

How we work at Ofwat

Ofwat is committed to creating a modern workplace that enables people to work in a flexible and agile way in line with the needs of the organisation. Being able to work in this way improves work-life balance and wellbeing, helps to attract and retain people, increases productivity and reduces costs.

Ofwat provides you with the ability to work where and when is best for you – as long as you are delivering the agreed outputs to the agreed standards

It's helpful to clarify some terms used around flexible/agile working.

Flexible working is a work pattern, which has been designed for an individual, usually to help that person balance work and home life. Flexible working arrangements can be written into your contract of employment and may have an impact on pay. Flexible working does tend to be driven by the employee and usually only involves changes to the working time, pattern and location. Every employee now has the right to formally request a more flexible pattern of work and further guidance can be found in our [Family Friendly Policy](#).

Agile Working is based on the flexibility of work to drive long-term organisational success. It can unlock value for both our people and Ofwat and is driven by organisational needs. It's an informal arrangement that revolves around empowering you to work where, when and how you choose that works with the business needs. We expect everyone at Ofwat to be able to work in an agile way although the degree of agility will depend on your role and/or your personal preference. Agile working may incorporate flexible working practices but the aims, drivers and scope are significantly different.

Flexi-time working arrangements. This is a time-recording system used in parts of the Civil Service. From 1 April 2014 the flexi time system has not been open to new people joining Ofwat or, in some cases, for existing staff where they change to a role which triggers different terms and conditions. For those who have these arrangements in place the policy can be found [here](#).

Key principles

Our approach to agile working in Ofwat is based on the following principles:

1. We will support you to work where and when is best for you and for Ofwat – as long as you are delivering the agreed outputs to the agreed standards.
2. We are committed to challenging assumptions about traditional ways of working, taking account of our priorities, the needs of our stakeholders and our people.
3. Our default is to say yes to requests to work in a more agile way unless there's a significant compelling business reason to say no for now, because of the work you are doing. For example there may be roles which do not lend themselves to regular homeworking.
4. We'd like you to be available and accessible to colleagues and stakeholders at reasonable times of the day (Monday to Friday).
5. However there are no 'core hours', that is, there are no set times that everyone in Ofwat has to be at work but there will be people who at times will be available for customers and/or stakeholders e.g. the Service Desk. These arrangements will generally be informally agreed with your resource manager and project managers.
6. Use of informal arrangements, where appropriate, are encouraged. This will reduce bureaucracy for everyone.
7. You and your resource manager will keep an open dialogue to help identify opportunities, solutions or compromises, where appropriate, to accommodate agile working.
8. We recognise that everyone is an individual, has individual needs and preferences. So, as an example, it's ok if you'd prefer to work in the office rather than home. We don't want people to feel bound into working a 9 to 5 day but if this is what you'd prefer that's ok too.
9. We will all work together to support people to have as much flexibility as possible while also enabling Ofwat to deliver its business and services more effectively.
10. Resource and project managers will make decisions based on an objective process that does not discriminate against particular people.
11. Ownership –you own your work and manage your working time which means we're expecting you to:
 - agree with people when things can be done, deliver on time or have the conversation when it can't be done;

- prioritise your own work and or seek support to do this. At times you may need to manage expectations of delivery.
 - plan your work to avoid working excessive hours, as far as you can, and not voluntarily take on extra work which you know will cause you to work excessive hours.
 - check in with your RM and project manager(s) to let them know when you'll be taking time off. They need to know when you'll be unavailable.
12. Resource managers will support you to ensure that you have a full programme of work but are not overloaded.
13. You can utilise the technology to enable you to work more flexibly. It will often be ok to dial into meetings from home or use the video-conference facilities instead of travelling. We're relying on you to make these decisions based on your knowledge and individual circumstances.
14. We recognise that people's lives change and what you chose to do or want to work may change over time for various reasons. Agile working arrangements can therefore evolve and be adjusted so long as they meet organisational need.

Responsibilities

You are expected to take responsibility for managing your own workload and having the conversations you need to enable you to work in the agile way you wish, as far as possible.

Project managers are expected to engage with those working for them on projects to ensure that people are able to work in an agile a way as possible while still delivering the outcomes of the project.

Resource managers are expected to work with you and your project managers to help ensure that you are able to work in the agile way you wish, as far as possible.

How we do it around here...

It's ok to	It's not ok to
<p>Work non-standard hours and not be in the office every day between 9 and 5. Show your availability on your Outlook calendar.</p> <p>If you're part of a group that's required to provide a service during particular times you'll work together to ensure the right level of support is provided</p>	<p>Leave people wondering where you are as your calendar is not up to date and reflective of your movements or availability.</p>
<p>Have boundaries around when you are and aren't available, communicating these to people. Be clear with people when you're working and when you're not.</p>	<p>Feel you have to be on-call 24/7.</p>
<p>Use video conference facilities or dial into meetings by telephone.</p>	<p>Be absent from or decline meetings because it doesn't suit where you're planning to work on a particular day (unless you have a really urgent matter to deal with or have pre-arranged leave).</p>
<p>Rearrange meetings if the meeting invitation is for a day and time that you are not contractually required to work (i.e. a non-working day if you work part-time or compressed hours) or on a day that you've pre-booked as leave</p>	<p>For your calendar to inaccurately show you'll be available on days that you don't normally work or when you're actually on leave.</p>
<p>Agree with your resource manager when would be the most appropriate time to take some time off if you've worked extra hours due to a peak of work (This also applies if you are planning to take flexi-leave).</p> <p>Also if you know you have a busy period coming up plan to work shorter hours in the run up if possible.</p>	<p>Work extra hours on a regular basis without talking to your resource manager and/or project managers about how priorities and time can be managed in a more effective way</p>
<p>Say no and push back if your time is already committed to other pieces of</p>	<p>Say you'll do something by a certain date and then don't deliver without informing those you're working with.</p>

<p>work; we need people to have those conversations.</p> <p>If you find this difficult seek support to have that conversation, for example from your resource manager or people partner.</p>	<p>Regularly work excessive hours because of poor work planning or the reluctance to say no.</p>
<p>To use the office facilities to your advantage i.e. work in the quiet zone if the desk area is too noisy or unavailable.</p>	<p>Think you must be at a desk all of the time you are working in the office.</p>
<p>Talk to the Service Desk if you need equipment at home to make your workstation safe and healthy.</p>	<p>Neglect personal responsibility for your own health and safety needs and assume that it's someone else's responsibility.</p>
<p>Use your initiative and judgement to plan when and where you'll work. You know the work and your own circumstances better than anyone else. When working in a more agile way it is important your resource manager is kept in the loop from a duty of care perspective.</p>	<p>Ask permission for every minor change to your working pattern and/or location.</p>

How we work at Ofwat: Case Studies

These are case studies that illustrate the types of working arrangements we have here.

Agile working	<p>Working from home:</p> <p>Benefits to me: saves me time and money from not doing a two hour commute; can pop out to the post office/shops; can receive deliveries; can attend medical appointments; it's good for my wellbeing.</p> <p>Benefits to Ofwat: I am more productive; I am grateful for the flexibility; I recognise it as a perk which I enjoy; it generates goodwill.</p> <p>How I do it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically start work earlier – quite often as soon as I get up, which suits me on days at home;• I tend to spread my working day out, doing the same hours over a longer period;• I will split my day up into chunks with frequent short breaks to do domestic things (see above);• I get fewer interruptions and meetings take place via conference call – most meetings can adapt to this. Face-to-face is not always required;• I tend to make more phone calls, instead of walking round to see someone – I try not to always resort to e-mail. <p>I'm mindful of my working environment and adopt DSE guidance to ensure my health is protected.</p> <p>Working flexible hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• My typical working day is 10am to 6pm, with a 30 minute break;• I use my Outlook calendar on a daily basis to record exactly what I have spent my time on and colour-code it for my key time@work projects;• I transfer this into time@work and on a monthly basis, it adds this up for me and I compare the hours I have worked with that for the monthly FTE;• This approach is similar to, but not the same as flexitime – it's actually more flexible, because there are no rules about carry forwards or how much time off you can take. If I need to, I could take multiple days back in one go. For example with the build-up of time caused
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	<p>by a recent project. Or, sometimes, this involves simply finishing an hour or two early on a Friday for a couple of weeks. If I'm going to be unavailable for a day or more I check in with my RM and project managers to let them know my plans. I then update Outlook so people know I'm not around.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use my self-discipline not to let my hours build up too much. I recognise that my workload ebbs and flows and I manage my recovery of extra hours and taking of leave in line with this...and in discussion with my RM. I probably don't take it all back, but that's my choice. • Sometimes I finish 'early' on a Friday, especially if I'm tired, and might do some work on Saturday morning instead. • I keep a record, not so I can prove what I'm doing if challenged, but so I can keep an easy record to help me manage my hours so I do not work too many or too few. <p>When I needed to take time-off at short-notice to deal with a flood in my home I managed the situation through moving my working hours around, taking some time off and working at a location nearer to my home. I didn't worry about having to have time 'banked' in order to do this as I knew I could make up some time in the following weeks. I made sure that my RM and project managers were aware of when I was available or not.</p> <p>All of this is enabled by two-way trust and being reasonable. I don't have to ask permission to deviate from what is perceived to be my 'normal working hours' of 10am to 6pm and am trusted to manage changes to this on a daily basis, while getting my work done. I note what I am doing in my diary so anyone can see. In return for this flexibility which works so well for me, I respond flexibly to changes asked of me by Ofwat. Win-win scenario.</p>
<p>Flexible working</p>	<p>I have a formal flexible working pattern written into my terms and conditions of employment, based on a four day working week.</p> <p>I structure my time and work with a focus on outputs rather than working the exact times and days stated in my contract. I take responsibility for managing my own workload.</p> <p>I don't always work all my daily hours in the office as I can't do this with childcare. So I'll often make up the hours at home and sometimes in the evening. I also work extra hours but I appreciate the flexibility I get in return, e.g. time</p>

	<p>back to attend a school event and also flexibility to take time off occasionally.</p>
<p>Flexible working hours scheme (flexi-time)</p>	<p>I work full-time hours, five days a week. I use the flexi-time system to vary my start and finish times, which enables me to deal with childcare arrangements and the unpredictability of my journey time to work. On most days I arrive between 8.45 and 9.15am and generally leave at 4.45pm.</p> <p>I mainly work with internal stakeholders and because I deal with a large amount of queries on a daily basis it's important that people know when I'm not available. I update my calendar on a daily basis and if I'm planning to go on leave I contact my key stakeholders beforehand to let them know so that they can adjust their work planning.</p> <p>In an average month I'll work approximately six hours more than my contracted hours. If I don't need to be in a meeting or available for work with an immediate deadline I may use the 'banked' hours to shorten my working day from time to time. Or sometimes I'll take a flexi-leave day after agreeing a suitable time for this with my RM and project managers.</p> <p>When I accrue extra hours one month I generally take it back the following month so that I'm not carrying forward too many hours into subsequent months.</p> <p>If I find that my working hours and accrual of flexi-time are creeping up I have a chat with my RM. We discuss how I can prevent this and agree a good time for me to take some of this time back. It's my responsibility to make sure that I also discuss my time off with relevant project managers.</p>

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