

# Arawak Walton Housing Association

## Work Life Balance Policy

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Statement of Values	We Aim High We Value People We Move With The Times

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 With its roots in the African Caribbean community, Arawak Walton Housing Association champions the provision of quality affordable homes in sustainable multi-cultural neighbourhoods. To help us deliver on this mission and our strategic aims, we have developed a People Strategy which supports a culture whereby employees are encouraged to realise their potential. It focuses on:

- Recruitment and retention
- Talent and performance management
- Diversity, inclusion and wellbeing
- Reward and recognition

1.2 We are 'Passionate about People' and we know that our people make us great. Only by having a skilled, engaged, committed and diverse workforce can we continue to provide the very best service to our customers.

1.3 We aim to provide a positive and stimulating working environment, where our customers are at the heart of everything we do. We have a central base in the hub of the community where our employees and customers can work together however, we recognise from that from time to time, by providing more flexibility to our employees in relation to where and when they work, we can empower them to work more flexibly and in turn, to deliver better services to our customers.

## **2 Purpose**

2.1 The overall purpose of this policy is to outline the ways of working at Arawak Walton Housing Association in order to provide employees with greater flexibility over their working hours and location whilst continuing to carry out their roles effectively and to provide excellent face-to-face customer service to our customers.

## **3 References**

3.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Flexible Working Policy
- Maternity, Adoption, Surrogacy and Paternity Leave and Pay Policies and Procedures
- Data Protection Policy (GDPR compliant),
- Holiday, Special and Diverse Leave Policy,
- TOIL Policy
- Travel and Expenses Policy

3.2 This policy replaces the previous 'Flexi-Time Policy'.

## **4 Scope**

4.1 This policy applies to all employees within the organisation however it does not form part of the contract of employment.

## **5 Benefits of a flexible approach to working**

5.1 The association recognises that working more flexibly can provide numerous benefits, both to management, employees and to customers. This can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- improved staff morale, wellbeing and reduced absenteeism
- increased productivity
- more responsive to customers
- enabling staff to continue conducting their role if the usual place of work becomes temporarily unavailable to them
- positive impact on the environment
- will benefit staff with a long-term illness or disability and enable them to continue working
- will benefit staff with emergency and short-term child/care needs

## **6 Our People Strategy Vision**

6.1 We aim to create a positive working environment where people want to come to work and deliver an excellent service to our customers. We want to attract and retain skilled staff and we want them to know that their contribution is valued and important and to ensure that they learn and grow with us and rise to the challenges that we face as an organisation.

## **7 General principles of how we work at Arawak Walton:**

- Between the hours of 9-5, Monday to Friday we will have a physical presence for our customers within our head office in Ardwick, and we will always have a core cohort of staff present and able to respond to the needs of our customers.
- Our head office is our collaborative space and we recognise that it is important for our staff, across all teams, to be able to come together to learn from each other and work together in order to share knowledge, learning and ideas.
- All staff members will have use of a desk space at head office at any time (or at the sheltered scheme if applicable) but this may involve hot desking.
- We put the safety and wellbeing of our staff and customers first.
- We provide staff with flexibility to achieve a work life balance whilst ensuring we are able to respond to our customers' needs.
- Our customers' needs must remain at the forefront when determining how/when/ where staff work, however we recognise the benefits of flexibility for our staff members and want to build this into the way we allow staff to work.
- We want to empower managers to manage based on outcomes against our shared objectives, mission and values, rather than management based on control.
- We want a culture whereby we measure outputs rather than presenteeism.
- We want to empower staff to manage their own workloads, but to remain flexible in response to the needs of the customer.

- We recognise that we are all individuals and work effectively in different ways and we want to support and encourage that.
- We embrace diversity and equality and aim to support the diverse needs of staff through a flexible approach to working
- We want to promote joined up working - between individuals, teams and customers and provide a safe space to do this.
- Our IT systems will make it easy to access information from anywhere so that we can provide services to customers/stakeholders in the right place, at the right time.

## 8 Where we work:

8.1 Work activities will generally be carried out in the association's main office. However, remote working and working from home may be permitted on an ad-hoc basis, meaning it will ordinarily not follow a regular pattern, and will be combined with working from the office and will be subject to the prior approval of a line manager. Employees who undertake more flexible forms of working will still be expected to work their core normal hours, however subject to further discussions with management, may be able to work their hours in a more flexible way from time to time.

8.2 The different ways in which remote or home working will be permitted will depend upon the needs and requirements of the organisation. The following bullet points provide more detail on where and how we can work:

- Our staff will all have a fixed base, which will be their normal place of work. This will usually be at head office (or at one of our sheltered scheme sites) however, we provide the flexibility for staff to work from a variety of places to both ensure a more flexible service to our customers but also to aid in providing a work life balance for our employees.
- All staff will have use of desk space at an office and we encourage hot desking in order to ensure that teams work cross functionally.
- We operate clear desk principles - drawers and lockers are available for storage. We leave our desk space clean and tidy and free of confidential information.
- Staff will agree with their manager how and when their work will be carried out, based on the demands and requirements of their role on any given day.
- If staff need to have specific times out of the office for religious needs these will be agreed in advance.
- Managers will have the responsibility to manage their teams fairly, flexibly and in the best way to support customers, provide necessary office cover and to address individual requirements where possible.
- Staff members must work their contractual hours but have the flexibility to manage their working pattern within the context of the needs of the business and in cooperation with others (see **working time** section)
- Staff with an agreed working pattern may still work flexibly, if this suits the needs of the business and is agreed with their manager.
- Staff members who are often working outside of the office in customer facing roles, for example in tenants' homes or within the community, may find it works

better for them to work from various sites around their appointments. This could include community sites, sheltered schemes, coffee shops, their home. We want staff to have the flexibility to work from wherever makes the most sense however, this must be prior agreed with their manager to ensure that there is enough office cover.

- 'Back office' staff may also work more flexibly in terms of working hours or location, if prior agreed with their manager.
- **It is important that all staff recognise that whilst we want to provide flexibility, our office spaces are our main base and we will always require a cohort of staff to be in the office to meet the needs of our customers. Staff may not refuse to work in the office if required to.**
- Wherever our staff are working from, we encourage:
  - Staff to take regular breaks from work.
  - Individuals take their own responsibility to take rest breaks and not to work continuous hours or late nights without taking statutory breaks.
  - Laptops should not be used for extended periods and should be safely stored when not in use.
  - When working remotely, colleagues are expected to consider their own health and safety.
  - Staff should always abide by the rules of data protection and data security (see below)
  - Managers and staff members work together to agree clear, robust protocols for lone working to make sure colleagues are not at risk and are aware of their own responsibilities.
  - A more flexible approach to work allows for us to make reasonable adjustments for colleagues with disabilities, or a specialist function that requires a specific location.

## 9 Working from home

- 9.1 In certain circumstances employees may be able to work from home. Whilst we expect staff to spend the majority of their working week based in our offices, staff may work from home on occasion, with prior approval from their manager. Any home working arrangements should not interfere with business operations, and should be managed fairly by departmental managers.
- 9.2 Where an employee's role does not allow for effective homeworking or where staff are required to be in the office or on site as a result of cover issues or due to work commitments, then they may not refuse to work from our premises.
- 9.3 If you choose to work from home, you are responsible for ensuring that you have an appropriate broadband connection to work effectively. As working from home is a choice, we don't reimburse colleagues for the cost of their broadband connection or other household bills such as landline connection, heating, lighting etc.
- 9.4 Your home set up must be acceptable. Our telephone system allows for remote working and most staff members will now be provided with a laptop to work from or may use a pool laptop if they do not have a laptop workstation in the office or a personal laptop at home.

9.5 It is important to emphasise that home working is ad hoc and optional and must be pre-agreed. No staff member is required to work from home and no staff member will be asked to work from home if they do not want to.

## **10 Manager responsibility**

10.1 It is the responsibility of the manager to determine how work is carried out in their team. Where staff members are working remotely, managers must ensure that staff members are safe to work and they must ensure that regular contact is maintained.

10.2 Managers must ensure that they monitor and feedback on performance of their staff members and set meaningful targets for all employees. Managers must also ensure that sufficient cover is provided in the office and that all staff members take part in team meetings, staff meetings and all training that they are required to complete.

10.3 It is the responsibility of management to ensure all employees are provided fair opportunity in which to work flexibly, if the post allows for this. AWA's managers will meet collectively and ensure that this policy and procedure remains fair and accessible across teams.

## **11 Employee responsibility**

11.1 Employees who are working remotely may not be seen in person as regularly by management, meaning that an element of trust will need to be maintained between all parties in order for any arrangement to work.

11.2 It is the responsibility of employees to make sure any working arrangement does not impact upon their productivity and output. If it is found that this is the case, the organisation will review the effectiveness of working flexibly for that employee and further disciplinary action may be taken. Employees must also ensure that they comply with usual policies on absence and sickness.

11.3 Employees must ensure that they take rest breaks during the working days in line with the association's usual policies. This is to ensure their continued wellbeing and continued compliance with government regulations. Again, if it is found that appropriate rest breaks are not being taken, the employee may have any flexibility withdrawn.

11.4 Employees working from home need to ensure a safe working environment that complies with the organisation's policies on health and safety. This includes adherence to Display Protective Equipment (DPE) standards. Full details can be found below.

11.5 Employees who are working from other buildings separate to the usual workplace are expected to leave their workspace clean and tidy following use

and remove all personal items. Standards of hygiene will be expected to be maintained throughout their period of working in this environment.

11.6 All employees must remain fully contactable by management during their working hours, and must be prepared to undertake reasonable requests as directed.

11.7 Additionally, all confidential information relating to the association needs to be kept secure in line with our data protection policies. If it is found that any aspect of working remotely or flexibly has resulted, or has the potential to result in, a data breach, the arrangement may be terminated and those responsible could face disciplinary action.

## 12 Working Time

12.1 See appendix I - 'Flexi-Time'.

## 13 Time off in Lieu (TOIL)

13.1 Where staff members are **requested** to work outside of normal business hours (i.e. to attend a Board meeting in an evening or they are asked to attend a community event at the weekend, for example) then they may claim Time Off in Lieu (please refer to the TOIL policy for more details).

13.2 Where employees **choose** to complete work in the evening or other time (for example if they travelled home early to avoid traffic or to make up hours following attending an appointment) then this would be recorded as normal working time on the timesheet.

## 14 Data Security

14.1 The security and confidentiality of our data and information is a top priority and employees must ensure they are operating within the context of our Data Protection Policy (GDPR). Complying with this policy is the responsibility of all employees within the association. All employees must follow the correct rules on data security and we provide training to everyone every 6 months to ensure that this happens.

## 15 Health and Safety

15.1 Your health and safety is important and should be at the centre of any discussions around where or when you work. Applied in the right way, this policy provides the opportunity for a better work life balance and improved health and wellbeing.

15.2 The association will work to ensure that usual association health and safety provisions are adhered to, wherever staff members work from (whether this is in the office, at a tenant's home, in a sheltered scheme or other community

building, or at the staff member's home). This will include conducting risk assessments of the proposed working environments where necessary to comply with legal provisions.

- 15.3 Staff members are required to ensure with their manager that any home working environment is acceptable before home working can be considered. Everyone will be provided with the opportunity to complete a DSE assessment and training and to enable them to adjust their workstation and further advice or reasonable adjustments will be available according to individual need
- 15.4 If an employee's health condition or disability is likely to be within scope of the Equality Act 2010, management will ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken to identify and implement any reasonable adjustments necessary that will assist them in carrying out their role.
- 15.5 Please ensure you and your manager are aware of our Health and Safety Policy and procedures. These apply wherever you are working from.
- 15.6 If an epidemic such as COVID-19 reappears and results in a Government direction to close our office or revisit our way of working, this policy may need to be temporarily suspended and we may need to review working practices.

## **16 Travel**

- 16.1 All staff members have a designated base for travel claims. This is either our head office, Margaret House, or at one of the sheltered schemes if applicable (this will be clearly outlined in your contract of employment). You are responsible for your daily commute mileage. If on a particular day, you do not attend the office at all, then you must still deduct your usual home to work miles from any mileage claim you make for that day (see Travel and Expenses Policy for more details).
- 16.2 We want to make it easier for you to plan your journey to and from our office and sites of work. We are also looking for ways to reduce our environmental impact. Our head is office is well served by public transport. We will also be offering a Cycle to Work scheme for those wishing to cycle to the office. We also hope that whilst still providing a core cohort of staff at the office during the hours of 9-5, we can be more flexible with start and finish times on occasion, to reduce the number of staff members travelling in and out of the office during peak times.

## **17 Formal flexible working and permanent requests**

- 17.1 It is understood that this policy aims to outline our approach to providing employees with a more flexible approach to working on an ad-hoc basis and does not represent a permanent change in working conditions. Any employee who wishes to make a formal request to amend their hours or location of work on a permanent basis must refer to the association's Flexible Working Policy



which can be located in the employee handbook.

## **18 Equality and Diversity implications**

- 18.1 We will monitor and review this policy to ensure that no staff member or group of staff members are treated less favourably than others. The policy should allow us more scope to meet the diverse needs and individual requirements of our staff members.

## **19 Financial implications**

- 19.1 The association should not incur any adverse costs through the operation of this policy.

## Flexi-Time

### 1 Overview

- 1.1 The association operates a flexi-time system for working hours. This system is to allow both employees and Arawak Walton flexibility in setting working hours. It provides employees with a choice over when their work is carried out, subject to their attendance at work during core hours. The association also benefits from flexi-time because it extends the duration each day that its operations are maintained which, in turn, creates a more flexible service to be received by our customers.

### 2 Principles and scope

- 2.1 The flexi-time system grants the opportunity for eligible employees, where a role will lend itself to flexi time, to work flexibly around the association's core business hours. The association however, reserves the right not to permit employees to undertake flexi time. In addition, the association may modify or suspend the flexi-time system as necessitated by the needs of the business.
- 2.2 Most roles within the organisation are eligible for flexi-time however certain roles (particularly where employees have specific set hours) are excluded. However, in these circumstances employees may request some flexibility from time to time, where their manager has agreed to this and where the business is not adversely affected.
- 2.3 It is assumed that all staff who are eligible to take part in the flexi-time scheme should be able to carry out their duties over an average of 35 hours per week in any month (or an average of their normal weekly hours if they are part-time).
- 2.4 From time to time staff may be required to work longer hours e.g. to address customer needs, cover for absences, meet unexpected deadlines, work on one off projects etc. This system should allow staff members to do this and to balance their hours over their working week.
- 2.5 Where staff members find that they are routinely working well in excess of their weekly working hours, they should raise this with their manager.

### 3 Core hours

- 3.1 Core hours are hours set by the association during which time, employees taking part in the flexi-time system are required to attend work.
- 3.2 The core hours fall between 10 am and 4 pm. During this time (subject to working patterns) employees should be available for work and remain contactable. Employees are however entitled to a lunch break during this time (see **Lunch Breaks**).
- 3.3 There may be occasions where an employee would like to leave earlier to miss rush hour traffic or to attend an appointment. If this is acceptable with

their manager, and does not affect operational cover, staff members may record a break on their timesheet while they travel home. Staff should record when they log back on and should ensure that their weekly hours are unaffected.

- 3.4 Working time outside of the core hours should be recorded on your Cascade timesheet and any breaks should be noted. In order to promote flexibility for staff members, we will no longer operate strict start and end times for our flexi-time bandwidth however we expect staff members to be sensible with how they work their hours and for managers to oversee this.
- 3.5 Staff should bear in mind that they will be required to be available during core hours and therefore should avoid accruing excess hours by starting work too early or working too late. However, with prior agreement and where the business permits it, staff members can work flexibly around the core hours. This can also aid in providing flexibility for our customers, for example, if a customer would prefer an evening appointment or an early morning appointment, staff should have more flexibility to accommodate these requests on occasion.
- 3.6 All staff members are reminded that the office is open to customers between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm and if they are required to cover operations during this time then they must adhere to this. Where it is possible to provide flexibility, this should be agreed with the relevant line manager.

#### **4. Lunch breaks**

- 4.1 Employees who work 6 hours or more in a day must take a rest break of at least 20 minutes. This could be a lunch break. Arawak Walton requires all staff to take at least 30 minutes unpaid break (unless otherwise agreed for part time staff). Ordinarily this should be taken between 12 noon and 2 pm however this can be flexible according to business need.

#### **5 Time recording and settlement period**

- 5.1 The association operates the flexi-time system over a four week settlement period. For clarity, the employee's total working hours will be recorded and any deficit or excess hours will be calculated for the purposes of flexi-time, every four weeks. Employees should ensure that they are not in deficit hours at the end of the four-week period.
- 5.2 Each employee is required to record their own hours on their Cascade timesheet for every four-week period they work under the flexi-time system. Managers are responsible for checking employee's timesheets and ensuring that employees are not working excessive or insufficient hours.
- 5.3 In any calendar month a maximum of plus 7 hours deviation from the normal working month will be allowed. The Cascade system will remove any accrued hours over the 7 hours allowed at the end of the calendar month.

- 5.4 Any credit or deduction will be added to or subtracted from the hours required to be worked in the next accounting period.
- 5.5 Where staff are absent due to holidays or sickness, Cascade will be updated to show holidays / sickness at your normal working hours for that day.
- 5.6 Where employment is terminated, the employee is required to settle any credit or debit hours before their last working day.
- 5.7 Please note that regular or persistent bad time keeping i.e. arriving late or leaving early, where you are required to provide office cover or attend meetings, will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under the disciplinary procedures.

## 6 Flexi-days

- 6.1 Staff members may take up to 6 flexi-days (pro rata for part time staff) per year, in addition to their holiday entitlement. This can be taken in full or half days and can be requested through the Cascade system. This is an employee benefit to aid in flexibility for staff members where they have had to work longer hours to work on specific projects, or to meet the needs of the business.
- 6.2 It is important to emphasise that flexi time should not be 'built up' to take back as flexi days. Flexi time should only be accrued if the work demands that you work more than your usual hours in an average week.
- 6.3 Flexi time cannot be requested in advance of it being accrued. Flexi time should also not be requested if the staff member is in deficit hours. Line managers should check the flexi time menu on Cascade to see requests flexi days.
- 6.4 Line managers will be required to ensure that customer service does not suffer and may refuse requests if sufficient cover is not available. A repeated build up of flexi time will require line managers to address possible workload issues.
- 6.5 Flexitime should not be confused with TOIL (time off in lieu) which arises if staff are **required** to attend out of hours meetings or during weekends. Please refer to the Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) Policy.

## 7 Medical visits and appointments

- 7.1 Where possible, visits to the doctor, dentist, hospital outpatients, physiotherapy appointments and other special appointments requiring regular visits, should be arranged for times outside core working hours. Where this is not possible, staff may use flexi time to facilitate appointments. This is subject to prior approval having been obtained from their line manager. Additionally, some people have the right to attend medical appointments irrespective of core hours. As outlined in this policy, managers should be flexible with staff appointments where they

can, allowing staff members to take the time as a break and return afterwards, or to log on from home or another site where possible.

- 7.2 All staff have the right to use holidays or unpaid leave if they are unable to make the time up.

## **8 Monitoring**

- 8.1 The flexi time system is reliant upon the association having trust in its employees to accurately record times on the timesheet. The system is subject to the association's monitoring processes and procedures. Any misconduct may result in the flexi-time system being withdrawn or suspended for that individual. Individual misconduct will result in the association taking formal disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy.

## **9 Travel time**

- 9.1 Travel time is not working time, unless employees are travelling to and from work appointments. Employees who choose to travel home to work for a period during the day must record travelling time as a break on their timesheet.
- 9.2 Where additional travel is involved in a journey, the time booked should include travelling in excess of the normal journey time to or from work. For example, if your normal travel to work is 30 minutes and you have to travel to a meeting in Liverpool straight from home, and that journey takes 70 minutes then 40 minutes can be accrued.

## **10 Miscellaneous**

- 10.1 Each department is required to ensure that staff cover is available between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm. It is hoped that generally this will be provided on a voluntary basis between all other staff within the department concerned.
- 10.2 In the event of a member of staff working less than the required number of hours in a month on two consecutive months they may be returned to fixed hours.
- 10.3 Employees are expected, where necessary, to arrange their working hours under the system to meet the current requirements of the role and any other business priorities.
- 10.4 As such, the association may request the employee to work during specific times to meet the needs of Arawak Walton. When arranging hours of work, line managers will give due consideration to the employee's normal standard working hours on a set day. Advance notice will be given, where possible, if the employee is required to work outside their normal standard hours.