

Comic Relief

Flexible Working Policy

Purpose

We recognise that sometimes you need to vary your working day on an ad hoc basis to accommodate real life beyond Comic Relief, and that you may want to amend your working week on a more permanent basis to achieve a different balance between your home and work commitments.

At Comic Relief we are committed to supporting you to achieve this flexibility so long as business needs can continue to be met.

Scope

All employees who have worked for Comic Relief for 26 weeks at the date of the flexible working request application have a statutory right to request flexible working. This policy will highlight all you need to know about how we handle flexible working at Comic Relief, whether you just need a temporary change to your working pattern or something more permanent.

To be read in conjunction with the Manager and employee FAQ's.

Template Owner & Version

Approved by: Remuneration and Nominations Committee

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Employee lead: Head of People, Facilities & Travel

Executive Director sponsor: COO

This policy belongs to Comic Relief and applies to the registered charity and all group companies (including Charity Projects and Comic Relief Ltd). This policy is for **internal use only** unless you have permission from the Employee lead or ED sponsor to use externally.

Comic Relief is the operating name of Charity Projects, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England no. 1806414; registered charity 326568 (England & Wales) and SC039730 (Scotland). Comic Relief Ltd is a subsidiary of Charity Projects and registered in England no. 1967154. Registered offices: 1st Floor, 89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP. VAT no. 773865187.

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PART A: POLICY FRAMEWORK

1. VALUES

- 1.1. Please apply the Comic Relief Values as a set of guiding principles when you read and use this policy.
- 1.2. The Comic Relief Values are:
 - 1.2.a. Make it personal
 - 1.2.b. Share the stage
 - 1.2.c. Inspire a culture of generosity
 - 1.2.d. Have a sense of humour, always
 - 1.2.e. Make meaningful change
 - 1.2.f. Walk the walk
 - 1.2.g. Break down barriers.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1. The People, Facilities and Travel Team manage this policy and are responsible for implementing this policy.

3. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- 3.1. Training
 - 3.1.a. Where training is provided on this subject area from time to time, you are required to attend such training.
- 3.2. Reporting and Recording
 - 3.2.a. The People Team will maintain a record of all flexible working requests and decisions in personnel files.
- 3.3. Governance oversight
 - 3.3.a. The register will be considered by the Audit & Risk Committee.
- 3.4. Consequences of non-compliance

- 3.4.a. If you don't comply with this policy, there may be a negative consequence for Comic Relief. Your failure to comply will be taken seriously and investigated promptly and objectively. Comic Relief will take appropriate action where needed.
- 3.4.b. Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

4. RELATED POLICIES

- 4.1. This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies:
 - 4.1.a. Grievance and Complaints policy
 - 4.1.b. Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

5. FURTHER SUPPORT

If you have further questions or feedback about this policy, please contact your HR Business Partner. You may also seek support from a mental health first aider or externally via the Employee Assistance Programme by calling 0800 1079042 and quoting scheme number 72713. (This call is free from landlines.)

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1. What is Flexible Working?

- 1.1. Comic Relief values the importance of getting the work-life balance right and ensuring that you have flexibility to be at your best when you're at work whilst managing your commitments and priorities at home or elsewhere. We want to give everyone the opportunity to perform well and be able to manage your time in the way that suits your life both inside and outside the organisation. Flexible working is a way of ensuring that the hours you work give you the opportunity to maintain a healthy balance between your work and business needs of your role and your life outside of Comic Relief.
- 1.2. This Flexible Working Policy can be used to make an application to work flexibly under the right provided in law to eligible employees. You have the statutory right to to make this request providing you have worked for Comic Relief continuously for 26 weeks and if you have not made a flexible working request in the last 12 months. However, Comic Relief will consider requests made at any point during employment.
- 1.3. Formal flexible working requests relate to permanent or long term changes to the terms and conditions of your employment contract. Comic Relief will always endeavour to accommodate a return to your old terms and hours if you find that they don't suit you or your circumstances change again. However, this may not be possible and particularly if there have been changes to other roles e.g. the recruitment of a job share partner.
- 1.4. There are different ways of working flexibly:
 - (a) Part time working, working shorter hours each day or fewer days in the week;
 - (b) Job share or job split, where two people share the same job or split the tasks between them who usually work opposite days and times to each other;

- (c) Working from home; it might be possible to do some or all the work from home or anywhere else within the UK other than the normal place of work
 - (d) Staggered hours, permanently changing the start, finish and break times of when you are working;
 - (e) Compressed hours, where your weekly working hours are perhaps done in 4 days rather than 5 or over a 9-day fortnight;
 - (f) Term time working, where you take your holidays in line with school holidays and/or reduce hours to match a school year; and
 - (g) Annualised hours, where your working hours are calculated annually rather than weekly enabling you to work more hours at busy times and fewer hours when it is quieter.
 - (h) Flexitime: you choose when to start and end work (within agreed limits), just ensuring it covers the 11am-3pm core hours
- Phased retirement: You can reduce your hours and work part time.

2. Remote working/ home working

- 2.1. Comic Relief supports staff in adopting a hybrid working pattern, with some days worked from home/remotely and some worked in the office. Temporary arrangements can be agreed with your manager, as can small adjustments to your working pattern, without the need for a formal flexible working application.
- 2.2. All employees who work from home whether formally or informally should complete an online workstation assessment at home and read the Information Governance Policy. When working outside of the office, it's particularly important that documents and files are kept secure. Employees are responsible for ensuring the security of Comic Relief property and all information, files, documents, data etc. within their possession, including both paper and electronic material.

3. Informal/ Temporary Flexible working

- 3.1. A formal flexible working request typically refers to permanent or longterm changes to working hours or patterns. Short-term changes to respond to unexpected or one-off incidents do not require a formal request to be submitted, and can be arranged and managed directly with your manager.
- 3.2. Staff can also work flexibly on an informal basis with the advance agreement of your line manager. Comic Relief's core hours are set from 11am until 3pm (with an hour for lunch) when everyone should normally be available, but

- start and leave times outside of these core hours and between the hours of 7am and 7pm can be agreed directly with line managers without submitting a formal request. However, employees and manager should capture this arrangement in writing and ensure that the People Team have a copy of this for file.
- 3.3. Staff must continue to take an hour's break during the lunch period – usually between 12pm and 3pm - as it is important to have a proper rest period during the day for your personal wellbeing. Specifically, we strongly discourage staff from taking a shorter break with a view to leaving earlier.
 - 3.4. Employees working with this greater flexibility are expected to continue to consider the needs of their team and wider organisation and make arrangements to cover absences, attend team lunches, staff events and business meetings etc. as required.
 - 3.5. Working flexibly in this way is a benefit and not a right and requires trust to be established between the employee and manager. If attempts to address concerns have not succeeded, Comic Relief reserves the right to require any employee to revert to fixed hours working at any point with a minimum of 2 weeks' notice if the work performance of the employee falls, or if the needs of the business or team changes.
 - 3.6. Some roles in Comic Relief may not suit this type of flexible arrangement because of the need to provide consistent service between set hours but we will endeavour in these circumstances, wherever possible, to allow some flexibility to cover one off needs for changes to start/finish times.

4. Flexible working Request and Approval Procedure

- 4.1. Any employee interested in flexible working is advised to speak informally with their line manager first to discuss their eligibility, the different options and the effect of their proposed work pattern on colleagues and service delivery, before submitting a formal request, using the flexible working request form.
- 4.2. Your application should ideally be formally submitted to your line manager at least two months before (and with 6 weeks' notice at a minimum) you would like the changes to take effect. It should:
 - (a) state that it is a flexible working request;
 - (b) explain the reasons for your request, especially if you think our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy may be relevant, for example, if



your request concerns childcare or other family commitments, religious or cultural requirements.

- (c) provide as much information as you can about your current and desired working pattern, including working days, hours and start and finish times, and give the date from which you want the changes to take effect;
- (d) identify the effect the changes to your working pattern will have on the work that you do, that of your colleagues and on service delivery. If you have any suggestions about dealing with any potentially negative effects, please include these in your written application; and
- (e) provide information to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria of continuous service in this policy including the dates of any previous formal requests for flexible working.

- 4.3. You should note that under current legislation, it can take up to 3 months for an employer to consider a request and possibly longer if an extended decision period has been agreed between you and your line manager. You should therefore ensure that you submit your application to the appropriate person well in advance of the date you wish the request to take effect. Once submitted, we will aim to get back to you within a maximum of 28 days of your request with a decision or to set up a meeting to discuss.
- 4.4. Some simple or straightforward applications will typically not require a meeting. For all others, you'll be invited to a meeting to discuss the reasons behind your application, which will be attended by you, your manager and a member of the People Team.
- 4.5. You may bring a trade union representative or a workplace colleague to the meeting as a companion if you wish. Your companion will be entitled to speak during the meeting and confer privately with you but may not answer questions on your behalf. The accompanying person has the statutory right to:
 - Address the meeting to put forward your case or to sum up that case, and
 - Respond on your behalf to any view expressed at the meeting
- 4.6. It is your responsibility to inform HR of the name and email address of your companion, to ensure that HR can include them into relevant communications and supply all relevant information and documentation.
- 4.7. The meeting will be used to discuss the working arrangements you have. You will be able to explain how the arrangements will accommodate your needs. You will also be able to discuss what impact your proposed working arrangements will have on your work and that of your colleagues. If we are

concerned about our ability to accommodate the arrangements you have requested, discussion at the meeting also provides an opportunity to explore possible alternative working arrangements. If your line manager needs more time to make a decision, for example, where they need more time to investigate or consult with others on how your request can be accommodated, they will discuss this with you.

- 4.8. Following this meeting, you'll receive confirmation in writing as soon as possible (but generally within 10 working days of the meeting) whether your application has been accepted or denied, and an explanation as to why this is so.

5. Successful Applications

- 5.1. If approved, you will receive a contract amendment letter from the People Team confirming the change.
- 5.2. New working arrangements will usually be subject to an initial trial period of 3 months to ensure that they meet your needs and those of your team or not. During this period, your line manager will review your performance and have regular catch-ups with you with feedback. You and your line manager must set out grounds on which the trial will be assessed as to its success or otherwise. Terms and conditions will not formally change until the end of the trial period. If for some of the agreed grounds, you or your line manager feel that the arrangement is not working, you can revert back to your original hours at the end of the trial period, which will be confirmed to you in writing.
- 5.3. Unless otherwise agreed (and subject to the trial period) changes to your terms of employment will be permanent. You will not be able to make another formal request until 12 months after the date of your most recent request.

The flexible working arrangements will be subject to a regular review every 12 months. This means that your line manager will review the flexible working arrangement regularly to ensure that it still meets the needs of the organisation.

6. Unsuccessful Applications and Appeals

- 6.1. We will always try to accommodate your request, but there are times when certain flexible working requests are not feasible for us as an organisation to meet. Comic Relief reserves the rights to reject the request



for the below reasons:

- planned structural changes
- the burden of additional costs
- quality or standards will suffer
- they won't be able to recruit additional staff
- performance will suffer
- won't be able to reorganise work among existing staff
- will struggle to meet customer demand
- lack of work during the periods you propose to work

- 6.2. If your request has been turned down, you can appeal the decision made within 10 working days. The appeal must:
 - (a) be in writing and dated;
 - (b) set out the grounds on which you are appealing; and
 - (c) be sent to the named person in the People team stated in the decision letter within 14 calendar days of the date on which you received the written rejection of your request.
- 6.3. You will be invited to an appeal hearing, and you may be accompanied by a Trade union representative or a workplace colleague. Where possible, the appeal meeting will be conducted by a more senior manager who has not been previously involved in considering your request. You will be informed in writing of the decision within 5 working days of the appeal hearing.
- 6.4. If your appeal is upheld, you will be advised of your new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to your contract of employment and the date on which they will commence. You will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter. This will be placed on your personnel file to confirm the variation to your terms of employment. You should be aware that unless explicitly stated, changes to your terms of employment will be permanent and you will not be able to make another formal request until 12 months after the date of your original application.
- 6.5. If your appeal is rejected, the written decision will give the business reason(s) for the decision and explain why the reason(s) apply in your case. You will not be able to make another formal request until 12 months after the date of your original application.
- 6.6. The decision made at the appeal hearing is final and is not subject to any further levels of internal appeal.



- 6.7. If you withdraw a formal request for flexible working, you will not be eligible to make another formal request for 12 months from the date of your original request. In certain circumstances, a formal request will be treated as withdrawn. This will occur if you fail to attend a meeting and a re-arranged meeting, or an appeal meeting and a re-arranged appeal meeting, without good cause. In such circumstances, the People team will write to you confirming that the request has been treated as withdrawn.