Kent and Medway:

# Our flexible working commitment

## Principles and guidance

As set out in the **NHS People Plan**, the NHS needs to be bold and commit to offering more flexible, varied roles and opportunities for different types of flexible working. We want our staff to have the opportunity to work flexibly, regardless of role, grade, reason or circumstance.

We understand that it is not always easy to accommodate all individual work preferences, but we are committed to being more flexible to provide opportunities to retain existing staff and attract new talent to work with us.

We have reviewed the way we work in the NHS and in order to make us more flexible in our working practices, both in our thinking and in practical terms, we have worked closely with our colleagues and listened to their feedback to support our desire to become more flexible and agile.

The ongoing feedback we have received has been used to support new systems and processes to support agile ways of working and has supported the creation of **'Our flexible working commitment'**.

Our goal and commitment is that all colleagues, regardless of their role, level, background or status can work in a way which enables a work life balance and effective delivery of our organisational objectives.

We each must take ownership in how we work and support our colleagues to do the same. This includes potential candidates, new team members as well as our existing colleagues. How we work must form part of our everyday conversations and the guiding principles set out in this document provides the framework to support these discussions. We want our organisation to demonstrate high levels of trust, compassion and kindness. We know through your feedback that these elements support positive staff experience.

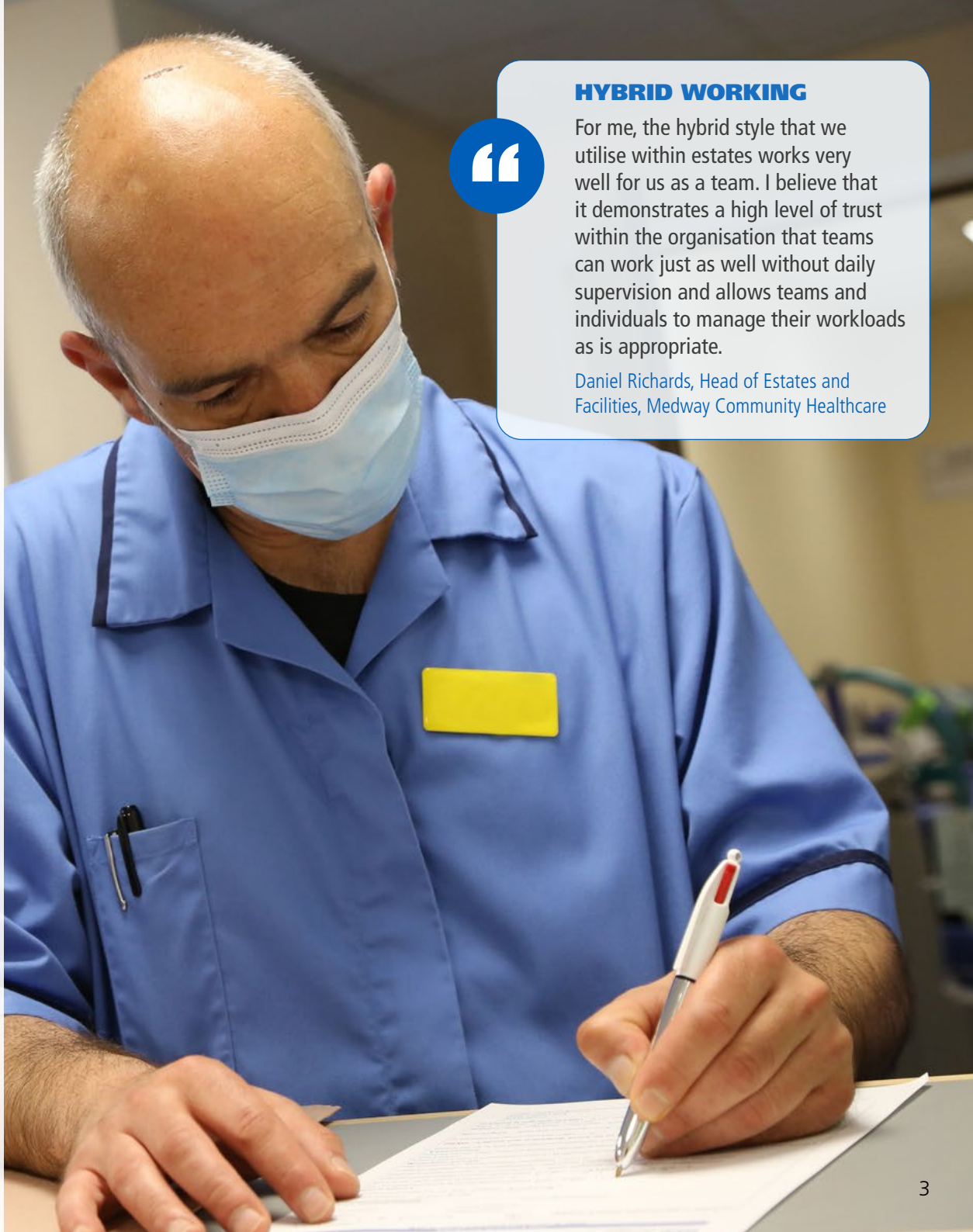
We all have a responsibility to role model the behaviours and principles we expect.

### COMPRESSED HOURS

Undertaking compressed hours has still allowed me to perform my role effectively but also allows me to prioritise my health and wellbeing, letting me rest adequately and share valuable time with my family.

Keeley Ward, Head of Nursing Workforce and Education, Medway NHS Foundation Trust





### HYBRID WORKING

For me, the hybrid style that we utilise within estates works very well for us as a team. I believe that it demonstrates a high level of trust within the organisation that teams can work just as well without daily supervision and allows teams and individuals to manage their workloads as is appropriate.

Daniel Richards, Head of Estates and Facilities, Medway Community Healthcare

# Types of flexible working:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Annualised hours** | Working your contracted hours flexibly throughout the year, without affecting your regular salary payment. This can include term time only contracts. |
| **Part-time working** | Where working hours are less than your standard full-time hours. |
| **Compressed hours working** | Where your contracted working hours are compressed into fewer days. |
| **Job sharing** | You and one or more people share responsibility for your current role. |
| **Flexitime** | Working flexible hours during the day within defined limits. |
| **Home working** | Where all or part of your role is undertaken from home, either on a contractual or occasional ad hoc basis. |
| **Secondments/ redeployment** | A temporary or permanent move to another post that has the working pattern you have requested. |
| **Self-rostering** | Where staff agree to organise themselves to work shifts/hours that need to be covered at the appropriate skill mix to meet the needs of the service, overseen by the line manager. |
| **Team-based rostering** | Team-based rostering is a 'bottom up' approach to scheduling work, giving people more control over the pattern of their working week. Parameters are set by agreeing in advance the levels of staff and skill mix required hour-by-hour throughout the working day. Staff put forward the times they would like to work and times they would like to protect away from work. This information is then used to compile shift patterns that match individual preferences as closely as possible, whilst maintaining agreed levels of cover at all times. |
| **Temporary reduced working hours** | This means voluntarily reducing the normal hours of work for a specified period, usually to accommodate personal commitments. Pay is reduced accordingly and the time frame for this arrangement should be agreed between the member of staff and their manager. |
| **Hybrid / Agile working** | To mean that staff are supported to work at a time and location that supports them and their teams to work effectively, while improving work-life balance and greater flexibility. Typically a mixture of home working and working from the designated workplace. |
| **Working patterns** | Members of our teams may have different working patterns as we move away from a nine-to-five culture. This will depend on the needs of the team or service delivered. |

### FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENT

I was granted a flexible working arrangement after I was diagnosed with an underlying health condition. It has helped immensely with my work life balance and also my health and wellbeing. This enables me to have a day's rest in the week to overcome the fatigue and balance out my ability to deliver 100 per cent in my job role.

Amanda Weightman, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

# Informal flexible working arrangement

These arrangements are usually agreed between the individual and their line manager (or equivalent) as and when needed and don't normally require a formal contractual change, however, they should be recorded in writing on the roster system.

Examples of informal arrangements could include:

- swapping shifts/sessions
- mixing shifts/sessions (e.g. working some long and some short shifts/ sessions)
- time off in lieu (TOIL)
- flexi-time
- staggered hours where start, finish and lunch/break times can be variable (usually set around a period of 'core hours - to note lunch/break times should not fall at the end of a shift)
- working from home (a role in which the individual has a defined office location but can work at home for part of their working week).

**WORKING PATTERNS**

We have a split role, half in management and half as a clinical lead, which works incredibly well. We both work full time across a 4 day week, and have the flexibility to adjust as required to cover for each other. This arrangement works for both of us and our department.

Eileen Brookson and Jo Watts, Joint Head of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust



# Team-based rostering

## What is team-based rostering?

Team-based rostering is an alternative approach to roster planning which facilitates the attraction and retention of staff by improving their work-life balance.

The basic principles are:

- every member of staff has a right to work-life balance, not just those with flexible working arrangements
- a team-based approach involves all staff within the clinical area
- there is a transparency and openness about everyone's preferred working patterns, and that conversations about work-life balance are not only permitted but encouraged
- there is no judgement made about the reasons why a particular working pattern is required: there is no 'hierarchy of needs' in terms of childcare, study, caring for elderly family members, health and well-being, or simply 'having a life'
- that producing a fair roster is a collective responsibility, requiring co-operation across the clinical area.

## What is the difference between team-based rostering and self-rostering?

Self-rostering is a system where colleagues request shifts and days off, focusing on the needs of individual staff and a team-based approach considers the needs of the team as a whole. Self-rostering has been trialled with mixed success in the NHS because it can be seen as an individual entitlement instead of a balance between individual, team and service benefit.

In team-based rostering, if the roster does not meet fairness, safety, efficiency KPIs, it is given back to the team to work together to find a solution that works for everyone.

In both approaches the roster must:

- provide an adequate skill mix and numbers of appropriately trained staff to deliver safe care to patients
- ensure fairness, generating agreement regarding the number of weekends, nights and evening shifts that each member needs to work over a set period of time.

# Principles

**1** Individuals should have an opportunity to request to work flexibly from day one of employment. Flexible working opportunities should be offered at all stages in a career, regardless of role, grade, or the reasons for wanting to work flexibly.

**2** Not all roles are suitable for every flexible working opportunity and may not facilitate a flexible working arrangement all the time. Requests for flexible working are therefore considered on a case-by-case basis.

**3** Job roles across the NHS are designed and advertised in ways which promote the most flexible appropriate working opportunities, with organisations initiating conversations about flexible working from advert through to each stage of an individual's working life.

**4** All requests for flexible working should be considered on individual merit. Managers should particularly have due regard for applications where the individual has 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).

**5** Individuals, managers and teams work together to explore the flexible working options that are available and seek a practical arrangement which supports the individual while:

- providing the best experience for patients/service users, their families and carers
- maintaining safe, high quality, efficient services that are appropriately staffed
- maintaining the work-life balance of colleagues.

**6** Those who have an agreed flexible working pattern should not be treated any less favourably in terms of pay rates, selection for promotion etc. than colleagues who do not. Any adjustments to pay and benefits should be pro-rated that of a full time individual.

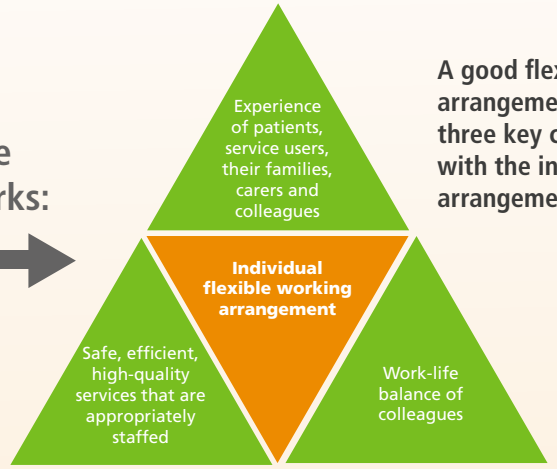
**7** Managers look to saying 'yes' to a flexible working request whenever they can. Organisations, networks, teams and managers are encouraged to collaborate to think creatively about flexible working solutions, and trial different flexible working options to identify what works best.

**8** The approach to making and granting flexible working arrangements should be a collaborative one between individuals and their managers. If an individual's first request for flexible working is declined, the individual should be supported to review their request and consider alternative arrangements consistent with any previous feedback. This approach should minimise repeated applications and the disappointment that might accompany any refusals.

**9** Managers and individuals jointly agree review periods and discuss flexible working as part of regular health and wellbeing conversations to consider whether any additional alternative arrangements are needed to meet the needs of the individual and the business. If a formal arrangement is made, this will need to be a contractual change.

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

**Finding where flexibility works:**




**A good flexible working arrangement balances three key considerations with the individual arrangement.**

# Roles and responsibilities:

## Team members

- To work within our values and behaviours
- To actively support and encourage proactive communication in the team regarding flexible working opportunities
- Take ownership of our work against agreed outcomes
- Keep diaries open to all colleagues so availability is transparent across the team
- Set and agree with line manager working patterns and arrangements
- Agree with the line manager any changes to the working pattern as soon as possible to allow opportunities to provide cover (if required)
- Ensure that we all work in a safe and secure way, which offers support for all members of the team

### COMPRESSED HOURS

I learned from the pandemic, having pushed myself too hard for sustained periods of time, how important it is to ensure good balance between work and downtime and working a compressed hours pattern ensures I have some discipline around taking time off. It benefits my home life, relationships at home and, from the organisation perspective, my productivity.

Simon Smith, Senior OD Business Partner, NHS Kent and Medway



# Roles and responsibilities:

## Managers

- To role model our values and behaviours
- Enable team members to agree their own working patterns which support delivery of team objectives
- Enable team members to have regular breaks during the day, including a meaningful lunch break and gaps in between
- Place one-to-one conversations and team meetings as a priority and ensure that the latest news and communication is shared across the team
- Create dedicated time for the whole team to communicate together
- Support flexible working opportunities within the department (where possible)
- To support colleagues to find the best work-life balance for them and the service
- Take ownership of the ways of working within the team and its review process
- To allow a review process of all agreements in place and ensure that this is appropriately recorded in ESR/eRoster

### WORKING HOURS

I love my job and my role requires a commitment of as close to full time hours as possible, I manage to carry out the work required in my contracted hours with the support of my colleagues and good time management. Leaving half an hour earlier each day allows me to collect my children from after school club.

Vanessa Sleigh, District Nurse Team Leader, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

# Guidance:

- Formal requests for flexible working can be made for a temporary period or on a permanent basis. All processes should be agreed with your line manager and HR team according to your local Flexible Working Policy and Procedure.
- An informal arrangement is usually agreed between the individual and their line managers, whereas a formal arrangement requires a contractual change.
- If your request has been agreed, you will receive confirmation of the new working arrangements and start date.
- Ensure all relevant systems are notified of the changes, for example roster systems, payroll and ESR etc as per your local Flexible Working Policy and Procedure.
- Should you agree to the change, there is no automatic right to return to your original pattern of work if you wish to change again in the future.
- Audits may be completed periodically by the HR Team in relation to the application of this document and local Policies and Procedures.
- Flexible working will also be an active discussion point for the appraisal process to ensure you still require the agreed working pattern and you have the support required to undertake your role.

## Thinking about flexible job design:

**WHERE**
Remote working, home, mobile, other offices

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

**HOW**
Job-sharing, job-splitting, project-based, contract, bank

### WORKING PATTERNS

I have worked flexibly through my pregnancy and return from maternity. I work a short shift pattern to suit being a new mum. I would never have considered taking on this role if it wasn't for my managers willingness to meet my flexible working needs, I couldn't be happier.

Jasmin Lindsay-Watson, Interim Acute Medical Matron, Urgent and Emergency Care, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

# Flexible working success stories

You may find these real examples useful and inspiring when thinking about how to improve practices in your workplace.

- 14 April 2021 Empowering disabled staff through flexible working (NHS England and NHS Improvement)
- 19 November 2020: Nurses work life balance (Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust)
- 11 August 2020: Improving retention at all stages of nurses' careers (United Lincolnshire Hospital Trust)
- 2 March 2020: Supporting staff to work for longer (University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust)
- 13 February 2020: Developing a sustainable career pathway (Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust)
- 06 February 2020: Creative emergency department recruitment amid staff shortages (The Princess Royal University Hospital)
- 2020 University Hospitals Plymouth (UHP) New to Care – Reducing Healthcare Support Worker vacancies
- 2020 Leading with empathy (East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust) – Improving ED retention and recruitment
- 28 November 2019: Improving joy at work – electronic self-rostering (Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust)

**COMPRESSED HOURS**

I work my full time hours over four days each week. This not only supports my family life and child care arrangements, it also aids the service, as I am available on the days that I work from 8 am until 6pm, so we have management cover earlier and later in the day to support the service on those days.

Safraz Joomun, Clinical Service Manager-East Kent, Acute Services, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust



Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust

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Medway Community Healthcare

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