



Flex Evelina

Flexible working putting patients first

Evelina London

Building a Business Case for Return on Investment

NHS
Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

Who Am I?



People & Culture Director
20+ years in people, culture & organisational change

CIPD FELLOW
Chartered HR professional

HR30 LIST 2026
Recognised among leading HR voices

HSJ TOP 50
Influential leader in healthcare

HR COMMENTATOR
Regular voice across HR & NHS press

Why this conversation, why me?

Flexibility is easy to launch. Culture is harder to change.

I'm here to share what happened when we treated flexible working as a cultural intervention — not simply an HR policy.

PEOPLE

Listen to what people actually need

Staff voice • trust • choice

CULTURE

Change how leaders and team's work

Manager behaviour • accountability

VALUE

Show whether the change delivered

Experience • retention • performance

THE BIG QUESTION: What was the return on changing the way people work?

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Introduction & The Strategic Case for Change



- **Flexible working is an important part of attracting, recruiting and retaining staff**, particularly in the NHS where organisations need to balance workforce needs with the delivery of safe, high-quality patient care.
- Flexibility can be designed into jobs, teams and services in different ways, depending on organisational and operational needs.
- However, access to flexible working is **not always experienced equally**. Individual circumstances, role requirements, team cultures and manager confidence can all influence whether flexibility is requested, discussed and agreed.
- Research and organisational workforce data increasingly highlight the relationship between **flexibility, staff experience, engagement, retention and inclusion**.
- This means flexible working is a question of **leadership, culture, job design, fairness and workforce planning,** and ultimately **strengthens employee experience** and **builds organisational resilience.**
- **The NHS is changing –** the **'Fit for the Future: 10 year health plan'** focuses on three main shifts in the way the NHS operates in the future:

Hospital → Community | Analogue → Digital | Sickness → Prevention

Each shift will require a workforce that can work differently, making flexibility an enabler of organisational transformation, not an employee perk.

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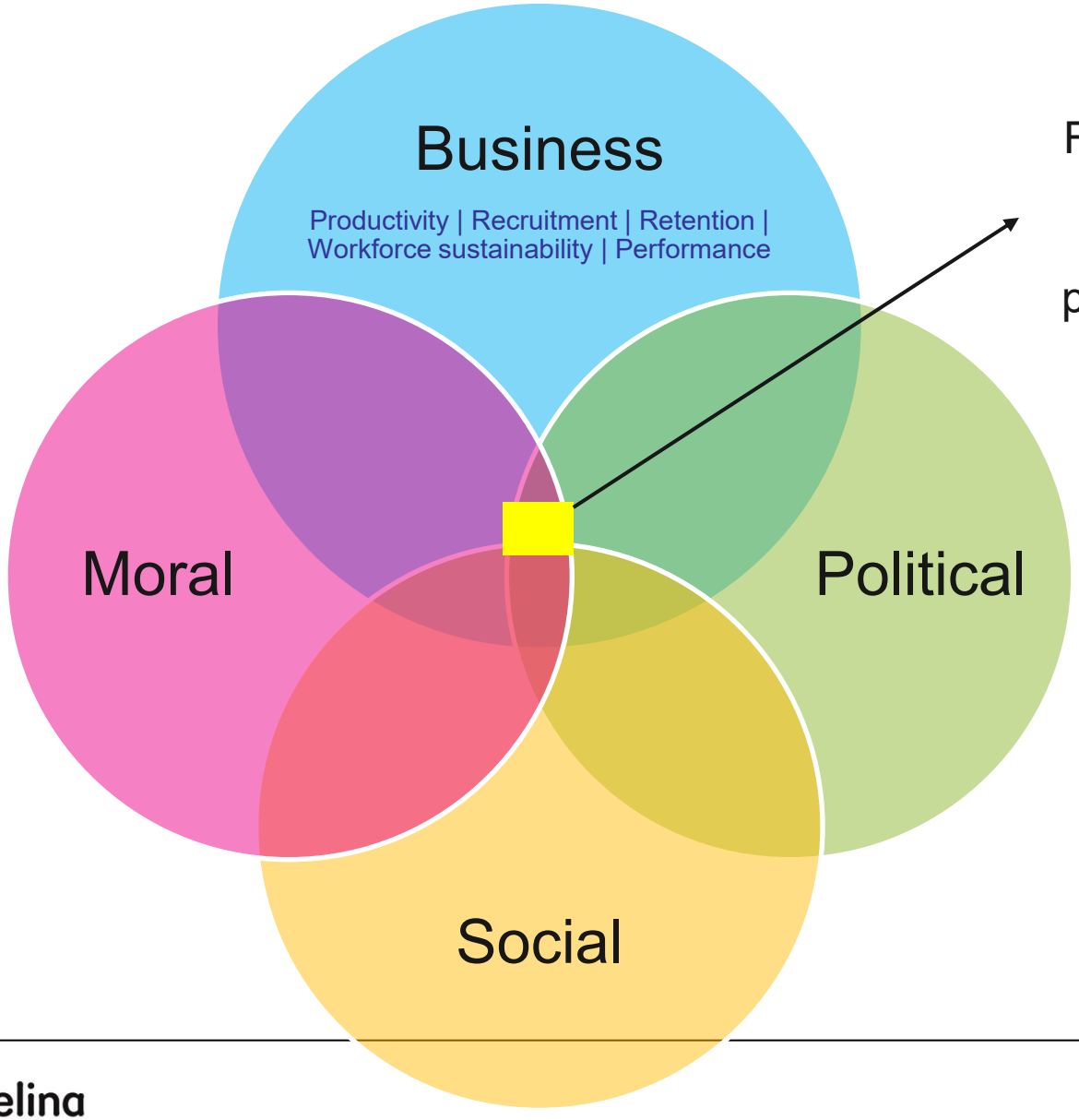
Why Flexibility Matters



Flexibility is where multiple organisational priorities converge

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Compassionate Leadership

Professor Michael West's work on **compassionate leadership** demonstrates that **high-performing organisations** create cultures built on **Attending, Understanding, Empathising and Helping**.

Leaders can show their compassionate leadership through many mediums, including flexible working.

Trust is the **currency of true compassionate leaders**. It is built when people **believe their voice matters**, **leaders genuinely listen**, **decisions are transparent**, **managers are consistent** and that their **feedback leads to change**.

For Evelina London, flexibility became one practical way of translating these leadership principles into the **everyday employee experience,** supported heavily by our Executive Teams.



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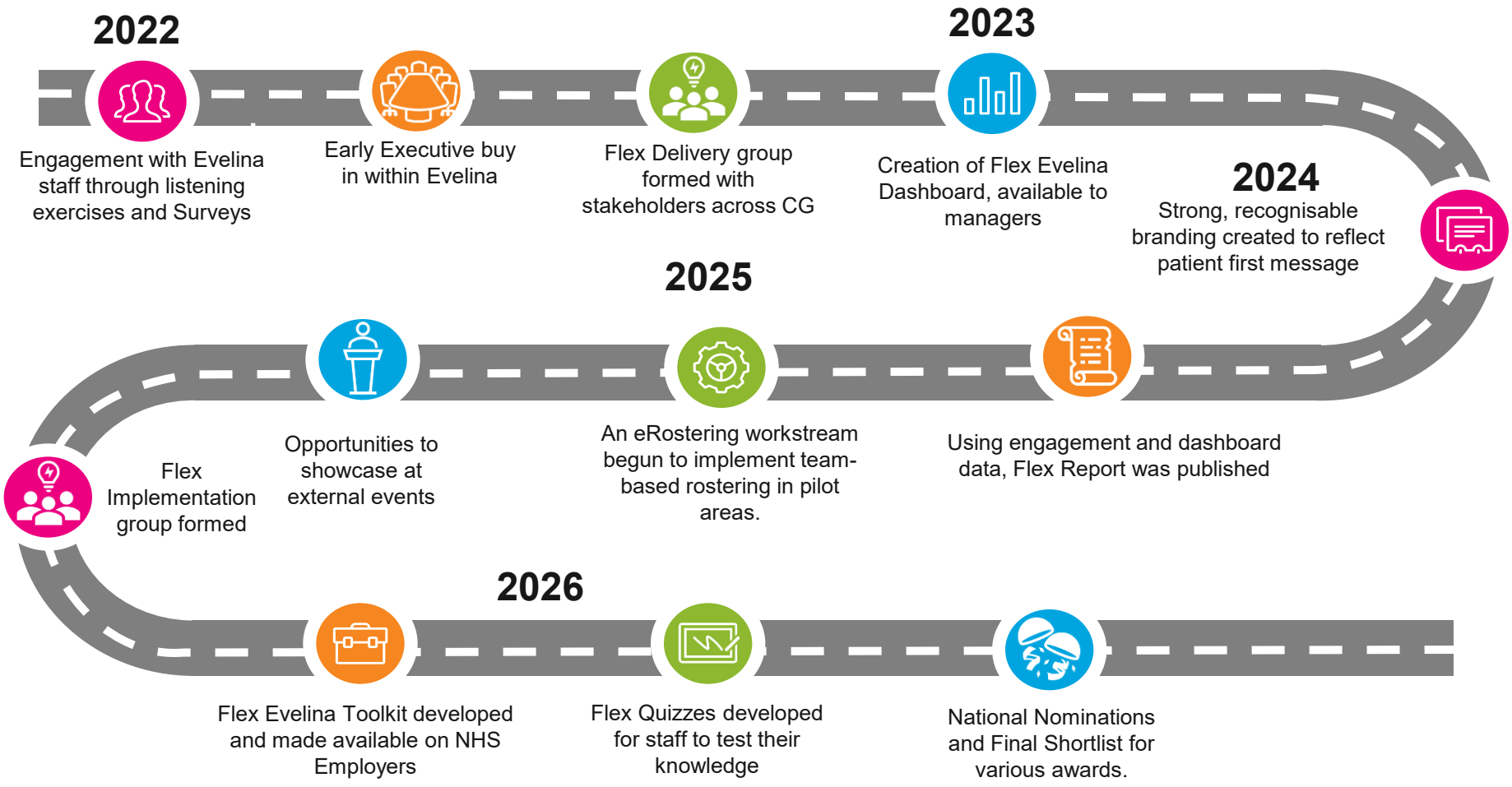
The Flex Evelina Journey (So Far)



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Designing Flexibility Into Services

Flex Evelinas focus is shifting beyond policy into workforce design, in line with the recommendations of the Flex Evelina report. Working alongside our services, we are:

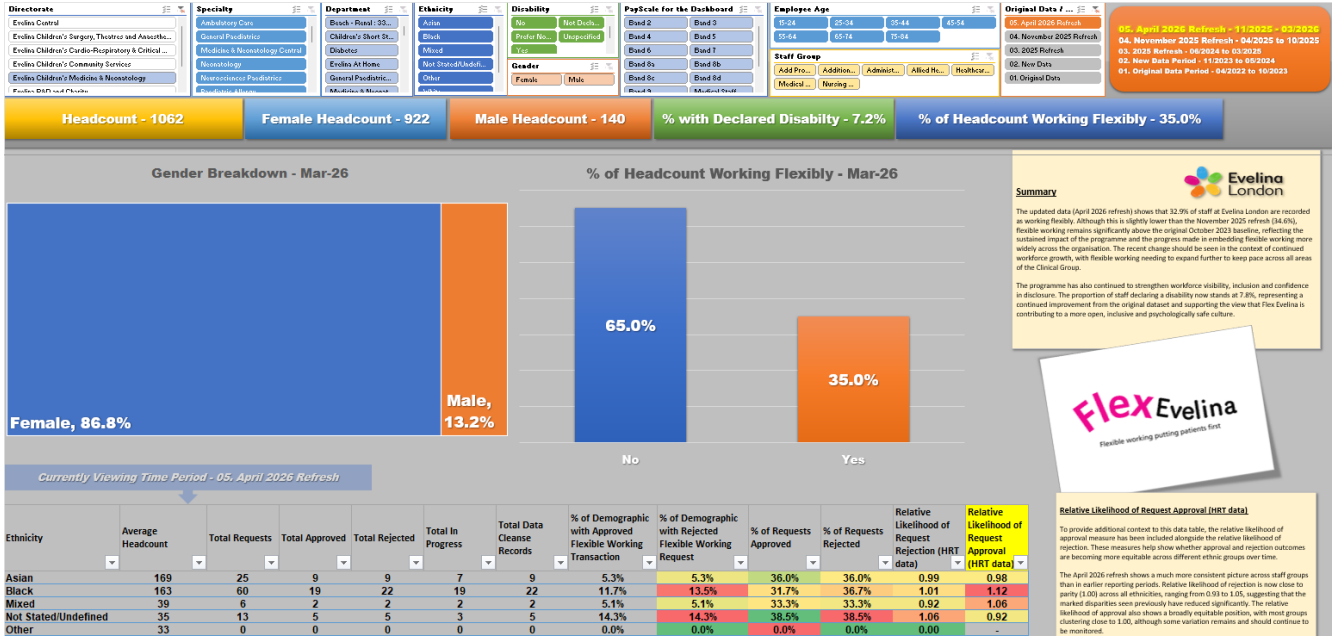
- Reviewing roster design
- Building flexibility intentionally into services
- Supporting team rostering by introducing self-rostering where appropriate
- Agreeing clear service parameters while giving colleagues greater choice

By creating a purpose-built Flexible Working Dashboard (below), services can proactively assess how flexible working is accessed. It allows managers to understand approval rates, likelihood data, identify variations, all through an equality lens.

It moves conversations from:

Opinion → Evidence

Policy → Culture



Ethnicity	Average Headcount	Total Requests	Total Approved	Total Rejected	Total In Progress	Total Data Cleanse Records	% of Demographic with Approved Flexible Working Transaction	% of Demographic with Rejected Flexible Working Request	% of Requests Approved	% of Requests Rejected	Relative Likelihood of Request Rejection (HRT data)	Relative Likelihood of Request Approval (HRT data)
Asian	169	25	9	9	7	9	5.3%	5.3%	36.0%	36.0%	0.99	0.98
Black	163	60	19	22	19	22	11.7%	13.5%	31.7%	36.7%	1.01	1.12
Mixed	39	6	2	2	2	2	5.1%	5.1%	33.3%	33.3%	0.92	1.06
Not Stated/Undefined	35	13	5	5	3	5	14.3%	14.3%	38.5%	38.5%	1.06	0.92
Other	33	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.00	-

What the Data shows (Summary)

The Flexible Working Dashboard has five datasets that cover the pre cultural change programme period (April – October 2023), to March 2026. Through the data, we see tangible trends in metrics:

Likelihood of Asian Staff having their application approved

1.15 ➡ 1.00

Disability Declaration

5.5% ➡ 7.8%

"I would recommend GSTT as a trust to work at and feel as a trust it's appreciative of it's staff. I particularly like the culture around flexible working and will absolutely miss this in my next role." (Healthcare Scientist in Community)

'We Work Flexibly' People Promise Score (2022 v 2026)

5.71 ➡ 6.33

Likelihood of Black Staff having their application approved

1.26 ➡ 1.02

Why this matters for patients?

Better staff experience is proven to create a better patient experience.

When people feel trusted and included:

Teams are more engaged → Retention Improves → Experience Stays within the Organisation → Continuity of Care Improves → Patients receive safer, more compassionate care

Flex Evelina's ethos has always been to put patients first, and at the centre of everything we do, while responding to the needs of our workforce in a human and compassionate way.







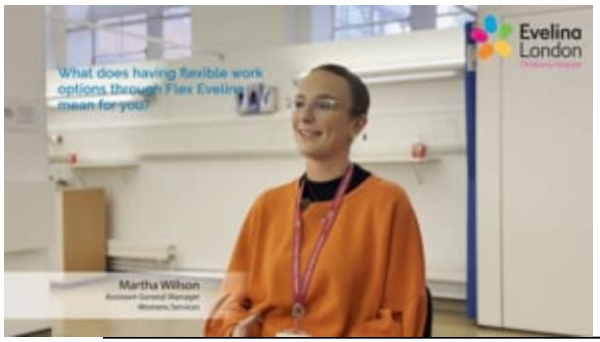
Return on Investment & Learning

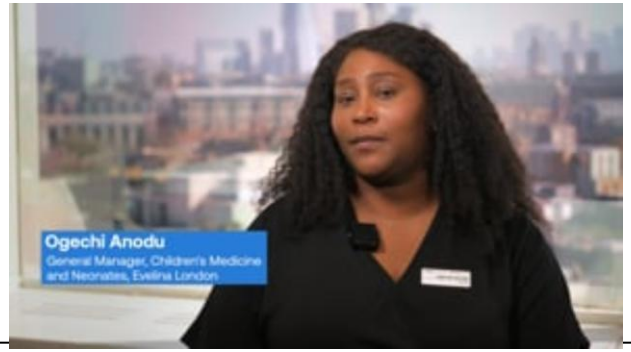
It is recognised that the success of the programme is not predicated on simply the number of staff that work flexibly, and that it is much more. It is the organisational capability created by designing work differently

Investment	Return
Time spent redesigning jobs and rosters	Better workforce utilisation
Manager capability and leadership	Better quality decision-making
Data and monitoring	Greater equity and transparency
Staff engagement/co-design	Higher ownership and trust
Flexible working opportunities	Attraction and retention of talent
Cultural change	A more adaptable workforce

What have we learned?

1. Flexibility is a workforce strategy, not an HR policy.
2. Equity requires us to examine who can access flexibility.
3. Sustainable flexibility has to be designed into jobs, teams and services.
4. Data turns flexibility from a conversation about individual preference into a conversation about organisational performance.







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Thank you



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