



TIPS FOR PRACTITIONERS

If you have identified that you would like to work flexibly, the following will help you to make the case for those arrangements to your firm and implement any agreed flexible working arrangements.

1. Assess your situation

- First, determine your need for flexibility and what form of flexible working will best meet your needs, taking into account your work and working style;
- Find out what your firm currently provides in the form of flexible work practices. Identify and review any existing policies. If there are no policies in place, then identify the kind of flexibility you want and be prepared to pioneer it;
- Consider the benefits to both yourself and your employer. You are more likely to be successful if there are benefits for your employer as well as for you;
- Consider any expected challenges for yourself and your law firm and how these can be mitigated. This will require you to be realistic about possible costs for your employer, for example setting up an office at home.

2. Create strategies

- Identify several options that will help you to handle your work responsibilities and that will work for your supervisor, the team and the client. These options should plan for everyday as well as emergency situations;
- Develop a communications plan. This should include information on the following: when, where and how you will be available to be contacted when you are not in the office; the best way to continue to communicate with clients; a plan for how messages can be left and how often these will be checked; whether you will be available to attend meetings in person and any arrangements that will need to be made for regular staff meetings; information storage and access; and how supervisors, team members, clients and others will give feedback on how your new schedule is working for each of them.

3. Make your business case

- Once you have considered your strategies for working flexibly, advise your partner or manager that you are considering requesting a flexible working arrangement. Your partner or manager should have an opportunity to consider the issues arising from the proposed arrangement prior to the discussion;
- Identify the flexible working options you are seeking and why;
- Give examples of successful implementation of other flexible working options;
- Outline the benefits compared with the perceived problems and costs;
- Outline the plans and steps to be implemented to minimise any impact on your work responsibilities, the team and the client;
- Outline your developed communications plan.

4. Once proposed arrangement is approved

- If this arrangement has been approved your contract of employment may need to be modified and it can be useful to document the expectations of those involved in the form of a detailed Flexible Work Plan.
- The Flexible Work Plan should be regularly reviewed and modified if necessary. Your partner or manager and colleagues should have regular opportunities to provide feedback.