



JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (JNC) FOR YOUTH AND COMMUNITY WORKERS

GUIDANCE ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Introduction

The JNC believes that local authorities, not for profit and voluntary sector employers of youth and community staff should be committed to developing and implementing purposeful work-life balance policies and to support this has developed the following national guidance. A lack of work-life balance can have an adverse impact on all staff and reduce their chances of good health and their ability to balance workload and other activities. Work related stress is more prevalent in the public service sector, such as education; health and social care; and public administration.¹ Therefore any measures that can be taken to reduce such risks should be considered.

Work-Life Balance

1. Work-life balance is about helping staff combine work with their personal commitments and interests. Positive work-life balance is an essential factor in developing workforce planning, staff effectiveness and satisfaction, which in turn supports young people. Where possible employers should adopt policies that enable staff to balance their working lives with their personal needs, interests and caring responsibilities.
2. In ensuring effective work-life balance policies it is important to note that youth services do not operate standard working hours and employees work flexibly in various environments and across multidisciplinary teams.
3. A proactive approach to work-life balance issues can yield significant benefits, including reducing stress, reducing sick leave, boosting morale, increasing job satisfaction and improving recruitment and retention. If an employer helps their employees balance their work and home life, this can be rewarded with loyalty and commitment allowing an employee to focus on their work and develop their career.²

¹ Work related Stress, Anxiety and Depression Statistics in Great Britain 2016, Health & Safety Executive, <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress/stress.pdf?pdf=stress>

² Flexible and working life balance, ACAS, June 2015 - <http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/jj/m/Flexible-working-and-work-life-balance.pdf>

Shift Planning

4. The JNC's position is that shifts and rotas should be properly scheduled with sufficient notice of shifts so that staff are able to plan their lives, while recognising the need to provide a flexible and effective service. As services evolve this should be left to the discretion of local management arrangements involving consultation and ideally consent with employees. There may be the occasional requirement to change working arrangements at short notice, but again this should be managed in consultation and where possible with the consent of employees.

There is a need to ensure appropriate rest periods between shifts and that the provisions of the Working Time Directive (11 consecutive hours' rest, in a 24 hour period) are applied correctly. While this is the legal framework, managers in multidisciplinary teams should be aware of different working patterns that may be related to the professional role when planning cross team interaction and there should be good communication between employers and employees. An example of effective planning is that where an employee works late into the evening then an early morning meeting the following day for that individual should be discouraged.

Workload and TOIL

5. TOIL forms a core part of work-life balance and is included in the JNC national agreement ('The Pink Book'). Flexibility is required to allow staff to be able to take time off within time limits and employers should have effective local planning and management arrangements which take account of the particular out of hours needs of youth services. Local authorities as large employers will generally have an over-arching framework on TOIL that covers all council services. This is likely to set limits on how much TOIL can be accrued. This is a sensible arrangement for both employers and employees and requires local negotiation and agreement.

Case Studies

Debbie is a senior youth worker, in a West Midlands local authority on a 37 hour standard working week. Once a week, Debbie works on Thursday night till 10pm; this is an additional five extra hours each week. Debbie usually claims back time off in lieu, to accommodate these extra hours. Debbie is allowed to determine in advance whether she wants to take these hours at the start of the day, so she can start later in the afternoon, or at the end of the day, starting at her usual time and leaving early. Alternatively, she can take the hours back over the following week.

Manish is a youth worker employed in an East Midlands JNC Pink Book local authority. He has a weekend residential activity on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. In order to compensate Manish working on Friday evening and at the weekend, his employer allows him to take a Tuesday evening, Wednesday and Thursday as TOIL in advance to compensate him for working at the weekend.

Practicable Support for Flexible Working

6. There are a variety of approaches that can be taken to flexible working that would include part-time working, job share flexitime, annualised hours, compressed working, term-time working and time accounts). As well as these structural approaches, both Sides of the JNC encourage the use of practical steps to support more effective working practices and a better work-life balance. Examples of this would be:
 - Telephone or video conference facilities for staff where meetings are hard to attend in person;
 - Managers of multidisciplinary teams should be aware that many youth workers work non office hours and different working patterns and it is helpful to be flexible in terms of the timing of team meetings;
 - Purchase of equipment, for example phones, laptops, tablets etc., to help staff work more flexibly and reduce the need to come into an office to deal with administrative tasks.

Training

7. Good practice entails working with all staff, including those who work part-time, to provide appropriate training to enable them to do their jobs effectively within standard hours. Training, including CPD, should ideally take place during the working day but may be required to take place out of hours given the nature of the service. An evening session of training is included as one of the maximum eight sessions per fortnight for staff.

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