



Has your company developed accessible work-life balance options that provide flexible working patterns for employees?

Rationale for question

Work-life balance is defined by the [Work Foundation](#) as individuals having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, the business and society.

Work-life balance is generally achieved through some type of flexible working practice. There is growing evidence that workers and employers can mutually benefit from such flexibility. The provision of work-life balance options increases productivity and overall employee welfare, thereby mitigating the negative effects of stress and absenteeism. Employers may also benefit from an increase in job applicants, as flexible working allows into employment those who were previously unable to engage because of other responsibilities, such as raising children.

Companies providing work-life balance options must ensure that business practice follows principle. Workers must be fully informed about the opportunities available. Co-workers and line managers must be given adequate resources to incorporate this flexibility into their work loads. To be effective, employees also need to be

supported when considering taking up flexible work patterns. For instance, there should be no fear that they will be stigmatised, their job may be at risk, or their career development may be compromised.

Work-life balance options include, but are not limited to, the following:

- career breaks where employees may take a paid or unpaid extended leave or sabbatical and return to their employer at the end of their time-off;
- maternity, paternity or adoption leave beyond the statutory minimum where employers offer leave for a greater length of time and/or higher pay;
- time off for dependents beyond the statutory minimum where employers are able to offer more assistance, such as an adjusted work schedule for individuals who must care for dependents during regular times of the week;
- compressed weeks where employees may work their required weekly hours in fewer days and have the remainder of the days off, e.g. working a 40-hour week through 10 hours a day for 4 days;
- job share where two employees may decide to share the responsibilities of one full-time job, with pay and benefits reflecting the amount of hours worked; and
- leave for volunteer work where employers give time off during work hours for staff to volunteer.

UK employment law states that employees have the [right to request](#) a flexible working pattern and employers have a duty to consider the request, although they are not required to grant it.

Defining terms

'Work-life balance options' provide employees the opportunity to both work and fulfil personal interests and responsibilities. The flexible working patterns should go beyond the statutory minimum that employers are required to provide, such as basic maternity, paternity and adoption leave.

Primary and Secondary answer requirements

ANSWERING YES

Companies must:

1. describe any work-life balance options available, as set out in the rationale;
2. explain how they inform their employees about the options;
3. explain how they take into account the potential effects that flexible working patterns may have on co-workers; and
4. explain the considerations given to longer-term impacts on individual career development.

ANSWERING NO

Companies must:

1. explain why they do not or cannot answer YES to this question, listing the business reasons, any mitigating circumstances or other reasons that apply.

Companies may:

1. describe any flexibility that exists, even if it does not meet the specifications for answering YES; and
2. mention any future intentions regarding this issue.

ANSWERING NOT APPLICABLE

Companies must:

1. confirm that they are made up of directors only and have no employees.

DON'T KNOW is not a permissible answer to this question.

NO ANSWER YET is only permissible under extraordinary circumstances and then for only a limited period.