



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**Committee for Education  
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Parliament Buildings**

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**To: Shane McAteer  
Clerk to the Committee for Finance and Personnel**

**From: Peter McCallion  
Clerk to the Committee for Education**

**Date: 7 March 2014**

**Subject: Flexible Working Inquiry**

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Shane,

You wrote to all statutory committee clerks on 31 January 2014 seeking feedback on the uptake of flexible working in departments etc..

The Education Committee subsequently wrote to the Education and Library Boards; the Department of Education; and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as requested. Some responses are appended.

As discussed, I am content for you to make all further contacts with DE and relevant Arms Length bodies in this regard in future and for the Committee for Education to be copied in to the relevant responses.

Thanks

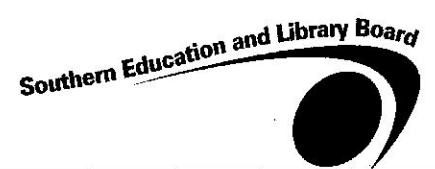
**Peter McCallion  
Committee Clerk  
Enc.**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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Mr P McCallion  
Committee Clerk  
Committee for Education  
Room 241, Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
BELFAST BT4 3XX

6 March 2014

Dear Mr McCallion

**Re: Flexible Working Inquiry**

I refer to your letter of 14 February 2014 and apologise for the delay in responding.

The Board currently has a wide range of flexible working practices in place available to both teaching and non-teaching staff. The Board does not facilitate teleworking but staff can access emails remotely. Teleworking for school based staff would not be a practical option.

Please find enclosed a booklet detailing family friendly working schemes available to non-teaching staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gavin Boyd".

Gavin Boyd  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Interim)

Enc  
/LMcC

Ref: SB/GW

5 March 2014

Mr P McCallion  
Clerk  
Committee for Education  
Room 375, Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
BELFAST  
BT4 3XX

Dear Peter

**Re: CFP Flexible Working Inquiry**

I refer to your correspondence dated 14 February 2014 to Mr Jim Clarke, Chief Executive, CCMS which has been forwarded to me for response.

In the first instance I can advise you that, similar to the NI Civil Service, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools does not have a formal policy on the flexible location of work in terms of technology and premises.

The Council however does have a Family Friendly Scheme, a Career Break Scheme, a Job Sharing Scheme and a Flexible Working Hours Scheme for CCMS officers.

Whilst no formal review of these policies has been undertaken, it would be the Council's view that they have been implemented successfully within the organisation and have had a positive impact on officer morale and commitment.

In addition to these formal procedures, the Council has also operated flexibility in relation to officers work locations. A number of officers have access to laptops which facilitate working from home arrangements when required.

The Council is currently reviewing its technology needs and it is intended as part of this review to purchase laptops with docking stations to further facilitate working arrangements.

In your correspondence you also make reference to the Flexible Working by Teachers Employed in Catholic Maintained Schools. As you are aware there are a wide range of policies relating to flexible working for teachers agreed through the Teachers Negotiations Machinery. CCMS officers advise school leaders and boards of governors in relation to the implementation of these policies however the Council does not have access to statistical information in relation to the numbers of teachers accessing such policies.

**Ref: SB/GW**  
**4 March 2014**  
**Mr P McCallion**  
**Page 2**



**Chief Executive: Jim Clarke**

I hope the above information is of some assistance to you in responding to the Flexible Working Inquiry.

Yours sincerely



**Suzette Bracken**  
**Head of Human Resources, Finance and Governance (Acting)**



**SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION  
AND LIBRARY BOARD**

Chief Executive: Mr Gregory P Butler B Ed M Ed MPA

Peter McCallion  
Committee Clerk  
Committee for Education  
Room 241  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

28 February 2014

Dear Mr McCullion

**CFP Flexible Working Enquiry**

With reference to your letter dated 14 February 2014 regarding the above.

Although the Board has previously explored flexible working in its broader sense, it does not have a formal policy on 'tele-working'.

In a similar manner to other Boards and Civil Service departments in general, the Board has a range of HR policies relating to , for example, alternative working patterns, flexi-time, and flexible retirement.

I hope this explanation is satisfactory.

Yours sincerely

Gregory P Butler  
Chief Executive

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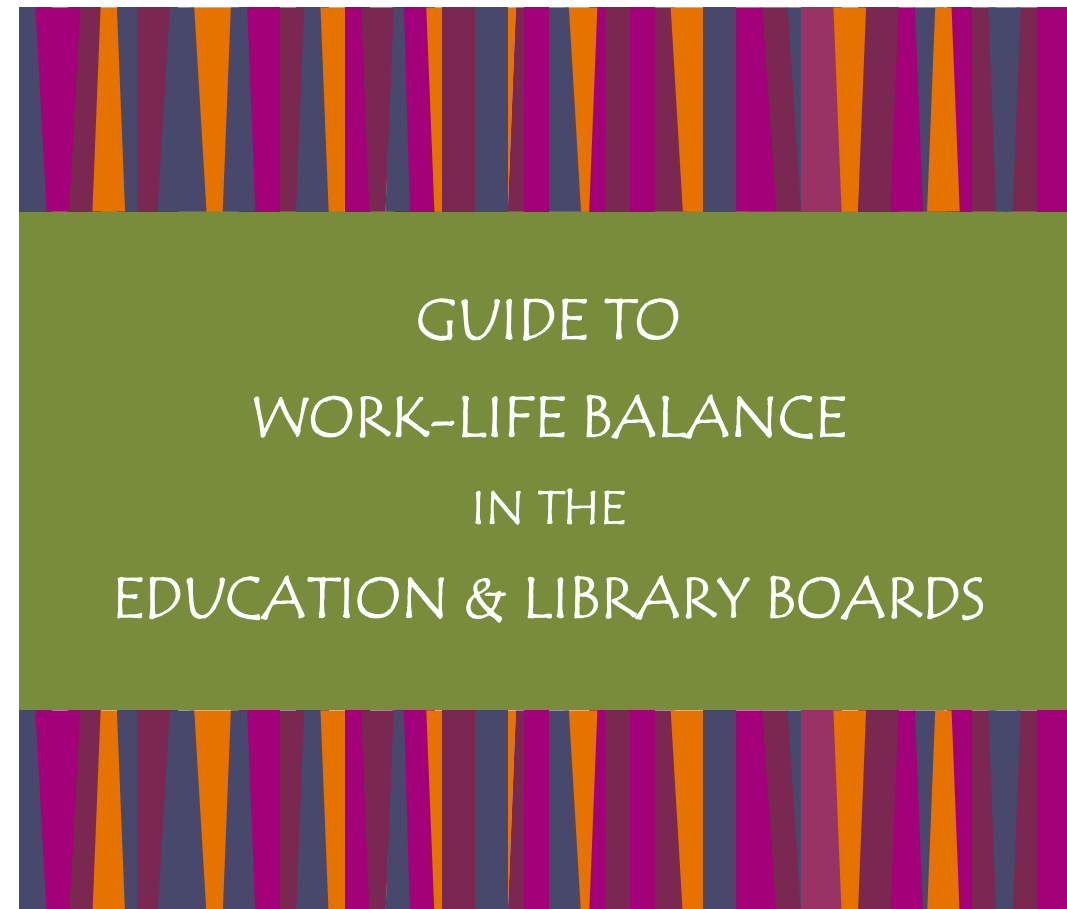
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# GUIDE TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARDS

## Managing Work-life Balance

The business benefits of alternative working patterns along with other work-life balance policies have been highlighted earlier in this booklet. The line manager is the first contact for staff wishing to change to an alternative pattern. As such, managers should actively consider ways in which the requested alternative pattern may be accommodated within their section and if it cannot, they should consider whether any other form or pattern of work would be practicable.

When managing and working with work-life balance policies it is important to take into account the following points:

- ◆ it benefits the organisation and individuals if people feel comfortable to approach you with their requests;
- ◆ people cannot always control their personal circumstances;
- ◆ all applications have to be considered fairly and in accordance with the agreed procedures;
- ◆ other people, some of whom live alone, can also have caring and other responsibilities, but everyone has a life outside work;
- ◆ if you cannot agree to a request, always consider what is preventing you from doing so;
- ◆ what are the line manager's and individual's responsibilities, within this request?
- ◆ consider how the person might feel in making such requests;
- ◆ ensure all requests are considered on an individual basis;
- ◆ Human Resource staff are there to **support** you in making a decision;
- ◆ your reasons for making the decision, whether it is favourable or not, need to be transparent and you will have to justify your decision to the applicant; and
- ◆ ensure that some requests are not treated more favourably than others.

Equally, staff should carefully compare their needs against the needs of the section and consider which pattern would be the most beneficial to both themselves and the section. In all cases where a member of staff proposes reducing their working hours or applying for extended unpaid special leave etc. they should seek advice from their Human Resource department on the consequential change to their salary and pension and other possible implications.

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This guide can be made available, on request, in alternative formats including in large print, on computer disc, by email, in Braille, on audio-cassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those people who are not fluent in English.

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Occupational Adoption Leave and Pay will entitle eligible employees to take paid leave when a child is newly placed for adoption by an adoption agency. Adoption Leave and Pay will be available to individuals who adopt, one member of a couple where a couple adopt jointly (the couple may choose which partner takes adoption leave). The provisions are similar to those granted under the maternity provisions.

## Parental Leave - JNC Circular No. 120

Parental leave of 13 weeks (**unpaid**) is available to all employees who have or expect to have parental responsibilities. This entitlement is available to the biological parents; foster parents; adoptive parents prior to placement; grandparents with a significant parenting role; step-parents; and same sex partners.

The entitlement is extended to 18 weeks (**unpaid**) for employees who are receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for a child for whom they are responsible.

Parental Leave is available for the purposes of caring for a child:

- ◆ up to the age of 8; *or*
- ◆ in the case of adoption, for 8 years following placement for adoption or up to the age of 18, whichever is soonest; *or*
- ◆ up to the age of 18 for those employees who are receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for a child for whom they are responsible.

The terms and conditions under which parental leave may be taken are set out in Circular No. 120.

## Teleworking

An inter-board policy has been developed on Home-based Working. The policy includes an information pack which provides guidance to departments/sections to help them consider the possibility of this type of working within their functional area. Home-based Working pilot schemes are underway in the Southern and Western Boards. More information is available from your Human Resource section.

## FOREWORD

The Joint Negotiating Council (JNC) is committed to the development of employment policies and procedures to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity.

As part of its programme of work aimed at the promotion of equality of opportunity it conducted a major review of the work-life balance policies in existence across the five Education and Library Boards. The review found that, while flexible work patterns are being operated, awareness of the available options is not widespread. The JNC concluded that:

- ◆ the availability of work-life balance policies should be better publicised;
- ◆ a greater awareness was required amongst line managers of the benefits of such policies; and
- ◆ greater co-operation between management and the trade unions in the operation of such policies was required.

The JNC's work-life balance policies have been updated to reflect best practice. This booklet will hopefully give staff and managers a useful insight into the range of opportunities available to reach a better balance between work and outside life.

I hope you find it useful.



**John Curran**  
Management Side Secretary  
Education & Library Boards



## Introduction

Achieving a balance between the demands of work and the demands of our non work-life is a challenge for most of us and presents real problems for many people. Getting the balance right between work and the other things in life, whether it is caring for children or elderly relatives, studying, working in the community or even just a chance to meet up with friends, can be difficult to achieve. Getting it wrong can lead to stress and unease. Finding and sustaining a balance between our work and other commitments is crucial to our well-being and there are solutions available.

Since the early 1990s the five Education and Library Boards have had in place job-share and part-time working arrangements. These policies were often referred to as 'Family Friendly' and tended to reinforce the perception that such policies are for working parents with young children. However, choice, control and flexibility in working conditions and personal fulfilment outside work are equally important to employees who are - *married, single, male, female, parents, carers, those without dependants, regardless of grade or age.*

## What is Work-life Balance?

Work-life balance therefore involves seeking a balance between an individual's work and their life outside work. Helping employees to achieve a better balance between work and life is an important way of supporting business delivery and enhancing an individual's performance.

scheme depending upon service stipulation and declared intention to return to work. If an employee does not return to work for the three month period the board will be entitled to recover 12 weeks at half pay. For those employees not intending to return to work, Statutory Maternity Pay will be payable for the next 12 weeks.

Every pregnant employee has the right to paid time off to attend for ante natal care and must produce evidence of appointments if requested.

## Paternity Leave - JNC Circular No. 118

In order to be granted paternity leave you must be the biological father of the child and/or be married to or the partner of the child's mother and expect to have responsibility for the upbringing of the child. You must be taking time off to support the child's mother or care for the child.

Staff who meet the above requirement, irrespective of service, are entitled to 1 weeks paid leave at full pay (maternity support leave<sup>1</sup>).

Staff who have **26 weeks** continuous service by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of confinement are entitled to an additional weeks leave, paid at the current rate of Statutory Paternity Pay if they meet the qualifying requirements.

## Leave for Adoptive Parents - JNC Circular No. 119

Provided that an employee has complied with the notification procedure he/she will be entitled to 26 weeks ordinary adoption leave. This may be paid or unpaid (depending on eligibility), followed immediately by up to 26 weeks additional unpaid adoption leave.

An employee may qualify for Occupational Adoption Pay and/or Statutory Adoption Pay. Employees in the boards enjoy an enhanced scheme depending upon service stipulation and declared intention to return to work.

If an employee does not return to work for a period of at least three months following adoption leave, the board will be entitled to recover 12 weeks at half pay.

<sup>1</sup> Staff other than the partner of the child's mother (e.g. father, sister, mother) may apply for maternity support leave (one week at normal pay) if the mother nominates them as carer in these circumstances.

## Special Leave

Special Leave is not an automatic right in all circumstances and you can be asked to cover part of an absence, through other leave provisions if it is appropriate. There are two main categories of Special Leave:

- ◆ Entitlements e.g. Paternity Leave, Bereavement Leave; and
- ◆ Other discretionary leave e.g. Special Leave (with or without pay) dependant on the individuals circumstances.

## Employment Act 2002

Under the Employment Act 2002 working parents who are employees have new and additional rights, intended to allow them to be able to spend more time with their young children. The new statutory measures in force in Northern Ireland since 6 April 2003 include:

- ◆ up to 26 weeks paid maternity leave and a further 26 weeks unpaid leave to expectant mothers;
- ◆ two weeks paid paternity leave for working fathers;
- ◆ adoption leave and pay, similar to maternity and paternity leave for parents adopting a child who is newly placed with them;
- ◆ facility for parents with children under the age of 6 or disabled children aged under 18 to request flexible working arrangements.

As a result of these legislative developments a substantial review of the existing Joint Negotiating Council circulars was undertaken. The following revised circulars have been issued.

## Maternity Leave Provisions - JNC Circular No. 117

Provided that an employee has complied with the notification procedures she will be entitled to 26 weeks maternity leave. This may be paid or unpaid.

If an employee has at least 26 weeks continuous service at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of confinement they are entitled to a further 26 weeks additional unpaid maternity leave.

An employee may qualify for Occupational Maternity Pay and/or Statutory Maternity Pay. Employees in the Boards enjoy an enhanced

### Work-life Strategies:

- ◆ view flexible working as something to benefit both the organisation and the employee;
- ◆ place **joint** rights and responsibility on employees and managers to find workable solutions;
- ◆ embrace the needs of people at different stages of the lifecycle;
- ◆ recognise the diversity in the workplace;
- ◆ respect equality of opportunity of all; and
- ◆ emphasise the business **and** social benefits to be gained.

### Work-life balance is about looking at:

- ◆ how much time people work;
- ◆ when they work;
- ◆ where they work;
- ◆ breaks from/in work;
- ◆ choice and security in work; and
- ◆ balance in the relationship between working time and time outside work.

### Work-life balance can help achieve:

- ◆ better customer service;
- ◆ improved productivity and performance;
- ◆ less stress, absenteeism and illness;
- ◆ improved return on investment in training;
- ◆ better staff morale;
- ◆ improved recruitment and retention;
- ◆ increased innovation and creativity;
- ◆ a more diverse workforce; and
- ◆ greater equality of opportunity.

## What's available?

This booklet seeks to draw together the wide variety of ways in which staff may, while remaining in employment, reach a better balance between work and outside life. It is therefore a document aimed at ensuring both managers and staff are aware of the opportunities available; can make better informed decisions; and have realistic expectations about what is and is not possible. It is, however, only an overview and much more detailed information on Joint Negotiating Council Circulars and other associated policies etc. is available from the board's Human Resource section.

### Job Sharing Scheme

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Job Sharing is a particular form of part time working where two people agree to divide the duties of the full-time post between them. The manager gets the benefit of full cover for a post, while the individuals are able to work together to share the hours for the post. The full-time salary and accompanying terms and conditions of service are divided proportionately between the job-sharers. Staff who are job sharing will be provided with the same opportunities for training as full-time staff.

### Alternative Working Patterns

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Most people's idea of an alternative working pattern is someone who works part-time i.e., only mornings or perhaps job shares with a partner to cover a full-time post. However, it is much more than that.

For example, term-time is a flexible working arrangement which allows part-time and full-time staff to take unpaid leave, normally during the school holidays. The salary and accompanying conditions are abated to reflect the reduction in working hours smoothed out over the year and paid in twelve monthly payments.

An alternative working pattern is open to all employees subject to the operational needs of the board. It is important, however, that the proposed working pattern will meet the business needs of the board/

section and practicalities such as opening hours of the building, opening hours to the public etc. are taken into account. Under these arrangements an agreement to amend the working pattern will result in a permanent change to the contract of employment.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, it is a requirement to make reasonable adjustments for employees who have a disability. This includes changing working hours where they are a substantial disadvantage to the person with a disability.

### Flexible Working Hours (Flexitime)

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Flexible Working Hours (FWH) provides a flexible system of attendance for staff. The number of hours which people work on FWH is the same overall as those worked under fixed times. There is scope however for individuals to vary their times of arrival and departure from work, to vary the length and timing of their lunch break and to take time off if they work extra hours. This flexibility should be achieved without adverse effect on the overall efficiency of departments or on an individual's service to the public.

The same opportunity is now provided to staff who work agreed alternative patterns to agree individual flexi hours, where practicable.

### Leave Provisions

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In addition to whatever working pattern you follow, another way in which you can further enhance your work-life balance is through leave, both annual leave and, where appropriate, special leave.

- ◆ Staff who work full-time receive 12 days public/statutory holidays per year.
- ◆ Staff who work an alternative work pattern receive a proportion of the full-time equivalent.

### Annual Leave

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Every member of staff has an annual leave allowance. Annual leave is intended to give staff time off for relaxation and leisure. It is in the interests of everyone that staff should have periods of rest and recuperation and you should use your full entitlement within each year.