



Work-Life Balance Policy

Employers can have a positive impact on their staff by employing effective work-life balance policies.

Do you, your staff or someone you know ever say things like:

- “I am finding it hard to juggle the demands of my job and family”
- “There is no balance between my work and personal commitments”
- “I feel so tired. There is no time for me”.

If you or they do, you and they are not alone. The negative impact of work and personal demands on employees is increasingly better understood and has resulted in the creation of many family friendly work places. In these work places, staff have access to flexible working conditions such as shorter working hours, not working on some days, access to more holidays and carer and parental leave.

These flexible work options make good business and personal sense. They help employees balance the changing demands of work and personal life and as a consequence boost staff morale and productivity and the reputation of the workplace as being a great place to work. Everyone wins!

Flexible work options make good business and personal sense

When designing flexible work conditions the needs of the workplace and the needs of the employee, relevant legislation, agreements and awards need to be considered. The success of these flexible work arrangements requires 'give and take' by employers and employees and a shared responsibility to make the arrangements work. Liaise with your HR department to discuss available family friendly work practices and or strategies to maximise the effectiveness of such conditions. There are many benefits of implementing work-life balance policies. These include:

Employers' benefits:

- reduced staff turnover
- lower recruitment and training costs, due to decreased turnover
- reduced absenteeism due to higher levels of well being
- gaining a reputation as a good employer or an employer of choice
- better attraction and retention of staff
- reduced stress levels amongst staff
- improved morale and job satisfaction
- greater staff loyalty and commitment
- improved productivity



Employees' benefits:

- improved work-life balance – a reduction in the impact of work on home and family life and vice a versa



- reduced stress levels and higher levels of well being
- control over time management in meeting work-life commitments
- autonomy to make decisions regarding work-life balance
- increased focus, motivation and job satisfaction knowing that family and work commitments are being met
- increased job security from the knowledge that an organisation understands and supports workers with family responsibilities.

What do these benefits mean?

Employers must acknowledge that their staff are most productive when they have achieved a work-life balance that enables them to meet their responsibilities outside work. A work life balance policy provides a framework so that the business can consider how best to enable staff to achieve an effective balance between work and life outside the workplace.

Financial rewards and other benefits, regular appraisal and development opportunities, good job-design and effective management practices are all important factors in enabling a business to achieve this objective. Research suggests, however, that increasingly the opportunity to achieve a work-life balance can be as important a factor as pay and benefits in attracting and retaining staff.

A good work life balance policy may include a range of options for staff. For example, flexible working patterns can be offered, which enable them to work from locations and/or at times other than the standard working week. The nature of these arrangements will, of course, depend on the nature and size of the business but must be formally offered as part of an employee's terms and conditions. Any changes must be feasible and have no adverse impact on the work of colleagues and the effective functioning of the business.

Flexible hours can benefit employees in many ways, for example, the opportunity to avoid commuting in the rush-hour, control over their start and finish time from day to day within certain parameters, to allow for changing domestic or other commitments, being able to take a child to or from school, to accompany a friend or dependent to a day centre or similar, to await the arrival of a carer prior to leaving for work or flexibility to pursue interests/hobbies outside work.

A work life balance policy may also include **shift working**, where staff can swap occasional shifts with colleagues to enable them to address individual domestic commitments. It could also include **rota working/staggered hours**, providing a fixed pattern of starting and finishing times for each individual and enabling members of a team to cover the work required for a longer working day than might otherwise be the case if everyone followed the same working pattern. Some policies include the option of **job share** – this is a particular form of part-time working, where all aspects of a job are shared between two people. Job share has the advantage that there are two members of staff who are familiar with the responsibilities of a role and if annual leave is staggered, it is possible to cover the duties with shorter gaps throughout the year, which may result in a better service provision for customer facing roles.

In some situations, employees may be offered **planned remote working**. This means that staff can occasionally work at alternative locations (either home or elsewhere). Any such arrangement must be formalised and the expectations detailed. Practical issues such as availability of equipment, additional costs, insurance and health and safety issues must be

considered before agreeing changes: Some policies offer the option of **compressed hours** - This arrangement means that staff agree to work longer hours on some days in order to work shorter hours on another day. While such arrangements can offer welcome flexibility for staff, managers must bear in mind the times and days at which post holders need to be available to respond to queries from others.

Career Breaks are also offered by some organisations. This can run alongside existing policies on Leave for Domestic and Personal Reasons, where staff with caring responsibilities can request unpaid leave for a period of up to 6 months to care for someone who is seriously ill. In addition to this, staff may request an unpaid career break from their post for a period of up to 12 months to care for a family member or to undertake career or personal development. Such a career breaks are normally unpaid but can be an effective means of retaining a skilled and experienced member of staff whose domestic commitments mean that if they do not take a career break they must resign from their post.