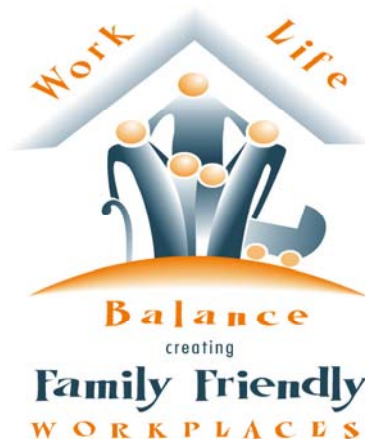




# Work Life Balance Information Kit



# Work Life Balance - Information Kit

Balancing work and personal responsibilities including family, study, travel, sporting and volunteer activities has become an integral part of working life. It is widely accepted that both employers and employees can achieve significant gains from establishing a workplace culture in which work life balance is supported and accommodated.

This publication is provided for managers to assist them in implementing or extending work life balance initiatives in their workplace. It outlines the rationale and business benefits of work life balance initiatives, key implementation issues, and discusses in detail the types of options that can be made available to employees.

## CONTENTS

### Introduction to Work Life Balance

- What are work life balance initiatives?
- WA Health Work Life Balance Policy
- Legal responsibility
- Benefits of work life balance initiatives
- Critical success factors
- Award and agreement obligations

### Work Life Balance Initiatives

- Flexible employment arrangements
- Flexible hours arrangements
- Flexible leave arrangements
- Other work life balance initiatives

### Implementing Work Life Balance Initiatives

- Getting started
- Implementing and labour relations issues
- Measuring success

# Introduction to Work Life Balance

## What are work life balance initiatives?

Work life balance initiatives are flexible work arrangements in the areas of flexible employment arrangements, flexible hours arrangements, flexible leave arrangements and other work life balance initiatives which give employees greater flexibility in how they work in order to balance the demands of their work and family/personal responsibilities.

There is a wide range of flexible work practices that can be made available to employees. This information kit outlines many of these options and important information on how best to implement them.

It is important to remember that balancing work and family/personal responsibilities is not just an issue for people with young children. Family life continues to impact on work throughout an individual's working life, and individual's needs change over time. Employees who do not have family responsibilities can also benefit significantly from work life balance initiatives, allowing them flexibility to meet lifestyle commitments such as study, travel, sporting participation and volunteering obligations.

## WA Health Work Life Balance Policy

The Director General and State Health Executive have endorsed the Work Life Balance Policy, applicable to all persons employed within WA Health including the Department of Health, Metropolitan Health Services and WA Country Health Service. The Policy recognizes and supports the need for work life balance initiatives within the workplace. The Policy is an overarching policy that provides the framework for implementing work life balance initiatives and flexible work practices. It should be read in conjunction with employee's awards and agreements and applicable flexible work practices policies.

*Appendix 1 – WA Health Work Life Balance Policy*  
<http://intranet.health.wa.gov.au/hwl/policies/policies.html>

## Legal Responsibility

Employers have a legal responsibility to be “family friendly”. State legislation makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against employees on the basis of age, gender, pregnancy, marital status and family responsibilities. Federal legislation makes it unlawful to dismiss an employee on the grounds of family responsibility, and unlawful to discriminate against a woman on the basis that she is breastfeeding.

### **The Western Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984***

#### **Section 4 – Interpretation**

**“Family responsibility or family status”, in relation to a person, means –**

- a) having responsibility for the care of another person, whether or not that person is a dependant, other than in the course of paid employment;

- b) the status of being a particular relative; or
- c) the status of being a relative of a particular person;

“relative”, in relation to a person, means –

a person who is related to the first-mentioned person by blood, marriage, affinity or adoption and includes a person who is wholly or mainly dependent on, or is a member of the household of, the first-mentioned person;

## **Benefits of Work Life Balance Initiatives**

Work Life Balance initiatives work. Recognised benefits for employers include:

- Lower staff turnover and increased return on training
- Reduced absenteeism and lateness
- Improved employee morale and commitment
- Reduced stress and improved productivity
- A more flexible workforce
- Increased ability to attract and recruit staff
- Potential for improved occupational health and safety
- Fulfillment of equal opportunity objectives
- Good corporate citizenship and an enhanced corporate image.

Organisations that have introduced work life balance initiatives have found that the benefits have far outweighed the cost and effort of making changes, particular in attracting and retaining skilled and productive employees.

Benefits for employees include:

- Ability to manage work and individual commitments
- Improved personal and family relationships
- Flexible working arrangements resulting in reduced work overload and stress
- Increased focus, motivation and job satisfaction knowing that family and work commitments are being met
- Increased job security from the knowledge that an organisation understands and supports workers with family responsibilities
- Increased ability to remain employed.
- Increased ability to remain competitive in career advancement
- Improved health and wellbeing of staff

## **Critical Success Factors**

To achieve the benefits of introducing work life balance initiatives, the critical success factors are:

- Choose work life balance practices that are suitable to the workplace and the employees' jobs, and ones that will meet the needs of the employees.
- Ensure there is good communication with employees, and they are well informed of the options available to them.

- Provide clear guidelines to all employees on how the work life balance practices are to work.
- Ensure that supervisors do not inhibit employees from accessing the work life balance practices that are available to them.
- Treat all employees fairly and equitably, regardless of their family/personal responsibilities.
- Be flexible with the changing needs of employees.
- Ensure that any changes in work practices are consistent with award or agreement requirements (see below for more information).
- Check whether the new work practices are actually assisting employees to better balance their work and family/personal responsibilities.

## **Award and Agreement Obligations**

It is essential that any new work practice that is implemented to improve flexibility is incorporated into or is consistent with employers' obligations under any award, enterprise agreement, employer-employee agreement or contract of employment that exists in the workplace.

A list of all relevant WA Health Awards and Agreements and clauses they contain that provide flexibility in the workplace has been developed to assist managers. The summary is provided as a reference guide only and should be read in conjunction with the full version of the relevant Award or Agreement, governing legislation and applicable WA Health or Health Service Policy and Guidelines. Awards and Agreements may be replaced or updated and it is important to refer to the online version of the document to ensure you have the most current and up-to-date information.

*Appendix 2 - Awards and Agreements Summary of Flexible Work Practices*

<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/familyfriendly/welcome/index.cfm>

## Work Life Balance Initiatives

A variety of work life balance initiatives exist within WA Health. The types of arrangements available to particular individuals will vary depending on the conditions of their Award or Agreement, governing legislation and applicable Health Service Policy and Procedures.

The initiatives are grouped into categories of flexible employment arrangements, flexible hours arrangements, flexible leave arrangements and other work life balance initiatives.

### Flexible Employment Arrangements

Employers can provide flexibility in employment arrangements by having a mix of employees working on a full-time or part-time basis. This can assist employers if there are peaks and troughs in the workload. It may also be possible to make arrangements for employees to work from home.

#### Flexible Full Time Employment

Employees work full working days on an on-going basis for 38 to 40 hours per week, with flexibility in their starting and finishing times.

#### Part-Time Employment

Employees hold a discrete job but work less than full-time hours on a regular ongoing basis. The hours of work need to be arranged to suit employers and employees. This arrangement is ideal for meeting peak workload periods.

This is an attractive option for pregnant employees, employees returning from parental leave, employees requiring reduced hours to meet their family responsibilities in caring for children, sick or elderly family members, for other commitments such as study, or for phased retirement.

Part-time employees maintain continuity of employment, and accrue leave and other benefits on a pro-rata basis. Part-time employees are eligible to be paid for any sick leave or annual leave taken, or any public holiday that falls on a day they would normally work.

Part-timers shall be treated fairly and have equal access to conditions of employment, training, development and promotional opportunities. Managers and supervisors need to manage part-timers effectively and work arrangements and meeting times may need to be altered to suit the working hours of part-time employees.

*Appendix 3 – WA Health Part-time/Job Share Policy*

<http://intranet.health.wa.gov.au/hwl/policies/policies.html>

#### Graduated Part-Time Work

Employees returning from parental leave or other periods of extended leave may benefit from graduated part-time, building up to full time employment. This may start with working four days a week instead of five days, or six hours a day instead of eight hours a day. Provisions exist to allow employees to return from parental leave at part time hours for a period of time before reverting to full time employment.

## **Phased Retirement**

Employees moving towards retirement may wish to undertake phased retirement. Phased retirement is a process of moving backwards from employees' peak level of hours, work responsibilities, salary or status, while still working for their employing organisation. Phased retirement can be a long-term arrangement. For employees, this may help the transition to retirement, while employers can retain the knowledge and skills of the employees. The effect on superannuation of part-time work prior to retirement will need to be examined by employees.

*Appendix 4 – WA Health Phased Retirement Policy*  
<http://intranet.health.wa.gov.au/hwl/policies/policies.html>

## **Job Share**

Two part-time employees could share a full time job on a regular ongoing basis, sharing the duties, pay, holidays and other benefits associated with a single job. A job can be shared in a number of ways. The employees could share the same workload, have a divided workload or have discrete jobs. The arrangement should result in the position being staffed on a full time basis.

Job share arrangements can reduce the impact of absenteeism, and are a good alternative for demanding jobs that have a high staff turnover rate. Some of the most traditional full-time jobs have been successfully converted into job share arrangements.

As job-sharers are essentially working on a part-time basis, their conditions of employment will be the same as that for part-time employees.

It is important when implementing a job-share arrangement to ensure that appropriate communication procedures are established to allow communication both between the job-sharers and between these employees and others in the organisation.

*Appendix 3 – WA Health Part-time/Job Share Policy*  
<http://intranet.health.wa.gov.au/hwl/policies/policies.html>

## **Term-Time Work**

Employees only work during school terms and have leave during school holidays. This could be arranged as leave without pay during school holidays when annual leave is exhausted, or as purchased leave or leave at half pay. Refer to the Purchased Leave options for further details.

## **Flexible Working Year**

Employees work for less than 48 weeks of the year and have additional time off work to care for dependents. This could be arranged as annualised hours, purchased leave or leave without pay as required.

## **Telecommuting**

Employees work from home on a full-time, part-time, temporary or ongoing basis. If employees will be working from home on an ongoing basis, arrangements could be made for the employees to come into the office for at least a few hours each week or fortnight for staff meetings or progress meetings with supervisors.

Arrangements may be able to be made for employees to work from home on a short-term basis while caring for a sick child or dependent family member.

A computer, modem and fax may need to be provided to employees. Issues such as security, occupational health and safety and insurance will need to be addressed.

*Appendix 5 – Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) Home Based Work*

[http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/WorkLife/Work%20and%20Family/Work\\_and\\_Family.html](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/WorkLife/Work%20and%20Family/Work_and_Family.html)

## **Flexible Hours Arrangements**

### **Flexible Working Hours**

Employees are allowed flexible starting and finishing times which suit both the business and the employee. Employers could prescribe the core hours of the day when employees are required to be at work, and give employees flexibility within the non-core hours at the beginning and end of the day. Such flexibility allows employees to meet regular or unexpected family/personal commitments during non-core hours without penalty, provided the missing hours are made up within that week or month.

Alternatively employers could agree to stagger employees starting and finishing times, allowing some employees to regularly start and finish earlier, and others to start and finish later. This could suit employees with childcare arrangements, and provide a longer span of operating hours for the employer and clients.

### **Increased Span of Hours**

Increasing the span of ordinary working hours of each day involves allowing employees to start earlier and finish later. Employers can negotiate the starting and finishing times of employees to both suit their family/personal responsibilities and meet work commitments.

### **Shorter Working Hours**

Breaking the expectation or culture of long working hours and allowing employees to go home at a reasonable time without detriment to their career expectations. The pressure of working longer hours has harmful effects on family life and on employee productivity. Employees working normal hours will be fresher, and more focused and productive than employees who continually work long hours. Managers need to focus on outputs as opposed to hours at work.

### **Rostered or Accrued Days Off**

Employees could be allowed to work additional hours during the week in order to accrue sufficient hours to have a rostered day off once a fortnight or once a month. This does not change the total number of hours worked by an employee, only when the hours are worked. Some employers might allow employees to work additional hours during the week and have Friday afternoon off if it is usually a quiet time or less productive time for the business.

### **Flexi time / Time off in Lieu (TOIL)**

Employees can accumulate extra hours worked to take time off in lieu of payment for a specific purpose or at a time which is convenient to the employer and employee. Employees are given the equivalent time off on an hour-for-hour basis for the additional hours worked. If employees have not banked up enough hours to cover a particular absence, they will be required to make up the time within an agreed timeframe.

Accumulated hours could be 'banked' for school holidays, or for ad-hoc or unexpected family matters such as medical appointments, pupil free days, school or sporting events of children.

Records will need to be kept of additional hours worked. A maximum number of hours or days that can be accumulated applies, and a time limit for the clearance of accrued hours to prevent it becoming a leave liability.

### **Consultative Rostering**

Rostering arrangements should be made in consultation with employees, taking into consideration the work requirements and employees' family/personal responsibilities.

### **Shift Exchange**

Employees are able to exchange shifts to help them meet their family/personal responsibilities.

### **Compressed Working Week / Extended Shifts**

The hours in a work cycle could be compressed into fewer, but longer shifts, eg. 10 hour shifts so employees could elect to work their ordinary working hours over four days rather than five, or nine days rather than ten.

### **Annualised Hours**

Employees work the same number of hours over a full year as full time or part-time employees, but have flexibility as to when the hours are worked. The hours of work may be expressed on an annual basis or monthly basis rather than a daily or weekly basis.

This option provides employers with greater flexibility in meeting seasonal variations or peaks and troughs of work. It is also a means of maximising employee input, increasing production flexibility and output, and reducing overtime and unproductive time. This arrangement could allow employees to determine actual hours of work within the specified boundaries and take time off when required. Employees will benefit from having the ability to take time off during normal working hours to attend to family or personal matters, with the same pay guaranteed each week.

Employees receive their normal weekly pay every week regardless of the number of hours worked. At the end of an agreed period, the actual hours worked are reconciled with the required hours for that period. Any shortfall in hours worked will need to be made up, and any excess cleared or carried over to the next period.

The same principles can be applied to any length of time, eg. a 4 week, 6 week, 13 week or 6 month cycle. For example, employees could be required to work 152 hours over a four week period instead of 38 hours per week.

Employers need to establish upper and lower limits of hours to be worked during any one day or week. Occupational health and safety issues need to be considered when establishing these limits.

The disadvantages of this type of arrangement also need to be considered. For employers, having annualised hours may increase administration costs and supervisory time and effort in supervising and recording varying hours of employees. For employees, it will involve working longer hours during peak periods and will involve inconsistent work patterns which may impact on dependant care arrangements.

## Flexible Leave Arrangements

The ability to take leave to manage family/personal obligations is an essential element in a workplace culture that supports work life balance. This section outlines the minimum leave entitlements of employees as well as flexible options in leave that may be a viable option for the workplace.

### Carers/Family Leave

Leave for caring for sick family or household members is provided under employment conditions, whereby employees can use a certain amount of their personal sick leave as Carers/Family Leave.

Under the *Minimum Conditions of Employment Act (1993)(Amended)* all full-time and part-time employees under the state industrial system can use up to 10 days of their sick leave entitlement per year as carer's leave to cover situations in which there is an unexpected emergency affecting a member of the employee's family or household, as well as injury or illness.

### Parental Leave

Unpaid parental leave of up to 52 weeks is available to full-time or part-time employees for the birth or adoption of a child. Employees must have been employed by the same organisation for more than 12 months to be eligible for parental leave. Contract employees cannot take leave beyond the end of their contract.

Under the *Minimum Conditions of Employment Act (1993)(Amended)* casual employees under the state industrial system who have been employed on a regular and systematic basis for 12 months or more, and who have a reasonable expectation of ongoing employment are entitled to maternity or parental leave.

Additional parental leave entitlements include paid parental leave, communication during parental leave, an employee's requirement to notify the employer of certain matters while on parental leave, leave without pay following parental leave to extend the leave period by up to two years and extension of unpaid partner leave up to a maximum of eight weeks.

Employees returning to work after parental leave now have the right to request a return on a 'modified basis', which includes working part-time, working fewer days and/or fewer hours or working different days and/or at different times that the employee was working before parental leave. Employers must agree to such requests unless there are reasonable grounds not to agree. Reasonable grounds may include:

- (a) cost
- (b) lack of adequate replacement staff
- (c) loss of efficiency
- (d) impact on the production or delivery of products or services by the employer.

Employers can make arrangements for employees on parental leave to keep in touch with work by regular telephone contact, newsletters, invitations to social activities, important meetings or training and development courses. Short periods of casual work during busy periods could benefit employees and employers.

Parental leave entitlements are provided within Awards and Agreements within the WA Government Health Sector, *The Minimum Conditions of Employment Act (1993)(Amended)* and the Paid Parental Leave Operational Circular, all of which should be read in conjunction with one another, as the most favourable provision will apply.

*Appendix 6 – Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) New State Labour Relations Laws – The Labour Relations Legislation Amendment Act 2006*  
[http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/LabourRelations/Media/New\\_State\\_labour\\_rel.pdf](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/LabourRelations/Media/New_State_labour_rel.pdf)

### **Breastfeeding Breaks**

Providing facilities and support for mothers, to enable them to combine breastfeeding and work. This may include flexible paid lactation breaks (one 30 minute break every four hours), an appropriate room provided for breastfeeding or expressing breast milk and breastfeeding resources and support.

*Appendix 7 – WA Health Workplace Policy for Breastfeeding*  
<http://intranet.health.wa.gov.au/hwl/policies/policies.html>

### **Flexible Annual Leave and Long Service Leave**

Employees could be allowed to take annual leave or long service leave to coincide with family/personal responsibilities such as school holidays or planned family holidays, or to care for a dependent family member. Employees could also be allowed to take annual leave or long service leave in small portions of leave such as single weeks or days as needed to assist them to meet their family/personal responsibilities. This will reduce unplanned absenteeism, assist with the clearance of leave and may reduce the need for relief arrangements for longer absences.

In addition annual or long service leave may be taken at half pay for double the period accrued or double pay for half the period accrued.

### **Purchased Leave**

(also known as 48/52)

Employees work on a full time basis at reduced pay and take additional self-funded paid leave during the year. The income earned for the actual time worked (including accrued paid annual leave) is averaged and paid over the full year. This provides a steady reduced income and additional leave.

Under this arrangement, service is not broken, however the additional leave does not count for service for the purposes of further leave accrual. Additional leave accrued when using this option is paid at the reduced rate when it is being taken. If employees revert back to full time employment, then the leave accrued during that arrangement period could be taken as a proportionally shorter period of leave on full pay. This arrangement is useful for employees needing additional time off work to attend to family responsibilities such as caring for elderly relatives or children during school holidays. It may also suit employers if such periods are usually quiet.

### **Deferred Salary Scheme (4/5 Years)**

Employees receive 80% of their normal income for four years of work, paid over a five year period in which the fifth year is taken as paid leave at the reduced income level. This is useful for employees wanting to take planned extended leave for family/personal reasons.

Managers need to ensure that this type of leave is managed carefully and is available on a fair and equitable basis. Written agreements should be established with each employee participating in the scheme outlining all details and conditions.

### **Ceremonial / Cultural Leave**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and employees of other cultures could be allowed to take annual leave or unpaid leave to meet traditional law, custom, cultural and family obligations, or to participate in ceremonial, cultural and religious activities.

### **Career Break Schemes**

Employees can take unpaid leave for an agreed period. This is valuable for those wishing to take leave beyond the normal 12-month parental leave period, care for an ill spouse or relative.

Employees could be offered short periods of casual employment during a career break. Using part-time work for a graduated departure or return to work may also be an appropriate option. This enables employers to retain skilled employees in the long term and assists employees with skill retention and a smoother transition back into the workforce.

As for all periods of extended leave, employers should make arrangements for employees to keep in touch with developments at work through regular contact, newsletters, and social activities.

### **Leave Without Pay**

Employers may approve employees taking a period of unpaid leave for personal reasons such as to care for a seriously ill partner, child or parent or for other family responsibilities, religious or cultural reasons, study purposes, competitive sports, travel or other personal reasons. Employers will need to be able to provide employees with a suitable job on their return from leave. Employees are required to exhaust all annual leave entitlements before taking leave without pay.

### **Short Leave / Emergency Leave**

Short leave on full pay may be available under certain circumstances or to attend to an emergency.

### **Emergency Service Leave**

Paid leave of absence for attendances at emergencies as declared by the recognized authority. This applies to active volunteer members of the State Emergency Service, St John Ambulance Brigade, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Bush Fire Brigade or Volunteer Marine Rescue Service.

### **Study Leave**

Study or development leave may be granted to undertake educational, developmental or similar activity in order to enhance your capacity to contribute to the business aims of WA Health.

### **Bereavement Leave**

Entitlement to paid bereavement leave on the death of a member of the employee's family or household.

### **Blood Plasma / Donors Leave**

Time away from the workplace in order to donate blood or plasma or additional leave granted to employees donating an organ.

## Other Work Life Balance Initiatives

There are many options for assisting employees with dependent care responsibilities whether on a short-term basis when dependents are sick, or more long-term care while employees are at work. Dependents may include children, partners, elderly parents or other relatives.

### **Scheduling Training and Development Courses**

Training and development courses which are scheduled to start early or late in the day, during school holidays, or are residential (live-in) can place an additional burden on employees with family responsibilities. Employers need to consider the normal working hours of employees and school holiday periods when organising training and development courses or planning sessions. If residential training courses are being planned, arrangements could be made so that employees with family responsibilities can go home if necessary. Part-time employees and employees working from home should be given equal access to all relevant training and development opportunities and courses.

### **Workplace Family Room**

The establishment of a family room in the workplace enables employees to continue to work as productively as possible while minding a child or another dependent family member when normal care arrangements breakdown. This could assist employees with child-care emergencies, unwell children, pupil-free days, or eldercare responsibilities. This is an alternative to employees having to stay at home to care for their family member.

A family room should contain a computer and workstation for the employee, plus a couch or bed, small activity table and chairs, toys, books or a television and video with headphones. It is important to develop sound guidelines for the use of the family room. For safety reasons, the room should not be available to anyone with an infectious disease. Insurance and occupational health and safety issues will need to be examined during the planning stage.

Example: The Family Work Room at Department of Health has been established in the Royal Street Division to assist employees in caring for their immediate family or dependents in an emergency, when normal care arrangements have broken down or when, due to non-infectious illness, normal care arrangements cannot be used. It also provides facilities for the expressing of breast milk.

*Appendix 8 – Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) Establishing a Family Room*

[http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/WorkLife/Work%20and%20Family/Work\\_and\\_Family.html](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/WorkLife/Work%20and%20Family/Work_and_Family.html)

### **Breastfeeding Room**

Provision of a private room for women who wish to continue breastfeeding once they return to work. This can facilitate an earlier return to work.

Example: The Mother's Room at Fremantle Hospital is a facility that provides a private location for breastfeeding mothers to express milk or if arrangements can be made for another caregiver to bring the child into the Hospital to breastfeed the baby on site.

*Appendix 7 – WA Health Workplace Policy for Breastfeeding*

<http://intranet.health.wa.gov.au/hwl/policies/policies.html>

*Appendix 9 - Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) Breastfeeding in the Workplace*

[http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/WorkLife/Work%20and%20Family/Work\\_and\\_Family.html](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/lr/WorkLife/Work%20and%20Family/Work_and_Family.html)

### **Assisting with Dependent Care Arrangements**

Employers can make arrangements to reserve places at a local day care centre or family day care centre for children or elderly dependents of employees, at a negotiated fee, which is paid by the employee. Day care facilities close to the workplace would provide easy access for the employee before, during and after work. It may also facilitate an early return to work from parental leave. This is often the easiest and most preferred option for employers considering assisting employees with dependent care arrangements.

Employers could also consider reserving places at local community facilities for out-of-school-hours care for children of employees before and after school, and/or vacation care or school holiday programs for the primary school children of employees. These programs offer supervised care and recreational activities for the children. Employees would pay the fees for this care.

### **Establishing a Child Care Centre**

Employers can consider establishing a child-care centre at the workplace, or in close proximity to the workplace for employees. This could be established for employees only, or with places available for the employees of other local employers, or to the community on a user pay basis.

Alternatively employers could enter into a joint venture with other local employers, the local council or community groups to establish a joint child care facility close to the workplace. This may be a more viable option. Consultation with an Accountant and the Australian Tax Office is essential to clarify taxation issues.

Example: The Children's Hospital Child Care Centre is located in the grounds of Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) and provides care for a maximum of 47 children. The Centre has a particular focus on providing care for shift-working parents, children who have additional needs and families who have a child receiving treatment at PMH. The Centre is available to staff of PMH/KEMH as well as staff from other Health Services.

Example: A joint initiative of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Hollywood Hospital, a Child Care Coordinator is employed to assist staff at both Hospitals to locate child care suitable to their needs and to coordinate four school holiday programs each year.

*Appendix 10 – WA Health Child Care Program*

<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/familyfriendly/welcome/index.cfm>

### **Vacation Care Program**

Provision of a staff school holiday childcare program.

Example: The Jewel House Child Care Centre is designed to look after children between 5 – 12 years of age on a permanent basis during school holiday periods for registered and enrolled nurses that work at Royal Perth Hospital.

### **Employer Sponsored Counselling**

Employers provide a free employer-sponsored counselling or Employee Assistance Program for employees that provides them with an independent, confidential and professional counselling service on any work or family related difficulties. This should assist employees to resolve matters which may otherwise affect their productivity and attendance at work.

# Implementing Work Life Balance Initiatives

## Getting Started

### Management Support

It is important to obtain support from senior management and all supervisors and managers in the workplace when introducing work life balance initiatives. This single factor is often the key to success in establishing a workplace that supports work life balance. Managers should be informed of the cost implications of restrictive work practices and of the business benefits of providing employees with greater flexibility in work arrangements. Employees must feel confident that they will not be disadvantaged for using any of the work life balance practices on offer in their workplace.

### Needs Analysis

A good starting point for managers is to:

- Look at the key operational requirements of the business and what flexible work practices might suit work requirements; and
- Ask employees which flexible work practices would assist them to balance their work and family/personal responsibilities.

A needs analysis can be undertaken by identifying the organisation's key operating requirements such as client contact hours, equipment operating needs, minimum staffing requirements, inefficiencies, workflow and workload peaks and troughs, and determining which work life balance practices would suit these operational needs.

The needs of employees can be ascertained through:

- Asking employees individually (this may work best in small workplaces);
- Open discussion with employees in staff meetings;
- Asking employees through general employee surveys, or through their managers and supervisors; or
- A formal work and family survey.

### Conducting a Survey

Conducting a work and family survey does not have to be a complex process. The survey should be short and simple, and could be used to:

- Inform employees they are valued and that employers want their assistance to improve the productivity and efficiency in the workplace while balancing their work and family/personal responsibilities;
- Find out more about employees' family/personal responsibilities;
- Provide employees with a list of work life balance initiatives which employers are prepared to offer and a list of other initiatives employers may consider making available (the list could be drawn from the options provided in this kit);
- Ask employees if they would be better able to balance their work and family/personal responsibilities if any of these flexible work arrangements were introduced; and
- Ask employees which options they would use if they were made available.

Employees must be assured of confidentiality of the information they provide.

In large health entities, it might be useful to establish a consultative group with representatives from the various occupational groups and sections of the organisation to assist with the promotion and implementation of the survey and the work life balance program.

### **Cost/Benefit Analysis**

Employers may wish to conduct a cost benefit analysis of proposed initiatives to ensure that the advantages will outweigh costs. As staff turnover has cost implications, employers could calculate the cost of staff turnover, i.e. the costs of:

- Paying out accrued hours and leave entitlements
- Temporary replacements or overtime until the job is filled
- Advertising, selection and recruitment
- Induction, and on and off the job training time for the new employee and supervisors.

Any additional costs of work life balance initiatives, such as the cost of additional equipment in setting up a workplace family room or working from home arrangements, should be calculated over the life of the equipment and be offset against savings associated with retaining skilled productive employees.

### **Implementation and Labour Relations Issues**

Prior to implementing any new work life balance initiatives, employers must ensure that it is consistent with existing obligations and arrangements under any award, enterprise agreement, employer-employee agreement or contract of employment that exists in the workplace. Employers must carefully assess the implications of any proposed changes in working arrangements, and ensure that unintended additional costs, such as overtime payments, are not incurred.

Employers seeking to change working arrangements may wish to consider establishing an agreement for their workplace or for a particular employee. Information on the agreement making options available can be found in the Employment Agreements section of the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) website.

Communication with employees is essential when changing any work practices or arrangement, including introducing work life balance initiatives. All employees need to be made aware of what new initiatives are available, how they are to be implemented and the rules and conditions related to these new work practices.

It is important that managers discuss labour relations issues with the WA Health Industrial Relations Service to ensure they receive expert advice on any changes that may impact on employee's working arrangements.

*Appendix 11 – Creating Flexible Workplaces – Employers Checklist*

*Appendix 12 – Creating Flexible Workplaces – Managers Checklist*

*Appendix 13 – Managers Checklist – Assessing Requests for Flexible Work Practices*

<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/familyfriendly/welcome/index.cfm>

## **Measuring Success**

To measure success, employers may need to collect baseline information before any new work life balance initiatives are implemented. This will provide a basis for comparison when evaluating the effectiveness of the new work practices.

The effectiveness of the new work life balance initiatives can be measured, for example, by changes to the rates of absenteeism, staff turnover, rate of return from parental leave, improvements in productivity, profitability, staff morale and job satisfaction. Qualitative and quantitative measures could be used.

It is recommended that employers regularly review all work life balance initiatives and their level of use. Employers may find that employees need greater flexibility, or that employees are not using particular initiatives. The needs of employees will also change over time.

Some of the initiatives outlined in this publication may not be feasible in certain workplaces, and may incur additional costs in relation to overtime or penalty rates. Employers must carefully assess the implications of any proposed changes in working arrangements.

Associated issues such as insurance, workers' compensation, legal liability, security, taxation and superannuation implications, equity and supervision also need to be considered carefully for some of the flexible work practice options.

# LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1	WA Health Work Life Balance Policy
Appendix 2	Awards and Agreements Summary of Flexible Work Practices
Appendix 3	WA Health Part-time/Job Share Policy
Appendix 4	WA Health Phased Retirement Policy
Appendix 5	Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) Home Based Work
Appendix 6	Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) New State Labour Relations Laws – The Labour Relations Legislation Amendment Act 2006
Appendix 7	WA Health Workplace Policy for Breastfeeding
Appendix 8	Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) Establishing a Family Room
Appendix 9	Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) Breastfeeding in the Workplace
Appendix 10	WA Health Child Care Program
Appendix 11	Creating Flexible Workplaces – Employers Checklist
Appendix 12	Creating Flexible Workplaces – Managers Checklist
Appendix 13	Managers Checklist – Assessing Requests for Flexible Work Practices

Policies and other documents may be replaced or updated from time to time and it is important to refer to the online version of the document to ensure you have the most current and up-to-date information. The documents can be accessed at the Work Life Balance website at:

<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/familyfriendly/welcome/index.cfm>