

Flexible Working Policy

Introduction

SOS Homecare believes that its staff members are its most valuable asset and is committed to attracting and retaining the very best talent. It also appreciates that the UK workforce is becoming increasingly diverse and includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with caring responsibilities, as well as those whose interests and aspirations impact on their time.

The Company recognises the importance of helping its employees balance their work and home lives by offering flexible working arrangements that enable them to balance their work commitments with other priorities. It is understood that a degree of flexibility in working arrangements can also be crucial in helping staff to respond to personal issues, such as caring commitments and recovering from a situation where domestic abuse has taken place. In addition, the Company recognises that staffing levels must remain in line with the demands of the business at all times.

This policy aims to set out the ways in which flexible working can increase staff motivation, build better relationships between SOS Homecare and its employees, increase the rate of retention of staff, reduce absence, attract new talent, promote work-life balance and reduce employee stress. In doing so, this will improve the Company's efficiency, productivity and competitiveness.

The business need

Although the Company is committed to providing the widest possible range of working patterns for its workforce, and will always take the personal circumstances of its staff into account, both management and employees need to be realistic and recognise that the full range of flexible working options will not be appropriate for all jobs across all areas of the business.

When a request of flexible working is received, the Company will need to take in to account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:

- the cost of the proposed arrangement
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- the level of supervision that the post-holder requires
- the structure of the department and staff resources
- other issues specific to the individual's department
- an analysis of the tasks specific to the role, including their frequency and duration
- an analysis of the workload of the role.

Eligibility to make a request

From April 2024, employees can make a flexible working request from day 1 of their employment. Employees must not have made a request for flexible working within 12 months previous to the date of their request.

Employees in all areas and levels of the Company will be considered for flexible working regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, or gender reassignment.

Scope of a request

The Company recognises that eligible employees can make a request for one of, or a combination of, the following:

- job sharing
- part time working
- annualised hours
- compressed hours
- flexitime
- term time working
- swapping hours
- working from home
- flexible shift working.

Any agreement to a request for flexible working will take effect as a permanent variation to the employee's terms and conditions, unless it is mutually agreed that this will be a temporary variation.

Applying for flexible working

The application must:

- be made in writing and state that it is an application for flexible working under the statutory right to make a request
- state whether a previous application for flexible working has been made under this procedure and, if so, when
- specify the change applied for and the proposed date for the change to become effective
- explain the effect the employee thinks the change will have on the Company and their colleagues and explain how any effect should be handled
- be signed and dated.

The application must also state whether the variation requested is made in pursuance of a reasonable adjustment under the disability discrimination provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Procedure for handling an application

A discussion regarding the application will be held between the employee and their line manager within 28 days of the application, unless the line manager notifies the employee in writing of their agreement to the variation. The time and place of the discussion will be convenient to both the line manager and the employee.

Once a decision has been reached, the employee will be informed as soon as possible of the discussion. Where the decision is to agree to the application, the notice will specify the contract variation agreed to and state the date the variation will take effect.

Where the decision is to refuse the application, the notice will state which of the specified grounds for refusal are considered to apply and contain an explanation of why this ground applies.

Procedure for handling an appeal

An employee may appeal against the decision to refuse the application. The notice of appeal must be in writing, setting out the grounds for appeal and sent to the senior manager.

The senior manager will discuss the appeal with the employee as soon as possible after receipt of the appeal, unless the senior manager notifies the employee in writing of the decision to overturn the original decision and specifies the variation which is now agreed and the date on which it will take effect. If an appeal meeting is held, the time and place must be convenient to both the senior manager and the employee.

As soon as possible after the date of the appeal discussion, the senior manager will give the employee written notice of the appeal decision. Where the senior manager upholds the appeal, the notice will specify the contract variation agreed to and state the date on which it is to take effect.

Where the decision is to dismiss the appeal, the notice will state the grounds for the decision and contain an explanation as to why those grounds apply. The notice will also state that there is no further right of appeal.

An application for flexible working will be concluded within 3 months of the date of the application, unless an extension of time is mutually agreed.

Refusal of an application

The employee will be informed of the refusal of their application in writing.

The application may be refused on one or more of the following statutory grounds:

- a burden of additional cost on the Company
- a detrimental effect on the Company's ability to meet customer demand
- an inability to re-organise work among existing staff
- an inability to recruit additional staff
- a detrimental effect on quality
- a detrimental effect on performance
- insufficient levels of work during the periods of proposed work
- a planned structural change.

Withdrawal of application by employee

The employee can withdraw their application at any stage before agreement. The employee should write to their line manager stating they wish to withdraw their application.

Where the employee fails to attend a meeting or appeal meeting on more than one occasion or they refuse to provide reasonable information to allow their application to progress, without reasonable excuse, the Company will treat the application as withdrawn.

The Company will confirm the withdrawal of the application to the employee in writing.

Non-statutory requests for flexible working

Ineligible employees may make an informal request for flexible working. This should be made, in writing, to their line manager with information of their proposed pattern of working, the date they propose this to take effect, whether this variation is temporary or permanent, and how any negative effects of the proposed working pattern can be managed.

This request will be considered in line with the Company's operational and staffing needs. Consideration will always be given, however, to the personal circumstances of staff and added flexibility could assist them in managing both professional and personal commitments.

Review

This policy will be every 2 years.