



Flex your Life at LUHFT

A guide for People Managers



LIVING OUR VALUES



Flex People Manager guide

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Dear People Managers,

We are pleased to be able to share with you this guide, which forms part of our Flex your Life at LUHFT offer in partnership with our Trade Union Colleagues. We are committed to creating happy and healthy teams. Colleagues have told us that having a healthy work-life balance is essential to having more good days at work.

This guide will support you, as a People Manager, to have more confident conversations with your colleagues around flexible working. Doing this well will mean teams are happier, more productive, can contribute to reducing sickness absence, and improve the retention of our colleagues.

We acknowledge the challenges you face in balancing the needs of your service with your colleague's flexibility preferences. We want People Managers to say 'yes' to flexible working requests where possible. You and your colleagues need to take a creative and innovative approach by working together to find alternative solutions where possible.

No matter what the outcome, it is important that throughout flexible working conversations, colleagues feel listened to, supported, and valued.

This Flexible Working Guide outlines an introduction to Flex your Life at LUHFT, things to consider during conversations about flexible working, the options that we have available, support in finding a compromise, myth-busting, and policy information.

Throughout this guide, we will direct you to other resources to help you manage your team's flexible working arrangements.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to creating a happier and healthier workplace, which will help our teams continue to provide excellent care to our patients and communities.

With best wishes, Heather Barnett, on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team.



We are delighted that LUHFT are offering our members the opportunity to work with greater flexibility. In partnership with Peoples Managers, Business HR and OD colleagues, we are proud to have the Flex your life at LUHFT offer. We are excited by this, as we believe, that this offer will improve our Member's work-life balance.

Please have a read of the guide to help you fully understand the offer and your role as a People Manager in supporting your teams. As always, do reach out to your Trade Union for any support.

Best wishes,
Joe Baldwin, Staffside Chair - LUHFT.



LUHFT is committed to improving the offer of flexible working, encouraging a culture which supports you as a manager to have open conversations with colleagues around flexibility to help them balance home and work life whilst balancing the needs of services and patients. This will help to improve everyone's life at LUHFT, helping us to be an attractive, modern employer of choice. The NHS has defined flexible working as; 'an arrangement which supports an individual to have a greater choice in when, where and how they work'. Throughout this guide, we may refer to 'flexible working' or 'flex' and use the terms interchangeably.

One of the seven promises within the **NHS People Promise** is 'We Work Flexibly' which aims to give colleagues **greater choice** over their working patterns; to help them have a better work-life balance and help the NHS remain an employer of choice.



At LUHFT, we have listened to feedback from the National Staff Survey and our own internal feedback channels, where colleagues have told us that we need to **improve flexible working opportunities** across the trust. The change to the flexible working policy supports the leadership commitment to enabling a **flexible working culture** and is putting the health and wellbeing of our people at the heart of our people practice. To further support and embed this culture, we are committed to ensuring that where flexible working has been agreed upon, that colleagues do not suffer any disadvantage or less favourable treatment as a result.

This guide is designed for people managers looking to support their team to work flexibly. Please read it alongside the Flexible Working Policy. If you are personally looking for flexibility, please see the 'flex colleague guide'.

Key principles of our Flexible Working Policy

- All staff employed on a permanent or fixed term contract including medical and dental staff are entitled to make a request for flexible working and to have that request considered.
- This entitlement applies from day one of employment.
- Colleagues may submit 2 flexible working applications within a 12-month period and the arrangement can be for any duration both temporary and permanent.
- Colleagues do not have to provide a reason for their request as part of the application however, supporting information may assist you in decision making.
- The Trust is legally required to fully consider all flexible working requests including the appeal stages within 60 days of the request being formally received via ESR. This timescale can be extended if both colleagues and line manager agree to it by putting it in writing.
- At LUHFT we want all people managers to start from a position of 'yes' where possible and work to find creative/innovative solutions to fully explore options to try to find an arrangement that works for the colleague and meets the service needs. Before declining a request, you should seek further advice from your line manager or HR.



[Link to
the
policy](#)



Things to think about whilst considering your application



Flex your Life at LUHFT
Your Flexible Working support offer



Benefits to flexible working:
Flexible working is much more than a perk for employees. When correctly implemented, it can help solve a number of core business issues, including (right):



TALENT ATTRACTION

87% of people either work flexibly already or wish they could.
92% of millennials identify flexibility as a top priority.



RETENTION AND MOTIVATION

75% of employers say that flexible working has a positive effect on retention and **73%** say it improves staff motivation.



INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Flexible working is a key enabler for many carers, parents, older workers and those with health conditions.



PERFORMANCE

97% of managers said the quantity of work improved or stayed the same.
93% of managers said the same about work quality.



BUSINESS COSTS

Over **70,000** people left NHS employment citing work-life balance addressing this would reduce our agency spend.

Balancing the needs:

The key principle at the heart of getting flexible working right is finding a working pattern that works for the organisation/service, the team, other colleagues' work-life balance, and the individual(s) who are making the request. You should explore what your service needs are, and what your employees' needs are, to identify options that can meet both.

This is demonstrated by NHS England's flexible working triangle (left) which you can use as a tool in your conversations with colleagues.

If a colleague has a disability, then their flexible working arrangement will be considered as a reasonable adjustment. By law, this request must be accepted unless there is genuine organisational reason not to. If the colleague is unwell and could be supported to remain in work with flexible working, this can be considered a reasonable adjustment. Please see Wellbeing & Sickness Policy.

[Link to policy](#)



Things to think about whilst considering your application

When exploring options, it is helpful to consider the 'when, where, how' to work flexibly (p.7-8), as not all options are available in every role:

Where

WHERE the work needs to be done. 'Where-based' flexibility refers to conducting the work in a different physical location i.e., can the role embrace remote working?

[Guidance on managing part-time staff on p.10](#)



[Guidance on managing remote staff on p.12](#)

When

WHEN the work needs to be done. 'When-based' flexibility refers to patterns in which the working day, week or year is adjusted. This includes patterns such as flexi-time, compressed hours and annualised hours.

How

HOW to make it work across all roles. The 'how' provides you, as Line Managers, with the permission to be open-minded when it comes to considering creative ways to allow flexibility. There may still be options for working different hours and working remotely for certain activities.

Things to think about whilst considering your application



Flex your Life at LUHFT
Your Flexible Working support offer



Where

- Who are your patients/colleagues and what do they need/expect by way of presence?
- What are the benefits to your patients from remote or virtual working? (e.g., they don't need to travel to the service or take time away from their work/caring responsibilities). How will you move away from presenteeism as a traditional measure of performance and towards measuring performance in an outcomes-based way?
- How often does the whole team need to be physically together, in the same room? Double-check that this is based on reality, not on one person's perception/comfort levels. Which activities are suited to remote working?
- Which roles require presence in a physical location such as an office, ward or GP practice?
- How can you ensure regular feedback and improvement focus, about performance, health and wellbeing and ways of working?

When

- What are the expectations of your patients/service users in terms of response time?
- Are there core times when people need to attend key meetings or see patients?
- Are there any important deadlines to be met?
- Are there key meetings during the week that should be attended?
- Can anyone else provide cover if the individual is unavailable at certain times?
- Can you use technology to support flexible working in different ways, and to keep people involved and informed?

How

- Examples of innovative options for working different hours and working remotely for certain activities:
- Holding one-to-one appointments and clinics via phone or video conferencing, to allow patients to be seen remotely.
- Using e-rostering to allow teams greater choice and input into scheduling.
- Splitting shifts between two workers.
- Using technical, remote solutions for activities such as training and personal development.
- Removing some of the 'rules' which have been applied locally to rostering but restrict individual choice e.g., to allow a 'nights only' pattern or working most weekends. If these local rules have not been informed by policy or a local flexi-time arrangement guide, then these should be removed.
- Creating a '10-2' shift, to provide cover during the busiest period on a ward, while also being an attractive shift for someone who wants to work part-time.

Culture

You have a pivotal role to play in creating a culture that promotes effective flexible working practices. Remember, it is important that you start from a point of 'yes' to explore what is possible. Use the questions below to help you to consider how you can best support and facilitate flexible working for your staff:

- How do you work with your staff to provide a solution that meets their needs and that of the service and the patients they support?
- How do you, as a people manager, adapt the way individuals and teams work to accommodate the many options available.
- How do you listen, accommodate, and respond in a balanced and compassionate manner when you're accepting, or compromising, or saying 'no' to a request?

Role modelling

Here are six ways that you can demonstrate successful leadership when it comes to promoting and embedding flexible working:

1. **Lead by example** - be a role model, be open about your own flexibility and how you're managing your wellbeing. Book out space in your own diary for family time, out-of-work activities or breaks. Log off visibly and be clear that you don't expect replies out of hours.
2. **Trust people** to do their jobs on a flexible basis. Don't wait for them to 'earn' it.
3. **Be accessible** - let your team know they should contact you if they need support. Create spaces in your diary where they can catch up with you outside of a formal meeting.
4. Consciously **reward and recognise** people for the outcomes they are achieving – not for working additional hours or being always present. This can unconsciously reinforce certain behaviours e.g., 'presenteeism'.
5. **Drive the conversation on flexible working**. Bring it up with people in health and wellbeing conversations, in one-to-ones, at end of year, and during recruitment conversations. Even if the individual doesn't want to work flexibly right now, mentioning it proactively will say a lot about how your team works.
6. **Talk to other teams about what you're doing**. Share your good practice and learn from theirs.

Managing multiple requests

You may be thinking that granting flexible working to one colleague may lead to all colleagues in your team wanting it and its natural to worry about how you're going to meet everyone's needs. The reality is that flexibility will look different for everyone based on their roles and circumstances outside of work, and not everyone will want the same thing. Doing flex well across your whole team will contribute to them being happy, healthy, more productive and have better days at work.

If you do find yourself getting multiple requests for the same flexible working arrangements and you're worried about how you can accommodate them, consider having a team discussion about how it might work across the whole team: your team may have some great ideas and solutions to overcome barriers. Be careful not to disclose anyone's personal circumstances or information about individual requests whilst having a compassionate and respectful conversation across the team. Before you do this, have a think about your own parameters of how the team can work flexibly considering the 'how, where and when' principles (p.7-8).

Support for you

Use the Team Talk template in the NHS England toolkit to consider flexible working across your team. Use the NHS Employers Flexible Working Scenarios to get some ideas about what's worked in other teams.

- Team Talk template p.17-18 [available within this link](#) and QR code.
- Flex scenarios are [available within this link](#) and QR code.



Actioning requests

- Once you receive a flexible working request from a member of your team via ESR, you must fully consider the request.
- **Act promptly** – The whole process from submission to conclusion of appeal legally needs to take place within 60 days.
- If the request can be accepted without the need for discussion, approve on ESR and write to the individual to confirm using the template letters.
- If it cannot be accepted based on the information available, you must arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss the request.
- If an agreement or compromise cannot be reached, you **must escalate** to the next tier manager for further discussion to ensure that all possible solutions have been explored.
- If an agreement still cannot be reached and the request is declined, the individual will have the right of appeal.
- All outcomes must be communicated in **writing**. See template letters on Staff hub.
- Flexible working requests should be **reviewed annually** as a minimum. Additional conversations on the arrangement should also be discussed as part of the appraisal conversation.

During this meeting

- Discuss the request in more detail and gain further information. Remember that the reason for requiring flexibility does not need to be disclosed by the colleague.
- Explore options and suitability of the request based on the role requirements.
- Consider and explore how you might accommodate it within the department using the when, where, how (p.7-8).
- If the original request cannot work, can a compromise be offered? For example: if the individual wants set days of Monday, Wednesday, Thursday but the service is busiest on a Friday, can you offer Monday, Thursday, Friday instead?
- Discuss the needs of the employee and how working practices could help their work life balance.
- If you have reservations, be open and explain why. You may be able to work together to find a solution.
- If you are unsure on whether the agreement will work, rather than decline, offer a trial period. Trials are a useful tool for exploring the impact on the colleague and service.
- Discuss the contractual changes a flexible working request may have an impact on pay, annual leave, hours, breaks, salary sacrifice, VISA requirements.

Useful Learning and Development resources:

Confident conversations which utilises BUILD framework: [Confident Conversations \(liverpoolft.nhs.uk\)](https://liverpoolft.nhs.uk)

How to negotiate: [How to negotiate \(liverpoolft.nhs.uk\)](https://liverpoolft.nhs.uk)

How to communicate: [How to communicate using the 12C's \(liverpoolft.nhs.uk\)](https://liverpoolft.nhs.uk)

[Link to
L&D](#)



What type of flex options are there?



List of flexible working options available on ESR:

Change working days or shifts	For example, working set days or night.
Annualised Hours	Commitment is made to work a set number of hours each year and the pattern of working hours enables activity peaks and troughs to be considered.
Compressed or condensed hours	Reduction in the number of days worked by extending the hours worked on each day. E.g., working 37.5 hours per week across 4 days instead of 5, or working a 9-day fortnight.
Flexi time	Allows you to vary your working hours daily within core service hours (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 - refer to the 'Flexitime Guide'.
Part Time	Reducing your hours to less than full time.
Job share	A form of part-time working where two or more employees share the work and pay of a single full-time role.
Staggered Working Hours	A staggered hours arrangement means that although employees work fixed hours every day, the start, finish and/or break times are specific to an individual.
Term-time Working	Employees who work in term time only do not work at all during the recognised school holidays, including night shifts and weekends, but get paid all year round at a pro-rata rate.
Career Break or sabbatical	Period of extended unpaid leave up to a maximum of 5 years – refer to 'Career Break Policy'
Flexible Retirement	Default retirement age has been phased out and older workers can choose when they want to retire. Individuals may access their pension and return to work in a part time capacity - see 'Retirement Policy'.
Home Working	Requesting regular working from home (outside of normal service arrangements) - see 'Agile and Homeworking guidance'.

This list is not exhaustive

What type of flex options are there?

Ad-hoc and informal arrangements:

Requests that do not require a change to terms and conditions such as the number of hours/days worked may be quickly agreed through informal discussion (possibly after adjusting to overcome any potential barriers). For example:

- Flexible hours
- Shift swapping
- Infrequent homeworking
- Short-term adjustments

All of these do not always need to be captured on ESR and can be agreed informally between you and the employee. It is recommended that you confirm the arrangements and start/end date in an email to the colleague. An email template is available in the Flexible Working Toolkit.



If a colleague has caring responsibilities for a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, mental health or any other reason, they may benefit from having a Carer's Passport. Take a look at our Support for Unpaid Carer's page on the Staff hub using the link to the right.

Any applications for flexible working as part of a carer's passport agreement should be considered in line with our Flexible Working Policy.

**Carers
passport**



Flexible working is only for working parents or those with caring responsibilities.

All employees covered by NHS terms and conditions (referred to as 'Agenda for Change') have the right to request flexible working from day one of employment.

People need to be present and be seen to know what they're doing.

Good management is about creating mutual trust and accountability for outcomes by regular communication and regular feedback on progress, which can be conducted remotely, facilitated by technology.

Employees do not need to give a reason to request flexible working, however, providing context may help you find a decision that works for them.

There is no justification for this - it means organisations such as LUHFT are losing out on talent and could be breaching equality and employment rights.

Staff undertaking leadership roles need to work full time

Staff need a reason to request flexible working.

Flexible working means that the individual is less committed to the job.

Flexible working is about a work pattern that suits the individual's needs and preferences. Always being available to work can be damaging to staff and services, which could breach employment rights.

It will be a headache to manage across the team / I don't have the time.

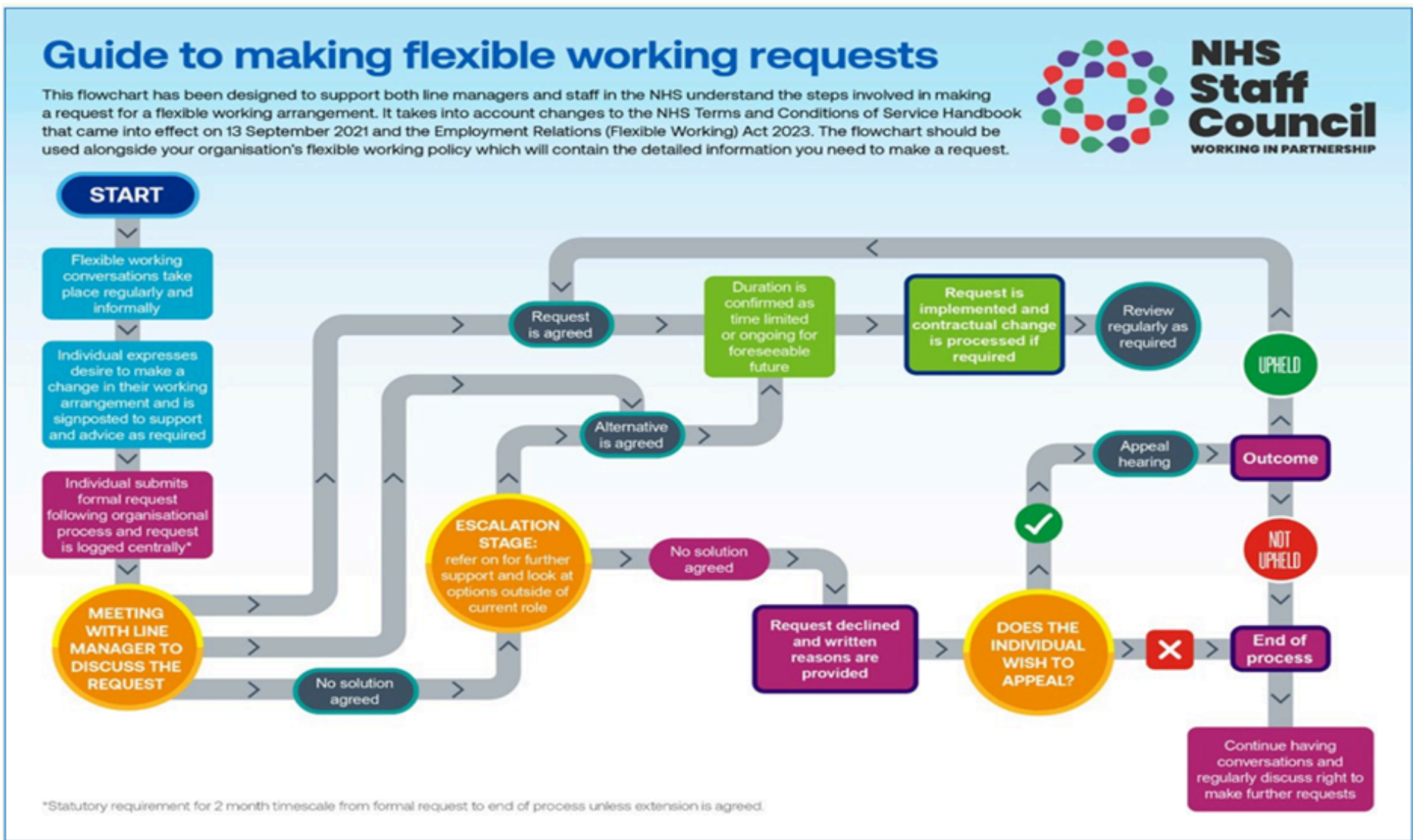
Flexible working can be a major contribution to retaining staff - having to recruit to replace staff who leave is more of a headache.

As a line manager, I can't request flexible working if my team are already working flexibly.

Why not? Talking to your team and to other line managers can lead to creative solutions which work for everyone.

Flexible working is bad for team culture / teamwork.

Team discussions about flexible working needs and preferences can be a very successful way of sharing ways of arriving at shared solutions and in supporting each other.



Thank you for taking the time to read our Flex your Life at LUHFT People Manager guide. We hope it will support your team's journey towards greater flexibility. If you can any queries, please speak to Organisational Development - organisational.development@liverpoolft.nhs.uk or your Business HR representative.

