

Flexible Working Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

Introduction

Ambitious about Autism (AaA) and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) are committed to supporting its employees achieve a better work/life balance. This can help to increase motivation, reduce stress and improve performance and productivity. This includes enabling other activities such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities, further learning and other interests. AaA/ AaAST are committed to considering all flexible working arrangements provided that the needs and objectives of both the organisation and employee can be met; especially with staffing levels for the Schools and College.

What is flexible working?

Some common forms of flexible working include:

Flexi-time	This is where employees have flexibility in start and finishing times outside a set core of hours determined by the organisation.
Compressed working hours	This allows an employee to work the same number of contractual hours required but over fewer days. For example, an employee may request to work full-time hours over 4 days instead of 5 days, or 9 days a fortnight instead of 10 days.
Job-sharing	This is an arrangement that allows two people to share the duties of a full-time post.
Part-time working	This is considered where there is a possibility that the needs of the role do not require full-time hours to be worked.
Working from home	This is considered where it is not critical for the employee to be present in the office at all times. It may be that all or part of the duties could be performed from home using appropriate technology. This is different to 'homeworking' where an employee's base location is their home address.
Term time working	This is where an employee remains a permanent employee but is only engaged to undertake a contracted number of hours per week during school term time. Salary and conditions of employment are pro-rata.
Temporary reduction in hours	This is where an employee agrees to reduce their hours for a fixed period with a guarantee of a return to full-time work when this period ends.
Sabbatical – unpaid	A period of (unpaid) leave granted for study or travel, with a guarantee to return to the same post at the end of the agreed period.

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Other policies to be referred to:

- Family Leave Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Pay and Benefits Policy
- CPD Policy

The needs of the organisation

Aa/AaAST are committed to providing a range of appropriate working patterns. However, employees and management need to be realistic and to recognise that not all flexible working options will be appropriate for all roles.

Where a flexible working arrangement is proposed, the organisation will need to take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:

- The effect of the proposed arrangement on pupils/learners.
- The effect and benefits of the proposed arrangements on colleagues in the department.
- How the new working arrangement can be managed.
- The availability of people resources.
- An analysis of the tasks specific to the role, including their frequency and duration.
- An analysis of the workload of the role.
- Health and safety issues
- Any other issues related to the individual and/or team/department

Further study or personal development often has a positive impact on the both the individual and the organisation and Aa/AaAST encourage people in their professional development. However, the capacity to support such requests must be considered carefully in the context of staffing levels and forward planning.

This policy and procedure does not form part of an employee’s contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2. Eligibility

Any employee with at least 26 weeks of employment service has a statutory right to request flexible working. To apply they should complete the flexible working form and have not submitted a request within the previous twelve months.

Submitting a flexible working request

An eligible employee is entitled to submit **one** flexible working request in a twelve-month period (an employee is entitled to additional requests if they relate to a statutory entitlement e.g., the Equality Act 2010 right to request reasonable adjustments).

All requests must be made **by emailing the completing the flexible working form to the line manager/SLT member in services**. Any request made must include:

- The date of the application.
- What effect the employee thinks the requested change would have on the organisation.
- How, in their view, any such effect could be dealt with.
- Whether a previous application for flexible working has been made.
- The dates of any previous applications.
- Clearly state the changes required to terms and conditions.
- The date on which you would like the request to come into effect.

If an application does not contain all of the required information the line manager/SLT member in services will explain to the employee what additional or amended information they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.

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Meetings regarding flexible working

Upon receiving a written flexible working request, the line manager/SLT member in services will arrange to meet with you as soon as possible after receiving the request to discuss it, but within 28 days. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager after taking advice from the People Team as required.

The employee may be accompanied by a work colleague, Staff Council representative (AaA only) or union representative if they wish. In some cases it may not be necessary to meet if the request can easily be accommodated.

This meeting is designed to:

- Provide the employer and employee with the opportunity to explore the proposed work pattern in depth.
- Discuss how best it might be accommodated.
- Provide an opportunity to consider other alternative working patterns should the original request not be possible.

If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their application will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

Responding to a flexible working request

The employee will be informed of the outcome to the request by letter, detailing the reasons why the decision has been made. This will be within 14 days of the meeting, again this can be extended if both employee and line manager/SLT member in Services agree. The letter will detail if:

- The request has been granted in full, in part or refused.
- The agreed new work pattern and start date
- Details of whether the agreement is a permanent or temporary change and if there will be any trial period.
- Detail of any changes to terms and conditions of employment.

Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern. Trialing new working arrangements

Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practicable for an employee and/or the organisation a trial period may be agreed. If a trial period is arranged the organisation will allow sufficient time for an employee and their manager to implement and become used to the new working practices before taking any decisions on the viability of a new arrangement.

Changes to the working pattern

Where changes have been agreed to the working pattern, these will be confirmed in a variation to contract letter to be signed by AaA/AaAST and the employee confirming acceptance to the permanent changes (unless agreed that arrangement will be for a fixed period, or for a trial period)

Reasons for rejecting the request

It will not always be possible for AaA/AaAST to agree to a request to vary the working pattern of an employee. Below is a list of statutory business reasons as to why an application might be rejected, the letter must detail which of these applies.

- Burden of additional costs.
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Inability to recruit additional staff.
- Detrimental impact on quality.

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- Detrimental impact on performance.
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand (pupil/learner needs).
- Insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work
- Planned structural change to the business

The reasons for refusing a request in relation to study or training under the statutory provision could also include:

- the proposed study or training would not improve the effectiveness in the employer's business; or
- the proposed study or training would not improve the performance of the business

Right of Appeal

Employees have the right to appeal against their manager's/SLT member's decision within 14 days of being notified of it. The appeal must be in writing clearly setting out the grounds. The letter of appeal should be sent to the Director of People.

The Director of People will appoint a suitable person to hear the appeal which will usually be a senior manager, or in the case of the Chief Executive hearing the first stage, a Trustee.

The person hearing the appeal will arrange to meet with the employee to discuss the matter within 14 days of receiving the letter of appeal. Following the meeting, AaA/AaAST will then write to the employee within a further 14 days explaining the reasons for rejecting or accepting the appeal.

How often can an employee request a change to their working pattern?

Employees can make one application in each 12-month period. Accepted applications will mean a permanent change to the employee's own terms and conditions of employment unless otherwise agreed between both parties.

Pay and benefits

If the employee reduces the number of hours they work, the pay and benefits received (which include any pension benefits and annual leave), will be pro-rated accordingly.

Promotion, pay increases and training

A change to working arrangements will not affect an employee's eligibility for promotion, pay increases and training and will be based solely on an objective reason

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Appendix A – Request for Flexible Working Form

This form should be completed when requesting flexible working.

Eligibility

All employees with over 26 week's service are eligible to make a request under the policy. Normally only one request in 12 months is permitted.

Proposed pattern of work

Please ensure that you build in a minimum of a 20-minute break when working for 6 hours or more.

Business Case

When considering the request, your manager/SLT member in services will need to decide whether it is possible to accommodate your proposal without detriment to the organisation/team/service users etc. Please answer the questions in this section as fully as possible so that your request can be fully considered.

Process for considering requests

Your manager will arrange to meet with you as soon as possible but within 28 days of receiving your request to explore your proposal further. The request will be considered in line with the 'Requesting a different pattern of work' policy and procedure located in the flexible working policy.

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Request for Flexible Working			
Name:		Job title:	
Start date:		Date of request:	

Current Working Pattern					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start time:					
Finish time:					
Duration of breaks*					
Total daily hours					

Proposed Working Pattern					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start time:					
Finish time:					
Duration of breaks*					
Total daily hours					

Current Total Weekly Hours _____ *Minimum 20 minutes after 6 hours
Proposed Total Weekly Hours _____ *Minimum 20 minutes after 6 hours

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Business Case: Please answer the following questions to enable your manager to consider the impact of your request on the organisation. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

How would you propose to manage the responsibilities and accountabilities in your role within the proposed hours?

Can you identify any barriers or difficulties in managing your responsibilities and accountabilities? If so, please indicate how they can be overcome:

Can you identify any support mechanisms that you feel would help to make this change a success?

Can you identify any barriers or difficulties to support mechanisms? If so, please indicate how they can be overcome:

What do you think the impact of the proposed changes will be to the organisation?

Please indicate how these can be overcome:

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What do you think the impact of the proposed changes will be on your colleagues and managers?

Please indicate how these can be overcome:

Additional Information:

Is there any additional information your manager should be aware of when considering your application?

Dates:

What start date do you propose for this arrangement? _____

Have you made a request for flexible working in the last 12 months? YES / NO If yes please give date

Signature of member of staff making the application:

Signed: _____

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Comments of line manager/SLT in services in considering the request:

Approved:

Not approved:

Alternative agreed:

Comments regarding approval/non approval/amendment

Confirmed date of variance:

Signed by line manager/SLT member in services: _____

Date: _____

Please send a copy of this completed form to payrollhelp@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

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