



Agile Working Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This agile working policy builds upon previous flexible working policies and supports a culture of working wherever, whenever and however is most appropriate to get the work done.

Adopting this approach means that desk space is better utilised, with the office plans setting out the new layouts. The new office layout will be more focused on collaborative working and desk space will be shared.

It is important that individuals work with their colleagues and line manager to agree agile working arrangements that meet the needs of both the team and service delivery.

Our approach to agile working also links to our vision to address the climate emergency.

This policy sets out our approach to agile working, which allows employees flexibility between attending the office and working remotely. Agile working is an important element of our:

- Strategy for adapting to, and thriving in the new working environment
- Meeting our climate change commitments
- Commitment to supporting a positive work-life balance for our employees

We wish to support employees to do their best work, have a good work life balance, work flexibly whilst staying connected and getting the job done.

What is Agile Working?

Agile working is about more choice in deciding how, when and where you work best, balancing the needs of WODC, your team and yourself. Where, when and how you choose to work will depend on your role and discussions with your line manager.

Key principles of agile working

- We acknowledge that agile working is not suitable for all roles. Each employee should discuss this with their line manager and establish how they work.
- Our Business Conduct policy applies in every location you work from, whether in one of our offices, at home or on site. Please familiarise yourself with this Policy. [Hyperlink](#)
- Agile working is open to everyone who has a suitable role regardless of how long they have worked with WODC.
- We commit to providing you with the necessary technology and equipment.

- Community and collaboration are part of who we are and we know they are important for our wellbeing. We will continue to provide safe office spaces for you to collaborate and connect with others.
- There will be times when being on site is important, e.g. when you first start working for us, or when you take on a new role. We would encourage you to visit one of the offices to familiarise yourself with the way we work and the support available.
- Working in this way will not change your contractual terms and conditions of employment in respect of working hours or work location. Agile working is an informal arrangement that may be changed from time to time depending on business needs.
- The expenses you can claim will be un-changed, that is if you claim mileage, you will be required to deduct your normal home to office from your claim even if you go to wherever you are going directly from your home.
- If you want to make a more permanent change to your hours, location, place of work and/or working pattern, you will need to request this separately through the Flexible working policy. (Please note a request under the Flexible Working Policy can only be made every 12 months)

Practical Considerations

The number of days per week each employee spends attending the workplace/office compared with working remotely will vary, depending on:

- Their individual circumstances
- The nature of their role
- What is happening within their role and team at any particular time; and
- The needs of our organisations, including the space we have available at our work locations

We expect that most staff will spend some of their working time in the office and some at home.

WODC recognises the benefits of flexibility but also that for some employees working at home may have its challenges. For example, you might:

- Live a significant distance from the office and it would be more efficient for you to spend more time working remotely or
- Have challenges with your working environment at home that mean that remote working is difficult for you and you would like to attend the office more often

Please speak to your line manager who will be supported by the HR Business Partner, if you think that you would benefit from working more at home or more in the office.

Being Flexible

Given the degree of flexibility that our agile working arrangements provide, we expect our people to be flexible.

You may be required to attend the office on particular days at the request of your line manager/senior manager, for example for in-person training and for meetings that your line manager/senior manager has determined are best conducted in person.

Similarly, there may be circumstances in which we ask you to work remotely, or to work from such other place as we may reasonably require, when you would otherwise expect to attend the workplace/office, for instance:

- For operational needs, for example if we have too many employees attending the workplace/office on specific days; or
- In the event of a lockdown/government guidance that employees should work from home if they can.

In such cases, you will be given as much notice as possible.

Arrangements while Attending the Office

Workspaces

Each team has a number of desks allocated to them; however it may be that if all the team are in the office at the same time, you may not be able to access a desk in your area. If this is the case, please use a desk in another part of the building. Some teams may decide to work on a rota basis. Please work with your line manager and the rest of your team to ensure you have the necessary desk space.

At the end of each day on which you are attending the office, please ensure that you leave the desk clean and tidy. Your laptop, any other equipment and any personal items should not be left on desks overnight. Please ensure that your laptop and other equipment are either taken with you or secured away.

Health and Safety - Working Measures

The health, safety, wellbeing, and security of our colleagues in all locations is paramount. Please:

- Familiarise yourself with the risk assessment relating to your work and meet the standards required whilst carrying out your work activities
- Familiarise yourself with the Emergency Evacuation Procedure, the First Aid Arrangements and the Accident / Incident reporting procedure for each site you may be working at.
- Complete a DSE (Display Screen Equipment) self-assessment for office and home workstations. A Working from Home Assessment might also need to be completed. Please see DSE guidance on the Health and Safety Support portal page, in the working from home guidance, and ensure you complete the iHasco online training.
- Keep your workstation tidy, ensure personal belongings or computer wires do not present a trip hazard. You should not bring in electrical equipment from home to use at work.
- Work with your team to ensure that you have appropriate lone working arrangements in place.

Let us know if you have any concerns, have identified any potential risks, or have any suggestions for further adaptations we can make. You can do this by raising concerns or making suggestions to your line manager.

You have a role to play in ensuring all our staff can work in a safe environment and you must follow our safe-working instructions. Failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence and dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. More detailed information can be found in the Health and Safety Support section on the portal.

Arrangements while Working Remotely

Working hours and keeping in touch

We want to empower you to choose the times you work so you can balance your home life and the needs of your role. We trust you to manage your own time and work the hours you are contracted to do.

There are some key areas we would like you to be aware of:

While working remotely, you must be available and working during your normal hours of work. You should agree your normal working hours with your line manager.

You must ensure regular contact with your team / line manager using mobile phone, telephones and email. Follow the control measures identified in your risk assessment relating to home and lone working.

We ask you to be mindful that you are not overworking. "Downtime" from work is essential. To help maintain your wellbeing, please make sure that you take adequate rest breaks:

- Take time off for lunch each day.
- Even if you are busy, it is essential that you find the time to take a break of at least 30 minutes during each working day that lasts more than six hours.

Please be as clear as possible with your line manager and colleagues about your hours of work for days on which you are working remotely. Making use of tools such as shared calendars and out-of-office messaging can help colleagues to be aware of your availability on these days.

We may ask you (with enough notice) to be available at certain times to meet the needs of the business, to physically be in the office to collaborate or attend training.

Flexing your working times should not result in extra work for other members of your team.

We know life can be complicated and that working in this way can help you balance your home and work life. However, agile working is not a way of dealing with emergency leave or for long-term childcare if it has an impact on your ability to carry out your day-to-day role.

We know that collaboration, connection and having a sense of belonging are important to your wellbeing. We encourage you to actively make time to connect with your colleagues. To find out what other support is available, please visit the Staff welfare and support page on the Portal.

Sickness

When working remotely, you should not work if you are unwell. If you are sick and unable to work, our Sickness absence policy applies.

You should notify your line manager by telephone or by message as soon as reasonably practicable on the first day of absence, preferably before you are due to start work and, in any event, no later than one hour after you are due to begin work.

Technology and equipment

To assist you to work remotely, you are provided with:

- A laptop computer
- A mouse
- A keyboard
- Any additional equipment required as identified in your Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment

You must take care of any equipment we provide you with and notify your line manager/the IT department of any faults with the equipment.

If you need any additional equipment, please speak to your line manager.

You must complete the DSE iHasco online training which will assist you in setting up your workstation correctly.

When working at home you must ensure you have a secure, private and appropriately lit and heated space to work in, with a reliable and secure Internet connection.

Care Commitments

When working at home you will be required to work the hours you are contracted. You should ensure you have the appropriate arrangements in place for childcare or other caring responsibilities, so that you can work undisturbed or distracted by such caring responsibilities. However, if for any reason there are challenges, please discuss any support you may require with your line manager.

Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality

Maintaining the security of information we work with is vital and when we work away from the office we are responsible for the security of the data we have. Please ensure that you know your responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and our security policies.

Please ensure:

- That you do not send work related emails of sensitive data to your home email address
- Do not store work related information on your personal computer
- If you work from a WODC office space, please be mindful of any IT security risk or confidentiality; position your laptop so others cannot see the screen and avoid having sensitive conversations in public
- Other individuals (including family members) should not have access to any work information or personal information either on paper or as electronic records.

Working Elsewhere

At times there may be a request to work outside the UK. There are significant legal and logistical issues with allowing staff to work abroad for weeks at a time. These include tax, employment law and data protection. For this reason, we are unable to support long term arrangements or requests for permanent relocations outside the UK. Please discuss any requests with your line managers and your HR Business Partner.

Costs and Expenses

Your contractual normal location of work will not change, so that your entitlement to claim expenses will remain the same. Please see our Expenses policy.

Employees may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home, provided the expenses are solely work related. If you wish to benefit from this tax relief, see the Government's '*Claim tax relief for your job*' expenses guide ([link](#)).

Appendix

Requesting Flexible Working

This Policy focuses on how our organisation operates agile working, but there are many other forms of flexible working.

If you have 26 weeks' service with us, you retain the right to make a formal request for flexible working, whether or not agile working is available for your role/in your team.

Examples of other types of flexible working that can be requested are:

- Reducing the number of hours that you are working
- Changing your start and finish times
- Compressing your working hours into fewer days (for example moving to a nine-day fortnight)

If you would like to request another form of flexible working, or if we do not currently offer you agile working but you would like to request it, you can make a formal request under our Flexible Working Policy.

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