Clear Desk Policy Guidance

WCC operates a clear desk policy, this forms part of our [Office Accommodation Standards](#).

Clear desk - what you need to know

- Policy applies to all employees, contractors/individuals using WCC offices and councillors
- At the end of each day desks should be left clear and if you are out of the office for more than 2/3 hours
- Store confidential or sensitive information securely
- Don't keep paperwork longer than you need - keep on top of filing/recycling
- Keep space around you clutter free too - that includes under desks and on top of filing units.

You can read the full policy in section 4 of the accommodation standards.

Property Rationalisation is helping many staff with making the move to clear desk working but it is important that all teams start working in this way.

Why clear desks are important

1. They support flexible working and make it easier to share our office space.
2. It makes sure we keep information secure.
3. It presents a professional business image.

We can all play a part in keeping our desks clear, here is a practical guide to how you can start to make the move to clear desk working.

Supporting the WCC Clear Desk Policy: A practical guide

Moving to clear desks can require new thinking and challenge to the way we've traditionally used our desks. This short guide provides some practical considerations for managers and staff to help move to a clear desk and tidy office.

This guide is split into two sections:-

1. Practical considerations for managers
2. Practical things we can all do

1. **Practical considerations for managers**

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Policy Owner	Sue Evans, Head of HR and OD			Page 1 of 4	

Lead by example!

Setting a good example through your own actions will show staff how important this is to you, and your participation will demonstrate this applies to everyone - at all levels of the organisation.

Talk to your team

Hold a team meeting to explain why having a clear desk is important to the organisation. Work with your team to pull together a plan for what needs to happen and by when. Be clear about who is doing what, set realistic targets and measure progress.

No exceptions

Take responsibility for ensuring the whole team keep to clear desk working - even those members of staff who work from the same desk every day. Set aside time in your diary to have an ad hoc walk around the office at the end of the day and provide feedback to staff about how the move to clear desk is going, where it's going well, and where improvements could be made. Utilise existing 1:1s with team members to find out how clear desk is going for individuals.

Not just desks

Implement well organised team storage. Ask your team to review what is being kept on desks and consider the best place for this to be stored, and whether it needs to be kept in paper form at all. If the paperwork is accessed by other members of the team, it should be filed in team storage.   If the paperwork is transient, then file in personal storage: pedestal, tambour unit etc. **It is OK and important to challenge why paper is being held rather than electronic versions.** Sometimes teams inherit paperwork, take time to identify any items that don't belong to your team and take responsibility for tracing an owner, or what to do with the information.

Declutter!

It's surprising how much office and desk space is taken up with items no longer relevant, but often we're just too busy with the day job to see this. Consider having a housekeeping day (or days) when everyone contributes to reviewing existing filing, disposes of things that no longer need to be kept in the appropriate way. This might be as confidential waste, or for files that need to be kept for legal/audit reasons, sending on to **Records Management**. If you're not sure how often files are used, why not put stickers on those files.   If they are used, staff should remove the sticker. At the end of the monitoring period, it will be easy to see those files that haven't been used.

Plan ahead

If there is a lot of get rid of and/or if it is of a confidential nature, ensure you liaise with Hotline before the declutter day so they can help support your disposal needs. Contact Records Management for advice, guidance and training on housekeeping days and sending files on to them.

Keep it secure

Clearing away portable IT equipment and storage is just as important as clearing

away paper files, they all need to be locked away at the end of the working day. Can your filing cabinets and pedestals be locked? Do you need to locate new keys? Do you need your pedestals? Talk to Hotline if you need assistance in resolving these issues.

Celebrate
Finally, don't forget to celebrate your team success in moving to a clear desk working environment.

1. **Practical things we can all do**

Take control and make time
Take ownership and be responsible for your own material and anything you may have inherited from someone else. You'll need to make some time in your diary to implement a clear desk policy, and also think about how this is going to work for you on a day to day basis.

Can you do things differently?
Think about the start of day routine - what do you need to put out on the desk each day? Do you really need that favourite photo, fluffy toy, pen pot etc, on your desk every day?   If so, is there room in your personal storage for these?   Likewise think about the end of day routine - how long will it take to pack your things away, wash and put your mug away, throw away any rubbish etc.

Get organised!
Review what's on your desk and challenge yourself to get organised. For example, **a paper list of your most used telephone contact numbers could be held as an electronic document on your desktop, rather than stuck on the desk; it's also more secure, especially if it's a list of sensitive contact numbers**. Can manuals be located in storage close to your desk and used when needed. Think about having a team reference library for commonly shared reference materials. This could be paper format but with more **and more resources available for free online why not create an electronic resource library**. This takes up no office or desk space and resources are never out of date as they are instantly updated. For example those needing access to legislation use http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ which provides access to past and present legislation, including previous versions of recently amended legislation.

Check your storage
What's in your personal storage? You might have a pedestal, tambour or locker allocated for your own personal filing. Have a declutter and dispose of those items no longer required.   Can any of the items be scanned and held electronically? Do any of the items already exist elsewhere e.g. meeting papers?

Get in a routine
Implement a personal housekeeping regime to ensure paperwork is regularly reviewed and disposed of as soon as possible. Some staff like to have a regular

slot in their diary to do this (perhaps once a fortnight). Most important is finding a

method that works for you to ensure paperwork is regularly disposed.

Support your colleagues!
There's no monopoly on good ideas - if you've found something that works for you, share it with your team who might appreciate your top tips on clear desk working.

Keep it safe and secure…
For a complete list of how to classify different types of information see the WCC information risk and protective marking standard. For policies, procedures, standards and guidance see the Information Management site. These are regularly updated but if you think anything is not covered please let Information Management know.
…even if it's rubbish.
For confidential waste contact Hotline for confidential waste bags and use the guidance available.