

# Flex your Life at LUHFT

## A guide for colleagues



LIVING OUR VALUES



# Flex Colleague guide

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## Dear Colleagues,

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 know that work isn't the most important thing in your life - family, friends, health, and personal interests are also vital priorities. By offering flexible working, we want to make things better for colleagues so you can deliver excellent patient care whilst also having a positive work-life balance, which allows you to bring your best self to work each day.

This Flexible Working Guide outlines; our offer, what to think about when making an application, the flexible working options that we have available, how to have a conversation with your manager about flexible working, some myth-busting, and policy information.

Throughout this guide, we will direct you to other resources to help you with your flexible working request(s).

We advise that you read this guide in full to help you get the most out of your flexible working application and have an open conversation with your line manager.

Where possible we want to say 'yes' to flexible working requests. We will work with you to find creative and innovative solutions where possible. Not all roles within the trust will be suitable for every type of flexibility, but we will be open and honest with you to ensure that you feel listened to and valued.

Thank you for your continued support at LUHFT. We hope that this resource helps you to have an improved work-life balance and more great days at work.

With best wishes,  
Heather Barnett, Chief People Officer, 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 Management, 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 do have a read of the guide to help you fully understand the offer and the process of submitting an application to your Line Manager. As always, do reach out to your Trade Union for any support.

Best wishes,  
Joe Baldwin, Staffside Chair - LUHFT.



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, like yourself, have told us that we need to improve flexible working opportunities across the trust.



LUHFT is committed to improving the offer of flexible working, encouraging a culture which supports **open conversations** around flexibility to help you **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 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, you do not suffer any disadvantage or less favourable treatment as a result.



## 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.
- There is no limit on the number flexible working applications you can make within a 12-month period, and the arrangement can be for any duration both temporary and permanent.
- You do not have to provide a reason for your request as part of the application however, supporting information may assist your manager 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.
- We want to accommodate your requests, where we can. There may be times when we are unable to, however we are committed to working with you to explore alternative options. We will try to find an arrangement that works for you and meets the service needs.



[Link to policy](#)



# Things to think about whilst considering your application



A good place to start is:

- Identify your work-life balance.
- Are you happy with the way you currently work, or would you like any elements to be different?
- What would be the ideal changes to help you reach your work life balance?
- How will this change impact upon your wellbeing?
- How will this change continue to meet the service needs?

It's important that you find a realistic and practical flexible working arrangement that balances your needs with the experience of our service users, the needs of the service, and the work-life balance of your colleagues. This is demonstrated by NHS England's flexible working triangle and will be a good base of conversation when you chat this through with your manager:

Before you make a flexible working request, we encourage you to have a think through your request to help you in your application. We'd recommend you chatting this through with your line manager before you make a request, so they can look out for the request on ESR and start considering how it might work best.



# Things to think about whilst considering your application

It may be that some options aren't possible in your role. Therefore, use the 'where, when, how' table below, the key considerations on the next page (p.8), and the 'formal and ad-hoc options' on pages 9-10, to help you to explore what flexibility can be built into your role:

## Where

- 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 can you 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? When will you engage with your team?
- What flexibility can you show in return?

## What

- Are efficiencies possible – for example what activities are there that could stop or be delivered elsewhere or differently?
- Can some of the work be delegated?
- Is a job share possible?
- Could the role be reduced over time?
- What flexibility can you show in return?

# Things to think about whilst considering your application



Flex your Life at LUHFT  
Your Flexible Working support offer



It's advised that you start thinking about some key practical considerations, and the specific benefits, when exploring what flexibility can be built into your role.



The 'so, what?' test can help you to identify the specific benefits:

- Working compressed hours will mean that I am not travelling to work during rush hour. It also means that I can use my build-up of hours to take a day off work to complete some of my home life responsibilities, go to appointments, and spend time with family.
- So what? This means I will be starting work either earlier or later in the day.
- So what? This will give our team better coverage of working hours. GREAT!

## Key Considerations:

- 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?
- Could this change have any negative effects on your wellbeing?

If you have a disability, then your 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 you are unwell and could be supported to remain in work with flexible working, this can be considered a reasonable adjustment. Please see the Wellbeing & Sickness Policy via this link.

[Link to policy](#)





# What type of flex options are there?



## List of flexible working options available on ESR:

<b>Change working days or shifts</b>	For example, working set days or night.
<b>Annualised Hours</b>	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.
<b>Compressed or condensed hours</b>	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.
<b>Flexi time</b>	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'.
<b>Part Time</b>	Reducing your hours to less than full time.
<b>Job share</b>	A form of part-time working where two or more employees share the work and pay of a single full-time role.
<b>Staggered Working Hours</b>	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.
<b>Term-time Working</b>	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.
<b>Career Break or sabbatical</b>	Period of extended unpaid leave up to a maximum of 5 years – refer to 'Career Break Policy'
<b>Flexible Retirement</b>	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'.
<b>Home Working</b>	Requesting regular working from home (outside of normal service arrangements) - see 'Agile and Homeworking guidance'.
<b>This list is not exhaustive</b>	

# 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 your line manager.



If you have caring responsibilities for a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, mental health or any other reason, you 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.

Based on your discussion and the outcome of your carer passport, your line manager will be able to discuss flexible working options available to you. Any applications for flexible working as part of a carer's passport agreement should be considered in line with our Flexible Working Policy.

[Carer's passport link](#)



# How to have a good conversation about flex with your manager



## A. Preparing options

It's good to be clear about what you want when you're having a flex-conversation with your manager. Start by re-visiting the 'considering your options' section that starts on p.6. This was where you identified some flexible working options. Remember that you will not have to provide a reason behind requesting these options. However, supporting information may assist your manager in decision making. Your manager will need to consider the health and wellbeing of the whole team and they will also need to make sure that your request won't adversely affect the delivery of the service or make it unsafe.

It's important to note that some types of flexible working arrangements may involve a permanent change to your role and contract. Before applying for a change of working pattern, employees are advised to consider any effect it might have on their pay, pension, annual leave or salary sacrifice.

Advice on pension.  
Advice on salary sacrifice.  
Advice on VISA requirements.  
Advice on other terms and conditions.

- Pensions Team - 0151 430 1926/1943
- Salary sacrifice - [smartsalary@liverpoolft.nhs.uk](mailto:smartsalary@liverpoolft.nhs.uk)
- VISA requirements – [Recruitment@liverpoolft.nhs.uk](mailto:Recruitment@liverpoolft.nhs.uk)
- T&C's - your Business HR Representative

# How to have a good conversation about flex with your manager

## B. Handle potential objections by being prepared to compromise

It's likely that you will find it useful to list any concerns that your manager might have about your proposed changes and to think about possible solutions for overcoming them. This is so you are fully prepared for your conversation with your manager, especially as compromises might need to be made on both sides. We'd encourage you to think creatively and work together to find a form of flexibility that works for you, your team, and the delivery of your service.

It's important to be honest with yourself about the elements of your role that will be hard to flex. 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?

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.

## C. Staying true to our trust values

It is important to live by our trust values. Your manager may have other requests from other members of your team and will need to be respectful of the fact that everyone has different needs, lives, and circumstances. It's important that you are **caring** and **fair** towards this situation. It may be that your team needs to come together to discuss **innovative** ways to make your request work.

## D. Communicating whilst being flexible

It is important to maintain effective communication whilst working flexibly. Consider the measures that you will put in place to support this. This includes; clarifying your availability, setting 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.

Other examples include sharing your calendar, providing updates to the rota/manager, or adapting your email signature and voicemail so stakeholders know when you'll be back and who else they can contact. It's important that you're transparent about when you are working (and when you are not working) and that it's communicated effectively.

## E. 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.

# How to have a good conversation about flex with your manager

## F. Plan in regular reviews

Inevitably, circumstances will change, and the 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.

[ESR support link](#)



## G. Time to submit your application

You will need to submit your flexible-working request through ESR. This can be accessed by going through 'My Employment' and then 'Employee Flexible Working Request'. An ESR guide to take you through the whole process has been developed. See the link to the top right.

Once the request has been submitted, you need to inform your manager. Where we can support your request based on the information from your flexible working request, this will be agreed without the requirement to meet. In circumstances where additional information is required, a formal meeting may be required.

- This is where you and your manager will explore your request before a decision is made.
- You can share your thoughts on how your option will be beneficial to both you and your team and/or organisation.
- Your manager might also come to this meeting with a compromised option, which we would strongly advise that you're open-minded about.
- If your request is rejected, you have the right to appeal this decision. Please refer to the flexible working policy for information on appeals.

Flexible working is only for working parents.

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.

I can't change jobs without losing my flexibility and I should not discuss it in a recruitment process.

The new flexible working arrangements for Agenda for Change colleagues encourages discussions about flexibility within recruitment processes - so be prepared to say what you want and how you think it can work for you and the service.

Employees do not need a reason to request flexible working, however, providing context may help your manager make a decision. Employees covered by Agenda for Change have the right to make requests regardless of the reason.

Staff need a reason to request flexible working.

Staff undertaking leadership roles need to work full time

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.

Flexible working means that I am less committed to my 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, and could breach employment rights.

I should accept a lower banded role in order to secure a flexible working pattern.

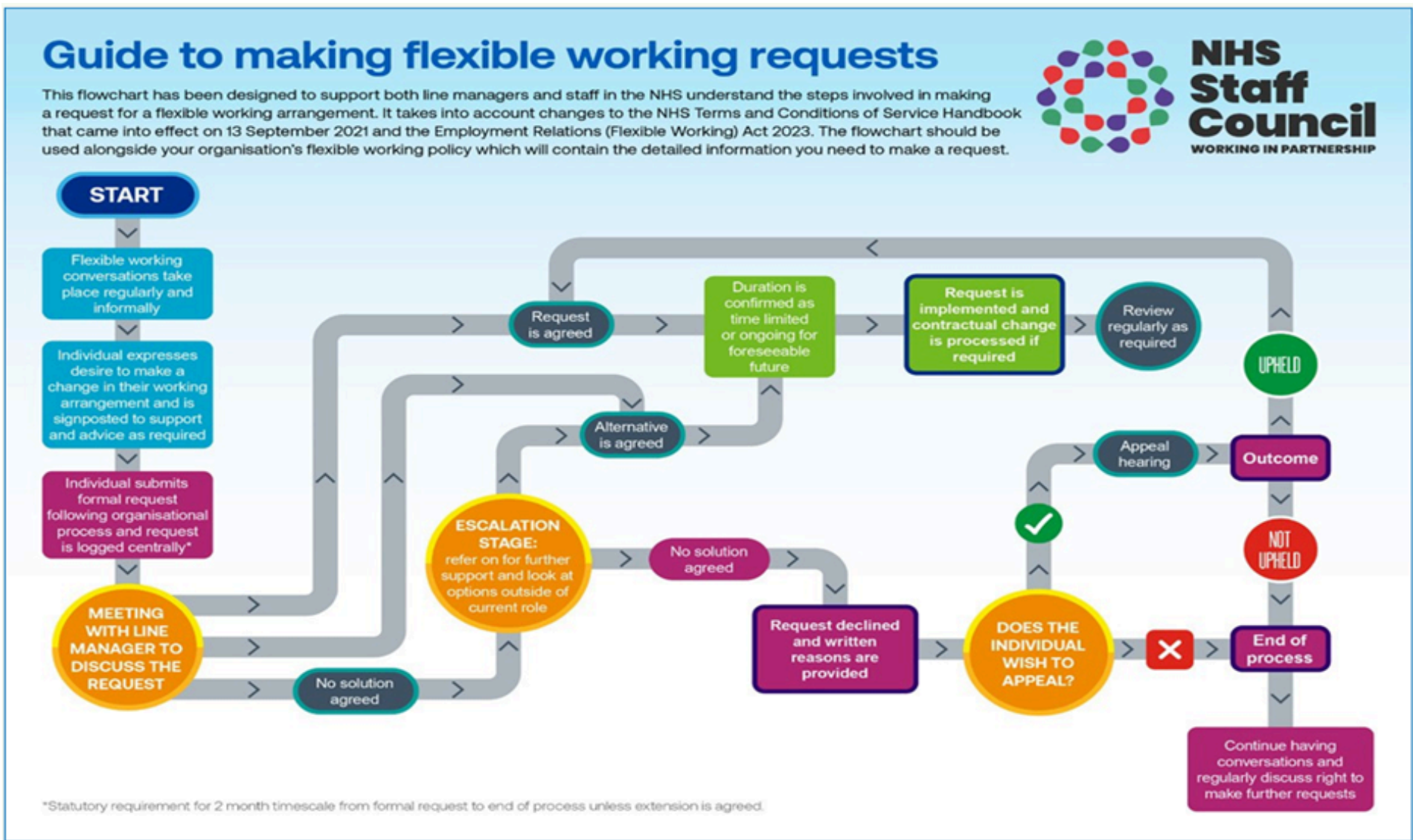
Absolutely not - organisations should be guarding against any flexible working penalty and in ensuring that it is considered in all roles.

Working less than full time means that I have to give up any hope of being able to apply for promotion.

Absolutely not - organisations should be guarding against any flexible working penalty and in ensuring that it is considered in all roles.

Flexible working is all about being being selfish / for personal reasons.

Being able to work flexibly means colleagues are able to give more to their work and feeling supported creates loyalty and commitment to the job.



Thank you for taking the time to read our Flex your Life at LUHFT colleague guide. We hope it will support your journey towards greater flexibility. If you can any queries, please speak to your manager in first instance.



