

DWP briefing



Public and
Commercial
Services Union

Department for Work & Pensions Group

To: Branch Secretaries, Additional Branch Contact, Regional Secretaries
and GEC

Date: 2nd November 2016

DWP/BB/114/16

DWP Flexible Working Hours Agreement

Stage 1 starts from 1st November 2016 and Stage 2 from 6th February 2017

New Flexible Working Hours Agreement

Branch Briefing DWP/BB/109/16 invited Branches to provide feedback on the proposed new Flexible Working Hours Agreement (FWHA). Following consideration of feedback, and DWP agreement to amend certain proposals, the PCS DWP Group Executive Committee (GEC) agreed a new FWHA at its meeting on 20th October 2016. This will be implemented in stages from 1st November 2016 and from 6th February 2017. The FWHA applies to all colleagues in grades AA to Grade 6 regardless of whether they are covered by the Employee Deal.

FWHA implementation from 1st November

The provisions of the FWHA for implementation, under Stage 1, from 01/11/16 include:

New Breaks Policy for all DWP staff – *In addition to any daily meal break, employees in all parts of DWP, both Operations and Corporate, will have the opportunity to take reasonable breaks in normal, paid working time to help them maintain their health, safety and well-being.* PCS Briefing DWP/MB/052/16 provides guidance for members on the agreement for breaks. The DWP Breaks Policy has been amended for consistency with the FWHA.

Medical appointments – Best practice for medical appointments has been extended to all DWP staff on the basis that: *Employees should always try to make medical appointments, including dental appointments, outside of working hours but this is not always possible. If an appointment has to be in working hours, managers should allow a flexi credit (FWHA Procedure 8 for Personal business). Special Leave Procedure 12 will be amended for consistency with the FWHA to include an instruction that Managers must: Consider, if the request is for personal business, whether a flexi credit, as detailed in the Flexible Working Hours Procedures, is appropriate.*

Training credits – The Agreement incorporates best practice *to support employees who need to focus on their classroom training event without the distraction of normal day to day business.* Such training events cover most of the working day but do not normally last for the full working day. DWP wanted to apply training credits on the basis that if the training day was 6 or 7 hours the credit for all staff would be 6 or 7 hours. This would result in full time staff going into deficit

or have to make up 1.24 (1.12 London) hours for a 6 hour course. The FWHA safeguards all members from a deficit in their daily hours due to attendance at a training course: on such occasions a full day's flexi credit shall be awarded for the employee's normal contracted hours or the duration of the course whichever is greater. Part time employees may also opt for their pay to be adjusted accordingly. The Agreement supports equal treatment of all DWP employees on the basis that no employee will go into deficit, or have to make up the time, for attendance at training events scheduled to last for one day. (FWHA Procedure 12)

Religious observance - Managers will apply discretion in allowing employees reasonable time away from work for prayers / religious observance. This must be managed with regard to colleague and business need. (FWHA Procedure 11)

Flexi Leave - Line manager consent to take half or full days of flexi leave will be applied for in the same way as with requests for half or full days of annual leave. (FWHA Procedure 9)

Accounting period - Flexi deficits and credits must be brought to account within the current set limits on a 4-weekly cycle. (FWHA Procedure 3)

Overall management - Employees will manage their times of attendance, accrual of credit / deficit and use of flexi leave responsibly to support consistently good customer service. In particular, they will work with colleagues to ensure adequate cover across the day. *Each team will therefore be responsible for ensuring enough employees are present to run the business throughout the day, starting by using employee preferences, with final decisions, as necessary, resting with line managers. In all cases managers and the wider team will adhere to these procedures so that (a) business and colleagues' needs are met and (b) employees will have reasonable personal freedom and self-management to enable them to maintain work life balance.* (FWHA Procedure1)

Stage 2 from 6th February 2017

The first paragraph of the FWHA Policy confirms the agreed intention that FWH will be *the primary means of managing hours and working patterns between colleagues from day to day*. PCS is discussing the introduction of guidance for managers to support fair and reasonable day to day flexibility as intended under the FWHA. Further guidance will be provided for Stage 2.

Further improvements to be achieved

The GEC has agreed the FWHA as a platform to achieve further improvements. This will include taking all necessary action to include Corporate Centre employees in the formal breaks arrangements. The agreement for Training Credits delivers a best practice to equally safeguard all members from detriment but the PCS policy objective will continue to be to achieve the simple solution of a 7.24 (National)/7.12 (London) credit for a "training day" for all members. Further guidance will be provided for members and representatives. Branches may send feedback or requests for clarification to PCS at the address below.

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