

**Mobile Working
Policy and Guidance**

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This document sets out the Council's policy and guidance on mobile working. It is designed to assist managers and employees with mobile working arrangements.
- 1.2 Mobile Working forms part of the Council's Agile Working framework which sets out a range of different working methods which differ from the traditional working models of fixed location and regular working hours.
- 1.3 Mobile working supports the Council's strategic aim "to create an excellent council" by maximising use of the Council's land and assets, specifically through making the most efficient usage of office space and supporting employees to work away from traditional office-based accommodation.
- 1.4 The Council wishes to maximise the opportunities made available in job roles where employees or teams do not require allocated desks usually because their job roles require that they spend significant time away from the workplace.
- 1.5 Mobile working forms part of the Council's agile working framework and in many cases a mobile worker's working pattern will include working at an office-based hot desk, and/or potentially homeworking on an occasional or regular basis as part of the arrangement.
- 1.6 Mobile working is not new and in many areas of the Council there are jobs that have always entailed spending large amounts of time away from the office or workplace. However, the availability of new technology has made working at a distance viable for other jobs for which this may not traditionally have been considered.
- 1.7 The key to mobile working's effectiveness is ensuring employees are provided with the appropriate facilities and technology to enable them to work as productively as possible on-site and between appointments without the requirement to return to specific Council office.
- 1.8 Where employees do need to return to a Council office there should be facilities for them to undertake any work they need do using hot desks, rather than dedicated desks.
- 1.9 Where a mobile working arrangement also involves a degree of homeworking, both managers and employees must be familiar with the terms and conditions of the Council's Homeworking Policy.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees who may be classed as mobile workers (see definition – Section 5).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Managers have a responsibility to:

- Identify whether there is scope for jobs to be delivered more effectively and efficiently through use of technology and mobile working.
- Manage all health, safety and welfare concerns and ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken so that there is trust and confidence amongst all those involved in the mobile working arrangement.
- Manage workload, performance and maintain communication with mobile workers.
- Ensure that that appropriate equipment is provided.
- Ensure that training is provided.
- Ensure that accommodation is available as required when mobile workers return to office base.

3.2 Employees have a responsibility to:

- Comply with the working practices and arrangements put in place
- Maintain communication with line managers
- Comply with health and safety requirements and guidelines
- Utilise equipment in accordance with the terms of this policy and the ICT policy.

3.3 Full consultation should take place with employees and Trade Unions regarding any proposed changes to working practices including mobile working.

4. The Business Case for Mobile Working

4.1 Mobile Working provides a range of benefits to the Council and employees:

- Making the most efficient usage of office space and IT equipment and reducing associated costs.
- Reduction of travel and associated costs.
- Increased flexibility of service delivery.
- Job roles can be undertaken more efficiently with the potential for increased productivity with less 'downtime' during a working day.
- Potential to reduce travelling time and improve worklife balance for employees.
- Increased autonomy and flexibility for job holders.

5. Definition

- 5.1 Mobile workers are those employees who spend time working outside the traditional office environment, visiting a variety of Council or customer locations to deliver services or attend meetings, but who may require a base, at a hot desk or at home, at times through the day or week.
- 5.2 A mobile worker can potentially work from a wide variety of locations – for example at home, at a Council office hot desk, at the workplace of a partner organisation, or on-site with a client. Mobile working allows commuting and waiting time between appointments to be efficiently used for work purposes, for example by using appropriate technology to write reports or respond to emails remotely, without necessarily requiring a return to a base or a specific base.
- 5.3 Mobile workers should not, unless in exceptional circumstances, maintain a permanent office or desk space. For times when they are required to return to their designated workplace they will be able to use hot desks. Alternatively, they may be able to work from home in between appointments or from other Council buildings or offices which may be convenient to them.

6. Information and Communication Technology

- 6.1 The Council will supply the employee with the equipment required to enable them to undertake their role away from their traditional office base.
- 6.2 It is recognised that managers may not always be aware of the technical possibilities and options that are open to them when considering the introduction of mobile working.
- 6.3 Managers are advised to contact IT Services to discuss their team's technology requirements and to advise on the implementation of mobile working.
- 6.4 The Council's ICT equipment must not be used by anyone other than the employee (e.g. colleagues in the Council or its partner organisations, friends and family members).
- 6.5 All policies of the Council apply to all employees regardless of their work style – mobile workers should particularly familiarise themselves with the Council's Code of Practice for Use of Internet and Electronic Mail Facilities and the ICT Security Policy ([link](#)).

7. Managing Mobile Workers

- 7.1 It is important that managers are able to monitor the performance of employees so that the effectiveness of the mobile working arrangement can be evaluated. The key principle is that there must continue to be a clear benefit to the Council.
- 7.2 When workers spend significant amounts of time away from the workplace, some of the usual indicators for performance – a reassuring presence and visible activity - are not there.
- 7.3 Building trust, motivating and engaging staff is likely to need a different approach and one less based on personal contact.

Performance Management

- 7.4 For mobile working arrangements both manager and employee must have a clear understanding and agreement of how the working arrangements should work and what the responsibilities and expectations of all involved are in ensuring the new arrangements are carried out.
- 7.5 The task of performance management may be more challenging as it has to focus on outcomes rather than time. Managers will need to consider establishing specific indicators to enable measurement of productivity; quality of work; service standards and timeliness.
- 7.6 Whilst the degree of specification may vary with role, it is vital to get detailed agreement on objectives and how performance is to be assessed.
- 7.7 This will also ensure that the employee has a manageable workload and that they know what is expected from them in terms of performance.

Communication

- 7.8 One of the biggest challenges for managers and employees is maintaining effective communication in a working arrangement where, depending on the particular arrangement in place, they may not see each other as regularly as they would in a more traditional working relationship.
- 7.9 Managers should be aware that systems of communication within departments or teams can often be informal and so it may be harder for mobile workers to keep up with latest information or to be consulted with.

- 7.10 Mobile staff also may miss the technical support and access to knowledge of colleagues and managers unless provision is made for this.
- 7.11 Managers should be aware that mobile workers may be uncertain about whether they are doing the right things, and without other colleagues for comparison, may have difficulty knowing whether their performance is acceptable and that they are achieving adequate results.
- 7.12 Managers therefore need to ensure that communication protocols are put in place to ensure that important job related information can be exchanged regularly, and that their employees remain briefed on corporate and team developments.
- 7.13 The usual one-to-one meetings and team briefings, may be supplemented by regular telephone calls, regular e-mails with progress reports so that both manager and employee can retain a strong working relationship.
- 7.14 Keeping in touch through regular reports and meetings should assist in overcoming any fears managers may have of loss of control, and reduce any ambiguity about the role and performance of mobile workers. Keeping in touch will also benefit the employee by ensuring they understand how the working arrangements will be managed and the expectations and responsibilities of the role. Employees can also be kept informed of any changes or updates within the office/service.
- 7.15 In addition to remote means of communicating, managers must ensure that regular meetings throughout the year are organised. This is important so that a more detailed discussion of progress, complex tasks or issues, and to deal with any concerns from either side.
- 7.16 It is expected that all routine meetings would take place at the office base. However, managers can also request employees to attend meetings at different venues, ensuring that adequate notice is given to the employees.
- 7.17 Managers with employees who are moving to a more agile way of working, including mobile working should be aware that some employees may be uncomfortable with change and may take time to get used to not having a permanent desk, being office based and working alongside their colleagues.
- 7.18 They may need extra support during the transition period to get used to new ways of working.

Hours of Work/Availability

- 7.19 Employees and managers should agree an appropriate working pattern.

- 7.20 Mobile workers are eligible to remain within the Flexible Working Hours Scheme.
- 7.21 There must be clarity about the times during which an employee must be available for contact and about any requirement for the employee to make regular contact with the manager/office. At the same time, there should be rules about acceptable and unacceptable contact, remembering that the employee has the right to privacy out of hours.
- 7.22 Variation of the agreed working pattern must be agreed with the manager in advance. Requests from mobile workers to change their hours of work i.e. to part time, job share or full time) will be treated in the same way as office based employees.

Health, Safety and Welfare

- 7.23 Managers have a duty of care for the health, safety and welfare of employees regardless of the working arrangements in place and even where contact with employees may be less frequent than regular and more traditional working arrangements.
- 7.24 Managers must be aware that "out of sight out of mind" can put employees at risk if hazards are not properly considered and assessed.
- 7.25 Managers need to discuss potential hazards and agree what risk controls are in place to avoid potential harm. The main issues to consider and assess will be working with display screen equipment, lone working situations, the working environments they will encounter, manual handling, stress, travelling/driving and personal security.
- 7.26 Managers and Employees can seek advice from the Health and Safety team guidance is available via the health and safety link on the intranet to all the Health and Safety Management Arrangements.
- 7.27 In undertaking risk assessments, specific consideration should be given to those mobile workers who may also be 'lone workers'.
- 7.28 The Health and Safety Executive define lone working as "Those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, either employees who work separately from others within an establishment or mobile workers who work away from a fixed base".
- 7.29 Although there is no specific legislation in relation to lone working, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to carry out a risk assessment in relation to all significant hazards faced by its employees.
- 7.30 Managers and employees must consider the guidance set out in the Council's Lone Working Policy which outlines the roles and responsibilities of managers who have employees that work alone and

the risk assessment procedure and control measures that must be followed, including providing instruction, information and training.

8. Travel Expenses

- 8.1 The Council's policy for claiming car mileage applies to mobile workers.
- 8.2 Mileage or other travel costs will not be payable on business journeys from home to the normal administrative base or designated administrative base. (An employee may be designated an administrative base if they do not have a normal administrative base).
- 8.3 However, mileage can be claimed from the individual's home address to a work site, if by starting or ending the journey at home the mileage is more than their home address to their normal place of work.
- 8.4 Therefore, if mobile workers are travelling regularly to offices or sites within the borough on daily basis they should ensure that they deduct their normal home to work mileage from the claim.
- 8.5 If an employee lives outside of the Wirral Council boundary then they will only be able to start claiming business mileage incurred, over and above the distance from borough boundary to their normal place of work.

9. Training and Development

- 9.1 It is important that mobile workers do not miss out on regular training and development opportunities, including team development, due to their working arrangements. It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that mobile workers are informed of any learning and development opportunities.
- 9.2 There are also fewer opportunities to learn from others and to engage in networking and social activities that give access to information, opportunities, innovative ideas, clients, senior staff etc. Managers must therefore ensure that mobile workers are kept informed of any changes and are kept up to date with the progress and performance of the team.
- 9.3 It is recognised that there may be training and development requirements for managers and employees arising from the introduction of mobile working arrangements.
- 9.4 This may be around the increased use of IT and technology which are a requirement of mobile working and both managers and employees will need to develop basic competences in those areas if there are any skills gaps.
- 9.5 Mobile workers may also raise issues of time management, communication skills and, for managers, potential development areas

around management styles and methods as managing remote workers may require managers to develop new skills and styles which are more appropriate to the circumstances.

- 9.6 In particular, as set out above, managers are likely to need to develop skills around setting performance standards and objectives, developing output based performance measures for employee and managing by objectives.
- 9.7 Manager and employees must discuss training and development requirements at the outset of any mobile working arrangement and ensure that this is also discussed regularly.

10. Contracts of Employment

- 10.1. All employees of the Council have the same contractual rights regardless of which agile work styles apply to them. Terms and conditions will remain the same, except where these have been specifically varied and agreed to by the employee e.g. in relation to place of work.

11. Evaluation and Review

- 11.1 Managers must ensure that mobile working arrangements are reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure the arrangements continue to realise the benefits to the Council that were envisaged at the outset.
- 11.2 Review and evaluation processes must include employee input on the suitability and success of the arrangements for them.
- 11.3 This policy will be reviewed periodically.