

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a blue spiral-bound book. The book's cover is a vibrant blue with a red spine. The text on the cover is white and reads 'Flexible working' in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with 'A quick guide' in a smaller font below it. The person holding the book is wearing a patterned headscarf and a white sleeve. The background is blurred, showing other people in a public setting.

**Flexible  
working**  
A quick guide



Flexible working is a way of working that suits the needs of the employee.

It is a way of sharing, staggering or breaking up the normal working day or week in order to improve work/life balance.



All employees (not just parents or carers) have the legal right to request flexible working if they have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks.

The law **does not** give an automatic right to flexible working, but employers **must** respond to requests.

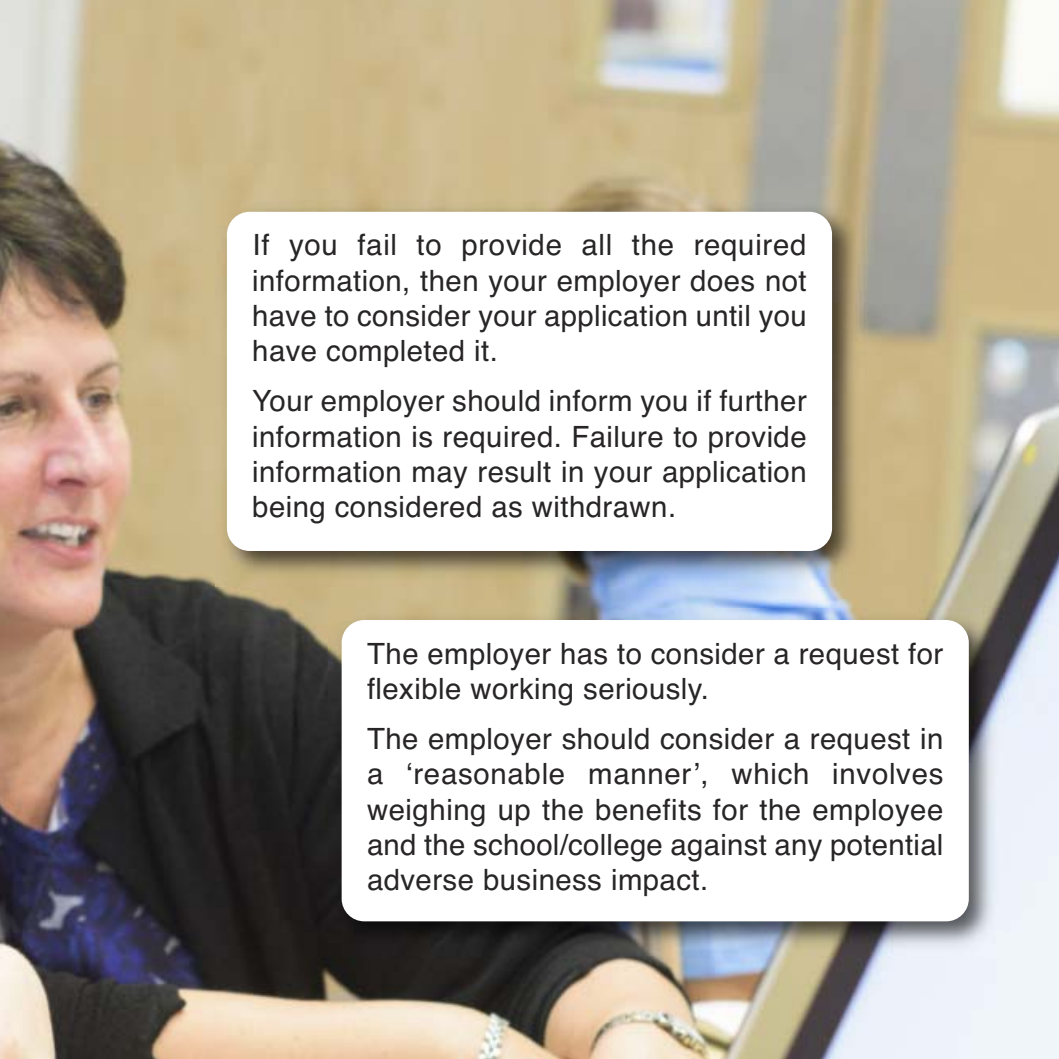
A teacher can only make a request under the legislation once in any 12-month period.



**A request for flexible working must:**

- be made well in advance of when you want it to take effect;
- be in writing;
- make clear that it is a statutory request;
- state the date of the application;
- make clear the change being requested to working arrangements, including the start date;
- state how this change might impact upon the school/college and how any such effect might be dealt with;
- include a statement saying if, and when, any previous application was made.

**There is a flexible working policy that covers every Grant Aided School in Northern Ireland (TNC 2009/6).**



If you fail to provide all the required information, then your employer does not have to consider your application until you have completed it.

Your employer should inform you if further information is required. Failure to provide information may result in your application being considered as withdrawn.

The employer has to consider a request for flexible working seriously.

The employer should consider a request in a 'reasonable manner', which involves weighing up the benefits for the employee and the school/college against any potential adverse business impact.

## Flexible working – the benefits



Reduced levels of stress

More job satisfaction

Better work/life balance

Reduced sickness absence

Good-quality staff retained

Employers have a greater talent pool from which to recruit

Continuity of staffing

## Flexible working – the facts



**77%**

**work in places  
that provide  
flexible working<sup>1</sup>**

**UK employees**



**66%**

**report greater  
work satisfaction<sup>2</sup>**



**50%+**

**report better  
work/life balance<sup>3</sup>**



**5.1 hrs**

**the number of productive hours employers  
say are gained per week per employee<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> The Flex Factor: *Realising the Value of Flexible Working*, RSA & Vodafone Report, July 2013; <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*; <sup>3</sup> Flexible Working Provision and Uptake, CIPD Survey Report, May 2012; <sup>4</sup> The Flex Factor: *Realising the Value of Flexible Working*, RSA & Vodafone Report, July 2013.

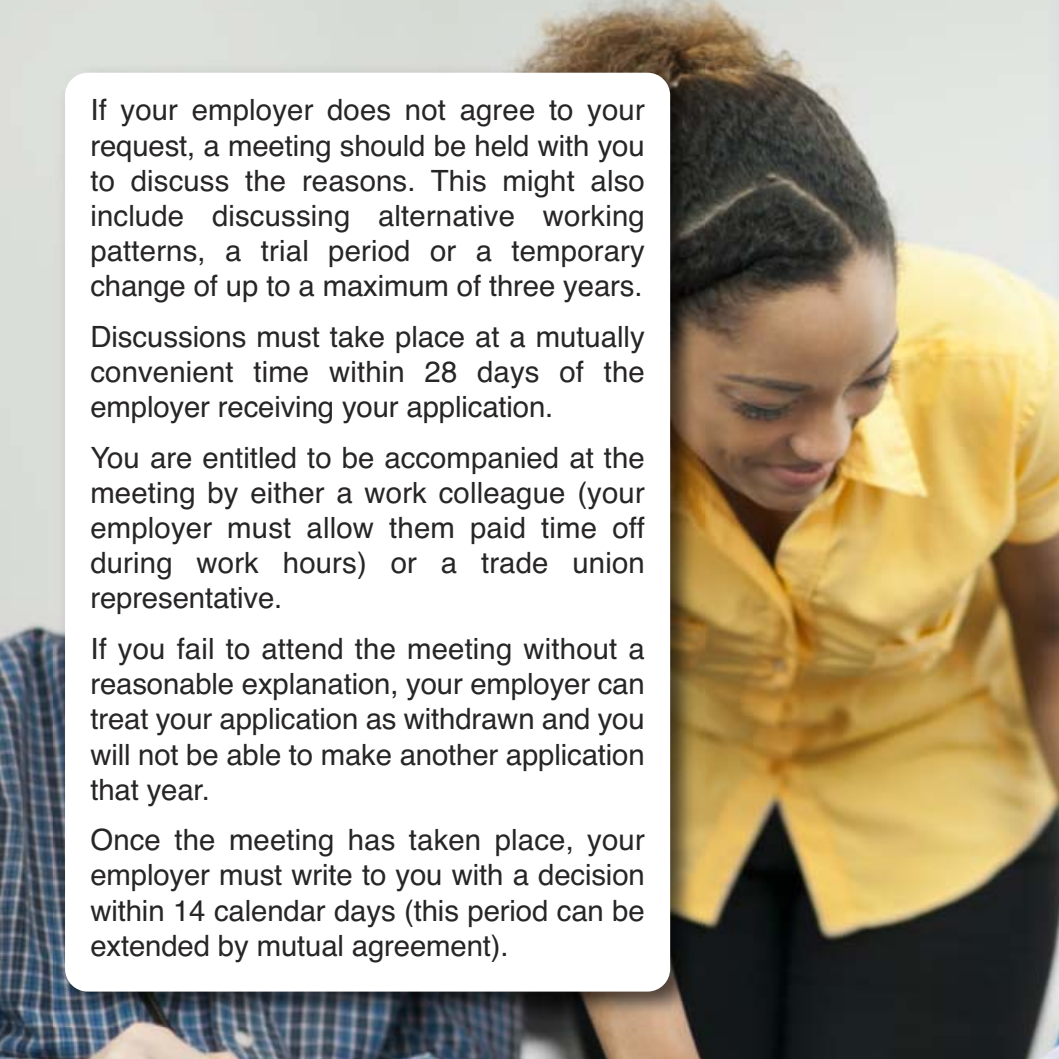
If your employer does not agree to your request, a meeting should be held with you to discuss the reasons. This might also include discussing alternative working patterns, a trial period or a temporary change of up to a maximum of three years.

Discussions must take place at a mutually convenient time within 28 days of the employer receiving your application.


You are entitled to be accompanied at the meeting by either a work colleague (your employer must allow them paid time off during work hours) or a trade union representative.

If you fail to attend the meeting without a reasonable explanation, your employer can treat your application as withdrawn and you will not be able to make another application that year.

Once the meeting has taken place, your employer must write to you with a decision within 14 calendar days (this period can be extended by mutual agreement).





A background image showing a young girl with red hair looking to the left, and the back of another child's head with brown hair on the right. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor classroom or activity area.

If the employer **accepts** the request, or accepts it with modifications, they should write to you confirming the following:

- the date of the communication;
- a description of your new working pattern;
- the date it will start.

If your employer **rejects** your request, you should be given in writing:

- the business ground(s) for refusing;
- an explanation why the business ground(s) apply to your application;
- details of your right to appeal;
- the date of the communication.

The statutory appeals process sets out your rights, including timescales and representation.

[www.nasuwt.org.uk/FlexibleWorkingNorthernIreland](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/FlexibleWorkingNorthernIreland)



**An employer can only reject a request for one of the following business reasons:**

- the burden of additional costs;
- an inability to organise work amongst existing staff;
- a planned structural change to the business;
- a detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand;
- 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.



Flexible working makes a positive contribution to the workplace.

The NASUWT is committed to campaigning to secure the right for all teachers to access flexible working opportunities.

The NASUWT is campaigning to secure the right to flexible working as a statutory entitlement.

**Contact the NASUWT for further advice on flexible working.**

# **NASUWT**

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