

NHS Flex for the Future Programme

Workshop 1: Programme Kick Off



In conjunction with



NHS England and NHS Improvement





INTRODUCTION & WELCOME

Welcome to the NHS Flex for the Future programme and thank you for being a member of the Flexible Working Change Team for your organisation.

Each of the six workshops in the NHS Flex for the Future programme will have an accompanying booklet like this one, containing reference material and tools to support you to learn more and take action in your organisation.

Inside this booklet you'll find a summary of the workshop content, plus additional guidance, information, tools and places to look to find out more.

The workshop slides and recording of the live workshop are also available in the [Resource Library](#)

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If you have questions about the programme please get in touch:

Melissa.Buntine@timewise.co.uk

weworkflexibly@nhs.net

1. Workshop summary and key concepts

This workshop gives an overview of the NHS Flex for the Future programme and the model we will be using to guide our work together. We clarify what we mean by flexible working in the NHS, and the commitments around flexibility contained within the NHS People Plan. We also take a look at the business case for flex relating to key NHS priorities of retention, wellbeing, workforce supply and diversity.

Good, effective flexible working arrangements are those which balance the needs of the individual employee (shown in the centre of the triangle) with three key organisational factors:

- patient/service user experience
- service delivery
- work-life balance of colleagues

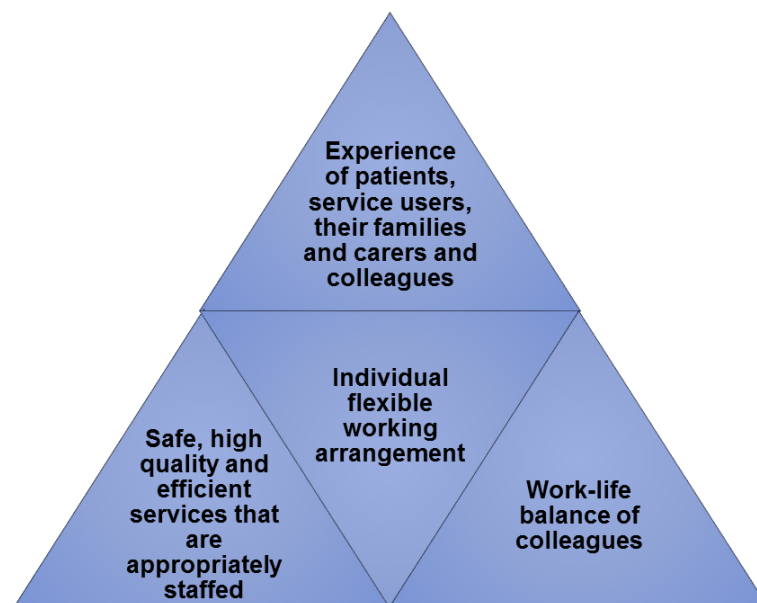


Figure 1. (Draft)

This is a key concept to use when designing and communicating flexible working actions and solutions for your organisation – in order to be effective, the balance of these factors must be right. Therefore, flexible working arrangements will look and feel different for different roles, depending on these factors.



2. Flexible working in the NHS

I. Definition & Principles

Throughout the programme we will be using the NHS draft definition of flexible working. The definition, currently in draft format, aims to support the shared and common understanding of flexible working that we need to achieve fair, equitable and consistent practice.

In the NHS we define flexible working as:

'An arrangement which supports an individual to have greater choice in when, where and how they work'

This may include changes to their working pattern, hours and role, and/or the location in which their work takes place.

Having a flexible working arrangement can help individuals to have more notification of, and predictability in, their work schedules and may facilitate greater variation in their work.

Alongside the definition, a set of principles have been developed (currently in draft format) which guide the ethos and values that should make flexible working become '*simply how we work*' in the NHS. The principles form a foundation for flexible working, giving each NHS organisation the ability to innovate and test out their local policy approaches against them, and to embed and grow strong flexible working for their own workforce.

We'd welcome hearing your thoughts and feedback on the definition and principles as you begin to use them in your organisation: weworkflexibly@nhs.net



The NHS Draft Flexible Working Principles are:

1. Individuals should have an opportunity to request to work flexibly from day one of employment. Flexible working opportunities should be offered at all stages in a career, regardless of role, grade, or the reasons for wanting to work flexibly.
2. Not all roles are suitable for every flexible working opportunity and may not facilitate a flexible working arrangement all the time. Requests for flexible working are therefore considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. Job roles in the NHS and primary care are designed and advertised in ways that promote the most flexible appropriate working opportunities, with organisations initiating conversations about flexible working from advert through to each stage of an individual's working life.
4. All requests for flexible working should be considered on individual merit. Managers should particularly have due regard for applications where the individual has protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (examples might include childcare needs, an adjustment to support a disabled member of staff, someone with a health condition or to meet religious requirements).
5. Individuals, managers and teams work together to explore the flexible working options that are available and seek a practical arrangement which supports the individual while:
 - Providing the best experience for patients/service users, their families and carers.
 - Maintaining safe, high quality, efficient services.
 - Maintaining the work-life balance of colleagues.
6. Those who have an agreed flexible working pattern should not be treated any less favourably in terms of pay rates, selection for promotion etc than colleagues who do not have a flexible working arrangement. Any adjustments to pay and benefits should be pro-rated against the fulltime working model for that role.
7. Managers look to saying 'yes' to a flexible working request whenever they can. Organisations, networks, teams and managers are encouraged to collaborate to think creatively about flexible working solutions, and trial different flexible working options to identify what works best.
8. Managers recognise that legislation enabling one flexible working request to be made in a 12-month period may not always be in harmony with the changes taking place in an individual's personal and professional life. The approach to making and granting flexible working arrangements should be a collaborative one between individuals and their manager. If an individual's first request for flexible working is declined, the individual should be supported to review their request and consider alternative arrangements consistent with any previous feedback. This approach should minimise repeated applications and the disappointment that might accompany any refusals.
9. Managers and individuals jointly agree review periods and discuss flexible working as part of annual health and wellbeing conversations, to consider whether any additional



alternative arrangements are needed to meet the needs of the individual and the business.

10. As flexible working agreements (including those put in place to support parental and caring responsibilities) may be subject to change, individuals and managers should agree how any changes should be planned, communicated and implemented.

We will be referring to the draft principles during the programme and encourage you as a Flex Change Team to review them now as you start this programme and consider and discuss with your Change Team colleagues how far these are currently applied within your organisation.

You may want to build this as an agenda item for your change project team kick off meeting and use the principles, together with the Timewise maturity curve, to highlight some areas for focus during this programme.

II. Aspirations in the NHS People Plan

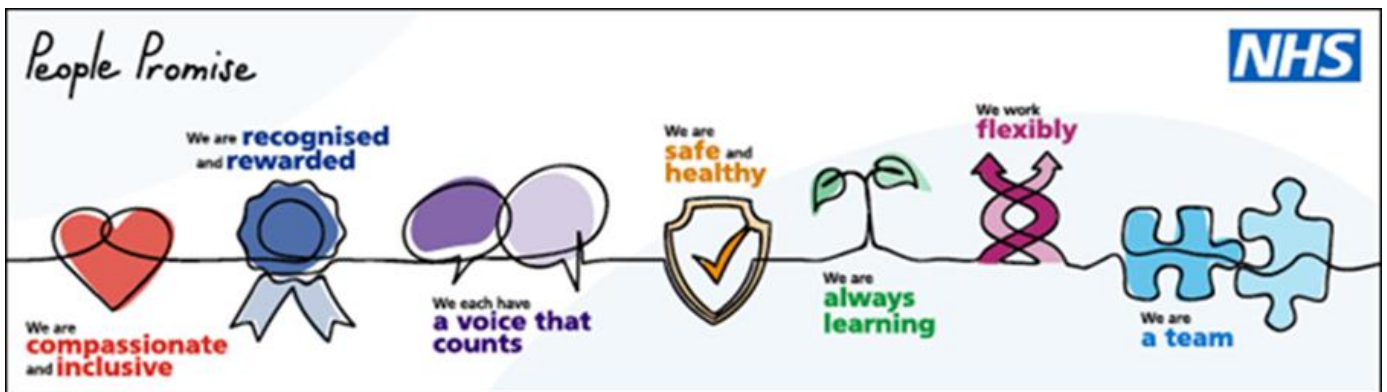
The [People Plan](#) (pages 19-21) outlines 10 commitments around flexible working, these range from the ability to request flexible working from day one, regardless of role, team, organisation, grade or reason to advertising more roles as open to a range of flexible working opportunities. The important thing about both the principles and the People Plan is that these extend more broadly than just those staff covered by the NHS Terms and Conditions Handbook.

At the NHS Staff Council in March 2021, a revised Section 33: Balancing work and personal life was agreed as part of the wider NHS England and NHS Improvement People Promise “We Work Flexibly”. These changes to the NHS terms and conditions of service handbook went live on the 13 September 2021 and apply to local flexible working policies. They include:

- New enhanced Day 1 contractual right to request flexible working
- Staff can request flexible working regardless of the reason and more than once per year
- An emphasis on considering how to advertise roles with flexible options



- Revised structure which is aimed at supporting managers to be more explorative in reaching mutually workable outcomes
- A re-emphasis on the importance of monitoring flexible working requests at an organisational level to ensure greater consistence of access to flexible working.





III. Flexible working for different NHS role types

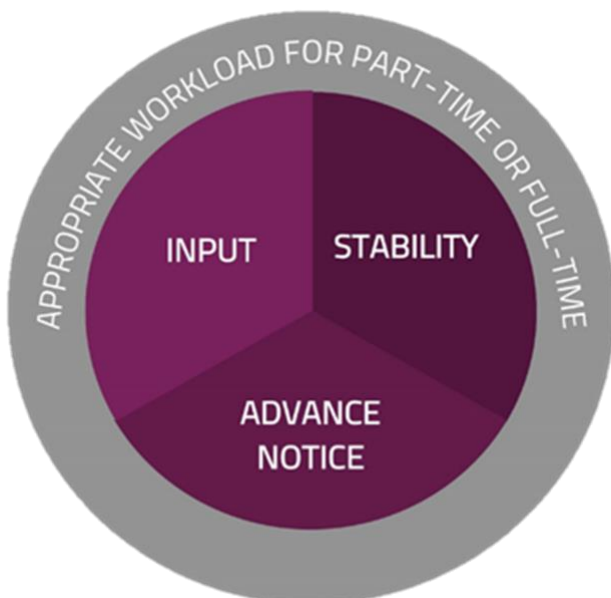
The draft principles and commitments in the People Plan make it clear that flexible working is an aspiration for all NHS role types, and that not all roles are suitable for all types of flexibility, all of the time.

The Where / When / How framework shown on the right provides a consistent way to identify different flexible working options, so that they can be considered against employee, service and colleague needs as outlined in Figure 1 above.

WHERE Remote working; home; mobile; other offices

WHEN Flexible start/finish times; annualised; compressed; shift choice; part-time

HOW Job-sharing; job-splitting; project-based; contract; bank

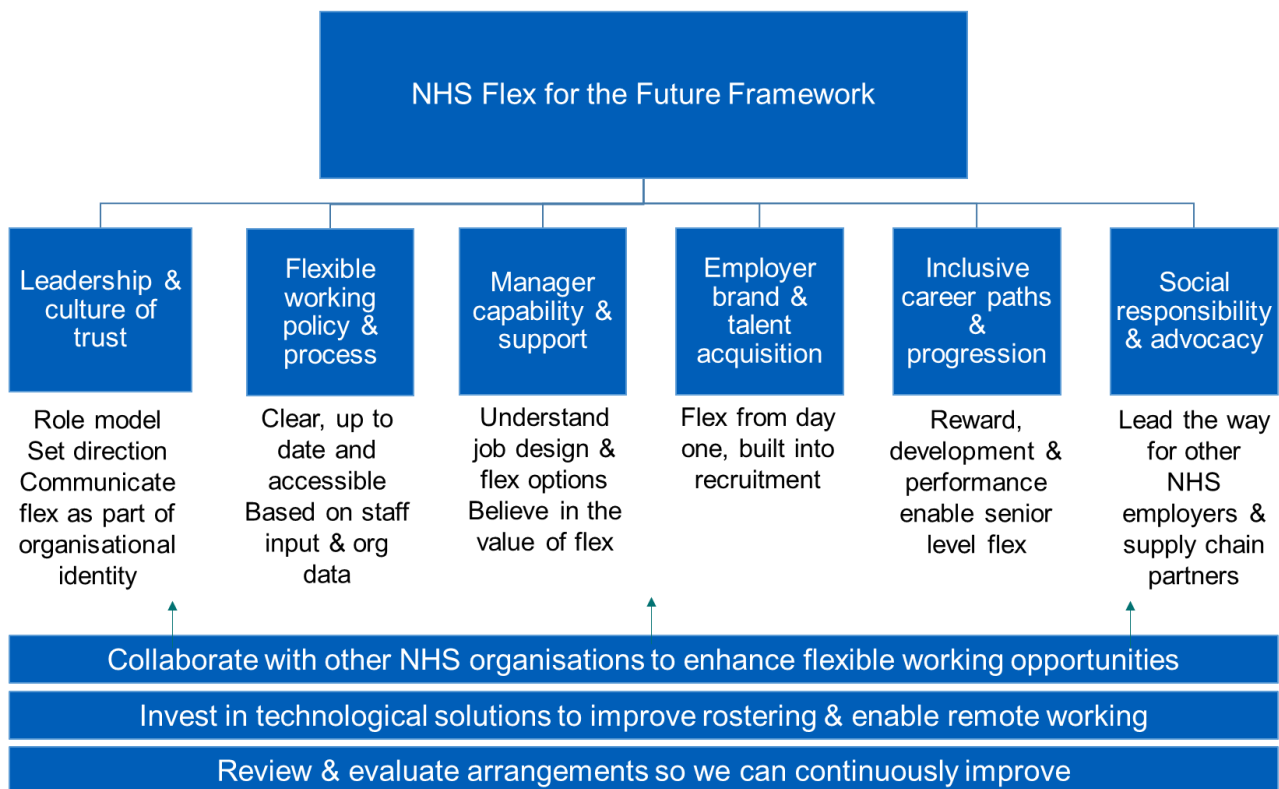


The key considerations for flexibility differ between shift based and non-shift based roles because what flexibility means for these different role types can be very different. As introduced in the workshop, Timewise's [Shift-Life Balance model](#) (right) illustrates three critical elements when considering flexibility at work for rostered job roles. These are: input, stability and advance notice, and are specific to shift based teams. Flexible working options can be brought about through self rostering and team based rostering processes which aim to enhance these elements.

3. NHS Flex for the Future Programme Model

We have developed this model for organisations participating in the NHS Flex for the Future programme, and will be using this to guide change teams to:

- Undertake data collection and analysis for their organisation
- Identify areas for focus
- Develop an action plan for flexible working



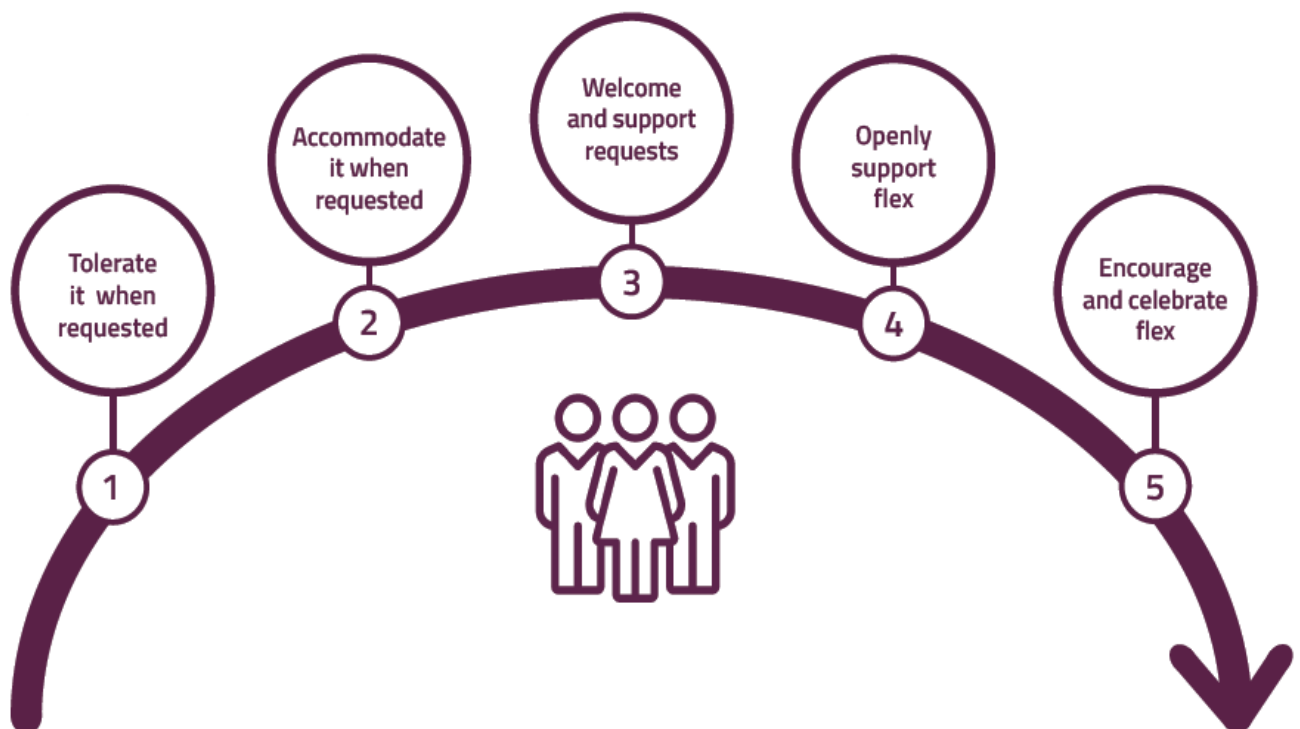
The framework model describes six key areas where NHS organisations can take action to define and embed flexibility, and meet the aspirations set out in the People Plan. It also highlights three key enabler areas of collaboration, technology and continuous improvement.

We will be using this model throughout the programme and you will be referring to it to complete your internal project work between workshops.

4. Timewise Maturity Curve

In the workshop we asked you to consider where your organisation currently sits on the Timewise maturity curve in relation to flexibility at work, and also to think about what your aspiration is – where do you want your organisation to move to as a result of this programme?

This is something it's valuable to discuss as a change team, to develop a shared understanding of the current state, in order that you can agree a meaningful aspiration for your organisation. You can use this maturity curve together with the programme model (above) to consider in which areas of the framework the organisation is more developed, and in which you are lower down the maturity curve. You can also use it to consider the different positions of particular teams, divisions or locations within your organisation. Having this conversation can bring insight which will be useful to you going into Workshop Two where we will focus very much on data collection and analysis to inform this project.





5. Holding a change team kick off meeting

Holding a kick off meeting for your internal change team is a good way to clarify your ambition and goals for the programme, agree the roles you will play, the time you will commit to this work, and who your key stakeholders are. This may be the first time you've worked together if you've come from different parts of your organisation, so it's good to spend some time getting to know each other and the strengths and experience that each of you bring.

Undertaking this 'contracting' up front as a team will help you to manage expectations and measure your success in undertaking this programme.

The table below offers a structure which you can use as the basis for a change team kick off session. You can run this in a way that works for you, incorporating the most relevant elements.

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Introduction | Aim of the session: to plan and agree how we will work together as a team to develop an action plan on flexibility for our organisation, and start to clarify what success will look like for us |
| Agenda | <p>1. Structure and roles within the team.</p> <p>Cover practical things like: frequency of meeting, best forms of communication, timings (ensure everyone has workshop dates in diary and can attend/catch up on recording). We'd suggest that the Change Team Lead takes responsibility for organising team meetings, but you will want to confirm expectations around this to ensure everyone is clear. Spend some time getting to know each other. What skills and experience do you each bring to this project? Are there any gaps?</p> <p>For example, you will need to have access to someone who can assist you with analysing your workforce data to enable you to understand the current picture of flexibility across your organisation – if you don't have this within your project team it's a good idea to make contact with a workforce analyst colleague now to let them know you may need their help.</p> |



We work
flexibly



2. **Stakeholders.** Do you have the right people engaged at different levels within the organisation? How will you manage the comms to them throughout the programme? Who else should you involve? Who will sign off your plan and who will have ongoing ownership for it? How will you involve your board level sponsor? What role do you want them to play?

If you haven't already got HR or internal communications represented on your group; it might be a good idea to involve them.

3. **Assessment of current state.** Review your existing policy and culture against the draft NHS Flexible Working principles – which of these do you excel at currently? Which are not happening at all? Which are happening inconsistently?

4. **Assessment of current flexibility maturity.** Use the Timewise maturity curve to discuss: What do you see, hear and experience in the teams we engage with? What does this tell you in terms of our level of flexibility maturity? How does this differ / what different experiences are there within your change team?

5. **Defining your aspiration:** What is your aspiration to achieve through this programme? What resources / support need to be in place to achieve this? Would your leadership team concur with this aspiration? What about your staff teams?

6. **Review the programme model:** are there obvious areas where you need/want to focus? Which and why? Or are you unclear at this stage pending workforce data collection and analysis to understand the current patterns?

**Wrap up and
close**

Capture actions arising and circulate these after the meeting.
Agree how and when you will next meet as a change team.



6. Further tools and references

In each booklet we will use this final section to signpost you to relevant reading and tools which may be helpful to you as you progress your flexible working project.

Further reading:

- **We are the NHS: [People Plan](#)** in particular pages 19-21
- **NHS Terms and Conditions of Service [Handbook](#)**
- **We work flexibly**

For more on the aspirations and commitments in relation to flexible working in the People Plan please take a look at the resources and information [here](#)

- **Enablers to flex**

For more on enablers to flexible working, NHS Employers have produced an [infographic](#) which they have revised to incorporate the key changes to section 33 of the NHS terms and conditions

- **NHS Case Studies**

For case study examples of an NHS organisation who have developed an action plan for flexibility, read [here](#) about the Christie NHS Foundation Trust in Manchester, to give you a sense of how they approached their project and the actions they prioritised.

To read about The Royal Free, who were the first NHS Trust to work with Timewise to develop and implement a flexibility action plan, take a look [here](#)

For more information about our Shift Life Balance model and how it came about read [here](#)

- **Timewise and London Leadership Academy report**

Flexible working in the NHS: [the case for action](#)

Contact: If you have any questions in relation to this workshop or the programme in general please contact melissa.buntine@timewise.co.uk or weworkflexibly@nhs.net