

**1.0 AIM / PURPOSE**

LauraLynn acknowledges that staff are happier, more productive and effective when they have a better work / life balance. With this in mind LauraLynn will endeavour to support staff, where possible, with this balancing act. This includes offering eligible staff flexible working arrangements. It is recognised that all staff have unique personal circumstances. This being the case the range of working options have been made available and where all staff should be able to benefit from, for example those with caring responsibilities, with a disability, older colleagues, those with long commutes, parents etc. Flexible ways of working also provide the opportunity for families to spend more time together.

The following policy sets out the principles and terms & conditions underpinning the LauraLynn flexible working policy. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies e.g., Hybrid Working policy.

**2.0 SCOPE**

This policy applies to all permanent and temporary staff. However, not all flexible working arrangements will be appropriate for all roles.

The options available will depend on the nature of their work, the needs of the team/department and the overall service. It should be noted that agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another staff member to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

Efforts will be made to support staff wishing to engage in flexible working practices. However, it should be noted that LauraLynn reserves the right to decline, modify or withdraw any flexible working arrangements depending on service needs, performance or behavioural issues and/or other issues that may arise. Flexible working arrangements may be requested by staff members. Alternatively, arrangement may be initiated by the Head of Department if, for example there was insufficient office space.

**3.0 ROLE / TEAM / DEPARTMENT / SERVICE NEEDS**

All applications for flexible working will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to certain overriding factors. Efforts will be made to support staff and their personal circumstances whilst ensuring the service provided is not adversely affected. In evaluating whether a role is suitable for flexible working the role itself and the needs of the team, department and service will take priority. This being the case not all requests will automatically be approved.

Flexible working arrangements may be amended at any stage in the future. Should issues arise it may be necessary to terminate the arrangements and revert to previous or alternative working practices. Staff affected by such a decision will be notified as early as possible in advance of any changes taking place.

**4.0 ELIGIBILITY**

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Access to all flexible working is not an automatic entitlement. Whilst all applications for flexible working will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in line with the criteria set out in this policy, it should be noted that certain roles do not lend themselves to particular types of flexible working. A staff member is eligible to submit a flexible working request if they satisfy the criteria outlined below:

- **Service / Probation:** The six months' probation period forms part of the recruitment process. It allows managers time to assess the performance of the new team member. It also provides an opportunity for the new staff member to settle into their new role. With this in mind both temporary or permanent staff in particular roles may be permitted by their manager to engage in flexible working, if feasible, during their probationary period on an informal / ad hoc basis only and assuming it is conducive to the role and is in line with this policy.

Once the staff member has accumulated 6 months service (12 months service required for career breaks) and has successfully completed their probationary period he/she may submit a formal application for flexible working.

- **Performance, Behaviour, Time & Attendance:** Staff with poor performance, behaviour issues including poor time keeping and attendance, must reach a sustained satisfactory level of improvement for a continuous period of three months before his/her application for flexible working will be considered. In addition, it may also be necessary to suspend any existing hybrid working arrangements to allow for closer monitoring of the member of staff during this three-month period.
- **Disciplinary:** Any member of staff with a live disciplinary sanction will not have their application considered/approved until the disciplinary sanction has expired. Where this arises, the manager may decide to suspend any existing flexible working arrangements to allow for closer monitoring of the member of staff.

Managers seeking advice on the working arrangements that could suit particular circumstances or who would like advice on evaluating the appropriateness of a flexible working request, should contact a member of the HR team. Managers might wish to consider making options available that are not included in this policy and if that is the case, these should be discussed with a member of the HR team before pursuing further, to identify possible implications with the proposed arrangement, for either the staff member or for the team / department / service.

**5.0 CRITERIA FOR DEALING WITH A REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

When considering requests for flexible working LauraLynn consider a number of factors including, but not limited to the following:

- The potential benefits of flexible working which may include improved performance, efficiency, morale and commitment, improved retention.

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- The new arrangements must be feasible and have no adverse impact on the role, colleagues, the department or the service overall.
- The impact and effect of the proposed arrangement on the role, other staff and the overall service
- The costs associated with the proposed arrangement
- If a proposal will affect an individual's pay or pension, they should be advised to consult with the Salaries Officer or a member of the HR team.
- Eligibility requirements (see section 4)
- The skillset and ability of the individual
- The level of supervision required (e.g. for hybrid working)
- Existing flexible working arrangements
- Availability of staff to cover

On the basis that there are no adverse implications, requests for flexible working should be considered and if possible, supported. When moving to a new or more flexible working arrangement, the staff member and manager should be aware of the need to monitor performance levels to ensure that they are effectively maintained.

**6.0 FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS**

**6.1 Compressed hours** - This arrangement means that staff would work longer hours on some days in order to work shorter hours (or not at all) on another day over the course of a week or a month. For example, a full-time nurse on a 37.5 hours per week contract might work longer shifts when on duty but would work less number of days by the end of the week or month. Or a staff member on a 35 hour per week contract may work these hours over 4 days instead of 5.

While compressed hours offers flexibility there may be times where the post holder is required to be available to respond to queries from others or attend meetings. Due to the nature of this option compressed hours are not feasible for every role. It is important to ensure that approving a request for compressed hours does not inconvenience a larger number of other staff who are required to interact with the post holder in order to do their job or who will have to cover for them in their absence.

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Approval to work compressed hours is on condition that the staff member is available to work outside the agreed pattern, if and when required. In such instances time off in lieu will be offered. As much notice as possible must be given in such circumstances.

**6.2 Hybrid Working** – (also known as blended working) – is a combination of working part of the week on site and part off site (remotely), normally from home. All LauraLynn offices, in Dublin and elsewhere around the country, will continue to be the primary workplace for all staff. Staff engaged in hybrid working may be required to attend on site at certain times.

NB: For further information on hybrid working please see the Hybrid / Remote Working Policy (No.3.34).

**6.3 Part-Time Working** - this option allows members of staff to reduce their working hours and so provide more time to focus on personal matters. Staff should seek information regarding the impact on salary, pension and other benefits when deciding to follow this option. Careful consideration must be given to ensuring the needs of the role, team/department and overall service are covered when considering a reduction in hours. Decisions will have to be made on whether the remainder of the post needs to be filled. Where this is the case, any agreement for part-time working may be contingent on the department being able to recruit to cover the remainder of the hours. Part-time staff are entitled to the same rates of pay and holidays (pro rata) as their full-time colleagues doing the same role. Likewise, all entitlements will be on a pro rata basis.

If a staff member wishes to return to working full time, he / she should discuss this request with their manager in the first instance. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the remaining hours of the full-time post had been backfilled previously then it may not be possible to facilitate a staff member’s request to return to a full-time contract. The head of department must discuss any requests with the Head of HR before a final discussion is made.

Part time working may be attractive to staff approaching retirement or staff with family / other personal commitments.

**6.4 Self Rostering / Shift Working** - Shift working in areas where 24-hour cover is needed (e.g., nursing and care assistants). Where shift working is in operation, a formal structure within which staff can swap occasional shifts with colleagues can enable staff to address individual domestic commitments. In addition, staff in these roles may avail of self-rostering where the individual selects the shifts they would like to work. Self-rostering can be of great assistance when juggling work and personal commitments.

**6.5 Open Working** – this option provides the staff member with the autonomy to decide their own start and end time each day, assuming their role is conducive to this type of working and on the basis that the needs of the team/department continue to be met. Open working may be approved on condition that the staff member ensures they are available to attend certain meetings (e.g., team meetings) or other events their manager requests their attendance at. The manager may set parameters around working particular core hours (e.g., 11:00am – 3:00pm) each day.

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This type of flexible working lends itself more to particular roles (e.g., certain admin posts). With open working the staff member must ensure he/she works their weekly contracted hours by the end of each week. The staff member must also notify their manager, by Friday each week their intended start and finish times for the following week.

This option may appeal to staff who may, on occasion, need time off at certain times of the day for personal reasons.

**6.6 Greater Selection of Shift Times / Staggered Hours** – This option contains a variety of set shift start and end times that the staff member may choose from. These could range from a short shift to a long shift (e.g., in nursing areas). The staff member may work a combination of shifts on condition that he/she works their overall contracted hours. Similarly, arrangements may be put in place whereby a team may agree staggered hours where each member would have separate start and finish times. Such arrangements facilitate an extension to the “opening hours” of a department. It may also benefit individual staff members who may wish to travel outside of rush hour and work to a fixed routine around which they can plan their leisure time.

**6.7 Shorter Working Year** – The staff member would work for 10 months and take the remaining two months as leave. His / her 10-month salary would be spread evenly over the full 12-month period. Whilst consideration will be given to applications for shorter working year it should be noted that approval may be conditional that suitable cover arrangements are in place to ensure there is no adverse impact on the role, team, department or the service overall. Any member of staff wishing to apply for this option should discuss the pay, pension and other factors affected with the Salaries Officer and a member of the HR team. Shorter working year may appeal to staff who wish to take a block of time off at a particular time of the year.

**6.8 Unpaid Leave of Absence** – LauraLynn accepts that staff may wish to take a period of unpaid leave to focus on other, non-work related issues. Where such a situation arises consideration will be given to an application for unpaid leave of absence of up to 12 months. Members of staff wishing to apply for unpaid leave of absence should discuss their request with their manager in the first instance. In considering all applications the needs of the role, the timing of the leave, cover arrangements etc will be factored in.

**6.9 Career Breaks** – A career break is a period of unpaid leave lasting for a minimum of one year up to a maximum of five years. A permanent staff member who has successfully completed one year’s service with LauraLynn may apply for a career break. Career breaks may only be used for one of the following reasons:

- To travel abroad
- To engage in further education
- For domestic reasons (e.g., to care for a sick relative)

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The granting of a career break is at the discretion of the management in LauraLynn. An application may be refused where it is considered that the granting of a career break would have an adverse effect on service.

Each career break application will be considered on a case-by-case basis and a decision on whether to approve or not would depend on the ability to recruit someone with sufficient skills and experience to cover the post on a temporary basis. In addition, consideration will be given to the requirements of the role, the timing of the leave, potential impact.

A career break may be attractive to a member of staff who may wish to take an extended period away from their role whilst being reassured knowing that they can return to work in LauraLynn at the end of the career break. For further information on career breaks please see the Carrer Break policy.

**7.0 APPLICATION PROCESS**

Staff wishing to apply for flexible working should discuss their request with their manager / head of department in the first instance. If, following the discussion, the staff member wishes to proceed further then he / she should submit a formal written request to their manager.

On receipt of the written request the manager will arrange to meet the staff member to discuss their application in greater details. This meeting will provide the manager and the staff member the opportunity to discuss the desired work pattern in depth and consider how it might be accommodated within the team/department. In considering flexible working hours, managers should bear in mind that staff working for a continuous period of 6 hours must take a minimum of a 30-minute break in that period. Staff may only make one application for flexible working in any 12-month period.

LauraLynn reserves the right to refuse, modify or withdraw at any point in time flexible working arrangements depending on service needs and any other relevant factors. The manager will inform the staff member in writing the decision of their application.

**8.0 SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS**

Where a flexible working application is approved a start date will be agreed. For some flexible working arrangements an initial trial or review period will be factored in. During, or at the end of the review period, an evaluation will be undertaken to determine whether or not the arrangements are running smoothly or requires any changes. The review, where it applies, will be carried out no later than 3 months from the start date of the flexible working arrangements. The manager will undertake this exercise in consultation with the post holder. LauraLynn reserves the right, during or at the end of the review/trial period to require the staff member to revert to their previous working arrangements.

Following the review approved flexible working arrangements should be continuously monitored, where necessary, to ensure they meet the needs of the role / team / department / organisation and the staff member.

Thereafter the manager and staff member should formally review arrangements on an annual basis (e.g., as

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part of the PAR process). At any stage it may be necessary to cancel or amend flexible working arrangements.

By engaging in hybrid working the staff member is agreeing and accepting of all terms and conditions as set out in this policy and other relevant policies (e.g., Hybrid Working policy).

**9.0 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS**

Should an application for flexible working not be approved the staff member may seek to have an informal discussion with their manager in the first instance to establish the reasons for the decision. Reasons whereby a request may be refused include:

- The burden of extra costs and budget implications.
- Impact on other staff within the team or department.
- Impact on the ability to meet the needs of the role, department or service.
- The department will not be able to recruit a temporary replacement.
- Impact on quality of service / work provided.
- Other appropriate reason.

The manager should inform their staff member of their decision in writing and include the reasons for not approving the application. The matter may conclude at that stage. However, if the staff member wishes to pursue it further then he/she may request a formal review of the decision-making process.

Such requests should be submitted in writing to the Head of Human Resources (HR) within 14 days of the decision to decline the application and should state the grounds they are seeking a review of the decision.

The Head of HR and/or another member of the Executive Management Team appointed by the Head of HR will assess the application process including relevant documentation. The review will be carried out within 14 days from the date the review was lodged with the Head of HR. The outcome of the review process will be communicated to the staff member in writing. The decision following the formal review is final.

The above process will also be applied in cases where a flexible working arrangement is terminated after the initial trial period or for any other reason.

**10.0 TERMINATION**

Approved flexible working should not be seen as an automatic permanent arrangement. In some circumstances it may be necessary to cease the practice altogether – for example if the needs of the role, team or service changes over time. The reasons behind any such decisions and an end date will be conveyed to the staff member by their manager. Staff affected by such a decision will be notified as early as possible in advance of any changes taking place.

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Where a staff member wishes to terminate their flexible working arrangements, he/she should discuss the matter with their manager. If, after the discussion, the staff member wishes to proceed with the termination then he / she should request same in writing to their manager. It may be necessary to have a lead in period (e.g., a month) before flexible working is terminated. This is to allow for suitable alternative arrangements to be made.

Should there be issues about the performance or behaviour, including timekeeping and attendance, relating to a member of staff already engaged in flexible working, the manager will discuss these with their team member and monitor the situation closely. In certain instances, it may be necessary to suspend / terminate the arrangements to allow time to review, support and monitor the staff member to improve to the required level on a continuous basis (e.g., 3 months). Once achieved the flexible working arrangement may be reinstated.

A member of staff engaged in a disciplinary process or with a live disciplinary sanction and who is engaged in flexible working arrangements may, in certain circumstances, have these arrangements suspended for the duration of the disciplinary process / sanction.

**11.0 ABUSE**

Any member of staff found to be abusing this policy will have their flexible working arrangements terminated and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

**12.0 OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

The Flexible Working Policy should be read in conjunction with the following other policies including: - Hybrid Working Policy, Use of IT, Internet/Data and Email Policy, Mobile Devices Policy, GDPR Policy Lone Worker Policy and the Health & Safety Statement. All policies can be accessed from on the shared drive as follows; (Group – Public Folder – Staff Resources Folder – Policies, Procedures, Protocols & Guidelines). Alternatively, please contact your manager or any members of the Quality, Risk and Safety team or HR team.

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