

Hybrid Working Policy and Process



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1. Introduction

This policy sets out our expectations and approach to managing ongoing hybrid working arrangements, as we transition and adapt to a new working environment. We recognise the many positive effects of hybrid working, including work-life balance, engagement, retention and productivity. As a result, the council commits to supporting and encouraging hybrid working arrangements wherever possible.

2. Scope

This policy and process applies directly to employees only. Agency workers and contractors are not covered by this policy. It is designed to support managers and employees in achieving the agreed levels of performance and engagement applicable to their role, in a hybrid working context.

For the purposes of this policy, hybrid working covers working from home on a regular basis, or from another remote location within the UK on a short-term temporary basis. Employees who work in a hybrid arrangement will be referred to as Hybrid Workers.

3. Principles

- To operate effectively, hybrid working requires high trust relationships and full support of the individual's manager and employees.
- Managers are responsible for determining which roles are suitable for hybrid working. However, hybrid working may not be considered suitable for every individual.
- Everybody's personal circumstances at home and in the workplace are different and therefore this will be taken into account when reviewing individual working arrangements.
- The council will ensure that homeworking arrangements do not have an adverse effect on any particular group of employees nor that a refusal to agree homeworking arrangements disadvantage any particular group.
- In the event that a Hybrid Worker requests to work from another location in the UK that is not their home, this should be discussed and agreed in advance with their manager. All elements of this policy would apply in these circumstances and the Hybrid Worker would be expected to be readily available to attend the workplace at short notice, should it be required.

4. Eligibility guidelines

In order to be considered for hybrid working, the following guidelines have been developed to aid managers in objectively assessing requests to work in a hybrid arrangement, ensuring fairness in their decision making.

- Managers should first and foremost consider whether the role can realistically be carried out from a remote location, or whether face to face interaction with employees and customers is needed on a regular basis, in order to maintain effective levels of performance.
- Employees requesting to work in a hybrid fashion should not have any live disciplinary and/or performance warnings or be subject to ongoing performance management processes.
- Employees will need to demonstrate they will have a suitable, professional working environment which is suitable for home working, including ensuring that risks to personal health and safety are reduced as much as possible. This includes a workstation and associated equipment to minimise the risks with the use of display screen equipment. Hybrid working should not be used to supplement childcare or any other caring arrangements.

5. Managing Hybrid Workers

Managers are required to adapt their management approach and work collaboratively with Hybrid Workers whilst they are working remotely:

- Communication plans should be agreed in advance and include the expectations of the manager in terms of how they expect Hybrid Workers to organise and manage their work schedule, including collaborating and maintaining effective working relationships. Communication plans should be compatible with the needs of the team and support achievement of the operational requirements. It should also cover how to ensure the Hybrid Worker does not feel isolated.
- Regular team and one-to-one meetings should be held face to face with Hybrid Workers, to include reviews of individual performance. It is important that the manager does not lose sight of overall performance levels and gathers where necessary feedback / evidence to support performance recommendations and ratings.

- Managers should remind Hybrid Workers that they are still required to keep up to date with organisational developments by reading all employees and organisational communications.

6. Hybrid working arrangements

Our expectation is all employees will spend between 1 to 3 days a week at their workplace. The number of days and when an individual is expected to be in the workplace should be agreed in advance with the individual's manager.

The number of days per week each member of employees spends attending the workplace compared with working remotely will vary however, depending on:

- their individual circumstances.
- the nature of their role.
- what is happening within their role and team at any particular time; and

We also recognise that the arrangement set out above may be difficult for some employees to follow, and therefore it is important that individual circumstances are taken into account when considering working arrangements. For example, you could:

- live a significant distance from the workplace and it would be more efficient for you to spend more time working remotely; or
- have challenges with your working environment at home that mean remote working is difficult for you and you would like to attend the workplace more often than this.

Please speak to your manager if you think that you would benefit from a different arrangement to that outlined above. Your manager's agreement is required to depart from this norm.

Given the degree of flexibility that our hybrid working arrangements provide, we also expect our workforce to be flexible. This means your manager or department may require you to attend work on particular days. For example, to attend in-person training and for meetings that your manager or Head of Service has determined are best conducted in person. It is important that you do attend in person when requested.

7. Arrangements while attending the workplace

7.1 Working hours

Your normal hours of work are set out in your contract of employment. However, in order to further support a flexible working culture, we operate a flexible working system for office-based employees, who are expected to work within our “core working hours” of 10am to 4pm, but have the ability to flex their start and finish times outside of these core hours when needed.

If you intend to alter your hours of work when working remotely, please discuss and agree this in advance with your manager. Making use of tools such as shared calendars and out-of-office messaging can help employees to be aware of your availability on these days.

We also ask you to be mindful that you are not overworking. Maintaining "downtime" from work is essential whether working remotely or at the workplace. To help maintain your wellbeing, please make sure that you take adequate rest breaks as per the below:

- Take your regular lunchbreak each day.
- Even if you are busy, it is essential that you find the time to take a break of at least 20 minutes during each working day that lasts more than six hours.
- Ensure the time period between stopping work one day and beginning the next is not less than 11 hours.

8. Performance of duties

It is our expectation that Hybrid Workers can continue to deliver the full requirements of their role and perform at the same standard as their peers working full time at their workplace. They are also required to adhere to all the council's policies and procedures in the normal way, as if they were working from the workplace. This includes but is not limited to the council's Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure. As with all employees, failure to perform at the required standard and / or the non-compliance of organisational policies and procedures could lead to disciplinary action.

9. Communication

To ensure Hybrid Workers do not feel isolated when working remotely, perform to a high standard and achieve their objectives, they must communicate with their team and manager on a regular basis.

How communication must be conducted should be agreed between the Hybrid Worker and their manager. It should also be reviewed frequently by the manager to ensure no ambiguity exists and to ensure trust is maintained. The following points however outline the basic principles of good communication that should be adhered to by all employees. These principles have been put in place to ensure visibility of contribution and encourage team collaboration:

- *Contact:* Frequent and adequate interactions should be maintained to give business updates and report on changes in workload, work patterns, activity and movements (e.g. meetings planned).
- *Virtual meetings:* Hybrid Workers are required to attend virtual meetings as requested to collaborate, keep up to date and to gain feedback on individual and team performance. The manager will determine the frequency of such meetings. All employees should ensure that when on camera, they are in a suitable location with minimal background noise and disruption. It may also be advisable, depending on your environment to use a professional, virtual screen background.
- *Availability:* All employees must remain contactable during the agreed working hours via telephone and email at all times, excluding rest breaks and when in meetings. All employees are also required to detail in their calendar periods when they cannot be contacted to include scheduled breaks, annual leave and meetings.

10. Health and Safety

We place a great importance on the health, safety and wellbeing of all our employees. All employees also have a responsibility for their own Health and Safety (H&S) and those they work with, and this is of particular importance for those employees that work remotely. Employees that work remotely must co-operate with their manager on any H&S matter that impacts upon them.

All employees must complete a [DSE assessment](#) for their remote workstation. Your manager will work with you to resolve any issues. Further details can be found in the [Display Screen Equipment Standard](#).

Below are some simple steps all employees can take to reduce the risks from display screen work:

- Breaking up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least 5 minutes every hour) or changes in activity.

- Avoiding awkward, static postures by regularly changing position.
- Getting up and moving or doing stretching exercises.
- Avoiding eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time.

You must notify your manager if:

- you feel any discomfort due to working remotely (such as back pain); or
- you believe that there are any work-related health and safety hazards.
- any work-related accidents occur in your home and you must also record these on [Assure](#) at the earliest opportunity.

Your manager will investigate the matter to determine what action can be taken. If, following a DSE assessment of your workspace, there are issues that cannot be resolved, to enable you to work safely, you will be required to attend your workplace where your manager will be able to consider/provide reasonable adjustments to enable you to work safely.

11. Security

All Hybrid Workers are required to fully comply with our Data Protection Policy at all times, to ensure the security of all information associated with our organisation. Specifically, Hybrid Workers must ensure the following:

- All documentation is stored securely, and printed documentation should be stored in a safe and secure storage unit at all times.
- All work-related information is safeguarded when working in public spaces, for example by:
 - positioning your device so that others cannot see the screen.
 - not leaving your device unattended; and
 - not having confidential/business-sensitive conversations in public spaces.
- You abide by all system and security requirements as detailed in the ICT Standards Policies and Procedures which are available to view on the councils Intranet pages.
- All computer equipment must have the council's virus protection software installed. Virus updates will be sent to the user by us on an ad hoc basis. Employees are not permitted to delay, prevent or interrupt this process, as this will put the council at unnecessary risk.

- It is also important that all employees keep their account details secure and practice good IT principles, including using a unique password for your work device and any other devices you use for work. If you have any reason to believe that an email or attachment may contain a virus, you must contact the IT Department without delay whilst following the processes detailed within the Cyber Security Principles documentation, available on the council's Intranet pages
- Hybrid Workers should not hold face to face meetings with customers or fellow employees at their remote working location, unless expressly agreed in advance with their manager.

12. Equipment

The IT Department will provide the equipment needed for each Hybrid Worker based on their job role, for use at the council's office-based workstations.

All employees must comply with the system of work for routine testing, inspection and maintenance of any equipment supplied by the council to ensure it remains safe to use and in good working order/undamaged. In relation to electrical equipment specifically, (laptops, tablets, mobile phones), you must routinely check that all plugs, leads and cables are undamaged. If the plugs, leads and/or any cables are damaged or believed not to be safe, you must not use them and report it to your manager immediately.

A replacement will be provided by the council. If you use your own personal extension lead, always check the extension lead plug contains the correctly rated fuse for the equipment being used.

In addition, all company equipment provided by us to enable remote working such as a laptop must be used for work-related purposes only and must not be used by any other members of your household or third parties at any time or for any other purpose.

13. Insurance

Hybrid Workers should check with their building and content insurance provider(s) that their home insurance is not invalidated by working from home, or by the storage and use of company equipment there.

14. Phone calls

Hybrid Workers should utilise the Microsoft Teams function to call employees or set up and attend meetings. To make external calls employees should use the corporate

telephony system utilising the softphone functionality via Jabber which is installed on the laptop. Further guidance is available on the ICT pages on the councils Intranet.

Where employees have been issued mobile phones these should be used only when your work does not enable you to have access to the laptop.

15. Other considerations

Hybrid Workers will need to inform their insurance company and contact their mortgage lender or landlord to check that partial use of the premises for work does not contravene a tenancy or mortgage agreement. Working from home should not affect your personal tax position (although your tax position is for you to ascertain and confirm) and has no impact on council tax rates, since the council does not require you to use any part of your home exclusively for business purposes. The home is still a residential property.

Administration

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