

# POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## Flexible Working

**Category:** staff



SoLO  
Life  
Opportunities

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England Company No.  
5025939

## Introduction

SoLO Life Opportunities recognises that the nature of the work providing leisure opportunities and associated activities for people with learning disabilities requires staff who can take a flexible approach to their work. SoLO wishes to ensure that this flexibility is not to the detriment of its staff and this policy outlines the various ways in which staff can benefit from flexible working conditions, whilst still meeting the business needs. This policy forms part of SoLO's holistic approach to ensure that staff well being is supported.

## Policy Statement

Flexible working is not an expectation but is an approach that enables SoLO to provide the best services to its members and also provides staff with caring responsibilities and other commitments the opportunity to manage their work/life balance. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and SoLO may amend it at any time.

## Time Off in Lieu

SoLO Life Opportunities operates a 'Time Off In Lieu system' for core staff (Those salaried and not paid through the SoLO timesheet process) who require flexible working conditions to enable them to effectively carry out their duties. These staff are, generally, those who (by the nature of their work) are required to operate outside of their normal working hours (9.00 am – 5.00 pm)

Exceptional circumstances may arise when overtime can occasionally be paid. However, this is only with prior agreement from the line manager and will depend, entirely, on additional funding being made available.

Flexible working conditions should work both ways to the advantage of both the organisation and the worker. This balance is very difficult to manage and

it is important that SoLO is not the only party to benefit from these arrangements.

This policy is designed to ensure that staff do not work more hours than they are contracted over a sustained period and to assist in the management of their workload, as well as meet the demands of the business for working during unsociable periods (i.e. after 5.00 pm and weekend working).

The following guidelines should be used in managing the ‘Time Off In Lieu system’

- Timesheets must be kept and discussed regularly with the Line Manager, before extra hours become excessive and difficult to take off.
- Wherever possible, hours accrued through the ‘Time Off In Lieu system’ should be used up within four weeks of being accrued. It is recognised, however, that the demands of the job may occasionally make this difficult. Any time off in lieu that you wish to carry forward for more than four weeks **must** be agreed with your Line Manager. This is to ensure the time accrued does not reach an unmanageable level for either the worker or the organisation.

Time Off In Lieu must be clearly identified from time taken off as holiday (holiday to be booked using the holiday booking system with your Line Manager).

Managers must ask to see staff’s timesheets on a regular basis to ensure that they are not working excessive hours and that they are able to maintain a work/life balance.

### **Banked Hours**

Banked hours differ from Time Off In Lieu, as they are when a worker wishes to work extra hours at specific times to enable them to take time off to alleviate issues such as caring responsibilities

Where there are exceptional circumstances, banked hours will be agreed as a short term response to specific issues. This **must** be agreed beforehand with the Line Manager. In all cases work commitments and home life requirements will be taken into consideration.

### **Flexible Hours**

Although SoLO operates a discretionary Flexible Working Hours system there is a clear business need for the office to be staffed between the hours of 8 am – 5 pm. All office based staff, excluding the CEO, will be expected to contribute to cover at the start or the end of the day on a rota basis, this

includes two staff present every evening to lock up. There is an expectation that at least one of those staff will be from the support team (administration).

Due to the nature of the work, some staff will need to start later or finish earlier than their normal working day. An example of this could be if a staff member is required to attend an evening meeting, they can start work at lunchtime and finish after the meeting. Equally, they may have occasional caring responsibilities, for instance if their childcare arrangements break down. This is acceptable if it is agreed with the Line Manager and it does not adversely affect the carrying out of the SoLO activities. They must, however, keep in mind the requirements of the Lone Working Policy and, where at all possible, ensure that they are not working alone on the office premises.

A Line Manager's agreement to allow flexibility over working hours will only be temporary or for a short duration; any agreement should not be implied as being a permanent, contractual change to usual working hours.

### **REQUESTS FOR CHANGE IN CONTRACT - SoLO**

SoLO may need to change the terms and conditions of employment when business need dictates. This may be due to:

- changed economic circumstances
- a reorganisation of the business.

Possible areas of change could include pay rates, hours or days worked, duties, supervisory relationships or place of work.

Where this is the case, SoLO will consult fully with the affected employees to explain and discuss the reason for the changes. Any variation to the employment contract will be agreed and confirmed in writing as part of the terms and conditions within a month of the change taking effect.

### **REQUESTS FOR CHANGE IN CONTRACT - Employee**

An employee may seek to vary their terms and conditions of employment to bring about changes in pay or working conditions, for instance by requesting additional holidays, or to change the conditions so that they suit him or her better, e.g. by requesting a change from full-time to part-time working because of domestic responsibilities.

Employees who wish to make an informal request for flexible working may make a request to their Line Manager who will consider it according to SoLO's business and operational requirements.

Informal requests will normally be in relation to a short term situation that requires a quick response and would not normally be expected to exceed a three month period.

It will help your line manager to consider your request if you:

1. make your request in writing and confirm whether you wish any change to your current working pattern to be temporary or permanent;
2. 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 your desired working pattern to start;
3. think about what effect the changes to your working pattern will have on the work that you do and on your colleagues, as well as on SoLO's service delivery and that of your team. If you have any suggestions about dealing with any potentially negative effects, please include these in your written application. Your Line Manager can consider whether they are workable; and
4. give details of the demands of your caring responsibilities, if you have any.

Your Line Manager will advise you what steps will be taken to consider your request, which may include inviting you to attend a meeting, before advising you of the outcome of your request. Decisions regarding informal requests can be made by the Line Manager and will be reviewed after three months if the situation continues.

Formal requests for changes in contract which will be more than three months or a permanent situation must be made in accordance with the procedure set out in Schedule 1 to this policy.

### **Working from Home**

It is recognised that from time to time it may be preferable to complete pieces of work at home in a quiet environment away from office distractions.

Examples may include such things as evaluation reports, funding applications and training/presentations preparation. With prior agreement from line management these hours can be claimed as normal hours and recorded on the individual's timesheet. It is anticipated that this will not be a frequent occurrence, and if a member of staff feels obliged to complete work at home they should discuss their workload with their line manager.

Very occasionally an employee may be asked to work from home if there is a lack of physical capacity (ie shortage of workstations) in the office.

Alternative arrangements must also be considered, ie. Working in a manager's office or working from the Fire Station.

## **Working Time Regulations**

The normal working week for full time staff members is 37.5 hours (in exceptional circumstances this can extend to 40 hours). SoLO is required to ensure that no staff member works longer than 48 hours per week over a period of 17 weeks, as this could be detrimental to their health and well-being. Staff have a responsibility to manage their workload to ensure that they do not exceed the full time hours and Line Managers are responsible for monitoring staff's workload.

If at any point, staff feel that their workload will be difficult to manage within the agreed hours, they need to discuss this with their Line Manager, at the earliest point, to enable work to be reprioritised or re-assigned, as appropriate.

Linked with: policies

- Stress Management
- Health and Safety and related policies

## SCHEDULE 1

### EMPLOYEE FORMAL REQUESTS FOR CHANGE IN CONTRACT

#### About this policy

This flexible working policy gives eligible employees an opportunity to request a change to their working pattern.

#### Eligibility

To be eligible to make a flexible working request, you must:

- be an employee of SoLO,
- have successfully completed your probation period,
- not have made a flexible working request during the last 12 months (even if you withdrew that request).

#### What is a flexible working request?

A flexible working request under this policy means a request to do any or all of the following:

- to reduce or vary your working hours;
- to reduce or vary the days you work;
- to work from a different location (for example, from home).

#### Making a flexible working request

Your flexible working request should be submitted to the CEO in writing and dated. It should:

- state that it is a flexible working request;
- explain the change being requested and propose a start date;
- identify the impact the change would have on the business and how that might be dealt with; and
- state whether you have made any previous flexible working requests.

#### Meeting

We will arrange a meeting at a convenient time and place within 28 days of your request being submitted. You may be accompanied at the meeting by a colleague of your choice. They will be entitled to speak and confer privately with you, but may not answer questions on your behalf.

The 28 days may be extended if the person who will consider your request is on annual leave or sick leave when your request is received.

We may decide to grant your request in full without a meeting, in which case we will write to you within 28 days of your request.

## **Decision**

We will inform you in writing of our decision within 14 days of the meeting. If your request is accepted, we will write to you with details of the new working arrangements and the date on which they will commence. You will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter.

Unless otherwise agreed, changes to your terms of employment will be permanent. However, we may suggest an initial trial period.

We may reject your request for one or more of the following business reasons:

- the burden of additional costs;
- detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
- inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- inability to recruit additional staff;
- detrimental impact on quality;
- detrimental impact on performance;
- insufficiency of work during the periods that you propose to work; or planned changes.

If we are unable to agree to your request, we will write to tell you which of those reasons applies in your case and why. We will also set out the appeal procedure.

## **Appeal**

You may appeal to the Chair of Trustees in writing within 14 days of receiving written rejection of your request. Your appeal must be dated and must set out the grounds on which you are appealing.

We will hold a meeting with you within 14 days of receiving your appeal. You may bring a colleague to the meeting.

We will tell you in writing of our final decision within 14 days of the appeal meeting. There is no further right of appeal.