

FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

V0.1 May 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

Action21 is committed to flexible working where this is possible in line with the needs of the business. Action21 recognises the importance of helping its employees to balance their work and home life and will consider carefully all applications for flexible working arrangements that enable employees to balance their working life with other priorities.

It is acknowledged however that the full range of flexible working options may not be appropriate for all positions within Action21. Furthermore, we aim to ensure that staffing levels remain in line with the demands of the business and there may be occasions when we may request that staff work more flexibly to meet the needs of the business.

2. PROCEDURE

There are many forms of flexible working e.g. part-time, staggering hours, job-sharing, compressed hours, annualised hours, working from home and term-time working. The request can cover hours of work, times of work, place of work and may include requests for different patterns of work.

Certain positions may not be suitable for all flexible working options but there will be no arbitrary barriers. All employees in all areas and levels of Action21 are eligible to apply for flexible working and their application will be considered without regard to their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, or whether they are employed on a permanent or fixed term basis. However, there is no automatic right to change to a flexible working option and each application will be considered on the basis of the particular work involved and any detrimental effect the change could have on individual, team or business objectives. Action21 does not normally offer compressed hours, however special requests can be made to the General Manager in exceptional circumstances, although these are only likely to

be agreed to for limited periods and to extend the working day no longer than 8 hours.

2.1. Making an application procedure

Requests for a change in working arrangements can be made by any employee. Two requests per employee may be made in any 12 month period (which includes requests that have been withdrawn). However, you may have only one live request for flexible working with the organisation at any one time.

The request must:

- be made in writing and state this is a flexible working request;
- be dated;
- set out the change requested, including when you would like the change to come into effect; and
- set out if and when you have made a previous request for flexible working to the Organisation.

On receipt of the application, the General Manager will respond and arrange to meet with you usually within 28 days of receipt of your request to discuss how your proposal could work. At this meeting you will have an opportunity to explain the reasons for the request and what flexibility you would like. If it is the General Manager who is making the request for flexible working it is made to the Vice-Chair.

The General Manager will respond to your request within a reasonable timeframe which will normally be within 14 days of the meeting to inform you of the outcome of your request and the reason for this decision.

You are entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee to assist in making any representations that may be appropriate.

If your request is granted, this may also include special requirements upon you e.g. attendance at work outside the revised hours to attend training sessions, events or meetings. If a request is agreed, the change will may be deemed permanent and you will not have an automatic right to revert to original hours. Otherwise the proposed change will be granted for a trial period.

Whilst Action21 will make every effort to accommodate your request for flexible working, there will be occasions when it is not able to do so. Action21 will consider carefully the request looking at the benefits of the requested changes in working conditions for the employee and the needs of the business and weighing these against any adverse business impact of implementing the changes. If your application is refused you will be informed of the reason why it has been declined and provided with details of the appeals process.

The application may be refused on one or more of several grounds, these being that the proposed changes will result in:

- a burden of additional cost;
- a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
- an inability to re-organise work among existing staff;
- an inability to recruit additional staff;
- a detrimental effect on quality;
- a detrimental effect on performance;
- an insufficiency of work during the periods you propose to work;
- a planned structural change; and
- any other ground allowed by regulations.

The Flexible Working request and any related paperwork will be retained on your personnel file.

In refusing any request, Action21 will explain the reasons for the refusal in writing and may make an offer of an alternative arrangement. Discussions may then take place to try to agree a way forward. If no agreement is reached then the employee's terms and conditions will remain unchanged, subject to the right of the employee to appeal the decision.

Any change in working arrangements which results from this process will be confirmed to you in writing.

The process (including any appeal) will be concluded within 2 months of the request being made, unless a longer period is agreed.

This policy will not prevent the General Manager agreeing to ad hoc arrangements from time to time. However, any such arrangement will not amount to a variation in

your terms and conditions of employment unless specifically agreed to the contrary and confirmed in writing. Action21 may terminate any such ad hoc agreement at any time and require you to revert to your agreed working arrangements.

As there will inevitably be a limit to the amount of flexibility Action21 can tolerate without detriment to its interests, employees must accept that the fact that a particular working arrangement has been granted to one employee does not oblige Action21 to grant it to another.

2.2 Appeals procedure

You have the right to appeal against the decision within 14 days of it being notified.

An appeal must be made in writing addressed to the General Manager who will refer the appeal to a trustee. An appeal from the General Manager should be made to the chair.

Your appeal must state the grounds of the appeal.

The appeal meeting will normally be held within 14 days from the receipt of the notice to appeal but the timescale may be extended, to allow for further deliberations and enquiries.

If the appeal is unsuccessful, the reasons why it has not been possible to approve your request will be outlined in writing to you.

2.3. Right to be accompanied

You will have the right to be accompanied at the initial meeting with your manager and at the appeal by a fellow employee of your choice. The companion will have the right to address the meeting and confer with you during the hearing but will not be permitted to answer questions on your behalf.

If your chosen companion is unavailable at the time proposed for a meeting, then we will postpone the meeting to a time proposed by you provided that this is convenient for us and within 7 days beginning with the day after the day initially proposed by us.

2.4. Withdrawing of an application

An application under this procedure will be considered withdrawn if:

- You withdraw it verbally or in writing
- You fail to attend the meeting to discuss the request without good reason. In certain circumstances failure to attend this meeting without any acceptable explanation being received beforehand will result in the case being heard in your absence based on the information available at the time
- You unreasonably refuse to provide information to support your request.