

Responding to a flexible working request

Three letters cover the whole process: acknowledge, decide, and (if needed) answer the appeal. The decision letter is the one that matters - it must name which of the eight statutory grounds applies and explain why, because a refusal that just cites a ground without reasons is what tribunals pick apart. All three are below, ready to copy.

Letter 1 - acknowledging the request

Copy from here

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your flexible working request dated [date], asking to [summarise the change requested - e.g. reduce to four days a week, working Monday to Thursday] from [proposed start date].

I'd like to arrange a time to talk it through with you so I understand how it would work in practice and whether there's anything we need to work around. I've suggested [date and time] - let me know if that doesn't suit and we'll find another.

You're welcome to bring a colleague or trade union representative with you if you'd like to.

We'll give you our decision, in writing, by [date - within two months of the request]. If we need longer we'll ask you first and agree a new date.

Best wishes, [Name, role]

Letter 2a - approving the request

Copy from here

Dear [Name],

Thank you for meeting me on [date] to discuss your flexible working request.

I'm pleased to confirm we're approving it. From [start date], your working pattern will be [set out the new pattern precisely - days, hours, start and finish times, location].

This is a permanent change to your contract of employment. All your other terms and conditions stay the same. [If salary changes pro rata, state the new figure and how it was calculated. If holiday entitlement changes pro rata, state the new entitlement.]

[If a trial: We've agreed to trial this arrangement from [date] to [date]. We'll review it together in the week of [date]. If it works as we both expect, it becomes permanent from [date]. If it doesn't, we'll discuss the options together before anything changes.]

Please sign and return the enclosed copy to confirm you accept the change.

Best wishes, [Name, role]

Letter 2b - refusing the request

Copy from here

Dear [Name],

Thank you for meeting me on [date] to discuss your flexible working request of [date], in which you asked to [summarise].

I'm sorry to tell you that we're unable to approve the request. Having considered it carefully and discussed it with you, our decision is based on the following statutory ground[s]:
[Name the ground - e.g. "detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand"]
[Explain specifically why it applies here. Be concrete: "The team covers customer calls until 6pm. Two of the three people in the team already finish at 4:30, and the request would leave Thursday and Friday afternoons uncovered. We looked at moving the cover to [X] but that would leave the same gap on [Y]."]
[Where relevant: We did explore [alternatives considered - e.g. a compressed week, a later start on two days] but [why they didn't resolve the issue].]
If you'd like to appeal this decision, please write to [name] by [date - inside the two-month window]. You can also make a further request in [month], twelve months after your original one. I know this isn't the answer you were hoping for, and I'm happy to talk it through.
Best wishes, [Name, role]

Letter 3 - the appeal outcome

Copy from here

Dear [Name],
Thank you for your appeal of [date] against the decision on your flexible working request.
Your appeal was heard by [name, role - ideally someone not involved in the original decision] on [date].
Having reviewed the original decision and the points you raised - [summarise the grounds of appeal] - our decision is to [uphold the original decision / approve the request / approve it in the following modified form: ...].
[If upholding: explain what was reconsidered and why the original ground still applies.]
This is our final decision on this request.
Best wishes, [Name, role]

How to adapt these

- Write the reasons yourself. The bracketed explanation in letter 2b is the only part that can't be templated - it's the part that has to be true of this request, in this team.
- Consult before you draft 2b. Consultation is mandatory before refusing, and a decision letter written before the conversation reads exactly like what it is.
- Offer the trial. A three-month trial in letter 2a resolves more of these than any refusal ever does.
- Keep the tone human. Somebody asked for help arranging their life around work. Even a no should sound like it came from a person.
- Diarise the deadline the day the request arrives - see the two-month timeline.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.