



# Community and Non Profit Sector Work-Life Balance Survey



2006 Report

- 56% of respondents work more than 36 hours a week with 30% saying that they felt pressurised to work long hours, with many working more than 48 hours a week.
- 35% of respondents claim their employer displays a negative attitude towards work-life balance.
- 99% of respondents think that having a good work-life balance improves their general well being.
- 85% of respondents felt that improving their work-life balance would improve their level of stress.
- 71% of the respondents thought that pursuing other interests and family life were more important or much more important with the remained saying that they were equally important.
- 60% felt unable to balance their work with other things that they would like to spend more time doing.
- Just under 40% had not heard of the right to request flexible working.
- Only 25% had requested flexible working.
- 37% say that they are currently not able to spend enough time with their families and balance their work.
- 45% say that they are unable to spend enough time with their spouse/partner due to balance of their work.

# Introduction

by Rachael Maskell, National Officer

A healthy work-life balance is crucial to sustainable working. The Community and Non Profit Sector of Amicus is campaigning to promote the opportunities for staff to achieve a better work-life balance across the sector. We know that the long hours culture is prevalent across many organisations. Often it is difficult for workers to carry out their job in contractual working hours. Employees in the Community and Non Profit Sector are often so dedicated to the campaigns and services they work on that they sacrifice their time and health to get the job done. Many people feel compelled to work excessive hours to meet service demands, often on a voluntary basis. One of the main reasons for this is that insufficient funding in the sector, driven by the marketisation of services, puts employees under huge pressures to meet their moral commitments to service users over and above that of the work. Amicus believes that better awareness among members and management of the positive impact that a flexible work-life balance can achieve would benefit all working in the sector.

Many employees in the sector have not been aware of their rights to request flexible working, and almost all would like a better work-life balance to spend a little more time on something for themselves or their family. The campaign looks at taking a pro-active approach to this agenda, promoting all the options available to enable the employee to work flexibly. At Amicus we are actively promoting better work-life balance and flexible working. We want to open up more opportunities for all employees to request and be granted flexible working that suits their needs. We aim to help you get more satisfaction out of life and have a more varied lifestyle.

Throughout this report there are quotes from those who responded to the survey highlighting some of the major issues facing the sector for a good work-life balance.

## Sample and Methodology

This survey is based on the responses of 348 Community and Non Profit Sector employees. They represent a good spread of responses from all ages between 16 and 65. The responses also correlate with gender trends in the sector as just under 70% of those that responded were female. Amicus is confident that this represents a robust statistical return on which to base the analysis of the survey below.

**High workload:** "I work from home part time with flexible hours but tend to work many extra hours to keep up with workload."

## Why do we need a good work-life balance?

Research shows that a good work-life balance can affect a person socially, physically, mentally and emotionally. Serious health conditions such as stress, fatigue, mental illness and heart disease can all derive from working long hours<sup>1</sup>. The impacts of these problems are far reaching, affecting co-workers, friends, family and society as a whole. It is difficult to calculate the full costs to society when you include the costs of health care provision and sick leave, the effects on children and other dependents, partners and friends.

In contrast a good work-life balance helps people to achieve a better more healthy and fulfilling life. Time off gives people the option to pursue other interests such as volunteering or continuing adult education and developing their skills through part time courses or degrees. It should also never be forgotten that social and leisure time are crucial to human wellbeing and happiness.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics show that a work-life balance for employees leads to benefits for employers as well. Happy and rested staff have higher morale and motivation, lower rates of absenteeism and are more efficient and productive<sup>3</sup>. The Health and Safety Executive estimates that a total of 12.8 million working days were lost to stress, depression and anxiety in 2004/5<sup>4</sup>. It is therefore in an employer's interest to develop good work-life balance policies for their staff.

Lastly tackling the long hours culture and time away from families can have an impact on wider societal problems such as literacy and education provision, social welfare, employment and crime<sup>5</sup>. While a good work life balance can make it easier to arrange child care and care of dependant adults, the long hours culture exacerbates gender inequality in pay and the division of labour in the home<sup>6</sup>.

**Use of toil:** "My employer lets people work lots of unpaid hours, although puts strict restrictions on toil"

<sup>1</sup> The Time of Our Lives (Amicus, 2003)

<sup>2</sup> Nick Isles, The Joy of Work? (The Work Foundation 2004)

<sup>3</sup> Robert Taylor, Britain's World of Work – Myths and Realities (ESRC, 2002) and Nick Isles, The Joy of Work? (The Work Foundation 2004)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/why.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Families and work in the twenty-first century, (Joseph Rowntree Foundation September 2003).

Also More time for families: tackling the long hours crisis in UK workplaces (TUC/Working Families report August 2004)

<sup>6</sup> *Out of time, why Britain needs a new approach to working-time flexibility* (TUC 2006)

## Long hours culture in the Community and Non Profit Sector

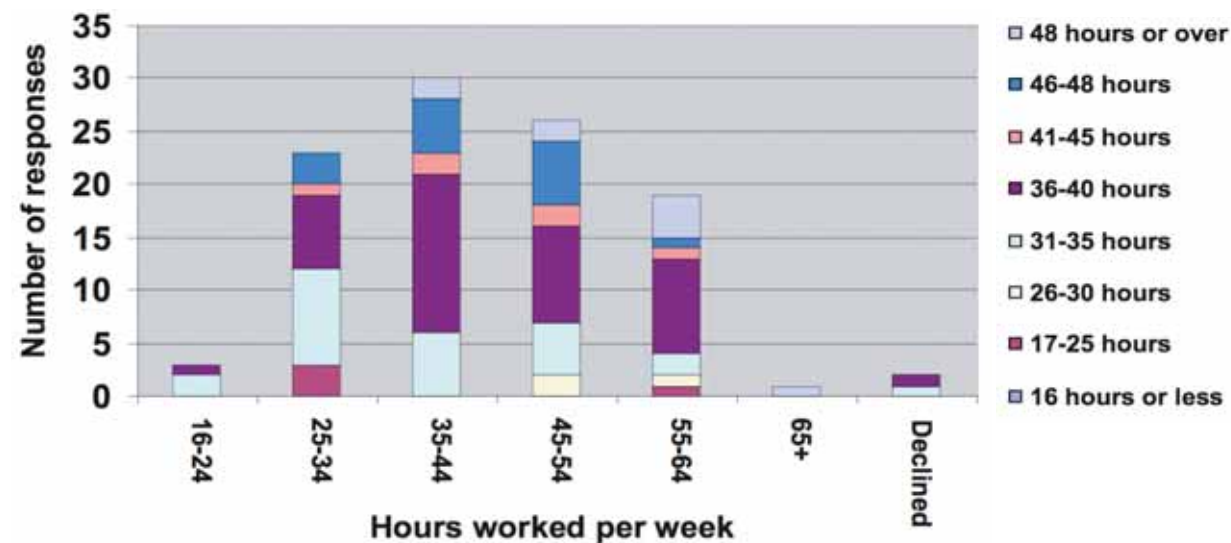
Many people in the Community and Non Profit Sector are expected to work longer hours than their contracts dictate, often unpaid. Amicus' survey results show that 30% of respondents felt pressured to work long hours. The figure was higher for men with 41% feeling pressured to work longer hours. Also 56% of those survey said that they worked more than 36 hours a week with 15% working more than 46 hours a week. The European working time directive sets 48 hours as the maximum that anyone should work per week but the British government has been doggedly defending its right to opt-out. The result is that many people in the UK feel pressured to work extremely long hours. UK employees work the longest hours in Europe. The average for full timers in the UK is 43.5. In France it's 38.2 and in Germany 39.9, yet both are more productive than the UK.

### Pressure to work long hours:

"It is implied that if they don't wish long hours their careers will suffer this is actually detrimental to creativity and productivity."

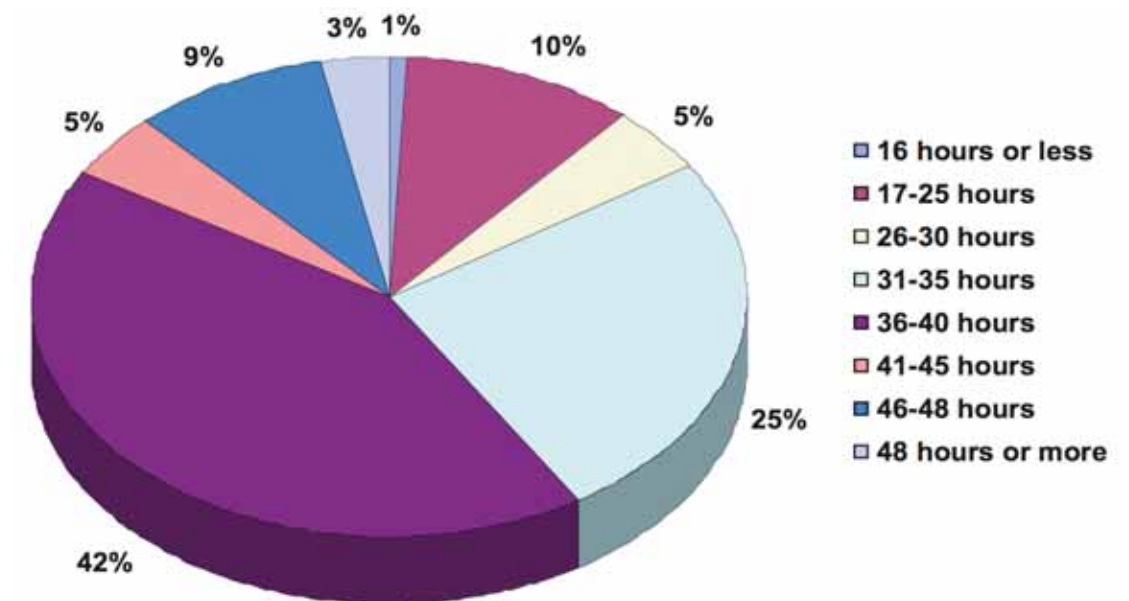
"People not seen to work in excess of contracted hours do not get contracts extended."

### Hours worked per week relative to age



**Lack of financial support:** "Some working at home allowed but with no financial supports for the costs of equipment and running costs. "

### Average hours worked per week



## Employers and a work-life balance

65% of respondents claim that their employers display a positive attitude towards work-life. Poor work-life balance policies are often due to a lack of understanding amongst management and employers about the benefits of flexibility. As highlighted above, a poor work-life balance can lead to stress, depression and other mental health problems, as well as a detrimental impact on family life. Overwork is definitely making us sick – a DTI survey found one in five men (19 per cent) had visited the doctor because of stress, rising to one quarter (23 per cent) of over 40s<sup>7</sup>. It is therefore important that managers are properly trained and understand the needs of their employees.

**Employer's attitude:** "Everything seems to be work, work, work. Seems to be a crime to have a life outside of work"

A good work-life balance can benefit the organisation as a whole by improving staff morale and loyalty, increasing productivity and staff retention as well as reducing absenteeism, sickness and stress. The Work Foundation claims that employee costs are often at least 50 percent of a company's expenditure, with replacement costing anything from £3,000 to £10,000 depending on seniority and level of technical skill<sup>8</sup>. It is therefore very much in an organisations interest to keep employees healthy and happy.

### Mixed messages:

"The culture is to work long hours but also to hear about work-life balance."

"Management wants to do it in principle but is obsessed with the idea that they will lose control or be ripped off"

<sup>7</sup> DTI The second work life balance study. Results from the employers survey- executive summary 2003

<sup>8</sup> Employers for a Good work-life balance, FAQ, [www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk](http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk) (run by the Work Foundation)

<sup>9</sup> Short Term Funding, Short Term Thinking, (Amicus 2006)

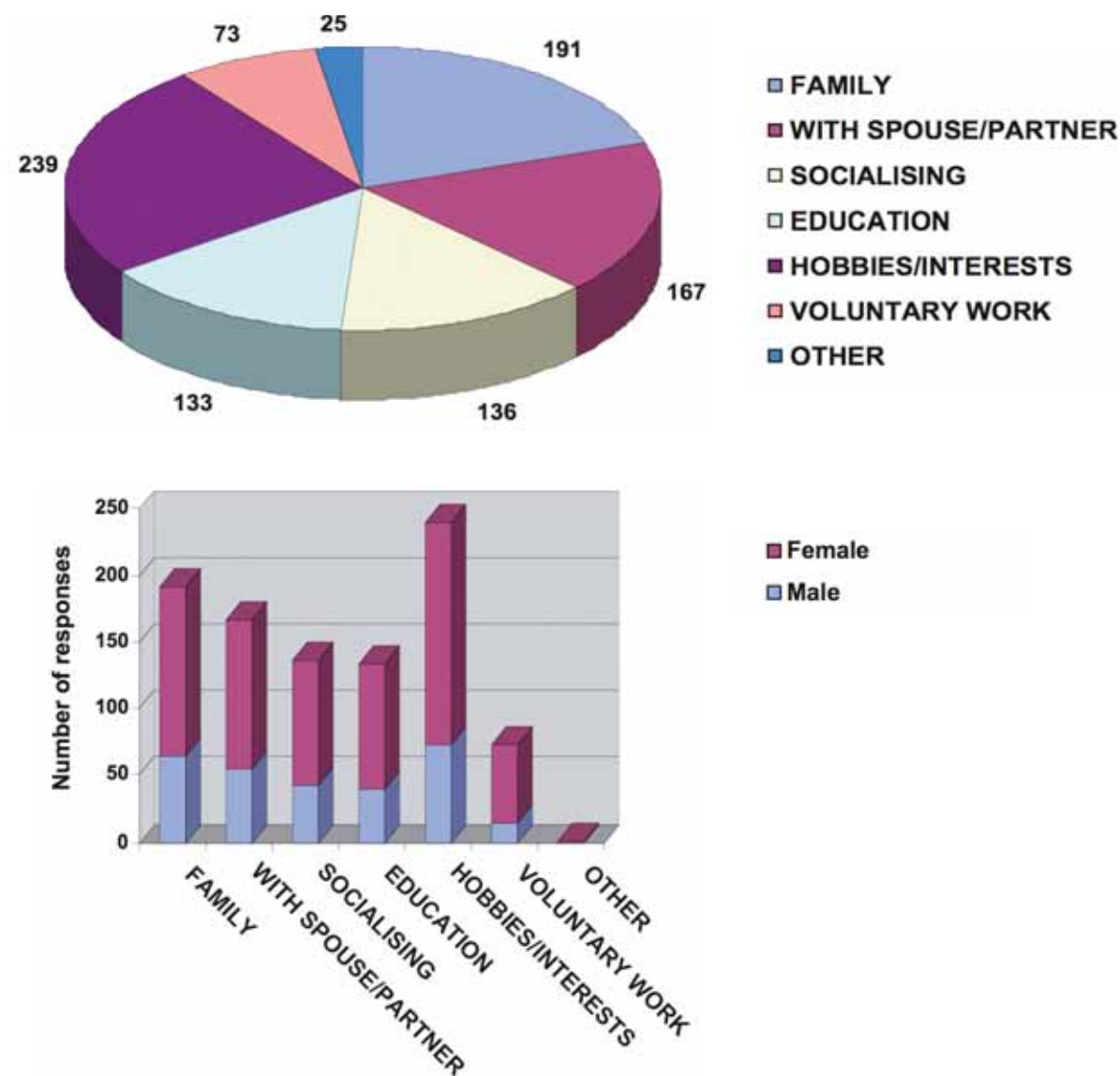
## Attitudes to work-life balance

99% of respondents think that having a good work-life balance improves their general well being. However 85% of respondents feel that a better work-life balance would improve their levels of stress. Of the men that responded this figure was 97%. The Community and Non Profit Sector is notorious for stress caused by long work hours, poor funding and resources as well as short term contracts<sup>9</sup>.

71% of the respondents thought that pursuing other interests and family life were more important or much more important than working. The remaining 29% said that it was equally important.

**Job Share:** "When my part time post was made fulltime, I did not want to increase my hours so we appointed a job-share partner."

Would you like to spend more time doing any of the following?



The charts above show that most people in the sector would like to spend more time with their family, socialising, or pursuing other interests. Several responses also included the desire for more time to rest, travel, keep fit and do domestic work.

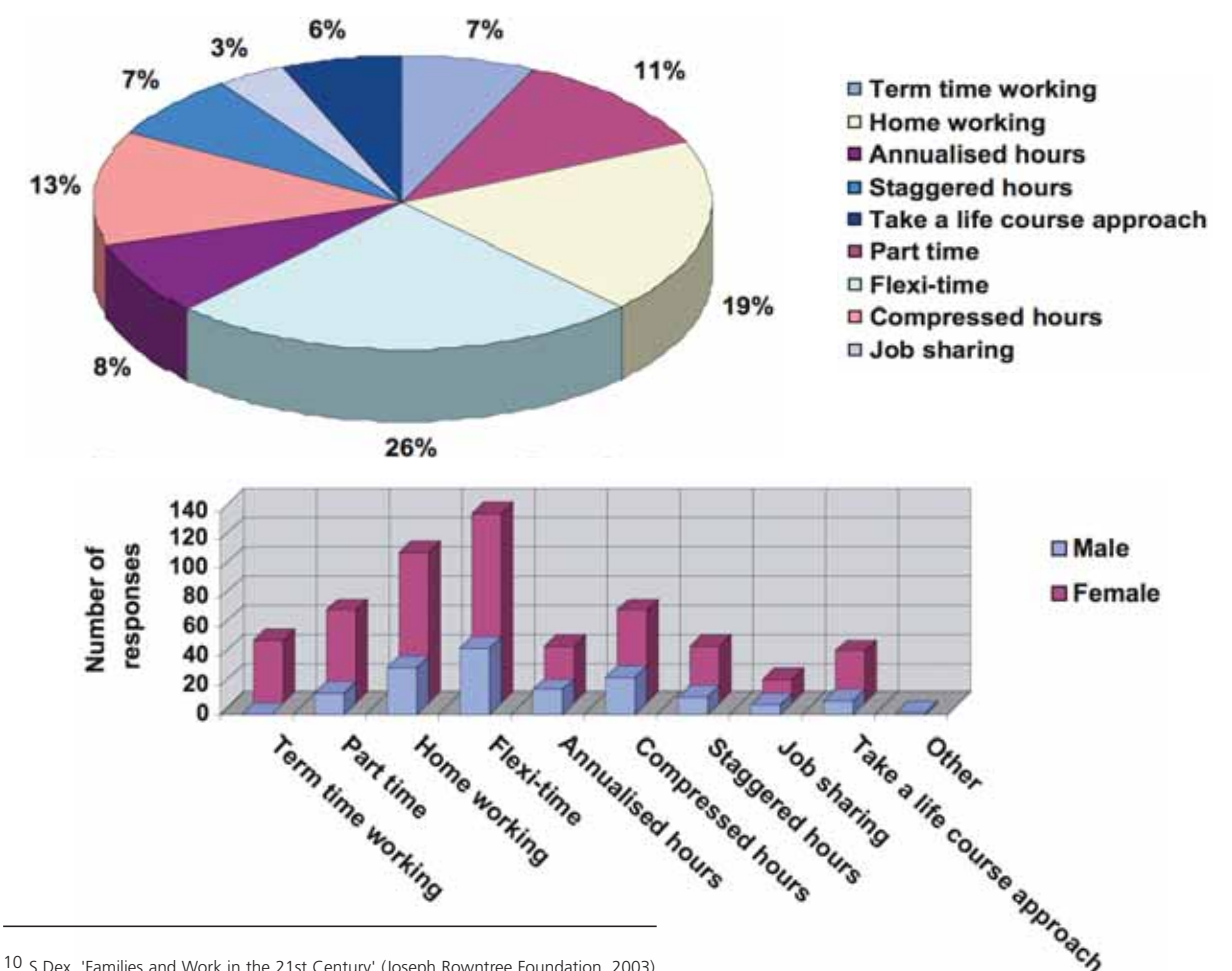
Over 60% of respondents said that they were unable to do the above activities in balance with their work. 37% say that they are currently not able to spend enough time with their families and 45% say that they are unable to spend enough time with their spouse/partner due to balance of their work. This is backed up by Joseph Rowntree Foundation research which found that most mothers whose partner works more than 48 hours a week wants them to work fewer hours<sup>10</sup>.

**Bureaucracy:** "Direct line management is very supporting of work-life balance, however, overall organisational bureaucracy and lack of effective cross-functional team working leads to significant inefficiencies which are often dealt with by extra hours."

## Flexible working

Almost 40% of respondents said that they had not heard of the right to request flexible working. Only 27% of women and 20% men had requested flexible working. 64% said that they were interested in finding out more about flexible working hours and work-life balance.

If you could, would you consider working using any of the flexible working options below?



**Lack of resources:** "We have lots of policies but not enough staff to do the shifts to cover the amount of work."

Your employer is legally obliged to consider all eligible applications for flexible working seriously (see below for information on who is eligible) and must provide good business reasons when an eligible employee's request is refused. Some jobs do not lend themselves as easily to flexible working, e.g. care work, however your employer is still bound to meet you and discuss the request, with the right to appeal if you think that you have been unfairly refused.

**Eligibility:** "Flexible working arrangements have a narrow criteria I think, therefore do not apply to everyone."

## The Right the Request

To be eligible for the right to request flexible working you must be an employee, have parental responsibility for a child under 6 or under 18 if the child is disabled. This applies to biological, adoptive and same sex partners. Under the Work and Families Bill it is being extended to all Carers in April.

**Part-time working:** "We agreed a pattern of working three days each week after I returned to work following maternity leave three years ago. The agreement meets the business needs and my family"

You also must have completed 26 weeks continuous service with an employer at the date of the request and have made the request no later than two weeks before the child's appropriate birthday. [See Appendix B for information on the application procedure.]

### Problems requesting:

"I tried to help negotiate more flexible working for colleague in press office on her return from maternity leave. Line manager refused"

"Have not requested it to date as other people requesting it have been poorly treated – even after returning from maternity leave"

"Not an option in my line of work. No negotiations. I have just come back from maternity leave and was not allowed to do compressed working or working at home."

## Trade Unions

Amicus aims to help you to get better rights and work more flexibly, providing you with a more varied lifestyle and a better work-life balance. Amicus wants all employees to have a good work-life balance and not feel pressured into long hours at work. By joining your local Amicus branch you will be able to receive advice about how you can develop a good work-life policy at work and also receive the support that you need with your claims. Amicus can guide you with legal procedure, resolve grievances and support you by influencing national policy to get better rights for workers.

**Union support:** "It isn't something that we receive much information about other than through the union."

## Take Action now on work-life balance

If you are interested in taking action against long hours and stress in the workplace there are several things you can do:

1. Join Amicus today to find out more about how to take action on the issue.
2. Become a workplace representative and promote the issue amongst your workmates. Let everyone you work with know about their rights and the flexible working options open to them. As a representative you can also put this on the bargaining agenda, raising the issue with your employer and work to develop good practices throughout your organisation.
3. If you are an employer or manager try to ensure that all employees have maximum access to work-life balance information and consider all possible options for flexible working. By working with your trade union representatives and all your other employees you can work to make your work place stress free.
4. Or simply just spread the word!

If you would like to find out more about Amicus and how we can help you in your workplace call us on **0207 420 8978** or visit our website: [www.amicustheunion.org/nonprofit](http://www.amicustheunion.org/nonprofit)

## Appendix A - Flexible working options fact file

- **Part time - Working fewer hours than normal.**

Enables the employee to spend more time with family and at home, and still allows employees to contribute to the workplace.

- **Flexi-time - Choosing when to work.**

Particularly good for parents, enabling them to collect children from school; also allows employees to fit working around other aspects of their lives.

- **Annualised hours - Hours worked out over a year.**

If an employee works extra hours in one part of the year he/she can 'pay off' some of those by working less in quieter times. E.g. having a four day week or an extra week's leave.

- **Compressed hours - Working agreed hours over fewer days.**

Allowing employees to have a long weekend or a day off in the middle of the week to care for small children or pursue hobbies and interests.

- **Staggered hours - Different starting and ending times for employees in the same work place.**

This is beneficial to the employer because all employees working at the same time only provide a limited provision to the service users, but if some are prepared to work earlier and later then the organisation can be open for longer hours. Also allows more choice for employees' hours.

- **Job sharing - Sharing a job usually for one person between two people.**

Allows freedom for each party and the job is done better as there are two people working on it, not one.

- **Home working - Working from home.**

Parents or carers can look after small children or dependants while working. And cuts commuting time and costs.

- **Term time working - Only working during school term time.**

This allows parents to look after their children during the school holidays.

- **A life-course approach – Similar to annualised hours, but accumulating hours over a working lifetime that can be spent when the employee wants to have more time off.**

Time can be spent at home to caring for children or in retirement. This encourages parents to work, but to be more participant in family life, increases the compatibility of employment with adult education, and promotes active ageing for the older workforce.

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### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the Amicus representatives in the Community and Non Profit Sector who kindly took the time to respond to our survey. The survey and the survey report were a collaborative effort and the following people had a role to play in its production.

Rachael Maskell	National Officer	Howard Betts	Report Production
Maureen German	Administrative Support	Esther Barlow	Volunteer Project Support
James Lazou	Research Officer		

## Appendix B - Requesting Flexible working

### The Right the Request

Parents now have the right to request flexible working hours. In order to be eligible you must:

- Be an employee
- Be responsible for a child under 6 or under 18 if the child is disabled
- Have worked for the employer continuously for 26 weeks before you apply
- Make the request no later than two weeks before the child's appropriate birthday

### In order to request flexible working hours you must carry out the following procedure:

1. Make the application to your employer in writing. It is up to you to decide what type of flexible working you would like and you should outline this in your application. Remember you can only make one application per year.
2. Within 28 days of receiving the application your employer must arrange a meeting with you to discuss the request.
3. Your employer must then seriously consider your request and within 14 days inform you in writing whether or not your request has been successful. If it has the change will be permanent, if not you must be given a clear business reason why not.
4. You have the right to appeal the decision within 14 days of receiving it. Your employer must arrange an appeal meeting within 14 days of receiving your appeal notice and then inform you in writing whether the appeal has been successful.

### Specific rights

- Right to paid (statutory maternity pay) ordinary maternity leave for 26 weeks and right to unpaid additional maternity leave for a further 26 weeks (if you've been employed continuously for 6 months before). In April 2007 ordinary maternity leave will be extended to 39 weeks and 52 weeks leave with the removal of the qualifying period. This will hopefully be extended to a year by the close of parliament 2007.
- Right to two weeks paid paternity leave if you've been in continuous employment for 6 months before and you are responsible for bringing up the child. It is proposed to allow 26 weeks unpaid paternity leave until the child is 1 however there is no date set for this to be implemented.
- Fathers would also be entitled to statutory pay balancing any unused statutory maternity pay outstanding on the mothers' return to work.
- Right to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave to spend time with your child if he/she is under 6 or under 18 if disabled and you are his/her formal parent.
- Right to 26 weeks paid adoption leave following the adoption of a new child.
- This will be extended to 39 weeks in April 2007.
- Right to unpaid dependence leave which is to take a reasonable amount of time off to sort out a family emergency.
- Additionally the Bill is being amended to include carers of dependant adults, such as parents

### Remember

- You can only make one flexible working application per year.
- If your request is agreed the change will be permanent.
- If your request is declined your employer must give a clear business reason why not.
- You can appeal to an employment tribunal if your employer has used false information as grounds for the refusal or not applied the procedure correctly.