Flexible Working Policy

Policy Created: June 2023

Last Reviewed: March 2026

Next Review: March 2027 (or sooner if significant changes in legislation, guidance, or organisational activities occur)

Reviewed by: Laurence Clark

Responsible Officer: CEO

Approved by: CEO

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1. Introduction and Commitment

Pathways Associates CIC is a disabled-led Community Interest Company dedicated to enabling people with learning disabilities, autistic people, and their families to live the lives they choose as equals in their local communities. The organisation is committed to flexible working as a core part of our inclusive culture, supporting work-life balance, wellbeing, productivity, and retention while accommodating diverse needs.

Flexible working includes arrangements such as hybrid/remote working, part-time hours, compressed weeks, job-sharing, flexitime, or adjusted start/finish times. Our mostly remote and event-based model naturally lends itself to flexibility, and we extend this to employees, associates, and Experts by Experience where possible. As of March 2026, this policy aligns with the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended), the Flexible Working Regulations 2014 (updated 2024 to allow day-one requests and faster responses), ACAS Code of Practice on handling flexible working requests (revised 2024), and EHRC guidance on reasonable adjustments. It emphasises positive responses, consultation, and non-discrimination. This policy supports our Home Working Policy (remote safety), Equality and Diversity Policy (adjustments for protected characteristics), Health and Safety Policy (risk assessments), Mental Capacity Act Policy (decision support), and Corporate Responsibility Policy (ethical management).

It reflects our values of being led by lived experience (co-producing flexible options with Experts by Experience), partnership (collaborating with staff on arrangements), inclusion and respect (equitable access without stigma), innovation (creative hybrid solutions), and integrity (transparent processes). We commit to considering all requests fairly, promoting flexibility from day one, and reviewing arrangements to ensure they benefit individuals and the organisation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all requests for flexible working, including changes to hours, patterns, or location. It covers employees (eligible from day one per 2024 regulations), associates, contractors, and Experts by Experience in paid roles. It addresses statutory requests (up to two per year) and informal arrangements. It does not cover short-term adjustments (discuss with manager) or external partners' policies.

3. Key Objectives

The organisation aims to enable flexible working that enhances wellbeing, inclusion, and performance while meeting operational needs. It seeks to handle requests promptly and fairly (within two months), provide reasonable adjustments for disabled staff or carers, comply with employment laws and ACAS codes, foster an equitable culture free from discrimination, and learn from requests to improve practices.

4. Core Principles

Flexibility is encouraged where roles allow, with a presumption of approval unless strong business reasons apply (e.g., impact on service delivery). Inclusivity ensures adjustments for protected characteristics (e.g., disability, caring responsibilities). Transparency involves clear communication and written reasons for refusals. Consultation is collaborative, exploring alternatives. Work-life balance is promoted, with no disadvantage for flexible workers. Proportionality tailors to our small CIC's needs.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Board oversees policy and receives annual reports on requests/outcomes. The CEO holds accountability for compliance and culture. Line managers handle requests, consult, and monitor arrangements. The HR Lead (integrated role) advises on law, adjustments, and appeals. Employees/associates submit clear requests and engage in discussions. All promote a flexible, supportive environment.

6. Procedures

6.1 Making a Request Eligible from day one for employees. Submit in writing to your manager (or CEO if manager), including proposed changes, start date, impact, and benefits. Up to two statutory requests per 12 months. Informal requests can be discussed anytime.

6.2 Handling Requests Acknowledge within 5 working days. Meet to discuss within 14 days (consult on alternatives). Decide within 2 months (or agreed extension). Approve if feasible; refuse only for statutory business reasons (e.g., cost, quality impact) with written explanation. Trial periods (3–6 months) may be offered.

6.3 Appeals Appeal in writing within 14 days to CEO/Board. Meeting held within 14 days; decision within 2 months. Independent mediation if needed.

6.4 Monitoring and Adjustments Arrangements reviewed after 3 months and annually. Changes can be requested if circumstances alter. Health & safety assessments for home working (links to Home Working Policy).

6.5 Refusals and Grievances Refusals explained fully with alternatives explored. Raise grievances per Grievance Policy if dissatisfied. Tribunal claims possible within 3 months, but internal resolution preferred.

7. Training, Awareness, and Support

Annual flexible working training covers law, bias, and adjustments (accessible). Induction briefs new joiners. Awareness via resources and meetings. Support includes wellbeing checks and EAP.

8. Monitoring, Review, and Continuous Improvement

Policy reviewed annually or on changes (e.g., Employment Rights Bill). Monitoring via request logs and feedback. Learning co-produced with Experts by Experience. Feedback welcomed; annual summaries in CIC report.

9. Conclusion

Pathways Associates CIC is dedicated to flexible working that empowers our team and advances inclusion. By handling requests fairly and supportively, we honour our disabled-led values and enable better outcomes for all.