Work Life Balance - Flexible Working Guidelines

Background

The A1 Group is committed to providing a work environment in which employees can achieve a balance between their work life and home life by using flexible work practices. We endeavour to reasonably accommodate an employee's need for flexibility, subject to business requirements.

Flexible working can benefit both the employee and the A1 Group as it:

- Helps retain experienced and valuable employees
- Can increase employee productivity, motivation and morale
- Can create a range of employment opportunities to suit changing business and individual needs

Scope

These guidelines cover all employees employed by the A1 Group. They are non-contractual, subject to change or withdrawal at any time at the absolute discretion of the A1 Group.

You may make a flexible working request to your manager, subject to the following principles:

An employee may make a flexible working request if they have been continuously employed with the A1 Group for at least 12 months. This includes the application for a career break, which is covered in a separate policy.

The A1 Group will give due consideration to all flexible working requests made under this policy but there is no automatic right to a flexible working arrangement.

Normally Employees may only make one flexible working request within any 12 month period, unless there is a change in role or personal circumstances.

Normally Employees should have been rated as at least 'valued performer' (or historical equivalent) in their most recent performance review, if applicable. They should not be undergoing a Performance Improvement process when applying for flexible working

Employees should have a good attendance record (as deemed by the Director) and should not be subject to disciplinary procedures when applying for flexible working

This does not replace any legal entitlements to flexible working.

These principles cover two types of flexible working:

1. Ad Hoc Flexible Working
2. Formalised Flexible Working

Procedure

You will need to put in writing your request for flexible working, specifying the change sought, the reasons for the change and your assessment of the impact of the change on your role, your department and the business generally. Before you submit you may wish to consider the following:

If your request is agreed there may be a trial period of 3 months when the new working arrangement is reviewed. All approved requests will be reviewed every six months, to ensure that the arrangement continues to be beneficial to both the employee and the business

If your request means that you will be working fewer hours, your pay and benefits will reduce accordingly.

You will need to consider how your colleagues will manage if your working arrangements are changed.

Once you have made your request, your manager will consider your request on its own merits, taking into account all relevant circumstances and the business needs of the A1 Group. Where requests for flexible working can be easily accommodated these may be agreed without the need for a formal meeting and this will be confirmed in writing, as soon as is reasonably possible and within 21 days of receipt of your written request.

If, however, your manager has concerns about your request and feels that he/she would like to discuss your request further, a meeting will be arranged to take place and a written response will be provided within 21 days of receipt of your request.

In general, your manager will not decline your request for flexible working without a meeting to discuss your request. Other working arrangements may be explored and/or a trial period of 3 months could be agreed. Your Director and HR Consultant should be involved in this decision. If your request is declined, written notice of this decision and the reasons for it will be provided to you within 21 days of receipt of your request.

Roles and Responsibilities

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that these guidelines are applied within their own area and the procedure is followed when considering a request for flexible working.

Working from Home

There are particular considerations which apply to employees making a request to work from home, as follows:

Equipment and Facilities

In order to be considered for working from home the employee must have a laptop or a PC at home that is suitable for business use. Laptops will not be provided unless the employee is eligible for one under normal circumstances If an employee elects to work from home, the staff member is responsible for providing a telephone, computer, high speed internet access

and other office equipment as is necessary and also ensuring confidentiality, particularly related to client information. It is also the employee's responsibility for the upkeep and on-going costs of such equipment. The A1 Group will not be able to fund the provision of such equipment and does not believe it reasonable on business grounds to do so.

Health & Safety

Employees will face similar hazards in the home environment as those in the office, and the same care should be taken when working from home as in the office. The employee is responsible for using equipment and furniture in a safe way and ensuring the room where the employee is working is both appropriate and safe. As such, the A1 Group requires that the proposed home workplace comply with occupational health and safety requirements at all times. This will be guided by means of a checklist completed (attached to this Policy) and signed by the employee. A safety audit of the selected premises may also be necessary. The employee must consent to the A1 Group having access by a specified person to visit or inspect the home workplace at mutually convenient time. Please refer to the A1 Group Health and Safety Policy for further information about your health and safety obligations.

Data Protection

When working away from the A1 Group offices it is important to remember that the employee has responsibility for ensuring that A1 Group information is kept secure and only used for the purpose it was intended.

Dependent Care

A working from home arrangement is outcome driven. Such an arrangement may assist with but is not considered a substitute for dependent care. The staff member must be able to work as efficiently and effectively as an equivalent employee working at A1 Group premises. Therefore, the A1 Group is entitled to refuse to grant a request to work from home until sufficient evidence is provided that caring arrangements can be met while the employee is working from home

Personal Aspects to Consider

Employees will need to consider how they will work from home without as much physical interaction with their manager and other workmates. The most essential part of working from home is the level of organisation and self-discipline it requires. Competing pressures at home and work need to be understood and addressed at the beginning. Part of the requirement for successful working from home is to be proactive and plan further ahead than you may be used to.

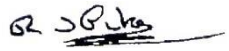
Trust and Confidence

Working from home, even on an ad hoc basis, requires a level of trust and confidence between the employee and their manager. Greater personal responsibility will develop through building trust between the employee and their manager to avoid abuse of this flexible working benefit. However, should the manager become aware that the employee is not completing tasks on time as agreed or not at all the arrangement may be withdrawn and may result in disciplinary action?

Any queries on the application or interpretation of these guidelines should be discussed with the HR Consultant.

Revision

The Company will make all employees aware of this Company Policy.

Signed: 	Date: 1/1/25

Russell Pike - **Managing Director A1 Group**

Next Review date 1st January 2026