



# **Home and Hybrid Working Guidance for Managers**

**Human Resources  
14 February 2024**

## **1. PURPOSE**

### **1.1 This Guidance will:**

- In Part I set out the process for employees in the relevant categories to participate in homeworking or hybrid working arrangements in line with Supporting Flexible Working Policy; and
- In Part II assist managers to effectively manage a remote and hybrid workforce.

## **PART I**

## **2. RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING**

2.1 Any initial assessment or review of an employee's suitability for working from home should be carried out in accordance with the same principles as a statutory right to request flexible working.

2.2 Reasons for rejecting a request must be objective and demonstrable, rather than an opinion. A request should only be rejected where homeworking will:

- cause an unreasonable burden of additional cost to the council;
- have a detrimental effect on the council's ability to meet customer demand;
- make it impossible to organise work within the existing staff resources;
- have a detrimental impact on quality of service; or
- have a detrimental impact on service performance.

## **3. ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

3.1 Even where their post is categorised as suitable for homeworking, there may be employees for whom home working is not suitable. Therefore, managers must assess the suitability of each employee who wants to work from home under the arrangements of the Supporting Flexible Working Policy.

3.2 Service Managers will be responsible for ensuring that an assessment is conducted for each employee who wishes to work from home to confirm they are able to undertake homeworking in an effective, efficient and safe way. The following steps should be followed in conducting an assessment:

### Step 1

3.2 Service Managers will inform employees in their service of the workstyle categorisation applicable to their post, and where appropriate the opportunity to working from home for all or part of their working week in accordance with the Supporting Flexible Working Policy and subject to assessment.

### Step 2

3.5 Relevant employees should be asked to consider the arrangements for homeworking and hybrid working as outlined in the Supporting Flexible Working Policy along with the Homeworking Guidance for Employees and indicate whether they wish to work flexibly from home.

### Step 3

3.6 Service Managers will arrange for an appropriate manager to discuss potential homeworking arrangements with each employee that wants to work flexibly from home.

3.7 The manager will discuss with the employee:

- what is expected of a home worker and any other factors that might impact on the employee's suitability to work at home;
- the employee's homeworking environment; and
- the homeworking risk assessment.

## **4. ATTRIBUTES OF HOMEWORKERS**

4.1 A key requirement of homeworking is that the role should be performed just as well away from the workplace by the employee working on their own. To be successful, an employee working from home needs attributes to cope with working on their own and the following should be considered as part of the review process.

4.2 The manager should consider if the employee is:

- Comfortable spending long periods working on their own;
- Self-disciplined and self-motivated
- Confident working without direct supervision;
- Able to separate work from home life

4.3 It may be necessary to re-assess an employee's suitability for homeworking, in which case, the employee's previous experience of homeworking arrangements will be a relevant consideration, as will the employee's ability to effectively and efficiently undertake the duties of their post during this time.

4.5 The manager should ensure that the employee has read the Homeworking Guidance and that they understand and have considered all aspects of the homeworking arrangement.

## **5. HOMEWORKING ENVIRONMENT**

5.1 A key consideration in reviewing the employee's homeworking environment is safety, as addressed in section 6 below by the Homeworking Risk Assessment. In addition to safety however, the following should be considered:

- Does the employee have a reasonable space, security and privacy to work?
- Does the employee live within an acceptable UK commutable distance allowing them to attend work as required for their role as set out in paragraphs 5.6 and 5.7 of the Supporting Flexible Working Policy?
- Does the employee have internet connectivity able to support access to council systems?
- What arrangements does the employee have in place for dependants at home during normal working hours in accordance with paragraph 3.1 of the Homeworking Guidance?

## **6. HOMEWORKING RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 The council has a duty of care to employees whether they are working from a council workplace or from home. To ensure that any health and safety risks are identified and addressed, the employee should complete a [Homeworking Risk Assessment](#) in preparation for discussion with their manager.
- 6.2 Any identified risks should be discussed, and consideration should be given to how any risks can be eliminated or mitigated to an acceptable degree. Managers should consult with their service Health and Safety Adviser as appropriate.
- 6.3 Where identified risks cannot reasonably be eliminated or mitigated, it may be necessary to determine that homeworking is not suitable for the employee concerned.
- 6.4 Where homeworking is considered appropriate, managers should discuss safe working procedures, such as, arrangements to ensure that the whereabouts of staff who work from home alone and go out to visit clients/customers are known. For example, team members notifying colleagues of when they are leaving home, arriving on site, heading home or arriving home. Location details for appointments should be noted on outlook calendars or another shared system.
- 6.5 For many home workers it will not be essential to have a lone working device, but where an employee is deemed to require such a device, the manager should ensure that the employee knows how to use it and understands the importance of using it.
- 6.6 The manager should update any existing risk assessments or existing lone working risk assessments in [Sphera](#) to reflect individual arrangements and the addition of homeworking.

## **7. RECORDING ASSESSMENT DECISIONS**

- 7.1 Each service should retain the details of individual homeworking assessments on a Homeworking and Hybrid Working Record along with all associated Homeworking Risk Assessments.

## **8. APPEAL PROCESS**

- 8.1 Where an employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of their individual assessment for homeworking, they may appeal the decision in writing to the Head of Service. The Head of Service decision will be final with no further appeal possible.

## **8. REVIEW**

- 8.1 The decision to allow homeworking under the Supporting Flexible Working Policy will be subject to change. As employee circumstances change or the employee's role develops or changes, it may be necessary to re-assess homeworking arrangements.

## PART II

### 9. MANAGING A REMOTE WORKFORCE

9.1 Managing a remote workforce can differ to managing a team in the office and may require you to adapt your management practices and style at times. It is important to:

- Agree ways of working - Make sure every team member is clear about how you will work together remotely, how you keep each other updated, and how frequently.
- Show the big picture - Remind your team about the big picture and how their work fits into it.
- Set expectations and trust your team - Be clear about mutual expectations and trust your team to get on. Avoid micromanaging. Focus on output and results rather than activity.
- Make sure your team have the support and equipment they need - This includes any coaching they might need to use online systems and work remotely. Keep your calendar visible and maintain a virtual open door.
- Have daily virtual contact where possible - This is essential for keeping connected as a team, to check in on each other's well-being and keep workflow on track.
- Have regular 1-2-1s and team meetings - This maintains a sense of structure and continuity for all.
- Share information and encourage your team to do the same - Opportunities to pick up information in passing are more limited when working remotely. Share appropriate updates or learnings from other meetings and projects and invite your team to do the same.
- Tailor your feedback and communications - Communicate regularly, not just when things go wrong. People can be more sensitive if they're feeling isolated or anxious, so take this into account when talking or writing.
- Listen closely and read between the lines - Not being in the same room means you don't have extra information from body language or tone to get the sense of what people are thinking or feeling. Consider what's not being said and ask questions to clarify.
- Foster relationships and well-being - Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport and eases communication between people who may not meet often. It also reduces feelings of isolation
- Regularly review clock in and out information to ensure individuals are maintaining work life balance.
- Maximise the benefits of any in person time in the office.

## **1-2-1s and Team Meetings**

- 9.2 It is important that you are in regular contact with your team and arrangements to hold regular one-to-ones by telephone or video conferencing should be agreed between you and team members. While the council's People Strategy recommends that one-to-ones are held at least every 4 weeks, it is recommended that contact with remote workers should be much more frequent, at least weekly, to discuss work. Managers also have a responsibility to monitor the well being of workers on a more day to day basis.
- 9.3 All workstyle categories require employees to attend the workplace for team meetings or other necessary face to face contact as required and at least once per month. Line managers must ensure there are opportunities for in person team collaboration at least once per month.
- 9.4 Regular attendance in the workplace also supports the building of effective working relationships with key stakeholders. Face to face collaboration with internal and external customers at key milestones of activity can smooth the way for effective remote working.
- 9.5 In person meetings may also be of particular benefit when managing periods of change. It is important during periods of change that managers keep their staff engaged. It is important that they talk about what the business needs, but that should be balanced with what the person needs to enable them to support the business and it is vital that communication channels exist that work across a range of needs.

## **Managing Performance**

- 9.6 In addition to the opportunity provided by regular 1-2-1s and team meetings to manage performance, Service Managers should make effective use of performance indicators and other appropriate measures to monitor the performance of hybrid and homeworking teams and individuals.
- 9.7 Effective use of workplans will help employees to understand what is expected of them and will assist managers in monitoring activity and achievement of targets/deadlines.
- 9.8 Where an activity is process driven, it may be possible to use existing performance indicators to measure processing timescales and levels of accuracy.
- 9.9 Such management information could be used to identify specific performance management or staff development needs, and could for example determine where it may be appropriate to suspend or terminate home or hybrid working for specific individuals or teams.

## **New Starts and Trainees**

- 9.10 In order to ensure that the new starts and trainees are able to effectively perform the duties of their role and meet service delivery requirements it is likely that a new employee to the council, an employee with a new role or a trainee will be required initially to attend the workplace for all hours worked. This will give the employee the opportunity to work along with colleagues in person, observe the role and pick up information in passing.

- 9.11 Attending the workplace initially for all hours worked will also give the manager the opportunity to assess the employee's individual suitability for homeworking in line with section 4 above.
- 9.12 Managers should ensure that appropriate support and leadership is in place in the workplace to enable the new start/trainee to learn from colleagues and should discuss with the employee the arrangements to support their learning. The Manager should also make arrangements to review and agree when it may be suitable to begin home or hybrid working as appropriate.

### **Hybrid Working Arrangements**

- 9.13 The Supporting Flexible Working Policy sets out the parameters for Hybrid Working and requires a minimum of 40% of working hours to be from the council work place, for a full-time employee this would normally be 2 days per week. However, the policy makes provision for managers to agree a different hybrid model where required, as determined by business need.
- 9.14 A different hybrid model, which still achieves the 40% of working time requirement, could be implemented for example where a team work a week long rotation of home working and hybrid working on an ongoing basis.
- 9.15 A different hybrid model could be implemented alternatively on a temporary basis as necessary to meet customer/employee needs. For example, the manager could suspend homeworking for a temporary period in order to ensure that a team work collaboratively on a specific project; or an individual could be permitted to work from home for a week in order to focus on achieving a deadline.

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