

Comic Relief

Flexible Working Policy

Scope of this Policy

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 sometimes 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.

All employees who have worked for Comic Relief for 26 continuous 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.

1. What is Flexible Working?

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 you and your life both inside and outside the organisation.

This Flexible Working Policy gives all employees an opportunity to request a change to their working pattern. Those employees who have worked with us for more than 26 continuous weeks can make a request in accordance with the statutory procedure for such requests. Wherever possible we will try to facilitate requests unless they cannot be accommodated for business or operational reasons.

We all have core hours stated in our contract of employment, but there are times when those times do not work as well for us or 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.



This policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2. What kinds of flexible working can I apply for?

There are several options that you can apply for with flexible working at Comic Relief depending on what suits your individual circumstances the best. Some possibilities that we might consider include:

- Part time working, working shorter hours each day or fewer days in the week
- Job share, where two people share the same job working opposite days and times to each other
- Adjustment to contracted hours, permanently changing the start and finish times of when you are in the office
- Compressed hours, where your weekly working hours are perhaps done in 4 days rather than 5 or over a 9-day fortnight
- Term time working, where you take your holidays in line with school holidays and/or reduce hours to match a school year
- 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
- Working from home, where you work some or all of your week from home rather than in the office. Please note that we will not consider any requests to work outside of the UK as a temporary or permanent base location

Remote working/home working

Comic Relief has a duty of care to all employees regardless of where you are based. Most of the work employees would undertake out of the office is paper based or work on a computer, and as such should not introduce health and safety risks not already present in the home environment. All employees who work from home whether formally or informally should complete an online work station assessment at home and read the **Acceptable I.T.Use Policy**, **Information Security Policy** and the **Data protection, Retention, Sharing and Disposal Policy**. Employees are responsible for addressing any recommendations highlighted in the work station assessment completed at home. Managers are responsible for ensuring the online workstation assessment is completed before employees commence home working.

When working out of the office its 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.

As Comic Relief remains the work base for employees and a desk and equipment is provided in the office, we will not normally provide any additional IT equipment, phone, broadband connection or furniture to work from home. You must also ensure that your home workstation meets the guidelines set out in the DSE documentation. You are also responsible for ensuring that you have suitable telephone and broadband services where required, and for contacting the service provider in the event of any technical issues. It is not possible for Comic Relief to provide IT support for equipment owned by employees.



If you require more information on what options would work best for your role and your team, please have an initial conversation with your line manager.

Informal/Temporary Flexible working

Rather than requesting a formal permanent change to your employment contract for flexible working, you might just need some temporary flexibility to cope with an unexpected or one-off incident lasting a day or two to a couple of weeks. In these circumstances, you can speak with your manager to see what informal, non-contractual local arrangements can be put in place to help you change how and when you are in the office.

3. Can I work flexibly without changing my contract?

Yes, you can work flexibly on an informal basis but always with the advance agreement of your line manager. There is an expectation that the office will be open as a minimum between the hours of 9.30am to 5.30pm with core hours set from 11am until 3pm when everyone is expected to be present. If your manager is agreeable, then you can start and leave flexibly after working your professional day between the hours of 7am and 7pm without submitting a formal request.

Lunch breaks will be taken between 12pm and 3pm. You must continue to take an hour's break during the lunch period, as it is important to have a proper rest period during the day for your personal wellbeing. Specifically, you must not take a shorter break with a view to being able to leave earlier.

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.

Working flexibly in this way is a benefit and not a right and requires trust to be established between the employee and manager. Comic Relief reserves the right to require any employee to revert to fixed hours working at any point without notice if the work performance of the employee falls, if the employee is subject to any informal or formal process, such as disciplinary/capability/health matters etc. or if the needs of the business or team changes.

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. How do I submit an informal/temporary request?

If you are requesting an informal temporary change lasting a few days or weeks, then you should just speak with your line manager. You might find it helpful to set out your request in writing so that your manager can review this with you so that everyone is comfortable with the changes and understands the implications of what you are proposing. Your manager will agree what targets or outputs you need to achieve during this period.



Permanent Flexible working

5. Can I apply for Flexible working so that my working pattern changes formally?

Comic Relief recognises that being able to work flexibly can have positive impacts on your wellbeing and productivity, so we extend the opportunity to all employees to ask to work flexibly unless problems have been identified with your performance or conduct.

All employees who have worked for Comic Relief for 26 continuous weeks at the date of the flexible working request application have a statutory right to request flexible working.

However, regardless of your length of service you can only make one application for flexible working in a 12-month period. In exceptional circumstances we may allow multiple requests, but we are under no obligation to consider or approve them.

Please remember, a formal flexible working request is not a request for an ad hoc change on a temporary basis as set out above but is a permanent change to the terms and conditions of your employment contract, so please consider carefully the implications of what you're requesting as we cannot guarantee to revert back to your old terms and hours if you find that they don't suit you or your circumstances change again although we will try to accommodate where ever possible and practical.

6. How do I submit a flexible working request?

Any employee interested in flexible working is advised to speak informally with their line manager to discuss their eligibility, the different options and the effect of their proposed work pattern on colleagues and service delivery, before submitting a formal or informal request.

If you are requesting a long-term change to your working pattern you will need to submit a written application using the flexible working request form if you would like your flexible working request to be considered under the formal procedure and if you are requesting a permanent change to your working arrangements.

Your application should be submitted to your line manager in good time and at least two months before 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 Equal Opportunities Policy may be relevant, for example, if your request concerns childcare or other family commitments, religious or cultural requirements, or adjustments because of a disability;
- (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.

Once you have completed the form, you'll need to email this to your line manager stating your intention to request flexible working. We'd advise you to speak to your line manager about it in person before emailing them the form ensure that both parties understand what is being proposed and that there are no surprises.

7. What happens after I have submitted my flexible working request?

Once you submit your application to you line manager, they will acknowledge your request and they will probably want to meet with a member of the People team to discuss the request before responding further. 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. It usually doesn't take this long, but this is usually the maximum amount of time it should take. If you have not heard anything from you line manager about it by 3 weeks following your application, do speak to your line manager about it again.

For some simple or straightforward applications, we may be able to approve your request without a formal meeting, although it will usually be helpful to your manager to discuss the request with you regardless to ensure it is the best solution. Otherwise, once your line manager has spoken to the People team about your request, you'll be invited to a meeting to discuss the reasons behind your application. Following this meeting, you'll receive confirmation in writing as soon as possible (but generally within 14 days of the meeting) whether your application has been accepted or denied, and an explanation as to why this is so.

8. What happens at the formal meeting?

Where it is necessary, your line manager will arrange a meeting with you after your application has been submitted. The meeting may also be attended by a member of the People team. You may bring a Comic Relief 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.

In most cases, the meeting will be held at our offices. We will try to ensure that the meeting is held at a time and place that is convenient to everyone.

The meeting will be used to discuss the working arrangements you have requested. 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 cannot accommodate the arrangements you have requested, discussion at the meeting also provides an opportunity to explore possible alternative working arrangements.

Your line manager may suggest starting new working arrangements under an initial trial period to ensure that they meet your needs and those of your team or department.



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.

9. Is the flexible working arrangement a permanent change?

Yes, it is. However, we understand that as it is a significant change you might want to test the waters before jumping right into it. So, there will usually be a 3-month trial period of the flexible working arrangement. During this period, your line manager will review your performance and have regular catch-ups with you with feedback.

If for some valid business reason, 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.

10. What happens if my application is approved?

Once your application has been approved or where we propose an alternative to the arrangements you requested, the People team will write to you with details of the 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.

Unless otherwise agreed (and subject to any 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 request will be subject to a regular review. This means that your line manager will review the flexible working arrangement regularly to ensure that it still meets the needs of the organisation, and we reserve the right to revert to your original hours or working arrangements if there is a reasonable business need to do so, following consultation with you.

11. My application has been denied. What do I do?

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. Business needs will be taken into consideration when making decisions and a full explanation will be provided to you.

In these circumstances, your line manager will write to you:

- (a) explaining the business reason(s) for turning down your application; and
- (b) setting out the appeal procedure.



12. How do I appeal a decision to turn down my request?

If your request has been turned down, you can appeal the decision made. 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 days of the date on which you received the written rejection of your request.

The People team will arrange for a meeting to take place following receipt of your appeal. We will try to hold the meeting at a convenient time for all those attending. You may be accompanied by a Comic Relief colleague of your choice.

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 as soon as possible after the appeal meeting.

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 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.

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.

The decision made at the appeal hearing is final and is not subject to any further levels of appeal.

13. Can the timescales under the formal procedure be extended or an application withdrawn?

There may be exceptional occasions when it is not possible to complete consideration of your request within the expected time scales. Where an extension of time is agreed with you, your line manager will write to you confirming the extension and the date on which it will end.

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.



If you have any other questions, queries or concerns, please feel free to come speak to a member of the People team.

Owners & Version

Owner of this policy: Sue Allis, Head of People & Culture

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