

Short-term role adjustments in your team



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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 have people in your team who, for whatever reason, cannot work full-time during this period. It could be the result of their caring commitments, it could be that their health requires a degree of isolation that means they can only work part-time, or any number of factors.

The purpose of this toolkit is to support people leaders to think through how to best find an equilibrium between the outcomes the team needs to achieve, and the work their team members 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.

This toolkit provides a process to make short-term role adjustments to help your team effectively balance any increase in work and life responsibilities.

Your role as a leader

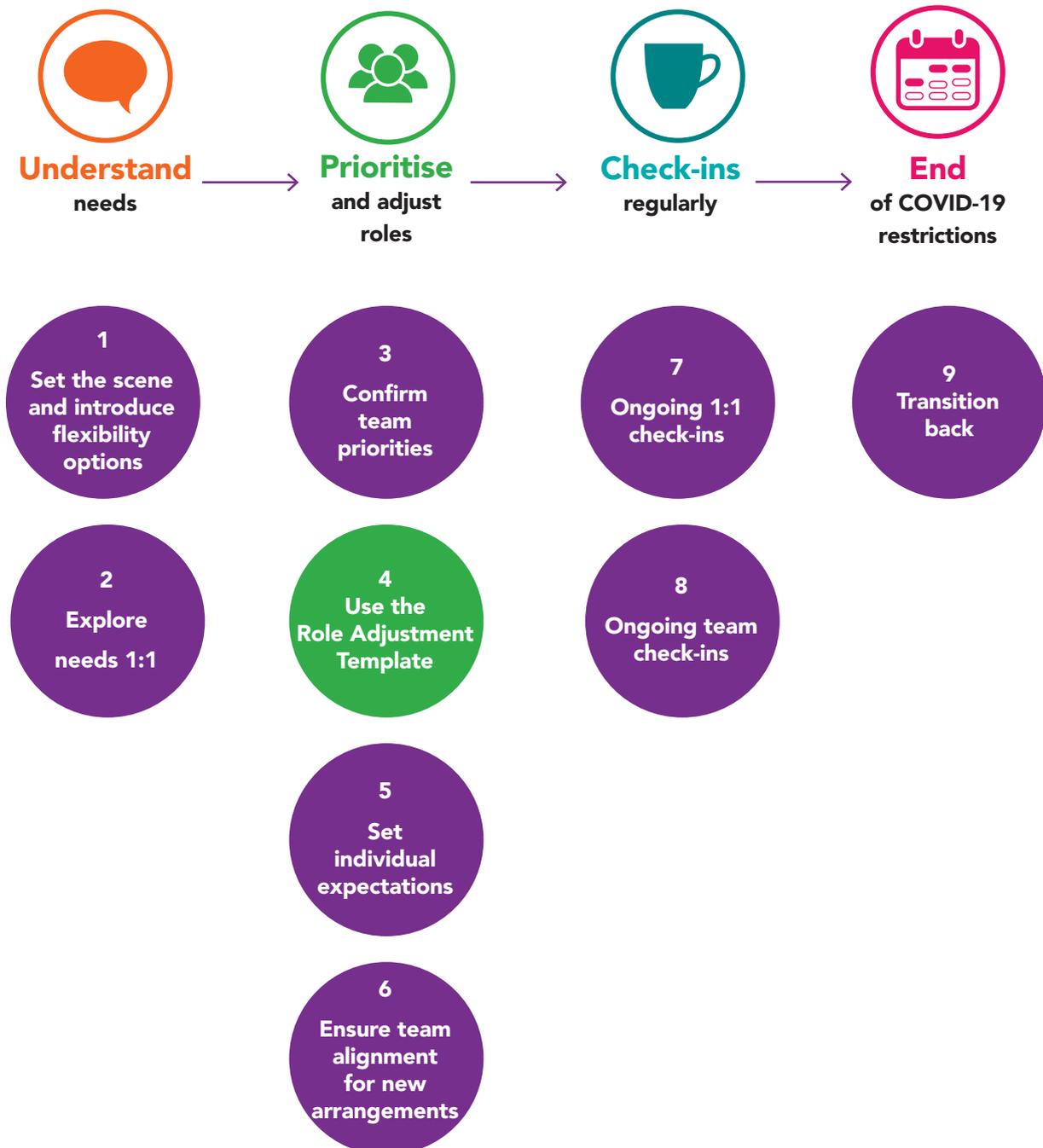
This toolkit focuses on your actions as a team leader in adjusting a role to help team members to balance their work and other responsibilities.

Your role here 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 yourself and your team 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 core leader activities and 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 employee to enter data and you to validate it to create role adjustment solutions for your team.

Please refer to the Employee Toolkit to support any planning you may need to undertake yourself.

Tip sheet 1: Set the scene and introduce flexibility options

Purpose

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees have been advised to:

- work at home as much as they can
- keep children home from school or childcare if they can
- self-isolate if they meet any defined risk factors, noting health implications may affect their ability to do all or part of their role (particularly if an element of it requires interaction with the public, but part can be done remotely)

Start by taking a team-based approach to responding to the adaptation required. Following is a 'Cheat Sheet' for this team discussion.

Key messages

- Key details of restrictions <insert internal messaging at the time, as these are evolving rapidly>
 - Recognition of the need for many people to balance employment and other responsibilities during this period (for example, caring for children, isolated elders or other needs)
 - You want to help the team through this challenging time to the best of your abilities
 - There are a few different options available for employees with caring commitments. They may:
 - Have a partner or another who can safely provide all care
 - Have a partner or another who can safely provide some care
 - Wish to take leave
 - Wish to work part time during this period and take paid leave on 'non-work' days
 - Wish to work part time during this period and take unpaid leave on 'non-work' days
 - Acknowledge your own feelings, concerns and worries and invite others to share their own
 - Encourage them to talk about the options with their family and others in their network who provide support over the next few days
 - Advise that you will set a time for a follow-up meeting to discuss individual needs and preferences with each team member privately
 - Lightly start a conversation around team priorities
- and how they have been impacted through COVID-19. Share the emerging needs and any known changes to project funding. A deeper team conversation will be had following 1:1 conversations about work preferences.
- Inform them that you have resources available to help the team make role adjustments as a team to enable part time work during this period
 - Remind team members of the EAP services, and explain how to access them at your agency.
 - Remind team members to consult the SafeWork website for ergonomic advice for home workplaces
 - Gently introduce the idea that the office remains open for anyone feeling unsafe to work at home, and referring to any office policies regarding family violence



Facilitation tips

Provide space

Give the team time to collectively process the impact of restrictions on the team

Don't problem solve

Listen to their thoughts, concerns and feelings and share the types of options that are available

Be authentic

Find a balance between sharing your feelings and dilemmas, and providing a sense of reassurance that there are many options available

Tip sheet 2: Explore needs 1:1

Purpose

After introducing the idea to the team, your next step is to set aside time with each team member to discuss how their capacity to work could be affected. This is best done privately, as people have differing levels of comfort over sharing their personal circumstances. For some it might be a short conversation as they have little to no impact other than reliable technology, but for others the advice to keep children home from schools or for their elders to self-isolate is a huge disruption in what is already a very uncertain and difficult time, and could alter their workload overall. For some, their work may have an enforced quieter period but for others, the nature of their role could mean it happens at a busy time workwise. The purpose of this conversation is to explore individual impacts, reinforce the available options and start to understand work preferences during this period.

Note this conversation does not preclude them from generally asking about flexible working at any time: see the [Managers' Conversation Guide](#) for this.

Key questions

1. Are any of the recent announcements around closures or advice on isolation likely to affect you or your family?
2. Do you have any ideas about what type of work arrangement would work best for you during this time?
3. If we go ahead with this work arrangement, what do you think could be the biggest challenge for you? For the team? For our unit's deliverables?
4. Is there anything you need from me over the next few days?



Conversation tips

Avoid assumptions

Try not to make assumptions about who is affected or how. Be mindful of any gender biases or assuming that those who are not parents are not affected in some way

Be prepared

Have the different options along with the employee's leave balances at your fingertips

Be confident

For those employees wishing to work part time during the closure period, explain the process that you will work through to make adjustments to their role

Be compassionate

This is not just difficult, but also new ground for everyone. COVID-19 could affect their health, mental wellbeing and financial security and potentially that of their family, friends and communities. Have the contact details for EAP on hand.

Tip sheet 3: Confirm team priorities

COVID-19 impacts have required all organisations to re-examine their priorities. Some teams may need to stop/pause activities, attempt them very differently or pursue new activities in response to the situation and rapidly changing community needs. Your team is no different. Your team's priorities need to be reviewed in light of the current situation. The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide a set of questions that you can use to facilitate a prioritisation session with your team and communicate any changes in direction. Please take some time to personally reflect on the priorities prior to the session.



Tip

Discuss your prioritisation ideas with your own leader to obtain feedback and endorsement before communicating the final set of priorities with your team members.



Key questions

1. Have the organisation's overall priorities shifted during this time?

Review the communications distributed throughout the business since the COVID-19 crisis commenced for information on the potential implications to your team's objectives.

2. Which priorities are no longer possible to achieve due to COVID-19?

It may be difficult (or perhaps even impossible!) to progress some of the objectives that were in your team's plan. For instance, if your team was responsible for commencing a non-deadline sensitive project needing input from frontline health professionals, you may need to postpone this activity.

3. What is the potential loss (e.g. reputational or financial) if this objective is postponed or stopped during this period?

Consider the level of risk that is appropriate. For example, it may not be introducing excessive risk to the organisation if your team doesn't manage to develop a modified customer application form by the end of the financial year. However, there will be risk of a penalty if customer enquiries are not answered in accordance with the Service Level Agreements.

4. Who will be affected if this objective is not delivered?

Is this objective related to customers or internal stakeholders? It may be necessary to negotiate what is done by when with internal stakeholders at this time.

5. What level of resources do you have available?

You will need to overlay the availability of your team when making these decisions. It is possible that you just won't have the resources to do everything if the situation restricts the availability of your team. Some may be choosing to take leave at this time, whereas others may be seeking a reduction in hours so they can balance their commitments.

Tip sheet 5: Set individual expectations

Purpose

Ask your employee to use the *Tool 4: Role Adjustment Template* to identify the key elements of their daily work, and ask them to set aside some time to discuss their results with you.

This meeting is where you can both get creative about the way the work is planned and arranged. For example, if they need to drop back to the equivalent of 3 days FTE (0.6), will the tasks prefer three full days, or spread across five? Is this feasible under your industrial arrangements? You may need to consult. You may also easily identify some tasks/projects that can be put to one side temporarily, or there may be urgent, ongoing work across their portfolio, which means you will need to look across the team for resourcing. Use the next tipsheet for a group discussion in that case. Alternately, you may be able to talk with your leader about temporary backfill, perhaps offering someone from another team an 'acting up' arrangement (as a vertical job share), or pausing work elsewhere in the team for a work share scenario shared across two or more peers. You may have another employee who would appreciate additional work or a stretch opportunity (it's important they volunteer for this). Above all, the solution chosen will need to be negotiated, and find an equilibrium between the needs of the business, the team and the individual.

Key questions

1. Discuss the outcomes of the Role Adjustment activity. Review, modify and agree on the temporary role adjustments.
2. If you need to go part-time, then what are their ideas on how to handle the total current workload? Can some projects/tasks be easily paused, resourced elsewhere in the team (or division) or is an additional external source of assistance needed? Who does this need to be discussed with?
3. What could be the feedback from your stakeholders or colleagues? Could they have any misgivings we should surface and address?
4. What other steps need to be taken (HR, IT) to ensure this arrangement can be put in place?
5. If we're adjusting priorities (where relevant) and deliverables, who do we need to discuss this with? Are you now clear on what will be the likely scope of your role?
6. What would warrant contacting you on a non-work day? How would you prefer to be contacted?
7. Do you have any questions or concerns that we haven't fully addressed?

What you need from me

E.g. I will need as much notice as possible if I have to (occasionally) move my days around for meetings.

What I need from you

E.g. As there are people working across different days I will need a little flexibility from you to help me find times that we can all meet via.....(Skype, phone, or Teams).



Conversation tips

Document outcome

This is your chance to provide your input into the *Tool 4: Role Adjustment Template* and document the agreement

Next steps

Assure the team member that you will regularly check-in to see how the arrangement is working and together you will make further adjustments as needed.

Team processes

Think about the team processes, operating rhythms and ways of working that may need to adjust to support the flexible work arrangement.

Tip sheet 6: Ensure team alignment for new arrangements

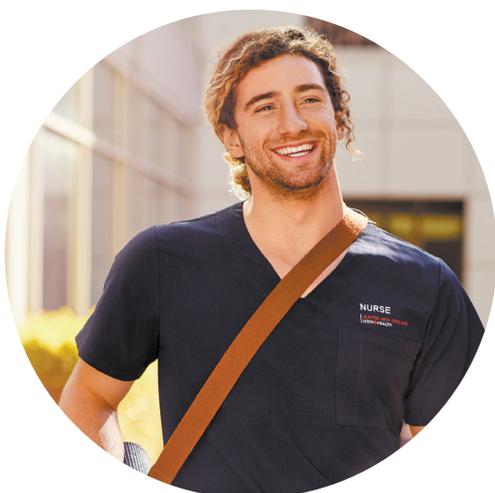
Purpose

If roles have been adjusted for the short-term, it is important the whole team understands how these changes may affect the team's work. This tip sheet explains how to structure this type of discussion with your team. It is suggested that this session is run as soon as any changes arising from individual conversations have been confirmed.

Use this tip sheet in conjunction with Tip sheet 5, and explore any misgivings or operational risks arising from suggested new plans - and any mitigations needed.

Key messages

- There are a number of roles that have been adjusted due to new restrictions, which will affect the way some of us work. Explain how each role has been adjusted and what each person will be focused on.
- Share any adjustments that have been made to the team's priorities.
- Encourage any questions and explore misgivings.
- For example, with some more people working in a part-time, we will need to adjust some of our team practices and some work responsibilities.
- I would like us to consider a few elements:
 - What meeting rhythms work best for the team?
 - What outcomes do we want to get out of each meeting?
 - What are our shared expectations around contact on non-working days?
 - What channels will we use to communicate and share information?
 - How often should we check in on how our flexible arrangements are working as a team?



Facilitation tips

Give a heads up

Make sure that those who are moving to temporary part-time, work share or job share are prepared to share and participate in this conversation.

Keep it constructive

If the conversation is going off track, refocus the team on the elements within their control. For example, the effectiveness of their meetings is something that they have control over.

Tip sheet 7: Ongoing 1:1 check-ins

Purpose

As with any flexible work arrangement, it is important to regularly check in and see how the arrangement is working for the team member, for you and for the team. The purpose of this tip sheet is to help you to assess how the arrangement is working and identify any adjustments that need to be made. This tip sheet should be used in your 1:1 meetings with team members who are working part time during the period of restrictions. This is a useful conversation for anyone working flexibly (not just part time).

Key questions

1. How do you feel like your reduced hours and adjusted role are working?

Leader feedback

Consider any feedback that has been received from stakeholders or team members?

Team member feedback

Consider any feedback that has been received from stakeholders or team members?

2. Are you clear on what needs to be delivered, the tasks or milestones along the way, and the standard to which it needs to be done? Are the outcomes we want to achieve by doing this clear? And does this all feel reasonable given your work hours or arrangements?
3. Is there anything you need from me or the team?
4. Are there any further adjustments that you think we should make?
5. Do you have any questions or concerns that we haven't fully addressed?



Conversation tips

Be clear

Tell the team member in advance that the purpose of the meeting is to check-in and discuss how the temporary flexible working arrangement is working.

Gather feedback

Where relevant, gather feedback from key stakeholders on how the team's flexible working arrangements and role adjustments are working and identify any unintended impacts.

Broaden your thinking

During this time, the blurring between work and home will be greater than ever before. Provide space for the team member to explore how their flexible arrangement is affecting both their work and home life.

Make yourself available

In addition to the formal check-in conversations, ensure that the team member knows that they can approach you at any time to make further adjustments.

Tip sheet 8: Ongoing team check-ins

Purpose

In addition to checking in with each team member on a one-on-one basis, a collective discussion with the team will also help to explore how your new way of working is going, and generate ideas for continuous improvement. This tip sheet will help you to structure that discussion. We suggest you run this session two weeks after new arrangements have been implemented and repeated as needed.

Key messages

- We are all learning during this unprecedented level of uncertainty and disruption to our work and personal lives.
- We need to continue to check in with each other to not only see how our new arrangements are going but also to see how we are going as people.
- Share your reflections since shifting to new ways of working.
- Invite your team to share how they are feeling and their learning since restrictions have been put in place. Ensure you invite discussion from the quieter team mates as well.
- Invite team members to share their experiences in a work context:
 - What is working?
 - What is not working?
 - What are your biggest challenges?
 - Are any adjustments needed?
 - What are some bold ideas that we can throw out there?
- You want to help the team through this challenging time to the best of your abilities and will continue to have these types of discussion both individually and as a team.
- Remind team members of the EAP services that are available, and to talk with you privately if they have any concerns about their arrangements (for example, if their home is not an ideal workplace).



Facilitation tips

Set the tone

Be authentic and share the ways of working or role components that you are finding challenging during restrictions e.g. juggling family commitments.

Take offline

If the conversation is moving into an area that is too challenging, less relevant or perhaps in too much detail for the team, invite the team member to pick the topic up with you offline and follow up with them immediately to do so.

Refocus effort

Recognise those challenges that are beyond the team's control or influence but steer the conversation and energy towards challenges that the team can control.

Tip sheet 9: Transition back

Purpose

When it is safe for schools and childcare centres to reopen or people to return to workplaces and typical interactions, employees will go through a period of transitioning to “a new normal”. The purpose of this tip sheet is to support managers in providing some practical advice to support their teams through this period of change.

Key messages

- Recognise that things such as school and childcare services resuming is another point of change and for some may be a difficult transition.
- An ideal transition period may look a little different for each team member.
- I'd invite us all to challenge any assumptions about what a 'new normal' should look like, and instead set aside time to reflect on what we (as people, and as a team) should stop, start or continue.
- Time will be set up with each team member to discuss their interest in continuing any flexible and part-time work arrangements.
- This period may have contributed many creative solutions to problems that are worth retaining.
- Where team members do want to remain as part time on an ongoing basis, a more permanent role re-design will be needed. Leverage the practical resources on the [PSC Flexible Working website](#) to use the role redesign tools for leaders.
- Your leadership team peers will discuss the next steps and what that means in your context for a consistent approach to any transition arrangements.
- Reflect on what you have learnt as a leader during this period:

Flexibility: How have the work arrangements and flexible ways of working redefined what is possible for your team?

Wellbeing: What have you learnt about your role in providing an environment that prioritises mental and physical safety and wellbeing?

Authenticity: How has the recent blurring of family and work responsibilities impacted how you show up as a leader?

Change: What have you experienced that will change the way that you lead through periods of uncertainty and change in the future?

- Afford yourself the same encouragement that you are giving your team, and think about whether a continuation of your own part-time or flexible work arrangement is something that interests you.