

Community of Practice Webinar: Flexible Working & Swaps Q&A

We had some great questions during the session, covering practical use of Loop and Optima, swap workflows, preference rostering, compliance controls, and future functionality.

Below is a summary of the questions raised, along with responses from the session.

Can we use the ESR interface to get doctors onto HealthRoster 8-12 weeks before changeover?

Yes, in theory this is possible if the doctors are already available in ESR. The main limiting factor is usually the timing of when doctors are added to ESR.

Where organisations struggle to get doctors onto ESR early enough, they may need to continue using the import person's bulk upload process instead. The best approach will depend on local ESR timing and onboarding processes.

Would you not expect doctors to speak to each other before moving things on Loop?

The swap process in Loop is a request workflow. A doctor can send a swap request, but the receiving doctor must choose whether to accept or reject it. Doctors may choose to discuss a potential swap beforehand, but the system itself still requires the other doctor to agree before the swap moves forward. If the request is rejected, the original doctor can either send a request to someone else or look for an alternative option.



When will resident doctors be able to swap blocks of shifts rather than just one day?

Block swaps are not currently available in the workflow shown during the session. This is understood to be an area for future consideration and will be followed up with the Loop/product team. For now, swaps are handled on an individual shift basis.

How would the system manage three-way swaps?

Loop currently supports two-way swaps only. Where a three-way swap is needed, doctors could use Loop's communication functionality to discuss arrangements and then complete the required swaps as separate two-way requests. However, this would need to be managed carefully, as each swap would still follow the usual request, agreement, and approval process.

How can preference rostering be managed if shifts are not evenly selected?

Preference rostering should always be supported by clear controls and oversight. In Optima, rota coordinators and clinical leads can use tools such as:

- Shift balance columns
- Shift counts
- Headcounts
- Staff league reporting
- Request rules and limits

These help teams review coverage, identify gaps, and adjust where required. If one day is over-selected and another is short, the rota manager can still review the requests and make decisions to ensure safe and fair cover across the roster.

Are swaps allowed if they create rest breaches?

No. If the relevant 2016 contract rules and rest requirements are configured in Optima, the system will flag and prevent swaps that would create a breach. This means flexibility is available, but within the safety and compliance controls already set up in the system.



Could front-loading long shifts create a risk of breaching WTR or 72 in 168?

If the relevant rules are configured in Optima, the system will help prevent requests that would breach those rules. For preference rostering, rota teams should also use shift balance and shift count reporting to review how duties are spread across the full reference period and ensure cover remains safe and compliant.

Is preference rostering based on first come, first served?

Not necessarily. While requests can be submitted by doctors, they still need to be reviewed against coverage, fairness and local rostering requirements.

If a department has vacancies or uneven demand, rota managers can review the requests and adjust the roster to avoid one day or weekend being disproportionately short while another is overstaffed.

Could the preference rostering period be different for each specialty, grade or site?

Yes, the approach can be configured flexibly depending on local requirements. During the session, a 16-week period was used as an example, but the configuration can be adapted by organisation, specialty, grade or site depending on how the team wants to manage its rostering rules and reference periods. There is also planned work to make shift balance periods more visible and flexible in future releases.

Have rota managers using RLDatix been specifically trained on this functionality?

Training and support are available through RLDatix resources and guidance. The session referenced user guides covering Loop swaps, request setup and self-rostering configuration. Organisations implementing or expanding use of this functionality should work with their RLDatix contacts to confirm the right training and support route for their teams.



How does the rota coordinator know when a doctor-to-doctor swap has been agreed?

Notifications can be configured as part of the swap workflow. These support each stage of the process, including notifications between doctors and notifications for approval. Once the doctor-to-doctor swap has been agreed, the rota coordinator can review and approve it in Optima before the roster is updated.

Is it possible to remove the approval step and allow auto-approval for swaps?

No, not currently. The rota coordinator approval step is still required. This could be considered as a future development if there is wider customer demand. Organisations interested in this functionality should raise it via the ideas board at the following link [RLDatix Ideas Portal](#).

What stops doctors requesting too many consecutive nights, weekends or long shifts?

Preference rostering and swaps remain subject to the rules configured in Optima, including contract and rest requirements. For preference rostering specifically, tools such as shift balance, shift counts and request rules can help manage fairness and prevent duties being overly front-loaded. These controls support rota teams in making sure requests are balanced across the agreed reference period.

What is the minimum notice for swaps?

The minimum notice period for swaps is configurable. It can be set by unit and adjusted depending on local policy. This means organisations can decide how short or long the notice period should be. For example, whether a swap can be requested close to the shift start time will depend on how the unit has been configured.



Would the rota coordinator receive a notification if a swap request was submitted close to the shift start time?

Notifications can be configured within the workflow. The exact behaviour will depend on the organisation's setup, including the minimum notice period and notification preferences. Where short-notice swaps are allowed, it is important that notification settings support timely rota coordinator review.

Key Learning

The discussion showed strong interest in how flexible working, swaps and preference rostering can be used safely in practice.

The main themes were around maintaining fairness, protecting compliance, managing complex swap scenarios and ensuring rota teams have the right oversight before changes are applied.

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