



Human Resources: Guidance on hybrid working

Introduction

Hybrid working is a flexible working model. It affords employees a level of flexibility to decide where they will work.

The introduction of hybrid working will

- create an environment which allow employees to achieve an improved work life balance, greater job satisfaction, motivation, morale and productivity;
- lower our carbon footprint, through reduced emissions from reduced travel;
- improve the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees; and
- reduce absenteeism and related costs

For employees, hybrid working can

- Provide an opportunity to manage their working day more efficiently;
- Increase engagement as a result of autonomy and trust at work;
- Improve work life balance;
- Enable them to work more effectively on a particular piece of work, where concentration is important, by avoiding the interruptions that are part of the office environment;
- Reduce travelling and related costs;
- And increase their wellbeing, health and happiness – reduce stress, better sense of control.

Hybrid working is agreed on an informal basis without the need for a formal alteration of an employee's employment contract.

To vary contractual working hours/working patterns/location permanently an application must be submitted under the Flexible working policy.

Aims

These guidance notes are not part of the Hybrid working policy but provide a framework and more detail to ensure consistent and fair implementation of the policy. The guidance enables both managers and employees to gain a better understanding of what hybrid working should look like here, and understand the basic principles which can then be considered and applied.

Employee definitions

Hybrid – employees who work from the office some of the time and from home some of the time, and can be out on-the-go or out on-site some of the time. Hybrid employees will hot desk in their team's office. They can also use the designated hot desk workstations or quiet working spaces available in Aldern House or in other locations.

Office-based – employees whose posts are eligible for hybrid working but the employee has opted to work from the office most of the time. Where the office-based employee works 4 or more days per week in the office, they will be allocated a designated desk.

Operationally based – posts where the job demands they are on site at all times. Employees in these posts are not eligible for hybrid working.

What does hybrid working look like here?

Employees with hybrid working arrangements are expected to spend at least 40% of their contracted hours in the office. Use this figure as a guide. The employee should be aiming for 40% in the office as a general rule with exceptions accommodated by the line manager as long as the employee is operating within the spirit of the rules.

We accept many of our employees are part time and 40% of contracted hours will not fit neatly into their number of working days. Line managers have discretion to agree the best fit for the employee.

We understand that the number of days per week each employee spends attending the office compared to working remotely will vary, depending on:

- their individual circumstances;
- the nature of their role;
- what is happening within their role and team at any particular time; and
- the needs of our organisation, including the space we have available at our work locations.

Line managers have discretion to manage their teams and balance the needs of individual employees.

It is understood that site visits/meetings will sometimes take place during an 'office' day. Where desks are shared, the clear desk policy applies so the desk is available to be used by other employees. Line managers will oversee the desk allocation and desk use in their teams.

Employees are expected to be flexible to work in the office or other locations as required for planned events (e.g. team meetings; training etc) and if requested by their line manager to work in the office or other locations on unplanned occasions (e.g. for cover resulting from sickness absence or to meet service/customer need).

One week's notice is reasonable for both manager and employee to request a change. In practice, shorter notice may be given by either side as a result of circumstances.

Adequate care arrangements for dependents must be in place to allow the employee to work from home effectively, and be able to attend the office or other locations for short notice unplanned occasions.

There may be times when an employee would like to depart from the expectation they spend at least 40% of their time in the office for example, a long-term average for a full time equivalent of 1 day per week. The line manager and Head of Service's agreement is required for this, and granting this variation would be the exception and only agreed on a temporary basis.

Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are our 'connection days'. Hybrid employees are expected to plan at least one of their days in the office on a connection day. This will facilitate more face-to-face meetings which are good for our wellbeing. Also, to enhance the social connection between employees, as far as possible, engagement events (e.g. Staff Briefings, We're Listening sessions

etc) will be arranged on a connection day. Any social events such as fundraising coffee mornings, quizzes, or guided walks should be arranged on one of these days too.

How to request a hybrid working arrangement

Employees who are not operationally based can request a hybrid working arrangement.

An applicant for hybrid working must have at least 6* months service to have demonstrated reasonable competence in their role, reliability, customer service (internal and external) and excellent communication skills (*this may be varied at the Head of Service's discretion where an application for hybrid working is submitted).

The request for hybrid working will be subject at all times to ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery including being accessible to internal and external customers.

Heads of Service determine the posts in their service eligible for hybrid working. Heads of Service can reject or withdraw any hybrid working request where service delivery is compromised or the employee will/or has been inaccessible to customers.

An employee should complete our Display Screen Equipment self-assessment and application forms and submit them to their line manager.

The line manager will meet with the employee to discuss their forms and then consider and decide whether or not to recommend supporting the application to the Head of Service. The line manager in their recommendation will assess the benefits for the employee, the team, the potential impact of the application on service delivery and between services, the applicant's team and other colleagues (especially in small teams).

The Head of Service must consider each application fairly and equitably.

Approving an application

The Head of Service will email their approval with the completed form to the employee copying in the line manager and relevant Human Resources Adviser to confirm the approval as a temporary agreement (not a variation to the contract of employment which is maintained). The agreement will be subject to one week's notice by the employee if their personal circumstances change. The Head of Service may end the agreement with one week's notice if required by service need, changed needs within the team, or the ability to maintain the provisions of the agreement (including work performance, ease of contact, team working).

Agreements can include a 3-month trial period.

It is essential that hybrid working is regularly reviewed in one-to-ones with the line manager, to ensure the benefits and efficiencies are continually realised for the employee and the Authority, as well as supporting the employee's safety and wellbeing.

A formal review of the hybrid working arrangement will be held annually as part of the Employee Performance Review – 'enjoy' conversation.

A line manager may suspend/restrict hybrid working due to:

- The employee moving to an operationally based post
- Changing needs within the team (including leavers and starters)

- Need to induct new colleagues for training/development of the employee or colleagues
- A health condition which prevents safely working remotely (including a change in wellbeing)
- Returning from a long-term absence and requiring additional support
- Being monitored under the Managing Performance procedure
- Being subject to an internal investigation (e.g. discipline or grievance)
- A measure following a formal hearing (e.g. discipline or grievance)

The above is not an exhaustive list.

The Head of Service is able to request, or accept a request to vary the hybrid working arrangement. If this is acceptable to both parties the Head of Service emails confirmation to the employee, the line manager and relevant HR Adviser.

Arrangements while working remotely

Working hours

While working remotely, employees must be available and working during their normal hours of work, as set out in their contract of employment.

An employee's 'contractual place of work' is agreed on appointment and detailed in the employee's contract of employment. Travel expenses will be in line with the Travel and Subsistence policy.

Normal timesheets/flexi-sheets will be completed.

We ask you to be mindful that you are not overworking - "downtime" from work is essential. To help maintain wellbeing, employees should be mindful they are not overworking and should ensure that they take adequate rest breaks:

- Employees must take a minimum of 30 minutes unpaid rest break during their working day where their working time exceeds 6 hours. Such breaks must be taken during their work period, not at the beginning or the end. Wherever possible, employees should take these breaks away from the workstation.
- Employees should also ensure regular screen breaks to vary focal length and move/stretch.
- Flexitime hours are between 7.00 am to 8.00pm with any exception to be agreed with your line manager. This is to prevent employees having long days by working unsocial hours. It should also improve availability and connectivity of employees during normal working hours. Working time regulations set out the time period between stopping work one day and beginning the next is not less than 11 hours.

Employees should be as clear as possible with their line manager about the hours of work for days on which they are working remotely. To help colleagues to be aware of your availability on these days every employee should keep their electronic diary up to date with where they are working and if uncontactable at what meeting/site visit/commitment. When an employee is working they must be contactable by work telephone or set voicemail if uncontactable.

Sickness absence management

When working remotely, employees should not work if they are unwell. If an employee is sick and unable to work, our Sickness Absence Management policy and procedure applies.

Employees should notify their line manager by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable, preferably before they are due to start work and, in any event, no later than one hour after they are due to begin work.

Health and Safety

Employees have a responsibility for their own and others health and safety while they are carrying out work activities regardless of the work location.

Managers and hybrid employees must ensure that:

- They are aware of and compliant with the relevant health and safety policies and procedures
- Reasonable and practical monitoring is undertaken to ensure physical and mental wellbeing are not compromised
- Concerns must be raised promptly through appropriate channels
- Employees are aware of their responsibilities in relation to their personal safety and welfare, including their workstation set up and support for lone working.

Employees must not carry out face-to-face work meetings in their home.

All accidents/near misses should be reported and investigated in the normal manner.

Finance

Tax implications can change over time and should be checked periodically by the employee; changes in rates are usually effective from 1 April each year. Employees may wish to take independent tax advice.

(<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home> guidance (2022/23) states 'You cannot claim tax relief if you choose to work from home').

The employee is responsible for any home internet broadband costs and energy or heating costs whilst working from home.

Data protection, security, and confidentiality

We provide employees with access to the personal and confidential information they need to do their job. This information must not be disclosed to others who are not authorised to see it.

Our Information management policy framework applies at all times regardless of working site. Employees must have up-to-date Data Security training via ELMS or other means as specified by the Authority.

When working in a mobile manner, an employee is responsible for the security of equipment, files and any other information in their possession, including the transportation of such items whenever outside the office environment.

Employees should use only Authority provided IT equipment with appropriate encryption/access to servers via passwords. Laptops must not be left unattended, or in public view/access areas, or in cars. Screens must be locked when laptops are temporarily left unattended at different work location sites and when working remotely. Business calls must be made/taken where they cannot be overheard.

Any paperwork must be transported and stored securely. Employees should assess the level of risk to decide on the level of protection needed; if the majority of paper files being taken home are historical planning files then the risk is much lower than if a paper file is being taken home that relates to employee details such as sickness records.

On assessment, low risk information is considered 'secure' in a zipped laptop or other bag. If you have a desk at home that includes a locked drawer this can be used for higher risk information, otherwise the documentation should not be taken home. It is particularly important to ensure non authorised

individuals (in the home environment or hot desking) cannot gain access to confidential or personal information.

Any loss of equipment or information must be reported immediately to the employee's line manager and the Data Protection Officer.

Allocation of IT and other equipment

The following is the list of standard equipment:

1. Authority office accommodation provided for employees will have;
 - single network point
 - 1x keyboard
 - 1x mouse
 - at least one monitor (two monitors provided where required)
 - docking station, where required
2. There is an additional allocation for employees eligible for and undertaking remote working;
 - 1x keyboard
 - 1x mouse
 - 1x monitor

Any item required over and above this should be requested via Sysaid. It will be evaluated on a case by case basis and where appropriate funded by the service.

In person IT support and printing services are only available at our offices.

When requesting hybrid working, employees must complete and submit our Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessment form with their application form to their line manager.

Advice will be sought from the Occupational Safety and Health Adviser where additional/alternative furniture or equipment is required following completion of the DSE self-assessment or when an employee believes discomfort might be caused by their work with DSE.

Where appropriate and reasonable, furniture (chair/desk) and accessories (footrest/laptop stand) will be supplied on loan, to be returned when the employee leaves our employment or moves to a role where hybrid working is not supported.

Insurance, mortgage and tenancy arrangements

Computers and other items of equipment provided as part of our hybrid working arrangement will be covered by the Authority's insurance policy. The exceptions include,

- no cover provided where the IT equipment is left on view in an unattended vehicle, and
- theft from property has to be by means of a forced break-in (i.e. if someone walks through an unlocked or open door, cover would not be provided).

Where Employees are on occasion working abroad, computer equipment is covered under the Travel policy.

Hybrid employees are required to contact their own insurance company to inform them that they will be working at home. This does not usually result in an increase in premium and it is unlikely that working from home will affect cover. The employee is responsible for any increase should this occur.

Our liability insurance will operate once the DSE self-assessment and application form have been processed and risk control measures addressed.

All accidents must be reported immediately in accordance with our Occupational Safety and Health Policy.

Employees should advise their mortgage company or landlords that they intend to work from home. The employee is responsible for any additional costs as a result.

Using a room or part of a room to work in would not normally require planning permission.

Review and revision arrangements

The policy and guidance will be reviewed on a regular basis in line with HR processes.

Individual employee hybrid working arrangements will be reviewed annually as part of the Employee Performance Review – ‘enjoy’ conversation.

Employees should familiarise themselves with the following Authority documents:

- Occupational safety and health policy
- Flexible working policy
- Absence management policy
- Information management policy framework
- Employee performance review guidance
- Working alone safely – code of practice for controlling the risks of working alone
- Accommodation framework
- Clear desk Guidance Note and Checklist
- Travel and Subsistence scheme
- Flexitime scheme

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