

CIVIL SERVICE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION SCHEME

F W H

General Council Report 978

(Meetings of 28 May 1980, 25 February 1981, 26 May, 30 June, 28 July and 29 September 1982)

Flexible Working Hours (FWH) in the civil service

1. At the meeting of 28 May 1980 it was decided that a sub-committee of the General Council be set up to consider the general question of the future operation of flexible working hours in the civil service and, in this context, to review the arrangements already operating pursuant to Council agreements.
2. Further to the sub-committee's findings, as outlined in the attached report, the matter was discussed on a number of occasions by the General Council. At the General Council meeting of 29 September 1982 the Staff Side indicated that they were prepared to accept the Official Side position in relation to the option question. As the Official Side had already indicated that the choice of equipment should be settled at local level the Staff Side then withdrew its demand that an amendment relating to choice of equipment be included in the guidelines. Also, they agreed that the guidelines prepared by the sub-committee could serve as the basis for the future operation for flexible working hours in the civil service.
3. It was agreed that the recommendation in paragraph 4 below would, on adoption, constitute an agreement in principle at the General Council which would enable agreements to be made at Departmental Councils for the introduction of schemes of FWH for any grades comprehended by the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme. Accordingly it would not be necessary to refer such schemes to the General Council. All FWH schemes would, of course, require the approval of the Minister for the Public Service.
4. Further to the foregoing discussions it was agreed to recommend that the future operation of flexible working hours in the civil service would be on the basis of (a) the terms of this report and (b) the attached guidelines.
5. This report was adopted on 14 March 1983.

Report of sub-committee of the General Council set up to consider the general question of the future operation of flexible working hours (FWH) in the civil service

1. At the first meeting of the sub-committee on 22 July 1980 it was decided to undertake a survey in order to assess the pilot FWH schemes already in operation. Accordingly, questionnaires were issued to a sample of staff and supervisors operating the pilot arrangements in a number of Departments. The replies indicated a generally favourable attitude towards flexible working hours and an absence of serious difficulties in operating the arrangements.
2. The response to the questionnaires was considered by the sub-committee at meetings held on 2 April and 9 June 1981. At these meetings the Official Side said that, having reviewed the position, they were prepared to consider the extension of flexible working hours to as many areas of the civil service as possible. Any such extension would be on the basis that there would be no significant change (such as extension of bandwidth, reduction in core time or extension of the maximum 8 - hour carry-over) in the arrangements obtaining under the existing pilot schemes. Subject to one reservation, the Staff Side indicated that they were prepared to proceed towards such an extension and, to this end, it was agreed that guidelines should be prepared. The reservation related to the question of an option i.e. whether individual members of the staff in an area where FWH operated could have an option as regards participation in the scheme.
3. At a meeting of the sub-committee on 15 December 1981 the Staff Side expressed general satisfaction with the draft guidelines which the Official Side had circulated in October 1981. Some amendments, regarding core time and flexible bands, were agreed and incorporated in the guidelines (copy attached). The Staff Side also raised some points in relation to paragraphs 2.2 and 4.18 of the draft guidelines. Paragraph 2.2 says, inter-alia, that decisions on FWH, its introduction, continuance and operation are in the final analysis a matter for management and the Staff Side expressed concern about the possibility of local management using this paragraph to take unilateral action e.g. suspending a scheme without consultation. The Official Side explained that they were not in a position to dilute paragraph 2.2 but said that it should be possible to avoid the rather unlikely situation referred to by the Staff Side. Local arrangements for FWH schemes could cater for this to some extent by providing for consultation with staff through monitoring committees or otherwise. In relation to paragraph 4.18 the Staff Side referred to the possibility that the working circumstances of staff in a particular area would necessitate both early arrival in the morning and overtime in the evening, with a resulting unavoidable accumulation of excess credit hours. The Official Side indicated that where this unusual situation arose the application of the provision for carrying forward excess credit could be considered (paragraph 3.17 of the guidelines).
4. As regards the option question on which the Staff Side had earlier reserved their position, the Official Side said that they were not prepared to agree to an option as sought by the Staff Side. Under the pilot schemes staff had been allowed an option as regards participation but this arose from the experimental and temporary nature of the arrangements. The Official Side's position was that it was essential in the post-pilot stage to have only one method of time recording, i.e. electronic or meter based time recording equipment, in areas of

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the civil service on flexible working hours. (There will, of course, be areas, e.g. Ministers' Offices, where FWH will not suit). In the case of a FWH area, staff who are employed in it, including staff who move into it, will be required to record their attendance on the equipment rather than by other means such as signing an attendance book. The Staff Side said that they were not in a position to accept the Official Side's position and the question remained unresolved at further meetings of the sub-committee on 16 February and 20 April 1982.

5. At the final meeting of the sub-committee, on 20 April 1982, the Staff Side raised the question of the type of attendance - recording equipment to be used. Some constituents of the Staff Side indicated that their members might not be prepared to operate FWH if electronic equipment was to be used. They wanted the guidelines to be amended accordingly. The Official Side indicated that they were not prepared to agree to a restriction on the choice of equipment; this matter could normally be expected to be settled amicably at local level. This point also remained unresolved at sub-committee level.

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GUIDE

TO

FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

AN RANNÁN PEARSANRA  
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DEPARTMENT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These guidelines have been prepared under the auspices of the Civil Service General Council following a joint review by the Official and Staff Sides of the pilot schemes of flexible working hours (FWH) operating in a number of Government Departments and Offices.
- 1.2 In 1977, negotiations about the introduction of pilot projects of FWH took place with staff interests who had taken the initiative in seeking projects in particular areas. Agreements were reached on the type of systems and the arrangements for monitoring and assessing the experiments. The first pilot scheme got under way in May 1977 in two areas of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. Further projects were then launched in a number of other Departments and Offices.
- 1.3 The staff associations catering for the grades covered by the projects have been involved at all stages of the experiments, from the initial meeting to receive explanations of the general idea right through to the assessment of the operation of the projects. The details of each pilot scheme were tailored to the needs of the individual office involved. However, the broad outlines were the same in each case.
- 1.4 The pilot projects have been assessed by a sub-committee of General Council. Management and staff have expressed themselves in favour of retaining FWH. No major snags have come to light in the operation of the schemes and there have been no adverse reactions to FWH from members of the public. Staff, in general, are overwhelmingly in favour of retaining FWH and see as its major advantages the opportunities it gives them to (1) strike a better balance between work and domestic arrangements and (2) alter their patterns of attendance. FWH should also result in some easement of strain on transport and traffic during peak hours.
- 1.5 These guidelines are as agreed by the Official and Staff Sides, following the joint review. They offer guidance on FWH. They do not cover every eventuality and it is not desirable that they should. It is important that each FWH scheme should be designed with the conditions of the Department or Office in mind. There must, therefore, be scope for slight variation between schemes. However, these guidelines explain the main features which any scheme in Governments should follow.
- 1.6 The basic principles of FWH are set out in Chapter II. Chapter III gives a narrative outline of how these principles are put into practice. Chapter IV gives details of attendance recording equipment and general matters affecting FWH. Chapter V sets out the main considerations which need to be taken into account in devising a scheme.

## CHAPTER II

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

- 2.1 The main purpose of FWH is to provide a more flexible system of attendance for staff. The total number of hours which people are required to work on FWH is the same as that which they are required to work under fixed hours. The difference lies in the scope which individuals on FWH have to vary their times of arrival and departure, to vary the length and timing of their lunch break and to take time off if they work extra hours.
- 2.2 Of course, this flexibility cannot be unconditional. FWH cannot be allowed to reduce the overall efficiency of Departments/Offices or their service to the public and sections must, of course, be appropriately staffed during the working day. It is necessary, therefore, to say that, while every effort will be made to operate the arrangements on the basis of agreement between management and staff, decisions on FWH, its introduction, continuance and operation are in the final analysis a matter for management. The need for this stipulation derives from Ministerial responsibility for running Departments/Offices.
- 2.3 Subject to the foregoing, the introduction of schemes of FWH for general service grades and grades common to two or more Departments is a matter for agreement at General Council before discussions at Departmental Council can be instituted. For grades not common to two or more Departments, agreements can be made at Departmental Council.

## CHAPTER III

## FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS: THE DETAILS

## THE DAY

- 3.1 The number of hours of attendance required will not change but, work permitting, staff will be able to vary their arrival and departure times within fixed limits which will be known as Flexible Bands. The main part of the day, during which all staff should be at their jobs (with the exception of lunch breaks) will be known as Core Time. Under FWH, a typical working day could be divided as follows:

- 08.30 - 10.00 Flexible morning band - staff could start work any time during this span
- 10.00 - 12.30 Morning core time - staff would have to be present during this period unless on authorised absence
- 12.30 - 14.30 Flexible lunch band - staff would have to take a minimum lunch break of 30 minutes but the break could be extended up to 2 hours
- 14.30 - 16.00 Afternoon core time - as for morning core time
- 16.00 - 18.30 Flexible evening band - staff could finish work any time after 16.00 up to 18.30.

THE FLEXIBLE WORKING DAY

| FLEXIBLE MORNING BAND | MORNING CORE TIME | FLEXIBLE LUNCH BAND | AFTERNOON CORE TIME | FLEXIBLE EVENING BAND |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 8.30 - 10.00          | 10.00 - 12.30     | 12.30 - 14.30       | 14.30 - 16.00       | 16.00 - 18.30         |

All staff must be present during Morning and Afternoon Core Times. Communications, therefore, tend to be concentrated in these periods, leaving the flexible periods for quieter individual work.

## CORE TIME

- 3.2 In order to ensure that there will be minimum periods in each day during which staff are available to communicate with each other, with other Departments/Offices and with the public, several hours each day will be designated as Core Time. Core Time is the part of the FWH day during which all staff MUST be in attendance unless on authorised absence. The Core Time will consist of two periods: -

10.00 to 12.30 and

14.30 to 16.00

Shorter Core Times will not be permitted in any particular scheme that may be agreed. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to alter the timing of the core periods where the timing referred to above (10.00 to 12.30 and 14.30 to 16.00) does not suit the work requirements. The approval of the Department of the Public Service will be required for such alteration.

- 3.3 Authorised absences in Core Time may arise in a number of ways e.g. annual leave, sick leave, duty outside the office, visits to the dentist which could not be arranged outside Core Time. In normal circumstances, absences during Core Time will always be subject to prior authorisation by an individual's supervisor. A member of the staff should always ensure that his/her absences are recorded properly (see Paragraph 3.11).

## FLEXIBLE BANDS

- 3.4 These are the periods outside Core Time (see paragraph 3.2) during which staff may determine their times of arrival and departure subject to the need to maintain adequate staffing during normal office hours. The operation of the system will always have to be subject to the work requirements and it may not be possible always to allow individuals the maximum flexibility. This may be particularly so at holiday periods or during periods when Departments/Offices are exceptionally busy. Staff must be prepared to help out on jobs as necessary when the full staff is not present. Obviously a system under which individuals could vary considerably their times of arrival and departure on a daily basis would cause confusion. In order that supervisors can organise the work flow and maintain output over the whole span of the FWH day, staff must be open and co-operative with their colleagues about the pattern of their attendance.
- 3.5 Under FWH, performance of work and hours of attendance become, to an extent, a group rather than an individual responsibility and this must be accepted by staff as one of the principles of FWH. While this may appear formidable, it all stems from one basic consideration - if work is not to suffer and if the full benefits of FWH are to be realised, staff must live up to the new type of responsibility. In respect of work and attendance cover, officers on FWH must operate as a group on the basis of openness and full co-operation. Experience has shown that, given the right approach all round, this objective presents little difficulty in practice.

- 3.6 The flexible bands may not begin earlier than 08.30 or finish later than 18.30 in any scheme that may be agreed.

#### FLEXIBLE LUNCH BREAK

- 3.7 The lunch break MUST be a minimum of 30 minutes and may be up to a maximum of 2 hours.

#### BANDWIDTH

- 3.8 The period 08.30 to 18.30 is known as the Bandwidth.

#### THE ACCOUNTING PERIOD

- 3.9 The number of hours which staff will be required to work will not change. Staff cannot complete the required number of hours by working Core Time alone. The balance between Core Time working and the required (or standard) number of hours will be made up by attendance during the flexible bands. Calculations will be made over a four week Accounting Period. Hours of attendance will be recorded and adjustments made for Credits and Debits (see 3.11 and 3.12).
- 3.10 Each individual entering an FWH scheme will be supplied with a Reconciliation Form to enable him/her to record credits and debits. There are a number of factors in relation to the reconciliation form which must be borne in mind:
- . the form must be available to the supervisor whenever required
  - . the appropriate credit must be claimed immediately on return
  - . all credit entries must be initialled by the supervisor.

At the end of each accounting period, there will be a Reconciliation (see 3.13) of the hours recorded with the required number of hours, net of lunch breaks. Within certain limits, a person can carry over an excess or deficit of hours.

#### CREDITS AND DEBITS

- 3.11 Absences should be calculated manually and recorded on a Reconciliation Form as follows:
- (i) any authorised absence from the office will result in a credit equivalent to the actual time away from the office
  - (ii) a full day's absence from the office for annual leave, public holiday, sickness or other authorised reasons will be credited as a Standard Day (see 3.20-23).
  - (iii) a half day's absence will be credited with the appropriate time (see 3.20-23)

The main cases where such calculation will be required are:

- (a) Annual leave, approved in advance as at present
- (b) Visits to the dentist/doctor. For an appointment which could not be arranged outside Core Time credit will be given at the discretion of the individual's supervisor.
- (c) Trips away from the office (e.g. on official duty). An allowance will be made for the absence (less time spent on lunch break, if relevant) on return.
- (d) Where sickness at work necessitates leaving early, credit may be given representing the difference between the actual time of departure and 17.30 (or 17.15 on Friday)
- (e) Credit will not be given for ordinary transport delays and similar hazards. Where exceptional circumstances exist, however, time may be credited at the discretion of the supervisor.
- (f) Visits to the Bank. Each staff member will be allowed a credit equal to the actual time taken to cash the pay cheque subject to a maximum of 30 minutes.

- 3.12 Time should be debited from an officer's record of hours attended to compensate for time wrongly credited. This could arise, for example, when an officer forgets to record his/her departure. Debits should be entered on the reconciliation form and initialled by the supervisor.

#### END OF ACCOUNTING PERIOD RECONCILIATION

- 3.13 As well as dealing with credits and debits as they occur, reconciliation will be carried out at the end of each four-week accounting period. The hours worked during the period, including adjustments for credits and debits will be compared with the hours required to be worked and, within certain limits, a person may carry over an excess or deficit.
- 3.14 The precise method or methods (recording on machine or reconciliation form etc.) for effecting the End of Accounting Period Reconciliation will depend on the type of equipment installed. For example, with electronic equipment credits will be keyed into the memory of the equipment which carries out reconciliation at the end of each four-week accounting period. Meter-based systems merely accumulate time once a key is inserted. It is not possible to add credits into the meter. They must, therefore, be recorded on the reconciliation form and balanced with the recorded hours at the end of each four week accounting period. Reconciliation must be carried out as soon as possible after the end of each accounting period.

## CARRYOVER

- 3.15 The maximum carryover of either deficit or excess hours will be 8 hours.
- 3.16 Staff may not normally carry forward more than the maximum deficit. Any greater deficit than the maximum would be in breach of the scheme and this would normally lead to disciplinary action (which might include forfeiture of annual leave or stoppage of pay for the excess deficit). However, it may happen that staff are prevented from reducing their deficit balance to the maximum allowed (e.g. if they are absent for a week or more due to ill health towards the end of the accounting period). Such occurrences should be rare, bearing in mind that staff are credited with the standard hours for the day during periods of sick leave. Where staff are prevented from reducing a deficit balance to the maximum allowed, because of circumstances which they could not anticipate or avoid, they may be allowed to carry the extra deficit forward.
- 3.17 Any credit hours in excess of 8 hours will be forfeited. However, where staff are prevented by the needs of the office, because of sick leave etc., from reducing their credit balance to the maximum, they may be allowed to carry the excess forward.
- 3.18 When the carryover of a greater deficit or excess than the maximum is authorised, it should be clearly understood that the deficit or excess should be brought within normal limits as soon as is reasonably possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the normal limits should apply again at the end of the next accounting period.

## FLEXI-LEAVE

- 3.19 Flexi-leave may be defined as permission to be absent from work during Core Time in recognition of excess hours carried forward from a previous accounting period. In order to qualify for this an individual must have built up
- (1)  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours credit to be absent for one core period (i.e. one half day) or 7 hours if he/she intends to be absent for 2 core periods (i.e. 1 full day) and
  - (2) he/she must have the supervisor's permission in advance.

The date of such leave should be entered on the Reconciliation Form (at the application stage) and initialled by the supervisor. Flexi-leave will be kept separate from annual leave but may, of course, be taken in conjunction with annual leave.

## STANDARD DAY

- 3.20 The amount of time allotted for the standard FWH day will vary according to grade and type of attendance recording equipment used. For general service grades from CA to Secretary and for some Departmental grades the required working hours (or standard hours) over the four week accounting period will be 139. These are the same as worked at present and are arrived at as follows - net working week (excluding lunch) of  $34\frac{3}{4}$  hours x 4.

- 3.21 For schemes using electronic equipment the standard FWH day is regarded as 6 hours 57 minutes. The morning is regarded as 3 hours 30 minutes and the afternoon period as 3 hours 27 minutes. Absences for the complete duration of these periods should be recorded accordingly.
- 3.22 For schemes using meter-based equipment the standard FWH day is 7 hours. A full day's absence from the office for annual leave, public holiday, sickness or other authorised reasons will be credited as 7 hours for the period Monday to Thursday and 6.75 ( $6\frac{3}{4}$ ) hours for Friday. A half day's absence will be credited as 3.50 ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ ) hours except on Friday afternoon when it will be 3.25 ( $3\frac{1}{4}$ ) hours.
- 3.23 For staff with different conditioned hours the calculations should be adjusted accordingly for the required hours over the accounting period and for the standard day.

## CHAPTER IV

## FWH SCHEMES

## GENERAL

- 4.1 Any FWH scheme which it is proposed to introduce in a Government Department or Office must be sanctioned by the Department of the Public Service. FWH may, of course, be applied to staff on probation.

## CONTROL

- 4.2 If the arrangements are to work properly the greater freedom which they allow must be balanced by a responsible attitude on the part of staff and supervisors as regards attendance and work performance. In particular, adequate supervision at local level is essential under FWH.
- 4.3 Since abuse of FWH (including infringements of Core Time) would be a breach of the scheme, it would be necessary for management to take action in this regard. This would need to be made clear, particularly to newly-recruited staff who join the office already working FWH. Whether and what action should be taken if there is abuse depends, of course, on the circumstances of each individual case.

## HOW TO SET UP A SCHEME

- 4.4 Each Department should nominate an officer who, following agreement for the introduction of an FWH scheme, will become the local supervisor's main point of contact for advice on FWH. This officer's functions will be to co-ordinate the implementation of FWH in the Department; to be responsible to the appropriate officer for the control of expenditure on FWH; and to liaise with the Department of the Public Service on the introduction of schemes and the purchase of equipment.
- 4.5 A proper introduction to the FWH scheme is regarded as being of extreme importance. An outline programme for setting up a scheme is set out in Chapter V.

## TIME RECORDING

- 4.6 Time recording equipment is normally considered necessary for any FWH scheme as it provides an objective and efficient system of noting attendance. The recording equipment is easy to operate, easy to read and keeps staff informed of hours worked at all times.
- 4.7 There are two types of equipment currently in use in the Civil Service - (1) electronic and (2) meters.
- 4.8 The electronic is a sophisticated system with memory facilities. The "keying in" facility may be either at a central timing unit or a multi-user terminal connected to a central master unit. The insertion of a key or badge on arrival or departure calls up the total recorded

hours worked to date from the memory and this is displayed on a small screen in the terminal. There is also a facility to cause a display of standard hours to date so that the officer can compare his/her total with standard hours whenever he/she keys in or out.

- 4.9 Some machines can be programmed not to accept keying in during core time. Credit or debit adjustments to an individual's "account" of hours may be made daily by authorised personnel and the carryover is calculated automatically by the machine and displayed at the terminal on the first day of the new accounting period. Printers may be either included in the central master unit or attached to terminals to give a record of core infringements, check in-out times, lunch infringements, credit/debit revisions etc.
- 4.10 The meter based equipment consists of a master clock and time recording meters which can be located apart from each other yet linked to the master clock. The recording meters usually come in groups of eight or ten (known as banks) but blank spaces can be provided if necessary. Each person using the system is assigned an individual meter. This consists of a key acceptor and a counter which is activated by a key or a plastic badge. On the arrival of the officer the meter is switched on by the key; on departure it is switched off by the same process. Some meter systems require the key to be left in the meter in order to ensure that time is recorded. The metre merely records cumulative hours and does not show time of arrival or departure. On switching on the meter a coloured disk or light is activated which shows that the employee is present.
- 4.11 Computer linkage systems are used by organisations requiring automatic processing of data, using an in-house computer or bureau for the automatic production of FWH and/or payroll analyses. This type of attendance recording equipment has not been used in any Civil Service pilot scheme.

#### RECORD KEEPING

- 4.12 Paperwork should be kept to a minimum. Generally, records need not normally be kept for longer than, say, three months. However, in the first six months of a scheme it may be necessary to keep the FWH records for the full period for review purposes.

#### CHOICE AND SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT

- 4.13 The equipment used is influenced by a number of factors which in turn are determined by the circumstances of the location of the FWH scheme - the size of the building, the layout, the total number of staff and, not least, the cost per head. Close liaison must be maintained with the Management Services Unit of the Department of the Public Service regarding selection. Ultimately, sanction must be sought from that Unit for the purchase of any attendance recording equipment. The cost is met from the subhead for Office Equipment and within existing financial provisions. During installation it may be necessary to call on the services of the Office of Public Works for the provision of power points and any necessary site preparation.

## MAINTENANCE

- 4.14 Departments should make their own arrangements for maintenance of the equipment. There is usually a choice between paying an annual fee to cover routine maintenance and breakdowns or paying the actual cost of a visit from a service engineer in the event of a breakdown. Decisions will vary depending on the size of the installation and the amount of equipment purchased or proposed to be purchased.

## MONITORING GROUP

- 4.15 A Monitoring Group representative of management and staff should oversee the operation of the early stages of each FWH scheme initiated at Departmental Council in each Department/Office. The Group should maintain contact with the Department of the Public Service. The progress of each FWH scheme should be kept under review but it is envisaged that, once the early stages of a scheme have been satisfactorily completed, the Group will have discharged its functions.

## OVERTIME

- 4.16 There is clear distinction between extra hours worked by staff on FWH, as part of the normal FWH arrangements, and ordinary overtime. The two should be kept separate. Overtime for staff on FWH must therefore be authorised and supervised in the normal way, and should be recorded completely separately from FWH. Before starting to work overtime staff must "key out".
- 4.17 It follows that:
- (a) hours credited to the FWH total may NOT attract payment of overtime and
  - (b) extra attendance which is authorised as overtime may NOT be added to the FWH total.
- 4.18 Overtime will begin, as usual, at normal closing time. Staff on FWH may key out at any time during the evening flexible band, i.e. between 16.00 - 18.30, but it is imperative that staff on overtime have keyed out before the beginning of the overtime period.

## TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- 4.19 Staff leaving the Department should bring their credit or debit hours to nil by the date of leaving. Should there be a debit balance outstanding a deduction will be made from salary or annual leave. The FWH key must be returned to Personnel Section.

## TRANSFER

- 4.20 An officer transferred from a Section where FWH is in operation to one where it is not, will not retain the right to continue working flexible hours. Appropriate arrangements will be made to liquidate any outstanding obligations under FWH.

## EARLY POST DUTIES

- 4.21 Some Departments/Offices operate an early post system whereby staff are asked to attend for early duty in order to sort incoming post. Time off in lieu of such attendance is normally allowed. Where FWH is introduced it is recommended that the present arrangements should continue, i.e. staff should attend for early post duty and on completion of this duty each should key in. The usual time off in lieu arrangements should continue.

## CHAPTER V

## SETTING UP A SCHEME - AN OUTLINE 'PROGRAMME'

## PLANNING

- 5.1 The introduction of FWH needs careful planning. Sufficient time must be allowed for the necessary discussion with the Staff Side and other interests. Where machine recording is to be used, time must be allowed for ordering the equipment, installing and testing it. A realistic starting date should be agreed, taking account of equipment delivery dates and avoiding work/annual leave peaks. It is impossible in these guidelines, which are for general use, to indicate a firm timetable but a typical programme for a medium-sized office is given below as a guide.

## WORKING PARTY

- 5.2 Proposals to introduce FWH should be considered at Departmental Council or through the normal negotiating procedures. It is essential that the Management and Staff Sides cooperate from the outset in examining FWH. This can be achieved by setting up a sub-committee of Departmental Council or a small working party with, say, 2 Official and 2 Staff Side representatives. The working party would have two functions:
- (i) to report on the feasibility of an FWH scheme
  - (ii) subject to (i), to draw up detailed recommendations within the general guidelines laid down here.

The Department of the Public Service will provide advice for a working party on any matter in relation to FWH including the type of attendance - recording equipment to be used.

- 5.3 The essence of FWH schemes is that they should be drawn up to suit local circumstances. Generally, however, it will be necessary for all local schemes to conform to the provisions set out in this document, particularly in relation to the basic features of the scheme, e.g. bandwidth, carryover, flexi-leave.
- 5.4 In drawing up detailed recommendations, the working party will need to consider the effects of the introduction of FWH on the general running of the Department/Office, e.g. in regard to services to the public and security arrangements.

## INTRODUCTORY ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.5 Emphasis has been laid elsewhere in this guide on the importance of the introductory arrangements for a FWH scheme. This cannot be stressed too much. As soon as a decision is made to introduce a scheme, attention should be directed to the task of familiarising all concerned with the details of the scheme. Briefing sessions should be held for management, supervisors and staff. Experience has shown that it is invaluable to hold these sessions. It enables everyone to understand the FWH concept and reduces to a minimum mistakes and queries when the scheme comes into operation.

- 5.6 Written details of the arrangements for the scheme should also be circulated to all staff. When the equipment is installed a target date should be set for the start of the scheme. It is a good idea to set the date for a week or so after installation. This will allow time both for thorough testing of the equipment and staff familiarisation with it.