Flexible working requests – reps' checklist

Here's what you can do support members in requesting flexible working and to make sure your employer responds reasonably and fairly.

1. Encourage members to use the right to request

- ☐ Make sure members who may need it, such as those returning from maternity, adoption, or other family leave, are aware of the right to request.
- ☐ Support members to make requests following your employer policy and the law and check their request includes all the information a statutory flexible working request must have.
- ☐ Link requests where relevant to a protected characteristic (e.g. a women returning from maternity leave) and use discrimination law to support their request.
- ☐ Encourage disabled members who need changes to their hours or location to ask for them as a reasonable adjustment (not just a flexible working request), as this gives them stronger rights under the Equality Act.

2. Check your employer updates their policies

- ☐ Make sure policies match the new rules.
- ☐ Check managers know they must properly consider and explain refusals.

3. Use flexible working as an organising opportunity

- ☐ Bring together workers with similar needs – for example parents or carers – to push for wider pattern changes.

4. Negotiate a policy that goes beyond the minimum

- ☐ Aim for one where *all* workers have a right to flexible working by default, and your employer must clearly explain and justify any exceptions – that way people don't have to stick their heads out as individuals.
- ☐ Get your employer to mention flexible working options in job adverts – it will help them attract more applicants and diverse staff.

5. Push for equality and highlight discrimination

- ☐ Keep track of who's getting refused by role, grade, and, where you can, ethnicity, disability, and gender.
- ☐ Look for patterns that might reveal discrimination.
- ☐ Use the new stronger rules to challenge bad practice.
- ☐ Check for unfair treatment of people who've made a flexible working request, as research shows some groups – for example Black workers – are more likely to be treated badly when they ask for flexibility.