



Our People

FLEXI-SCHEME

APRIL 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**Epping Forest
District Council**

1. Introduction

The aim of the flexi-scheme is to provide flexibility in working arrangements for both managers and employees. The provision of cover is a joint responsibility of both management and employees. The workplace must be staffed throughout normal working hours (including lunch time) in order to maintain service cover.

2. Scope

This Policy covers all employees except Craft Workers in the former Works Unit who have been exempted from the scheme, those who are employed to cover specific time periods and those who work on a shift/rota system basis. Part-time employees, including job sharers can be included in the scheme, subject to the needs of the service.

Where a service to the public is offered it must be accepted that the provision of cover is a joint responsibility between staff and management. With this in mind, employees participating in the scheme may have certain restrictions imposed on the operation of flexible working in order to facilitate the delivery of service.

3. Application of the Flexi-scheme

3.1 The Working day

Core hours are the time periods when all employees must be at work. For full time staff the core hours are 9.30 am to 12 noon and 2 pm to 3.30pm. By “at work” we mean working in the offices, site visits, conferences, training or other reasons authorised by management.

For part time workers the core hours are determined by their individual Managers.

3.2 Length of day

Attendance at work may be from 7.30am to 7pm Monday to Sunday. Attendance may depend on access to the workplace being possible and whether there is work to be done. Management has the discretion to determine the normal start time for employees on the grounds of service delivery.

3.3 Lunches

A maximum of two hours (from 12 noon to 2 pm) may be taken for lunch and a minimum of half an hour. If employees are taking a long lunch break (e.g. for up to two hours), they are required to agree this with their Manager in advance. Meal breaks are unpaid and a break must be taken after a period of 6 hours of continuous working.

3.4 Working times

It is a condition of the scheme that employees will establish a normal pattern of working within their team and with the agreement of their direct line Manager. In doing this, wherever possible individual personal circumstances will be taken into account subject to effective service delivery.

Variations to this pattern, which are known in advance, must be agreed with the team and Manager. However, emergencies and unforeseen occurrences will be dealt with sympathetically and flexibly.

3.5 Internal Transfers

Where employees are transferring across Directorates and Services, they should try to use up all their flexi-leave before transferring and not be in deficit/or credit. In other words they should start with a zero balance, unless there are compelling operational reasons to the contrary.

4. Accounting period

The main accounting period for flexible working is every four weeks. Everyone will work to a common period, for example day 1 week 1 will be the same for everyone; unless Directors have agreed to them being on a “staggered” accounting period, this is where day 1, week 1 for all staff in a section is not the same.

New starters would need to “join in” wherever the period is, at that time.

The standard hours for full time staff to be worked over a period is 144 hours. (i.e. 36 hours x 4 weeks=144). For part-time staff the same formula is applied i.e. number of hours the individual is contracted to work, multiplied by 4. This is known as the individual’s target time. Any hours in excess of, or less than this, may be carried over to the next period as credit or deficit subject to the following:

4.1 Credit (where the number of hours worked exceeds the target hours)

The maximum number of hours, which may be carried over from one period to the next is 10 for full time employees and pro rata for part time employees. There are no time limits as to when accrued hours must be taken. Any hours above 10 will be lost except where prior permission is given.

Approval to carry forward credits in excess of the maximum number of hours (pro rata) will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances and, even then, only if specifically approved in advance by the relevant Assistant Director.

Reasons of ‘general workload’ will not be agreed.

4.2 Deficits (where the number of hours worked is less than the target hours)

The maximum number of hours that employees can carry over to the next accounting period is minus four hours and pro rata for part-time employees. This deficit must be cleared within the next accounting period except where prior permission is given.

Approval to carry forward debits in excess of the maximum number of hours (pro rata) will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances and, even then, only if specifically approves in advance by the relevant Assistant Director.

Leavers must not be in deficit at their time of leaving. If there is a deficit, their salary will be adjusted accordingly or an invoice for the outstanding debt will be sent.

In any event the Assistant Director should not authorise an excess of hours or debit for more than 2 consecutive accounting periods.

4.3 Taking Flexi-leave

Flexi-leave must be taken in accordance with the needs of the service and by agreement with the Manager. A maximum of two days flexi leave is allowed in any one period (pro rata for part time staff).

4.3.1 Minimum flexi-leave allowed

It is recognised that there will be times where it is necessary to leave work for less than half a day, for example for dental appointments or to attend to family emergencies. For this reason, a minimum of one hour's flexi-leave will be granted and this could be within core hours.

4.3.2 Taking leave without the necessary credits

A total of four hours flexi-leave may be requested even if the necessary credit has not been built up, pro rata for part-time employees. However, this must be cleared within the next accounting period.

All flexi-leave must be in agreement with the line manager and must be shown on the recording sheet.

4.4 Absence from work

Employees will only receive credits for authorised reasons such as sickness, annual leave, authorised college attendance, special leave, compassionate leave, public duties etc. Credits will also be given for hospital appointment attendance where staff are unable to arrange the appointment outside of working hours, for example for appointments with Specialists or Consultants.

Credits will not be granted for attending doctors, dentists, opticians etc., instead leave must be used (either flexi or annual leave). If flexi-leave is used, the provisions of paragraphs 4.3 and 4.3.1 apply.

Staff undertaking a day or half day external training should only book 7hrs 12mins or 3hrs 36mins respectively, regardless of travelling time.

4.5 Additional Hours

Where additional hours are worked, by mutual agreement, beyond a normal working day, it may be treated as paid overtime as per the Collective Agreement and recorded on the normal overtime claim forms. Where the hours are not to be paid they will be recorded as part of the flexitime system, and subject to the requirements of the flexitime. All flexi time will be at plain time.

4.6 Realignment of the flexi-scheme

If managers anticipate a period of peak workload with tight timescales that will preclude staff taking accrued flexitime, they may make a request to Management Board that the flexitime scheme be suspended for a specific team(s) for a specified period of no more than 3 months. This will allow a relaxation of the maximum carry forward credit, and will avoid operational difficulties during the peak period. This will

only occur in exceptional circumstances, and will require Management Board agreement in advance of the proposed period of suspension. Management Board agreement will also be necessary if the period of suspension is required to extend beyond 3 months.

This will include seasonal or annual peaks in work, such as the closure of accounts in Finance, and the seasonal service provision in Country Care. In such recurring circumstances, agreement will stay in place for subsequent years, unless there is a further change required in either the period of suspension or the group of staff affected.

Managers are to take care to ensure that excessive hours are not worked by employees, as per the Working Time Regulations. For further guidance on the Regulations, please consult HR.

4.7 Evening attendances

Evening attendance at Council, Cabinet, Committee, Working Groups meetings and Civic Events will be paid at the appropriate attendance allowance. Staff cannot claim flexi-time and evening attendance allowance for the same meeting/event. For example, where an evening meeting/event starts at 6.30pm and finishes after 7pm the employee should only claim evening attendance allowance.

5. Recording

Standard sheets for recording times of starting and finishing work will be kept in a central place within each service area and be accessible to staff within that team.

Each person is responsible for filling in their own times and signing that it is a true record. It is not acceptable to enter information on someone else's behalf. The times should be entered as they are worked, or as soon as possible after they are worked. For example, if a member of staff goes straight home after a site visit, the sheet would need to be completed as soon as they are back in the office.

5.1 Flexi time recording sheet

To ensure consistency across the Council all staff will be required to use the corporate recording sheet preferably in the electronic format, which will be sufficiently flexible to apply to full time and all part time working.

5.2 Abuse of the flexi-scheme

Where the flexi-scheme is abused, or where records are not properly kept, an investigation will take place and the individual may be subject to the Council's disciplinary procedures. Where the records have been falsified, this would be deemed as gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal under the Disciplinary procedure. The Council has the right to remove an employee from the flexi-scheme where it has been abused by them.

6 Review

This scheme is subject to review and amendment at the discretion of the Council after consultation with the Trade Unions.

Glossary of Terms Used

Core time:	Hours during which staff must be at work.
Accounting period:	A four week period.
Target time:	The expected number of hours to be worked during the accounting period e.g. 36 hours each week for 4 weeks totals 144 hours target time and pro-rata for part timer staff.
Working day:	These are the hours, which will normally work each day. For full time staff this will be 7.2 hours (expressed as a decimal) or 7 hours 12 minutes each day. The actual hours of work are to be agreed with the Manager or Supervisor to ensure adequate cover. The ultimate responsibility for deciding on staff hours rest with Directors.
Credit:	These are hours worked in addition to the target hours.
Deficit:	This is where the time worked is less than the target hours.
Flexi-leave:	This is leave, which you may take as a result of working credit hours. A maximum of ten hours for full time staff (pro-rata for part time staff) can be carried forward to the next period. The most flexi-leave taken in any one period is two days and the least is one hour.