

Blended and Flexible Working Policy

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REVIEW HISTORY			
Date	Name	Signature	Notes
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Blended and Flexible Working Policy Statement:

We want to empower our people to choose when, how and where they do their best work, whilst balancing this with the operational needs of the organisation and ensuring we deliver excellent service and impact for our beneficiaries. We recognise that, in addition to helping balance work and home lives, blended and flexible working can improve employee wellbeing, satisfaction and productivity and reduce stress.

This policy aims to empower and encourage managers to agree blended and flexible working parameters within their teams; to support individuals in exploring options to work flexibly and to agree to any formal flexible working requests unless they cannot be accommodated for clear business or operational reasons.

In a post-pandemic labour market, there is a strong need for us to be agile and creative in how we engage people to work for, and with, the organisation. This policy seeks to support us in recruiting and retaining talented and diverse people to deliver our work.

Who this Policy applies to

The policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, volunteers or self-employed contractors.

This policy does not form part of the contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

1. Principles

- 1.1. We encourage and support work / life balance and believe that physical and mental wellbeing is important no matter where people are working from.
- 1.2. We believe that our office spaces can be great for culture, connection and collaboration. Coming together in person is an important part of our culture.
- 1.3. Some aspects of work are best done face-to-face, and a balance of virtual and office time is vital to our success. Individuals will also have personal styles that mean they thrive and work best in different environments.
- 1.4. Trust, accountability and transparency is key and, where possible, colleagues will generally be managed against objectives, outcomes and KPIs rather than presenteeism. We trust our people to do great things wherever they are working from.
- 1.5. All flexible working requests will be treated fairly, objectively and based on the impact on both the organisation and other colleagues.
- 1.6. Those working at leadership and management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote our aims and objectives around blended and flexible working. Managers will therefore be supported in ensuring that our flexible working practices promote equal opportunities and reflect best practice.
- 1.7. All members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with it and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. If you have any questions about this policy, please speak to your line manager.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. **Flexible working** is any type of working arrangement that gives a degree of flexibility on how long, where and when you work. There are a number of flexible working options:
 - Different start / finish times outside of the 'standard 9-5'
 - Compressed hours (for example a 4-day week or 9-day fortnight)
 - Working from home or from different locations
 - Part-time working
 - Part year working (such as term-time only)
 - Job sharing
- 2.2. We recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' approach, and that all of our colleagues have different needs. This list is therefore not exhaustive and there may be other options, or a combination of options.
- 2.3. **Blended working** generally refers to the location of work and the combination of working from home and in the office in a way that is suitable for both employers and staff. It is a concept that has grown in popularity and use during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. The Needs of the Organisation

- 3.1. We are committed to helping you reach your potential by offering a blended approach and flexibility in where and when you work. However, we do also need to be realistic and recognise that some roles are less adaptable to the full range of flexible or blended working options. In these cases, managers should consider other ways of offering flexibility.

- 3.2. When designing a role, or when you make a request for flexible or homeworking, the line manager will need to consider a number of criteria around flexibility and blended working including:
- Costs associated with the proposed arrangement
 - Effect of the proposed arrangement on colleagues
 - Maturity of the team (new teams are likely to need more face-to-face time)
 - The need for, and effect on, supervision and performance management
 - Existing structure of the department and team
 - Availability of staff resources
 - Details of the tasks specific to the role
 - Workload of the role
 - Whether it is a request for a reasonable adjustment related to a disability
 - Any health and safety issues

4. Planning Blended and Flexible Working

- 4.1. We do not believe that a 'one-size fits all' arrangement is appropriate or effective for the needs of our organisation.
- 4.2. Therefore, SLT will take a tailored approach on a team by team basis. This approach will be informed by the needs of the organisation, the needs of the department, the needs of the role and the needs / preferences of the individual.
- 4.3. Each department will have a **team charter** that establishes standards for team communication, collaboration and project working. It will also set out how time will be set aside for team development and social connection.
- 4.4. SLT, or line managers, will also work proactively with individual team members to establish:
- Your working pattern, location and flexible working arrangements.
 - When and where you will have your 1:1s and development conversations.
 - How often you will catch up informally.
 - Your remote working set up and needs (how many days in office).
 - Wellbeing support.
- 4.5. Directors will collate team charters and individual working patterns and submit these to the HR to ensure a centralised record.
- 4.6. In addition to the above, there are some organisational expectations that will be established periodically by the Senior Leadership Team. These include:
- When and how all staff will get together for all-staff meetings and briefings.
 - Social time as a whole organisation.
 - Centrally organised wellbeing events or activities.
 - Whole organisation training programmes or briefings.
- 4.7. Arrangements set at an organisational, department and individual level will be reviewed at least every 6-months to ensure they are still fit for purpose and enable and support high performance.

5. Contracts of Employment

- 5.1. Where a blended or flexible working arrangement is determined as part of the role design process, or where it has been agreed as a permanent change to working arrangements, it will be reflected in your contract of employment.

- 5.2. We, as are all organisations, still learning about, and developing, our vision and approach to blended working. We will regularly review our model and adapt as necessary. We will regularly discuss with colleagues what aspects of our approach work and where we may need to change.
- 5.3. Where employees work for the majority of their time from home, and this is noted as part of your terms and conditions in your contract, you will be classified as a 'home worker'. This will mean that you may be eligible to claim home working expenses (allowance rates are set by the UK Government and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>).

6. Health and Safety and Expectations in Blended Working

- 6.1. Health and Safety is important to us and we will take all reasonable steps to protect your health, safety and wellbeing wherever you work, including at home. Before agreeing a blended working arrangement, your line manager must be satisfied that it is safe.
- 6.2. If you work from home either on an occasional or regular basis, you will need to complete a Homeworking Self-Assessment (available from the HR team).
- 6.3. While working from home, you have a responsibility to take reasonable care. If you have any health and safety concerns, or if an accident or incident takes place, you must report this to your line manager immediately, in line with our Health and Safety Policy.
- 6.4. If you have a health condition or impairment that impacts you while carrying out your role at home, we will arrange for a risk assessment to take place to identify any reasonable adjustments that are needed to enable you to work safely at home, if required.
- 6.5. We all need to commit to being location-inclusive so that all colleagues have a consistent experience. It is expected that all colleagues will be considerate of differing working arrangements and strive to ensure that meetings, training and social activity is as inclusive as possible.
- 6.6. If, as part of your agreed working pattern, you work from home some of the time, you should discuss any requirements for additional equipment with your line manager. They will consider any needs and requests seriously and where affordable, proportionate and appropriate, we will pay for the provision of additional equipment.
- 6.7. If you work from home, whether on an occasional or regular basis, you must be contactable during your agreed working hours as normal, and colleagues should be made aware of how best to contact you.
- 6.8. You should ensure that you have a safe, reasonable environment to work in that is free from disruption. You should also ensure that you have adequate care arrangements in place for dependants who may be at home during working hours (except in exceptional circumstances and when agreed with your line manager).
- 6.9. You are still expected to adhere to our employee handbook and policies regardless of your work location. These include (but are not limited to) the Sickness Absence Policy, Data Protection and IT Policies and our Code of Conduct.

7. Formal Flexible Working Requests

- 7.1. It is expected that the vast majority of flexible working arrangements will be handled proactively through our blended approach to working.
- 7.2. Employees with at least 26 weeks' service have a statutory right to make a formal request for flexible working. However, because of our commitment to flexible working, we will consider any formal flexible working requests, irrespective of whether you meet the statutory requirements.
- 7.3. If you wish to make a formal flexible working request you should complete a Flexible Working Request Form ([Appendix A](#)) and send this to your line manager, providing as much detail as possible. You may find it helpful to discuss the proposed changes with your colleagues, as this can help you to identify any potential problems and how they could be resolved.
- 7.4. We encourage open discussion with employees. If you think that you may benefit from flexible working, you are encouraged to discuss this with your line manager in the first instance, who will help you explore the options available.
- 7.5. If you wish to work flexibly on your return from any parental leave (including maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave), you should make your application as soon as you can. This is to allow time for your application to be discussed and the impact of it to be considered before your return.
- 7.6. If your flexible working request relates to a disability, please include this as part of your request, to enable us to consider reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- 7.7. Your line manager will advise you of what will happen next, which may include inviting you to attend a meeting, before advising you of the outcome of your request.
- 7.8. If your request is accepted, you will be informed in writing, usually within 28 days of the date of your request. The notification will confirm the details of your new working arrangements and the start date for that change.
- 7.9. If we are unable to accommodate your chosen flexible working pattern, we might be able to offer you a reasonable alternative, which could include a trial period.
- 7.10. Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, a variation will be made to your contract of employment detailing your new working arrangements.
- 7.11. If your formal flexible working request is either refused or only partially agreed, you can appeal the decision. If you wish to appeal a flexible working request outcome, please outline your reason for appeal in writing within 10 working days of receiving notification of the outcome. We will consider the reasons outlined in your appeal and you will be notified of our decision in writing, usually within 10 working days.

Appendix A: Formal (permanent) Flexible Working Request Form

Please complete this form if you would like to apply to work a flexible working pattern that is different to your current working pattern.

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Please tick any of the below which are relevant:

- ☐ I have worked continuously as an employee for the last 26 weeks.
☐ I have not made a formal flexible working request during the past 12 months.

If you do not meet the above criteria, we will still consider your request to work flexibly, and you can still complete this form. However, your request may not be protected under the Employment Rights Act 1996. More information on statutory entitlement can be found at gov.uk/flexible-working.

Name:	Position:
Line Manager:	Date of Request:
What date would you like the proposed change(s) to come into effect?	
What is the working pattern / location you would like to request? (<i>days, hours, times worked and work location</i>)	
I think this change in my working pattern will affect our organisation and my colleagues as follows:	
I think the effect on our organisations and my colleagues can be managed by:	
If your request relates to a disability or health condition, please provide brief details of how the new arrangement would support your needs:	

Example Ways of Working

