



Hybrid working policy

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1. Purpose and background

Prior to the pandemic in March 2020, the IS supported hybrid working, with many employees splitting their week between the office, working from home and being out and about visiting council and partners' offices. This approach has worked well for us as an organisation, and has been highlighted consistently across the years in our employee surveys as one of the benefits of working for the IS. Formalising our hybrid working practices will help us to continue to evolve our culture.

Flexibility is seen by the Improvement Service (IS) as a strategic tool to support improved individual and business performance through developing greater diversity and increasing levels of job satisfaction and commitment from our people.

Over the last few years, the IS has developed a range of flexible working practices to aid effective working and promote a culture of flexibility, agility and resilience. Hybrid working builds upon our [Flexible working policy](#) and supports a culture of working wherever, whenever and however is most appropriate to get the work done. Hybrid working is a form of flexible working where employees spend some of their time working remotely (usually, but not necessarily, from home) and some in the employer's workspace.

Our approach to hybrid working will support the delivery of [Our approach to net zero](#) and our commitment to become a net zero organisation. It will also support the delivery of our [Wellbeing policy](#), with a reduction in travel helping employees achieve an improved work life balance.

The purpose of this policy is to outline how hybrid working arrangements will be implemented in the IS and it applies to all IS employees.

The policy will be subject to ongoing review based on operational effectiveness, employee wellbeing and the needs of customers. We will ensure it remains fit for purpose and make any necessary adaptations to suit the future requirements of the organisation.

2. Principles for hybrid working

Hybrid working is based on the concept that work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go to. It is not about doing things in the old way with some new technologies and redesigned offices – it is about new ways of working using new tools, new processes, and new approaches to management and teamwork. This requires different types of behaviours and different expectations about how work is done.

Hybrid working is designed to give you more choice over deciding when and where you work best in a way that balances the needs of the IS, your team and yourself. It is about giving you more choices about how you do the right work, in the right place, at the right time.

Our principles for hybrid working are set out below:

- We will aim for flexibility in where and how we work to introduce a sustainable level of remote and office working for the benefit of our customers, stakeholders and employees
- We will ensure that needs of our customers and stakeholders determine where, when and how we deliver our products, services and support
- We will apply an open, fair and consistent approach within teams based on service needs and ensure that teams are engaged in the planning and delivery of successful hybrid working. Individual preferences will be considered in line with team requirements and service needs
- We will manage performance on results and team outcomes rather than presence in the workplace
- We will be flexible and open to challenging ourselves in relation to new ways of working and delivering services.
- We will come together to collaborate and sustain team working and gain the benefits of working together in person
- We will spend enough time in person to support colleagues, our team and service delivery, learning and developing through the process

We recognise that one size does not fit all and individuals, roles and services vary, as will hybrid arrangements, and we will all contribute to find mutually beneficial solutions.

3. The potential benefits of hybrid working

Operating a [Digital first approach](#) alongside with a hybrid working model will offer benefits to our customers, employees and the organisation.

The key benefits of hybrid working are likely to be as follows:

- Increases productivity, enabling employees to manage their working day more efficiently
- Reduces unnecessary travel time and related cost
- Lowers our carbon footprint through reduced emissions from reduced travel
- Creates an environment which allows employees to achieve an improved work life balance, increase their wellbeing and health, reduce stress and provide greater job satisfaction and engagement
- Improves the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees by offering flexibility to match individual work preferences
- Reduced absenteeism and related costs.

4. Manager responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Arranging both frequent individual and team meetings, ensuring regular communication is maintained between themselves and team members and providing support for employees
- Ensuring that meetings can be conducted on a hybrid basis – i.e. a mixture of in-person and virtual attendees
- Jointly agreeing with the employee their hybrid working style and how this will be achieved

- Ensuring good communication with employees and agreeing clear communication lines and methods
- Being clear as to their expectations of employees when they are engaged in hybrid working, such as agreed outputs, availability for meetings and ensuring that employees are not working excessive hours
- Ensuring that they bring their team together in person on a regular basis to collaborate and gain the benefits of working together in person
- Spending enough time in person with employees, particularly when they first join the organisation, to support their learning and development
- Regularly reviewing the hybrid working arrangements to ensure they are working and delivering the required outcomes for the business

5. Employee responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Working to the principles outlined in this policy
- Jointly agreeing a hybrid working arrangement with their manager
- Being open and constructive in discussing and agreeing hybrid working arrangements
- Maintaining regular contact with their manager and team
- Complying with Health and Safety policy and procedures by participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety
- Complying with confidentiality, data protection and internet security policies
- Ensuring that all reasonable care is taken of all IS supplied work and IT equipment
- Reporting immediately once known, any loss, theft, or damage to IS IT equipment or the loss of confidential information

6. Tools and support

The following tools and equipment will be provided and maintained by the IS:

- Laptop, docking station, monitor, keyboard and mouse
- Access to West Lothian Council network

Return of Company Property

All property belonging to the Company, including (but not limited to) IT equipment, laptops, mobile phones, monitors, accessories, documents, records and any other equipment or materials issued to you for the purposes of your employment ("Company Property"), remains the property of the Company at all times and you are required to take reasonable care of Company Property.

Upon request, and in any event on the termination of your employment for whatever reason, you must return all Company Property in your possession or under your control within a week of your leaving date and in good working order (subject to fair wear and tear). Where any Company Property is lost, damaged (other than fair wear and tear), or not returned, the Company may require you to reimburse the reasonable cost of repair or replacement, or replace the items.

The Company may deduct any such sums from any pay or other monies due to you on or after the termination of your employment, or issue you with an invoice for the cost of repair or replacement, to the extent permitted by law, without prejudice to any other rights the Company may have to recover such sums.

7. Costs

Employees will not be eligible to claim expenses for home working and should weigh up the benefits of any home working when considering that no reimbursement for household bills will be provided. This includes but is not limited to, broadband, heating, lighting, water, landline connection etc.

8. IT support

IT Services will continue to provide IT support to employees who are working from home. Where employees experience hardware, software or network issues they should contact the IS IT support on itsupport@improvementservice.org.uk

9. Security

Employees who work from home are responsible for keeping information associated with the Improvement Service secure at all times. All employees should follow and comply with the Improvement Service security operating procedures for remote and home working detailed below:

[Remote and home working operating procedures](#)

10. Keeping in touch

An employee's working hours at home should largely mirror those normally undertaken in the office, unless otherwise agreed by the line manager. These working hours can vary to accommodate work- life balance arrangements, if agreed with the line manager and in line with the Flexible Working policy.

During remote work hours, employees must be available via email, and/or phone. It is the employees' responsibilities to update their shared Outlook Calendar with working hours.

Employees should ensure, where possible, to limit interruptions during their working day, unless previously agreed with their line manager.

11. Meetings

Employees are required to attend meetings via Microsoft Teams. If Microsoft Teams is not available, employees may call in via phone as a secondary option. If an employee is unable to attend a given meeting for reasons remote or otherwise, they must notify their manager or the person hosting the meeting.

Employees may be required to work or attend meetings at any of the organisation's premises or at the premises of its customers, clients, suppliers or associates within the United Kingdom from time to time.

12. Travel

As per the [Travel and subsistence policy](#), any expenses incurred when travelling to and from the IS office from home cannot be claimed. Similarly, travel to and from the IS office does not form part of your working day. For example, if you are required to attend the office for a team meeting at 2pm, but choose to work from home prior to, and after the meeting, the time taken to travel to and from the office does not count as working time. You could choose to work from the office for the full day and your journey to and from work would not count as working time, as has always been the case.

13. Health and safety

While working from home, it is more important than ever to differentiate between work time and personal time by:

- sticking to a routine, where possible, when it comes to the time you start and end work
- if space allows, setting aside a specific, separate area in your home where you can work

- switching your laptop off at the end of your working day and tidying all the papers away

By law, employers are responsible for the health and safety of all employees, including those working remotely. Line Managers should ensure that:

- each employee feels the work they're being asked to do at home can be done safely
- employees have the right equipment to work safely
- they keep in regular contact with their employees, including making sure they do not feel isolated
- they make reasonable adjustments for an employee who has a disability

Employees also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety. This includes:

- taking regular breaks and exercise and to structure the working day
- assessing their workstation by following the Display Screen Equipment Workstation Checklist and guidance issued by our Corporate Services Team
- avoiding being 'always on' by identifying non-working time, keeping in regular contact with line managers and tell them about any health and safety risks or any homeworking arrangements that need to change
- keeping in touch with colleagues to avoid feelings of isolation.

If you are ill and unable to work, you should follow the normal sickness absence reporting procedures as outlined in the [Sickness absence policy and procedure](#).

Our Mental Health First Aiders regularly run mental health drop-in sessions via email,

Microsoft Teams, text or phone call. Keep an eye on the weekly emails to find out more.

Where employees use the IS office to work, they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety. They should ensure they are aware of fire safety arrangements to ensure they are fully conversant with the actions to be taken in the event of discovering a fire or on hearing the fire alarm signal and ensure they adhere to the local signing in and out arrangements.

14. Terms and conditions of employment

Unless agreed otherwise, your total weekly hours and normal pay will apply whether you are working from home or from the IS office. All other terms and conditions of employment will remain unchanged.

Any changes to the Terms and Conditions of Employment will be consulted on and agreed upon by all parties, giving appropriate notice of the change.

15. Related policies

[Social media policy](#)

[Flexible working policy](#)

[Digital first approach](#)

Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the appropriate parties.

