

SCRA FLEXIBLE WORKING STRATEGY

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to outline SCRA's vision for flexible working.

It will outline how we will expand the choice available to, and improve the service we provide to, children and families and to our partners.

It will indicate how we will support staff aspirations for an enhanced work/life balance by increasing choice in the how, when and where of working life.

It will advise as to how we aim to meet our Property Strategy and environmental policy commitments.

It will explain how we will reduce the revenue costs of travel expenses and office space.

It will offer, at a time of reducing budgets, an opportunity to reduce staffing cost whilst maximising employment opportunities.

This Strategy will inform decision making over the next 8-10 year period.

There are a number of drivers for this strategy:

- deepening understanding of the service needs and aspirations of children, families and our business partners
- Agreement in partnership with UNISON, that we would deliver significant improvements in flexible working arrangements for the benefit of SCRA staff.
- Equality duties – recognition that adherence to a traditional office-based 9-5 model of work increases inequality in that it does not recognise the needs of carers etc
- Reducing revenue and capital budgets

The Business Case for Flexible Working:

Improving efficiency

Making use of our Property capacity – ensuring that where we have buildings they are able to be used for larger sections of the day.

Exploiting the opportunities offered by IT to overcome the physical restrictions of office-based work; to reduce carbon footprint through reductions in travelling and building occupation; to facilitate home-working.

Reducing Revenue Costs

Greater access to flexible working offers the opportunity to reduce revenue and environmental costs associated with travel and office space.

Reduced staffing costs offer an efficient alternative to voluntary redundancy programmes or voluntary early retirement – ensuring that, at a time of budget pressure, the organisation has the ability to retain maximum numbers of qualified and experienced staff.

Increase staff morale and motivation/increase service quality and productivity

Employees who find their domestic/personal needs increasing may consider leaving an organisation which fails to offer alternative work patterns and good work/life balance opportunities. Employees who can achieve this control experience reduced pressure and stress and greater satisfaction at work. Employees who are more satisfied are more productive and also provide a higher quality service.

By increasing flexibility – thereby minimising time and location related stressors - SCRA will increase productivity and contribute to service improvement.

Meeting the Equalities Duties

The traditional office-based, commute to work, 9-5 working day is a pattern that predominantly discriminates against women. By facilitating greater flexibility and respecting and valuing the diverse lives employees lead SCRA will go some way to meeting the employer's equality duty.

Statutory Provisions

Statutory rights are found in: **The Employment Rights Act 1996** (ERA) as amended by:

- the **Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations 2002**;
- the **Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaint and Remedies) Regulations 2002**;
- the **Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaint and Remedies)(Amendment) Regulations 2006** and also **2007**

What we currently provide:

SCRA currently exceeds statutory minimum provisions in relation to flexible working. However this does not mean that SCRA has achieved either nationwide consistency in application of the current flexible working policy or that it could not make significant improvements by expanding the organisational definition of 'flexible working'.

What we want to provide:

Universal staff access to flexible working – whether flexibility refers to 'the when' (time element) of work or 'the where' (location aspect) of work or to a combination of both.

The presumption will be that all requests to work flexibly will be granted.

This universal right to work flexibly does require regulation to ensure SCRA meets operational requirements.

How SCRA will deliver flexible working:

Value staff choice and expand service delivery methods:

- Invest in technology which will support remote or home-working
- Offer a variety of work patterns across the day, week, month or year
- Invest in training for our managers to help them provide support which is tailored to meet the more independent needs of a flexible worker

- Increasing the availability of hearing sessions out-with the traditional 9-5pm Mon-Fri office pattern.
- Increasing access to SCRA staff out-with the traditional 9-5 pattern.
- Increasing volume of work performed out-with the traditional 9-5 pattern.
- Resource-sharing across existing teams

Teams must be able to work flexibly to maximise benefits for the service and to support choice for teams, in how, when and where services are delivered. Flexible working and information technology will be used to support increased access to home-working and remote-working, ultimately reducing need for numbers of dedicated workstations within our offices and to decrease the number of offices required. Open-plan offices will maximise building use. A new casework tool (planned to be completed by 2012) provides an electronic file that can be accessed anywhere – facilitating changes in ‘the where’ of working and also reducing/removing the need for paper files and storage space.

If the Hearing location does not serve as an SCRA office, staff will be provided with the ability to work there, before and after the Hearing, with network and printing facilities. This will help make best use of staff time and will minimise travel. We will also seek to work collaboratively with partners, where this is possible, by sharing accommodation to minimise costs and travel time.

Summation:

The SCRA emphasis is upon providing a high quality, modern service which harnesses technological advance to liberate staff from the current one-size fits all approach to work. It is this model which will assist us to concentrate our reducing revenue and capital expenditure upon service provision – helping us to retain as many experienced staff members as possible – and assisting SCRA to provide a service which is both sensitive and responsive to the needs of children, our staff and our partners.

By facilitating increased uptake of flexible working patterns and practices we move closer to achieving that vision.