

# BEYOND LOCKDOWN: HOW TO NEGOTIATE FLEXIBLE WORKING, FOR THE LONG-TERM

A Timewise Toolkit for employees

# WHAT THIS GUIDE WILL GIVE YOU

There's no question that we're living through a challenging time. Covid-19 has ripped up the rulebook on what normal work looks like, and many of us have been required to do a juggling act as our work and home lives have become more and more blended.

But if there's a flip side, it's that working more flexibly, even in these unusual circumstances, is helping us all understand how, when and where we work best. And this is creating an opportunity to transform the way we work, and enjoy a fulfilling career whilst working flexibly.


This Timewise Toolkit is a practical guide to help you think through how you could take this new-found flexibility into future ways of working. It's in three short sections:

**Part 1:** Understanding the different flexible working options, and assessing how to balance your needs with those of your organisation

**Part 2:** Deciding what kind of flexibility best matches your needs and how you could make it work

**Part 3:** Preparing a business case that sets out how being more flexible will benefit your team

It includes three practical helpsheets, designed to provide a structure for mapping out your plans. You'll also find some useful links to further reading and some inspirational case studies that show how others have made a success of working flexibly.



For further help and advice on working flexibly, and finding a new flexible role, check out the advice and ideas section on **Timewise Jobs.**



# Part One: Understanding the different flexible working options

Having been asked to work remotely during the Covid-19 crisis, many people are keen to keep some of their new-found flexibility once workplaces open.

However, there's a big difference between being asked to work from home in response to a crisis, and developing a sustainable flexible working pattern. So it's important to explore all the options, and find a way of working that will suit both you and your organisation in the long term. These steps will help you get started.

## Step 1: Explore the most common flexible working patterns

The first step is to get clear on the different kinds of flexible working that are available. At Timewise, we use a simple WHERE / WHEN / HOW MUCH model to explore what flexibility can be built into a role. Here are some of the most common forms of flexible working, and how they fit into the three categories.

### WHERE

- Remote working: working from home, from other offices within your organisation, or from other remote locations.

### WHEN

- Compressed hours: working extra hours on certain days to work fewer days each week, fortnight or month.
- Annualised hours: working a set number of days or hours per year, at fixed times, such as term time only.
- Flexi-time: varying start, finish or lunch break times within set limits.

### HOW MUCH

- Part-time work: working less than full-time for reduced pay.
- Job share: sharing the responsibilities of a full-time job with another colleague.
- Unpaid leave, flexi-holidays and sabbaticals: buying extra holidays, taking extended leave, or having periods of time off work.

Working through these options will help you to decide which kind of flexibility will best help you create a good work-life balance.

## Step 2: Understand the difference between formal and informal flexibility

Your organisation should have a flexible working policy which clearly outlines both formal and informal flexible working arrangements and the processes you might need to follow for each.

Informal arrangements are changes that have no impact on the total number of hours you work, your pay or your benefits. These are usually agreed with line managers, having been discussed with the team. They can be confirmed in writing or verbally.

Formal arrangements are changes that will lead to a permanent difference in the total hours you work or your working pattern, and will impact your pay, benefits or primary working location. These are likely to result in a change to your employment contract and so require approval from your line manager and HR team.

Formal plus informal arrangements are a combination of both. For example, you might decide to formally reduce your working hours, but also work from home from time to time by agreement with your line manager.

# Part Two: Defining your flexible working needs

Now you've explored the different kinds of flexible working, and started thinking about how a change might impact your workload and your organisation, it's time to consider how to balance the different elements of your work and life.

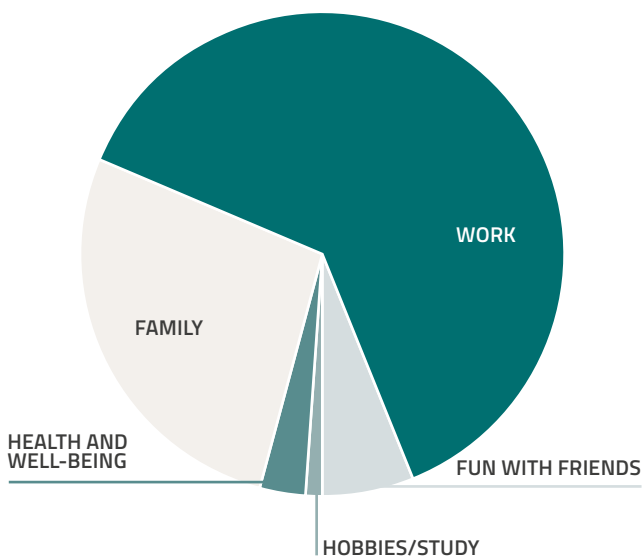
## Step 1: Compare your current work-life balance with your ideal

Now ask yourself, is this working? Are you happy with the way you currently split your time or are there changes you would like to make?

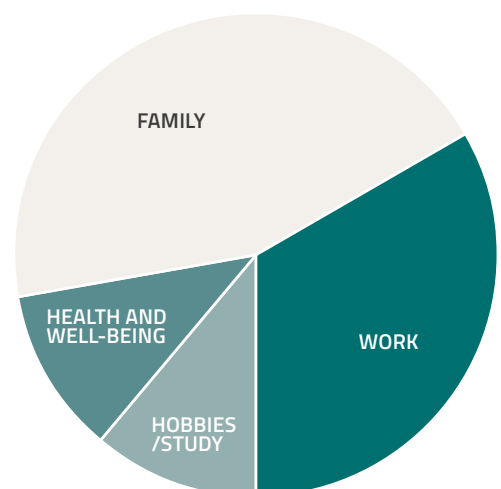
If you think things could be better, repeat the exercise, this time thinking forward to how you would like to be splitting your time.

Finally, you need to compare your two versions. Make a list of the differences and begin to consider how you could change your current way of working in order to move closer to your ideal.

### CURRENT WORK SPLIT



### MY IDEAL TIME SPLIT



The best way to start is to think about the different parts of your life, and how you split your time across them. You could either do this by activity (work, family, exercise and well-being, personal growth and development, fun with friends) or by role (employee, father, golfer). Next, you need to look at how you currently split your time across these different activities or roles, using a pie chart, for example. You can use Helpsheet 1 at the back of this guide, to support this exercise.





## Step 2: Closing the gap between your current and ideal balance

It's likely that you'll have concluded that your work segment should be smaller, to make room for the other elements of your life. If so, there are a couple of ways to tackle this.

(i) A quick approach is to carry out a similar exercise, this time breaking your work time down into smaller chunks (such as commuting, key tasks, meetings, administration). You can then start to think about whether flexible working could help you change these elements. For example, would changing your start and finish times reduce your commute time?

You will also need to take into account the impact on your workload. Here are some key questions you to consider:

- Can your responsibilities be covered by someone else when you are not there?
- How responsive do you need to be, and in what timeframes?
- Are there peak times in your working day or week?
- What are the expectations of your key stakeholders/customers, and how will you manage these in a more flexible role?

(ii) Alternatively, if you'd like to take a more detailed approach, you can use helpsheet 2 at the back of this guide, to break down the different ways you could make your job more flexible, based on the WHERE, WHEN and HOW MUCH model we explored in Part 1.

The WHERE section focuses on the location of your work. Some key issues to consider are which activities would be best suited to remote working, whether you would have the technology to support it, and how you would stay connected to your team.

The WHEN section prompts you to think about your key stakeholders' expectations, and how you would manage them if you were working outside of core hours.

The HOW MUCH section helps you think about whether you could reduce your job from full-time to part-time. This involves considering whether part of your workload could be moved to a different area of your organisation, or delegated to a team member.

For a reminder of the different kinds of flexibility you might want to consider, look back at Part 1.

### CONSIDERING PART-TIME?

It's important to think through the financial implications of part-time work. Opting for a three-day week will mean your salary, holiday and benefits will be adjusted to 60% of their current level. However, you may make savings on expenses like travel and childcare.

This salary calculator, recommended by the Citizens Advice Bureau, will help you work out what your pro-rated pay would be:

<https://www.thesalarycalculator.co.uk/>



**Step 3: Think about how to make your preferred flexibility work for the business**

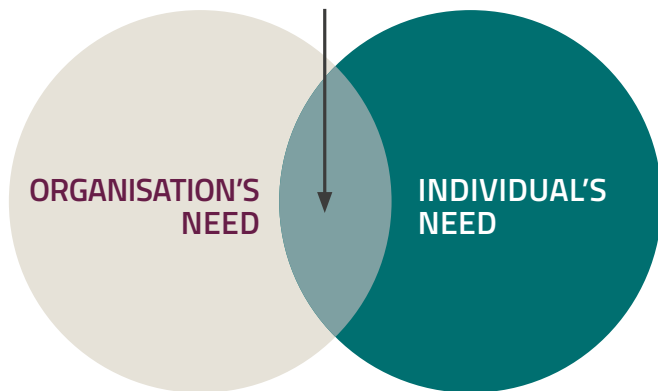
Having explored how the different kinds of flexible working might work for you, it's time to think about how you could make them work in practice.

Experience has shown us that flexibility works best when it works both ways. So it's important to think through what your organisation needs from your role, as well as what you need. The best, most sustainable flexible working options are those in which both sets of needs are met.

Create a shortlist of any working patterns that feel feasible, and ask yourself these questions:

- What changes would you need to make to your workload to make this pattern work?
- How would this impact on your stakeholders and/or customers?
- What would be the effect on your team and wider colleagues?
- If you are a manager, how would it impact your direct reports?

**WHERE FLEXIBILITY WORKS**



**In need of inspiration?**

Take a look at some of the [Timewise Power 50](#) winners and see what patterns they've used to balance their work and lives successfully

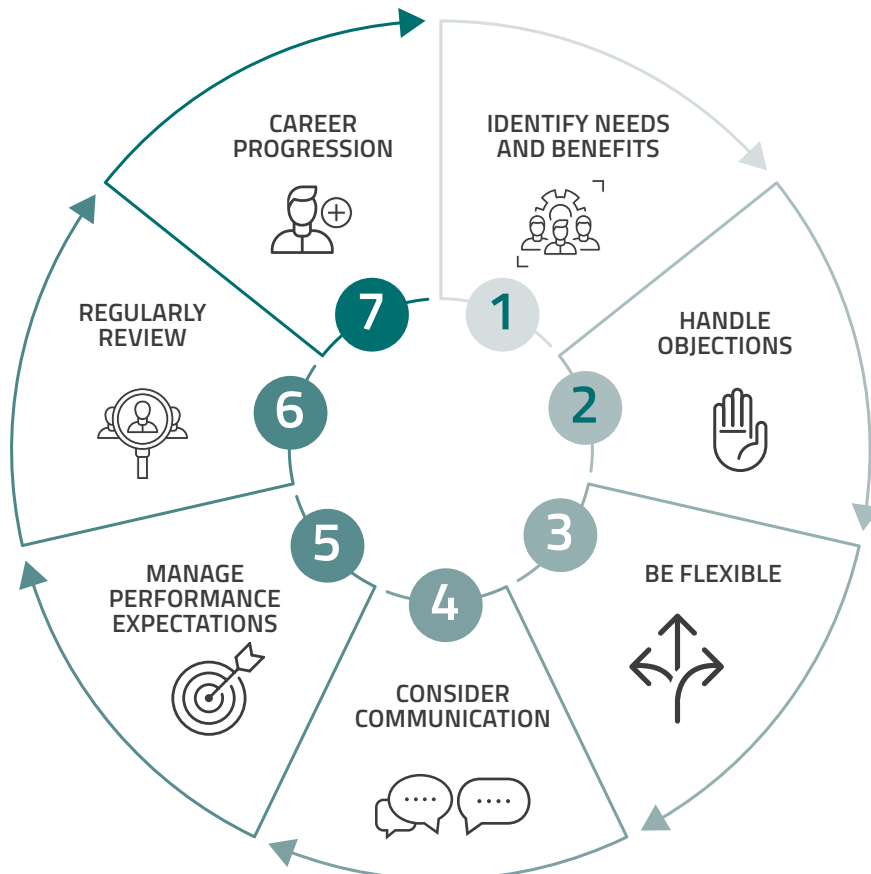


# Part Three: Preparing the business case for your flexible role

If you've worked through Part 1 and Part 2 of this toolkit, you will have explored the different kinds of flexible working, identified a pattern or patterns that could improve your work-life balance and started to think about the wider business implications of changing your way of working.

Now it's time to bring everything together, and start preparing for a positive conversation with your manager about what you need, how the business will benefit and how you can work together to make it happen.

It might help to think of it as a sales pitch, or a presentation; essentially, you're trying to persuade the listener to do something, and need to build a compelling story about why it's in their interests to do so. Work through these seven steps, using Helpsheet 3 at the back of this guide to guide your thinking.





### Step 1: Identify the business benefits

Start by outlining how your preferred way of working will be beneficial to your organisation. List as many as you can, and be as specific as you can. If you are struggling to turn one of your points into a benefit, try applying the ‘So what?’ test. For example:

- Working from home two days a week will save me six hours of commuting. So what?
- This means I can be available from 8am one day and until 6pm on the other. So what?
- This will give the business better coverage for our customer queries. GREAT!

This approach will ensure you are articulating the benefits of your proposal to the business, rather than just how it helps you. Stick to the facts, use professional language and avoid an emotional tone.

### Step 2: Overcome potential objections

Next, list any concerns that your manager might have about your proposed changes, and think about possible solutions for overcoming them. Preparing this in advance will avoid you having to think on your feet or becoming defensive. It will also show that you understand your manager’s world.

It’s important to be honest with yourself about the elements of your role that will be hard to flex, and come up with some alternative suggestions. You don’t have to do this alone; if you’re considering how changes to your working pattern might impact on your colleagues, why not talk to them in advance and see what may or may not be possible?

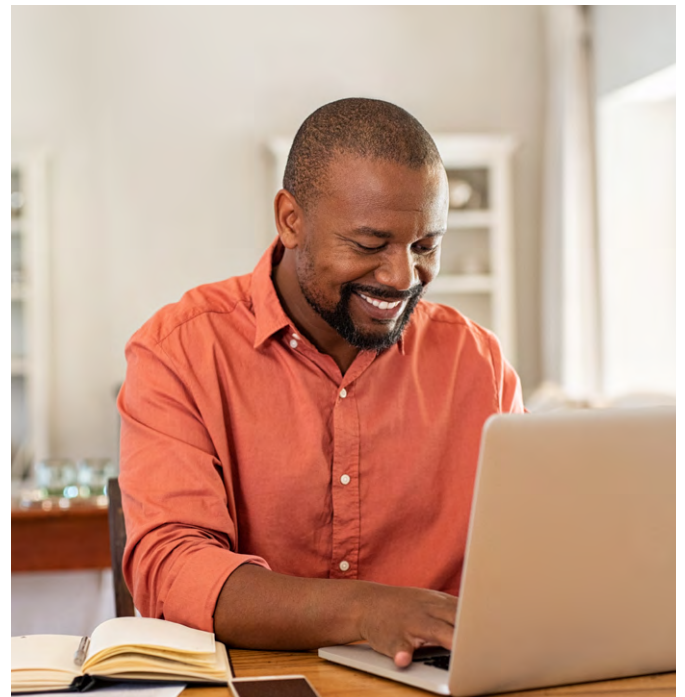
If you are considering reducing your hours, think about how it will impact your stakeholders and your deliverables, as well as where or with whom the remaining work would sit. Could this be an opportunity for a more junior member of the team to upskill?

If you can, include examples of similar arrangements that have worked really well, either internally (such as how work is covered during holidays) or externally (such as how your competitors work).

### Step 3: Be prepared to be flexible in return

Showing that you’re willing to compromise will make it more likely that you’ll find a pattern that works for you and your manager. For example, could you be flexible about your non-working days to attend monthly team meetings? Could you dial in to essential briefings when working remotely?

You’ll need to be realistic about what is and is not possible to manage with your circumstances. For example, dialling in to an important meeting with no child care in place might not work for you or your organisation.





#### **Step 4: Make a plan for communicating**

It will help allay your manager's concerns if you are able to show how you will communicate with internal and external stakeholders, and suggest practical steps to make this work smoothly.

Explain the process you will put in place to clarify your availability. This is likely to include sharing your calendar, and adapting your email signature and voicemail so stakeholders know when you'll be back and who else they can contact. If you are a manager, think about how you will give your team clarity on your expectations, how to escalate issues when you are not available, and your willingness to be contacted in an emergency.

#### **Step 5: Manage performance expectations**

You will also need to factor in a discussion about how your performance will be measured. Will this need to change? If you are planning to reduce your hours, you may want to suggest how your targets or output measures could be reduced to reflect this. (You'll also need to remember this when it comes to annual review time.)

It's important to think about the most positive way to present your suggestions. For example, will reducing your deliverables give a junior member of your team the opportunity to step up? Thinking through the possibilities and providing recommendations will make it easier for your manager to feel positive about the change you're proposing.

#### **Step 6: Plan in regular reviews**

Inevitably, circumstances will change and needs will evolve on both sides. So reassure your manager that you will regularly review your new working pattern, overcome any new hurdles and make any adjustments that are needed.

Explain that you will check in regularly with your manager, your team and other stakeholders. This will enable you to resolve any concerns quickly and

efficiently, rather than letting them fester and become future problems.

In many organisations, new arrangements are agreed for an initial trial period. If your manager is reluctant, this is a good way to show that you can make it work before making a formal change.

#### **Step 7: Plan for your future progression**

Our research tells us that flexible workers, particularly those on reduced hours, often miss out on career progression opportunities, due to prioritising the needs of their stakeholders rather than their own personal development. That isn't good for them, but it also affects their team, who are unable to make the most of their potential.

So it is worth thinking ahead about how you will factor in time for formal and informal training and development. Some of the informal networking and coaching opportunities that are seen as a 'nice to do' are crucial to building skills, confidence, support and sponsorship for your career progression, and will make you a stronger member of your team.



Remember to use  
Helpsheet 3 at the back  
of this guide to support  
you as you work through  
these seven steps.

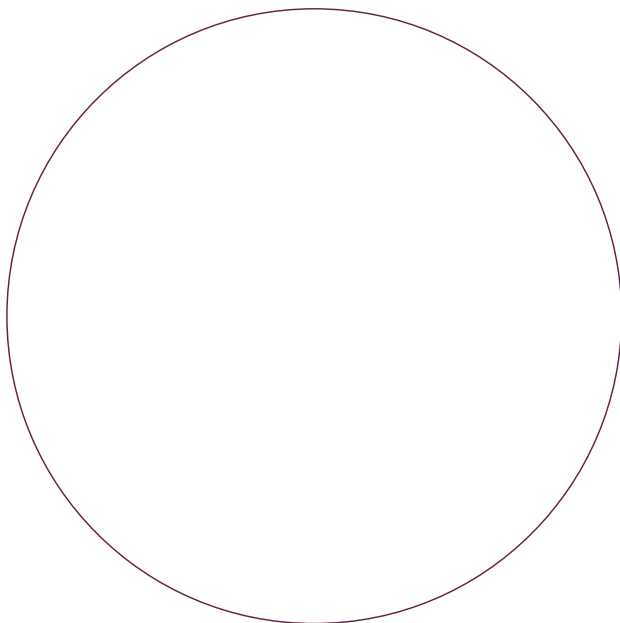
# HELPSHEET 1 – DEFINING YOUR IDEAL WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Start by listing the different elements of your life (or, if you prefer, the different roles you fulfil). For example, this might include work, family, exercise (or employee, father, golfer).




Use the pie chart template (see page 4) to visualise how you currently split your time across them.


## My current time split

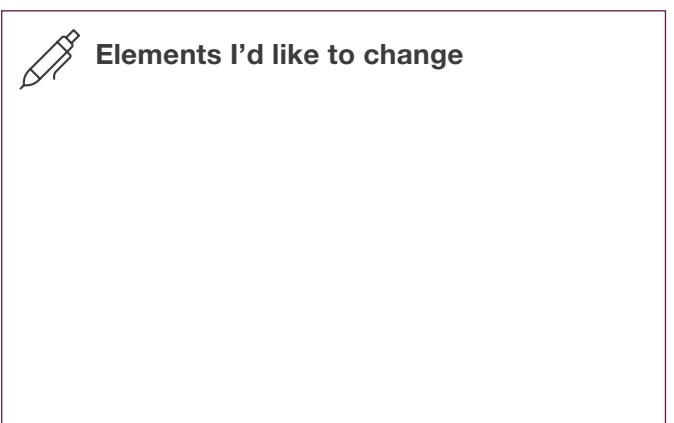


Now, note your feelings about how you're currently splitting your time.

 **Elements working well**

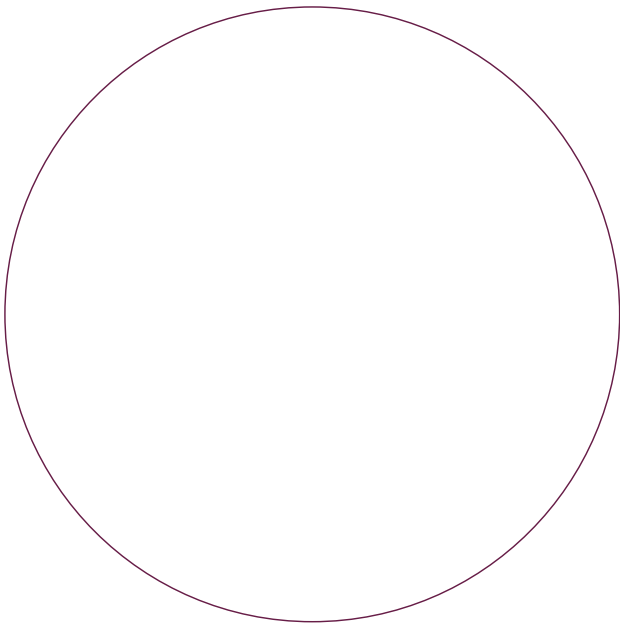


 **Elements I'd like to change**

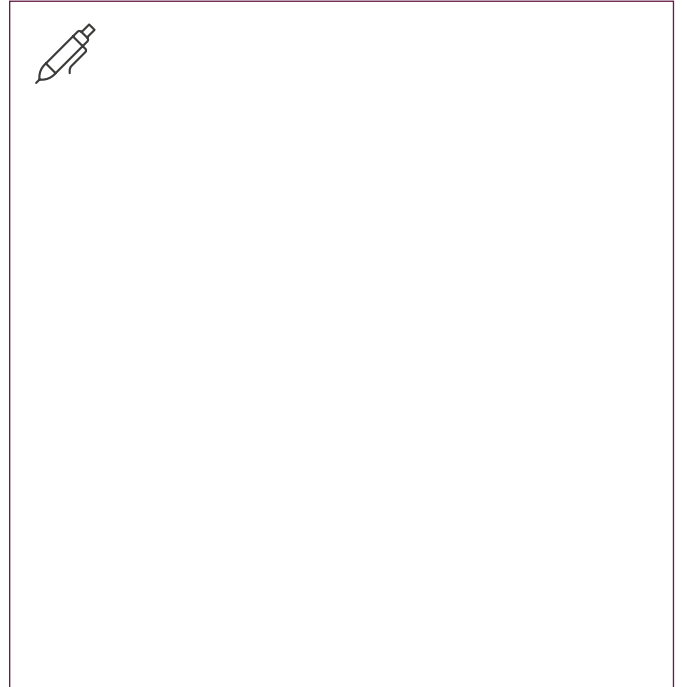


Next, building on your notes, think forward to how you would ideally like to split your time. You may want to add in extra elements that you don't currently have time for.

**My ideal time split**



What are the key differences between your current and ideal time splits?



How could you change your current ways of working to move closer to your ideal?

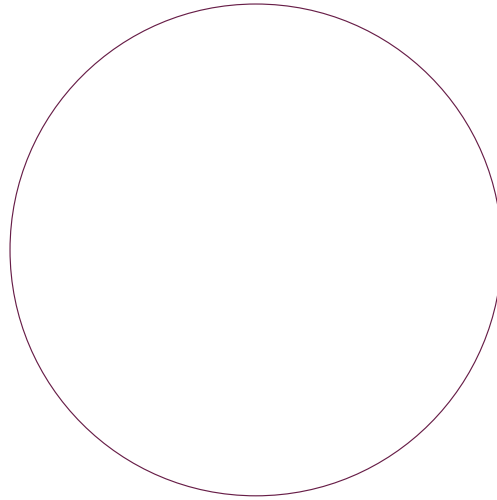
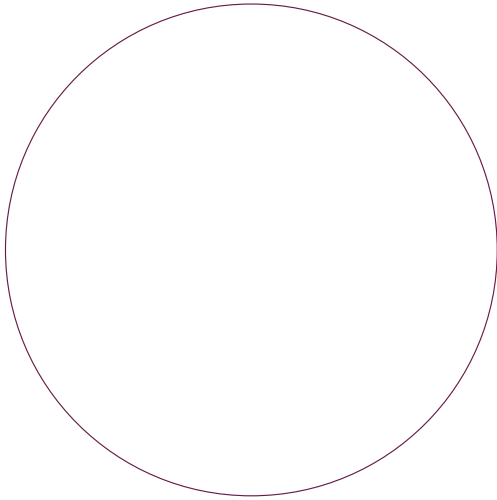




Now carry out the same exercise, this time breaking down how your working time is split (for example, commuting, meetings, key tasks.) This will help you to see opportunities to do things differently. Using Helpsheet 2: Exploring what kind of flexibility suits your role will support this.

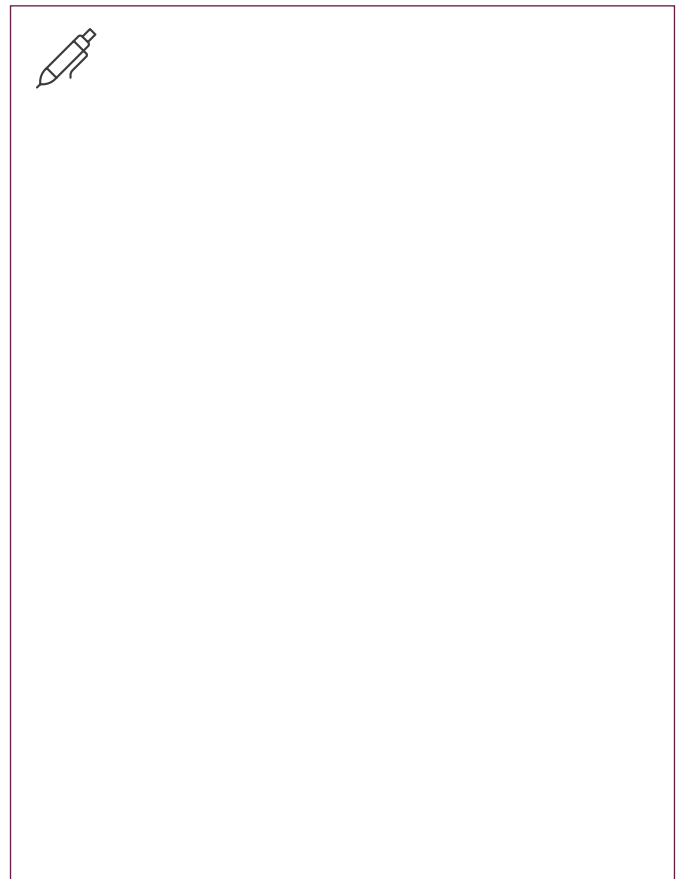
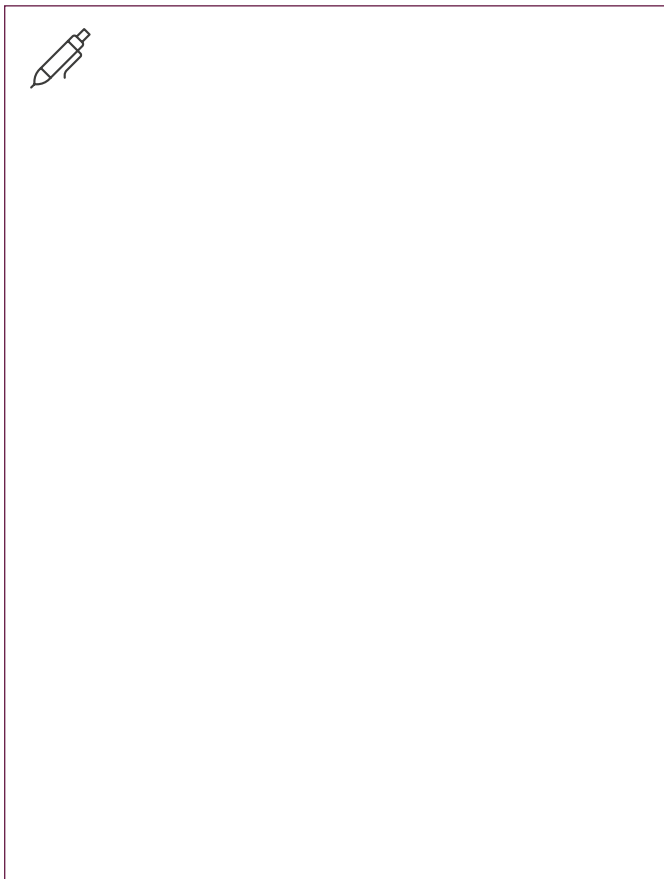
**Current work split**

**My ideal time split**



How could you change your current ways of working to move closer to your ideal?

How would this impact on your stakeholders, customers and colleagues?



We'll explore how you can present these changes positively in Helpsheet 3.

# HELPSHEET 2 – EXPLORING WHAT KIND OF FLEXIBILITY SUITS YOUR ROLE

Asking yourself these questions will help you decide which kind of flexible working pattern would work best for you.

## WHERE

- Can some of your activities be done remotely?
- What can be done via technology?
- Will you need additional equipment or software?
- How will you show your work is being progressed?
- How will you ensure good communication?
- How can you support team cohesion?
- What flexibility do you need to show in return?

## HOW MUCH

- Are efficiencies possible – ie, are there activities that could stop or be delivered elsewhere?
- Can some of the work be delegated across, down or up?
- Is a job share possible?
- Could the role be reduced over time?
- What flexibility do you need to show in return?

## WHEN

- When do you need to be available for stakeholders?
- Does your role have 'core' hours?
- What speed of response is needed?
- Who else could cover the role when you are not available?
- If you are a manager, how will issues be escalated when you are not available?
- What flexibility do you need to show in return?

## NOTES

Which types of flexible working might fit best for you? What are the key issues/barriers that you may need to talk to your manager about?

# HELPSHEET 3 – WAYS OF WORKING CONVERSATION TEMPLATE

To give yourself the best chance of agreeing a more flexible working pattern, you need to explore how it would impact your team and your organisation – then present this as positively as possible.

This template is designed to help you have a meaningful conversation with your manager. It is not meant as a script, but a series of prompts to guide your thinking. If you haven't yet completed Helpsheet 1 and Helpsheet 2, you might want to do that first.

## Step 1: Identifying your needs and the business benefits



What changes are you hoping to make to create a more flexible working pattern?



In what ways will these be beneficial to your organisation (including managers, colleagues and stakeholders)?



How could you summarise this in one compelling sentence?



## Step 2: Overcoming potential objections



What concerns do you anticipate your manager might have?



What solutions could you offer to allay these concerns?



How might your changes impact on your team (managers, colleagues, direct reports)?



What solutions could you put in place to overcome these?



How might these changes impact on your customers or other stakeholders?



How might you minimise these?

### Step 3: Being flexible in return



In what ways could you be flexible about your flexibility?



Are there times at which you cannot be flexible? What support could you enlist from others to cover these?



Would you be open to being contacted outside of your working pattern for specific reasons? If so what might these be?

### Step 4: Making a plan for communicating



Will you need to put any new processes in place to minimise disruption for your stakeholders, internally and/or externally?



What steps could you put in place to stay connected with your team?



How will you make sure you don't miss critical information when you are not working, or working elsewhere?

## 5 – Managing performance expectations



Are you clear about your priorities and deadlines?



Are these still achievable if you change your way of working?



Will these need to be adjusted or will you need additional support?



What adjustments would need to be made to make your proposed pattern work?



Can you identify any roles or other areas of the organisation which could provide additional support?



Are there parts of your workload that don't add value that could stop? Are there tasks that could be carried out more efficiently elsewhere?



## Step 6: Setting up regular reviews



How often will you revisit your new arrangement, with your manager, team and other key stakeholders?



What feedback mechanisms would you suggest to ensure it is working well or address any concerns?



Would you be happy to agree to a trial period to test out your proposed pattern?



How long do you think you would need in order to test it adequately?



How will you ensure you still have time for development and personal growth, such as training and networking?



Is there anyone already working in a similar way who you could learn from or get advice from?

## Step 7: Planning for your career progression



How will you keep your career on track?



How will you build in time for your personal development, training and keeping abreast with industry news?



Who will help you navigate progression within your new way of working? What coaching and networking opportunities can you tap into?

## Helpful links:

### About flexible working

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/rights-at-work/flexible-working/flexible-working-what-is-it/>

<https://workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/flexible-working-a-guide-for-employees/>

### Negotiating a flexible working arrangement

<https://www.acas.org.uk/making-a-flexible-working-request>

<https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/applying-for-flexible-working>

[https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/flexible-working-business-case\\_tcm18-52768.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/flexible-working-business-case_tcm18-52768.pdf)

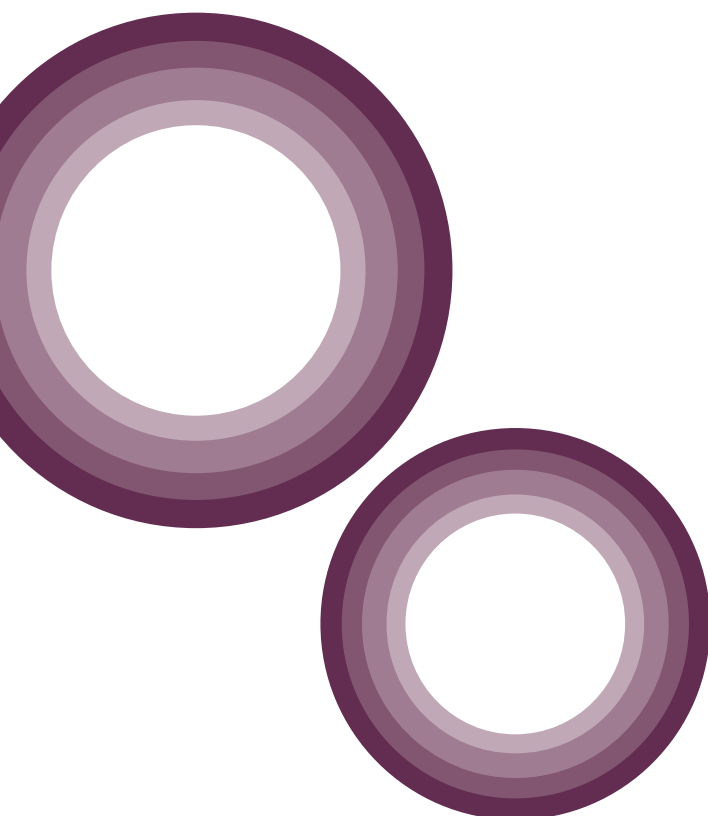
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/cryptoconfidential/2020/06/14/bitcoin-slumps-to-june-low-trumps-new-crypto-bull/#5f7693b615fd>

### Benefits and financial support

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/universal-credit-an-introduction>

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-your-earnings-affect-your-payments>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/>



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TALENT THROUGH FLEXIBILITY

We hope this toolkit has given you the support and guidance you need to design and negotiate a flexible job that fits with the rest of your life. For more advice and ideas about finding and managing a flexible role, visit **Timewise Jobs**, our part-time and flexible jobs board.

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