



# **Agile Working Policy and Procedure**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 We encourage our employees to adopt a flexible, collaborative working style which supports the delivery of effective customer service whilst also offering staff flexibility in how they work. Agile technology enables us to work remotely and allows staff to access the information and tools that they need to carry out their work at any time from any location. This flexibility means that we can utilise our accommodation more efficiently and provide an environment where teams can expand and contract over time and accommodate working with partners.
- 1.2 Some roles within the Council will require employees to have a fixed work location but for all other employees there is an expectation that they will be flexible in their work location. We are working towards achieving remote working and hot desking arrangements for the majority of staff, and for new employees the ability to work remotely (at home or other work locations) will be a contractual requirement.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 This document sets out the Policy, Procedure and standards for remote and mobile working and applies to all employees working for the Council whose work location may be flexible. Those employees who have a role which needs to be carried out in a fixed location will not be able to work remotely and this Policy and Procedure does not apply to them.

2.2 The following employees will normally be excluded from working from home:

- Employees carrying out operational roles which cannot be carried out remotely.
- Employees who are subject to formal support arrangements under the Capability Procedure.
- Employees who are subject to a formal warning under the Disciplinary Procedure for a breach of this procedure or other relevant misconduct.

2.3 Agency workers may be assigned as agile workers depending on the nature of the role, and the service should assess what equipment will be necessary for them to undertake the duties associated with the role.

2.4 This Policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all staff employed in the Council regardless of the work location and number of hours worked.

### 3. Policy

3.1. All jobs will be assessed to determine how the work needs to be carried out and each role will be categorised under the following definitions:

Category	Description
Fixed Worker	workers will have a fixed place of work and will work in a fixed office location at a fixed desk. The nature of the work dictates that work must be carried out at a particular location (e.g. acting as a 'hub' for the team, continuously responding to clients from a fixed building, delivering a service across the Borough from a fixed work base).
Agile Worker	workers who can work effectively for part of the week at a different location and can choose to split their time between home and a Council office with hot desking arrangements.
<b>Equipment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For some specialist packages, such as CAD, fixed desktop computers are required and these will be based at a fixed desk location.</li> <li>• Otherwise, all employees are provided with laptops that can be used with desktop docking stations at any desk across any Council offices, or for homeworking. The laptops will pick up the corporate wifi automatically from any Council office and employees will use personal wifi when working from home.</li> <li>• When working from home employees will need to use the Council provided laptop as they will be unable to use personal devices to connect to Council systems.</li> <li>• Telephony is built into the laptops provided.</li> </ul>	

3.2. The working pattern for Agile Workers will be determined through an assessment of a

range of factors affecting the role and the wider team, or service. This will include the need for office cover, need for collaboration with other staff, and whether someone has managerial or supervisory responsibilities. As a general guide staff are expected to attend the workplace for at least half of the working week but we recognise that work patterns may vary at different times.

- 3.3. For new employees, agile working will be a contractual requirement if the job is assessed as suitable for agile working arrangements
- 3.4. No existing employee whose job is assessed as suitable for an agile working arrangement will be required to work away from the office environment if they choose not to do so. All existing staff (at the time of this policy being adopted) choosing to become agile workers, do so on a voluntary basis.
- 3.5. Employees who work under an agreed agile working arrangement will be expected to do so on a permanent basis or until operational requirements are redefined. Because of office accommodation requirements it will not always be possible to allow employees to change to different office working arrangements. However, it is recognised that employees' circumstances can change, and a manager may agree to a change to the agile working arrangement, and these should be assessed on a case by case basis.
- 3.6. Employees will be provided with ICT support, including equipment (Laptop, riser, keyboard, mouse), software, training and technical support and advice, as appropriate to their work style. Arrangements will be put in place to preserve continuity of all ICT systems which agile workers rely on to carry out their jobs effectively.
- 3.7. Employees who work at home as part of their working arrangement will be provided with advice and information on appropriate insurance (see 15.3).
- 3.8. Employees working away from the office (at home or at other work locations) must be logged into MiCollab and be able to receive telephone calls through both Teams and MiCollab during pre-defined working hours.
- 3.9. Employees who volunteer to become agile workers or new employees who are recruited as agile workers are expected to provide themselves with a suitable workspace within the home where they can work effectively (e.g. in a quiet location, at a workstation with an adjustable chair and any specialist equipment that they need). All working environments (including the home 'office') will be subject to a risk assessment to ensure the health and safety of relevant employees. Employees may be prevented from working from home where their workspace within the home has been assessed as not compliant with health and safety requirements.
- 3.10. Teams will have designated work areas and lockable storage and individual lockers will be provided. The team managers will implement a desk booking system within the designated areas.
- 3.11. Council office locations which accommodate agile workers will have adequate arrangements for 'flexi-desks', including workstations (laptop docking and PCs), meeting spaces, and any other requirements as agreed with the line manager. Other specified Council workplaces may be identified to provide 'touch down' spaces for agile workers.
- 3.12. All employees working at home must have suitable child care/dependant care

arrangements in place (see 5.6).

- 3.13. All equipment provided to the employee is for the exclusive use of that employee (i.e. not for use by family/friends).
- 3.14. Managers and employees will be provided with procedures, training, and support, as necessary, to ensure that performance and conduct can be managed for agile workers.

#### **4. Procedure for approving Office, Agile and Homeworking Arrangements**

- 4.1. The line manager, in conjunction with the Service Leader, will determine the category of each job role within their team. Working patterns will then be agreed and approved by the Director.
- 4.2. Each employee will be notified of the manager's assessment and employees will commence the new working style. Managers will discuss any concerns that the employee may have.
- 4.3. The line manager will meet individual employees, as necessary, to discuss the implications of transferring to agile working, and will ensure that they have access to any relevant guidance documents. HR or ICT can provide further information or answer specific queries.
- 4.4. New employees will be required to work from home or work remotely unless the post is assessed as an Office Worker. There may be exceptions to this, and these will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
- 4.5. If an employee cannot work remotely due to a change of circumstances a fixed office base will be considered if there are sound reasons that affect the employee's ability to work flexibly. The Service area will incur any cost associated with the transfer to non-flexible arrangements.
- 4.6. In cases where the employee has been excluded from working from home (see 1.4 above), in some circumstances the line manager may, in conjunction with the Service Leader, determine that agile working may commence or continue. This decision should take account of the operational needs of the service, the nature of the problem, and be subject to suitable management arrangements being in place.
- 4.7. Agile working arrangements may be suspended for short periods for operational reasons, after consultation with affected employees.

#### **5. Hours of work**

- 5.1. Employees working away from the office must work between 7.30am and 7.00pm Monday to Friday as specified in the Council's Flexible Working Scheme, unless the post specifically requires work to be carried out outside these hours, or where alternative arrangements have been agreed with the line manager subject to service provision.
- 5.2. As a public service there is a need for customer demand to be serviced during normal working hours. Full-time employees should always be at work between the core hours of 10.00 am to 12.00 pm and 2.30 pm to 3.30 pm and must take a lunch break of at least ½ hour between 12.00 noon and 2.30 pm unless otherwise agreed

with their line manager. Core hours will not apply where alternative working practices are currently in place to support the business need or operational requirements. The working hours of employees working under these arrangements are reflected in their contracts of employment.

- 5.3. For part time employees, the line manager and employee should agree the normal daily working hours, during which period the employee should be contactable by telephone and email, as appropriate.
- 5.4. Hours worked should be recorded on the electronic time-recording spreadsheet.
- 5.5. The line manager may agree with the employee reasonable 'time out' during working hours in order to improve work life balance (e.g. to take children from school to an after-school activity, walk the dog or attend appointments). This should be reflected in the employee's time-recording spreadsheet.
- 5.6. Employees working from home must confirm their childcare/dependant care arrangements with their line manager, where these apply. Homeworking must not be seen as a substitute for other childcare/dependant care arrangements, and employees working from home should not do so whilst in sole charge of children/other dependants requiring care and supervision unless as an agreed 'time out'. Staff with parental responsibilities should be aware of the NSPCC guidance on leaving children at home alone <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/in-the-home/home-alone/#>. This guidance should be followed in determining whether your child can be left unsupervised to enable you to carry out your job efficiently and effectively without undue distraction.
- 5.7. All employees have a responsibility to adhere to the Working Time Regulations (WTR) with respect to weekly working hours and rest breaks. Line managers should monitor the number of hours employees are working flexibly to ensure that WTR are not breached.

## **6. Contact and cover**

- 6.1. Line Managers should ensure that employees are clear on the standards that apply to them locally in terms of contact, availability, telephone cover, office cover, working from home etc.
- 6.2. Employees who are unable to work due to being unwell should contact their line manager in accordance with the normal Sickness Absence procedure regardless of the location they are working from.
- 6.3. All employees working flexibly should be contactable by the line manager and other officers of the Council during their normal working hours or the hours specified in their Outlook Calendar. Where appropriate, they should also be contactable by customers/clients. Agreed 'time out' should clearly be blocked out in the Outlook calendar to indicate that the employee cannot be contacted during these hours.
- 6.4. All employees should keep their Outlook calendars up to date with their location and times of meetings and make them available to the whole team or service.
- 6.5. All employees should adhere to the Council's Telephony Usage Standards. Suitable personal voicemail messages should be recorded so that callers have the right

information if the employee is unavailable or away from work. Employees' telephone numbers should be displayed in the email sign off after the job title and should be formatted as landline number followed by a council mobile (if applicable).

- 6.6. Employees should log into MiCollab when at work. This ensures that calls to their telephone extension are routed to and from their preferred device (laptop with or without headset, work mobile as appropriate).
- 6.7. Agile workers may be required by the line manager to participate in a rota system to cover office hours or essential services such as customer help lines and duty systems. This requirement will be determined on a case by case basis in each workplace/team.
- 6.8. Agile workers should plan their work accordingly to ensure that they do not rely on colleagues to carry out tasks that have to be undertaken at the office base, for example printing and scanning documents.
- 6.9. Agile workers will be required to attend meetings, training, seminars etc. as appropriate to the job, and to provide reasonable cover for absent colleagues at the request of the line manager. This may be at short notice and require the employee to attend the office or other work location if working remotely.

## **7. Office environment**

- 7.1. Agile workers will be allocated a 'designated office' which is deemed to be their place of work when not working from home or at other locations.
- 7.2. The Council will provide workstations (also known as 'flexi-desks') with desktop PCs or the ability to plug in laptops as necessary, within designated offices, for Agile workers to use when they are in the office. They will be required to use whichever convenient workstation is available and will not have the right of exclusive use of a particular workstation. All flexi-desks should be cleared at the end of the working session and left clean and tidy for the next occupant.
- 7.3. Agile workers will have access to lockable storage in the designated office for their personal files, papers, ICT equipment and stationery.
- 7.4. Other Council offices/properties throughout the Borough may also provide temporary 'touch down' workstations with facilities for laptops and access to the Council's ICT systems. These will be available for use on an ad hoc basis by Agile workers.
- 7.5. Where an Occupational Health assessment has determined that an Agile worker requires specific workstation equipment to carry out their work, they may be given priority use of a specific workstation if this is the only practical way to provide it. However, this may limit the designated offices at which the worker can work.

## **8. Team ethos**

- 8.1. Good communication is essential to agile working and under flexible working

arrangements it will be the manager's responsibility to ensure that they maintain team ethos within their team. Managers will therefore need to consider:

- The use of effective communication which may include regular contact and supervision meetings, updates, team meetings, informal break chats.
- Planning team building and team activities.
- Inducting new staff members into the team including their socialisation into the team.
- Ensuring emotional support is available as required either through access to managers or through the introduction of a buddy system.
- Creating opportunities for team working, mentoring, and training opportunities.

Managers are able to access support and training in maintaining team ethos through e-learning on managing a flexible workforce, and the Managing a Remote Workforce Resource Pack which is currently being developed.

## **9. Management of performance**

9.1. Managers must put in place arrangements to ensure that the performance of each employee can be managed effectively without continuous direct supervision. Under remote working arrangements, performance management and regular contact is more important and therefore needs to be more planned and formalised.

9.2. Performance management should include;

- Regular 1:1 meetings with the employee to discuss work issues, including progress towards objectives. These should occur at least once every 4 to 6 weeks, and give the manager and the employee the opportunity to raise any matters of concern.
- The use of updates between managers and employees in between supervision meetings through effective communication.
- The use of 'SMART' work objectives in performance review and 1:1 meetings.
- A Personal Development Plan (PDP) which provides the employee with opportunities to learn and develop in the role, which is regularly reviewed with the manager.
- Regular feedback from customers and other data on work output (where appropriate).
- Effective communication mechanisms such as team briefings, team meetings, team building days etc.
- Providing support mechanisms and a supportive environment to staff who find remote working challenging.

9.3. Agile working arrangements require employees to be well-organised and motivated, with clear objectives and timescales for achieving them. Management of Agile workers must take into account the need for support, and training if necessary, to manage their own workload without direct supervision.

9.4. If the line manager has any concerns about the employee's conduct or performance, these should be raised as soon as possible with the employee. The line manager should consider with the employee whether any additional advice or support is required to help them to reach the required standards. Consideration should be given as to whether the agile working arrangement should be suspended after taking advice from HR.

- 9.5. Serious concerns about underperformance should be addressed through either the Capability Procedure, or the Disciplinary Procedure if the behaviour constitutes misconduct.
- 9.6. Managers and employees are able to access training, support and advice on the effective management of agile working arrangements through the corporate training programme and HR.

## **10. Equipment**

- 10.1. The Council's ICT service will provide support and advice to an employee working remotely however the service is unable to support an employee's home internet connection. Where an employee's home internet connection does not work they must contact their line manager who should advise them that they need to come into the office to work until the problem is resolved.
- 10.2. Agile workers must have broadband installed with a wireless router or a wired (R45 Ethernet) network connection. Employees who do not wish to purchase broadband may not be allowed to work from home. Employees should not use Council-issued mobile phones to access the network when working remotely for any significant length of time.
- 10.3. Equipment supplied by the Council is for business purposes. Employees should refer to the ICT Policy regarding the use of Council equipment for personal use for more information. The equipment must not be used by anyone (e.g. members of the family, friends etc) other than the employee.
- 10.4. Where Council owned equipment requires maintenance or repair, this must only be carried out by the Council's ICT Service.
- 10.5. For security and support reasons employees will not be provided with a home printer unless in exceptional circumstances a business case for home printing has been investigated and approved.
- 10.6. All Council mobile workstations (Laptops/Tablets) must be connected to the Guildford Borough Council Network from a Council office at least once every month for an hour to receive updates and patches.

## **11. Expenses and allowances**

- 11.2 Employees will not be entitled to any allowances or reimbursement of utility bills for working from home.
- 11.3 Mileage is not payable when the Agile worker attends the designated office base. Any other mileage incurred will be paid at the relevant mileage rate depending on the reason for travel and any car user status attached to the post.
- 11.4 Mileage is claimed from the designated office base and if attending site visits from home the normal home to work mileage should be deducted from the mileage claim.

## **12. Health and safety and risk assessment**

- 12.1 Most of the regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 apply to employees working at home as well as to employees working at Council accommodation.
- 12.2. Managers have a responsibility to ensure that a health and safety risk self-assessment is undertaken by the employee concerned of the work area in the home to ensure that the work can be undertaken safely without endangering the health of the worker or their family.
- 12.3. The Workrite on-line Homeworking Assessment for Mobile and Flexible Working should be completed as a joint exercise between the line manager and employee. Employees have responsibility for implementing any actions identified in order to reduce/mitigate risks in their home and to make their work environment safe. The cost of any adjustments to the home working environment to meet health and safety requirements should be borne by the employee.
- 12.4. The Council will provide a workstation at the office base that is fully compliant with all health and safety requirements. Where staff need to purchase additional equipment to ensure that their home environment is fully compliant, the Council will reimburse up to £100 towards this. If employees are unable to satisfactorily complete the homeworking assessment, they will not be able to work from home.
- 12.5. Employees with particular needs will be assessed by a trained workstation assessor or Occupational Health. Recommendations will be made about specific equipment needed (e.g. special computer mouse, or a specific type of chair). This equipment will be provided for the employee to use at their main work location. If the main work location is the office, the cost of providing additional/specialist equipment for working at home will be considered however if this cost is judged unreasonable, the Council may determine that the worker should be required to work in the office. Prior to making this decision the line manager should seek advice from Human Resources.
- 12.6. Managers should be reviewing health and safety on a regular basis and should be discussed on a frequent basis during 1:1 meetings. Where there are concerns appropriate advice should be sought.
- 12.7. Where employees are visiting clients/sites etc. they must ensure they make frequent contact with their office, usually after each visit in line with the Service's Lone Working Policy. <https://intranet.guildford.gov.uk/article/23634/Lone-working-and-violence-at-work-management-requirements>
- 12.8. Any accidents whether they occur in the workplace, whilst working from home or on a visit should be reported to the line manager as normal and recorded on an accident report form.
- 12.9. Electrical equipment supplied by the Council should be regularly tested, in line with the annual frequency at the employee's designated office location.
- 12.10. Employees must never use handheld mobile phones or email devices whilst driving and employees should be stationary when making or receiving telephone calls whilst driving. Please refer to the Vehicle Fleet Policy for further information <https://intranet.guildford.gov.uk/article/23342/Vehicle-Fleet-Policy>
- 12.11 If the line manager determines that a new employee cannot safely work at home,

they must work in the office at a flexi-desk.

### **13. Corporate standards**

- 13.1. All employees should respect others when it comes to the working environment and be aware of how their behaviour might impact on others working in a flexible environment. It is recommended that locally services agree to a list of standards that are then communicated to employees to follow.
- 13.2. The standards below represent the minimum that is expected from employees, it is not intended to be an exclusive or exhaustive list and should be used as the basis for local agreements:
  - Be aware of noise levels in the office.
  - Leave all flexi-desks clean and clear for the next user.
  - There should be no attempt to 'claim' or personalise flexi-desks.
  - 'Fixed' desks should be left clear when employees are on leave to allow other employees to use them.
  - Time keeping should be adhered to both at the start and end of meetings as a courtesy to those attending the meeting as well as to the next user of the room.
  - Leave meeting areas tidy (e.g. clearing up dirty cups at the end of a meeting)
  - Avoid eating smelly foods at desks.
  - Avoid having meetings at desks as this can disturb others. Where possible, meetings should be held either in meeting rooms or in break-out areas.
  - Earphones should be used for Teams meetings attended at the desk to reduce noise levels.
  - Where problems develop with working environments these should be reported using the management structure in place to resolve issues as they arise.

### **14. Security**

- 14.1. Employees must ensure that all Council data and equipment (including laptops, handheld email devices, mobiles phones etc.) is stored securely, and that it is not at risk of loss or theft. Guidelines for employees on data security when working away from the office is provided in the [ICT Security Policy](#) .

### **15. Liability**

- 15.1. Employees working away from the office are covered by the Council's insurance policy for employer's liability and personal accident in the same way as office-based employees.
- 15.2. Equipment supplied to employees working away from the office is covered by the Council's insurance arrangements providing it is used for work purposes only, and in line with manufacturer's instructions.
- 15.3. All employees working from home for part of their working week should contact their own insurance company to advise that they will be working from home. This would not usually result in an increase in premium. The Council will not reimburse any increase in premium should this occur.

- 15.4. If an employee is home working in rented accommodation, they should advise mortgagees or landlords that they intend to work at home. However, using a room or part of a room to work in would not normally require planning permission. Working from home should not affect Council Tax liability.

## 16. Changing circumstances

- 16.1. When one of the circumstances below arises, the Council reserves the right to reconsider the working arrangements under which the employee works. No changes will be made without consulting the individual concerned.
- The employee moves to a different job role, either permanently or on a secondment or acting up basis. The suitability of the new role for agile working will need to be assessed.
  - The employee moves home. Arrangements for homeworking will need to be reassessed.
  - The Council undertakes a reorganisation of the work area. All job roles will need to be reassessed in the light of changes to job profiles and person specifications.
- 16.2. Managers are responsible for reclaiming equipment where an employee leaves or moves posts in order for it to be reallocated to the next post holder.
- 16.3. Managers are responsible for keeping a record of work styles in their team and informing HR of any changes.

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