



## **Central England Area Quaker Meeting (CEAQM)**

### **Flexible Working Policy 2024**

#### **1. Principles**

1.1 Central England Area Quaker Meeting (“the employer”) believes that the promotion of flexible working can increase staff motivation, promote work-life balance, reduce employee stress and improve performance and productivity.

1.2 The employer will endeavor to consider all requests for flexible working arrangements sympathetically and with due regard to balance the needs of both the employee, and the Meeting / Branch or area for which they work.

1.3 This policy is not contractual but indicates the way in which CEAQM intends to deal with such issues. We reserve the right to vary, amend or withdraw the policy at any time.

#### **2. Eligibility**

2.1 The law grants all employees, regardless of length of service, the right to request flexible working and to have their request considered seriously by their employer. However, flexible working of any kind is not an automatic entitlement, and it should be emphasised that it is not suitable for some roles or at certain times. We will therefore treat each request for flexible working on an individual basis, and the fact that another employee has requested, or been granted, permission to work flexibly does not confer any obligation to make or grant further requests from other employees. Any agreed arrangements need to be seen as flexible and responsive to the organisation's needs at any particular time.

2.2 An employee can make two statutory requests in any rolling 12 month period, starting on the first day of when the first request is made.

2.3 A request for flexible working in this context can include a request for a change to the number of hours that the employee works, a request for a change to the pattern of hours worked and a request to perform some or all of the work from the employee's home.

#### **3. The Process**

3.1 An employee wishing to make a request for flexible working, should notify their Line Manager and make the terms of the request clear. Their notice should include the following:

- The date of the application, the change to working conditions they are seeking and when they would like the change to come into effect.
- That this is a statutory request and, if they have made a previous application, for flexible working and the date of that application.

3.2 It is preferable if the employee sets out the reason for the application e.g. because of caring responsibilities for a child or other relative, or wishing to work flexibly as part of a reasonable adjustment in relation to a disability.

3.3 All applications will be completed within 2 months, unless CEAQM has requested an extension with agreement by the employee. The relevant Committee of the Meeting or Branch where the employee is employed will arrange a meeting with the employee within no more than 14 days of receiving their written request. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the changes the employee has proposed, the effects of the proposed changes and any possible alternative arrangements that might suit both parties.

3.4 The employer will take all reasonable steps to accommodate an employee's request for flexible working and each request will be dealt with individually taking into account all of the circumstances including: the likely effects that the proposed changes to working hours (or place of work) may have on the employer; the effect that the proposed changes may have upon the way in which the Meeting or Branch is run; the impact that the proposed changes may have on other employees or volunteers; and the impact that the proposed changes may have upon the ability of Members of the Meeting or Branch and/or other users to make use of the Meeting or Branch's facilities. Agreeing to one employee's request will not therefore set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

3.5 Where we are able to agree a request, or we have agreed an alternative arrangement, we will either issue a revised contract of employment or write to the employee confirming the change to their terms and conditions. Continuity of employment and all related rights will be preserved.

3.6 If the request is refused, we will write to the employee to confirm this. A specific reason will be given (which will be one of the permitted reasons set out below) together with an explanation as to why that reason applies.

3.7 If an employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of the flexible working request, they may appeal to the CEAQM Trustees' Employment Committee. An appeal applies where there is new information that was not available to the employer at the time the request was originally considered, or if the employee thinks the application was not handled reasonably and/or in line with this policy. An appeal should be made in writing to the Clerk of the Trustees' Employment Committee within seven days of the response to the request being received and will be dealt with within 14 days of receipt of the letter of Appeal.

## **4. Grounds for refusing a request**

- 4.1 CEAQM may decline the request based on one or more of the following reasons:
- detrimental effect on our ability to meet demand from Friends or members of the community
  - inability to reorganise work within available staffing
  - inability to recruit additional staff
  - detrimental impact on quality
  - detrimental impact on performance
  - burden of additional cost to CEAQM
  - insufficient work during the period the employee proposes to work
  - planned structural changes to the organisation.

## **5. Withdrawal of application**

- 5.1 We will treat an application as withdrawn if the employee:
- Informs us, either verbally or in writing, that they are withdrawing the application, or
  - Fails to attend, without reasonable cause, a rearranged meeting or appeal meeting, or
  - Refuses to provide the information required to assess whether the request can be agreed to.

5.2 We will confirm the withdrawal of the application in writing to the employee (unless the employee has already provided written notice of the withdrawal). The employee will not be entitled to make another formal request until twelve months after the date of the original request

## **6. Reduced hours**

6.1 Employees should note that a reduction in hours will lead to a pro rata reduction in pay and benefits. A change in work pattern of the same hours will not normally alter other terms and conditions.

## **7. Health and safety**

7.1 All arrangements must comply with the Working Time Regulations and also with in-house health and safety considerations. Risk assessments will be carried out where appropriate.

## **8. Trial periods**

8.1 Each situation will be specific and success may be difficult to predict, therefore some arrangements may be agreed on a trial basis initially. This will particularly apply in circumstances such as where the request is made following a bereavement or to cope with short-term care issues, to undertake a short course of study or where we are unsure if we can sustain the revised working arrangements.

8.2 Any agreed arrangements will specify an agreed duration and then, unless the employee reverts to their previous working arrangements, if deemed worth continuing, may be either confirmed as a permanent alteration or may be subject to on-going regular reviews (as specified).

8.3 Regular reviews may result in the termination of a flexible arrangement which has been agreed on a trial basis, for business, economic or other reasons. Reasonable notice, at least 30 days will be given by either party in the event of a necessary change or termination.

## **9. Conflicting requests**

9.1 All flexible working requests will be given fair consideration.

9.2 Where more than one request is received, we will normally consider them in the order they are received. Each case will be judged on its merits and we will consider the effect on the organisation and the possible impact of refusing a request.

9.3 Where one or more employees have already been granted a flexible working request, the organisational context in which the subsequent request is made will be different, and this will be taken into account when considering further requests.

9.4 If we are unable to agree to a request because a number of other employees are already working flexibly and any further flexible working arrangements will impact adversely upon the organisation, we may discuss the situation with other employees in case they are willing to change their contracts to other arrangements, thereby enabling us to grant new requests to work flexibly.

9.5 However the degree of flexibility awarded may not be the same in each case as each request will be judged on its merits and according to individual circumstances.

## **10. Data Protection**

10.1 When an individual submits a flexible working request, CEAQM will process any personal data collected in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

10.2 Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with our Data Protection Policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

## **11. Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy**

11.1 This policy will take effect from 7/2/23. The Principal Officer has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation (at least annually) and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in legislation or to our working practices.

11.2 Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the Principal Officer.

## 12. Definitions

12.1 Branch refers to CEAQM “projects”, such as Peace Hub and the West Midlands Peace Education Project (Peacemakers)

Flexible Working Policy	Prepared by Sophie Garner
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