

**MERTHYR TYDFIL**  
**COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**



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**County Borough Council**  

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**Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol**  
**MERTHYR TUDFUL**

**TIMEKEEPING AND ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Date approved by Council: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of implementation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of review: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 1. Overview

Punctuality and regular attendance are essential to ensure optimal productivity and proper service delivery. In order for the authority to achieve these goals employees are required to maintain a satisfactory record of attendance.

The Time and Attendance (TA21) system is part of suite of software used by the authority to administer timekeeping and attendance, manager and employee self-service, leave, flexitime, payroll, and expenses functions. The TA21 system facilitates the recording of attendance through signing in and out electronically using a smart card at designated terminals or via a log entry at a PC (in HR21). These are known as making clocking entries on the system.

Signing in and out electronically (clocking) enables the system to record times of arrivals and departures and compare the hours worked against the working pattern which applies to that employee.

The system is also used to monitor and organise holidays, time off in lieu, flexi-leave, sickness absence and medical appointments.

The details on all employees are administered through software systems, although not all staff sign (clock) in / out electronically. The systems have functionality that may permit overtime to be claimed electronically through the use of online timesheets, which managers would be required to authorise in order to feed directly into employees' pay.

## 2. Responsibilities

### All Employees

Employees have a contractual obligation to attend work to fulfil their contract of employment. They must follow the appropriate notification procedure when they are unable to attend work due to sickness and for following the correct procedures when taking leave.

The responsibilities of every employee include:

- Ensuring identity badges are kept securely and used to register with the system. Failure to do so may be considered a disciplinary offence.
- Informing the Human Resources Department immediately if a badge is lost or stolen. Persistent losses may be deemed a disciplinary issue due to the impact on security.
- Signing in on arrival and signing out on departure. It is also necessary to sign in and out at break and lunch times.
- Following business absence routines when working away from base.
- Ensuring they arrive in time to start work at the beginning of their shift or core time and to resume work after breaks in a timely manner.
- Ensuring their timekeeping is of a satisfactory standard. Lateness is considered misconduct and dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. Please also refer to section 8.

- Ensuring sickness absence routines are followed and fit notes are supplied for all periods of absence in excess of 7 calendar days. Failure to do so could result in pay being affected.
- Always seeking permission from your line manager both in advance and on each occasion if you need to work part of the day from home
- If using business absence at the end of a day and you do not return back to the office, you must put in an adjustment to the time you actually finished the working day as soon as possible on your return to work.

**The time and attendance system is the basis of pay so any abuse of it will be considered as fraudulent and will result in disciplinary action. Fraud is considered gross misconduct in the Disciplinary Policy.**

Examples of abuse of this policy include but are not limited to:

- Signing in or out on behalf of a colleague
- Failing to sign out for breaks
- Falsifying or accepting incorrect time records
- Clocking out on business absence for non-work activities – e.g. taking a smoke break, making purchases (including buying milk, sugar, tea, coffee, biscuits, etc.), even if it is for use in the workplace
- Clocking out on business absence and accepting credit to a later time than actually worked, even if some of that absence was for business purposes.

### Managers

The responsibilities of every Manager include:

- Identifying and addressing any problems if an employee is not adhering to their responsibilities or failing to comply with their working patterns. Any manager failing to address breaches of this policy will themselves be subject to disciplinary action.
- Informing HR of any changes in structure or working patterns which must be agreed with HR before implementation.
- Approving (or declining, if appropriate) entries created through the system (e.g. leave, expenses, and overtime) within specified deadlines.
- Authorising the payment of overtime or the accumulation of time off in lieu.
- Administering adjustments including holidays, absence, medical appointments and additional hours.
- Ensuring the validity and accuracy of all adjustments. The accuracy of all adjustments is the responsibility of the authorising manager.
- Ensuring that the Policy is being followed by each employee (the manager is not permitted to authorise anyone to operate outside of the policy other than in occasional minor matters. If a circumstance is identified that an employee needs to have a different working pattern, HR need to be informed so the deviation from the Policy is recorded and is approved)
- Ensuring all relevant paperwork relating to sickness absence is received and supplied to HR Admin/Payroll in a timely way.
- Conducting and documenting return to work interviews and ensuring all forms are submitted to HR Admin.

- Ensuring identity cards are returned to HR Admin on termination of employment.
- Ensuring that your employees comply with the flexible working policy, including identifying and putting into place remedial action where their balances fall outside out the flexitime limits.
- Managers are not permitted to agree for their staff to work outside of the Timekeeping and Attendance Policy. If circumstances warrant consideration of this, Human Resources should be contacted for authorisation for a temporary amendment to the Policy rules, if necessary.

### Human Resources (HR) and Payroll Department

HR and Payroll are responsible for:

- Issuing new starters with an identity badge on their first day (or soon after) which must be used for signing in and out and arranging door access with ICT
- Arranging suitable access to the system for all employees.
- Advising Managers in the use of the system.
- Any changes to structure and work patterns.
- The cancellation and destruction of leavers' identity cards.

### **3. Recording Time**

For a normal working day, employees should personally record their arrival through the automated signing in system when they arrive in the morning using their personal identity card. They should record their departure in the system when they leave. This also applies to any breaks during the working day.

All staff should take a minimum of 30 minutes for lunch and are required to record their departure and arrival back from lunch. It is not acceptable for staff to record their departure then immediate arrival, forcing the system to default to a lunch period of 30 minutes. The Working Time Regulations enforce a period of rest for workers and this should be followed correctly.

### **4. Business Absence**

Some of the Authority's employees need to undertake Council business away from their work base e.g. site visits, meetings etc. Where such absence is necessary it should be recorded via the Business Absence Procedure, which will automatically allow for and record the absence.

If on Business Absence to other Council premises with a time and attendance terminal, employees should sign in on arrival, sign out (BA) on departure, continuing this process on further visits.

### Business Absence Default Times

Signing out as business absence and signing in again on return will credit the time absent on business.

If signing out on business absence and not returning that day a default leaving time of 5:00pm will be recorded. It is a disciplinary offence if this is incorrectly used, either in whole or in part (see Section 2).

The employee, if unable to sign out at the end of the day due to being in a meeting off Council premises, and the employee uses the default business absence of 5:00pm, they must put an adjustment in for the correct time the meeting ended within a few days of returning to the workplace.

Where business absences are over the lunchtime period, the minimum 30 minutes will be deducted automatically and will not be re-credited.

Any amendments to start, finish or lunchtimes must be made through a miscellaneous adjustment with a note of explanation.

Full day business absences must be recorded using a manual adjustment to the system. Any time spent working from home must be identified as such.

All adjustments are subject to authorisation by the line manager.

## **5. Other Absences**

Other absences e.g. annual leave, sickness etc. will be credited through the system, when book and approved on HR21 (the employee and manager self-service system) or through the authorisation of leave in accordance with the terms of the appropriate / special leave policy.

Doctors and dental appointments, and appointments with non-hospital specialists, should be kept in employees' own time where possible. If this is not possible, core time only will be credited where such appointments occur during these times. Confirmation of appointment details may be requested by the Manager in order to verify appointments in core/working time. Any adjustments need to be made using the Time and Attendance (TA21) system.

Core time is 10am – 12 noon, and 2pm-3pm

*Early morning appointments* – where an employee arrives at work after 10.00am there will be a credit for the period of absence from 10.00am onwards, excluding 30 minutes lunch break where the absence extends beyond 2.00pm. Any credit will be made through a manual adjustment with a note of explanation.

*Late afternoon appointments* – where an employee leaves work prior to 3.00pm there will be a credit for the period of absence between leaving work and 3.00pm. Any credit will be made through a manual adjustment with a note of explanation.

Hospital appointments/Health screening (where the employee has no influence on appointment times) – time will be credited for the whole absence time (excluding 30 minutes lunch break, where appropriate). Credit will be taken back to 8.30am, and will not be credited past 5.00pm.

None of these absences will be credited for more than a standard day.

Smoking – employees may only take a break for smoking outside of working time / core hours and must sign out during this time.

## **6. Adjustments**

Employees should ensure that by use of the 'notes' section of the automated system, any automatic or manual adjustments have a clear explanation of the reason for the absence.

The following list, whilst not exhaustive, identifies some of the main causes likely to be encountered:

- For each day / half day of annual leave (for a full-time employee working five days per week) – a credit of 7 hours and 24 minutes or 3 hours and 42 minutes as appropriate, will be automatically recorded (the amount will be pro-rated for reduced hours staff). NB: The hours must be entered as a decimal in the HR21 system so 7 hours and 24 minutes is 7.40 hours and 3 hours and 42 minutes is 3.70 hours.
- 'Special' approved leave such as Bereavement and Family Support Leave will be credited for the duration of the approved absence not exceeding standard hours for each day of absence and in accordance with the times specified in the relevant policy.
- If an employee is taken ill during the working day, as long as they have attended work for at least 4 hours there will be a credit of remaining hours made up to the maximum of a standard day. Half the day will be classed as sick leave, the other half a working day.
- Where the Council grants a concession of an early finish, e.g. Christmas Eve, an automatic credit will be allowed for the period between the agreed finishing time and the end of the standard day. Prior notification of such concessions will be given to staff.
- Absences at approved courses, conferences, day release or prior authorised home working etc. will be credited as appropriate, normally a standard day.
- Keying in/out omissions or an inability to record through equipment failure should be credited, as appropriate.

## **7. Overtime credited as Time Off In Lieu (TOIL)**

Overtime which is payable as TOIL can be added to a Flexible Working Hours balance. Staff should be aware that the normal rules regarding carry over balances would apply. Therefore staff who add TOIL to their balance and are 15 hours or more in credit at the end of the accounting period will lose the excess hours.

Alternatively staff can agree the appropriate time off with their supervisor / manager and claim the hours under a miscellaneous adjustment with a note of explanation.

All overtime and the taking of TOIL is subject to the prior approval of the supervisor/manager.

## **8. Fixed Work Patterns**

Fixed work patterns involve working to pre-determined shift patterns and apply to employees engaged in customer service roles with specific operating times. Such roles do not lend themselves to flexible start and finish times because of the business requirement to operate departments during advertised hours.

Under fixed work patterns, breaks will be factored into the working shift.

Only approved hours worked in excess of the shift pattern will be accumulated and taken as time off in lieu (TOIL).

If an employee is identified as having worked less than their contracted hours over a period of two weeks or more, the manager should identify why this is occurring and if necessary see HR Advice as to how to resolve the issue.

## **9. Flexible Work Patterns (Flexitime)**

Flexitime is a system whereby employees are able to choose (within certain rules as set by the Service Manager) the time they start and finish work. It is not necessary to work the same hours every day, although it is important that there is some regularity so the efficiency of the service does not suffer. Employees may build up a credit or debit of hours over or below their contracted time as long as it does not exceed the rules laid down by the Council and can be accommodated by the service area.

In some Services, the manager may prefer to set the work pattern with little deviation allowed. The use of flexi time is not an absolute right and must be used with the exigencies of the Service being considered.

The Flexible Working Hours Scheme has been in existence for a number of years. Its introduction and continued operation is designed to assist employees and the Council to meet its demands of providing efficient and effective services, whilst appreciating the growing demands that are brought to bear on the time of employees as individuals.



A fundamental element of the scheme is that employees are recording the time they are at work. This means that they should be confident that they are undertaking constructive work and not just be present at the workplace. Anyone abusing this principle undermines the inherent mutual trust in the scheme and will be subject to disciplinary action and/or removed from the scheme.

A manager may take an employee off the scheme at any time if they do not consider the employee as using the scheme correctly (e.g. not working to the required work pattern, being down on their hours too often, not being productive within the working day).

## 10. Definition of Terms

Bandwidth	The earliest starting and latest finishing times. These are 7.00am and 7.00pm.
Core Time	The periods you must be present in work. These are 10.00am to 12.00noon, and 2.00pm to 3.00pm.
Flexible Time	The periods within which you may vary your starting and finishing times*. These are 7.00am to 10.00am and 3.00pm to 7.00pm respectively.
Flexible Lunch Time	Lunch breaks must be a minimum of 30 minutes and taken between 12.00 noon and 2.00pm.
Standard Time	Contracted hours are 37 hours per week (full time staff), which equates to 148 hours per four-week accounting period.
Debit Hours	The number of hours worked less than standard time. Employees must not go below 10 hours per 4 week flexi period.
Credit Hours	The number of hours worked in excess of standard time. Employees can carry over up to 15 hours per 4 week flexi period.
Carry Over	At the end of the accounting period any credit or debit allowed within the rules will be automatically carried over to the next period. Any credit in excess of the allowed 15 hours will be lost. Any debit balance must be made up during the next accounting period – any debit balance in excess of 10 hours must be discussed with the manager and an agreement made to make up within the first five days of the next accounting period.
Accounting Period	A pre-determined working period of 4 weeks, over which hours are measured. There are usually 13 accounting periods in a year.
Standard Day	A standard day, for full time staff, is 7 hours and 24 minutes; a standard half-day is 3 hours and, 42 minutes.

Holiday Year	The holiday year runs from 1st April to 31st March each year.
Annual Leave Entitlement	24 days plus bank holidays. After 5 years' service 29 days plus bank holidays.  Annual leave for anyone working less than 37 hours per week is calculated in hours (pro rata).

\* In conjunction with the needs of the service/managers discretion.

## 11. Flexi-Leave

Employees who accumulate credit time may take this as Flexi-Leave which is booked through the Time and Attendance system and must be authorised by a manager. In any accounting period a maximum of 1 full day or 2 half days may be taken by arrangement with the line manager as long as the applicant has time in credit.

No more than one full day should be taken in each 4 week period. If the flexi leave is booked in advance, it should not be more than 4 weeks in advance to ensure that the balance is managed so as to be in credit for the day off.

## 12. Termination of Employment

When an employee terminates employment with the Authority, they must ensure that the appropriate number of contracted hours has been worked at the date of leaving. For Flexitime employees this should be a nil balance at the date of leaving if possible.

If there are any credit/debit balances by the end of the last day these will be subject to an adjustment to the final pay, or other method of recovery if there are insufficient monies to recover any overpayment on termination.

Employees must return their identity badge when leaving.

## 13. Withdrawal of the Flexitime Scheme

If for operational reasons the Flexitime Scheme is not fit for the purposes of the department, or has an adverse effect on the provision of the service, it may be withdrawn at the discretion of the manager. The HR Department and Trade Unions will be consulted on any decision to withdraw the scheme including the reasons(s) for its proposed withdrawal

The Scheme will be withdrawn from any individual who through their own actions has not operated the Scheme correctly within the requirements of this policy. The

employee will then not be entitled to enjoy the benefits of the Scheme and will be required to work fixed hours. Withdrawal of the scheme to individuals may occur if the employee is subject to a disciplinary investigation/receives a warning or due to a less serious but relevant misuse of the scheme.

Staff taken off flexi will still need to make clocking entries to record their start and finish times of their fixed working pattern. Staff should only cease using the clocking system when they are based at locations that have no clocking machines.

#### **14. Suspension of the Flexitime Scheme**

The Scheme can be suspended if the Corporate Management Team feels that the operation of the Council's services may be detrimentally affected by the use of the Scheme. This may particularly be in times of emergency or inclement weather.

#### **15. Annual Leave**

Annual leave must be booked through the HR21 (Employee and Manager self-service) system, or other method if the employee does not have access to HR21, giving at least twice as much notice as the period of leave required. All leave applications must be authorised by a manager. The maximum period taken at any one time must not exceed 10 working days except by special arrangement. The Council reserves the right to fix 2 days of the leave entitlement to be taken at specified times.

At times annual leave has to be booked with short notice. This is permissible as long as the manager has given permission.

#### **16. Other Leave**

Other types of leave, e.g. compassionate leave, parental leave, family support leave, can must be arranged through the Human Resources Department in accordance with the Special Leave Policy. Managers can authorise leave applied for through the special leave policy but can only authorise online sickness, annual leave and flexi-leave.

Managers and employees must make themselves aware of the types of leave, those that are paid and those unpaid.

#### **17. Security**

It is the responsibility of every employee to ensure appropriate security measures are taken to prevent the loss or theft of identity badges, or unauthorised access to personal information on the Time and Attendance system. With this in mind passwords should be changed regularly and the HR21 system will prompt changes every 90 days.

## **18. Abuse of the Policy**

Separately from any disciplinary action that may be taken against an employee or manager, anyone found to have benefitted from any incorrect time recording or false or exaggerated business absences will be found to have breached this policy. Any such breach will be treated as an overpayment to salary.

The overpayment to be recovered will be the value of the pay representing the amount of time gained or, if the exact period(s) gained cannot be exactly calculated, a reasonable assertion of this value. The overpayment will then be recovered from the employee, either in flexi time, annual leave, or as a deduction from salary.