

## New flexible working bill becomes law

2 years ago



*Insight from Charlotte Parr, director at Churchill, and Hazel Bedson, marketing and operations director at Service Works Global. Charlotte and Hazel explain the key points of the new flexible working law and how FM can support clients who may see increased flexible working in their workforces.*

On 20 July, the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 received Royal Assent, meaning the bill is now law.

The new legislation makes provisions to the existing law with regards to the “rights of employees and other workers to request variations to particular terms and conditions of employment, including working hours, times and locations”.

Key parts of the new legislation are:

- All workers have the legal right to request flexible working from day one of their jobs.
- Workers can request flexible work twice per year (instead of one).
- The employer must respond to a request within two months.
- The employer must consult with the employee if they decline the request (this is currently not a requirement).

The law has been adapted because of the flexible working boom that we have experienced in the last three years. There are of course plenty of roles where flexibility will always be limited (for example, a teacher will still need to teach during school hours), but employers now have an increased duty to agree to flexible conditions or have a good reason not to.

As we have already witnessed with current hybrid working patterns, there is a two-way impact for the FM sector. Flexible work can impact service provision, but the sector can also take a proactive approach and

support clients to manage their buildings as efficiently as possible.

#### Service provision

This monumental change with the implementation of the flexible working bill means that the state of flux the FM market has been adapting to is very much here to stay. Since the pandemic, FM providers have been working hard to create flexible solutions for our clients that meet the ever-changing demands of the office, but one thing is for certain: now more than ever, we must play our part in creating destinations of choice.

Modern working is about so much more than the 9 – 5, it's about creating workspaces that give people the freedom to create, to feel safe and comfortable and to increase their performance.

We are working hard at Churchill to create sustainable destinations and a future-proof environment, which means more collaboration with service partners and building users alike and creating the same sense of community you would feel in your hometown, all while looking at data trends and working with service partners on flexible delivery solutions.

Flexible working gives people the freedom to choose where they work best, and as an industry, we stand on the edge of a new evolution of workplace experience – what an exciting time to play our part.

#### Data-driven insights

While the new legislation is undoubtedly a huge leap forward in terms of inclusivity for employees, the potential of more staff requesting flexible work could create challenges for business leaders that are unprepared for fluctuating levels of office occupancy.

Smart technology and data will be critical tools for leaders that want to understand how and when their spaces are being used. The benefits are numerous, from improved sustainability by only using energy when and where required, through to cost savings by scheduling cleaning and maintenance schedules around quiet times in the office.

Tools can be extended for employee use for tasks such as a desk and room booking. Even if more employees opt for flexible work, they have an expectation of their workplace and technology can ensure that is met, making their day run much more smoothly. At Service Works Global we have been supporting clients with their hybrid policies for many months and expect to see demand for data insights increase in light of the new law.

#### Proactive partnerships

Regardless of the services you offer, clients benefit most from FM partners when we flag industry news and provide proactive suggestions. This new law has not been widely publicised, so bringing this to the attention of your clients, ensuring we are future proofing our industry together. All while offer advice on how you can provide support and adapt our service should there ever be further building occupancy changes.

The law also bears some consideration for our own companies. Flexible work isn't just about location – it can mean hours or other conditions of employment. Our sector can set an example by showing how we

can offer flexibility to our employees without compromising on service.