

**Agile Working Policy**

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## **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 The agile working concept enables people to work in a variety of workplace options and locations, utilising home working, mobile working and hot desking. It is about making the best use of technology to support different working patterns and locations. The objective of agile working is to maximise service benefits through greater efficiency and productivity, whilst also providing benefits for the employee.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to developing agile working models in support of its strategic aim to 'create an excellent council' by maximising use of the Council's land and assets – specifically through making the most efficient use of office space and supporting employees to work away from traditional office-based accommodation.
- 1.3 The success of agile working relies largely on employees and managers. It challenges the conventional way in which some jobs are carried out by embracing technology and thinking creatively as to how things may be done differently whilst ensuring managers and employees give same consideration to all health, safety and welfare arrangements that should be provided at work.
- 1.4 This document sets out the framework for agile working, the key concepts and provides information and broad guidance on the different models of agile working.
- 1.5 This policy is supported by a number of other policies that provide more detailed information for managers and employees, including:
  - Home Working Policy and Guidance
  - Mobile working Policy and Guidance
  - Hot Desk Guidance

## **2. Benefits**

- 2.1 There are significant benefits to be gained through agile working, both for the Council and its employees:
  - A more diverse range of working patterns can be offered that enable employees to balance the responsibilities of their job with other interests outside of work.
  - Office accommodation can be rationalised more flexibly and effectively and accommodation costs reduced
  - Job roles can be undertaken more efficiently with the potential for increased productivity with less 'downtime' during a working day

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- The aims of the Council's Travel Plan are supported by reducing the overall need for travel and allowing more flexible journey times and journey types.
- Staff recruitment, retention and motivation are all likely to improve through the offer of a wider and more flexible range of working patterns to support work life balance.

2.2 Local government is facing pressure to improve the accessibility of its services, both in terms of time and locations. The Council recognises these pressures on our traditional working patterns and has put together this Agile Working Policy in response to these needs.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

3.1 Predominantly, the introduction of agile working will be driven by management at all levels to deliver the strategic aims of the Council.

3.2 Managers have a responsibility to assess and review the services that they provide on a continual basis. This includes reviewing the most effective and efficient way of delivering quality and timely services with the resources available and identifying whether there is scope for jobs to be delivered in a different way through agile working.

3.3 Agile working encourages managers to consider how working arrangements may be developed to deliver benefits to the Council and employees.

3.4 However, it is recognised that agile working arrangements can only be introduced on an individual or team basis where there is scope to do so or where employees themselves have identified the potential of changing the way in which they work.

3.5 Where agile working arrangements are introduced it is the responsibility of the manager to ensure there is clear agreement from manager and employee as to the expectations and requirements of the working arrangements.

3.6 Managers and employees have a responsibility to ensure that the terms of the agreement are adhered to, that any problems or issues are discussed, and that there is trust and confidence amongst all those involved in the agile working arrangement.

3.7 Managers and employees should be aware of their role & responsibilities within the Council Health and Safety Policy and Management Arrangements with regard to agile working.

#### **4. Criteria for agile working**

4.1 All proposals for agile working arrangements must satisfy the following criteria:

- Savings or efficiencies for the Council are made. For example, savings on office space and/or improved employee productivity and contribution.
- Levels of service, and accessibility of services are maintained or improved
- That the work activity can be done without creating additional risks to the employees health, safety or welfare
- Technological requirements can be met
- The work can be done remotely without increasing the workload of others.
- Job performance can be effectively measured and managed.
- The work can be conducted with minimal supervision.
- Effective communication can be maintained with agile worker.

4.2 Not all jobs are suitable for agile working patterns and managers have responsibility for identifying which roles may be suitable and the potential benefits this may bring.

4.3 Equally, some people may be uncomfortable with changing the traditional way in which they have worked, particularly where their dedicated desk is taken away and hotdesking arrangements are implemented, or where they are no longer situated in close proximity to colleagues. Homeworking is also a working arrangement which may not be suitable for some employees for a variety of reasons. Employees will be consulted before any new agile working arrangements are implemented and concerns should be raised with their manager.

4.4 Managers must also be aware that some staff may need extra support during the transition period.

#### **5. Agile Working: Models**

5.1 Agile working capitalises on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) advances by providing access to the software, documents, emails and telephone calls available in the traditional office base.

There are a number of models of agile working:

- **Home-based working**
- **Mobile working**

- **Hot desk working**

5.2 It is recognised that in the majority of cases, agile working will involve a combination of the above on a regular basis. This is entirely within the spirit and intention of the agile working policy as the key concept is ensuring that services are delivered flexibly and as efficiently as possible.

5.3 The models of agile working are described below:

### **Home-based working**

5.4 *Permanent or regular* home working is where the employee works at, or is based from home for significant periods of their working week – rather than a Wirral Council site or office.

5.5 These staff will be provided with all the equipment they need to do their job in their home and, whilst they will still be required to attend meetings and training at Council sites and offices as required. They will not maintain a permanent office base or desk.

5.6 Permanent and regular homeworkers will have a formal agreement with their manager setting out the key terms and conditions of the homeworking arrangements to ensure all parties are clear about their responsibilities under the arrangement.

5.7 *Occasional* home workers are based at Wirral Council sites and offices but may spend a small amount of time working from home as and when required.

5.8 Occasional home working is usually ad hoc and is associated with the delivery of a specific piece of work where certain conditions are required. For example, it may be better to work from home when high levels of concentration are required for the production of a complex piece of research or analysis when the office environment may be distracting.

5.9 Occasional home workers will not receive permanent access to any special equipment to support this type of working arrangement, although it may be helpful for individual or pool laptops to be available where such an arrangement may help a team on a regular basis.

More information on homeworking is provided in the Homeworking Policy

## **Mobile Working**

- 5.10 Mobile workers are those employees who, as part of their role, regularly visit service users and customers, or attend meetings at a variety of locations, including other Council buildings, but who may require a base at times through the day.
- 5.11 A mobile worker has the ability to work from any location (home, office, on-site) at any given time and may also utilise workspace in partner organisations where appropriate.
- 5.12 Mobile working involves utilising technology to enable employees to be productive in between site visits, meetings or other activities undertaken in the course of their work without necessarily having to return to a fixed base. It also allows employees to work 'smartly', maximise productivity, minimise unnecessary travel and unproductive time' and makes—more efficient use of office space and resources.
- 5.13 Mobile working is likely to be introduced by management where it has been identified that there is scope to change the way a job is done to bring benefits to the Council and the employee; often through the use of new technology.
- 5.14 Mobile workers will be provided with the equipment they need to do their job remotely.
- 5.15 Mobile workers do not maintain a permanent office or desk space. For times when they are required in their designated workplace they will be able to utilise hot-desking facilities. 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.
- 5.16 Mobile workers will still be required to attend meetings and training at Council sites and offices as required.
- 5.17 Where a mobile working arrangement also involves a degree of homeworking for an employee, managers and employees must be familiar with the terms and conditions of the Council's Homeworking Policy ([link](#)).
- 5.18 More information on mobile working is provided in the Mobile Working Policy.

## **Hot desk working**

- 5.19 The agile working options detailed above will be supported by 'hot desking' arrangements.

- 5.20 Agile workers that spend a large proportion of their time out of the office will not have specific desks allocated to them. Instead they will be able to utilise any desk that is free on a bank of desks set up in different locations specifically for hotdesking.
- 5.21 Managers implementing agile working in their departments should ensure that sufficient hotdesking facilities are available for their agile workers where required and should follow the guidance within the hot desk guidance and the Health and Safety Management Arrangements for Display Screen Equipment.
- 5.22 The number of hot desks will depend on the type of agile working pattern being implemented and the number of people likely to need hotdesking facilities.

## **6. Managing Agile Workers**

- 6.1 For all agile working arrangements managers must maintain a clear understanding and agreement of how arrangements should work and the responsibilities of all involved. The following factors must be considered
- **A clear business case, where appropriate including savings or efficiencies, benefits for the service and for the employee**
- 6.2 It is the overriding factor that there must be a clear benefit to the Council from agile working arrangements at the outset and throughout. This may include savings in office accommodation, increased productivity and efficiency or improved customer service levels.
- **Have a clear agreement for the hours and patterns of work**
- 6.3 Managers must ensure that there is clear understanding about working hours and ensure there is an agreement in place setting out the requirements for availability and flexibility within the working hours. Managers and employees must agree what the process is for agreeing any variation to working hours and a system for recording working time.
- **Performance Management**
- 6.4 It is critical that managers are able to monitor the performance of the employee so that the effectiveness of the agile working arrangement can be evaluated. To do this, managers will need to identify and agree measurable outcomes with the employee so that effective performance is maintained or improved within the service area.

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- 6.5 Outcomes should cover issues such as productivity; quality of work; service standards and timeliness and need to be monitored and reviewed by the manager at regular periods.
- 6.6 The most effective way of monitoring the work of an employee is to concentrate on outputs rather than inputs. This relies less on traditional "command and control" management and more on collaborative working through the agreement and regular monitoring of clear, realistic and achievable performance targets and indicators.
- **How communication will be maintained**
- 6.7 Agile working requires clear and regular channels of communication being maintained between the manager and the agile worker.
- 6.8 The manager has a responsibility to ensure that agile workers feel part of the team and are included in all communication and information provided to regular employees, and are not disadvantaged. Working arrangements and patterns should be tailored to ensure agile workers can attend meetings, Key Issue Exchanges (KIE) and all other events they need to be do their job effectively.
- **ICT requirements**
- 6.9 Agile working is largely dependent on the use of ICT to allow employees to undertake the duties of their work, and have access to all necessary information and networked systems in a place other than their normal location.
- 6.10 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 agile working in their departments and they are advised to contact IT Services to discuss technology requirements and to advise on the implementation of agile working.
- **Health and Safety requirements**
- 6.11 Managing the health, safety and welfare of agile workers is as important as it is for other workers
- 6.12 "Out of sight of mind" can put them at risk if hazards are not properly considered and assessed. Manager 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



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encounter, manual handling, stress, travelling/driving and personal security.

- 6.13 Managers and employees can seek advice from the Health and Safety Team and guidance is available from the Health and Safety Management Arrangements available on the intranet.

- **Training and development**

- 6.14 It is recognised that there may be training and development requirements for managers and employees arising from the introduction of agile working arrangements, for example, new ICT competences.
- 6.15 Agile working may also raise issues of time management, communication skills and, for managers, potential development in areas such as management styles and methods of performance management.
- 6.16 In particular, managers may need to develop skills around setting performance standards and objectives, and developing output based performance measures.

## **7. Evaluation and Review**

- 7.1 Where agile working arrangements, comprising one, or any combination of the working patterns and models set out in Section 3 are introduced, managers must ensure that the arrangement is 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.
- 7.2 Review and evaluation processes must include employee input on the suitability and success of the arrangements for them.
- 7.3 The timescale for review should be agreed by managers and employees at the outset of the arrangement but it is recommended that in all cases, the arrangements are reviewed no later than 6 months from commencement.