



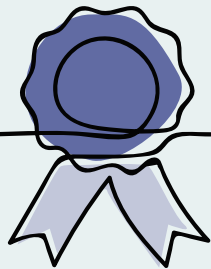
# Flexible working

in the NHS

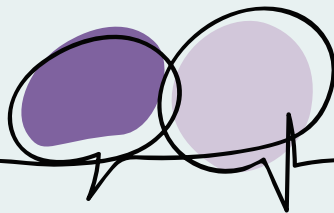
A toolkit for individuals



We are **compassionate** and **inclusive**



We are **recognised** and **rewarded**



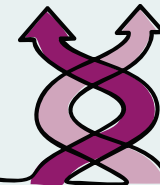
We each have a **voice that counts**



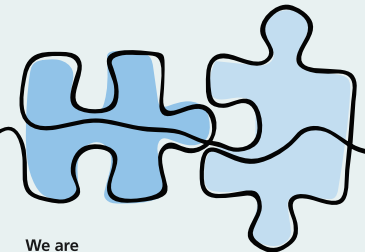
We are **safe** and **healthy**



We are **always learning**



We work **flexibly**



We are **a team**

# Foreword

Simply put, flexible working is about supporting you to have greater choice in where, when and how you work. We know many of our colleagues really value having this choice; and that for some, it is necessary in order to work at all.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated our ambition to embrace flexible working. We want to learn from the innovation we have seen during this time around how jobs are undertaken, and how this has enabled us to embrace different ways of working across a range of roles.

NHS England and NHS Improvement, Timewise and the NHS Staff Council have worked in partnership to create this toolkit. It's a practical guide to help you explore how flexibility could support you, and to have a positive conversation with your line manager about it. While not every request will be workable, we








hope that by helping you prepare your request, you will have the best chance of agreeing a solution which works for you, your team and the organisation. Remember that you should read this guide alongside your local policies. You might want to speak to colleagues, not only in your own team but in teams where people already work flexibly, to explore how their arrangements work for them. You can also speak to your HR representative (or equivalent management arrangement) and/or your local trade union representative who can help you think about your conversations or applications (see your organisation's flexible working policy for more information).

The toolkit includes three practical tools designed to provide a structure for mapping out your ideas for flexibility. 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.

**We hope you find the toolkit helpful. We'd love to hear how you've used it.**

**NHS England and NHS Improvement  
Timewise  
NHS Staff Council**

# Contents

 <b>Introduction</b>	<b>4 – 5</b>
 <b>Considering your options</b>	<b>6 – 9</b>
 <b>How to have a good conversation about flexible working with your manager</b>	<b>10 – 13</b>
 <b>Top tips for working flexibly</b>	<b>14</b>
 <b>Tools</b>	<b>15 – 19</b>
 <b>Things to think about</b>	<b>20 – 27</b>
 <b>Helpful links and further reading</b>	<b>28</b>

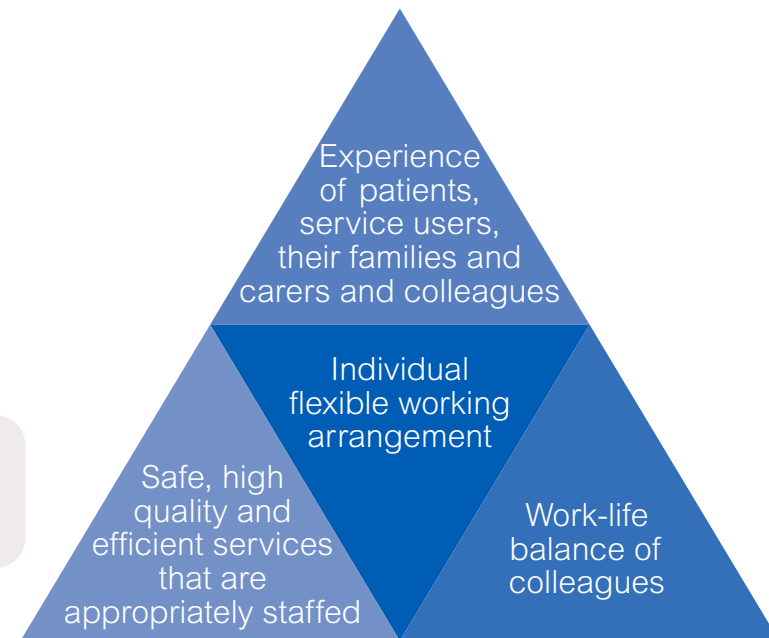
# Introduction

The NHS and primary care 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 better notification of, and predictability in, their work schedules and so may facilitate greater variation in their work.

You may hear the terms 'flexible working', 'agile', 'smart' and 'remote working' used interchangeably, and they can mean different things to different people. We are going to use the term flexible working and the definition described previously throughout this document.

Good flexible working arrangements should balance the needs of the individual with:

- Patient/service user and staff experience.
- Service delivery.
- Work-life balance of colleagues.



## This guide is for all staff working in the NHS.

This guide is for all staff working in the NHS. If you are covered by the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook, changes have been made which form part of your employment contract and mean that:

- All employees have the right to request **flexible working** from day one of employment.
- There is no limit on the number of requests you can make.
- You have the right to make requests and have them considered, regardless of the reason.
- Your employer should keep a central overview of how the organisation is handling requests so they can check everyone is being treated fairly.
- If you and your line manager can't find a solution straight away, there is a further stage to check for other suitable options that could be considered, perhaps in another team or setting. This is so that you and your line manager can get support to explore all the options.
- Your line manager should have regular conversations with you, including in one-to-one conversations and within your team, about working flexibly without waiting for you to make a formal request.

Your regular health and wellbeing conversations provide a useful opportunity to discuss flexible working, as well as your appraisal and one-to-one discussions with your line manager. Of course, you can raise a flexible working request formally or informally at any time.



# Considering your options

Being clear about what you want to achieve from your flexible working arrangement is a great starting point for finding a way of working that will suit both you and the organisation.

Here are five steps to help you get started.



## Identify the changes you want to make to your work-life balance

Reflecting on your current working pattern, are there changes you would like to make? Are you happy with the way you currently work, or would you like any elements to be different?

**Tool 1: Defining your work-life balance** can help you to reflect on the changes you want to make.

Make a list of the differences between how you work now and how you'd like to work and consider what could move you closer to your ideal.

Try and be specific in your thinking about what would make a difference to you. Is it picking up your children from school a couple of times a week, or being able to attend your favourite exercise class? Avoiding commuting at rush hour, or not having to work on a Monday morning? You do not have to justify your request, but it helps to think about what matters to you in advance of any conversation with your line manager.

Think about whether you want a flexible working arrangement for a time-limited or longer period.

If you are an unpaid carer, this might also be a good time to raise the possibility of having a discussion using the working carers passport. This can help you frame conversations around flexible working and other support available to you, to help you balance your work and caring responsibilities.

If you have additional protections from the Equality Act 2010 (for example, to meet childcare needs, as an adjustment to support a disability or to meet religious requirements), make sure you mention this in your conversation.

# Considering your options

(continued)

**STEP  
2**

## Explore the most common flexible working patterns

The second step is to be clear on the different kinds of flexible working that are available.

It may be that some options aren't possible in your role, so a good place to start would be to consider which options would work within the balance of patient/service user experience, service delivery and the work-life balance of you and your colleagues.

**Tool 2** gives you a simple **where, when and how model** to explore what flexibility can be built into a role.

**STEP  
3**

## Understand the difference between formal and informal flexibility

Some types of flexible working, such as occasional home working, can be agreed locally with your manager. Others, particularly those that affect your contract or pay, may require a formal flexible working application.

It is also possible to have a combination of both. For example, you might decide to formally reduce your working hours, but also work from home from time-to-time with agreement from your line manager.

Your organisation will have a flexible working policy that clearly outlines the processes you will need to follow for a formal application.

## Case study

The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust improved staff retention and reduced vacancies by implementing electronic self-rostering to offer their staff greater shift flexibility and choice. This enabled staff to have more control over their rosters, improve work-life balance and promotes roster fairness. Read more about their approach and the steps they took to improve joy at work for their staff in the [full case study](#).

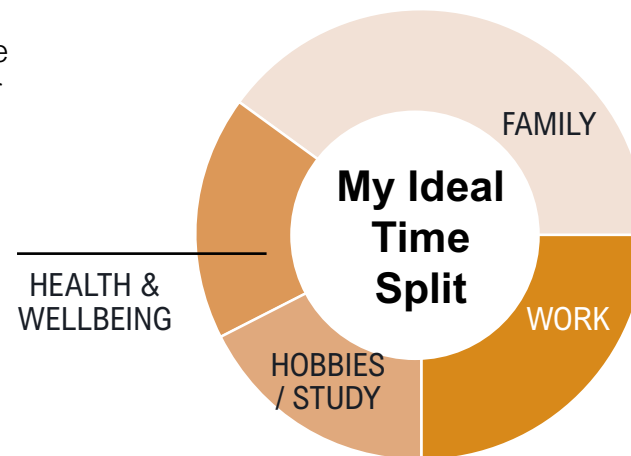
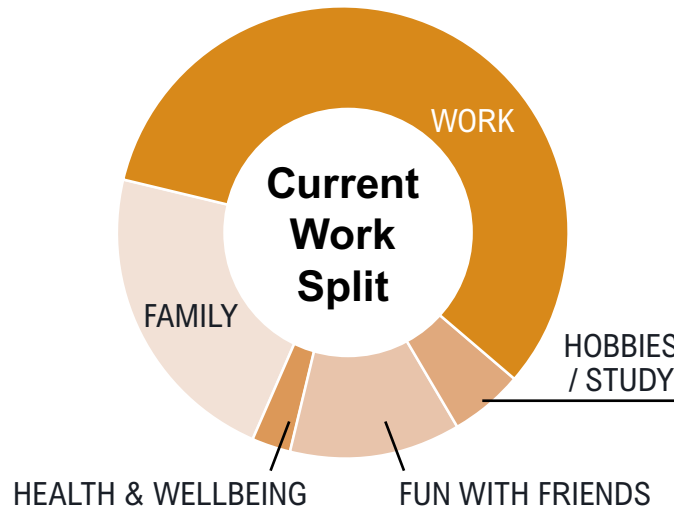
# Considering your options (continued)

## STEP 4 Closing the gap between your current and ideal balance

In most cases, it's likely you'll have concluded that you want to rebalance work and life in some way and make room for the other elements of your life. If so, there are a couple of ways to consider this further.

You could do a quick exercise that breaks your work time down into smaller chunks of activity such as commuting, key tasks, meeting and administration, etc.

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 for you to consider:

- Can you share your responsibilities with someone else so you each provide cover when one of you is absent? Or can work be redistributed without unduly adding to someone else's workload?
- How responsive do you need to be, and in what timeframes?
- Are there peak times in your working day or week, or shifts which your team find hard to cover?
- What are the expectations of your patients and key stakeholders, and how will you manage these in a more flexible role?
- Is there an opportunity to work in a different team, setting or role to help you get closer to the flexibility you would like?

Your manager can help you explore what might be possible in accordance with your organisation's flexible working policy, including seeking advice from HR (or equivalent personnel) and trade union representatives on any wider options that may be available.



# Considering your options

(continued)

## STEP 5

### Think about how to make your preferred flexibility work for your team and organisation

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, think of the benefits as well as the challenges and reflect on these themes:

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



## Case study

**Charlotte Mayhew Goodman is a play worker who works remotely and flexibly.**

“Due to long Covid, I needed to work from home and flex my hours. My manager suggested using [Attend Anywhere](#) to trial a patient-facing service with me working from home.

“We have set up a whole virtual prep service for theatre patients. I contact them before they come in, send them resources, chat to the family and listen to their concerns. This has enabled me to continue a career I would otherwise have had to have left due to an acquired disability.

“The feedback from the service we have set up has been really positive. It's not only given me job satisfaction, but actually benefited the patient experience.”

# How to have a **good conversation** about **flexible working** with your manager



If you've worked through the five previous steps, 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 organisational 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 organisation will benefit and how you can work together to make it happen.

It might help to think of yourself as telling your manager a compelling story about why your request for flexible working can also be in their interest too.

Working through these seven phases will help you with this process. See [Tool 3](#) at the back of this guide for additional support.

## PHASE 1 Identify the benefits

Start by outlining how your preferred way of working could be beneficial to both you and your team and/or organisation. List as many benefits 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 flexible about my timings, either starting earlier in the day or working until later in the day. So what?
- This will give our team better coverage for dealing with incoming enquiries and calls. **GREAT!**

This approach will ensure you articulate the benefits of your proposal to the organisation, as well as how it helps you. These conversations can feel hard, so it's useful to stay objective.

## PHASE 2 Handle 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 become defensive. It will also show that you understand your managers 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?

Consider how any new flexible working arrangement would impact on those you work most closely with, then present this as positively as possible. If you work shifts and are part of a rota, think about how your new working arrangements would be organised as part of creating the monthly rota.

If you are considering reducing your hours, think about how it will impact your delivery, as well as where or with whom the remaining work would sit. Could this be an opportunity for a colleague to upskill, or for you to share work with a colleague who also wishes to reduce their working hours?

If you can, include examples of similar arrangements that have worked well, either internally (such as how work is covered during holidays or unplanned absences) or externally (such as how other teams make it work).

**Remember, flexible working arrangements work best when they are a 'win-win' for you and your organisation. This means they need to work for everyone in your team (managers, colleagues, direct reports) as well as for you.**

**PHASE  
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. We'd encourage you to think creatively to find a form of flexibility that works for you, your team and the delivery of your service.

Your manager will need to consider the health and wellbeing of the whole team. Not every flexible working option is suitable for all roles all the time. They will also need to make sure that your request won't adversely affect the delivery of the service or make it unsafe.

That's why it's important for you to be practical and realistic when making requests for flexible working. By speaking to your colleagues about the possibilities, being open to different options and being prepared to reach a compromise with your manager, you are more likely to be successful in getting your flexible working request agreed.

If you are considering some form of remote working, consider which of your activities would be best suited to this arrangement, whether you would have the technology to support it, and how you will stay connected to your team.

**For example, do you always need the same non-working day, or can you change it with notice for a day when your team is short staffed? If you're needed at a meeting when you're working remotely, can you dial in?**

**PHASE  
4**

## Make a plan for communicating

It will help allay any concerns your manager may have if you are able to show how you will communicate with your team or manager, and suggest practical steps to make this work smoothly.

Explain the process you will put in place to clarify your availability. This could include sharing your calendar, providing updates to the rota/ward manager or adapting your email signature and voicemail so stakeholders know when you'll be back and who else they can contact. Be transparent about when you are working (and when you are not working). Set out how you will maintain regular contact with your manager, team and wider stakeholders and how you will respond quickly and efficiently to any feedback about the arrangement.

If you are a manager and working flexibly, think about how you will give your team clarity on how you will be working, how to escalate issues when you are not available, and your willingness to be contacted in an emergency.

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.

## PHASE 5

### Manage performance expectations

You will also need to factor in a discussion about how your performance will be measured. 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 your annual appraisal and in setting clear, SMART objectives.

It's important to be realistic and to think about the most positive way to present your suggestions. For example, thinking through the possibilities and providing recommendations will make it easier for your manager to feel positive about the change you're proposing.

And remember to support others to make a success of their flexible working. Whether that's helping cover for someone, or encouraging them to leave on time, we can all play a part in creating a more flexible working culture.

## PHASE 6

### Plan in regular reviews

Inevitably, circumstances will change and needs will evolve on both sides. Let your manager know that you will regularly review your new working pattern, look to overcome any new hurdles and make any adjustments that are needed. Remember to raise any issues or changes with your line manager sooner rather than later, to enable time to come up with new ideas and solutions.

## PHASE 7

### Plan for your career progression

Timewise research tells us that flexible workers, particularly those on reduced hours, can miss out on development opportunities due to prioritising the needs of their day job rather than their own personal development.

It is worth talking to your line manager about how you will access time for formal and informal training and development. Some of the informal networking and coaching opportunities that are seen as 'nice to do' are actually crucial to building skills, confidence, support and sponsorship for your career progression, and will make you a stronger member of your team, so think about how you will build them in.

Your health and wellbeing conversations provide the opportunity to discuss any flexible working requirements: but remember you can check in on ways of working during an appraisal, job plan or one-to-one discussion.



### How I make it work

“Work closely with your rota co-ordinators. Come to them with solutions rather than problems. I find that if I can go with a solution, and make my rota co-ordinator's life easier, then it's more likely to happen. They know I'm likely to help and have the trust's interests in mind.”

**Henry Walton, ST3 Emergency Medicine Trainee, North East London**

# Top tips for working flexibly

- ✓ Ensure you have regular one-to-ones with your manager, supervisor or equivalent as part of your health and wellbeing conversations, appraisal, job plan or one-to-one line management discussions.
- ✓ Ensure you are clear about your priorities. Do you need to review your objectives with your manager or supervisor in light of any new flexible working arrangement?
- ✓ Make time to regularly review and reflect on your arrangement with your manager, your team, your colleagues and other key stakeholders.
- ✓ Be transparent about when you're working (and how flexible you can be about that) and when you're not able to work. Be clear about how your working pattern fits in to the rota and shift system of the team.
- ✓ Be rigorous about timing and deadline expectations for work and projects, and be clear about the expected outcomes too.
- ✓ Plan your time effectively and efficiently, including your workflow and breaks.
- ✓ Don't try and do everything on your own. If you're struggling, talk about it.
- ✓ Use technology well, not just to keep in touch with others but also to signpost clearly when you are and are not working. Your calendar, email signature and answerphone messages are useful tools for this.
- ✓ Role model sticking to planned team meeting times by prioritizing them and showing your commitment.
- ✓ Talk about 'flexible working' openly. Share good practice and talk about it with others. Supporting your colleagues to make a success of their flexible working by, for example, encouraging them to leave on time or agreeing to cover for one another, will help to foster a more flexible workplace. In teams which operate shift patterns, working together to draw up rotas will give you a greater understanding of not only your own needs, but the needs of your colleagues and that of the service you deliver.
- ✓ Learn from other flexible working colleagues, support one another and buddy-up together.
- ✓ Remember, it's OK to build in time for small talk to build relationships.

# Tools

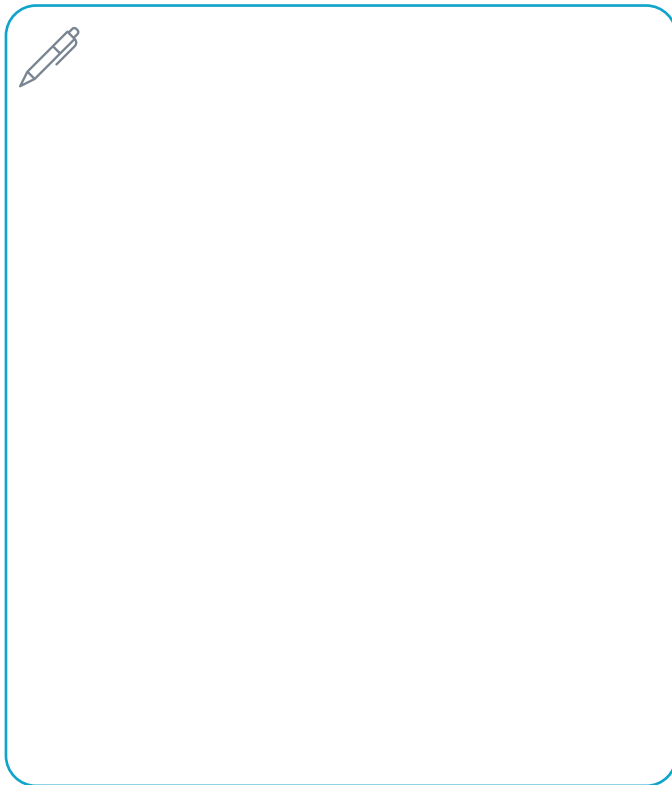
## TOOL 1

# Defining your ideal **work-life balance**

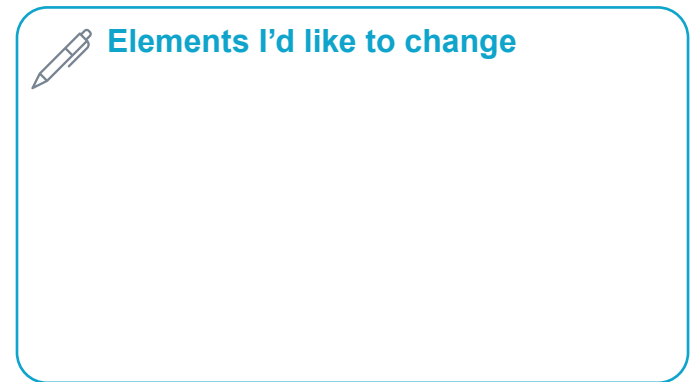
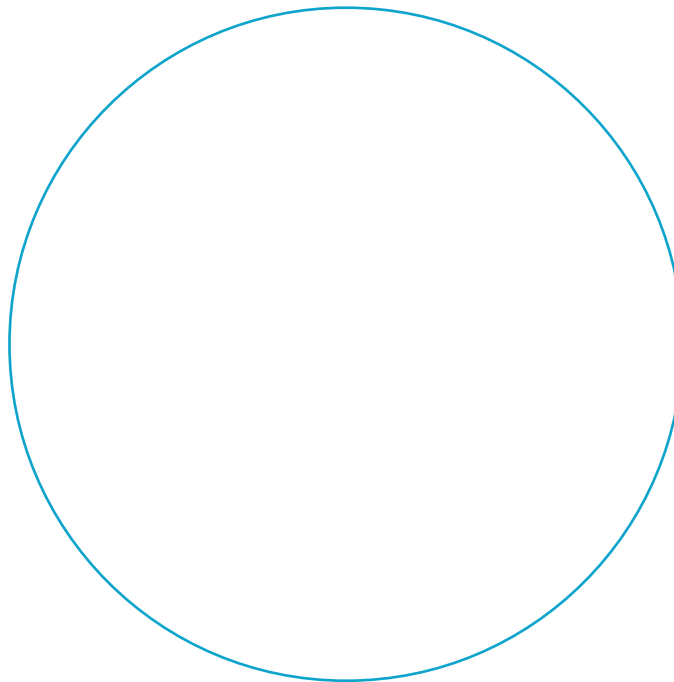
Start by listing the different elements of your life (or, if you prefer, the different roles you fulfil). For example, this might include work, family, exercise (or employee, father, runner).

Use the pie chart template (see page 8) to visualise how you currently split your time across them.

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



**My current time split**



**TOOL**  
**1**

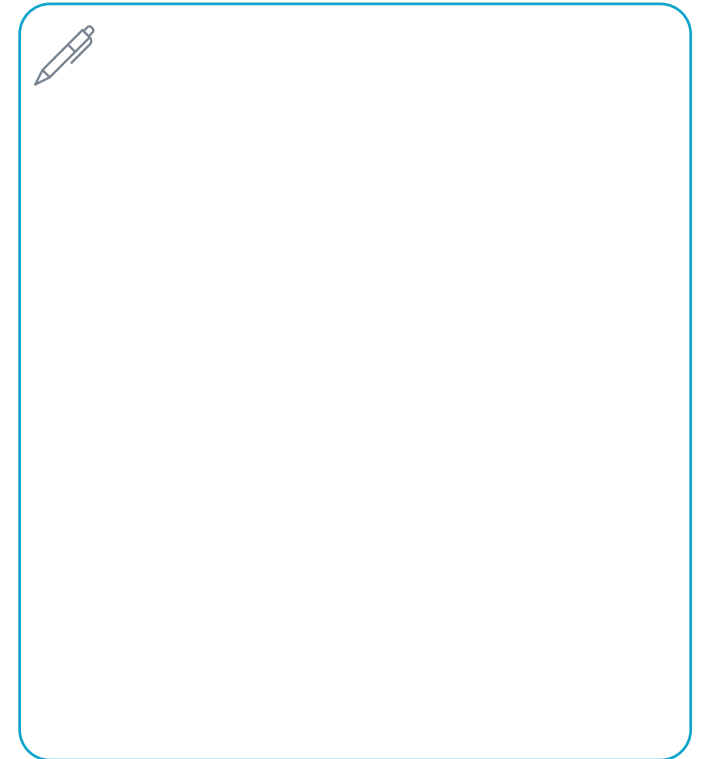
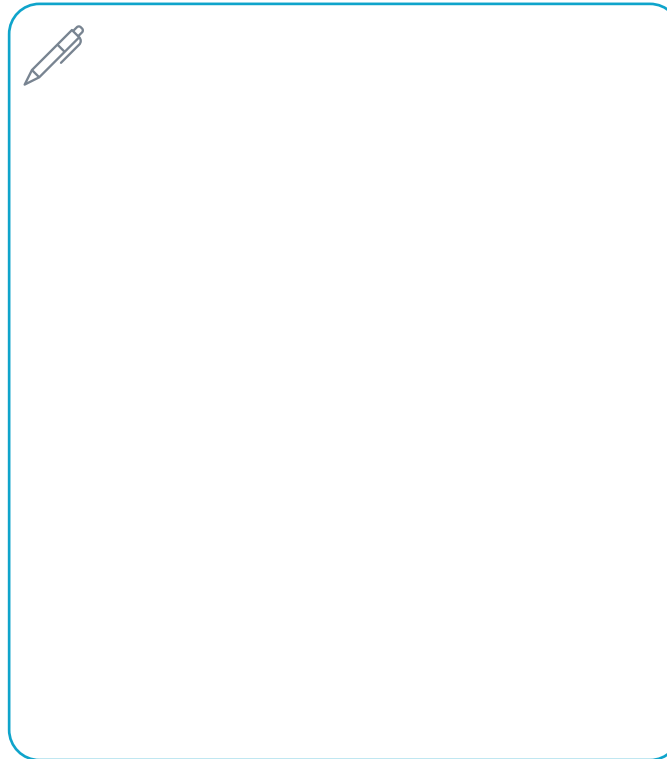
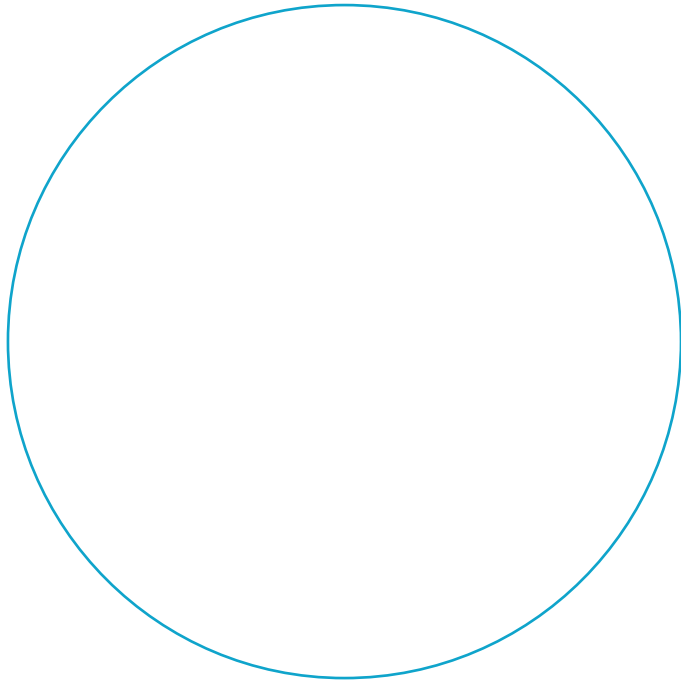
# Defining your ideal **work-life balance** (continued)

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.

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

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

**My ideal time split**



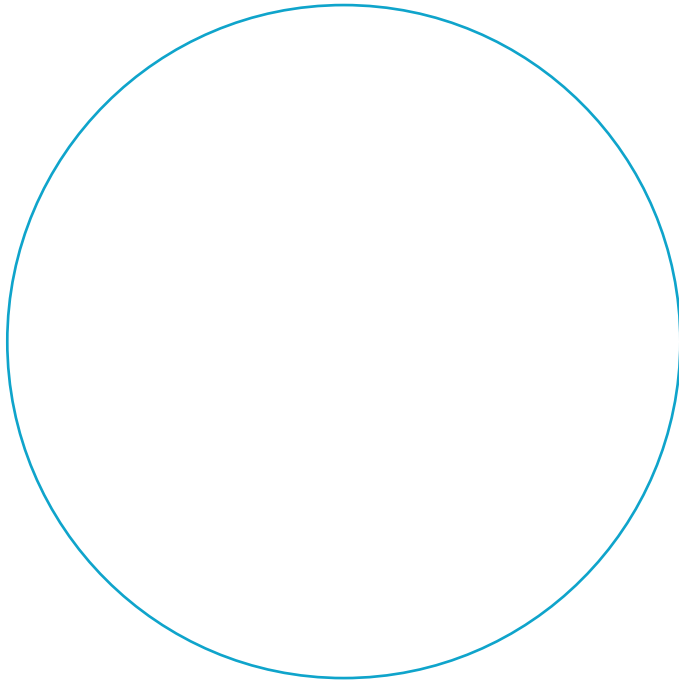


**TOOL  
1**

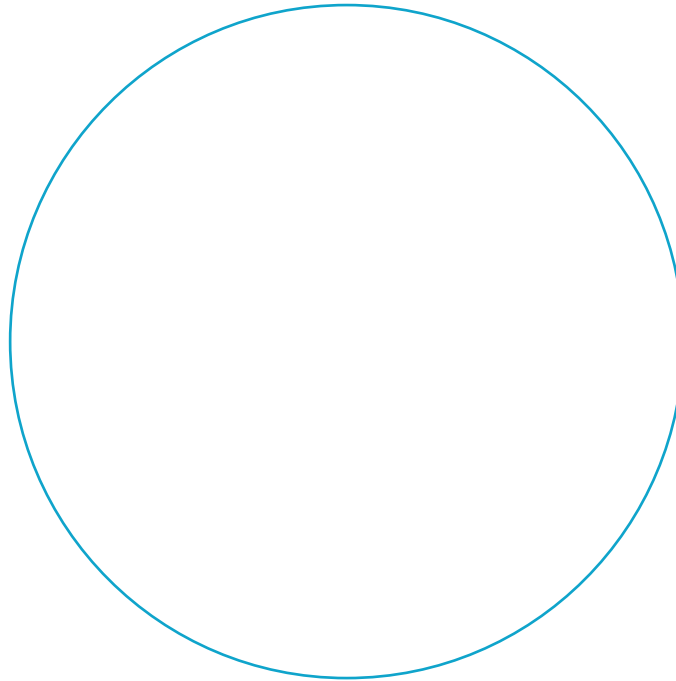
# Defining your ideal **work-life balance** (continued)

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 see opportunities to do things differently.

**My current time split**



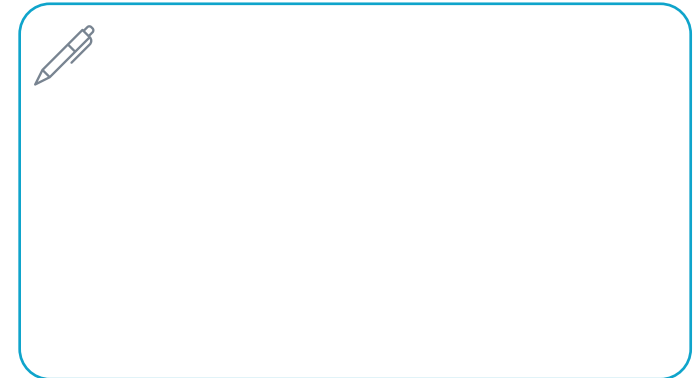
**My ideal time split**



**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?**



## TOOL 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?

### When

- When do you need to be available for patients, colleagues, team members?
- 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?

### How

- Are efficiencies possible – for example, 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?

# **TOOL 3** Preparing to have good conversations with your manager

This tool is designed to help you have good and meaningful conversations with your manager around flexible working. If you need or want extra support or advice in thinking about your answers, you can talk to your local trade union representative or a member of your HR team (or equivalent management personnel) to ensure your request is balanced and practical and to help you get the most out of the conversation.

## **Set your goals**

List the flexible working option(s) you would like to explore further with your manager (or equivalent).

## **Supporting continued development**

How you will stay on top of your personal and professional development (eg finding ways to network), or be supported to progress, if that is your aim?

## **Plan for success**

How you will make sure that your new flexible working arrangement will work for the team and service? For example, what adjustments might need to be made to your workload or what pieces of work could you deprioritise?

## **Stay in touch**

List practical ways you can stay in touch with your manager and team. For example, how will you let others know when you are working? How you will make sure you don't miss out on important information when you're not there?

## **Be solution focussed**

List any concerns you think your manager might have along with the solutions you think will address these. Use the 'points to consider for managers' under each of the flexible working options outlined in this toolkit to get an idea of what your manager's concerns might be.

## **Showcase the benefits of working flexibly**

Write a few short bullets about how working flexibly will have a positive impact on you, your team and service. For example, working a different day or shift could support you while also helping your team to manage peak workloads.

## **Arrange regular reviews**

When will you and your manager review your flexible working arrangement? We recommend a trial period before deciding on your arrangement longer term. How will you and your manager know if your new arrangement is working?

# Things to think about

These points will help you consider different types of flexible working arrangements.

## Working part-time or reduced working hours

Working fewer hours than you were initially contracted to work

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
Do you want to work a reduced number of hours each day or fewer days?	How can the service needs still be met? Think about how to backfill the remaining hours or organise things differently.
You will have reduced salary but you may make savings on things like travel and childcare (see <a href="#">pro rata salary calculator</a> ). How will this impact on you and your household?	What are the benefits of agreeing to the request?
Have you considered the impact of pro-rata reduced annual leave and other leave entitlements, eg special leave?	How will this fit in with existing flexible working arrangements?
What will the impact be on your pension contribution/benefits (see <a href="#">NHS pension scheme information</a> )?	What is the impact on the rest of the team?
Are you aware of the impact on your maternity and redundancy entitlements? These might not be important to you now but you might want to consider them for the future.	
Remember that where a permanent change has been agreed, your hours may not be able to be increased at a later date.	

## FAQs

**How does this affect my annual leave entitlements?** Annual leave is calculated on a pro-rata basis for part-time workers. Please refer to your organisation's annual leave policy for more information.

**Can I request to work on set days of the week or combine this with other flexible working options?** Yes. Your manager will need to consider the impact this will have on your team and service as with all flexible working requests.

**Can I work overtime if I have reduced my hours?** Yes, you can request to work overtime where this has been agreed with your line manager in advance. Additional hours up to full time (37.5 hours) are paid at basic pay rate for Bands 1-7. Hours worked above 37.5 hours are paid at overtime rates. Unsocial hours attract enhanced pay rates in the usual manner. Bands 8-9 are not normally eligible for overtime payments.



## Job-sharing

**A form of part-time working where one full-time role is shared between two members of staff. Salary and benefits are divided according to the hours worked**

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
How will you and your job-share divide the job role – are there particular parts of the job you want to focus on? How will you keep in touch with each other and hand things over? How will you communicate these arrangements to others?	How can the duties and responsibilities of the role be clearly defined and measured for each person?
Sharers may be on different points of the salary scale depending on their individual length of experience.	How will the hours/days be worked by the sharers to best meet individual and service need?
Salary and pay related benefits will be reduced pro-rata. See part-time working/ reduced hours information.	
If one of you wants to leave while the other doesn't, you will have some options to consider which could include finding another partner, taking over some additional hours, or considering a part-time post.	

## FAQs

**Does a job share have to work on an equal split of time and responsibilities?** Not necessarily, but how time will be split will depend on the requirements of the job to be shared and the skills each of the job sharers bring to the role.

**If the person I share with is off sick or on leave, will I have to cover for them?** No, there is no contractual expectation for you to cover. However, if practical, there may be times when you are asked to cover or flex your days to suit service needs, though you are not obliged to do so.

**If I want to work a job share, can my employer find someone to share with me?** You are encouraged to find out if there is anyone in your team/department who might be interested in a job share. Your employer can help by reviewing whether other employees have requested to work part time and by placing an internal/external advert on NHS Jobs.

## Average hours eg annualised hours

Contractual hours are averaged out over a set time period for example quarterly, every six months or over 12 months. This can allow staff to work more hours at some times of the month or year and fewer or no hours at others - for example working more in the winter months and less in summer

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
What period do you want to average your hours over? This could be quarterly, bi-annual or annual.	What are the minimum and maximum staffing levels and skill mix required per day/shift? How will the working hours be recorded?? Are there peak times of the year that you will need to manage differently?
Do you want to work a regular pattern over the period, or have short-term flexibility to decide when you work your hours? Do you want to work more hours in winter and fewer in summer for example?	How will roster changes be managed at short notice?
Where you do not work full time hours, your salary and pay related benefits will be reduced pro-rata. See information on part-time working and reduced working hours	How will time owing/time owed be managed?
	When does the 'year' run from? For example, from January-December, April-March etc

## FAQs

### How will my total hours be calculated?

By calculating the total number of hours to be worked in a year minus your annual leave entitlement.

### How many weeks is a year calculated over?

To account for leap years, annualised hour are calculated over a 52.25 week period.

### Can I vary the hours I work each week?

It may be possible to vary your weekly hours providing:

- you work your contracted hours within the agreed period
- this is agreed by your line manager.

### How will I be paid for working averaged hours?

Your salary is usually paid over 12 equal monthly instalments. If you leave part way through the year you will have your final salary adjusted if you have not completed or have completed more than your contracted hours for that period.

### Can I request an extended period of time off work?

Extended periods of annual leave can be requested in the usual manner, whether this can be accommodated will depend upon the needs of the individual service.

## Set working pattern

Fixed hours and days to give certainty that other commitments can be fitted around work

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
If you change to work shifts which do not attract enhancements this could impact upon your salary.	How many other staff have a similar pattern? Is there scope for a team discussion to ensure set days complement each other?
Are there already people with the same set days in your department which might make it difficult to accommodate your request? If so, could you talk to each other about how to make it work between you?	How many staff can be accommodated with similar requests?
	What is the impact on other staff members?
	What are the benefits of agreeing to the request?

## FAQs

**Do I have to work the same set days each week?** You do not have to work the same set days each week. It may be that the agreement is to work set days/shifts over a month or a roster period instead.

**Can I flex my start and finish times?** This may be more difficult for staff working in wards and department areas which operate around shift patterns. However, each request will be considered on an individual basis.

## Staggered working hours

Where staff work a set number of hours during the day but with different start and finish times

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
Remember that you need to schedule minimum break times into the working day.	What are the minimum and maximum staffing levels and skill mix required per day/shift? How will the working hours be recorded? Are there peak times of the year that you will need to manage differently?
	Is there enough cover during core hours to support the request?

## FAQs

**Can staggered working hours include weekend work?** Yes, if your existing work pattern include weekend work, or you could request a change to your work pattern to include weekends if this is what you want.

**Can I reduce my working hours by working through my breaks?** Minimum rest break requirements are there for your health and safety and for the safety of the service. They must be provided for during your working hours.

**Can I work staggered hours if I work part time?** Yes, you should be able to ask to combine different flexible working options.





## Compressed working week

Working your contracted weekly hours over fewer days per week. For example, working your hours over four days instead of five

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
Consider the potential impact on your health and wellbeing due to having to work longer hours on your working days.	How can compressed working hours accommodate service need?
If you work a particular pattern, or can you be flexible about this? (eg will you take the same non-working day, or can you be flexible to meet service needs where useful?)	How will this arrangement affect rostering of other employees?
	How will communication with staff be maintained?

## FAQs

### How will my annual leave be calculated?

Annual leave is usually calculated in hours. Please refer to your organisations annual leave policy for further information.

### Can I have the same day off each week?

Yes, you can request to have the same day off each week and this will be considered as part of your request.

## Term-time working

Usually favoured by working parents to work 39 weeks per year within term-time and use their annual leave entitlement, plus additional unpaid leave, to have school holidays off work

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
Consider that pay and benefits will be impacted on the basis that annual salary is reduced pro-rata. Your annual leave will also be pro-rata.	How can you adapt the service or bring in cover for the work during the school holidays?
Do you want to take all school holidays including half terms as unpaid time or just some eg Easter, Summer, Christmas?	How would this arrangement impact on the working patterns of other employees?

## FAQs

**How will I be paid?** Your salary will usually be paid in 12 equal parts every month.

**Can I request to take additional holidays during the school term?** You will normally be expected to take your annual leave during the school holidays, but you can request to take some of it during the term or to take additional unpaid leave. Your organisation may also have a policy which allows you to 'buy' additional annual leave. If agreed between you and your manager, you might also have the option of working additional hours which you then take as paid time off in lieu (TOIL). Remember if you need time off for caring/domestic reasons this is covered by other policies.

**Is it possible to agree term-time working for an agreed number of years and then return to a full year contract?** Yes, this might be possible. Remember, you are encouraged to review your flexible working arrangements regularly with your manager to ensure that they are working well for you, your team and the service.



## Flexi time

**Allows you to vary your working hours on a daily basis (which may include your start and finish times) to suit your individual circumstances whilst ensuring you meet your contractual working hours over an agreed period**

Points to consider	
For you	For your manager
Your contracted hours will need to be completed within the agreed period and your policy may have core hours requirements. Make sure you and your line manager are both clear about what these are.	Does the nature and volume of work allow for flexi time to work well??
Working hours should be agreed with your line manager prior to being worked.	Are there enough employees covering the service to meet work demands in core hours?
Your local policy might have limits on the amount of time in credit you can build up – and when you have to use it by so remember to explore your local policies. HR can help you with any questions you may have.	Are there any health, safety and security issues relating to staff working outside of ‘normal’ hours eg lone working?
	Are you both clear about how staff record their hours worked and request time off?

## FAQs

**Would I need to start/finish at the same time each day?** No, flexi-time policies normally allow flexibility around core hours, but you and your line manager need to agree how you will work your hours.

**My colleague works flexi time, does this mean I can too?** Your employer should be supportive and accommodating when it comes to your flexible working requests and if somebody in your team is already working flexi time successfully, speak to them about how they made a success of their flexible working application.

# Helpful links and further reading

## NHS England and NHS Improvement

- For more on the Flexible Working programme, including case studies
- We work flexibly
- Health and wellbeing conversations
- NHS Futures: Flexible Working

## Negotiating a flexible working arrangement

- Making a flexible working request (acas)
- Applying for flexible working (GOV.UK)
- Flexible working business case (CIPD)

## Benefits and financial support

- Money Advice Service
- Citizens Advice

## More inspiration on flexible working

- @NHSFlex (Twitter / Instagram)
- <https://timewise.co.uk/power-list/>

### For further support:

- Look at your own local flexible working policy
- Contact your local HR team
- Contact your trade union representative
- Or mail the NHS England and NHS Improvement flexible working team at:  
[weworkflexibly@nhs.net](mailto:weworkflexibly@nhs.net)