


Guidance on flexible working approaches

Flexible working approaches in adult social care can significantly benefit both employers and employees by increasing job satisfaction, work-life balance, and productivity. Drawing from best practices in social care, Health Service Research, this guidance aims to provide adult social care employers with practical examples to help implement flexible working arrangements effectively.

Flexible working is about more than just retention. It can unlock new opportunities to meet the needs of different workers and contribute to people's mental health, wellbeing and engagement with their role, and we know that more engaged staff leads to better care. It can also be an important option to help improve the diversity of your workforce. A lack of flexible working is most likely to negatively impact unpaid carers, people with disabilities, and parents.

Flexible working is for everyone, regardless of role or reason for wanting to work flexibly. Employees must have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks to be eligible – see the [flexible working guidance at gov.uk](#)  for more information regarding legal rights.

Flexible working approaches can play a crucial role in improving the work-life balance and job satisfaction of employees in the adult social care sector.

Find more information and a code of practice for handling _____



Understanding flexible working

Flexible working refers to any arrangement that allows employees to have some control over when, where, and how they work. The key principles include:

Implementing flexible working

Develop a comprehensive flexible working policy

Create a clear and comprehensive flexible working policy that outlines the various options available to employees. The policy should also detail the process for requesting and approving flexible working arrangements, as well as any expectations regarding communication, performance evaluation, and data security. It's important to apply the policy consistently across your organisation. ACAS has a template that employers can use to help them develop a flexible working policy.



Encourage open communication:

Foster a culture of open communication where employees feel comfortable discussing their needs and preferences for flexible working. Encourage managers to have regular check-ins with their team members to address any concerns and ensure that the arrangements are working effectively.



Provide necessary technology and support

Ensure that employees have access to the technology and resources required to work flexibly. This may include providing laptops or tablets for remote work, setting up secure communications channels, and offering training on using remote communication tools.



Be flexible in approving requests

When employees submit requests for flexible working arrangements, assess them on an individual basis. Be open to different types of flexibility, such as remote work, flexible hours, or job sharing, depending on the employee's role and responsibilities.





Check s

Implementing a flexible working policy in social care settings requires careful planning, consideration of the unique needs of the sector, and adherence to regulatory requirements. Here is a checklist of things social care employers should consider when implementing flexible working arrangements:

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9. Equity and inclusivity

Consider the diverse needs of the workforce. Some employees may have caring responsibilities, while others may prefer compressed workweeks. Be inclusive in accommodating various requests.

10. Emergency and contingency plans

Develop contingency plans for situations where flexible working might not be feasible, such as during emergencies or natural disasters. Define clear expectations for employees during such situations.

11. Person-centred approach

Prioritise the needs of people who draw on care and support and safety. Ensure that flexible working arrangements do not compromise the quality of care provided. For instance, maintain adequate staffing levels during peak service times.

12. Recognition and rewards

Recognise and reward employees who excel while working under flexible arrangements. This can motivate others and create a positive work environment.

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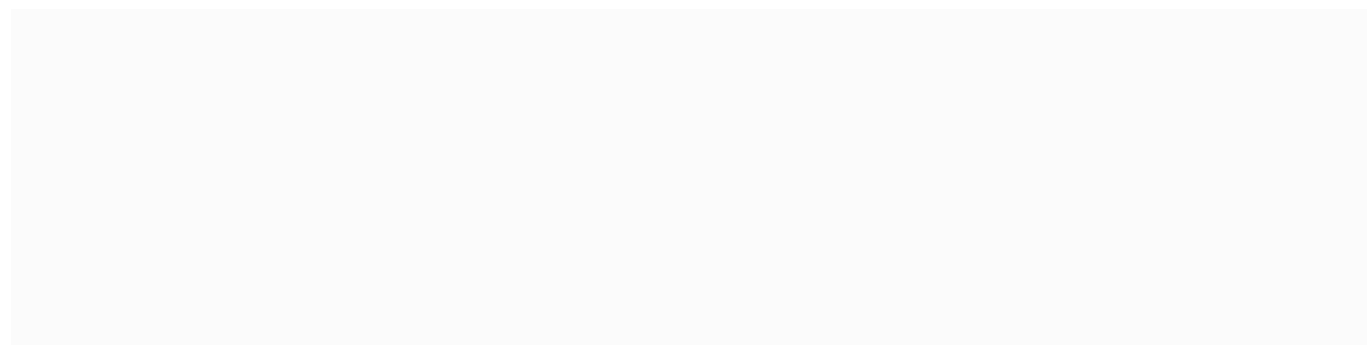
Encourage older employees to transition into retirement gradually by offering flexible work arrangements. This can help retain experienced workers while allowing them to reduce their hours.

Things to watch out for

Managing service continuity issues

Flexible schedules can disrupt service continuity, particularly in care organisations where people who draw on care and support rely on consistent care and set hours of the service need to be defined.

Solutions



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Employees working remotely may experience feelings of isolation and loneliness due to reduced social interaction with colleagues. This can affect their mental health and job satisfaction.

Solutions

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In organisations where the working is not applied consistently or fairly, some employees may feel disadvantaged or resentful. This can lead to morale issues and conflicts and potentially legal challenges.

Solutions

Loss of company culture

A strong company culture can be challenging to maintain when employees are not physically present. Casual interactions, team-building activities, and shared experiences may decline.

Solutions

Foster virtual team-building activities and social events to maintain a sense of camaraderie.

Clearly communicate and reinforce company values, mission, and goals through virtual channels.

Establish regular video meetings and check-ins to maintain face-to-face connections.

Encourage open communication and feedback to keep remote employees engaged.

Provide opportunities for skills development and career growth, even in a remote setting.

Recognise and reward remote employees for their contributions and achievements.

Use collaboration tools and technology to facilitate teamwork and information sharing.

Develop a remote working policy that aligns with the company's culture and expectations.

Managerial skills gap

Managers may need training and development in managing remote or flexible teams effectively. Some may struggle with the shift from traditional supervision to a results-based approach.

Solutions

Provide training and resources to help managers effectively lead remote and flexible teams.

Foster strong communication skills, including active listening and clear virtual communication.

Encourage adaptability and flexibility in management styles to accommodate diverse work arrangements.

Emphasise goal setting and performance metrics to measure productivity.

Promote trust and accountability between managers and flexible workers.

Train managers to recognise and address potential isolation or disconnection issues among team members.

Implement regular feedback and coaching processes to support career development for flexible workers.

Encourage managers to lead by example in embracing work flexibility and work-life balance.

Resistance to change

Some employees and managers may be resistant to adopting flexible working arrangements due to a preference for traditional work setups. Resistance to change can hinder successful implementation.

Solutions

Conclusion

Incorporating these flexible working practices into the social care industry can help ensure that care is consistently provided to people who draw on care and support while also promoting the wellbeing and job satisfaction of care workers. It's crucial to balance the needs of the organisation with those of the employees to create a sustainable and supportive work environment.

Resources

[Flexible working in social care | Local Government Association](#) 

[Flexible working | Acas](#) 