

# FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

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## Warwickshire County Council

### FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is committed to developing new ways of working to benefit the services it provides.
- 1.2 This policy supports the Council's commitment to implementing working arrangements which :
- Provide a consistent approach to the introduction of flexible working across the Council
  - Increase the opportunities and benefits to service provision from implementing flexible working arrangements
  - Ensure the occupational health and safety of staff working in line with this policy
- 1.3 It must however be borne in mind that the operational needs of the Council must always be met, and all requests for flexible working need to be consistent with achieving that objective.

#### 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy has been developed for all WCC employees except those employed to work in schools. Separate arrangements apply for uniformed fire and rescue service staff employed under the grey and gold book conditions of service.

#### 3. Role Suitability

- 3.1 Mobile or flexible working will not suit every type of job or individual and managers will be responsible for making an objective assessment of suitability for their services based on :
- Suitability of the job and service needs.
  - Cost effectiveness of the proposed arrangements.
  - Suitability of the working environment.
  - Individual needs.
- 3.2 Posts which require mandatory flexible or contracted home working should specify this in the recruitment documentation. Mandatory changes to roles which affect existing employees should be introduced in

consultation with staff and their representatives in accordance with recognised change management processes.

## 4. Flexible Working Agreement

- 4.1 It will be the line manager's responsibility to create a Flexible Working Agreement with an individual member of their staff. Normally an agreement will only be required when they are, or are preparing to become, a flexible, contracted home or regular home worker (see Section 5).
- 4.2 The Flexible Working Agreement will detail the employer and employee responsibilities, will be signed by both parties and will form part of the employee's terms and conditions of service.
- 4.3 All Flexible Working Agreements will be reviewed after the first 12 weeks, and then subsequently linked into the appraisal programme on a 6 and 12 month review. The Flexible Working Agreement will also be regularly reviewed as part of the one to one schedule of meetings.
- 4.4 In the majority of cases terms and conditions of employment will remain unaffected. It is however advisable that agreement is reached in advance on designating a base for travel claim purposes. Please refer to the Travel Code of Conduct for further advice which can be found on the Intranet under HR - HR A-Z - Travel Expenses.

## 5 Role Definition

- 5.1 Line managers will make a decision in consultation with each individual team member as to what definition of worker they will be. This will be documented in the individual's Flexible Working Agreement.
- 5.2 The following role definitions will be used:

**Flexible Worker** - *A flexible worker is someone who can work from a variety of locations for all or part of their working hours in agreement with their manager. For instance they may be able to work from any desk within WCC, partner's offices, home on an informal basis, hot desking or out in the field.*

**Office Worker** - *An office worker is someone who is based in the same location for all of their working hours but may share office space/workstation within a team location in that building.*

**Fixed Desk Worker** - *A fixed desk worker is someone who has to work at a fixed desk for all of their working hours. This may be because of equality/disability issues (e.g. specific chair, desk), specific software on PC or specific role.*

- 5.3 Work location may vary according to service needs. Where home is deemed part of the working location the following definitions may also apply. These can be mixed with role definitions and are not mutually exclusive.

**Contracted Home Worker** – *A contracted home worker is someone who has a formal arrangement in place to work all or part of their working hours at home, as stated in their contract of employment*

**Regular Home Worker** – *A regular home worker is someone who regularly works at home on a non-contractual basis but they have a formal arrangement with their manager whereby they work at home for least one working day each week.*

**Occasional Home Worker** - *An occasional home worker is someone who works at home on an ad hoc, occasional or informal basis during their normal working hours e.g. to write a specific report. Each specific period of homeworking should be agreed with their line manager.*

## 6. Equipment

- 6.1 The line manager is responsible for arranging the provision of essential IT and other equipment as necessary to do the job and maintain a link with base. The frequency of flexible working and the nature of duties undertaken will normally dictate the level of provision but generally :-
- a) Contracted Home Workers will be provided with all reasonable equipment required for use at home (in conjunction with the home working health and safety risk assessment).
  - b) Regular Home Workers will be provided with equipment agreed by the line manager, (in conjunction with their home working health and safety risk assessment and flexible working agreement).
  - c) Occasional Home Workers will not be provided with any additional equipment at home (and provided the arrangement remains occasional will not normally need a home working health and safety risk assessment or a flexible working agreement).
- 6.2 As access methods, systems and support differ widely for IT equipment, advice on the most suitable options should be sought via the IT Service Desk (tel: 01926 414141).
- 6.3 All IT and other equipment provided remains the property of the Council. If WCC hardware becomes faulty, the employee is responsible for organising the return of equipment for repair via the IT Service Desk (tel 01926 414141).

6.4 The level of ICT support provided to staff working from home and using their own connection will vary according to type of equipment and router being used. Further information can be found in the ICT pages of the intranet under "Citrix Support - what you can expect from ICT".

## 7 Health and Safety

7.1 It is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure that :

- Flexible working risk assessments, home working risk assessments and display screen equipment self- assessments are completed (templates are available on the intranet see 7.3) and employees are aware of the findings.
- Employees are suitably trained and equipped for their work
- Employees' working time is appropriately monitored for traceability
- An effective arrangement for support and communication is in place
- The Flexible Working Agreement is monitored and reviewed at appropriate intervals and linked to appraisals.

7.2 The Council requires all flexible workers to :

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and co-operate with their manager to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing
- Follow Council guidance in relation to flexible working
- Work in accordance with their Flexible Working Agreement
- Maintain adequate records of their working time, location, etc (see section 11)
- Report any health and safety or security problems arising from flexible or home working to their line manager promptly

7.3 Further advice and information is available from the intranet under 'Health Safety and Workforce Wellbeing' pages. [Intranet](#) > [Helping You Work](#) > [HR](#) > [Health, Safety and Workforce Wellbeing](#) >

## 8. Insurance

8.1 Flexible workers should inform their home insurer if they are working from home on a regular basis as a contracted home worker or regular home worker. In addition, contracted home workers must also ensure that they notify their landlord or mortgage company.

## 9 Security

- 9.1 The Council is required under the Data Protection Act 1998 to ensure that all confidential and/or sensitive information held on a PC, mobile electronic device or in hard copy format is protected from loss, destruction or unauthorised disclosure.
- 9.2 With that in mind, all employees are required to understand the responsibilities associated with the security of the equipment they use and the information they have access to. Staff will be expected to comply with the corporate Email and Internet Code of Practice, and Information Security Policies and procedures. Further information about Information Security policies can be found on the intranet.
- 9.3 Flexible working in particular, increases the risk of loss of equipment and, more importantly the information stored on that equipment. The signing of the Flexible Working Agreement by an employee indicates they have accepted and understood the security advice and information provided by WCC.
- 9.4 Staff should bear in mind that a serious breach of the security policies would result in disciplinary action. Accordingly they must take all reasonable care to ensure the safety and security of Council property, equipment, records and information.
- 9.5 Staff must ensure that they do not allow any other non-WCC employee to access County Council equipment, records or systems provided for their work in the home.

## 10. Training and Development

- 10.1 Home and flexible workers will be provided with the same core induction programme and subsequent training and development opportunities as office based colleagues.
- 10.2 Line managers are responsible for working with flexible / home workers to identify and facilitate the support systems and training/development required to establish and maintain successful working arrangements. Newly appointed staff may be required to phase in flexible working as part of their induction process.
- 10.3 Line Managers will specifically be responsible for ensuring that employees working flexibly are trained in the use of any equipment that may be provided, as well as being aware of the IT Security and Health and Safety policies/ relevant local health and safety arrangements for their work.

## 11 Contactability and Supervision

- 11.1 Flexible working may provide employees with greater flexibility over their working pattern. However, to ensure this does not cause service disruption and to maintain the health and safety of staff, flexible workers must ensure that their location and contact details are known at all times. This is important for all staff but critical for employees who are lone working. Further information on lone working is available in the Personal Safety Policy and accompanying guide.
- 11.2 The working pattern will be agreed between manager and employee and the employee is responsible for notifying their manager if away from their expected place of work. Flexible workers will be required to maintain an adequate record of their working time. The Flexible Working Agreement will record details of how all these arrangements will occur.
- 11.3 There is an expectation that all staff should be contactable when they are working – regardless of their physical working location. This can be by phone, email or other means such as Instant Messaging
- 11.4 Where a work mobile phone or smartphone has been issued this should be on when an individual is working unless in a meeting or driving – in which case it can be put on silent mode, but checked once the meeting or journey ends.
- 11.5 If working from home, then it is the individual's responsibility to ensure that arrangements are in place to allow their line managers and team members to contact them. During their working day, they must always be available to respond to organisational needs and/or customer enquiries and be prepared to travel to their normal base if required.
- 11.6 Staff must always attend their base when required by their line manager, for example, to attend regular one to one supervision meetings, appraisals, training sessions, team or other meetings, collect post etc or if the needs of the service require it.
- 11.7 If invited to attend a meeting, there is an expectation that the request will be accommodated unless there is a **business** reason which prevents the individual from doing so. This normally means that any meeting request will supersede a request to work from home.
- 11.8 All staff are expected to manage their electronic calendar and keep this accessible to all. Personal and meetings of a confidential nature should be marked as 'private' items. Diary entries should be updated regularly and provide sufficient information to allow others to be able to contact the flexible worker as and when necessary. Times when the worker is not available to contact during the normal working day should be agreed with the flexible worker's manager in advance and clearly indicated on the diary.

## 12. Hours of work

- 12.1 Service hours may vary across WCC, and teams will need to be aware of public access times and service demands. Teams will need to decide how their working arrangements will be made in order to meet the requirements of the service. Consideration should be given to customer needs, duty cover and emergency contacts where required. It will be the responsibility of individual managers to maintain the level of cover required to meet their service standard. Special arrangements may apply during holiday periods, adverse weather and emergency situations.
- 12.2 For most roles, there will be some requirement for staff to be available to liaise with a range of colleagues in their own and other functions and departments. For this reason, there is also an expectation that Flexible Working will be managed with recognition that the main business hours of the organisation are broadly Monday to Friday on a 9 to 5 basis. Whatever potential variation there is, a significant overlap with these working hours would normally be expected.
- 12.3 Depending on the role definition agreed, the actual number of days that a flexible worker will be expected to be present in the office could vary. This will form part of the discussion when creating a Flexible Working Agreement and could be different across teams and individuals, depending on the business need.
- 12.4 The organisation recognises that Flexible Working can help to manage peaks and troughs in terms of service delivery, but that this would normally be planned in advance and agreed taking into account the needs of the service and ensuring workload is manageable and delivery is maintained consistently and evenly over time.
- 12.5 The Council expects managers and staff to take a sensible approach to managing their total work time and to give due regard to health, safety and well-being considerations whilst working flexibly. Line managers for instance will be expected to check that lunch breaks are taken at a reasonable time and are for a minimum of half an hour.
- 12.6 Flexible working approaches may also be applied to facilitate delivery of an individual's learning and development plan. This may be particularly helpful for part time staff when a training event lasts longer than the individual's normal working day.



### 13. **Sickness**

- 13.1 If an individual is unable to work because of sickness, they must follow the Corporate Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure.
- 13.2 Working from home if a dependant requires care will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances i.e. where the individual can demonstrate that there is work that can usefully be achieved to meet a business need, that caring for the dependant will not be a frequent distraction, and that it is a very short term arrangement. Such issues must be discussed and agreed with the line manager at the earliest opportunity and be in accordance with the Family Friendly Guide.

### 14. **Performance Management**

- 14.1 Work outcomes will be managed at the One to One sessions which will be held on a 4-6 weekly basis. Sessions will also include a review of work load and time management with reference to the electronic timesheet as required. It will be the line manager's responsibility to discuss and agree clear and tangible objectives with suitable targets and realistic performance measures achievable within the individual's working hours.
- 14.2 Attendance at the sessions is vital but there may be the opportunity to hold them at WCC venues other than the main office base, if that is agreed between the individual and line manager.

### 15 **Complaints**

- 15.1 Complaints from staff or teams about the application or operation of this policy should be raised informally with their line manager in the first instance. If matters cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the Grievance Procedure should be followed.

### 16 **Review and Termination**

- 16.1 Line managers should review flexible working arrangements on a regular basis to ensure that they remain effective and sustainable.
- 16.3 Where it becomes necessary to terminate flexible working arrangements, reasonable notice will be given where possible. In the event of operational emergencies, flexible working agreements may be suspended with immediate effect.

## 17. Further information

- 17.1 An employee's and manager's guide with answers to frequently asked questions and relevant checklists/forms for staff can all be found on the Internet : [Home](#) > [Staff members](#) > [Human Resources \(HR\)](#) > [Absence, working hours and leave](#) > Working Hours