

# Flexible working from April 2009



From April 2009, anyone with a child up to the age of 16 will have the right to request flexible working. The changes extend the existing rules which were first introduced in the Employment Act of 2002. Some businesses fear an influx of impossible demands during an economically difficult time.

But flexible working does not need to be a headache for small businesses. Handled in the right way, flexible working can even help your business thrive during the economic downturn.

The changes are straightforward. Currently qualifying employees can request flexible working to care for a child under the age of six, a disabled child under the age of 18 years old, or a person aged 18 or over who is a partner, relative or adult who lives at the same address of the employee, and is in need of care. The changes simply allow the parents or carers of children over the age of six and under 17 to request flexible working too.

Flexible working does not necessarily mean shorter hours. It applies to a wide range of working practices. It can include flexi-time, annualised hours, job sharing and home working. It might include shorter hours, longer hours, later starts and school-term time employment only.

Negotiating a flexible working package could greatly enhance your business. Accepting requests for shorter hours, for example, may be all you need to cut costs and avoid redundancies. This would save your business on redundancy fees and, arguably more valuable, help the morale of your workforce. It may also help you hold onto your best staff. Once a request has been agreed the employee's contract changes permanently.

Are you currently dealing with flexible working request and would like some HR support to know you are following the right process, give the The HR Dept a ring on **0845 202 1999** or email us at [info@hrdept.co.uk](mailto:info@hrdept.co.uk)