



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Hybrid Working A Framework for Accountable Managers

Gweithio Croesryw Fframwaith ar Gyfer Rheolwyr Atebol

**Os hoffech dderbyn gohebiaeth mewn perthynas â'ch cyflogaeth yn
Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'ch Swyddog AD dynodedig**

Version	Date	Action
Version 1	July 2021	Draft Policy
Version 2	August 2021	Amended Policy (including Accountable Manager feedback)
Version 3	September 2022	Amended following further feedback from Accountable Managers

Introduction – empowering our managers

We have developed this Framework for Hybrid Working, following the clear feedback from our employees who have worked from home, for all or some of the time during the Covid 19 Pandemic, and from you, our Accountable Managers, and the detailed steer you have provided of how you want to manage and arrange the work of your teams moving forward.

We are clear that this new way of working must enable our employees to work more flexibly, working where, when and how they choose to maximise their productivity, as well as improve their work life balance. We are also clear that we need to empower Accountable Managers to make the decisions about how work is organised and services are delivered.

The original Framework took account of your feedback, that you do not want prescriptive policy arrangements, rather you want to work to a set of principles, that you will apply fairly and consistently within your own teams, but with the ability to adapt working arrangements to suit the needs of your own service. However, once you had implemented hybrid working in practice, you provided us with further information and we have amended this Framework to include guidance which you felt was important and which resolved recurring queries throughout the trial period.

Introducing hybrid working

From 1st September 2021 Accountable Managers have been empowered to develop hybrid working arrangements to suit the needs of the services and employees they manage. To begin with, the new working arrangements that you agree with your employees were on an **informal**, and **flexible** basis to enable you and your teams to evolve your working arrangements over time.

As this was a new way of working, it was important that we did not move too quickly to set arrangements in stone. However, these new working arrangements now have been in operation for around 8-9 months and during this time you have had the opportunity to try different arrangements to suit your services and your employees.

The HR Team are working on a process that will enable you, to confirm the contractual working patterns of your team(s). . We will also be reviewing our employment policies and processes in a joint exercise with our recognised trade unions, to ensure that they support the hybrid workplace and empower managers rather than instruct you.

In the meantime, we will keep listening to you, and adjusting this framework to ensure that it is fit for purpose as we move into the exciting future world of work.

Workstyles in a Hybrid Workplace

Within our Hybrid workplace we have the following workstyle examples:

Fixed Workplace - this describes an employee who predominantly works from a fixed location workplace and for the majority of the time, is required to work within prescribed hours (e.g. office hours, rota or shift hours). This type of workstyle is best suited to jobs that can only be performed at the fixed workplace, e.g. because of specialist plant / machinery / technology requirements or linked to a requirement to be located where their customers are – this could be a reception or cash desk for instance. It also describes our school employees.

Frontline / community based – this describes our employees who work in our communities. These employees will have a designated workplace and for the majority of their time, work within prescribed hours (e.g. rota or shift hours).

Mobile Hybrid Worker: this describes an employee who has a designated workplace but, whose work can be carried out from a number of locations, e.g. from an office or site, in the community, from another Council or partner agency site or from home (and they may spend some or most of their time at home). This work style is not tied to a fixed work location and the employee might choose to undertake duties from an alternative location to minimise travel time and costs, other than when required to be in a particular place at a particular time by their manager. Please note service needs and requirements will always be a priority. The employee works within prescribed hours (e.g. office, rota or shift hours).

Agile Hybrid Worker: this describes someone who will work from a variety of locations for some or all of their working time. This could be from home, 'on the move', from a Council workplace, in the community or client / partner premises. Again, they may spend some or most of their time at home. There is no requirement or reason for the employee to attend the normal fixed workplace or to carry out their work within specific times, **other than when service requirements dictate or when required to by their manager**. Employees have the flexibility to carry out their work tasks on any days, at any times and to choose where they work so that outputs and outcomes are maximised, as well as the most cost-effective way of working achieved. They are not confined to 'when' they must carry out their work, although this must be in agreement with their manager. (these employees would not be part of the flexi scheme). Please note service needs and requirements will always be a priority.

There will be times where employees will be required to attend an office location for team meetings or key service/project work and this will be arranged between the Accountable Manager and the individual. Employees will be given reasonable notice unless an emergency situation arises which requires their expertise.

Developing hybrid teams

Working in a hybrid way, where employees may be working from different locations or even at different times, will require **planning** and **organising** if it is to be successful. There are few precedents to follow, and it is likely that some experimentation will be required to determine just what will work in a particular context. Exactly how to implement hybrid working will vary from service to service, and even from team to team – these new ways of working should be tailored to the unique needs of the individual, team or service.

Your role as Accountable Manager will be key to establishing new ways of working by consulting with your team and ensuring that they work in practice, with the needs of the service prioritised.

As Accountable Managers you will be able to develop a set of principles based on the Hybrid Working Framework to suit the needs of your service whilst also consulting with your team/s. These principles will supplement the Framework and will provide your team/s with more in-depth guidance on how you expect hybrid working to work in practice. Support can be provided by your designated HR Officer should you require it.

Provided below are the key principles for enabling effective hybrid working.

Principle 1:

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Effective hybrid working is facilitated by strong communication. Communication needs to be more intentional and planned in a hybrid environment, as there might be fewer casual or ad hoc conversations. Exactly how a hybrid team needs to communicate will vary depending on its size and the types of roles being undertaken.

Communication in a hybrid team requires a different approach to communicating with an office based or fully remote team. However, the key principles of good communication remain: employees need to have the information that they need, in a timely way, to allow them to successfully undertake their work.

Good communication is a shared responsibility across the team; engage the team in a discussion about the best ways to communicate. Consider some of the following:

- Discuss and agree arrangements for meetings. How often does the team need to meet, and for what purpose? For example will you have weekly or fortnightly check-ins, 1:1's or team meetings.
- It can be difficult for new starters to the Council or team when working in a hybrid way. We have developed a Guidance Document on [Engaging New Starters Remotely](#) which may be helpful to you, with an associated infographic for easy reading. A Virtual Working Guidance which can be found [here](#) may be useful to signpost to new starters.
- Agree the process for sharing working arrangements and locations. Agree a mechanism for sharing who is working where and when. This could include using status updates, auto-signature messages, or shared calendars or even a 'people on a page' plan sharing working days, locations and hours.
- Agree when and how different forms of communication should take place. Is a meeting the right format for a status update, or should these be done via email? What other ways are there to communicate other than meetings? When should meetings be online, and when should they be face-to-face? What communication should take place synchronously (at the same time) and what could be done asynchronously such as via an online update, so that people can access the information at their convenience?
- One of the most important factors in communicating with a hybrid team is ensuring that information reaches everyone, wherever and whenever they are working. Equal access to information and knowledge is key to preventing communication issues and feelings of unfairness.

- Hybrid working may lead to some employees feeling isolated or lonely, it is therefore important to encourage teams to interact on Yammer and Microsoft Teams to enable your team to feel a sense of community even when working at home. You may also want to guide employees to the Council's Staff Health and Wellbeing pages, or signpost to services such as [Wellbeing Through Work](#).
- Communicate to your teams on how they can utilise desk space if they wish to work in the office and where they can work collaboratively and face to face with their team members.
- You may want to communicate clearly what your expectations are to your team whilst hybrid working and attending virtual meetings. [Link here](#).
- Communicate to your team on the flexi-time scheme and also the guidance on time off in lieu (TOIL) to ensure your team understand how the policy works when working hybrid. Please see Appendix A for further information on this.
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- It is important where teams are working from home to emphasise the need for regular breaks throughout the working day to ensure your employees are productive which increases engagement levels.
- To make your employees aware on how hybrid working impacts teams in relation to travel time and travel expenses, you may want to communicate the policy on mileage to your team. Please see Appendix A below.
- Communicate the expectations around caring responsibilities whilst hybrid working by acknowledging that hybrid working is not an alternative for childcare. However, managers can deal with this on a case by case basis. This is at the manager's discretion and please note service needs and requirements will always be priority. Employees should ensure that they are not the providers of their childcare during their working hours, unless otherwise agreed by their line manager on an ad hoc and emergency basis.

Principle 2:

Involve your team in developing your hybrid model

Employees may be anxious about new ways of working, especially if they want to carry on with homeworking but are unsure if this will be permitted. It will be helpful where possible to talk to your employees individually about their personal preferences for future working patterns. Please note service needs will always be a priority. Discuss:

- What tasks would need to be performed in the workplace
- Whether the employee has the necessary equipment or technology to work in a continuously hybrid way.
- What work patterns the employee would prefer

Although it may not be possible to meet all employee preferences or expectations, when people are able to work within their preferred style this can help them to be productive, support employee engagement and is also good for wellbeing.

Make clear with your team that personal preferences cannot all necessarily be met, and provide a timeline for providing more information wherever possible.

After you have gathered information on individual preferences, consider talking with your team as a group. Discussions can include some of the following:

- What worked well for our team whilst working remotely during the pandemic – what can we learn from this?
- What would hybrid working mean for our team? What would need to be in place for us to work effectively in a hybrid way?
- How can the team balance personal preference against service delivery requirements?
- What are the potential risks or challenges for our team about working in a hybrid way? How can we overcome them?
- How often does our team need to be in the office and how often can we work remotely? What would be an appropriate balance to ensure that we meet the needs of our stakeholders, colleagues or customers?
- If we work in a hybrid way, how can we ensure that we are inclusive, fair and work in a healthy way?

Principle 3:

Work together to establish new ways of team working to support the hybrid model

When you have agreed that hybrid working is possible and individual working patterns are identified, engage your team in establishing new ways of working. Remember that a move to hybrid working represents a fundamental change after what has already been a challenging period for many people. It is likely that people will experience this change in different ways. Some will be excited, others may be anxious or concerned and you will need to show empathy, concern and consideration for all points of view.

Work with your team to consider the following:

- How individual working preferences can be balanced against service delivery requirements. Work together to consider this and problem solve.
- Are there any opportunities to do work in a different way? There may be value in rethinking processes or workflows.
- What work is done best where? How can work best be organised so that individuals get the most out of their remote time (focus and deep work) and office time (collaboration and relationships).
- Consider other forms of flexibility, including time flexibility. Remember that hybrid working is just one form of flexibility. Employees can also benefit from time flexibility – or working differently to the standard 9-5. Include this in your discussions.
- Think about task allocation. Workload and opportunities need to be fairly distributed across your team. It is important to ensure that additional workload does not fall onto those who spend more time in the office, as well as making sure that opportunities are not disproportionately weighted towards this group too.
- When considering work organisation, consider how technology can help. It can support effective communication and knowledge sharing, connect people and provide innovative ways to create and collaborate. Support people in using technology where necessary.
- Ensure each employee who works in a Hybrid way completes an annual Display, Screen, Equipment (DSE) risk assessment to ensure you are complying with Health and Safety Regulations and focusing on the wellbeing of your team.

Principle 4:

Build everything on the principles of fairness and inclusion

Hybrid working can support inclusion. Greater flexibility, in both where and when people work, can open up opportunities to people who cannot work a traditional 9-5 working day, including those who have disabilities or caring responsibilities. Increased flexible work can also support the reduction of the gender pay gap.

However, if not managed properly it can lead to challenges too, including employees who are working remotely not being sufficiently included, recognised or having equal employee voice.

Consider these recommendations to support fairness and inclusion:

- **Determine on a case by case basis how to hold meetings** When some members of the team are working in the office and some are working remotely, you should consider how meetings are held. For example, if a number of employees are working from home due to prior booked appointments, you may deem it more appropriate for meetings to take place online. However, where teams are able to access the office you may deem it appropriate for meetings to take place face to face. Managers must ensure everyone has the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to meetings whether they are online, in person or hybrid meetings.
- **Ensure everyone has an equal voice**, wherever or whenever they are working. Be aware that we can tend to default to people that we can see or are in close proximity to.
- **Address conflict quickly**. It is possible that issues will arise in relation to hybrid work. This could be as a result of miscommunication or perhaps because, as a result of different roles, some employees can work remotely and some cannot. If conflict does arise, address it early, effectively and in an impartial manner, including following up as appropriate.
- **Be open and consistent** when determining who can work in a hybrid way. There will be some roles that cannot work remotely at all. There may also be some roles that can have a great deal of location flexibility and some that can only have a small amount. When deciding who can or cannot work remotely, be clear about your decisions, act consistently and communicate these in an open way.

Principle 5

Review and evaluate

These are new ways of working, and what we are asking you and your teams to do is to start making a step towards the future workplace. It would be unrealistic to expect everything to slot into place without the need for further readjustment, or even a fundamental shift in approach.

It is very important that you and your team review arrangements at regular intervals, and think about how new ways of working may be impacting, positively and negatively, on service delivery, and then responding to this as you move forward.

As you implement hybrid working and associated principles you may have agreed, it may become clear that you need other things to be in place to help you. Please contact Digital Services for any technology queries, Facilities Management for different office layouts, or email futureofwork@npt.gov.uk for changes to employment policies.

Appendix A

Travel/Working Hours/Medical Appointments/Flexitime/TOIL

Travel and Subsistence Claims

Expenses will be paid in accordance with the Travel and Subsistence Policy which you can access [\[here\]](#). Regardless of workstyle and hybrid model of working, the fixed work location (fixed centre) remains the same as that stated on the employee's employment contract. This location will apply when any travel and/or subsistence payments are claimed. The shortest route and shortest time rules apply.

Can employees work from any location?

This will vary depending on your work style and service needs. All employees have a contractual place of work (fixed centre). There will always be a requirement for you to attend your normal work location when service requirements dictate, or you are required to do so by your manager. If you work in a location that isn't your fixed base, you must consider minimising your travel time and costs. Employees must ensure there is a workspace available to them prior to attending any work location and adhere to the relevant health and safety risk assessment for that building. Employees should be mindful of confidentiality and GDPR when choosing a suitable work location and also, if attending virtual meetings should do so in a suitable environment without interruptions.

Can an employee's home be their contracted fixed location?

Regardless of workstyle and hybrid model of working, the fixed work location (fixed centre) remains the same as that stated on the employee's employment contract. This location will apply when any travel and/or subsistence payments are claimed.

Is travelling from or to home classed as working time?

It should be noted that the first and last journeys of every day, i.e. home to duty and duty to home, are classed as normal commuting and are not regarded as business travel, which is in accordance with HMRC rules. Travel time between home and the chosen work location can only be considered working time, when in excess of the normal journey time from home to the fixed centre or when you arrive at the temporary work location if this is closer. This is irrespective of the time of day in which the travelling occurred. For example, you might have started work at home and then travelled to a work location, whatever this time occurs, it is still classed as the first journey to work and vice versa. You can then only claim the additional time it has taken you to travel to (or from) this location. If your first or last journey to a work location is closer than it takes to travel to your normal fixed centre, you cannot claim any working time.

Can Employees claim mileage from home?

Employees will be reimbursed for excess mileage incurred, that is the total mileage travelled in the day deducting the mileage from home to their fixed centre.

Normal home to fixed centre mileage incurred each day must be deducted from the total business mileage claimed on **each day**.

Health Appointments

Employees should arrange medical, dental and optician appointments at convenient times so as not to disrupt the working day too much and with agreement from their manager. If there is no alternative to this taking place within the normal working day, Employees are able to claim the time they were at the appointment during the working day (up to an hour for Doctor, Dentist and Optician) and for hospital appointments, the total time spent at the hospital - this excludes any travel time.

Flexitime Scheme

The Flexi-Time Working Scheme has been revised to take account of your feedback. You can access the new scheme [[here](#)]. Accountable Managers can agree whether or not the Scheme applies to an employee, taking into account workstyle, and agreed working arrangements.

Employees who participate in the Flexitime Scheme must record their times on a daily basis and are able to take up to 2 days flexi leave (compensatory leave) each flexi period (depending on the principles agreed for the particular team). Employees who do not participate in the Flexitime Scheme and work flexibly do not have to complete a flexitime record and they are unable to take up to 2 days flexi leave (compensatory leave), they are, however, able to arrange their working time to suit their particular requirements, subject to approval from their manager as service requirements take priority.

Managers are able to vary the band-width times that best operate for their service and can choose any times between the hours of 6 am and 10 pm, subject to a fair and consistent approach being applied across the team.

Guidance on Time off in Lieu (TOIL)

There might be times where the service is facing significant pressures and managers need people to work additional hours to meet such demands. If this is the case, TOIL can be authorised.

TOIL, **without exception**, must be authorised, in advance, by the accountable manager.

It is the manager who determines whether working additional hours is necessary and not the employee. No accumulation of TOIL will be made unless management approval has been granted beforehand.

TOIL should be recorded separately from flexi-time

As work styles and working patterns are varied across services and depending when additional hours are worked, the manager would consider whether TOIL is given at plain time or enhanced time. For example, if the manager has agreed 'band widths' for the team, if an employee is required to work outside these, the manager would consider whether to give TOIL at the enhanced time as below.

The same level of enhancement will apply to TOIL as in the case for payment being made. Please see below.

Employees who are **required** to work additional hours beyond the standard working week of 37 hours will be paid at:

Monday to Friday

Time plus 30%

Saturday and Sunday	Time plus 30%
Public and	Double time
Extra Statutory holidays	(min 2 hours)

Part-time employees are entitled to the 'enhanced time' only at times and in circumstances in which full-time employees would qualify. Otherwise, a full working week for full-time employees shall be worked by a part-time employee before the 'enhanced time' is applied.

Flexible Working Hours

Where employees wish to request to work more flexibly to achieve a better work-life balance and it involves a change in their working hours, this request must be made under the Council's 'Flexible Working Policy'.

Overtime

All overtime **MUST** be agreed in advance by the manager. Due to the extension of the bandwidths in the Interim Flexitime Scheme, overtime is now payable when an employee has worked over 37 hours per week. For part time employees plain time will be paid up to and including 37 hours if a part-time employee works overtime.

Digital Infrastructure

Digital Infrastructure in Civic buildings has been adapted to accommodate social distancing and is based on staff bringing their corporate device into the office.

Appendix B

Useful Information

Staff Health and Wellbeing resources

<https://www.npt.gov.uk/22793>

Virtual Working Guidance

<https://www.npt.gov.uk/28804>

Quick Guide 1 Office Furniture & Equipment for homeworking

Quick Guide 1 - Homeworking DSE & Office Equipment

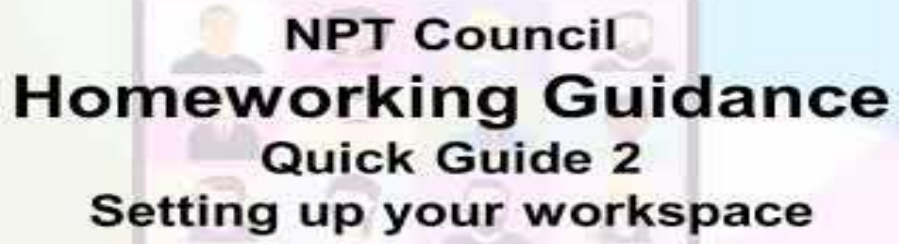


Quick Guide 2 Setting up your workspace at home

Quick Guide 2 - Setting up work space



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Homeworking Guidance
Quick Guide 2
Setting up your workspace