



Workstyles Policy

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Document summary

This policy sets out the key requirements and considerations that will enable both managers and staff to work from Council premises, or other suitable alternative locations (as agreed). All staff who are required or enabled to work from an alternative location, must comply with this policy.

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About this document:

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Key points

- The County Council aims to provide modern, efficient, and productive ways of working to better support the needs of the Council and members of staff.
- The workstyles policy recognises that many staff can carry out their role effectively from their designated workplace or alternative sites for all, or part of the time.
- The amount of time that a member of staff can work at any location will depend on the role and needs of the service. It is the manager's responsibility to define the degree of flexibility that can be allowed for any given role and within the parameters set by the manager, the individual may work from their designated workplace or an alternative location.
- It is critical that any hybrid working arrangement put in place does not impact detrimentally on the quality and continuity of service provision or the functions and activities of the Council.
- This policy can only be at its most effective when it is built on mutual understanding and trust between the Council and its staff.
- To enable hybrid working, staff are required to engage in discussions with their manager and sign up to the actions and behaviours listed in their team agreement.
- Individuals may request changes to their work pattern or other working arrangements under the Flexible Working Policy.

1. Scope

- 1.1. This policy applies to all employees in corporate departments.
- 1.2. It is not applicable to staff in schools.

2. Which policy to use

- 2.1. Requests to change working arrangements (such as working hours/days) should be considered under the Flexible Working Policy.
- 2.2. Any changes to contracts of employment that are led by the Council must be managed through the Managing Change Policy.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. The following definitions are referenced within this policy:

Designated workplace: Council premises or specific site (such as a school or country park) where the service determines the member of staff must carry out their role, all, or part of their time. This will be detailed in the contract of employment and may also be referred to as 'work base' or contractual location.

Alternative location: This includes all other Council premises or partner organisation's sites, in the community, at home or any combination of these where the member of staff may need to, or it is agreed that they can work from, to carry out their role for an agreed period of time.

Contractual homeworker: Members of staff who are appointed to a role that is carried out at, or from, home. They will be contractually required to work at, or be based at home on a permanent basis, and this will be detailed in their contract of employment on appointment. A contractual home worker does not have a dedicated Council workplace.

4. Overarching Principles

- 4.1. There are several overarching principles that have been agreed as part of the Council's flexible approach when determining a staff member's work location.
- 4.2. Work takes place at the most effective location and at the most appropriate time, depending on the needs of the role and the requirements of the service. The needs of the service will always be the paramount consideration.
- 4.3. Managers of the service will be responsible for determining whether roles or activities can be carried out at designated workplaces or alternative locations for some, or all of the time.
- 4.4. The Council will continue to provide staff with a designated workplace at Council premises or a specific site.
- 4.5. There are a number of benefits for staff to come into their designated workplace. These include team cohesion, staff wellbeing, or for collaborative work. As such, the service can require members of staff to attend their designated workplace for these purposes.
- 4.6. Within the needs of the service and the requirements of the role, a member of staff can discuss and agree their hybrid working arrangements with approval from their manager.
- 4.7. Hybrid working relies on a culture of mutual understanding, communication and trust between managers and staff.
- 4.8. A staff member's performance is results-focused and is measured through the achievement of performance outputs and objectives. This is determined and evaluated through the Maximising Performance Process.
- 4.9. Regular communication and staying connected is essential, particularly within teams that are working flexibly across a number of locations.
- 4.10. To enable our workforce to thrive in a flexible work environment, the Council commits to:
 - providing technology, space, and policies to support hybrid ways of working.
 - developing manager skills in remote management, supervision, and development of staff.
 - investing in tools and skills that improve competency and performance in a digital world.
 - setting clear guidance for meeting protocols, including when virtual, face to face or hybrid meetings are most suitable, with an emphasis on meeting virtually where suitable.

5. Benefits of hybrid working

- 5.1. There are significant benefits for staff and the Council when adopting a more flexible approach to staff workstyles and work locations. These include:
- Improved staff productivity, for example, being able to work in the best place to achieve the required outcomes and reducing time staff spend travelling to or between offices to attend meetings.
 - Improved staff health and wellbeing, for example, working at alternative locations reduces both the frequency and length of commuting time to work.
 - Better work/life balance, for example, reducing commuting time gives staff the ability to use that time for themselves.
 - Reduction in travel costs for both staff and the Council due to virtual meetings and a reduction in commuting.
 - Optimisation of the Council's investment in technology.
 - More efficient and effective use of office space.
 - Recruitment and retention of staff, through being able to offer improved ways of working that benefit staff as well as the organisation.
 - A more resilient and adaptable working culture that can respond to future challenges.
 - Contribution towards delivery of the Council's Climate Strategy by reducing business travel and employee commuting.

6. Roles and Responsibilities of Managers

- 6.1. To determine the work location(s) of a member of staff and consider whether the role, or work activities of the individual, should be carried out at a designated workplace or alternative location for some, or all of the time and/or a combination of both.
- 6.2. To liaise with their senior management team to ensure a consistent approach in the use of this policy across their service, aligned to both the departmental and workstyle principles.
- 6.3. To consider the technology that their team member(s) will require if a hybrid workstyle is agreed.
- 6.4. To ensure that staff are managed through outcomes and that management styles are adapted to suit teams working in alternative locations.
- 6.5. To manage the level of staff occupancy in the workplace and ensure that attendance is spread evenly across the working week.
- 6.6. To ensure that there are sufficient floor wardens in the office to comply with emergency evacuation procedures.
- 6.7. To create a team agreement that clearly identifies the practices and behaviours of the team when not working in the same location.
- 6.8. To approve, in advance, any requests for equipment or contributions to the cost of equipment as detailed in this policy.
- 6.9. To manage any request that cannot be agreed or resolved through the application of this policy in accordance with the formal application for flexible working process in the Flexible Working Policy.

7. Defining work locations

- 7.1. Most staff will be required to work from their designated workplace all or part of the time to be able to carry out their role effectively.
- 7.2. For many staff, their role can, at times, be effectively carried out from an alternative location.
- 7.3. Not all roles across the Council lend themselves to working from an alternative location and as such there is less flexibility that can be applied.
- 7.4. The amount of time and how often a member of staff can work from an alternative location, other than their designated workplace, will depend on the requirements of their role and business need. This may be subject to change over time depending on the needs of service.
- 7.5. Work locations are determined by the Manager and defined by the requirements of the role. Staff should discuss their work locations with their manager and agree how this will work in practice.

8. Use of alternative locations

- 8.1. Managers should talk to their team members about the most appropriate locations for them to carry out their work. For some job roles or tasks this may include the employee's home.
- 8.2. Any arrangement for working from home should be voluntary on the part of the member of staff and is subject to review in consideration of possible changing circumstances.
- 8.3. To enable home working, staff must ensure that they have access to reliable broadband and that their home is set up to enable them to work effectively. The [Home Working Self-Assessment Checklist](#) should be completed for all those who work from home.
- 8.4. When working from home, staff need to maintain an environment which is conducive to effective working whilst at home with minimal distractions. Home working is therefore not a substitute for child/dependent care or other non-work-related responsibilities.
- 8.5. Staff need to ensure that any alternative work location complies with their responsibility to respect security and uphold confidentiality.
- 8.6. Working from an alternative location can be an occasional arrangement or an agreed regular pattern of work. Employees working from other locations on specific days will still need to be available to attend their designated workplace as required by their manager e.g. to attend meetings, training or to deal with unexpected matters at work at short notice.
- 8.7. Where an employee needs to provide a service during 'normal office hours' they must be available to undertake their work within these hours, even when working from an alternative location.
- 8.8. There should be a regular review of risk assessments, job performance, standards and working practices to ensure that these remain to acceptable standards whilst the employee is working from an alternative location.

- 8.9. Employees working from home need to ensure that they comply with the provisions of the Working Time Regulations 1998 (the principles of which are embodied in the Council's Policy Statement on Working Time Regulations) regarding the maximum hours that they work each week and taking appropriate rest breaks.
- 8.10. If it is agreed that some work can be undertaken from home, staff may be entitled to make a claim directly to HMRC for tax relief towards the cost of home working. It is the member of staff's responsibility to check the requirements on the HMRC website and apply if eligible.
- 8.11. The Council has a number of drop-in centres available which can be used by staff. The drop-in centres can offer an alternative place to work and are useful for those who are travelling between meetings or provide a closer alternative to their designated workplace. Further information about the locations of the [drop-in centres](#), their use, and the facilities available can be found on the intranet.
- 8.12. There is a possibility that the organisation of an employee's work activities may have to be periodically reviewed and redefined to facilitate the use of alternative work locations. Ultimately, the needs of the service will be the key factor in determining work locations.

9. Contractual Homeworkers

- 9.1. In exceptional circumstances and where the role allows, an individual may be classed as a contractual homeworker. For a role to be classified as such, it will normally be the case that:
- the person will rarely, if ever, work in Council premises (e.g. they might attend quarterly meetings and never otherwise visit); and
 - either (a) the person does all or nearly all of their work either in their own home or (b) their work is done in the field (e.g. at variable locations determined by client need) and is supplemented by work at their home (e.g. typing up notes, preparatory reading).
- 9.2. Approval to designate an individual as a contractual homeworker must be given by a Head of Service or above.
- 9.3. For all contractual home workers, the [Home Working Self-Assessment Checklist](#) must be completed as part of the induction or at the time they are classified as contractually required to work from home.
- 9.4. Contractual home workers may on occasion, be required to visit County Council premises. Staff should be flexible in terms of the needs of their department, service, or team.
- 9.5. Contractual home workers will be required to clarify that their home insurance (whether property or contents) covers them for their home being classed as their designated workplace. A template letter is in the [Flexible Working Letter Templates](#) available on the intranet.

- 9.6. Gains in the value of homes do not usually attract Capital Gains Tax (CGT) when they are sold. However, where a part of the home is set aside exclusively for work purposes, CGT could be levied on the gain in value attributable to that part of the home when it is sold. Those wishing to avoid CGT liability may choose to ensure that their home working area is not exclusively used for work. For example, if a separate room in the home is available as a work area, leaving a folding bed or storing domestic items in the space can reduce the risk of CGT liability arising. Individuals should contact their tax office if they make building alterations and devote an entire room to their employment, as they could be liable for CGT if they sell their home.
- 9.7. It is not anticipated that any employee should experience a change to the level of Council Tax they pay because of working from home as part of their role with the County Council, nor that they should start to attract Non-Domestic Business Rates. As with CGT, such a liability is more likely to occur where parts of a property are given over entirely to work and therefore effectively cease to be part of the home. Decisions about levels of Council Tax and Business Rates are made by the Valuation Office Agency.
- 9.8. Contractual home workers should write to their residents' association, mortgage lender or landlord to advise them of the change in work practices if this is required by the terms of their rental agreement, leasehold, or mortgage. A template letter is in the [Flexible Working Letter Templates](#) available on the intranet.

10. Team agreements

- 10.1. Where teams are working across different locations, they should form an agreement that details the behaviours and practices of staff. This may include the way in which the team will communicate with each other, how work should be delivered and collected, the setting of clear targets with measurable outcomes, the planning and scheduling of work, and the working patterns of the team.
- 10.2. If alternative working locations have been agreed, individuals should ensure their managers and colleagues are aware of where they are working and how best to contact them.
- 10.3. Managers and their staff should discuss and agree how hybrid arrangements will work but the needs of the service must be met ahead of any individual/team working preferences.
- 10.4. To enable hybrid working, staff are required to engage in discussions with their manager and sign up to the actions and behaviours listed in their team agreement.
- 10.5. There are a range of tools and resources available, including guidance and training for managers on [managing remote teams](#).

11. Travel expenses and other costs

- 11.1. Travelling expenses for all staff will be reimbursed in accordance with the Council's [Travelling on County Council Business Policy](#).
- 11.2. Where a member of staff has undertaken business travel from an alternative location (include their home), the HMRC requirement to deduct normal home to designated workplace mileage must be applied.
- 11.3. Members of staff should seek to avoid unnecessary travel.

- 11.4. Contractual home workers can claim business mileage from their home address if they are required to travel to attend for work, except where their home is a considerable distance from such premises (e.g., because they live outside of the County). In this instance, a maximum mileage limit may be set by their Head of Service or above as part of the arrangement.
- 11.5. East Sussex County Council is not responsible for any incidental costs that result from the member of staff working from home or other alternative location, for example, but not limited to, broadband, heating, or electricity.

12. Insurance, mortgage, and lease considerations

- 12.1. It is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform their insurance provider, mortgage lender, or landlord of their intention to work from home if required.
- 12.2. Any additional costs incurred in relation to home insurance, a mortgage or lease agreement is the responsibility of the member of staff.
- 12.3. Staff working from home are, in general, covered in the same way as other employees under the Council's Employers and Public Liability Insurance arrangements:
- i. **Employer's Liability:** If someone working from home suffers an injury caused by the Council's negligence the claim would be dealt with under the Council's insurance arrangements.
 - ii. **Public Liability** - If through the negligence of the home worker, whilst performing duties arising out of and in the course of their employment, a third party suffers injury, loss or damage, any claim which arises, will be dealt with under the Council's insurance arrangements. Any claim made against the Council's insurance will be investigated to see if liability attaches. There is no automatic right to compensation. If in doubt, please contact the Insurance and Risk Management Officer for specific advice.

13. Security of Information

- 13.1. Employees working from alternative locations to their designated workplace must ensure the confidentiality and security of any papers, files, and documents in their keeping, including all information stored electronically.
- 13.2. Employees who have access to personal data at alternative locations must ensure that printed or paper records are locked away when not in use, computers are password protected and screen locks are put in place when away from the device. Any papers that are disposed of should be done so securely.
- 13.3. Anyone working from alternative locations must ensure they comply with the Council's information governance policies including but not limited to the [Data Protection and Information Security](#) and [Data in Transit Policies](#).
- 13.4. Employees working from alternative locations must ensure that they are able to participate in voice or video calls in a confidential environment and that conversations cannot be overheard, and laptop screens cannot be seen.

14. Health, safety, and risk assessments

- 14.1. Members of staff who are working from alternative locations must ensure that they follow the process and associated guidance, including any training and mandated checklists, that are published on the [Health and Safety Policies](#) page on the intranet.
- 14.2. Staff working at home should complete a home working [checklist](#) and email it to their manager. Information on [workstation assessments](#) will help staff to set up their workstation at home correctly, ideally completing the self-assessment form and online training.
- 14.3. If staff have any health issues that could be exacerbated by working at home, they should also complete the [home working risk assessment](#) and send it to their manager as soon as possible.
- 14.4. If the completed checklist or assessments raise concerns about the home workstation, Posture People (our preferred supplier) can complete a virtual workstation assessment to ensure it is set up correctly and to check that staff have the appropriate equipment to work from home.
- 14.5. A referral to Posture People must be made by a line manager at enquiries@posturepeople.co.uk and copy in the Wellbeing Service ESCC inbox (WellbeingServiceESCC@eastsussex.gov.uk). Upon receipt of the referral, Posture People will endeavour to undertake the assessment within 72 hours.

15. Visitors to the home

- 15.1. Contractual home workers or staff with an agreement to work from home are not expected to accommodate colleagues, managers, or customers at their home for meetings or any work-related activity. Such activities should be conducted at Council, customer, or alternative premises.
- 15.2. There may be exceptional circumstances where an employee's line manager may need to visit to discuss workplace issues or carry out health and safety checks. Such visits should be planned in advance and the frequency and purpose of such visits should be discussed and agreed by the manager and employee.

16. Provision and ownership of equipment and technology

- 16.1. All equipment, documents and materials supplied by the Council for work remains the property of the Council and is provided solely for business use. Please refer to the [Personal Use of Council Equipment Policy](#) for more information.
- 16.2. All Council equipment used at home or when working remotely must be returned when requested to a Council office for annual Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) in line with the [Electricity at Work Policy](#). Equipment must not be used if the PAT is out of date.
- 16.3. All equipment must be returned to the department when the member of staff leaves the organisation or moves into a role that no longer supports working from an alternative location.