

Remote Working Guide

Introduction

This document sets out the Council's approach to remote working and is applicable to those roles where all or some duties can be carried out from home or another suitable location.

The purpose of this guidance is to build on the positive lessons learned during 'lockdown' and to offer a more flexible approach to retain and attract talent by enabling a better work life balance for our employees.

Remote working gives you the opportunity to request to change your traditional working pattern. The transition to a new way of working also offers broader opportunities for other aspects of the Council's day to day business and for the flexibility of the services that we offer to our customers.

Remote working requests

In agreement with your manager, you may be able to split your time between attending your normal place of work (Civic or Depot Office) and working remotely (typically from home). In all cases, customer and service needs must be prioritised.

Whether you can work remotely, and on what basis, will depend on the following:

- The needs of the Council
- The nature of your role
- What is happening within your role and team at any given time
- Working patterns in your team
- Your individual circumstances and remote working environment

We recognise that it will be particularly difficult from some roles to be fulfilled with a remote work pattern, however, Heads of Service will consider all requests to work flexibly on a case by case basis with support from HR.

Your manager will need to consider what is necessary, in terms of working patterns and office cover to provide services to your customers. Your Head of Service will determine what times their teams need to be available to deliver their service and ensure they have the right people available to do so.

You will be asked to request a consistent pattern but where possible we will allow flexibility to do more or less in the office or remotely with the prior agreement of your manager.

We appreciate that remote working may not suit some employees. For example, you may not have appropriate space to work without distraction or would prefer to keep home and work separate. Remote working is not compulsory.

If remote working is agreed, this will be at your request and does not change your contract of employment.

If you wish to make a formal request for other forms of flexible working you should follow the Council's [Flexible Working Policy](#).

Changes to remote working agreements

All remote working agreements will be subject to a trial period and kept under review so we can ensure they work effectively within the service.

We recognise that your personal circumstances may change over time. You'll have the right to ask to change your working pattern or return to office-based working. However, we would not expect to see overall working patterns changing regularly i.e. no more than once a year unless under exceptional circumstances.

In some situations, it may be necessary for the Council to withdraw agreement for remote working, for instance if there are performance or well-being concerns or a detrimental impact to customers. If you move to a new role within the Council, your remote working agreement will need to be reviewed.

Flexibility

Given the degree of flexibility that remote working arrangements will provide you with, we expect you to be flexible in return.

You'll need to be able to attend the office at the request of your manager, for example for training and meetings that they have determined are best conducted in person, to cover customer rotas or to cover absence in the team. Notice will be given wherever possible.

You may be expected to come into the office at short notice. Whilst it is hoped this will only be under exceptional circumstances, you will need to consider the options available to you, so you can come in to the office if needed. In situations where a suitable 'back up plan' cannot be agreed to make short notice attendance possible, your manager may need to review your remote working pattern based on the needs of the service.

You have a responsibility to review your working week to help decide on the best work location for each day.

Your manager will have the ability to ask you to work from the office "full time", where it is necessary to deliver the service (e.g. during holiday periods, for specific work tasks etc).

There will be an expectation that all employees attend and work from the office periodically to promote team cohesion. If you have supervisory/management responsibilities, you will need to ensure that you have 'face to face' time with all of your team which may impact what type of working pattern can be agreed.

We will encourage you to manage your work and home life commitments in a way that best supports your well-being.

What to think about when working remotely

Trust will be central to the success of working remotely. Your manager will trust you to be working when clocked on and you will need to have considered a suitable working pattern that allows this trust to be maintained.

You should be mindful that working from home may mislead family members about your availability. It is possible to become distracted and/or feel overloaded because you are presented with both work and home commitments and work longer hours because there isn't a clear distinction between work and home.

It is important you separate your work and personal time and plan your working day/hours, scheduling in appropriate breaks and switching work related technology off when you have finished work for the day. You must use common sense as to what circumstances should lead you to 'clock off' temporarily as you are unable to work.

Real-life examples

We have probably all experienced some of the following when working remotely: deliveries, neighbours knocking the door, caring responsibilities (children, pets, parents etc). The real-life examples below should help you with what is and isn't acceptable when remote working.

You can stay clocked on to answer a quick knock at the door or to take in a parcel or to move washing from the machine to the tumble dryer or to make a drink.

On the flip side if you are having a furniture or supermarket food shopping delivery which might take more than a couple of minutes of your time or you have a big pile of washing to hang out and put away, or are making your lunch, you should be clocked off.

If you have caring responsibilities at home, you will need to discuss a working pattern with your manager which balances these responsibilities with your focus on work. For example, if your children are independent, then it will be acceptable for you to work with them at home. If your child or someone you care for needs some supervision, you will need to discuss this in more detail with your manager.

If your child is unwell and home unexpectedly or someone you care for at home needs more supervision than normal for a short period, this should be discussed with your manager at the time as more flexibility may be possible to clock on and off as required during the day so you can continue to work.

You will need to be realistic about the focus you can give to work based on your demands at home when making your request and take a common sense approach to ensure your manager can trust you to be working as effectively from home as in the office.

Working Hours

You must be available to colleagues and customers and working during the hours agreed with your manager.




Customer opening and switchboard hours are Monday to Friday, 08.45-17.15 with the offices open for employees between 0800-1830. With your managers agreement, it may be possible to work remotely outside of these times subject to the needs of customers being met. This will be reviewed throughout the trial period. ICT support will not be available outside of 0800-1830 and you will need to make up time lost if you encounter an ICT problem.

To help maintain your wellbeing, make sure that you take adequate rest breaks:

- A Lunch break in line with the flexi time policy or department arrangements
- A break of 30 minutes after working 6 hours continuously
- A break of no less than 11 hours between stopping work one day and beginning the next.

Technology and Equipment

To assist you to work remotely, the following may be available based on your agreed working pattern:

		
<p>Home-based worker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-worker IT supplied • Access to mobile technology on demand • Workstation must be compliant (FBC-supplied chair on request) • Requirement to attend offices (team bonding, etc), regularly (for example twice a month) • Performance based on outcomes • Can expect same contact from managers as office-based colleagues 	<p>Office-based worker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed ICT supplied at a hot-desk • Uses hot desks in team zones • Personal locker space • Access to breakout spaces for online meetings • Access to fully enabled meeting rooms for “Teams” meeting • Performance based on outcomes • Can expect work to be shared fairly with home-based colleagues 	<p>Hybrid worker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile ICT available for use at home and work • Access to hot-desk space in their team zone in the office • Optional fixed screens at home supplied • ICT docking space in the longer term for laptops • Personal locker space • Performance based on outcomes

You must take care of any equipment we provide you with and notify ICT of any faults with the equipment. All FBC equipment must be returned if your remote working agreement ends or you leave the Council. Requests for equipment should be sent to your manager.

Use of Microsoft Teams and cameras for meetings will be a requirement for those working remotely.

You must make full use of your outlook/teams calendar and out-of-office messaging to show your availability and you must be contactable by phone.

Financial Assistance and Personal Home Policies

You may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home. If you wish to benefit from this tax relief, please visit the [Government's guide](#).

You are advised to check any personal home policies or agreements you may have in case they contain specific terms relating to working from home.

Health and Safety

As you would in the office, when working remotely you should complete a workstation assessment to ensure your working set-up is appropriate and that you are working in a safe manner.

You must also take responsibility for your own health and safety and that of anyone else who is affected by your work (for example others in your household when you are working from home).

You may be required to provide photographs of your home workstation to assist with any safety assessment. Portable appliance testing (PAT) will be carried out for FBC equipment.

You must notify your manager of any problems.

Sickness Absence

When working remotely, you should not work if you are unfit to do so and should notify your manager by telephone as soon as possible before you are due to start work.

If you are unwell but feel able to work, remote working may be agreed on an ad-hoc basis or part time basis by your manager. This will also help the Council to avoid the spread of colds, flu etc in the office environment.

Claiming Mileage

Your normal place of work will remain the same (Civic Offices, Depot, Sheltered Housing complex). You will not be paid mileage for journeys from home to attend your normal place of work.

If you need to claim mileage for sites visits undertaken from home, please ensure your normal commuting mileage is deducted from your claim before being submitted.

If the journey mileage is less than your normal commute, you will be unable to claim.

Flexi Time

If you are scheduled to be working at home for the day and need to come to the office to collect documents for example, then you may remain clocked on for your travelling time. However, you are responsible for ensuring that you are working from the most practical location on any given day, so such occasions are expected to be infrequent.

If you are scheduled to work at your normal place of work on any given day (on a rota for example) then you must only clock on upon arrival at work and clock off for lunch and when leaving the office at the end of the day.

Wellbeing

If at any point you feel your wellbeing is affected, either due to work or personal reasons, please ensure you speak to your manager or a member of HR so that the appropriate support can be put in place.

Working away from the office could result in you feeling isolated, however, technology can facilitate visual contact with colleagues and customers via Microsoft Teams.

For further information please refer to our wellbeing pages on SID.

Data Protection when working remotely

You are responsible for keeping Council information secure at all times when working remotely. The [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#) and [ICT security guidelines](#) must be followed at all times.

Specifically, when working remotely you are under a duty to:

- keep all hard copies of work-related documentation secure
- ensure that information is safeguarded when working in public spaces
- position screens so that others cannot see any information
- not leave your laptop unattended
- not having confidential/business-sensitive conversations in public spaces.

- use any equipment provided for work-related purposes only
- not allow any other household members or third party access at any time
- report any potential data breach to your manager.

New technology may mean you have the ability to work in public locations or other offices. Be aware of your surroundings and the potential for data breaches and ensure they are appropriate for the work you are carrying out (e.g. confidential phone calls). You must be contactable and ensure your manager knows where you will be working.

If you have any questions regarding this guidance please contact a member of HR.