

UNISON Rejects proposals to remove flexi time policy

UNISON has rejected the proposals by HR to remove the current flexi time policy which ended the ability to build up hours and take a flexi day off. It is clear from our members feeling in our survey that this move is unacceptable and needs to be opposed.

Highlights are summarised below but with 81% wanting the policy to remain, 91% use the flexibility to complete task or projects, 81% feel it was an insult to propose this during the pandemic and 77% need the flexibility to do their job properly.

The survey generated 1249 responses, around 60% are within the current scheme.

70% of the respondents were women and spread across Communities & Families, Place and Resources with a smaller number from within Health & Social Care.

Main points

1. Flexible start & finish

90% thought this was important or very important. Although this was to be set by managers it is clear the policy needs to protect this part of the scheme.

The main reasons are:

54% avoid rush hour
51% personal appointment
52% early/late riser,
40 % match public transport

2. Being able to take Flexi days off

76% thought this was important or very important (only 5% thought it was not important).

The main reasons were:

Family Commitments 54% (only 7% never used it for family commitments
Additional day off 48% ,
Wellbeing /mental health 46% (only 12% never used it for wellbeing)
Medical/dental 41% (only 5% never used it for medical/dental)

Taking time off I have worked extra 32%
Care commitments 26%
Leisure 26%
Learning 7%

3. How many days do people take off a year

Between 0 - 4 days a year 30%
Between 4 – 12 days 48%
Between 12.5 - 19 days 20%.

4. Benefits of flexi system as it is to the council and staff wellbeing

- 77% use it to work longer to accommodate work demands and get that time back later (only 3% disagree with this)
- Almost 60% use it sometimes to always to shorten the day when they are not feeling well.
- 91% agree/strongly agree that it allows them to work longer to complete tasks or projects
- Over 80% says it allows flexibility with clients/service users , meet deadlines, service operating hours. (Only 3% to 5% think it does none of these things)
- 55% said it was the only way I can manage my workload.

5. Family/childcare commitments

Of those that have these commitments

Pick up / drop off 48%
 Family medical appointments 36%
 20% School appointments
 19 % In service days
 11% Friday afternoon school

6. Care commitments

For those who have care commitments the main reasons were:

Taking to medical appointments 21%
 Household chores 17%
 Organise medication 15%
 Shopping 14%
 Personal care 13%

7. Was this the right time to stop flexi and remove current policy

- 81% feel this was an insult to propose removing the flexitime scheme during the Covid19 crisis
- The same amount felt it should have waited till staff return and discussed with colleagues and unions

8. Should we keep a policy

88% believe that a policy should be maintained as without it the system will be unclear
 87% agree that any changes by their manager should be discussed with union first
 87% worried that future manager may impose restrictions.
 Less than 5% disagree with any of the above.

UNISON'S position

1. A Policy is required to ensure clarity, fairness and rights. The current policy should remain and any proposals for amendments be discussed in the current meetings. If widespread changes are still proposed then it should be put on hold until the majority of staff have returned.
2. The ability to take Flexi days off has to be retained.
80% of staff take a limited amount of time off a year, mainly for family or care commitments, wellbeing and medical reasons.
3. Flexible start and finish should be protected in the policy.
4. Accruing time – With most staff saying they need it to do their job this has to be retained.
5. Reintroduce flexi time working without delay as staff have shown they must be working over current hours to keep things going.
6. Staff who are not on the flexi system don't want this removed, they want increased flexibility in their post. This will need to be discussed within a reasonable timescale.
7. TOIL seems to be a major part of many of our members working life, so this needs to be well covered in a future policy.

Conclusion

It is clear that an agreed policy is not only beneficial to the staff but also the Council. The staff use the flexible start/finish, and Flexi days off for a wide variety of uses, many that come under the category of wellbeing. Being able to juggle family and care commitments and time off for mental health and wellbeing is testimony to a really good Policy.

What was surprising was the 77% of staff who must work longer on a regular basis to keep services running. This is a major benefit to the Council and eases the individuals stress knowing that time can be taken back to help juggle modern living.

Removing this policy in its current form would be a major mistake for the Council and a step back in staff wellbeing and equalities at a time when all our futures are uncertain.