

Modern Ways of Working

“Home-working” Policy



1. Introduction

Council Policy

The Council is committed to providing a modern, flexible work environment to support the delivery of excellent services.

“Modern Ways of Working” involves looking at new approaches to how and where employees work, and moving away from the traditional concept of a permanent base and/or desk for all employees. These will support the delivery of excellent services and help employees to manage their work-life balance.

Home-working may be considered where this will meet the needs of the Council, its customers and employees.

Benefits

Home-working, as part of an agreed flexible working arrangement, can provide a range of benefits for the Council and its employees, including:

- Reduced costs / accommodation needs
- Reduced travelling for employees
- Greater flexibility as to the hours times worked (“work life balance”)
- Greater flexibility to cover emergencies e.g. transport disruptions
- Increased productivity

Key Principles

The introduction of Modern Ways of Working is an opportunity for managers and staff to review how work is organised within teams and at new ways of working; the key principles that will help enable a successful outcome are to:

- i) Consider the needs of your internal and external customers;
- ii) Involve all team members when reviewing how work is organised;
- iii) Be open to new ideas and to give these a chance to succeed;
- iv) Think about what support is needed and take advice;
- v) Review the situation if arrangements do not work as expected.

It is important to consider the potential impact of home working arrangements on the service and other employees e.g. maintaining cover and taking leave etc and the following principles will also apply:

- i) There are subject to the needs of the service and will be reviewed regularly, (not agreed on an open ended basis)
- ii) These will be subject to an initial trial period to ensure there is no adverse impact on service delivery or to other employees
- iii) Employees are not required to work from home and do so on a voluntary basis, (they will not be paid for electricity/telephone etc)
- iv) Employees must demonstrate that they can provide a safe and secure working environment at home

2. Home-working - Planning

General

Home-working is different to other forms of flexible working; it is reliant on the information technology available and a different approach to managing work, monitoring performance and maintaining relationships with colleagues.

The main consideration is how home-working impacts on service delivery and team working and it may not be suitable for some areas / job roles. Home working is on a voluntary basis only and is subject to regular (annual) review.

Planning

Managers should regularly review with staff how work is organised and the cover required at peak periods, as well as the arrangements for emergencies such as transport disruptions etc. (These should be set down in writing and included with the induction for new employees).

Employees need to know in advance when home-working may be considered e.g. what work can be done from home and IT needs etc. This information will also be helpful when considering applications under the statutory right of parents and carers to request flexible working.

Job Roles / Work

The most suitable job roles where home-working may normally be considered include those which:

- Work independently, have a high level of self-management and do not require close supervision
- Work out of the office / workplace each day (at meetings, site visits, with customers or working at other locations)
- Do not require constant access to files, IT databases or other confidential information

Examples of the situations when home-working may normally be considered include:

- As part of an agreed flexible working arrangement when moving into open plan / shared work accommodation
- To complete specific pieces of work (to meet urgent deadlines)
- As a reasonable adjustment for disabled staff
- As part of phased return to work from long-term sickness (to meet the new 'Statement of Fitness to Work from the DWP')
- During office moves
- There is disruption to public transport (bad weather or industrial action)
- Other disruptions to public services (pandemic flu)
- As part of an agreed flexible working arrangement (dependent on the job role) e.g. under the statutory right to request flexible working

3. Home-working – Implementation

Managing Employees

Managing employees working away from the workplace requires a different approach with performance measured by result rather than by attendance.

Employees working from home are still subject to the same performance measures, processes and objectives that apply to their colleagues. To ensure that this is applied fairly and consistently, it may be helpful to break down the duties and tasks of the job and / or look at output as defined pieces of work.

It is important to be clear from the outset as to what is required in terms of the work to be completed and timescales for doing so and remaining in contact.

Practical Considerations

There are a number of practical considerations that managers and employees need to consider and must be agreed from the outset, including the:

- Work to be undertaken and timescales for completion
- Arrangements for maintaining contact with the manager/colleagues and attendance for;
 - team meetings
 - 1 to 1's / supervision
 - training or development
- Times where employees can be contacted at home, which may be different to normal office hours, (and times they cannot be contacted)
- Employee's responsibility for complying with IT security and data protection requirements, and e-mail and internet usage guidelines
- Employee's responsibility for completing and returning the "Safety Self Assessment for Homeworking"* to their manager for a risk assessment, (* see the links to the Health and Safety Intranet pages at Section 4)
- Employee's responsibility to check and ensure that they are "covered" on their household insurance for working from home.
- Arrangements for reporting illness/accidents
- Arrangements when home-working may be suspended/cancelled

The arrangements should be confirmed in writing and subject to a pilot period after which the manager should review the outcome with the employee.

Pilot Period

It is important to be clear from the outset as to purpose and arrangements i.e.:

- Duration of the pilot period
- Arrangements being piloted
- Any support to be provided (e.g. a work lap-top / phone etc)
- Arrangements for reviewing the outcome and measuring "success"

The timescale should be sufficient to give the arrangements a fair chance to succeed e.g. 4-6 weeks, but must not be left “opened ended” so they become accepted practice by default.

Alternatively, if it is clear that the arrangements are not working or need adjusting, then this needs to be addressed promptly and should not be left to the end of the pilot period.

Managers must review the outcome, (including any impact on the service and colleagues), with the employee before agreeing any arrangements, which will be for a fixed period only.

Monitoring

Home-working arrangements should only be agreed for a fixed period of up to 12 months only after which period they must be reviewed.

Any extension beyond 12 months will need the approval of the Head of Service following consultation with the Head of Human Resources.

Statutory Right to Request Flexible Working

The statutory right to request flexible working applies to employees, (not agency workers), who have worked for the employer continuously for 26 weeks before applying and:

- have or expect to have parental responsibility of a child aged 18 or under
- are the parent/guardian/special guardian/foster parent/private foster carer or as the holder of a residence order or the spouse, partner or civil partner of one of these and are applying to care for the child
- are a carer who cares, or expects to be caring, for an adult who is a spouse, partner, civil partner or relative; or who although not related to you, lives at the same address as you

There is no right to flexible working or to work from home but any requests should be consider sympathetically, subject to the needs of the service and implications for other employees.

4. Advice and Support

Guidance on risk assessments and the Statutory Right to Request Flexible Working” Policy can be found on the HR Intranet pages at:

<http://lbbd/hr/health-and-safety/risk-assessment.htm>

<http://lbbd/hr/health-and-safety/display-screen-equipment-vdu.htm>

<http://lbbd/hr/hours-of-work/docs/right-to-request-flexible-work.doc>

Human Resources will automatically update the Procedure to comply with any changes to legislation and / or ACAS guidance and notify employees of the amendments.