**DRAFT**

**The Case for Change Template tool**

Flexible Working

**Case for Change: Call to Action**

***Please note that this is a draft template designed to help you in your investigation and in building your case for change for flexible working. It is not intended to contain all the information you might want or need your organisation or team may wish to adjust the whole, or some of, the template to best suit your needs. This may include adding, removing or updating the evidence and information contained in the template. The text in blue is designed to prompt you in thinking through your own organisational/ team approach.*** ***You may want to seek input from your HR (or equivalent) and Trade Union representatives when developing your case for change.***

1. **Executive summary**

2020 placed an unprecedented spotlight on the NHS workforce, with the Covid-19 pandemic bringing to the forefront the compassion, dedication and selflessness of those working in the NHS. It has shown how our NHS people readily adapt their ways of working and often place their own health and wellbeing after that of others.

The health and care system is accustomed to operating in an increasingly turbulent environment, accelerated by advances in technology and innovation. We have rightly used these drivers to focus on the experience and quality of care for our patients and service users, maximise our performance and create real value with finite funding. We recognise that to keep doing this well we need to continue to practice and share courageous and compassionate leadership and care for our people. The rapid response to the pandemic has shown us just how flexible and adaptable we can be, and now is the time to see that step change recognised in our working arrangements. The working arrangements that we have historically had are no longer meeting the expectations or needs of individuals, and in some cases, our patients and service users and the service itself.

We want to be better at endorsing and adopting new and different ways of working and we want to respond faster to the needs of our people in ‘normal’ times, just as our people showed what’s possible for services during the global emergency. The [NHS People Plan](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/We_Are_The_NHS_Action_For_All_Of_Us_FINAL_24_08_20.pdf) (2020)1 is clear that flexible working is a change that we must build on after Covid-19. And now is the time.

1. **Strategic context**
2. **National and regional strategy**

*Add how your project aligns with other wider national and regional public sector objectives*

The commitments to flexible working in the NHS People Plansupport the NHS in its ambition to be a modern and model employer. It sets out how the NHS should go beyond its legislative duties by offering flexible working opportunities from day one of employment. While there is no statutory duty to agree automatically to an individual’s request for flexible working, the NHS wants to say ‘yes’ to practical requests whenever possible, so that flexible working simply becomes the “way we work”.

1. **Organisation/service business strategy**

*Outline how your project aligns with the organisation’s business strategy and other programmes of work*

1. **The case for change**
2. **Benefits to flexible working**

Flexible working has several benefits to both the individual, organisation and wider system including:

* Better work-life balance
* Increased job satisfaction, motivation and productivity, which in turn supports a better experience for our patients, service users and their families and carers
* Enabling equitable job and career opportunities and supporting a reduction in the gender pay gap by offering more working options in roles at all levels across an organisation
* Attracting and retaining high quality candidates and a diverse workforce with organisational memory, valued skills and experience within a competitive employment market
* Reductions in stress and absenteeism
* Reductions in carbon footprint
* Decreased financial burden (e.g. travel, office space, turnover, recruitment, lost productivity).

1. **Drivers for change**

**Attracting, retaining and developing talent**

In a continually changing environment and an increasingly competitive job market, attracting and retaining talent will become paramount for organisations. Flexible working is becoming the norm across UK workplaces, with 9 in 10 employees wanting or needing it ([Timewise](https://monitoruk-my.sharepoint.com/personal/rachel_ryle_improvement_nhs_uk/Documents/Definition%20and%20Policy/Flexible%20working%20in%20the%20NHS), 2018)2. Simply offering traditional full-time hours and/or fixed roles and working patterns will not suffice if we are to be an employer of choice, attracting and retaining the best talent. For example, we know that around 80% of nurses work for agencies because it gives them more control over their shifts[[1]](#footnote-1).The [GP Forward View](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/gpfv.pdf) (2016)3 highlights the advantages of flexible careers in general practice and the need to make it easier and more attractive for GPs to return to practice. In 2020, the [BMA](https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/flexible-working-all-change)4 recognised the move towards more virtual consultations and different patterns of working, suggesting that now might be the time for GP practices to consider job plans that sit outside of the ‘norm’.

But flexible working isn’t just about the present. Covid-19 has raised the profile of careers in the NHS, including primary care, and has captivated a previously untapped future workforce. We need to take advantage of this opportunity, but we know that expectations of the workplace are changing. [Deloitte's](https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennial-survey.html) 2017 Millennial Study5 found that millennials appear to be driven by strong values and flexible working options might influential. Timewise (2018)2 show that the highest demand for flexible working comes from the youngest age group (92% of those aged under 35). These changes in ways of thinking are likely to much stronger influence on the early years of a person’s career, including in our apprenticeships and training programmes.

Our existing workforce is also changing. We know that 47% of the NHS workforce is currently aged 45 and above, with the average age being 43 years and predicted to increase ([NHS Employers](https://monitoruk-my.sharepoint.com/personal/rachel_ryle_improvement_nhs_uk/Documents/Definition%20and%20Policy/An%20ageing%20workforce%20-%20The%20key%20issues), 2017)6. Following changes to the state pension from 2010, 70% of the NHS workforce will have a pension age of between 65 and 68 years. Flexible working has been proven to enable older workers to work to a higher pension age, and we expect it to play a significant role in supporting those who need, or choose, to work longer.

**Health and wellbeing**

56,000 people left the NHS between 2011-2018 citing work-life balance1. The number of nurses leaving due to work-life balance is higher than the average than for all other clinical staff groups combined (14.6% compared to 12.2%). But there’s an arguably more compelling reason why the NHS needs a focus on flexible working – staff burnout. Sickness absence in the NHS already runs around 2.3 percentage points higher than in the rest of the economy7. In a tracker survey undertaken by the [BMA](https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/personal-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-doctors-wellbeing-revealed-in-major-bma-survey) (June 2020)8, 41% of NHS doctors reported they were currently suffering from depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, emotional distress or other mental health condition relating to, or made worse by, work. Twenty-nine percent of respondents felt their condition had worsened since the start of Covid-19. Opportunities for flexible working have been recommended by the Marmot Review and NICE as being one organisational and situational factor that plays a greater part in preventing burnout than individual factors ([Public Health England](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506777/25022016_Burnout_Rapid_Review_2015709.pdf), 2016)9.

**Equality, diversity and inclusion**

We need to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion, including tackling the gender pay gap, remains at the centre of recruitment and retention strategies in the NHS. In a 2019 employment trends survey, [Pertemps](file:///C:\Users\rachel.ryle\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\94CT7X0Z\employment-trends-survey-2019.pdf%20(pertemps.co.uk))10 show that 68% of respondent firms are looking to increase workforce diversity and create inclusive workplaces over by introducing or extending flexible working opportunities.

Women make up 77% of the NHS workforce, yet just 47% hold very senior manager roles ([NHS Employers](https://monitoruk-my.sharepoint.com/personal/rachel_ryle_improvement_nhs_uk/Documents/Definition%20and%20Policy/Gender%20in%20the%20NHS%202019%20amends%20A4%20v5%20(nhsemployers.org)), 2019)11. We know that women are most likely to take the primary role in parental and caring responsibilities and so it is unsurprising that women particularly have felt that a lack of access to flexible working is a barrier to career progression12. Men are also increasingly looking for flexible working opportunities, particularly since the onset of Covid-19. However there remains a stigma for men who want to adopt flexible working, and there are reports that it is less ‘culturally acceptable’ for men to work flexibly ([People Management](https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/flexible-working-more-popular-with-male-employees-since-lockdown#gref), 2020)13. The [Women and Equalities Committee](https://monitoruk-my.sharepoint.com/personal/rachel_ryle_improvement_nhs_uk/Documents/Definition%20and%20Policy/Fathers%20and%20the%20workplace%20-%20Women%20and%20Equalities%20Committee%20-%20House%20of%20Commons%20(parliament.uk)) (2018)14 recognised that men are less likely to make a request, and are more likely than women to have their request rejected when they do.

An estimated 1 in 5 of the NHS workforce in England is also an unpaid carer, and we expect this figure to have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Given that approximately 72,000 people have left the NHS due to caring responsibilities outside of work15, there is much more that we can do in terms of flexible working to support our working carers to remain in the workplace. This is especially important in retaining and developing talent as 39% of carers have taken a less-qualified job or turned down a promotion because of caring responsibilities16.

In early 2019, the CIPD’s [Megatrends](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/megatrends-report-flexible-working-1_tcm18-52769.pdf) study17 found that those most likely to use remote access technology were in senior positions. More recently, [Personnel Today](https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/how-working-from-home-is-levelling-the-playing-field/) (2020)18 highlighted how flexible working opportunities can provide broader opportunities to support equality, diversity and inclusion. For example, working from home enables individuals to adjust their routine and environment (e.g. temperature and lighting) to better meet their personal needs and long-term health conditions. Virtual meetings, where we are all faces on a screen, may be reducing traditional power bases and ways of categorising and labelling others18.

**The business opportunity**

The CIPD’s 2018 [flexible working business case](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/flexible-working-business-case_tcm18-52768.pdf)19 highlights how both managers and individuals view flexible working as increasing motivation and productivity, with managers and co-workers reporting a positive or neutral impact on performance regarding the quality and quality of an individual’s work. In a small [employer survey](https://workingfamilies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Employer-survey-briefing-Oct_2020.pdf) by Working Families (2020)20, 25 of the 26 employers surveyed felt that productivity had been the same or was better than usual during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

Supporting staff to work more flexibly may also help reduce the costs associated with bank and agency use. The [Nuffield Trust](https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/resource/the-nhs-workforce-in-numbers#5-what-are-the-implications-of-these-shortfalls)21 reported that at the end of 2018/19, NHS trusts forecasted a spend of £5.8 billion on temporary staff compared to a planned spend of £5 billion.

**Organisational culture**

Our biggest challenge is creating a workplace that maximises flexible working options for all roles from day one of employment. Despite NHS organisations having dedicated flexible working policies in place, just 54% of respondents to the 2019 NHS Staff Survey reported being ‘satisfied/very satisfied’ with opportunities for flexible working.

Yet, the positive effect of having individuals who want to come to work and the impact of a good experience at work on individual and organisational performance is well documented. The [Kings Fund](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/improving-nhs-care-by-engaging-staff-and-devolving-decision-making-jul14.pdf) (2014)22 highlights clear links between staff experience and patient outcomes. [PWC](https://monitoruk-my.sharepoint.com/personal/rachel_ryle_improvement_nhs_uk/Documents/Definition%20and%20Policy/Employee%20experience)23 go further suggesting that staff experience is *becoming a vital part of an organisations’ ability to thrive.*

The culture around flexible working needs to be supported to reflect the aim that we approach flexible working from a default of ‘yes’. Anecdotally we hear that there is a belief (and sometimes a lived experience) that flexible working is thought of as being for women with parenting or caring responsibilities only. Flexible working in the NHS is for everyone regardless of their role, reason or position. Organisations should be open and approachable when it comes to flexibility.

The evidence base for flexible working expands over a decade and indicates that flexible working has benefits for both organisations and individuals. We know that more research is needed on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of flexible working practices in the modern workplace and that this can only be achieved through implementation, Covid-19 may have drawn our attention to an untapped demand for flexible working, but it will be up to our leaders of today to set the direction and pace for the workplace experience of tomorrow.

1. **Organisation/service overview**
2. **Current position**

*Provide a brief description of your organisation/service and workforce. For example:*

1. *What type of organisation/service do you have?*
2. *How many individuals work in the organisation/department/team?*
3. *What are your vacancy and turnover rates?*
4. *What work needs to be completed?*
5. *How many people do you need at any given time?*
6. *When, where and how does the work need to be done?*
7. *Are there peaks and troughs in workload? If so, when?*
8. *What arrangements are needed to ensure continuity of care and/or the business?*

*Summarise your current organisation/service flexible working arrangements. For example:*

1. *Does your organisation have a flexible working policy? If so, how is implementation monitored and reported?*
2. *How do you talk about flexibility in your organisation? What are the associations and expectations?*
3. *What types of flexible working arrangements do you currently support? Do these apply to all roles and individuals? If not, is there a clear and relevant reason why not, and are individuals aware of this?*
4. *Does your organisation/department/team have a carer’s leave policy and use the working carers passport?*
5. *Is the pattern of approval the same regardless of role, for example between shift/session and non-shift/session based roles?*
6. *How many flexible working requests do you have in each financial year?*

* *Are there any trends or patterns (e.g. are most requests for compressed hours, do more shift/session workers ask for flexible working)?*
* *How many requests are converted into flexible working patterns? Is the pattern of approval the same for shift/session and non-shift/session based roles?*
* *How many resubmitted requests and appeals were there, and what was the outcome of each?*

1. *How many of your roles are currently advertised as flexible? And how many go on to be appointed to those who take up the opportunity of flexibility?*
2. *How do you assure yourselves that the flexible working policy is applied consistently (i.e. that it is not dependant on the opinion that the authoriser holds on flexible working)?*
3. *How many of your team are also on a bank or part of an agency? Do you know how many of these would reduce their bank or agency hours if they could work more flexibly in their substantive role?*
4. *Do you have the relevant technology in place to support and monitor flexible working and is it widely used (e.g. through e-rostering and NHS ESR)? If not, what do you need to do to do to acquire the technology and/or increase its functionality and use?*
5. **Future vision**

*Describe what you want to achieve for individuals and the organisation/service from implementing flexible working arrangements. This might include:*

1. *A new culture by setting out different values and behaviours for individuals to display and for senior people and line managers to role model. For example:*

* *Encouraging a ‘yes’ by default approach to flexible working requests.*
* *Removing hierarchies of need and personal bias (e.g. ‘last in gets last choice’ or ‘priority for annual leave for the school holiday period will be given to those with children).*
* *Shifting to a focus on productivity and outcomes, rather than on the hours being worked or having a presence in the office.*
* *Setting time aside to enable physical or virtual contact, particularly for those working in a different location.*

1. *A motivated workforce, who report satisfaction with flexible working opportunities and minimal stress.*
2. *More flexible roles and new job design to support an agile and cost-effective workforce.*
3. *An expanded talent pool by clearly showing that you are open to flexible working in job adverts.*
4. *Preserved organisational memory and skilled expertise through the retention of experienced and valued individuals.*
5. *Technology (fully utilised) which supports flexible working arrangements.*
6. **Gaps, learning and growth**

*Set out any gaps you have between the current service and future vision, and where you can draw on previous learning and missed opportunities to support implementation. For example:*

1. *How has your team/organisation responded to the staff survey regarding flexible working (“How satisfied are you with the opportunities for flexible working?”). Is there a correlation between that question and the respondent’s intention to leave?*
2. *What flexible working arrangements will you continue after the Covid-19 outbreak (e.g. offering more remote working or more choice about virtual or face to face appointments)?*
3. *Do you know how individuals would prefer to work post-Covid-19? How will you ensure there isn’t a drift back to ‘the old ways’?*
4. *What data and information on flexible working have you not been able to obtain, and how could this be collated in the future?*
5. *How could you use your flexible working offer to attract new, and retain existing, talent? For example:*

* *How flexible are your jobs designed to be? What might need to change? How creative could you be (e.g. splitting a full-time role between 2 different departments)? What arrangements could you try or offer more of?*
* *How many individuals are working with flexible retirement options in place, and what might need to change to support your future workforce?*

1. **Workforce impact**

*Set out the potential impact of your plans for flexible working (and highlight what won’t change). For example:*

1. *Which roles will be impacted by the implementation of flexible working?*
2. *Who is qualified and/or skilled to undertake specific roles and activities?*
3. *Who is willing to undertake a specific shift/session, role or activity?*
4. *Who would be available for work when you need them?*
5. *What do individuals need to be safe, well and productive?*
6. *What advice and recommendations have your HR/Trade Union representative(s) offered?*
7. **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

*Describe how you have considered equality, diversity and inclusion, and outline any specific issues that you might need to address. For example:*

1. *How will those who work flexibly be offered the same education, training, development, career and promotion opportunities?*
2. *What is your current gender pay gap? How will your flexible working arrangements help to address the gender pay gap (e.g. by encouraging career progression in those who work part time – the majority of whom are often women).*
3. *How will your flexible working arrangements support those who traditionally may not ask for, or be offered, opportunities to work more flexibly (e.g. men or those without children or caring responsibilities)?*
4. *Could the flexible working changes disadvantage or better support those with protected characteristics or specific needs (e.g. carers)?*
5. *How many people within your organisation/department/team are working carers?*
6. **Current risks and issues relating to flexible working**

*Detail the current risks and issues relating to flexible working in your organisation/service. For example:*

1. *The organisation’s flexible working policy does not provide the level of information needed to support consistent practice.*
2. *Managers are concerned about implementing flexible working practices fairly and consistently.*
3. *Managers are concerned that the needs of the service will not be met if all individuals are offered/take up flexible working.*
4. *People will leave if they are not granted their flexible working request.*
5. **Economic case**
6. **Evidence base**
7. *What legislation relating to flexible working could you use to support your case (e.g. European Working Time Directive)?*
8. *What national, regional and local flexible working policies can you draw on?*
9. *What does the NHS Staff Survey say about flexible working your organisation?*
10. *How many employees have left your organisation due to a lack of flexible working (although not exact enough, good proxies here are the categories ‘work/ life balance’ or ‘flexibility’ captured in exit interviews)?*
11. *What do you know from organisational workforce data? For example:*

* *What is currently working well for individuals?*
* *What do they think could be improved?*
* *What outcomes would individuals and the team as a whole like to see from implementing flexible working?*
* *What are individuals concerned about, and how are these concerns being addressed?*

1. **Critical success factors**

*What are the key events, activities or elements that are key to achieving success?*

1. **SWOT analysis**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |

1. **Assumptions**

*What assumptions are being made (e.g. support from a senior level, demand for flexible working patterns)*

1. **Options appraisal**

*Include the preferred way forward*

1. **Commercial, financial and management case**

*Provide details of the flexible working project*

1. **Objectives**

*Outline the objectives that you are looking to achieve. For example:*

1. *Increased efficiency*
2. *Agile workforce*
3. **Benefits**

*Describe the benefits your flexible working project will have.*

1. **Monitoring and measuring success**

We will monitor our progress through the following *existing/[add new]* measures (also identify your data sources). We will know we are successful if:

1. *Satisfaction with flexible working opportunities increases by xx*
2. *Staff reported motivation increases by xx*
3. *New talent [add specific role as needed] increases by xx*
4. *Retention rates in [add specific role as needed] increase by xx*
5. *Organisational memory and knowledge is retained*
6. *Our patient/service user satisfaction scores improve by xx*
7. *Rates of attendance improve by xx*
8. *Sickness absence rates decrease by xx*
9. *There is a xx reduction in the gender-pay gap and increased opportunities for personal development and career progression.*
10. **Training and education**

*Summarise what training and education you will need to achieve success, and how you will share your experience and good practice. For example:*

1. *Behaviour change training*
2. *Coaching and/or mentoring opportunities*
3. *Drawing on national flexible working definitions, principles, supporting tools, webinars and events.*
4. **Communications**

*Describe how you will communicate your flexible working vision and associated changes across the organisation/service:*

1. *Who will be your target audience for communications?*
2. *What will your key messages be?*
3. *What communication channels will best suit your target audience?*
4. *How will you ensure you have dedicated support for your communications campaign around flexible working?*
5. *Who are your current role models?*
6. *How will you celebrate your successes?*

1. **Finance**

*Provide details of any costs associated with your project. This includes current expenditure and predicted savings. For example:*

1. *What budget do you have to support flexible working?*
2. *What additional costs might there be and what return on investment could you expect?*
3. *How much does it cost to fill a vacant post?*
4. *What spending could be reduced through flexible working? (e.g. agency rates)*
5. **Project risks and issues**

*Detail risks and issues relating to your flexible working project and describe how these will be mitigated. For example:*

1. *There is no dedicated budget to implement the flexible working project.*
2. *Offering flexible working may not provide a tangible return on investment.*
3. *Offering flexible working is unlikely to realise a short-term benefit.*
4. **Governance**

*Describe the governance arrangements in place for the project. For example:*

1. *Which group/forums will the project report to, and how often?*
2. *Which groups/forums will oversee delivery? How often?*
3. *Who will have overall accountability for the project? Who will be your active SRO?*
4. *Who have you sought advice and approval from (e.g. senior managers, colleagues, HR and finance teams).*
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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)