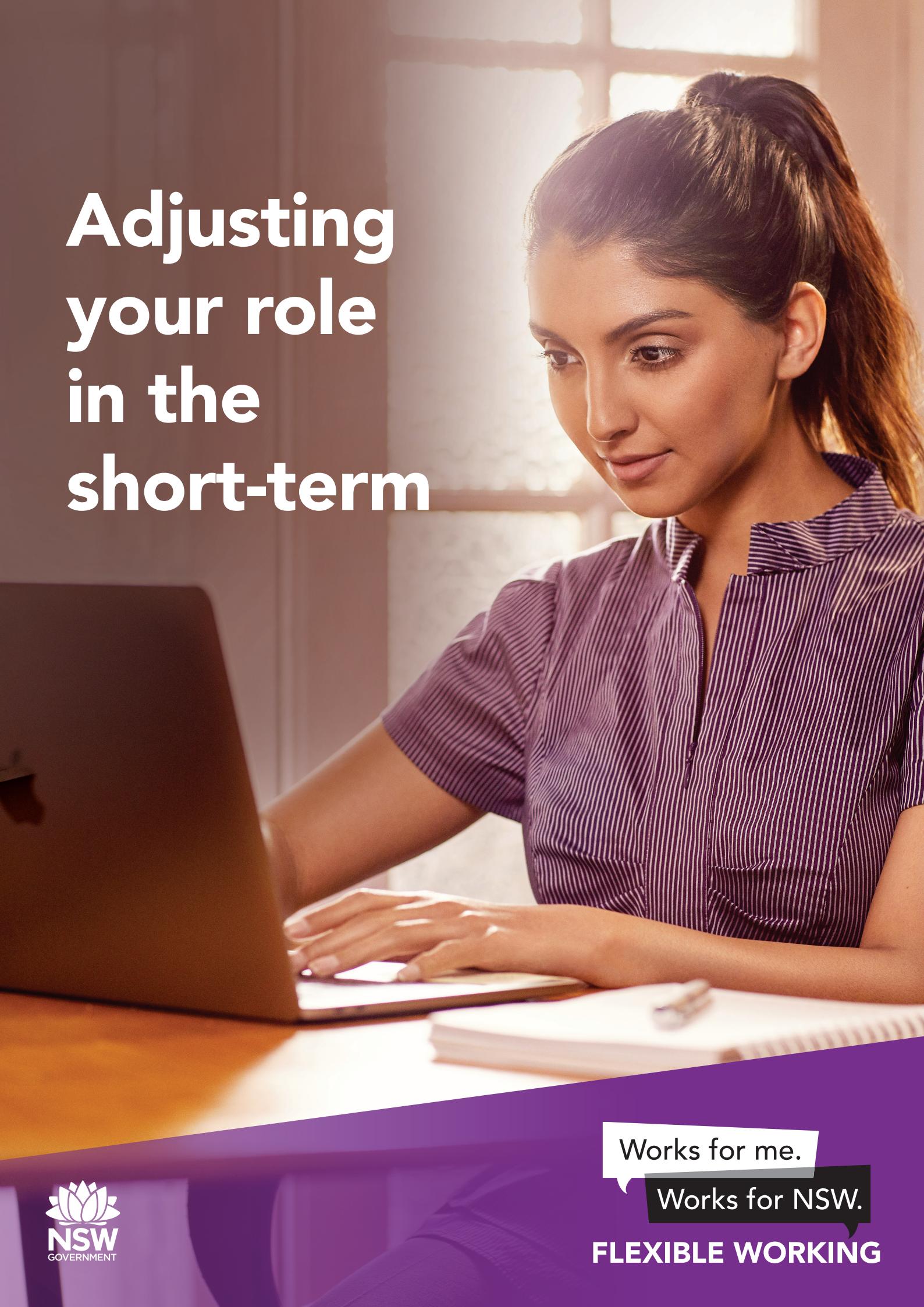


Adjusting your role in the short-term



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FLEXIBLE WORKING

Why we've provided this toolkit

With an increasing number of restrictions in place as a part of the national COVID-19 response, you may, for whatever reason, not be able to work full-time during this period. It could be the result of your caring commitments, it could be that your health requires a degree of isolation that means you can only work part-time, or any number of factors.

The purpose of this toolkit is to help you find an equilibrium between the outcomes that the team needs to achieve, and the work that you are able to effectively undertake during this time. While some team members will be able to continue with full time work, with or without varied start/finish times, others may need to switch to part time or job share in the short-term. The latter is the focus of this guidance. Refer to our '[Design your own flexibility trial toolkit](#)' for the other forms of flexible working that generally have a lower impact on a role's design.

Your role as an employee

This toolkit focuses on your actions needed to adjust your role to allow you to balance work and other responsibilities during this period. You and your leader both have an active role to play.

Your role is to:

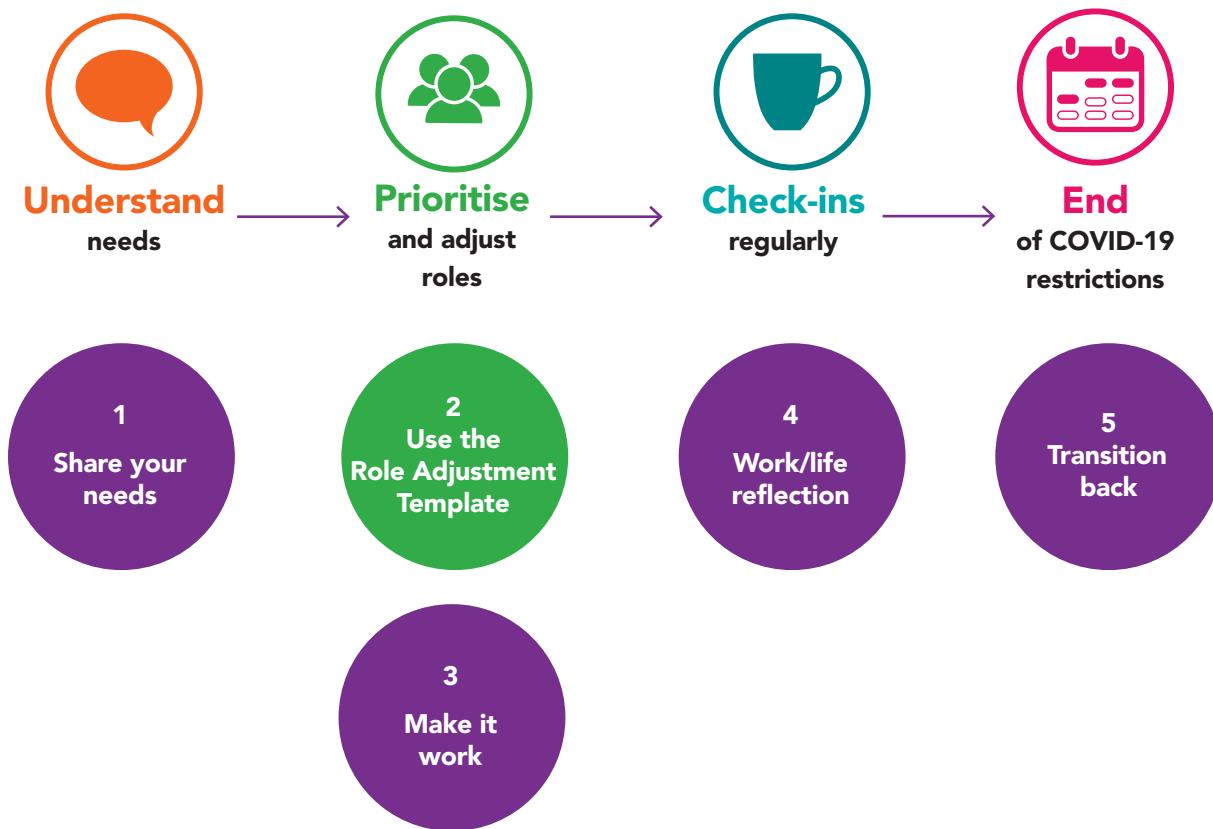
- Identify and communicate your needs and responsibilities outside of work during the COVID-19 restrictions
- Consider and flag the work implications of needing to adjust your hours of participation both at a team and individual level
- Help to identify different ways to plan and arrange your work to meet the team's needs and your individual needs
- Participate in team discussions about work priorities and resourcing
- Co-design role adjustment solutions with your leader that work for your individual circumstances and the team outcomes
- Collaborate with others to identify and address any customer/client implications of role adjustments

Your leader's role is to:

- Help team members clarify the work implications of needing to adjust their hours of participation both at a team and individual level
- Challenge their teams to identify different ways to plan and arrange the team's work, and question which work is a priority
- Co-design role adjustment solutions with team members that work for their individual circumstances and the team outcomes
- Work with the team to identify and address any customer/client implications of role adjustments

The role design process

The following process map demonstrates the resources available within this toolkit.



Resource types

Tip sheets provide a quick reference to practical and impactful actions that can be taken at critical moments.

The **Role Adjustment Template** requires you to enter data to determine which components of your role could be retained, re-distributed or paused over this period.

Tip sheet 1: Share your needs

Purpose

The policy and public health response to COVID-19 means that many of us will need to rethink the way we currently plan and arrange our work, whether it is because the work itself must be done differently, because of caring or isolation requirements for elders, housemates or children, or resulting from some other combination of factors. What that looks like in practice could be different for each person and each role. The purpose of this tip sheet is to get you started thinking about changes that may be required in your role.

Top tips

- **Those you live with:** First and foremost, consider what is best for your family and those who you live with. This is a disruptive time, so your physical and mental wellbeing, and the physical and mental wellbeing of your family and others that you live with, comes first. Call a household meeting to talk through the changes in an age appropriate way and continue the dialogue as the health advice evolves. Spend regular time talking through the options with your partner, close relative or trusted friend to help with the decision-making process.
- **Face your challenges:** The spread of COVID-19 has introduced a range of challenges and an increased range of responsibilities for many. Think about your evolving responsibilities, both inside and outside of work, and what it is that you need to juggle. These factors might include additional caring responsibilities, education support, health requirements or an increased level of remote working for tighter isolation measures. Consider what it might take to achieve a sense of equilibrium between your work/client outcomes, team outcomes and personal outcomes.
- **Financial implications:** Crunch the numbers. If your solution means a reduction in working hours, consider if you can access paid leave. If you can't, explore whether a reduction in hours is financially feasible during this time. When you are reworking your budget, factor in other expenses or income streams that have changed due to the economic impact of COVID-19.
- **Be realistic, not ambitious:** Your leader will have a conversation with you about your work preferences over this period. Consider the number of work hours that are possible, and if they can be structured differently or will need to be reduced. Is there another way to plan your work, or can you temporarily swap work with another (willing) colleague to make your role better adapted to remote working? This may be dependent on factors such as the age of your children, if you have a partner and if they are able to provide care during the day, or your health and other risk factors. Your leader will talk to you about your work options.
- **Be creative:** For those who can share the caring load, discuss ways that you might be able to split up the day and possibly work non-traditional hours such as before the children get up or after they are in bed. For example, you might be able to split the days so each carer gets a 'work shift' and a 'kids shift'. You might consider a 6am to 12pm shift and a 12.30pm to 6.30pm shift. Be mindful of your overall workload when exploring this option. Will your home workspace make it feasible? If caring for elders, will this 'home roster' support shopping or other care requirements?
- **Discuss with your leader:** *Tool 4: Role Adjustment Template* will help you to consider different options for adjusting your role during this period of restrictions. Discuss the outcomes of the role adjustment activity with your leader and keep an open mind. This discussion will be about finding an equilibrium between the work/client needs, the team outcomes and individual needs. Review the tool outputs, modify and agree on the temporary role adjustments.
- **Remain open:** Even though you will head into this period of restrictions with a solid plan, things change. This is not an experience that you have been through before so as you trial new work and caring rhythms, learn and adjust along the way. Keep the conversation going with your leader and discover what will be most effective for you, your outside commitments and your work.

Tip sheet 3: Make it work

Purpose

With restrictions now in effect, the juggle of work and caring responsibilities (whether for others or self) is more challenging than ever. For many, this will be the first time that they are working remotely or working from home while, for example, their children or elders are in the house. For some there will be multiple firsts. The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide teams with practical advice for navigating part time and/or remote working for the first time.

Top tips

PRODUCTIVITY

- Set up your office space: Whether you're in a sharehouse, an apartment or have your own office, set up a workspace that's as quiet and clutter-free as possible. Find a way to clearly demarcate your work area and consider noise-cancelling headphones. If possible, will the workspace allow you to 'close the door', literally and metaphorically, to mark the end of each work day? Familiarise yourself with your agency's home office set-up guidelines for health and safety.
- Get the tech sorted: If you're worried about your home tech set-up not being able to handle the work, or you're running into issues, let your manager know and enlist your ICT team's support as soon as possible for the things they can arrange. Make sure you're using your work laptop and if not, let your manager know. Have a Plan A, B and ideally C for the inevitable tech fails (e.g. if your internet struggles, can you tether to your phone in a pinch?)
- Look for new ways to communicate: When everyone is in the same location, communication can feel a lot easier. Luckily, with the development of technology, there are lots of ways to share information and have team discussions virtually. Think about how you can use Teams, Skype, email or phone. Ensure you understand what platform to use for what purpose, and be consistent. If your team has not discussed this to date, lead a conversation at your next team meeting, as it saves scrambling.

- Provide a solid handover: If a task needs to be progressed on your non-work day, be sure to provide a handover and clear instructions to the team mate responsible. Talk to your leader or others about who will be responsible for following it through or being the point of contact to help with business continuity. Where the task is critical, provide your teammate with a quick run down at the end of the day. This might be over email, Slack, Teams or a quick phone call. If it's not critical, come back to it when you're in the office again.
- Get one thing done at a time: Get used to being highly productive in short sprints of time. Be clear about the tasks that you need some peace and quiet for, and the tasks that you can do with a little distraction (like cleaning up your inbox or answering chats) and time your day accordingly.

HEALTH

- Stay on top of your health: The biggest risk of remote work isn't a lack of productivity but loneliness and mental health issues related to isolation. With the current social distancing, personal connection is more important than ever for our wellbeing. Make sure you have time in your calendar each day to connect with other team members. If you think you might be struggling, let your manager know and get in touch with your agency's EAP service. Consider how you will allow time for exercise each day.

Tip sheet 3: Make it work

- Create clear transitions: It's easy for the lines between home and work to become blurred. Be thoughtful about how you create these boundaries for yourself and find ways to mark the transition to and from work. To start the work day, consider strategies such as getting dressed for work, doing a short meditation or stretch or making a cup of tea at the time you normally would at work. To end the work day, go for a brief walk around the block, listen to a short podcast or do a set of yoga poses. Ask your team what they are doing and share your ideas.
- Be kind to yourself: Everyone is trying to find their way through this challenging time, both personally and professionally. Some days will be harder than others. Few will be experiencing the perfect work conditions, but your team is in this together.



BALANCING FAMILY AND WORK

- Have clear work and non-work times: Chat to your leader about any adjustments that you need to make to your work hours. Share your agreed work hours with your team and your stakeholders and update your calendar to show your availability. Don't forget to take breaks for meals, stretches and virtual interaction with your team as you would in the office.
- Throw the cards in the air: If you have a partner who is also working remote, part time hours, discover your new routine together. Try not to focus on who normally does what. Put everything on the table and challenge any traditional roles that your family falls into. If you have children learning at home by day, try to ensure that each of you get some child-free time during the day, whether it's going for a run or have a virtual catch up with a friend. A kid-free break even for just half an hour will help with your wellbeing.
- Embrace the mayhem: Team video calls with family 'video-bombing' in the background is the new normal. Don't feel pressured to display a perfect work environment. Everyone is doing the best they can, and showing authentic adaptability is the key.
- Get the kids sorted: If you do have older school aged children, work with them to create and agree to a schedule at the start of each day and that works for both your work schedule and the school schedule. Consider getting the kids out for a spot of exercise first thing or in the middle of the day before sitting down to do some school work. It will help with their (and your) focus.
- Earn some brownie points: Make dedicated time for being present with the children. This will give them a sense of normalcy and periods of your undivided attention. It will hopefully make it easier for the times when you need to be distracted with work.

Tip sheet 4: Work/life reflection

Purpose

As with any flexible work arrangement, regular reflection on how the arrangement is working for you, your family and the team is important. It is even more important in the context of COVID-19 and evolving restrictions. The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide guidance around how you can continually evaluate, learn and adjust your temporary work arrangements during this time.

Top tips

- Pause and evaluate: Spend some time thinking about what is working and what is not working with your adjusted role. Think about it through the lens of your family, your stakeholders, your team and, of course, yourself. Talk openly with your family, stakeholders and team to ask for their feedback.
- Iterate and adjust: Identify what further role adjustments will ease the challenges that you are facing. Consider options such as different work hours, a further work reduction or an exchange of tasks with another team member. Think creatively and talk to your leader about your ideas. Also look at any adjustments needed on the home front. This might include an exchange of responsibilities with your partner, a new household schedule, a different type of quality time with the children or a new reward system.
- Ask others: There will be many people who are in the same or similar situation to you. Invite them to share what is working well for them. Open up about your challenges and ask for advice. Consider setting up a virtual check-in time with a trusted peer, friend or extended family member.
- Mental wellbeing: Reflect on your mental health and how you are doing in this period of great uncertainty and tremendous pressure. Many will find themselves, or those close to them, experiencing great hardship. Use your agency's EAP service, your GP and other support services to access help that you may require. Speak with your leader about what further adjustments can be made from a work perspective.
- Share your learning: When you do stumble upon something that works well for your adjusted role and home schedule, be sure to share it with others. Use virtual catch ups, virtual team meetings and social media to spread your hot tips.



Tip sheet 5: Transition back

Purpose

When it is safe for restrictions to be lifted, you will go through a period of transitioning to "a new normal". The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide you with some practical tips for when this time comes.

Early advice

- For families: The lifting of school and childcare restrictions is another point of change and, for some, may be met with mixed emotions. For most parents it will see them spending significantly less time with their children. Think about the level of support that your children will need as they resettle into school and childcare, and adjust to their previous or changed routines.
- During this period where part-time, remote work has been commonplace, teams have discovered what is really possible in terms of flexibility. Leaders have been asked not to assume that all team members will necessarily want to transition back to their old work models. Spend time thinking about your preferred work arrangements going forward.
- If you do want adjusted hours on an ongoing basis, a more permanent redesign of your role will be needed. Leverage the practical resources available at your agency or the [PSC website](#) to support you to create a sustainable role design solution.
- Map out your "normal" school routine to remind yourself of your day-to-day logistics. Think about lunches, uniforms, drop offs, pick ups and extra curricular activities. Make a note of when activities are recommencing, and consider how your work schedule can evolve to accommodate this, provided it maintains an equilibrium between work, team and individual outcomes.

