

## How To – Meeting between the Employee and Manager

Experience shows that the best way for both parties to understand each other's position and identify a solution that suits them both is to hold a face-to-face meeting to discuss the request.

The meeting will provide both the Manager and the Employee with the opportunity to discuss the desired work pattern in depth and consider how it might be accommodated.

2024 updates to Flexible Working Regulations require employers to consult with their employees, as a means of exploring the available options, before rejecting a flexible working request

### Logistics

The manager should consider and decide on requests reasonably and within a **two month** period unless an extension has been agreed with the employee. This includes time for the outcome of any appeal, as appropriate. The initial meeting should therefore be arranged with this timescale in mind.

Managers should ensure the meeting is held at an appropriate time and place, which is convenient to both parties. In most cases, this will be the usual place of work, but both parties should be prepared to be flexible, for example, an employee who is returning to work from maternity leave may find it difficult to travel to their workplace. Discuss the meeting place and consider if there is an easier place to meet.

Managers should log the meeting.

### Preparing

A Manager should carry out their own initial assessment of the request, taking advice from HR/legal/senior management if required, prior to meeting with the Employee.

Both parties should themselves be prepared to be flexible. If the original working pattern cannot be accommodated, the meeting also provides an opportunity to see if an alternative working arrangement may be appropriate. The employer is required to discuss alternative options before they can reject the request. For example, if it is not possible to change an employee's working hours on all days, they could consider making the change for certain days instead.

### Outcomes

A note should be taken of the meeting and any agreement reached.

It may also be in both parties' interest to agree that the new working pattern will take place for an agreed trial period in order to see how it would suit them both and details of the trial period should also be noted.

### How to Ensure you Get the Most from the Meeting

Managers are encouraged to:

- Make a list or draft an agenda of the issues you want to discuss at the meeting, eg if you are already aware that the request can be granted, you may want to discuss a suitable start date before formally accepting the request.
- Inform your employee of anyone you have asked to join the meeting.
- Ask your other employees if they would want to cover any extra hours that may be created as a result of granting the request.
- Speak to Human Resources so that you are clear about your options.
- Familiarise yourself with this guidance and the different types of flexible working.

### The Employee Bringing an Accompanying Person

An employee can bring one accompanying person with them to the meetings, if they feel this would help them. This may include a colleague or a trade union representative.

The role of the accompanying person is to support the employee and to provide them with advice and guidance throughout the meeting and at any adjournments. The accompanying person is able to address the meeting, and to confer with the employee during it, but they may not answer questions for the employee.

The onus is on the employee to advise the accompanying person of the date of the meeting to ensure they are free. If the accompanying person cannot make the initial meeting, the employee must seek to rearrange the meeting for a time convenient to all parties. This should take place within a reasonable timescale of the initial proposed meeting. If this cannot be achieved then the employee should consider an alternative accompanying person although, where the Manager agrees to consider an alternative date, the employee should try to arrange this.

### Where the Employee Fails to Attend the Meeting

If the employee fails to attend the meeting without notification, they should contact their manager as soon as possible to explain their absence, and to allow the Manager to rearrange the meeting at a mutually convenient time.

If the employee fails to attend the meeting more than once and does not provide a reasonable explanation, the manager may treat the application as having been withdrawn. In such circumstances, the Manager should inform the employee that the application has now been considered withdrawn.