

Flexible working for older workers

Flexible working is a popular option for older workers as it allows people to make a gradual transition between full-time work and retirement. 6 out of 10 people over the age of 50 say they would like to work past pension age, if they could go part-time. Half of people who recently retired said they would have considered working longer if they could have accessed flexible work.

Flexible working has benefits for employers and employees. It can increase employee commitment and motivation and help retain skilled and experienced staff. It can also help employers to manage the flow of work, whether on a day to day basis or over the longer-term.

It is good practice to offer flexible working to all employees. Remember, it may be difficult to justify offering flexible working arrangements to older workers, but not to other groups, such as parents of young children.

You can save on overheads when employees work from home. Shift-working can mean less down-time for machinery or enable you to extend the hours that customers have access to the business.

Ways of flexible working include:

- flexi time
- shift work
- job sharing
- compressed hours
- part-time or reduced hours
- temporary contracts
- seasonal work
- term-time only
- home working
- unpaid leave
- annualised hours
- call down contracts
- peak service or peak production times.

How to operate flexible working

- Review all flexible working options and offer the range of working patterns that meet the needs of the job and the business. Don't rely on traditional working practices just because that's the way things have been done previously.
- Look at good practice in your sector for ideas.
- Ensure your line managers are aware of the options available in your business and how to consider requests to work flexibly.
- Make sure workers of all ages know about your commitment to flexible working. Provide information about their options and how to apply to work flexibly.

- Offer individuals an opportunity to discuss the options available to them through performance discussions.
- Help individuals assess the financial implications of flexible working by referring them to information on the Directgov website [link].

“Flexible working options help people choose when they work. We offer a range that includes flexi-hours, reduced hours, condensed hours and other options. One example is the opportunity to work flexibly within skills and competencies, in terms of 'downgrading' to less demanding roles as appropriate and possible. This gives both the organisation and the person flexibility; the individual can continue to work and we can retain valuable experience and skills within the workforce.”

Spokesperson, Portsmouth City Primary Care NHS Trust