

Managing time-in-lieu

Time-in-lieu is when people who work extra hours can take the equivalent time off later. Sometimes it is done on a casual and informal basis. Other times it is managed quite formally. Employers find it a useful strategy, but one that needs to be managed carefully.

Where does it work? Where doesn't it?

Employers find that time-in-lieu works well when:

- the work does not require specific hours to be covered
- employees are self managing and self motivated
- busy periods are counterbalanced with quieter times when leave can be taken.

It does not work as well for jobs where there is limited scope for taking the time-in-lieu. In these situations it may be better to use over-time, with a budget you can control.

Setting the boundaries

It is useful to set clear boundaries for using time-in-lieu. Remember that accrued time-in-lieu is a cost to your business. You may want to consider:

- Is there a limit on how much time can be accumulated?
- Is there a limit as to when time-in-lieu can be accumulated? Is it at any time, or is it restricted to specific periods of the year when workloads are high?
- Is there a fixed period in which the time-in-lieu needs to be taken, for example within two weeks, a month or a year? This will depend on the nature of your work and how you manage your budget.
- Who can access time-in-lieu? Is it related to specific jobs or to how long people have been working for you?
- How much time can be taken without prior arrangement and approval, e.g. one hour?
- Do you need to limit when it can be used?
- Does it need to be used particularly for short breaks such as a half day or a late start to go to a personal appointment, or can it be used to extend annual holidays or to reduce hours during school holidays?
- Can it be used when there are regular work demands such as evening meetings or would this be better managed by adjusting the working hours on the day?
- Does it need to be used up before annual holidays are taken?



Making it work

To ensure that time-in-lieu works:

- make sure the boundaries for accumulating and using time-in-lieu are clearly understood by all employees
- make sure there is a consistent approach to the use of time-in-lieu across the organisation or a clear rationale as to why it might differ
- keep an eye on the amount of time-in-lieu being accumulated. Is it appropriate, or does it suggest that the workloads need to be adjusted or that more staff are necessary? Can your business carry this cost?
- watch for people coming in unexpectedly or unnecessarily and then claiming for time-in-lieu

If you suspect time-in-lieu is being misused, address the issue early.