



WILLIAMSBURGH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Flexible Working Policy

Revision History

Policy	Flexible working
Reviewer(s)	HR
Committee Name	FAC
Number and Date of Meeting	August 2024
New Policy or Description of Revision	Revision – legislative changes in 2024
Equality Impact Assessment Complete	
Data Protection Impact Assessment Complete	
Health and Safety Risk Assessment Complete	
Consultation Complete	
Next Review Date	August 2027

Introduction

Williamsburgh Housing Association (W.H.A.) recognises the need to have a flexible working policy to help ensure best practice for staff and compliance with the right to request flexible working under legislation. The policy helps to ensure equality and fairness throughout the process and aids employees in looking at their work life balance. Employees have the right to request changes to their working hours or place of work under the statutory right in the Employment Rights Act 1996 as updated in the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.

Background

W.H.A believes its staff members are its most valuable asset and is committed to attracting and retaining the very best and utilising all talent and experience available. We understand that it is important for staff members to establish a work – life balance as many individuals have personal responsibilities outside from work. Flexible work may allow more freedom for employees to organise their employment to fit in with other parts of their life.

Legal Framework

Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023

The introduction of the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 enhances the rights of employees from previous acts. This Act gives employees the right to make a flexible working request from day one of employment and also allows 2 requests to be made in a 12-month rolling period with a time limit of 2 months for W.H.A to respond in full to a flexible working request.

Whilst W.H.A has always engaged with the new law in principle, this policy lays out the exact principles which staff can expect and management will adhere to. It embodies the changes to the law in 2024 which compliments previous Acts as listed below:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Act 2002
- Work and Families Act 2006
- Flexible Working Regulations 2014

Policy Principles

- The policy has been updated to ensure compliance with requirements.
- Aims to provide staff with the opportunity to request changes to their standard working arrangements to strike a better balance between their home and work responsibilities and for W.H.A to retain talent and skills in the workforce and react effectively to changing market conditions.
- Details the flexible working procedure that must be followed (Appendix 1).
- Is only applicable when the employee instigates the request to work flexibly (and not when it is instigated by the employer).
- Re-emphasizes a desire to create a good place to work for everyone by aiming to retain skills and experience and adapting to changes in society.

Eligibility

Under provisions set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996 and updated in the Employment Relations (Flexible working) Act 2023, every employee has a right from day one of employment to request a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment. An employee has the right to make 2 flexible working requests within a rolling 12-month period.

General

To be eligible, staff members must:

- Be an employee.
- Not be an agency worker.
- Not have made more than 2 applications to work flexibly under the right during the past 12 months.

Types of Flexible Working

Some examples of flexible working are documented below, however please note this list is not exhaustive.

Part time working

A system whereby the employee is contracted to work fewer than the standard full-time hours. There are many variations to part time working such as later start or earlier finish times, afternoons or mornings only and fewer working days in the week.

Job-sharing

An arrangement whereby two part time (or occasionally more) employees share the responsibility of a position. In a 'shared responsibility' arrangement the individuals both carry out all the duties of the job simply by picking up the work where the other employee left off. A 'divided responsibility' arrangement is when the duties of the position are divided between the two individuals, with each being able to provide cover for the other as and when necessary.

Term time working

The employee remains on a permanent contract but can take unpaid leave of absence as agreed, generally in line with the holiday closures of the school their dependent attends.

Compressed Hours

A system permitting employees to work their total number of contractual hours over fewer working days. For example, a five-day working week may be compressed into four days.

Flexible Working Procedure

In the first instance it is best to discuss your thoughts with your line manager on an informal basis, this may help to speed up the discussion. W.H.A aims to deal with requests as soon as possible and within 2 months of first receiving the written request, including any appeal. If for some reason the request cannot be dealt with within the 2-month period, then W.H.A. can extend this time limit provided the staff member agrees.

Application for flexible working

To formally apply for flexible working, employees need to follow the steps below:

- Apply in writing.
- State the date of the application, the change to working conditions the employee is seeking and when they would like this change to come into effect.
- State that it is a statutory request.
- State whether a previous application has been made and the date of such application.
- Sign & date it.

Once the request is received

If W.H.A. are happy to accept the change requested, they can confirm it in writing without a need for a meeting. If there are minor details to discuss then this may happen between the employee and manager. Alternatively, a meeting will be arranged.

The Meeting

- Employee will be invited to a meeting in writing and informed they can be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union .
- At the meeting, the employee's proposal will be discussed.
- If the employee's proposal is not suitable to the business, alternative solutions will be discussed.
- If an employee fails to turn up for a meeting without prior notification on more than one occasion and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, W.H.A will treat the application as withdrawn. This will be confirmed in writing informing the employee this will constitute one of their statutory 2 flexible working requests they have a right to make in a rolling 12 month period.
- After the meeting the manager will inform the employee of their decision in writing, along with all details of the change.

Flexible working Acceptance

- Once both sides have agreed to the changes requested. Or an agreed variation of the request, a permanent variation of the employee's terms and conditions will be issued. The employee has no automatic right to return to the original arrangement.
- A trial period for a specified time may be applicable to establish if the new arrangement is suitable for the needs of the business. This will be confirmed in writing following the meeting and acceptance.

Flexible working rejection

If the employee's application is declined, it will be confirmed in writing, specifying the business reasons for rejection.

One (or more) of the following reasons may apply:

1. Burden of additional cost
2. Inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff
3. An inability to recruit additional staff
4. A detrimental impact on quality
5. A detrimental impact on performance
6. Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
7. Insufficient work for the periods the employees proposes to work
8. A planned structural change to the business.

Withdrawal of application

W.H.A can treat an application as withdrawn under the statutory provisions where the employee has:

- Notified W.H.A, verbally or in writing, that the application is withdrawn.
- Without a reasonable explanation failed more than once to attend a meeting or appeal meeting
- Refused to provide W.H.A with information required in order to assess whether the contract variation should be agreed to.

Appeal Process

An employee no longer has the automatic right to appeal but W.H.A will honour hearing the appeal as best practice.

- The staff member can appeal against W.H.As decision to refuse an application.
- The appeal should be made in writing to a named manager of at least one level higher than the manager who made the original decision if possible and then a meeting will be held to discuss the appeal and any options available. This manager will be named in the outcome letter and will fall in line with the delegated authority levels as detailed in other policies depending on the level of the member of staff making the request.
- The employee will be informed they can be accompanied to the meeting by a fellow employee or trade union representative of their choice
- After the meeting, the employee will be notified in writing, confirming the grounds for decision.

Responsibilities

Both the employee and the employer have certain responsibilities within this procedure as follows below:

Employee's responsibilities

- To provide a careful thought out application.
- To ensure their application is valid by checking that all the eligibility criteria are met and that they have provided all necessary information.
- To ensure the application is made well in advance of when the change is proposed to take effect.
- To arrive at meetings on time and to be prepared to discuss their application in an open and constructive manner.
- If necessary, be prepared to be flexible themselves in order to reach an agreement with the employer.
- If the employee wishes to be accompanied by a representative, the employee must ensure that their representative can attend on the date proposed by the employer or an alternative date within the time frame previously stipulated

Employer's responsibilities

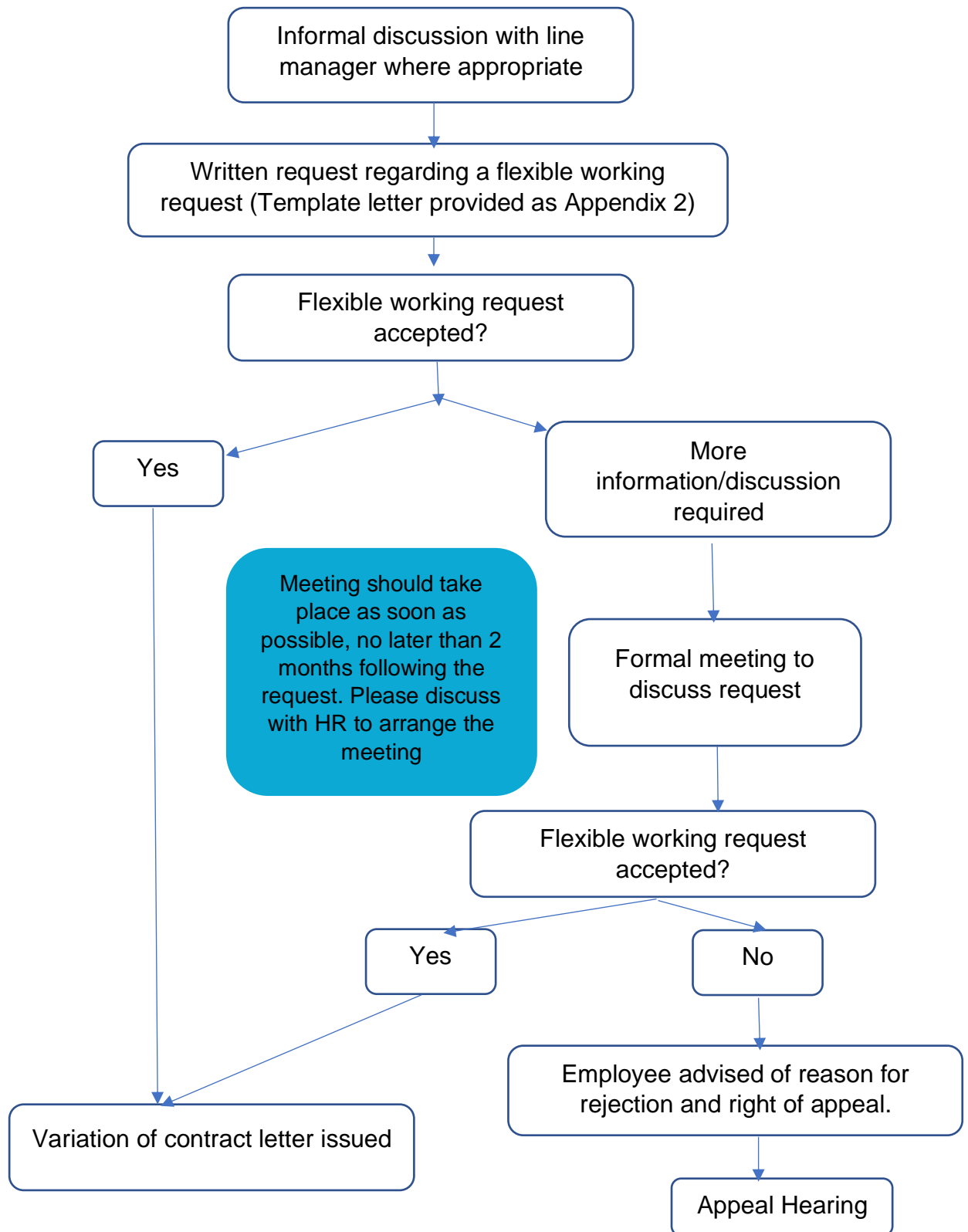
- To consider requests thoroughly and in good faith in accordance with the set procedure
- To deal with requests as quickly as possible and within 2 months.
- To decline a request only where there is a recognisable business ground and to explain to the employee why it applies
- To ensure that any variation of the procedure is agreed in advance with the employee and recorded in writing
- Not to subject an employee to detriment or dismissal for making a flexible working request.

General Data Protection Regulations

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own [insert name of policy or procedure]. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in W.H.As employee privacy notice.



Appendix 1 – Process map





Appendix 2: Flexible Working Application Form

Note to the employee:

An application to work flexibly under the right provided in law must be in writing. This form is a template to assist you. It will help if you provide as much information as you can about your desired working pattern. It is important that you complete all the questions as otherwise your application may not be valid. Please give your completed form to your line manager.

Employee Details

Name:	
Date of Application:	
Start Date:	
Job Title:	
Department:	
Manager:	
Current Hours worked per week:	
Current Shift Pattern:	
Previous Application Made & Date (if applicable)	

Proposal

Please detail your proposal below, including your proposed working pattern, effective date of change, if the request is temporary or permanent. It would also be helpful for the organisations consideration of the request if you could detail the impact the request may have on the organisation and how you believe this could be remedied.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Dated: _____