

## **Employee well-being policy**

RVA aspires to foster a working environment that protects the physical and mental well-being of its staff. This policy document provides a framework within which RVA will encourage and facilitate working practices and environment that support employee well-being. It aims to draw upon good practice, recognising existing informal arrangements, and to be flexible rather than prescriptive.

It is vital of course that each employee, regardless of their role, makes a full contribution to RVA, but it is recognised that flexibility and diversity of working practice derives mutual benefits. There is abundant evidence that a flexible approach to working patterns, for example, may have significant organisational benefits, including reduced absenteeism, improved morale and greater productivity.

This policy is applicable to all staff but recognises the diversity of contractual and other working arrangements that exist. The policy is complementary to established policies including:

- Disciplinary
- Grievance
- Managing absence

The support outlined within this policy are not contractual and are permitted at the discretion of the trustees and only when available.

### **Work-life balance**

Work-Life balance is very prominent in the public mind and is closely associated with the prevention of unhealthy work-related stress. By taking steps to improve the working environment through effective, flexible and sensitive management RVA will hope to enable individuals to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of work.

It is generally accepted that a flexible approach to working arrangements reaps benefits for both employer and employee. There are many different ways of structuring working patterns including, but not limited to, the following:

- Part-time working;
- Term-time only working;
- Flexible working hours;
- Compressed working hours
- Annualised hours;
- Job sharing;
- Working at or from home.

Annex 1 describes how some of these flexible working arrangements might operate. Certain employees already have a legal right to request flexible working in recognition of particular circumstances, e.g. caring responsibilities for young children, disabled children and adult dependants; however RVA will give due consideration to any reasonable request for flexibility but employees must appreciate the constraints that might demand a refusal or modification of the request, such as:

- The burden of additional costs.
- A detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand.
- The inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff.
- The inability to recruit additional staff.
- A detrimental impact on quality or performance.
- An inability to match the hours requested with sufficient work.
- Planned structural changes.

Requests to work flexibly should be made formally, following a procedure set out in Annex 2.

### **Promoting well-being**

RVA is committed to creating a workplace that embraces flexibility and gives its staff the best opportunities to manage their time and commitments. It is vital

therefore that this message is communicated to staff, to breed confidence that requests for flexibility will be given appropriate consideration.

Important that managers, and colleagues, are alert to the signs of stress and intervene at an early stage where possible. It is also vital that staff inform their line manager at an early stage if they are finding their work commitments too demanding, even if the reasons for their difficulties are external to RVA.

Staff should be encouraged to attend training & development [where budgets allow] including:

- Managing stress in others.
- Absence management.
- Working under pressure.
- Time management.
- Understanding and preventing harassment.
- Helping others cope with loss.
- Mental health first aid.
- Trauma informed theory and practise.

## **Annex 1**

### **Examples of flexible working arrangements**

It is essential for the successful operation of any flexible working hours scheme that appropriate levels of cover are maintained; operation of the scheme is conditional upon this and it is the responsibility of the CEO to ensure compliance.

It should also be noted that the scheme is best-suited to staff who work regular hours and may not be suitable in areas where working hours are dictated by service provision.

- Core hours are 9.30 a.m. to 12.00 noon and 2.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.
- Your working hours will not normally start earlier than 8.00 a.m. or finish any later than 6.00 p.m. Unless for specific meetings and events when TOIL will apply.
- Specific roles may require regular work outside of core hours.
- At least 30 minutes must be taken for a lunch break between 12.00 noon and 2.00 p.m.

- It is permissible to carry a balance of upto +/- 7 hours from one calendar month to another. It is not permissible to carry a deficit forward for two consecutive calendar months.
- Any abuse of the scheme will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

### **TOIL – Time off in lieu**

Most RVA staff are required to work in the evenings, and occasionally at the weekend, to accommodate events, meetings and training. This entitles them to TOIL. Staff should be encouraged to take their accrued TOIL within 2 weeks. TOIL should not be used to make up for time taken to catch up on work unless exceptional circumstances apply [e.g. meeting a funding deadline]. Staff should inform the CEO if they are struggling to manage their workload within their working hours.

### **Compressed hours**

This is where an employee works their total agreed hours over fewer working days. For example, a five-day working week is compressed into four days or the employee works nine days out of ten in a fortnight.

## **Annex 2**

### **Requesting Flexible Working**

The procedure for requesting flexible working will be as follows:

1. A member of staff wishing to request flexible working should submit a written request to the CEO outlining the reason for the request. The request should state the proposed effective date, the changes required, the effect these changes may have on RVA and how this might be dealt with.
2. Within 28 days of receiving the written request the CEO will arrange to meet with the member of staff to discuss the request and how best it might be accommodated. The meeting will provide an opportunity to consider alternative working patterns should this be necessary. The member of staff will have the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a work colleague or a trade union representative.
3. The CEO will advise the member of staff of his/her decision within 14 days of the meeting, providing detailed reasons for any variation to the request or refusal. (Where a member of staff is exercising their legal right to request flexible working, the request can only be refused on specific grounds.)
4. A variation to a work pattern may be made on a permanent or time-limited basis. It may be advisable to include a trial period in any agreement.

5. In circumstances where a member of staff is exercising a legal right to request flexible working, and the application is refused or amended, the member of staff will be informed of their right of appeal. An appeal should be made in writing to the Chair of Trustees, stating the grounds of appeal, within 14 days of being informed of the decision.
6. An appeal meeting will then be arranged to hear the appeal within 14 days of receipt of the appeal letter. The member of staff will have the right to be accompanied to the appeal meeting by a colleague or a trade union representative.
7. The outcome of the appeal will then be communicated to the member of staff within 14 days of the appeal meeting.
8. No further request for flexible working can be made until a period of 12 months has elapsed following the last request, unless trustees give permission.

**Additional support introduced in 2020 in response to the ongoing impact of Covid 19**

- Access to an Employee Counselling Helpline: 0344 8939012
- Clinical supervision for all staff working with vulnerable people
- Time during the week for the team to meet informally for peer support.
- Access when available to coaching service to support employees through life changes they may be facing.

**To be reviewed – September 2021**