

Reduced Hours Guidance

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) developments, the status quo for everyone is constantly changing, and organisations and their workers are asked to rapidly adapt to new situations.

Now that most performing arts practitioners are working from home, those with children will also face the ongoing task of caring for their kids at home, including home school, entertain, provide meals and nurture, respond to various demands, negotiate sibling fights and screen time, whilst adapting to and managing home working.

Voluntary reduced hours, that ensure a reduction in workload, may be welcomed by parents and carers during this challenging period. Additionally, reduced hours may offer a break to anyone suffering mentally during this heightened state and provide some financial relief for the organisation.

Here are a few suggestions to enable workers at home, particularly those still on full time contracts, to reduce their workload and working hours in order to manage their new demands. Please note that all these examples are based on a short to medium term change of hours and should *not* affect the individual's permanent contract of employment.

Remember too that employment law permits you to make temporary and permanent reductions in working hours, but you cannot impose even temporary changes without the consent of your staff members. You may make such changes

- To account for a decline in the demand for your product or service.
- To reflect changes in duties and responsibilities.
- Lack of work activities for an employee to carry out.

If you're unable to reach an agreement with a member of staff, or with your employee representatives, you may also consider an imposed reduction in working hours. You should take legal advice before you do this.

- **Reduced hours and workload on full pay:** In an ideal scenario your organisation would continue to provide full time pay, whilst reducing staff's work hours, adapting workload accordingly. This requires clear communication between managers and staff, discussing key activities and structure in advance. Additionally, the time period for this practice should be clearly set out and understood, as your organisation may only be able to provide this on a short term basis, after which managers would review the arrangement. PiPA is aware that, whilst this is best practice, many performing arts organisations might not be in a position to provide this due to financial insecurities.
- **Request for Reduced Hours:** Managers should communicate that they are open to temporarily converting existing contracts to short term part time or reduced hours, reducing salary accordingly. Staff who are interested in this would not be required to make a formal request under the Right to Request regulations, and the new

arrangement would **not** result in a permanent change to their contract. This can be offered to all staff who voice concern about managing home working under the current conditions, regardless of their care responsibilities. A timeframe should be agreed in advance and regular reviews scheduled.

- **Voluntary Reduction in Hours and Pay:** Organisations facing potential financial crisis can ask all staff to agree to a voluntary temporary reduction of hours to recalibrate staff costs for a short time. This would need to be on a strictly voluntary basis, identifying those who would consider short term reduced work, as well as reassuring those who are dependent on their current pay to continue. During the 2008 financial crisis, this was an approach which was used successfully in organisations of different sizes and industries to avoid redundancies.
- **Voluntary Holiday:** If your organisation is approaching the year end for annual leave, now might be a good time to remind staff to take holiday they might otherwise lose. Whilst traveling might not be possible at the moment, future holidays would not be affected if the official company leave ends in the next months. You may find that some staff welcome the ability to “switch off” 100% from work, whether or not their role can be done from home.
- **Unpaid Parental Leave/ Sabbatical:** For those with financial security that can afford an unpaid break, now could be the chance to take unpaid leave for an agreed timeframe, knowing that their employment is secure upon return. Reminding staff about this option may encourage uptake.

Work structures

Key to adjusting and managing reduced hours is discussing the requirements and appropriate structure, setting regular touch-in points, whilst being aware that plans can change and might need readjustment.

- **Flexible structure:** The advantage of working flexibly throughout is for staff to be able to adjust their time and management of work according to needs.
Example: Monday. 10am touch-in point, flexible hours throughout the week, Thursday 4pm touch in point to review
- **Set structure:** In dual person households where both parents are working from home, a set timetable might be more beneficial to all parties to enable the share of care as well as domestic workspace, reducing stress and potential conflict for everyone. Example: Working hours Monday to Friday 8.30am - 12.30pm, touch in point Tuesday 10am
- **Mixed:** A mixed model of above options, where some hours are set with workload being picked up flexibly throughout the week.

PiPA Example of managing remote working with both parents at home:

Remote working is deeply ingrained in PiPA's practice as our whole team works mainly from home around existing childcare arrangements. Like many people we now find ourselves sharing our workspaces with partners who are also working from home as well as our children whose schools are closed. We are in the process of setting clear schedules with our children and our partners, dividing time with the kids between us, plus taking partners' new work requirements and key work hours into account when scheduling PiPA team time. We are setting weekly PiPA Team meetings, establishing points in the week when we know that all team members are available for each other.

Everyone however will need time to adjust. Our partners might not be used to working around the kids, and kids might not be used to having their parents work at home, therefore not understanding the boundaries we are trying to set. Flexibility and continuous communication to adjust is key for us, and is likely to be so for the parents and carers who you employ.

Personal note from Anna, day one of kids not going to school:

"Writing this paragraph I moved rooms twice to find a quiet working spot, negotiating space with lego and teddies, whilst being hunted down numerous times by my 5 year old daughter trying to discuss why dad isn't allowing more sweets, and if we could buy a scooter with a unicorn attached. Finding our new routine will take time."

If you would like further support discussing reduced hours please get in touch with PiPA's Charter Manager Matt pipacharter@gmail.com.

Equally, please send us examples of any relevant policies and practices you are willing to share with the Charter Partner network to facilitate cross organisational learning.

For more information about available support for performing arts professionals please visit our website [HERE](#). We are continuously updating the information, so if you have anything to add do let us know.