NASUWT THE TEACHERS' UNION

F IS FOR... FIXING

THE TEACHER/PARENT BALANCE

Podcast Companion Toolkit

FIX OUR FUTURE. FUND EDUCATION

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THE TEACHER/PARENT BALANCE

EPISODE 4 PODCAST TOOLKIT

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PODCAST EP 4: DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use this discussion guide to stimulate conversation around issues raised in the podcast that are also occurring in your school and local area. You could do this in a formal setting, during a podcast screening, or informally if a colleague or friend mentions listening to the podcast.

These questions are for teachers who are parents/carers or thinking about becoming parents. Some questions can also be adapted to involve teachers who are not parents, school staff, and community groups.

1. F is For... is set in a 'dream staff room', where the chairs are comfy, refreshments are plentiful, and teachers have time to connect and rest. What would be in your dream staff room, and why? Would you add anything extra to support teachers who are parents, expectant parents, or carers?
2. At what point in your teaching career did you become a parent or carer?
3. Throughout the podcast series, teachers have discussed the pressure they felt to carefully plan if and when they became parents. As a teacher, how did you plan to become a parent? If you did this, what did you have to consider with regards to your job?
4. In this episode, Narinder makes the point that teacher parents and carers are always looking after someone and cannot 'switch off'. Has this been your experience? What are the challenges you face and how do you try to overcome them?
5. What makes an employer 'family friendly' to you?
6. How well does your current role work alongside your parenting or caring responsibilities? What would you change, if you could?
7. Do you know what types of leave your employer offers you as a parent or carer? Have you ever accessed these?
8. Does your employer make this information easily accessible?
9. NASUWT is campaigning for improvements to maternity and paternity pay for teachers, including 52 weeks of fully paid maternity leave. What does your school or trust offer for maternity and paternity packages? Do they make this information easily accessible?
10. You are now the Education Secretary with the freedom to change policies that could support teachers who are parents, expectant parents, and carers. What would you change?
11. Can any of the issues surfaced in your discussion be resolved through the Union? (If in doubt: speak to your workplace rep or local union office.)

ACTIVITY: WHAT KINDS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARE REALLY POSSIBLE IN TEACHING?

MY SCHOOL SUPPORTED ME TO SWITCH TO A FOUR-DAY WEEK SO I COULD BE THERE FOR MY SON WHEN HE NEEDED ME MOST.



In this section, you can:

- Test your knowledge on the types of flexible working teachers can access with our quiz and true-or-false scenarios.
- For activists: learn how to improve work and home life for teachers in your school with a flexible working workshop.

How to play the quiz: what types of flexible working are available to teachers?

- Print out the cards on page 5-7.
- Use the cards to match the types of flexible working to their definitions.
- Choose someone to go through the answers, leading a discussion where development of understanding is needed.

AS A UNION REP, I HELP COLLEAGUES WHO ARE PARENTS TO TAKE THEIR PPA IN A SINGLE MORNING BLOCK SO THEY HAVE A FLEXIBLE MORNING.



Working a certain number of hours over the year with some flexibility about when you work. There are sometimes ‘core hours’ which you regularly work each week, with the additional hours being worked flexibly or when there is extra.

Working less than full-time hours over a set number of days - usually less than the normal working week.

A form of part-time working where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for a job between them.

Working full-time hours but over fewer days.

You have a different start, finish and break time from other workers.

Allows you to choose, within certain set limits, when to begin and end work.

It might be possible to do some or all of your work from home or anywhere else other than your normal place of work.

The default retirement age has been phased out and older workers can choose when they want to retire. This means that they can reduce their hours and work part time.


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PART-TIME WORKING

COMPRESSED HOURS

ANNUALISED HOURS

JOB SHARING

FLEXITIME

WORKING FROM HOME ON A REGULAR BASIS

PHASED RETIREMENT

STAGGERED HOURS


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GAME ANSWERS

Types of flexible working available to teachers

Here you will find specific types of flexible working alongside their definitions. There may be other options available to you too, and if you have something else in mind, you should discuss it with your union rep and employer.

Remember: anyone can apply for flexible working. There is no need to be a parent or carer.

Part-time working: working less than full-time hours over a set number of days – usually less than the normal working week.

Job-sharing: a form of part-time working where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for a job between them.

Flexitime: allows you to choose, within certain set limits, when to begin and end work.

Compressed hours: working full-time hours but over fewer days.

Annualised hours: working a certain number of hours over the year with some flexibility about when you work. There are sometimes 'core hours' which you regularly work each week, with the additional hours being worked flexibly or when there is extra.

Staggered hours: you have a different start, finish and break time from other workers.

Working from home on a regular basis: it might be possible to do some or all of your work from home or anywhere else other than your normal place of work.

Phased retirement: the default retirement age has been phased out and older workers can choose when they want to retire. This means that they can reduce their hours and work part time.

ACTIVITY: TRUE OR FALSE: FLEXIBLE WORKING EDITION

How to use this resource

In this section, you can expand your understanding of employer obligations under flexible working. You could present these scenarios in a workplace or activist meeting in order to stimulate discussion, or ask members to work through them in groups or pairs.

1. **True or false** – there are eight reasons why your school/college can refuse a request for flexible working.

2. **True or false** – you have to be employed for six months with your school/college before you can make a request for flexible working.

3. **True or false** – you can only make one request per 12-month period.

4. **True of false** – you have the right to appeal against an employer's decision to refuse a request for flexible working.

5. **True or false** – the right to request flexible working cannot be changed once approved.

TRUE OR FALSE: ANSWERS

1. **True or false** – there are eight reasons why your school/college can refuse a request for flexible working.

   TRUE – there are eight business reasons and only eight reasons.

   These are:

- The burden of additional costs.
- An inability to organise work amongst existing staff.
- A planned structural change to the school/college.
- A detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demands.
- A detrimental impact on performance.
- A detrimental impact on quality.
- Insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work.
- An inability to recruit additional staff.

   You should therefore check your workplace policies carefully to see if they are complying.

2. **True or false** – you have to be employed for six months with your school/college before you can make a request for flexible working.

   FALSE – following changes made in 2024, the right to request flexible working is a day one right for all employees.

3. **True or false** – you can only make one request per 12-month period.

   FALSE – following changes made in 2024, you are now able to make two requests in any 12-month period.

4. **True or false** – you have the right to appeal against an employer's decision to refuse a flexible working request.

   FALSE – whilst good employers offer the option to appeal, there is currently no statutory right to appeal against a decision to refuse a request for flexible working. The Union has always maintained that there should be a statutory right and the Acas Code of Practice sees it as good practice to allow for an appeal.

5. **True or fals**e – the right to request flexible working cannot be changed once approved.

   TRUE – once a statutory request is approved, it represents a permanent change to your terms and conditions, including pay. You can obviously make a further request in the future, but it is important to recognise that it is not the choice of your school/college to change or alter the request without your permission.

GUIDE: HOST A FLEXIBLE WORKING WORKSHOP AT YOUR WORKPLACE

Did you know that you can improve working life for teachers who are parents, expectant parents, and carers through your trade union? Here are some ideas to help you plan for positive change.

Flexible working is something that often comes up when teachers individually need support, but the best way to protect your rights in the workplace is to plan proactively, and together.

Hold a flexible working workshop in your workplace or Local Association

It's time to use your teacher skills for activism and help fellow teachers to understand more about the flexible working options that are possible for teachers.

You can use the podcast episode and activities in this toolkit to hold a workshop in your school or college. In the workshop, you can introduce attendees to all the different types of flexible working available to them as teachers, identify issues with flexible working in your workplace, and identify members who need individual support.

You could hold a screening for the full podcast episode or use the Chapters function in the episode's YouTube description to show short clips. You can then use the discussion guide to structure and direct conversation around issues relevant to your attendees or workplace.

Finish the workshop by planning next steps for progress in your workplace. These actions could include:

- Collective action: requesting a meeting with your headteacher to discuss improvements or clarifications needed to existing flexible working policies in your workplace. If needed, your Local Association or regional centre can provide advice on this step.
- Collective action: encourage attendees to support NASUWT's Fix Our Future campaign by signing the petition at **www.fixourfuture.co.uk** – the petition's demands include improvements to maternity and paternity pay for teachers.
- Individual action: if individual members need help with personal circumstances and flexible working, make an appointment to follow up with them.
- Individual action: ask attendees to share the podcast episode with others who might benefit from listening.

If you can't hold a full workshop, why not try out some of these resources at your next workplace meeting?



FURTHER RESOURCES

NASUWT's guide to flexible working for teachers
(including flexible working policy checklists)

Examples of flexible working scenarios in schools

NASUWT's guide to maternity, paternity, surrogacy/adoption and parental leave

NASUWT's report on Being a Teacher and a Parent

Finding support and planning together

In a trade union, you are never alone. If you need support to improve flexible working in your workplace, start by getting in touch with your regional centre or Local Association.

It may be helpful for groups of local activists to plan how to use these resources together, especially if some members belong to the same academy trust. By planning together and developing local or trust strategies for flexible working education, you can fill gaps in knowledge, build confidence, and learn from each other's experiences.

Remember: if you use this toolkit to plan a successful meeting or activity, tell your fellow activists! Hearing about your positive experiences will motivate them to get involved.

DON'T FORGET TO SIGN THE PETITION!

As part of the Fix Our Future, Fund Education campaign, we're asking the Government to raise education funding to 6% of GDP. You can support this goal by signing the petition.

Please share this petition with colleagues, friends and family.

TOGETHER, WE CAN FIX OUR FUTURE

SIGN THE PETITION
FIXOURFUTURE.CO.UK

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