Guideline

![NSW Government logo]

Flexible Work (More than one way to work)

Secretary, NSW Health

NSW Health
GUIDELINE

Flexible Work (More than one way to work)

GUIDELINE SUMMARY

This Guideline outlines the variety of flexible work options available to the diverse range of employees and roles within NSW Health. The intent is to promote a cooperative workplace culture that embraces flexibility and reflects the NSW Government commitment to [Flexible work](#).

KEY PRINCIPLES

Flexible working is about rethinking where, when and how work can be done, to maintain or improve service delivery for the people of NSW.

Flexible working arrangements do not replace or change industrial award conditions, flexible working hours agreement and/ or relevant legislation. Flexible working is about applying these conditions in different ways to suit different teams and circumstances.

Employees undertaking flexible work need to consider any impacts such arrangements may have, for example changes to normal working hours may impact on the ability to qualify for overtime.

Flexible working arrangements are generally <u>not permanent</u> but need to be reviewed at least annually to make sure they are continuing to work well for the individual and the team. Employees are to refer to their local processes in conjunction with these Guidelines.

It should be noted that rights to request flexible arrangements, such as when returning to work following parental leave or to support employees experiencing domestic and family violence, are still applicable, as are requirements to ensure flexible arrangements comply with work health and safety obligations and legislation.

The following is to be considered when contemplating applying or reviewing requests for flexible work:

- **For everyone:** Everyone can request to seek approval to access the types of flexibility that make sense within their role.

- **One size does not fit all**: Flexible working takes many shapes or forms as relevant to different teams and circumstances.

- **Context matters:** Different types of flexibility will suit different roles, business requirements and operational environments.

- **For the team:** Flexible arrangements are to be considerate of the needs of the team

- **Options not entitlement:** Final decisions on flexibility requests must take into account operational and role requirements. If a request to work flexibly is not approved, the

employee should be provided with reasons why the arrangement cannot be implemented.

- **Give and Take:** Everyone needs to be flexible in their approach to flexible working. Sometimes arrangements need to be reviewed, changed, paused or ended to meet the needs of the individual, their team and NSW Health.

- **Mutually Beneficial:** This means that flexibility is to create the best outcome for all parties and not negatively impact on service delivery or incur additional costs.

- **Modelled by Senior Leaders:** Senior leaders need to visibly demonstrate the benefits of flexible working and enable their teams to work flexibly.

- **Trust and Communication:** There needs to be a high level of trust and accountability within the team for flexible work practices to be successful.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved By	Amendment Notes
GL2023_020 August-2023	Deputy Secretary People, Culture and Governance	New Guideline

CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND

NSW Health is committed to an approach to flexible working that is responsive to the needs of those supported by NSW Health. This commitment enables NSW Health employees to collaborate and apply flexible work practices that make sense to the way they work and that maintain and improve service delivery and health outcomes. Flexible working is about rethinking the where, when and how work can be done, in a way that maintains or improves service delivery and performance outcomes. NSW Health is taking a teams-based approach and decisions will be made that balance the needs of NSW Health, the team and what works well for individuals.

This doesn't mean every role, or every employee, can always have their choice of flexible work. What it does mean, is that everyone can begin a conversation about the type of flexible working that may be available to them.

Working flexibly is about exploring the options that could work in each environment and for each role. It's about providing equal opportunity for employees and teams to access suitable flexible work options if they wish to do so.

The following matrix provides some indicative guidance about what flexible work options could be relevant to the various role types across NSW Health.

	Hybrid and Remote	Job Share Part Time	Activity-Based Working	Flexible Hours	Flexible work options in rosters
Office Based Teams	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Patient-Facing or service delivery requires on-site presence		✓	✓	✓	✓
Office and Field Based Teams	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Frontline 24/7 Rostered Call Centre Teams (such IT support)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Service Centre Frontline Delivery (Business Hours)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

1.1. About this document

This Guideline sets out the various types of flexible options available and provides guidance on successfully implementing flexible work arrangements.

NSW Health has a diverse range of roles, with varying options for flexibility. For example, those in patient facing roles may not have the ability to work away from their nominated work site. Different roles may lend themselves to other flexible arrangements. One size does not fit all.

1.2.   Flexible work principles

It is important to note that generally, flexible work arrangements are <u>temporary</u> in nature and subject to review.

1.2.1.   Award and legislative provisions

While anyone can request flexibility, there are circumstances where an employee has a right to request flexible work arrangements. For example:

- an employee returning from parental leave to care for a child or children

- an employee experiencing domestic and family violence or who is providing care or support to a family member who is experiencing domestic and family violence.

Managers and employees are also responsible for making sure that any flexible work arrangement supports and complies with relevant employee health and safety legislation.

1.3.   Key definitions

Activity-based working	Allows employees to use the type of workspace to best suit their work. Instead of having a set desk for all day-to-day jobs, activity-based working provides a range of workstations that are purposely designed for individual tasks, such as open spaces for group work and meetings, or quiet "do not disturb" areas for more focused work.
Flexible working hours	A range of flexible working options available under existing awards and/ or flexible working hours agreement
Hybrid working	A combination of working remotely and working onsite in a designated workplace.
Job-share	Where a single full-time role is undertaken by more than one employee who are paid on a part-time basis for the hours they work.

Part-time work	A work pattern where an employee works fewer than full-time hours. In the context of flexible work arrangements, this would normally mean a temporary part-time or reduced hours arrangement. A request for part-time work arrangements as part of a return to work from parental leave is managed in accordance with parental leave provisions as set out in the relevant award. This does not prevent the employee requesting other flexible work arrangements in accordance with this Guideline.
Remote working	When an employee works from home or another location.
Temporary Individual Roster Arrangements (TIRA)	Employees submit requests for the shifts they would prefer to work and the days they prefer to be rostered off. The roster is then built taking these requests into consideration, trying to accommodate requests where possible and practical.

2. FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS – THE WHEN, HOW AND WHERE

WHEN work is done	**Flexible working hours and scheduling**: An alternative to the traditional 9am to 5pm, 35/ 38-hour work week, allowing variance to start/ finish times. **Flex, banked time and accrued days off (ADOs)**: Getting time in lieu for hours worked (as per relevant award regarding accruing time). **Existing leave provisions**: Support employees managing personal, family, community and/ or study commitments. **Flexible rostering**: Employees submit requests for the shifts they would prefer to work and the days they prefer to be rostered off. The roster is then built taking these requests into consideration, trying to accommodate requests where possible and practical. Also known as Temporary Individual Roster Arrangements (TIRA).
HOW work is done	**Activity-based work**: Recognises that people perform different activities in their day-to-day work and may need to move around the office or worksite selecting the setting that is most appropriate for the day or task at hand (such as quiet rooms, collaboration spaces). **Shift swapping**: Allow shift workers to trade shifts with each other, enabling flexibility to meet both work and personal needs. **Split shifts**: A type of shift-work schedule where an employee's workday is split into two or more parts (such as morning and evening) separated by more than the normal periods of time off (as for lunch). **Part-time**: Fewer than full-time hours are worked. Note the days/ hours worked can be varied by mutual agreement. In the context of flexible work, these are usually temporary part-time or reduced hours arrangements. **Job share**: A full-time role is undertaken by more than one employee who is paid on a part time basis for the hours they work. See the Public Service Commission Job Share resources. **Flexibility in task within a team or collaboration across teams**: assign work based on strengths or share people across teams as needed.

WHERE work is done	**Working in a hybrid model**: working remotely (from home or another location) <u>and</u> from the designated workplace.

2.1.   Benefits of flexible working

Attracting great employees

Flexibility has become one of the most desired features of organisations for job candidates. If NSW Health offers flexibility, it will attract the most talented individuals to its job roles.

Employee retention

Retaining existing corporate knowledge and skills is important as it ensures the maximum return on investment in recruitment and training. Offering flexibility is one way to reduce the likelihood of employees leaving.

Increased job satisfaction

Employees who have opportunities to work flexibly tend to have greater job satisfaction, which increases their productivity and engagement.

Improved teamwork and inclusion

Teamwork often improves as knowledge and enthusiasm is shared among a more motivated flexible working team. Also, diversity and inclusion can benefit from improved accessibility.

Improved output

For jobs requiring concentration, working remotely or working during hours when the office is quieter can help improve the quality and efficiency of the work.

2.2.   Meeting the challenges

Challenges in implementing flexible work arrangements may include:

Challenge	Comment
Ensuring worker safety in remote locations	Adequate design of working environment and equipment (including adequate internet/ Wi-Fi), planning for emergencies, contact agreements with manager and the team; consideration of other risks, such as domestic and family violence issues.
Productivity and service delivery may suffer	Identify performance outcomes and how they are measured. Discuss potential impacts of flexible arrangements and how the team will manage them. Trial flexible work options and measure, review and revise.
Employees might expect flexibility without understanding impact on the team	Regularly discuss shared responsibilities. Working flexibly needs to work for the whole team and the team should work together to resolve any issues. Flexibility is a two-way street.

Challenge	Comment
Perceptions that people who want to work flexibly are not as committed to performing the work and/ or engaging with the team	Accept flexibility as the norm; wanting to work flexibly does not mean less commitment.
	Trial flexible arrangements and actively discuss and measure performance outcomes.
	Career development discussions and initiatives are not compromised by flexible working.
Lack of visibility – are people doing their work?	Set and agree to clear goals.
	Have regular team and 1:1 check ins.
	Raise issues of concern early and resolve them quickly.
Team communication and connection may be compromised	Agree to communication protocols and channels.
	Use available technology.
	Ensure that wellbeing remains as important when working flexibly.
	Establish protocols to deal with potential feelings of isolation.
Ensuring equitable access to flexibility	Discuss flexible work options as a team.
	Have confidential conversations with individuals about flexibility requests.
	Understand that ensuring the same access to flexible work does not mean the same type of flexible arrangement for each employee.
	Individual and team circumstances are considered when deciding on flexible work arrangements.
Scheduling work and meetings can be difficult	Discuss required coverage, meeting attendance and expectations and resolve scheduling conflicts as a team.
	Reinforce expectations that the team is flexible in their approach to meet work commitments and support the team.

3.   MAKING FLEXIBILITY WORK

Managers and employees discussing flexible working arrangements should start from the position of **how this work for can all parties**.

The discussion is to also include:

- Being **creative and solutions-focused** – flexibility can take many forms.
- No one size fits all – everybody and every situation is different.
- Promoting a guilt-free attitude to flexibility requests. Be open to options and outcomes-focused
- Cultivating an open and trusting environment.

Poor performance is not a reason to deny a request to work flexibly, but may guide appropriate options for such working arrangements.

Flexible working must be **mutually beneficial** to the employee and NSW Health. This means that flexibility is to create the best outcome for all parties and not negatively impact on service delivery.

3.1. Commencing a flexible work arrangement

Employees should build their awareness of what flexible working could look like for their role. For example, they may have already been working flexibly for some time, such as working part-time, or working under flex time, but not considered this as flexible working.

Employees should seek information to develop suggestions and proposals that could work for them, their team and the organisation.

As well as the flexible work options outlined in this guide, employees may also consider how existing leave entitlements could support them in balancing work with study, family, community or other personal matters or commitments.

Managers should also start having a conversation about flexible work in team meetings, explaining that there is commitment to creating a work environment that allows people to meet their personal and professional goals, while ensuring the needs of the team and broader NSW Health are met.

3.1.1. Applying for a flexible work arrangement

The first step is for a meaningful conversation to take place between the employee and their manager to discuss possible flexible working options. The next step is to submit a request via the relevant NSW Health Organisation's Flexible Work Request form.

3.1.2. Considering flexible work requests

When a manager receives a request for a flexible work arrangement, they are to consider the following:

- Are the option(s) to be considered in line with the award and relevant legislation?
- What are the employee's key duties?
- Do these duties need to be done at set times or locations?
- Who does the employee interact with in the normal course of their work? Will the proposed arrangement affect these interactions?

Managers are to consider all flexible work requests on a case-by-case basis, considering the merits and any potential issues, including how these could possibly be addressed. As a guide, managers are to provide advice on the outcome of the flexible work request within 2 weeks.

Upon approval, any arrangements that affect payroll must be processed via the applicable system. Existing processes and forms should be used wherever possible, for example temporary part-time work arrangements. These provide an opportunity for an employee currently working full-time to work part-time, with leave without pay to cover the balance of full-time hours. At the end of the defined period, the employee returns to full-time work. Such arrangements would be submitted through StaffLink.

3.1.3. Trial period

Once approved, it is useful for new flexible working arrangements to be trialed for an initial period, for example 1 - 3 months. The length of the trial, if appropriate, will depend on the new arrangements being considered and will allow time to make any tweaks before formalising the arrangement going forward.

3.1.4. Review of declined applications

In circumstances where a flexible working arrangement cannot be accommodated, and an alternate agreement cannot be reached, the employee is to be provided with a written response outlining the reasons behind the decision.

The employee may request a review of the manager's decision. Refer to the relevant NSW Health Organisation's approvals process, including delegations for review of flexible work requests.

3.1.5. Ongoing assessment of arrangements

Flexible work arrangements are <u>temporary agreements</u> and are subject to ongoing assessment to make sure they are still working well. The purpose of such assessments is to identify and address any issues that may have been identified by either the employee or the manager. Overly frequent reviews should be avoided unless concerns and issues have not been addressed satisfactorily.

Approved arrangements are to be assessed on at least an annual basis to make sure they reflect current or changing circumstances. A new agreement is to be implemented following the assessment. New agreements are also to be put into place when an employee changes role.

3.2. Making the arrangement work

Communication is key

The manager and the team need to be open about what they want to achieve. They are to offer solutions about how the flexible arrangement(s) within the team will work together and address emerging issues as they arise. Irrespective of the type of arrangements in place, regular communication about how things are going and what may need to change is critical to ongoing success.

Setting up team protocols

It's a good idea to set up some team protocols for how the team will work flexibly. For example, agree on the processes to communicate if a team member is working part-time, has changed their hours of work or working from a different location.

- What is the process for team meetings and sharing information?
- How will the team use email, Microsoft Teams, phone/ video conferencing, and when site-based meetings are required?

- How might the structure of site-based or virtual meetings change to get the most out of time when the team is connecting?

- Establish protocols to ensure confidentiality while working away from the office or when using activity-based workstations.

Presence, productivity and planning

It is a reasonable expectation that team members will coordinate their flexible working arrangements so there is adequate work coverage over the week. Achieving this may require extra planning and team-based discussions and by using work schedules and calendars for planning for leave.

Should there be irregular arrangements (for example to work from another location), it's reasonable for individuals to provide as much notice as possible. Expectations about whether team members who are working reduced hours, participating in job-share arrangements or working remotely are required to attend certain meetings or events face to face should be discussed with the team. The clearer expectations are communicated, the better the arrangements will work for everyone.

Frontline roles will require a different conversation, although the principles of setting up a flexible work arrangement still apply. The requirements to maintain service delivery need to be discussed, followed by a team-based conversation about how the service can be successfully delivered in a flexible work environment.

Give and take

Flexible working doesn't mean individuals will always get what they want. Not all types of flexibility will be available for every role, or every individual, all the time. Flexibility requires give and take between the employee, manager and team. It also places mutual obligations on the employee, manager and team to make flexible working a success.

When assessing a request that is initially considered unsuitable, the manager should discuss with the employee and suggest alternative flexible working arrangements that may still meet the employee's needs.

3.3.   Responsibilities

Senior Leaders	Managers	Teams/ Employees
Promote encourage and champion flexible working in NSW Health	Lead by example and model behaviours that support flexible working. Engage in discussions with the team on what flexible options may be available.	Support colleagues who work flexibly
Encourage managers to discuss flexible working opportunities	Consider requests for flexible work with an open mind and approach discussions in a constructive, problem-solving manner. Ensure that arrangements are documented appropriately, reviewed on a regular basis and adjusted if needed.	Participate constructively in team discussions about flexible working arrangements. Share successes and lessons learnt.
Lead by example and role model behaviour that supports flexible working	Manage team workload and performance including flexible working arrangements	Develop proposals to address business and team needs and any possible impacts
Discuss how to enable flexible requests or alternative strategies	Refer any declined requests to senior leader for further discussion and consideration	Deliver agreed work outcomes within the predetermined timeframes
Review declined requests and support managers and employees to reach agreement and/ or alternative strategies	Discuss and support development requirements within the team. Ensure communication, including regular check-ins and to manage issues and emergencies.	Ensure any flexible work arrangement meets work health and safety standards, maintains security and safe custody of equipment, information systems and data
Provide the tools to get work done	Make sure the team has access to relevant technology and appropriate training. Ensure compliance with award conditions, agreements and relevant legislation.	Participate in required training and use technology effectively as one enabler to flexible work. Ensure performance and conduct meets expectations during the arrangement.
Share benefits and positive learnings arising from approved flexible work practices within their teams.	Share benefits and positive learnings arising from approved flexible work practices within their teams.	Work collaboratively to review and address any issues that may arise from changed arrangements

4.   NSW HEALTH'S HYBRID WORKING MODEL

For those employees who are able to and have approval to work remotely, NSW Health is adopting a hybrid model. This is a combination of employees working from another location (including home) and on-site work, with teams made up of employees selecting a combination of both.

No role in NSW Health can be undertaken remotely on a permanent basis. Every employee has an official facility or office or facility-based location and this has not changed.

The physical workplace plays a critical role in working flexibly and remains an important touchpoint for individuals and teams. Research on flexible work reinforces that employee engagement improves for collaborative workers when they attend the physical workplace, so it is important to establish "anchor days" when employees are expected to attend the office or facility.

Eligible employees are to adopt a mixture of office, home and field (where appropriate) based work so that NSW Health can appropriately meet the needs of its stakeholders.

Managers, in consultation with their teams, are to determine the team's appropriate ratio of office-based and remote work time. This includes consideration of:

- Service delivery levels.
- The ability of the team to maintain productivity while working remotely.
- The need for regular connection and communication.
- The team's culture and each team member's work-life balance needs.
- Access to technology, such as printers/ scanners/ help desk services.

Managers need to ensure that when office attendance is required that such attendance is spread across the working week to avoid excessive numbers of staff attempting to work in the same location on the same day and managing planned absences to ensure adequate coverage.

4.1.1. Interstate and overseas arrangements

While NSW Health Organisations are to consider all requests for flexible work, generally requests to work from an interstate or overseas location are not supported. There may be extenuating circumstances where such arrangements are considered but these are by exception only and must be supported by a robust assessment of any risks that such arrangements may pose.

Network and/ or system security issues, ability to be recalled into the office, may make such arrangements impractical. Conversely, working interstate arrangements may make sense in NSW Health Organisations with proximity to borders and where staff live across the border from their work facility

Working from interstate or overseas may have implications for workers' compensation insurance coverage. When considering such arrangements, reference is to be made to the State Insurance Regulatory Authority's *Cross-border arrangements for workers compensation*.

The Department of Customer Service Circular *Accessing Government digital systems while overseas* (DCS-2022-03) also stipulates that:

> "*Any request to work **overseas** must be approved by the relevant Deputy Secretary or higher, with consultation with the Chief Information Officer (CISO) or equivalent on a*

by exception basis. Agencies must ensure they are appropriately managing risks to their staff, information and assets."
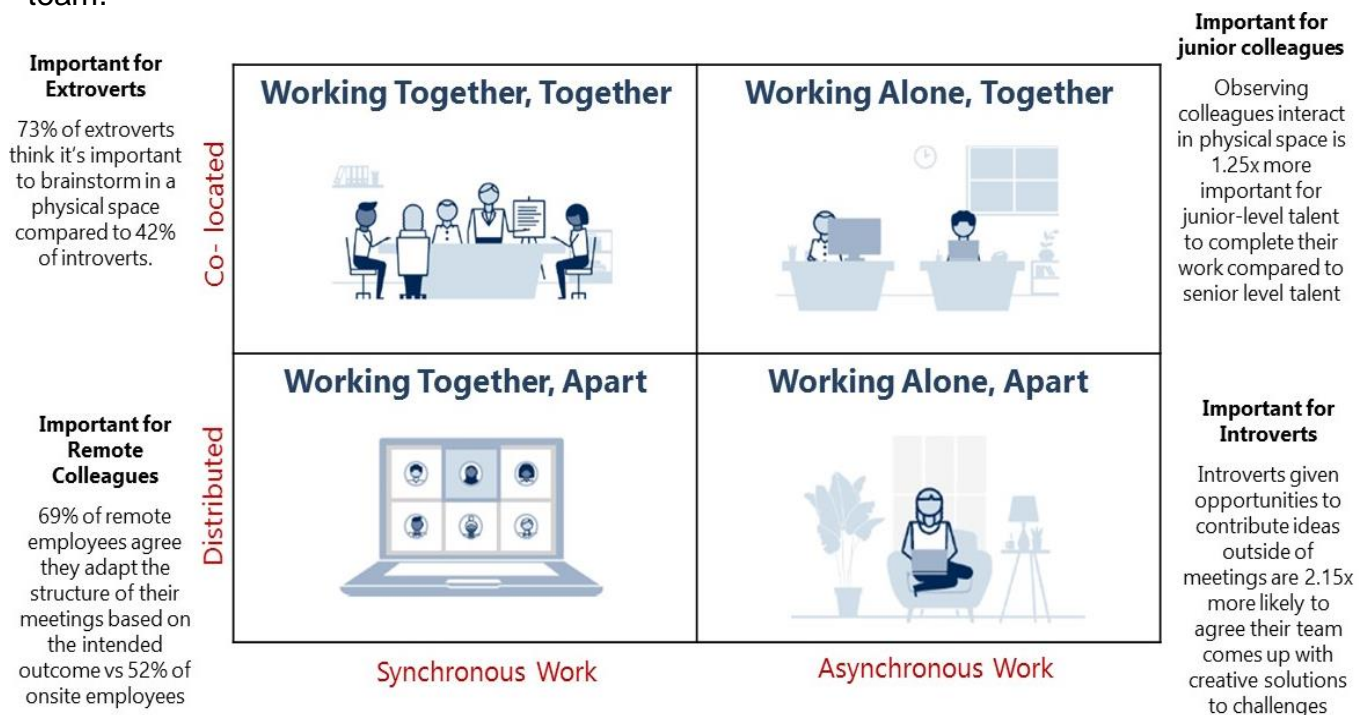
4.2.   Benefits of the hybrid working model

The hybrid working model incorporates the benefits of working in the office or facility, as well as opportunities to work remotely.

Workplace	Working Remotely
Connection with others, social interaction	Less commuting, saving costs and time, increased family-life balance
Enhanced communication when meeting in person	Minimise interruptions
Collaboration spaces and/ or focus areas for lone work	Potentially quieter work environment for focused activities
Change of routine (for those who have been working remotely for a period of time)	Minimise exposure to public transport
Access to meeting rooms and printing facilities	Flexibility on start and finish to suit personal commitments
Ability to build networks through informal chats	Better work-life balance

4.2.1.   Designing a team hybrid model

Teams should think about the following working styles and how they may apply to their team.[1]

Important for Extroverts

73% of extroverts think it's important to brainstorm in a physical space compared to 42% of introverts.

Important for Remote Colleagues

69% of remote employees agree they adapt the structure of their meetings based on the intended outcome vs 52% of onsite employees

Co- located

Distributed

Working Together, Together

Working Alone, Together

Working Together, Apart

Working Alone, Apart

Synchronous Work

Asynchronous Work

Important for junior colleagues

Observing colleagues interact in physical space is 1.25x more important for junior-level talent to complete their work compared to senior level talent

Important for Introverts

Introverts given opportunities to contribute ideas outside of meetings are 2.15x more likely to agree their team comes up with creative solutions to challenges

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[1] Gartner Hybrid Workforce Strategy, Gartner 2021

4.2.2. Meeting the challenges of hybrid work

Hybrid and remote work also present challenges to both individuals and organisations. These need to be considered and addressed by leaders and teams when navigating how they will work.

Agreeing appropriate and regular review points for any flexible work arrangements will assist in meeting these challenges. For example, potential isolation or burnout may prompt an earlier review of agreed flexible work arrangements.

Challenges	Comment
Ensuring Consistency and Visibility	Teams should consider: How will the team connect (both professionally and personally)? What are the outcomes and deliverables and how will they be delivered? How can the team plan for intentional collaboration as well as opportunities for spontaneous interaction and connection?
Isolation and Burnout Safety and Wellbeing (Digital distractions, virtual overload, always being "on")	Leaders and teams should discuss boundaries and ideas for teams to manage workloads and connection. Early identification of potential workload issues, through regular check-ins, team meetings or individual catch ups. Change communication methods during stressful times (such as frequency, mode, content, follow-up). Reach out to team members and ask if they are okay and offer a variety of additional support options such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), suggest contact with a GP or online support resources. Ensure any safety and/ or wellbeing risks have been identified and mitigated as far as reasonably practicable.
Inclusion and Equity	Some NSW Health employees may perceive inequity when hybrid work is not approved. It is important that employees are given individual feedback when hybrid work is not approved. This may include the requirements of the role and the impact on the team and service delivery. If employees demonstrate ongoing emotional stress from the decision, it is important that support is offered or other opportunities for flexible work are explored.
Policy, Work Practices and Leader Capabilities	Leaders and teams will have to regularly rethink and rework how effectively outcomes are being delivered as well as checking on their team "health".

4.3. The 'how to' of successful hybrid arrangements

Setting clear expectations

Managers are to discuss the individual's day to day responsibilities; identify what technology will be needed and ensure it's working properly and that the employee has undertaken necessary training.

The Manager, in collaboration with the team, clearly define team members' roles and responsibilities and how they fit with one another.

Collaboratively, establish the preferred methods of communication and protocols to indicate when employees are out of the office and make this information accessible to all team members.

A manager can require an employee who works remotely to come into the office on a specific day or days for operational reasons. This could be ongoing, such as for regular office-based meetings or face-to-face time, or it could be as required, for a particular meeting or project.

The manager and employee should provide as much notice as possible of a change to remote working days.

Working as a team

When considering how best to manage performance in a hybrid environment, focus on performance outcomes rather than the hours the employee is present and visible. To do this, the manager is to must identify and communicate clear goals, set effective measurements, source multiple points of feedback and have regular performance conversations. This is especially critical for employees whose manager also works remotely.

Communicating effectively

Effective communication is essential for the success of a hybrid team. Employees engaging in flexible work practices and all levels of management within a team/ department must share in the responsibility to stay connected. Managers must ensure their team has the information and resources they need.

Select the right communication channels to make sure messages are received in the right way. Provide opportunities to collaborate to maintain connections within the team. Foster a sense of team through activities and meetings and encourage relationship building.

Build and keep team connection

Ensure everyone can hear everyone else during team meetings conducted virtually. Check with remote employees regularly during phone/ videoconference meetings to see if they have something to add or ask. Use video wherever possible during team meetings.

Maintain physical and mental wellbeing

In a hybrid working model, it can be more difficult to notice if a team member is not feeling 100%. Managers need to be active in reaching out and checking on their team members.

Employees also need to reach out to their manager, team member or via the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if they are feeling unsafe, unwell or experiencing other issues that affect their wellbeing. Appropriate action needs to be taken to address these concerns.

All team members should take regular breaks away from their desk to minimise physical discomfort. In the workplace this can mean a short walk around the office or undertaking gentle stretching exercises. The same principle applies when working remotely.

Although some tasks can successfully be done remotely, they are often more effectively done in person. These activities include coaching, counselling, and providing advice and feedback; welcoming new employees and work that benefits from collaboration, such as innovation, problem-solving and creativity. The table below provides some examples but is not an exhaustive list.

Face-to-Face	Preferably Face-to-Face	Virtual or Face-to-Face
Day 1 Onboarding	Other Induction activities	Focus work
Project kick-offs	Supervision, development and coaching conversations	Daily/ weekly team check-ins
Learning and development where interaction is essential	Team morning and afternoon tea breaks	"Town Hall" or information sessions (in person options set up where possible)
Social events	Team/ division meetings	Collaboration or problem solving
Setting up a team/ team Building	Performance planning and review conversations	Informal recognition
Welcomes, farewells, celebrations, formal recognition	Problem solving/ creative/ innovation workshops	Informal or impromptu meetings
Strategy and planning workshops		Training

5.   APPENDICES

1. Frequently asked questions

5.1.   Appendix 1: Frequently asked questions

Can I apply for a flexible work arrangement?

Any employee can submit a proposal for a flexible work arrangement. However, not all roles are suitable for each type of flexible arrangement. Consideration is to be given to all requests to establish whether they can meet the needs of the individual, the team and the service or function.

How do I establish a flexible work arrangement?

Not all flexible work options will meet your needs or the needs of your work area. Some options like flexible working hours are only available if you are employed under a particular award.

Look at the impacts an arrangement might have on you, your colleagues and the work you do. Once you have an idea of what's possible, talk to your manager about what you are proposing and how this can be achieved without negatively impacting on your work and your team. After your discussion, put in a flexible work option application.

How long can I have a flexible work arrangement in place?

New arrangements are recommended to be in place for a trial period of 1-3 months. This will allow you and your manager time to figure out what's working well and what's not working. You can make adjustments (if necessary) before putting a longer-term arrangement in place.

It should be noted that no role can work remotely on a permanent basis.

Flexible arrangements are temporary and should be re-assessed at least annually to make sure they are working well.

Can a request for flexible work be denied?

NSW Health strives to support flexible work arrangements, however from time to time not all requests can be accommodated. Accepting or rejecting a proposal is a manager's decision and is to be based on sound consideration of any legal obligations to offer flexible work, and impacts on the team, the department or service to continue unhindered. Some considerations when reviewing a flexible working arrangement proposal include:

- Any legal obligations to offer flexible working, such as following return from parental leave, in cases of domestic and family violence, etc.

- Ability for the work to be carried out safely and efficiently under the proposed arrangement.

- Any detrimental impact on staff or patients arising under the proposal that cannot be mitigated.

- Arrangements where requests incur additional costs or impact the service or facility adversely.

- Working from home requests where an employee cannot demonstrate a safe and ergonomic workspace and associated technology is available or where the role is required to be carried out face-to-face.

You can request feedback on the decision on your flexible work proposal. Your manager may discuss whether any alternatives to the original proposal might work and can discuss suitable alternative flexible arrangements that will balance your needs with the needs of the role, team and Service. You will be provided with reasons as to why an arrangement cannot be approved, and you can request a review of this decision by following your local dispute resolution processes.

Can my flexible working arrangement be terminated at any time?

Generally, flexible working arrangements will stop when there's a mutual agreement to do so. In some instances, arrangements can be terminated by the employer or the employee by giving reasonable notice based on the nature of the flexible arrangement.

In exceptional circumstances, arrangements can stop immediately, such as in cases of misconduct or the health and wellbeing issues warrants such action or where there are urgent or emerging operational requirements. In such cases, careful consideration is to be taken to address any consequences, for example impact on childcare where the flexible arrangement needs to cease or change.

Once a flexible work arrangement has been approved, how can it be introduced smoothly into the team?

It is necessary to make sure that everyone is consulted when new working arrangements are introduced that have a broad impact. For example, it would be useful for the team to agree to procedures for:

- methods of briefing employees on new tasks, progress, continuing tasks
- methods of dealing with forwarding communication (such as calls from the office, urgent correspondence)
- assessing performance – how and when this will be done
- scheduling meetings – how and when they will be scheduled and how meetings will be conducted.

How is work monitored when flexible work arrangements are in place?

All employees are expected to meet the same standards and employee performance should not be adversely affected by a flexible work arrangement. Where part-time or remote working arrangements are in place, managers are to establish a structured approach for agreeing on work to be completed/ deliverables, including evaluation and management.

Communication is especially important for those working in a hybrid environment. Employees working remotely are still required to attend meetings or other events either in person or via teleconference. This is to form part of the flexible work arrangement.

Remote working practices should not deviate from standards and expectations of employees working in the office/ facility. For example, private appointments during the day should be recorded and appropriate leave taken or reflected in time worked.

Confidentiality while working remotely and adhering to record keeping requirements, proper use of official information and equipment is required under the NSW Health Code of Conduct (see NSW Health Policy Directive *NSW Health Code of Conduct* [PD2015_049]).

Can I change my bandwidth or core time hours?

Yes, but only if the industrial instrument that regulates your hours or work allows for this to occur. Such arrangements must also meet operational needs, not incur additional costs and any other relevant criteria.

Is remote working an option available to everyone?

No, remote working will not be possible for many roles within NSW Health due to the nature of the role requirements, such as patient-facing roles and where the work is required to be performed onsite. Whether a particular flexible work arrangement is feasible for an individual employee depends on a variety of factors, including the nature of the work, impact on the team and the employee. For example:

- Work that demands physical presence (receptionist, maintenance, food service, nursing) cannot be done remotely.

- An employee who needs close personal supervision (such as during their probationary period) may be required to be at work when the manager/ supervisor is present.

- An employee who needs to have constant, easy access to materials or to equipment may be required to be present when those materials or pieces of equipment are accessible.

- No employee should be permitted to vary their work arrangement to one that will put them in a potentially dangerous situation, including but not limited to, personal safety, lacking or inadequate equipment/ technology or security concerns.

Can I work from home if my child or another dependent is sick?

You cannot use remote working to meet ongoing caring responsibilities. Working from home may still be possible if you can work with minimal disruption, for example caring for your parent or an older child who does not require constant supervision or care.

If the person that is sick requires constant care that would prevent you from being able to fulfil the inherent requirements of your role, then you should make alternative arrangements for the day, such as taking other forms of leave.

You should always follow your NSW Health Organisation's flexible work processes and discuss such situations with your manager.

What happens if I'm injured while working from home or another approved place?

If you're working from home or another approved location under a Flexible Work Agreement, then this place becomes your workplace. The same work, health and safety conditions, obligations and responsibilities apply as they would in your usual NSW Health workplace.

If you are injured while on duty at home or another approved place, you must report the incident to your immediate supervisor/ manager and seek medical advice/ treatment (see NSW Health Policy Directive *Rehabilitation, Recovery and Return to Work* (PD2023_016). You are required to comply with all your obligations and duties under work health and safety and workers compensation legislation.

What impact does flexible work have on my other employment conditions?

Flexible work arrangements do not affect your grade or classification or your access to training, and other career development opportunities. Your current award provisions remain in place while in a flexible work arrangement.

Some flexible work arrangements may affect your pay or superannuation, for example entering into a temporary part-time arrangement or taking leave without pay.

You should seek independent financial and/ or superannuation advice before you make the change.

What about flexibility in domestic violence situations?

Flexible work arrangements may be put in place to support you if you have experienced domestic violence as defined in the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (NSW).

Flexible work options may also be available if you are providing care and support for family members who have experienced domestic violence.