

Addressing concerns about flexible working

Understand common concerns about flexible working and how to address them.

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Employees and their managers sometimes express concerns about what flexible work is, how it works, who it's for, and what the benefits are. Some of these concerns can be addressed by understanding the fears that are contributing to their reactions and resistance.

Concerns around flexible working are usually influenced by the different needs, goals, motivations, and behaviours of employees in the sector.

To engage hesitant employees, consider how their perspective could be shaped or influenced for driving implementation of flexible working.

Usually these employees can be engaged by:

- increasing awareness about the benefits of flexible working and the types available
- building their skills and confidence for flexible working
- understanding how it can work for them and their team
- encouraging continued conversations with managers and teams to make sure arrangements continue to be suitable.

Who can access flexible working?

Everyone is able to begin a conversation about what flexible working is open to them, regardless of the reason for why they are seeking it. The approach of “if not, why not” democratises and mainstreams flexible working so that it is no longer solely for employees with certain life circumstances.

Flexible working is not contingent on working in a role for a certain period of time.

Is flexible working just working from home?

Flexible working is about rethinking the where, when and how work can be done. It is more than just working from home and can include flexible hours, remote working, career breaks, compressed weeks, job sharing, study leave, flexible rostering and much more.

While employees in service delivery roles may not be able to work from home, there are other flexible working arrangements that may be available such as job sharing or flexible rostering. It's important to consider context – for example, flexible working for a teacher may not be the same for a policy worker, but it's still flexible working.

Can I access flexible working if the technology is not there?

Technology can act as a barrier to flexible working for some employees and ongoing work is required across the sector to make improvements. Employees are still encouraged to begin a conversation with their manager about what is possible with the current technology – whether a work around is available, or another type of flexible working.

How do I lead my team if I can't see them?

There are many ways employees can be productive that don't rely on full-time face-to-face working. Performance can be measured through outcomes rather than presenteeism and managers and leaders should feel empowered to trust their teams. Face-to-face time is still valuable and flexible working can be built around this.

How can my team work flexibly?

Flexible working is a team-based conversation, requiring consideration of how everyone can access and benefit from it – the person requesting the arrangement, their manager and their team.

Managers should discuss what flexible options are available for their team, how it could work, and if it can't, what else might be possible.