

Flexible Resourcing: What's It Going To Cost You?

In a perverse twist on the traditional tale of Robin Hood, Mr Bulloch and his band of merry men are apparently embarking on a plan to rob from the poor and give to the rich.

Looking at the guidance given to managers in the recent Flexible Resourcing pilots, the Bank said "more flexible approaches to managing and resourcing our branches locally will help us become more agile, effective and efficient".

Stripping out the business jargon, the objective of Flexible Resourcing is to run the branch network more cheaply and on the face of it that's a reasonable business objective. But a closer examination of the terms of the pilot suggests that the Bank aims to cut staff costs considerably, and expects staff to absorb the cost of the additional travelling that will be involved, rather than paying this from its own savings.

In answer to the question "Will I receive a travel allowance if I go to another branch to work?", the Bank has said in the pilot line manager guidance that:

"Any additional travel expenses will be managed in line with the Group Expenses policy. A travel cost allowance may apply where the additional required journey time increases by at least 30 minutes or ten miles each way".

Although not yet confirmed, we assume that the Bank will try to adopt this stance with CSAs when Flexible Resourcing is implemented on 1st April 2017.

What Does This Mean In Practice?

Let's assume that you drive your car to work 5 days per week. As part of Flexible Resourcing, you're asked to drive to a branch that's 9 miles beyond your current branch. HMRC say that employees should be paid a rate of 45p per mile if cars are driven for business purposes, so travelling an additional 18 miles to and from work (on top of your existing travel costs) will, in effect, cost you £8.10 per day. If you were asked to make this journey 3 times per week for 47 weeks of the year, it would cost you £1,142.10 per year. That's equivalent to a pay cut of about £1,440 a year. Could you afford that?

Add in the 25 to 30 minutes each way additional daily travelling, at say £9 per hour and it soon becomes clear that for many people the "flexible" in Flexible Resourcing is all one way.

The cost of car parking represents a further potential cost for staff. Experience suggests that its treatment, will vary from area to area.

Furthermore, if you're asked to travel more than 30 minutes or 10 miles each way, the Bank's guidance

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says that: "A travel allowance may apply" – that's hardly a cast iron guarantee. And even if an allowance is paid, the Bank's Mobility Policy limits travel allowance payments to 12 months only.

The Bank is hoping to rely on a Mobility policy drafted for a world that's very different to the one that we're about to step into with Flexible Resourcing, and it's quite clearly going to leave CSAs significantly out of pocket. **The Bank and its approved unions, Accord and Unite, are hoping you're not going to notice.**

Just The Start?

If you think that Flexible Resourcing will be limited to CSAs operating in pools of 2 to 5 branches only, then think again. The CSA Flexible Resourcing Colleague Handout says "This year, we are going to take **the first steps** (our emphasis) in implementing resource sharing between small groups of branches within each Local Director Group". We believe it's only a matter of time before Flexible Resourcing extends to other branch roles and the pools become widened with even more travelling: but no one is going to admit that openly at this stage.

The Next Steps

We've already received calls from a significant number of members concerned about what effects the Bank's plans will have on them. It's time for Mr Bulloch to answer some key questions, which I address to him directly:

1. Do you think it's morally acceptable to make branch staff, some of whom are the lowest paid staff in the Bank and struggling to make ends meet, bear the burden of additional travelling costs and time associated with Flexible Resourcing? If so why?
2. If not, what are you going to do to address this issue and ensure that staff are treated fairly?

Why not ask Mr Bulloch these questions yourself via his blog?

One-To-One Meetings

As I said in our last newsletter members will need to decide individually whether they change their working hours or locations but our clear advice is that at the meeting:

1. If you have any concerns about changing your location, or working hours or about mobility, you seek LTU's advice before you meet your line manager.
2. You do not enter into any verbal agreements or accept any verbal assurances.
3. You do not agree to temporary changes to be helpful without clear written understandings on the nature of the arrangement you are entering into.
4. You listen to what is being proposed but do not enter into any agreement or commit yourself to any changes/flexibility at the meeting.
5. You ask for the Bank's proposals in writing so you can't 'misunderstand' what's being said. We will provide a template letter for this purpose.
6. You remember that if you sign the Bank's form describing your 'flexibility' that will be treated as a commitment – don't sign.
7. You spend a day or two thinking about the proposal and decide what you can and can't commit yourself to doing and why.
8. You take carefully into account how changes in your circumstances could make something that's reasonable now, impossible at a later date e.g. care commitments.
9. If necessary, you contact LTU's Advice Team on 01234 262868 (Choose Option 1).
10. You confirm your position to your line manager using a template that we will provide.

LTU Information Collection

It will help us to help you if we already hold specific information which allows us to tailor our advice to your personal circumstances and respond more quickly.

To help us do that please complete and return the form enclosed using the Freepost envelope provided.

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