



People Framework

Remote Working during Covid-19 Procedure



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Tracking

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Service			

Revision History

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Document Approvals

Each revision requires the following approvals:

Sponsor Approval		Name	Date

1. Introduction

To enable the Council to maximise the productivity of its workforce and facilitate effective service delivery, the Council is committed to supporting employees to work remotely during the ongoing pandemic.

Employees need to consider whether they are able to provide the necessary environment and equipment to facilitate remote working practices that meet the needs of the organisation, the service and the employee. This will maximise the Council's ability to maintain service efficiency whilst ensuring that offices remain Covid-secure.

2. Procedure for the approval of remote working arrangements

It is recognised that there are some roles which are unsuitable for remote working.

In addition, no employee will be required to work away from the office environment if their personal circumstances make it difficult for them to do so (unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent the employee from attending their place of work).

Where there is an operational requirement for employees to work remotely, working arrangements must be authorised by the line manager or Head of Service.

3. Working Environment

All employees who work remotely are expected to supply their own computer equipment, broadband connection, telephone, etc.

Employees must make available a suitable workspace within the home where they can work effectively. The workspace must offer adequate equipment including computer, broadband connection, etc., freedom from interruptions and distractions, security and confidentiality and the ability to meet health and safety requirements.

4. Health and safety requirements

The Council has a legal duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of all employees. In addition, all employees are responsible for taking care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions at work.

All employees who work remotely must complete a Homeworking risk assessment and a DSE assessment before remote working commences. These must be reviewed regularly (i.e. at least every six months) by their line manager, who must be satisfied that there is low risk to the employee and that any required changes to the working environment have been addressed.

Remote working is a form of lone working. This means that there may be a risk of employees who work remotely not having immediate access to another person for assistance or supervision if circumstances require.

To mitigate this risk, employees who are working remotely are required to:

- Remain contactable by telephone during working hours.

- Keep their work diary up-to-date so that colleagues know where they are and what they are doing.
- Agree contact arrangements and frequency of contact, including the hours during which they will be working.
- Agree any proposed variations to normal working hours with their line manager and/or their teams.
- Be aware of all relevant health and safety policies, including accident/incident reporting forms and processes.
- Take their annual leave at regular intervals through the year.
- Ensure that the accrual of overtime and TOIL is approved in advance by their line manager.

Employees should not share their home address for work purposes and under no circumstances should work contacts or customers be invited to visit an employee who is working remotely at their home address.

Employees should carefully consider whether it is appropriate to share a personal telephone number or email address for work purposes.

5. Reasonable Adjustments

Where an employee requires a reasonable adjustment because of a disability or other health condition, they should discuss this with their line manager and HR, who will seek advice on whether reasonable adjustments may be provided.

6. Council equipment

All equipment which has been temporarily removed from Council offices (e.g. office chairs) or provided by ICT to facilitate remote working (e.g. laptops), remains the property of the Council. A record of all loaned equipment must be kept by the line manager or ICT as appropriate.

All employees are able to spread the cost of purchasing their own IT equipment and make National Insurance savings through the Council's Techscheme.

7. ICT support

Employees must liaise with ICT to ensure that they are provided with secure access to ICT facilities for working remotely.

Whilst the Council's ICT service will provide support and advice to employees who are working remotely, the service can only offer limited support for home computer equipment (e.g. access to the Council's network).

ICT is not responsible for resolving issues arising from the use of an employee's home computer equipment or internet connection.

Support through the IT Helpdesk operates during the following business hours only:

- 08:00 to 17:30 Monday to Thursday
- 08:00 to 17:00 on Fridays

No ICT support is provided outside of these hours. Employees who choose to work outside of business hours should also note that during this time systems are backed up and may run slowly.

Regardless of whether they are using Council owned or personal equipment, employees must familiarise themselves with, and adhere to the ICT Security and Acceptable Use Policy. For the purposes of this procedure, the principles of the ICT Security and Acceptable Use Policy will be applied to employees' personal computers and laptops.

8. Confidentiality and security of data

Managers and employees must ensure that all Council information is kept confidential and secure at all times in line with the Council's Data Protection Policy. Employees are not permitted to keep Council data (including electronic and paper files) at home on a permanent basis.

It is the responsibility of employees to:

- Treat Council property with due regard and care.
- Ensure that personal devices feature up-to-date antivirus software and ensure operating systems and software are up-to-date and secure.
- Be conscious of other individuals within their household who may have access to their devices and restrict such access.
- Log out of Council systems and not allow the device to remember passwords, or write passwords down/share passwords with others.
- Be conscious that other people within their household may be able to see information on their screen/overhear phone calls and take the necessary measures to ensure confidentiality.
- Ensure that all Council data is stored on a Council network drive and not held on a personal device.
- Refrain from taking paper documents containing personal or otherwise confidential information home with them unless absolutely necessary. If paper documents are taken home they must be kept securely in line with the Council's Data Protection policy.
- Remain alert to phishing emails and any other suspected fraudulent activity.

Whilst the Council is appreciative of employees using their own personal equipment for work purposes, failure to adhere to the Data Protection and ICT Security and Acceptable Use policies may result in action being taken in line with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

9. Compliance with policies and procedures

Employees who work remotely are still governed by the terms and conditions of their contract of employment.

In addition, the Council's Code of Conduct and all other policies, procedures and associated guidance remain in place and should be adhered to during any period of remote working.

Employees who are working remotely are expected to keep up to date with all corporate information such as emails from the Chief Executive, staff updates and information posted on EHub.

10. Hours of work

Employees are expected to work their normal contractual hours (as agreed with their manager) when working remotely.

All employees have a responsibility to adhere to the Working Time Regulations in respect of limits to weekly working hours and rest breaks. Line managers should monitor employees who are working remotely to ensure they do not work insufficient or excessive hours.

Where an employee requests a working pattern which is outside of the normal working hours of their service, this must be agreed by their line manager, who will need to ensure that there is sufficient cover to meet operational demands.

11. Attendance

Where an employee is working remotely, they must remain available and able to work, unless their absence is due to an authorised form of leave or sickness.

The usual provisions relating to reporting sickness absence apply. Where an employee who is working remotely is unwell, they must inform their line manager using the sickness reporting procedure set out in the Council's Absence Management Procedure.

Where the absence is related to Covid-19 sickness or self-isolation, managers and employees must notify HR and follow the relevant guidance on the HR pages of EHub.

Working remotely is not appropriate where an employee is too unwell to attend their place of work.

Where an employee is unable to work remotely due to an emergency involving a dependant or at home, the Council's Special Leave Procedure will apply.

12. Availability

Managers must ensure that employees are clear on the standards that apply to them in terms of contact, availability, office/telephone cover, etc.

Managers must also ensure that team availability/contact details and rotas for office cover are made available to others and that any changes affecting service delivery are notified to the relevant parties, e.g. Contact Centre.

Employees who are working remotely must

- Update their Outlook calendar/Skype status as appropriate so that their working hours, location and preferred method of communication are clearly visible to others.

- Transfer their work telephone extension number to their mobile or ensure that an alternative contact number is shown in their Outlook calendar/Skype entry each day.
- Ensure that their Outlook calendar is visible to others.

Step-by-step guidance on the how to complete the above actions is available on the ICT pages of EHub.

Employees who are working remotely must be readily contactable, normally by email and by telephone, during normal working hours. Employees must advise their manager of any times they will not be contactable, seeking permission as appropriate.

Callbacks must be dealt with as a priority and, where an employee is unable to deal with these remotely, the employee must notify their line manager who will ensure that the callback is managed within timescales.

All employees who are working remotely are expected to attend meetings via telephone or video conference facilities as required.

All employees who are working remotely are expected to be available to come into the office if they are asked to do so, e.g. in the event of the sickness of a colleague, a work emergency or to attend a meeting. Where an employee is asked to attend the office, their line manager will try to provide sufficient notice to enable the employee to arrive at their normal starting time. Where this is not possible the employee's travelling time will be considered as part of their working day.

13. Caring responsibilities

Working remotely is not a substitute for childcare or the care of other dependants and employees who need emergency time off for childcare or to make new arrangements should use Emergency Dependants' Leave (as outlined in the Council's Special Leave Procedure), annual leave or unpaid leave.

Employees must ensure that they are able to fulfil the requirements of their role whilst working remotely by making adequate provision for the care of their dependants during their working hours. The Council reserves the right to request evidence of the employee's childcare arrangements.

Where employees have caring responsibilities, they should discuss and agree their working arrangements with their manager, including the hours that they are able to work and any potential impact on their colleagues and work outputs.

Requests for temporary or permanent contractual changes to accommodate caring responsibilities should be submitted in line with the Council's Flexible Working Procedure.

14. Performance Management

Employees are expected to maintain the same levels of productivity whether working remotely or attending the workplace.

Working remotely relies on outcome based management. To ensure that the expected outcomes are achieved, managers must put in place arrangements to ensure that the performance of employees who are working remotely can be managed effectively without continuous direct supervision.

Employees must speak with their line manager as soon as possible if they are experiencing difficulties with managing their workload and/or work priorities.

Managers and employees who are working remotely must ensure that:

- regular contact is planned and formalised
- My Performance Conversations take place as outlined in the Council's Performance Management Procedure
- communication mechanisms such as team meetings take place at regular intervals
- support is provided to employees who find remote working challenging

Where a manager has concerns about the performance of an employee who is working remotely, these should be raised with the individual as soon as possible (in line with the Council's Performance Management Procedure) and additional advice sought from the HR team. Consideration may be given to whether remote working arrangements should be temporarily suspended.

15. Insurance

All employees who are working remotely are covered by Council's Employer Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance, providing that the rules of this policy have been followed.

Any equipment supplied for remote working is covered by the Council's insurance arrangements provided that it is used for work purposes only.

In line with the ICT Security and Acceptable Use Policy, employees who are working remotely must ensure that all Council property is used appropriately and responsibly and that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent damage and/or theft. Employees must report any damage or theft of Council property to their line manager immediately.

Working remotely may affect the provisions of the employee's home contents insurance policy. It is the employee's responsibility to assess the personal implications of remote working on their household insurance and to inform their insurer. The Council will not reimburse any increase in premium or accept liability for damage caused to personal property.

16. Expenses and allowances

No contribution will be made by the Council towards normal household expenses attached to working remotely, e.g. heating and lighting.

Mileage is not payable where employees who have been working remotely are required to attend Council offices. Any other business mileage will be paid in line with the Council's Travel and Subsistence policy.

Where an employee holds a parking permit, no discounts or refunds will apply where the employee is working remotely.

17. Changes in circumstances

The Council reserves the right to review remote working arrangements in line with Government guidance and service requirements.

Managers will communicate any changes to working arrangements to employees as necessary.

18. New employees

Managers are responsible for monitoring a new employee's performance and progress during the Settling-In period and it is expected that, wherever possible, new employees will attend their place of work rather than working remotely during their first weeks of employment.

Managers will decide whether it is appropriate for employees to work remotely during the Settling-In period, taking into consideration the nature of their role, the requirements of the service, the level of support needed and their ability to review and assess the employee's performance, capability and suitability for the role.