### Getting the Balance Right

**Employee Guide**

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1 Introduction

As stated in our Equality and Diversity Strategy, Fife Council will endeavour to promote policies which support all employees to integrate work, family and personal responsibilities.

Fife Council recognises that employees need flexible options to allow them to balance their working lives with their personal lives. We also recognise that there may be the need for employees to take a break from work to deal with personal commitments.

With this in mind we have developed a variety of flexible working arrangements, flexible leave schemes and childcare provisions which will contribute to the balance of work and life. The needs of the Council in relation to the provision of all services have to be met and any requests for the following arrangements will be considered taking into account service delivery needs.

Flexible working arrangements do not necessarily mean working less hours, but are more about looking at alternative working patterns which will allow employees to meet personal commitments, while at the same time, ensuring that service provision is maintained.

2 Flexible working arrangements

Who would be eligible for these provisions?

All employees who have at least 26 weeks continuous service with Fife Council can apply to work flexibly for any reason. Please refer to FW10 Statutory Flexible Working Requests for more information. You must complete FW50 Statutory Flexible Working Request Form to apply for any type of flexible working.

3 What are the options for flexible working?

Part Time Working
This means working less than full time hours. These hours can be worked on a part day or part week basis.

Case Study
Jenny is a busy working mum in Environmental Services who, although happy with her job, is finding it hard to keep up with the pressures of work and home-life. Jenny’s husband works shift work and so managing the collection of two children from school is a difficult challenge each week. However with the right to work flexibly open to all employees, Jenny has applied for and been accepted to work part time hours. She has now changed her hours and works 9.30am to 2.45pm, five days a week, enabling her to drop off and pick up the children from school regardless of her husband’s shifts. Her team has the capacity to cope with the reduced hours and so there is no detrimental effect to her colleagues or the needs of the organisation. Everyone is happy!
Job Sharing
This means that two people voluntarily share a full time post. All employees can apply for job share. In practice many jobs will be suitable for job sharing unless it could be shown to have an adverse effect on the service provided. See JS11 Job Sharing Guidelines and JS50 Job Sharing Request Form.

Voluntary Reduced Work Time
This means reducing weekly hours for an agreed period of time up to a maximum of 2 years. At the end of the agreed period, employees must return to their normal hours. The employee will be paid pro-rata for the hours that they work. All employees can apply to voluntarily reduce their work time.

Compressed Working Hours
This allows employees to apply to work their total number of contracted hours over fewer days. For example, working full-time hours over four days a week instead of five or working a nine day fortnight. All full time employees can apply for this option. See FW20 Compressed Working Week Quick Reference Guide.

Case Study
Alison works in Corporate Services and normally has a standard 36 hour week, spread over five days. She managed to build up lots of flexi hours each month as she comes in to work early and generally stays until 5pm. Her daughter is about to return to work after maternity leave and Alison would like to look after her grandson one day each week. She applied for compressed working hours and was accepted. Alison now works her 36 hours over four days instead of five and has every Tuesday off work to look after her grandson. The team can accommodate her hours (8am to 5.30pm) and she doesn’t lose out financially in any way.

Term Time Working
This means working during school term times. Employees on this pattern will be paid pro-rata for the time worked. This is more suited to employees working in education establishments, however, all employees can apply to work in this way. Salary payments can be averaged out over a 12 month period.

Flexi-Hours
This provides employees with a degree of flexibility in arranging their working hours, on occasion, to vary arrival and departure times or to leave work for a period of time during the working day to deal with personal circumstances with prior agreement from their manager. See WH11 Flexi Hours Rules and Guidelines.

Home Working
Home working gives employees the opportunity to work part of their contractual hours from home. This option is more suited to jobs which have a high degree of written work or where there is limited face to face contact with customers. There are, however, exclusions to the scheme and these include school based and front line employees. See FW12 Home Working Guidelines.
Case Study

John works 36 hours a week and has family responsibilities that are stretching him in terms of leave. With three young sons at school he has no childcare support for Friday afternoons and in the past found himself slowly depleting his supply of annual leave. Now though John has agreed with his manager to work from home every Friday. This works well as he can set his own hours, have the flexibility to do his work when it suits him but at the same time carry out his caring responsibilities.

Mobile Working

Mobile working is when an employee carries out their working duties ‘remotely’ without necessarily having a desk or base to work from. Such employees would carry out their role remotely with the aid, if required, of specially developed IT technology.

4 Flexible leave options

There are various leave options available to all employees which can be found in the Holidays and Leave section of HR Direct on FISH. A summary of these options are noted below.

Time off for dependants

Employees are legally entitled to take a reasonable period of unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. This leave is only intended to cover unforeseen matters. The period of time off should be long enough to allow the employee to cope with the crisis or to make alternative or longer term care arrangements. Normally, this will be one or two days but this will depend on the individual circumstances. Different conditions apply to teachers. See LV17 Discretionary Leave Guidelines and LV53 Discretionary and Parental Leave Request Form.

Special Leave

Special leave is a request for time off work, either paid or unpaid. Special leave applies when requests cannot be covered through normal annual leave or other types of leave granted by Fife Council. Requests for special leave will normally cover exceptional events and the amount of leave granted is at the discretion of the Line Manager and, depending on the circumstances of the request and the operational requirements, up to 12 months unpaid leave may be granted. See LV17 Discretionary Leave Guidelines and LV53 Discretionary and Parental Leave Request Form.

Case study

Ian works in Corporate Procurement and has been an employee of Fife Council for 15 years. Unfortunately his son was rushed into hospital with appendicitis and while he will fully recover, he will be off school for up to four weeks. It’s the end of the leave year though and Ian has only got four days annual leave left. Ian’s manager suggested that he fill in the Parental & Discretionary Leave Request Form to request four weeks unpaid Special Leave. This was granted and enabled Ian to look after his son until he was fully recovered and fit for school again.
Emergency Leave
Single Status employees have the right to take emergency leave on two occasions annually. Normal booking arrangements need not be followed. Up to a full day's leave may be taken on each occasion. Emergency leave is taken from normal annual leave entitlement or flexi-hours credit. See LV17 Discretionary Leave Guidelines.

Career Break
Career breaks are available to employees wishing to take a break from work for any of the reasons detailed in the Career Break Policy. Any employee, covered by the policy, with 3 years continuous service prior to the intended date of commencement of the break, can apply for a career break. When a break is to be for over two years employees are required to resign from their job, returning to a suitable alternative job. However, where a break is for two years or less there is no requirement to resign and the employee will return to their own job at the end of the break. See CB11 Career Break Guidelines and CB50 Career Break Application Form.

Parental Leave
Employees with children up to the age of 18 years are entitled to unpaid leave to care for their child providing they have 1 year’s continuous service. 18 weeks unpaid parental leave is available for each child with a maximum of 4 weeks to be taken in any leave year. See LV18 Parental Leave Procedure and LV52 Parental Leave Record Form.

5 Maternity and adoption leave

Adoption Leave
Adoption leave is available to all employees. Employees are entitled to a maximum of 52 weeks leave, consisting of paid and unpaid leave. To qualify for adoption pay you should have a minimum of 26 weeks continuous service at the week in which you are notified that you have been matched for adoption. For couples working with the Council, only one person will be entitled to the adoption leave, the partner may be entitled to other options such as Adoption Support or Paternity Leave. See MA12 Adoption Leave Procedure and MA57 Adoption Leave Request Form.

Maternity Leave
If you are pregnant, you will be entitled to maternity leave. Employees will have an entitlement of up to 52 weeks leave consisting of paid and unpaid leave, depending on their length of service. See MA11 Maternity Leave Procedure.

Maternity & Adoption Support Leave
This is available to any employee who will support the mother or primary adopter and assist with the care of the child at the time of the birth or adoption. Under this provision, employees are entitled to one week’s leave (part-time and job-share employees are entitled to this on a proportionate basis). See MA16 Maternity and Adoption Support Leave Procedure and MA59 Maternity and Adoption Support Leave Request Form.
Statutory Paternity Leave
This is intended for an employee who is the partner of someone who is giving birth or adopting a child (providing they satisfy the various eligibility criteria and have responsibility for the upbringing of the child). Ordinary paternity leave is for one or two weeks and must be taken within eight weeks of the birth or adoption of the child. See MA13 Paternity Leave Procedure and MA69 Paternity Leave Request Form.

Shared Parental Leave
Shared Parental Leave is a type of leave that is available to parents of babies due on or after 5th April 2015. It enables mothers to commit to ending their maternity leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner. Alternatively the mother can return to work early from maternity leave and opt in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date. Shared Parental Leave also applies to adoptive parents and intended parents in a surrogacy situation. For more information see MA14 Shared Parental Leave Procedure or MA15 Shared Parental Leave Procedure – Adoptive Parents.

6 Employee benefits
Childcare Vouchers Scheme
Childcare vouchers are a scheme run by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). They are a Government-approved, tax-efficient way of paying for childcare. For more information please refer to the Employee Benefits page on FISH or call HR Direct on VOIP 2000 or 01592 583200 for advice.

Health and Leisure Benefits
Through Employee Benefits you can get access to high quality healthcare products to help you cover the cost of dentists, opticians and other everyday treatments such as physiotherapy for as little as £1.50 a week.

Save up to 50% off the cost of physical activities at your local Community Use School. To receive your discount simply complete the on-line leisure discount application form on FISH. Save on membership at your local Sports & Leisure Trust leisure centre or swimming pool. Join Leisure Active and get unlimited access to the facilities of your choice for an annual or monthly fee with a 20% discount. See FISH for an application form and for any more details on Leisure Active go to www.fifeleisure.org.uk (external link).

Counselling Service
Emotional or personal problems can often get in the way of an employee’s ability to concentrate on work or even attend work. With this in mind, Fife Council employees have access to a confidential counselling service, TimeforTalking.

General information is available on their website www.timefortalking.co.uk for:

- Personal or emotional difficulties
- Relationship or family concerns
- Stress
- Harassment or Bullying
- Bereavement
- Addiction
- Debt or legal problems

If you have read the information and feel you would benefit from further advice and support through structured counselling sessions, this can be arranged through your line manager.

For more information please refer to the HR Direct page on FISH or call HR Direct on VOIP 2000 or 01592 583200 for advice.

7 More information

Detailed information on all these work-life balance opportunities can be found in the HR Direct section of FISH or by contacting HR Direct on VOIP 2000 or emailing hr.direct@fife.gov.uk