

SMART WORKING POLICY AND PROCEDURE



Policy Schedule	
Policy owner and lead	ODHR: HR Policy Manager
Consultation	Transformation Board Date
	Trade unions Date
	CCF Date
	CMT Date
Equality Impact Assessment	Date
Approving body	Employment & Appeals Committee
Date of approval	
Date of implementation	
Version number	Version 1 (DATE)
Related documents	Flexible working policy Health and safety policies IT policies Employee code of conduct Working Time Regulations
Review interval	Three yearly (DATE)

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- A Smart working suitability checklist
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 New technologies are making it easier to access information remotely, work from a variety of locations and to find more flexible and efficient ways to offer services. Slough Borough Council recognises the importance of modern working practices in enabling our employees to maximise their performance in the delivery of our five year plan.
- 1.2 The aim of this policy and procedure is to support the development of a flexible and agile workforce that can effectively respond to demands for services and resources. This policy outlines the types of smart working arrangements available and the procedures that should be followed.
- 1.3 Separate guidance on the benefits and operation of smart working, as well as frequently asked questions and case studies are available as part of the smart working toolkit and should be read alongside this policy and procedure.
- 1.4 This policy and procedure should be read and applied in conjunction with the council's Flexible Working Policy, Health and Safety Policies, IT Policies, Employee Code of Conduct and Working Patterns Arrangement Scheme.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all employees of the council. It does not apply to agency workers or contractors although managers may wish to consider smart working arrangements for such workers where there are clear business advantages.
- 2.2 This policy and procedure outlines a number of different work styles that support smart working and provides a framework that focuses on the job being undertaken. Requests for flexible working, which relate to the individual employee's personal circumstances rather than their position, should be made in accordance the Flexible Working Policy and Procedure (see paragraph 2.4).
- 2.3 In certain circumstances, management may want to consider if remote working applies. Examples are listed below:
 - Apprenticeships, trainees and work experience placements consider whether this would be on an adhoc basis.
 - Employees in roles that require them to carry out the majority of their work at council premises such as front of house roles - *see checklist.
 - Employees with day to day Building Management Responsibility i.e. Facilities Staff.
- 2.4 Whilst the Smart Working Policy provides guidance around developing an agile workforce, the Council's flexible working policy encompasses the statutory right to request flexible working and contains the statutory procedure for employees to make such requests. The council has extended the right to request flexible working to all employees and 'Smart' working can be requested as part of the flexible working request.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Smart working describes an approach to working hours, location and methods that enable employees to perform to a high level and to provide excellent customer service. Working styles adopted by the council are summarised below:

Working style	Definition
Home worker	Employees have an arrangement where their home is either their main place of work or where they work from home on a regular and established basis (e.g. part of the week, most weeks is spent working from home).
Location Independent Worker	Employees are not tied to a certain location; the work location is determined based upon the most effective location and work time.
Office based worker	The nature of the work undertaken dictates that employees must carry out their work (or the majority of their work) at council premises. This may apply to some face to face and front of house positions.

4. Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 Heads of Services, in conjunction with the line manager if they are not already the line manager, are responsible for implementing smart working as appropriate to the demands on the service and for the day to day management of smart working in their areas. Advice and guidance on effective management of smart working and on the implementation of this policy is available from the ODHR department.
- 4.2 Employees are responsible for ensuring they comply with the council's Employee Code of Conduct, their terms and conditions of employment, job requirements and other employment policies whilst working smartly.
- 4.3 Employees are responsible for ensuring that they are contactable during pre-defined working hours unless agreed otherwise whilst working at remote locations or from home.
- 4.4 Abuse of smart working arrangements may result in disciplinary proceedings and/or removal from smart working arrangements.

5. Identifying roles suitable for smart working

- 5.1 All positions will be assessed by the Head of Service to identify the potential for smart working to positively impact on the service provided. Appendix A outlines the criteria that should be used when undertaking an assessment and determining whether a position could be effectively delivered by a home worker, mobile worker, smart worker or whether the position must be predominately office based.
- 5.2 Heads of Services should discuss their assessment of a position's suitability for smart working with the employees who are already in post so they can contribute to the assessment.
- 5.3 Working from home is not mandatory. Employees in positions that have been identified as best performed by a home, smart or mobile worker and who do not wish to work from home may instead work from council office hot desks and/or hub locations.
- 5.4 We recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where a Head of Service may agree for an employee to work as an office based employee and such requests will be considered on a case by case basis. However, the council reserves the right to change the location of employees at any period.

- 5.5 Where a position has been identified as not suitable for smart working, the employee may still make an individual request for flexible working in accordance with the Flexible Working Policy.

6. Working smartly

- 6.1 Managers and employees should agree a set of working protocols prior to smart working commencing. These may include arrangements for making contact, communication routes, working patterns, meeting arrangements and how work tasks and responsibilities will be set and reviewed. Appendix B provides a template for these discussions.
- 6.2 Where an employee is regularly working from home or another remote location as part of their usual working patterns, a Health and Safety Self Assessment Form must be completed in conjunction with the guidance in the health and safety section of the smart working toolkit. This form must be reviewed and signed by the Head of Service before home working begins.
- 6.3 The necessary IT equipment required to enable smart working will be provided to the employee from the council and will remain the property of the council. Equipment provided to employees is maintained and insured where appropriate by the council and not through the employee's own home insurance arrangements. However employees are required to take good care of the equipment provided to them; just as they would if they were office based.
- 6.4 Employees must ensure that information is protected and kept safe at all times. For security reasons, printing of council documents is not permitted from home and printing should be completed at a council location. Employees are encouraged to use electronic documents as far as possible and any printing that is required must be undertaken at council premises. Please refer to the IT/data security section in the smart working toolkit.

7. Business Travel Hierarchy

- 7.1 Before undertaking any journey, staff should consider the Business Travel Hierarchy in appendix 1. Staff are encouraged to reflect on the need to travel for business purposes. The aim is to challenge the need to be physically present at meetings if alternative means of communication can be used and free up work time which would normally be used to travel across sites.

This may include for example: a telephone call, circulating comments and information by e-mail or the use of tele and video-conferencing.

- 7.2 The location of meetings, where possible, should be decided on the basis of minimising overall travel by all participants.
- 7.3 The use of hot-desking to provide opportunities for remote working and reduce the need to travel to, or return to, the base location on particular days or following certain meetings should be promoted.

8. Hours of work

- 8.1 Employees working smartly must fulfil their contractual working hours. The operation of working hours will be agreed by the manager and must take into account the business needs of the service. It is expected that the majority of employees will operate their working hours during the standard working week (Monday to Friday) and include the core hours of 10am until 4pm unless the position specifically requires work to be completed outside of these times or where alternative arrangements have been agreed on service need basis with the Head of Service. The operation of working hours before 7am and after 7pm and at weekends must

be agreed by the manager in advance and will not be paid as overtime unless specifically agreed in advance by the manager.

8.2 It is important that employees take regular breaks from work in accordance with the Working Time Regulations and their contract of employment. Working hours and break periods are confirmed in the employee's terms and conditions of employment but must include:

- A break of at least 20 minutes if working more than 6 hours a day
- A rest of at least 11 hours between working days
- An uninterrupted break of 24 hours each week

Further information on working hours is included in the Working Patterns Arrangement Scheme.

8.3 Line managers may agree with the employee reasonable time out during core working hours in order to improve work life balance providing it does not negatively impact on the service provided. This could include time to take children to school or to attend an appointment. Such time should be recorded as unavailable in the employees Outlook calendar.

9. Sickness absence and other leave

9.1 Employees who are unable to work due to sickness should inform their manager in accordance with the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure regardless of their work location. Similarly, other leave such as annual leave, dependant leave or compassionate leave should be booked in the same way as office based employees. Employees are not expected to pick up any work during sickness or annual leave.

9.2 Employees who have agreed an individual flexible working arrangement to assist with caring for dependants and who hold a position identified as suitable for smart working must confirm their care arrangements with their manager. Smart working is not a substitute for care arrangements and employees working from home should not be the sole carer for dependants on a regular basis unless as part of an agreed 'time out' period (see paragraph 7.3)

10. Workstations

10.1 Departments will continue to have designated areas of council premises as appropriate, although the number of desks will be reduced. Smart workers who share their time between the office and remote locations will not be provided with a permanent desk. Instead they will be required to use desk space available due to colleagues working remotely or on leave. If a desk is not available they should use hot desk facilities. Smart workers will also have access to a lockable storage in the designated office space for files and equipment. Desks should be cleared at the end of the working session to ensure it is left clean and tidy for the next occupant. No desk should be personalised or have in trays, files etc. sitting on top of them. A clear desk policy applies to all workstations.

10.2 As well as at St Martins Place, we also have hot desks available for staff to use in our Community Hubs such as Chalvey, Britwell and The Curve. These facilities are to support staff in working smartly i.e. if visiting a client or between meetings in the area, staff can go to these sites if PC access is required to undertake work.

10.3 Where an occupational health assessment has determined that a smart worker requires a dedicated work station to allow for specialist equipment as part of a reasonable adjustment for a disability, they will be given priority use of a specific workstation. However this workstation will remain a hot desk and can be used by other in the absence of this individual.

11. Supply of equipment

- 11.1 The equipment provided to a smart worker will depend upon the work style adopted and the nature of their position. Where possible equipment should be portable so that it can be utilised at a range of work locations. This includes providing a laptop rather than desktop PC and issuing telephone headsets, which can be used with a laptop, in replace of desk based telephones and land lines. A mobile telephone and/or tablet may also be required depending on the requirements of the position and subject to approval by the manager.
- 11.2 Heads of Services should maintain a signed inventory for their section of all equipment supplied to employees and a signed copy placed on the employee's personal file.
- 11.3 All equipment and software supplied by the council will remain the property of the council and should be returned in good condition should the employee's working requirements change or if they leave the council.
- 11.4 The council is responsible for purchasing, installing, maintaining and servicing ICT equipment. Equipment should be purchased through a work request with IT in the usual way. Any defects or technical problems with ICT equipment should be reported to the IT Service Desk regardless of work location.
- 11.5 The Council will be responsible for replacing damaged, lost, stolen or faulty equipment provided to employees by the council unless it occurred as a direct result of an employee's negligence. Equipment will be covered by the council's insurance arrangements and is not expected to be covered by an employee's individual home insurance policy.
- 11.6 The employee is responsible for ordering and collecting office supplies (such as stationery) where required and this should be collected from the main office location.
- 11.7 Where an employee is working from home, they are responsible for ensuring they have the necessary furniture (such a suitable table and chair) and broadband services to enable them to remotely access the council's IT networks.
- 11.8 The council will not reimburse employees for the costs of broadband or utility costs. We recognise that many employees will already have broadband services at home and employees who chose to work from home will also benefit from reduced travelling costs. However, working from home is not obligatory and employees may choose to work from council hot desks and hubs if they prefer not to use their own facilities at home.
- 11.1 Employees must ensure that all council data, equipment (including laptops, tablets, mobile phones) is stored securely to minimise risk of loss or theft. Smart workers must complete the mandatory training e-learning module on data security before starting to work remotely.

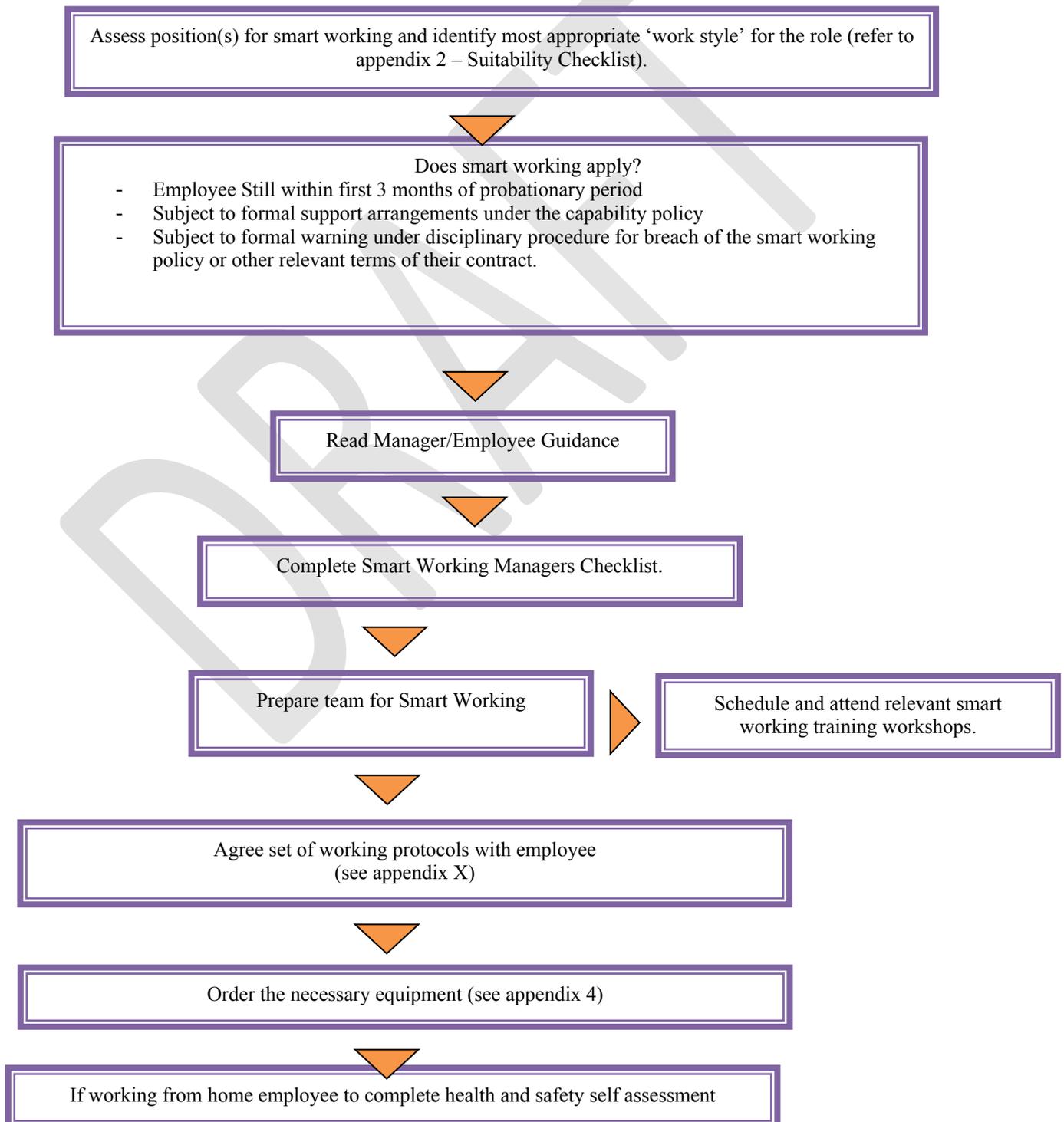
12. Change of circumstances

- 12.1 Smart working arrangements may be temporarily suspended or brought to an end at any time subject to business and operational demands. No change to working practices will be made without consulting with the employee affected first.
- 12.2 Other circumstances when it may be necessary to review smart working arrangements include:
- The employee moves to a new role, either permanently or on a secondment or acting up basis. The suitability of the new position for smart working would need to be assessed.

- The employee moves home. Home working may need to be re-assessed
- Following a re-organisation of the work area. Positions should be reassessed for smart working in light of any changes to service provision, job descriptions, person specification and interdependencies with other service providers.

12.3 Managers are responsible for reclaiming any allocated equipment when an employee leaves the council or moves to another directorate in order for it to be reallocated to the next post holder

13. Process flow chart



Employee name:

Directorate:

Service Area:

Job Title:

Head of Service name:

Date checklist was completed:

The position	Suitability (Yes/No)	Comments
Capable of being effectively completed from home or other remote location without an adverse impact on quality of service or on workload of colleagues		
Capable of being effectively completed without daily face to face contact with team members or direct reports or when needed by teleconferencing, email and telephone and attending on site meetings when required		
Capable of being effectively completed without regular face to face contact with customers/client at council offices		
Capable of being effectively completed without daily face to face contact with colleagues in other departments or when needed by teleconferencing, email and telephone and attending on site meetings when required		
Self sufficient in terms of administrative support as required by the position		
Position has clear tasks and responsibilities with agreed objectives and measurable outputs		
Requires limited day to day supervision		
Not dependent on large numbers of paper based files or other office based records and/or equipment that cannot be accessed from other locations.		
Tasks can be performed individually (for example preparing reports, planning, reviewing, researching, data entry, word processing, liaising with customers at their locations		
The employee	Suitability	Comments

When assessing the suitability of the employee for smart working this needs to be supplemented with evidence if it is felt that the employee does not meet the requirements.	(Yes/No)	
Is the employee self motivated and disciplined to work remotely without direct supervision?		
Does the employee usually complete work to scheduled deadlines		
Does the employee have flexibility and time management skills?		
Can the employee communicate effectively by telephone and in writing		
Will the employee be able to work effectively with reduced social contact with colleagues		
Are they flexible so that team/service needs can be met. This might include working from the team location rather than home/remotely to cover absence of other colleagues at short notice.		
The work location When assessing the suitability of the remote location/homeworking this needs to be supplemented by a health and safety risk assessment.	Suitability (Yes/No)	Comments
Is the employee able to access suitable working space at council offices when needed (e.g. hot desks, hubs, libraries)?		
Is the working environment conducive to work and not subject to frequent interruptions, distractions or noise?		
If the employee wishes to work from home, do they have access to internet broadband?		
Is there enough space to work comfortably?		
If working from home, does the environment meet health and safety requirements (health and safety risk assessment must be completed).		
If working from home, has the employee explored tax/mortgage/tenancy/insurance issues relating to working from home?		
The team/department	Suitability (Yes/No)	Comments
Will the arrangement impact on appropriate and fair cover in the office e.g. telephones, visitors? Is the team flexible so that the team/ service needs can be met?		
Have the team been consulted on the arrangement and if so are there any issues to be resolved?		

Any additional points discussed

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[Empty rectangular box for signatures]

Signature of employee:

Date:

Signature of Line Manager:

Date:

Signature of Head of Service:

Date:

DRAFT

Name of Employee:

Job Title:

Directorate:

Service Area:

Head of Service Name:

Start date of Smart Working Arrangement:

Address of remote/home working locations (if applicable):

This operational agreement has been prepared following discussion between you and your manager. The agreement sets out the operational detail relating to how you will carry out the duties and responsibilities of your job whilst working from home/remotely. Your manager may, however, require you to work from the team location rather than from home/remotely to cover absences of other colleagues at short notice.

Contact and communication

Electronic communication via e-mail and/or messenger services, including access to electronic diaries will be maintained in the usual manner.

You and your manager must take joint responsibility to ensure that regular contact and communication is maintained between you. The arrangements for regular contact and communication are set out below.

Communication/contact with manager: (e.g. telephone call every Monday at 10am to discuss priorities for the week, ad hoc telephone communication when required, face to face 1:1 meetings every two weeks at council location)

Communication/contact with colleagues: (e.g. team meetings every month, available to take work related calls between specified hours)

Communication/contact with customers: (e.g. available to take work related calls between specified hours, expected response times, meeting customers at their own locations) If there is a requirement for you to arrange business meetings and customer visits you must arrange these at a venue away from your home. Under no circumstances should you meet customers at your home.

Communication/contact with other departments: (e.g. attending other departmental team meetings as required, available to speak by phone/teleconference at set times, email responses)

Flexi Time Arrangements

If flexi time is agreed, how will this be recorded and how often will timesheets be approved by the manager?

Performance Management

Regular planned meetings will be held between you and your manager in order to review progress against agreed work objectives and to identify any support to be provided. Are work objectives clear and measurable?

Equipment and supplies

You are responsible for the ordering and collection of necessary work supplies from the office. The following arrangements for ordering and collection of supplies are detailed below:

If applicable the following arrangements will apply for the collection and sending of work related post:

If applicable the following arrangements will apply for the printing, scanning and storage of work related documents:

In order to facilitate effective smart working you will be provided with the following equipment: (e.g. laptop, headphones, mobile telephone)

Absence and leave

Annual leave should be requested in the usual way (via Agresso self service if applicable).

Sickness absence must be reported in the same way as for employee who are office based and in accordance with the sickness absence policy and procedure. Any specific arrangements should be confirmed below:

Other arrangements

Any other individual arrangements agreed with your manager should be listed below (e.g equality act adjustments, agreed flexible working arrangements, break times etc).

Signature of employee:

Date:

Signature of Line Manager:

Date:

Signature of Head of Service:

Date:

DRAFT

The following checklist should be completed by each Head of Service with team members who are/may undertake smart working and returned to the Assistant Director/Director.

Name:

Directorate:

Service area:

Date completed:

Task	Date completed
Familiarise yourself with the council's Smart Working Policy and Procedure, Guidance on benefits of smart working, management FAQs and associated documentation.	
Attend SBC smart working training for managers	
Consider appropriate work styles as outlined with the Smart Working Policy and Procedure (home worker, office worker, smart worker and mobile worker) and how they might apply and benefit your service area.	
Identify those positions that could benefit from smart working and discuss further with any post holders.	
Consult with team members	
Finalise decision to implement smart working for appropriate positions and complete smart working suitability checklist with employee(s)	
Provide feedback to any employees in positions that are not suitable for smart working and which need to be office based so they understand the business reasons for this decision	
Arrange with employee for them to attend SBC smart working training for employees	
Consider IT and other equipment requirements to support smart working including costs, time to order and install if necessary. Order equipment if needed or reallocate existing equipment	
Consider success criteria and review dates – how will outputs be measured (e.g. review of progress against objectives at regular meetings and appraisal, feedback, observations etc.)	
Meet with individual employees to set/agree objectives and measurable outputs as well as review periods.	
Complete Operational Agreement Form (including arrangements for communication and contact) with employee(s) and agree time frame to commence smart working	

Ensure Health and Safety Self Assessment completed by employee prior to any home working arrangements commencing	
Ensure employee knows how to access hot desks and hub locations when needed.	
Address any outstanding matters/concerns that need to be resolved prior to commencing smart working	
Remind smart workers of relevant policies, contractual obligations, security and health and safety policies	
Circulate and communicate to the team any working protocols such as contact times and team meeting arrangements.	
Communicate contact arrangements to customers, partners and other colleagues as appropriate to the position.	
Individual equipment inventory recorded	
Smart working review dates arranged	

Additional comments

DRAFT

Signature of Line Manager:

Date:

Head of Service Signature:

Date:

Assistant Director/Director Signature:

Date:



Where to start



Conversation



Review



Helpful tip

1. **Introducing smart working**

New technologies are making it easier to access information remotely, work from a variety of locations and to find more flexible and efficient ways to offer services. We recognise the important of modern working practices in enabling our employees to maximise their performance in the delivery of our vision to be an enabling and entrepreneurial council.

2. **Benefits of smart working**



Greater Productivity:

The nature of the office environment makes it easy for employees to disrupt work schedules and each other. Smart working can help to remove such distractions and allows employees to prioritise their work based on their objectives and deadlines. Whilst office distractions may only take a few minutes to deal with, research shows that it can take up to twenty minutes to regain concentration afterwards.

Research by 'Think Money' suggests that a third of employees are distracted at work for up to three hours a day, blaming lack of concentration primarily on office noise and chatty colleagues! Smart working can give employees back control of their work, limiting distractions and increasing productivity. The level of productivity increase will of course vary between positions and individual employees but several studies have found that the impact of smart working on productivity levels ranges from 15% up as much as 50%.

Improved communication:

Face to face meetings are not always essential and most of us have experienced 'meetings for meetings sake'. Most communication with colleagues can be achieved effectively by a telephone call, email or through an online communication tool such as Skype or Lync. These alternatives can be more direct and focusing more on the key points than face to face meetings. Group discussions are still an important dynamic to an effective workforce but can be set up as a virtual meeting either by conference call or web-cam. Virtual meetings are often quicker than face to face meetings with less time spent traveling to and from the meeting place.

Commuting:

The time factor in not having to commute to and from the office on a daily basis, as well as traveling to and from the office between meetings, is considerable for employees. The average daily commute in the UK is around 49 minutes each way, or 8 hours each week. This is equivalent to an extra day a week!

In addition to commuting time, employees would reduce the costs associated with traveling to and from work. Whether driving or taking public transport, the cost to the employee is on average £150 per month. Therefore, working from home for a proportion of the working week could actually be equivalent to a significant pay rise for your employees, at a time when local government cost of living increases are minimal and employee NI and pension contributions increasing.

Sickness Absence:

Sickness inevitably affects all employees and is a fact of working life. However, smart working can help to reduce the frequency and duration of absence. A report by Sir Professor Carey Cooper, a distinguished Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health, notes that over half of workers have confessed to 'pulling a sickie' when they were not unwell. The reasons for illegitimate sick leave vary but are often due to disengagement and low morale, stress and 'burnout', family/personal reasons and carer responsibilities. Many of these reasons could be better managed through smart working arrangements.

Of course the majority of sickness absence will be due to genuine ill health and we want to avoid presentism (where employees attend work when ill). There are some conditions where employees should not attend work or feel obliged to do so. On the other hand, some absences will be due to minor health conditions and employees may feel well enough to work but would rather not make the journey to work and/or do not wish to disturb or infect their work colleagues. In these circumstances the employee could still offer a productive day's work whilst working from home, helping to ensure that department projects and workloads remain on track.

Recruitment:

Providing the opportunity for smart working also has significant benefits for the recruitment and retention of high quality employees and can help enhance our reputation as an employer of choice. The pool from which we can recruit talented individuals for positions that are harder to fill is dramatically increased when we remove the geographical limits associated with requiring employees to come to Slough every working day. This is supported by research from the CIPD which has shown that as many as one third of candidates turn down a job offer because of the cost of commuting. This figure is alarming and yet doesn't take into account applicants who decided not to apply in the first place due to the work location.

It is also worth noting that the cost of housing in the south-east can prevent candidates from wider afield relocating. By offering remote working for a proportion of the working week, we reduce the need for relocation and will be able to extend recruitment to include candidates across the country where the cost of housing is more affordable.

Retention:

Smart working and the ability to manage an effective work life balance also has a powerful effect on employee retention, helping us to keep our best employees and reduce the costs associated with covering, recruiting and training new employees. Depending on the nature of

the position, the 'office' could be anywhere from a study, a kitchen table, local library or even a coffee bar in between meetings. This flexibility extends to the working day as well. Taking into account contractual hours, urgent deadlines and scheduled meetings (including virtual meetings) employees can set their own timetable. Time can be built in to cover a range of domestic activities without impinging on their work schedule and commitments, which is especially valuable for parents and elderly carers who can have the peace of mind that they are available if they are needed. A recent survey undertaken by Investors in People found that 34% of employees would prefer flexible working to a 3% pay rise!

3. Managing smart workers



Managing smart workers involves moving away from managing employees by their presence in the office to managing by results and work outputs. Some managers may have concerns about reduced productivity of employees who don't come into the office to work, but in reality the opposite is often the case. Putting trust in employees leads to increased engagement which in turn increases productivity. Whilst some managers may perceive a problem with monitoring individual performance, seeing employees in the office is really only monitoring presence; regular communication and setting objectives and KPIs is a far more effective way to measure performance.

Many of the management skills required to effectively motivate and develop smart workers are the same as those already applied to office base employees, only applied over a distance. Having an adaptable management style will ensure that you can take advantage of the opportunities to improve services whilst supporting employees with different working styles.



The workplace provides a location to interact with people and so employees working from home may feel isolated if removed from the office and their colleagues. In addition, employee interaction and maintaining team spirit is an important element of highly effective teams. To support smart working it will be necessary to be more creative and resourceful in getting to know and staying in touch with colleagues. These concerns could be overcome by splitting time between home and the office and ensuring regular face to face team meetings and events take place and not relying solely on virtual meetings.

4. Considering work styles and suitability

When introducing smart working styles, managers should consider the impact on the business/service, the employee, customers and the wider team. A suitability checklist that covers the position, employee and working environment is included in appendix A.

Suitability of the position:



In assessing the suitability of a position for smart working it will be necessary to consider the duties and responsibilities against the following:

- What proportion of duties and responsibilities are capable of being completed remotely without having an adverse effect on the service or on other employees?
- What proportion of work can be undertaken without face to face contact with other employees or customers?
- What level of direct supervision is required for the position?
- Can the duties be undertaken sufficiently without face to face administrative support?
- Can the nature of the work be measured through clear objectives and work outputs?
- Is the position dependent on large numbers of paper files or other work based records/equipment that cannot be accessed from other locations?

- How much dependency does the position have on other positions in the council? For example, can the work be performed on an individual basis (e.g. writing reports, planning, reviewing, researching, data entry, word processing)



Suitability of the Employee:

In assessing the suitability of the employee, some of the individual competencies and/or behaviours that are important for remote working include:

- Self motivation, self reliance and discipline to work without direct supervision
- Completes work on scheduled deadlines
- Initiative, flexibility and time management skills
- Communicates well by telephone, email and in writing
- The ability to work without close contact from colleagues
- The ability to cope with any additional pressures of working remotely (e.g. the ability to manage distractions at home)
- Flexibility so that the team/service needs can be met. This might include working from the office rather than home to cover absences or colleagues at short notice.



Suitability of the home (including health and safety):

Most of the regulations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 apply to home and remote workers as well as to employees working in council premises.

Managers have a responsibility to ensure that a Health and Safety self-assessment is undertaken by the employee on their main work locations to ensure that the work can be undertaken safely and without endangering the health of the worker or their family.

The manager's checklist for smart workers should be completed as a joint exercise between the manager and the employee after reading the Health and Safety section of the Smart Working Toolkit. Employees have a responsibility to implement any actions identified in order to mitigate or reduce risks in their home and to make their work environment safe.

Managers should ensure that the health and safety of the work environment is discussed on a regular basis during supervision meetings. Where there are any concerns regarding an employee's health and safety advice must be sought from ODHR.

The cost of any adjustments to the home working environment to meet health and safety requirements should be borne by the employee. Alternatively, the employee will be required to work from council offices or hubs.

Where an employee requires a reasonable adjustment due to a disability, an assessment will be carried out by an appropriate assessor (e.g. occupational health, dyslexia assessor). Recommendations will be made about specific equipment needed. Where deemed necessary and reasonable, the costs of such equipment will be met by the Council. Where practically possible such equipment should be portable so that it can be fully utilised remotely and in council premises. If this is not possible the manager will need to decide whether it is necessary for the equipment and the employee to be office based.

Electrical equipment supplied by the council should be regularly tested in line with the annual frequency at the employee's office location.

Where employees are based on site or visiting clients at other sites, they must ensure they make regular contact with the office, usually after each visit, in line with the Lone Working Procedure.

Any accidents, whether they occur remotely, in council premises or during a visit, must be reported to the line manager by the employee and the necessary accident at work form completed.



Suitability for the team:

In addition to considering the suitability of the position and the employee for smart working, it is also important to consider any impact on the team. Issues to consider may include:

- If applicable, will the arrangement impact on fair cover and appropriate cover in the office (e.g. attending to visitors)?
- Is the employee flexible so that they can work from the office to assist with covering absence of colleagues at short notice?
- Have the team been consulted on the arrangement and if so are there any outstanding issues that need to be resolved?

5. Preparing the team for smart working



Following the review of suitable positions for smart working it is advisable to discuss the benefits of the arrangement(s) and ways to overcome any challenges with the wider team. The criteria for success should be shared and managers should consider the views of all team members. Operational issues need to be considered and any working protocols agreed (see appendix B for guidance on working protocols). Issues that you may like to discuss with the team include:

- Responsibilities – what needs to be done, by whom and what are the timescales?
- Understanding each others positions, sharing objectives, targets and project plans
- Open communication including protocols for contacting each others, keeping each other up to date on tasks and work locations
- How best to support each other; discussion about different ways of working, how to ensure good communication and address any concerns about reduced interaction
- Identifying which tasks/services need to be office based and how these will be completed and, if appropriate, shared out
- Agreeing when team meetings and individual 1:1 meetings will be held
- Clarifying the circumstances when an employee working remotely would be required to come into the office (e.g. covering sickness absence)
- What hot desk and hub space facilities are available and how to book them.
- Health and safety arrangements
- Absence reporting arrangements
- Practical arrangements for post, stationery, printing and file management
- Supply and care of equipment
- What to do in the event of any technical problems with equipment
- Confidentiality and data security

6. Success criteria



It is important to consider the success criteria for introducing smart working styles so that you can be confident that the most effective approach is being taken. The following list provides some examples of what success could look like:

- Work completed on time, to required quality and within budget
- Cost of smart working styles compared to operational effectiveness and productivity

- Customer satisfaction
- Effective relationships between team members and with stakeholders
- Calls and emails returned promptly
- Regular feedback
- Accessibility in emergencies
- Effective workload planning
- Fast response to customers
- Smart workers feel engaged and in touch with the service area priorities

The success criteria identified above could be measured through surveys, performance appraisals, supervision meetings and output monitoring.

7. Information security

- 7.1 Employees must ensure that council data, information and equipment is stores securely to minimise the risk of less or loss. Managers should ensure that any smart workers in their team have completed the e-learning module on information security prior to working remotely.

DRAFT

FAQs for managers

How do I manage staff expectations?

Employees should be made aware that the service needs are given priority. If there are particular business needs within a team that mean certain positions cannot work smartly this should be communicated from the outset.

How do I ensure my decisions regarding which positions are suitable for smart working are fair?

Appendix A: Smart working suitability checklist, provides a consistent and transparent framework for assessing positions. This checklist helps to ensure that requests are considered from a business perspective and you can share information with individuals to demonstrate that your decisions have been objective.

What should I communicate to the rest of the team when I have identified positions as suitable for smart working?

It is good practice to talk to the team prior to finalising which positions are suitable for smart working. If anyone concerns are raised you should explain how you have addressed. Open discussion and sharing the business reasons why particular roles are suitable for smart working will help deal with any perceived unfairness by colleagues who are unable to work remotely.

What can I do if circumstances change in the service and a previous arrangement for smart working cannot be maintained?

Smart working protocols are clear that staff need to be flexible and can be required to come into the office if required. Smart working arrangements should be reviewed with each employee every 6 months but you can instigate an earlier review if business needs change. Ideally as much notice as possible should be given as possible but not less than one month. Staff with permanent arrangements can be asked to change their existing working patterns providing you consult with them and provide notice. Further advice should be taken from ODHR.

What records do I need to keep?

The forms provided as part of the Smart Working Toolkit, including the Smart Working Suitability Checklist, Manager Checklist and Operational Agreement, will help you to record decisions that have been made and your reasons for these decisions.

A member of my team has asked to work smartly due to carer responsibilities. What should I do?

Smart working policy relates to identifying positions that are suitable for smart working rather than focusing on individual employees. If an employee would like to amend their working pattern due to personal circumstances they should submit a flexible working request in line with the council's Flexible Working Policy and Procedure. Whilst home working as part of a smart working arrangement is unlikely to be suitable for employees who would be the primary carer for a dependent whilst working at home, flexibility with the operation of their working hours may be a possibility depending on operational requirements.



Where to start



Conversation



Review



Helpful tip

1. Introducing smart working

New technologies are making it easier to access information remotely, work from a variety of locations and to find more flexible and efficient ways to offer services. Slough Borough Council recognises the important of modern working practices in enabling our employees to maximise their performance in the delivery of our vision to be an enabling and entrepreneurial council.

Smart working describes an approach to working hours, location and methods that enable employees to perform to a high level and to provide excellent customer service. Smart working can include working from home and other remote locations such as a customer site or council based hot desks or hubs.



Put simply, smart working really means being thoughtful about the tasks we have to achieve each day and choosing the most appropriate location from which to accomplish them.

2. Eligibility



Smart working considerations focus on the nature of the position and service rather than an individual employee's personal circumstances (e.g. caring for dependents). However, an employee may submit a request under our Flexible Working Request policy for requests that relate to them personally.

Not every position will be suitable for smart working and Heads of Services are responsible for identifying whether positions in their team are suitable for smart working. A consistent framework has been provided in appendix A to assist them with reviewing positions. Factors they will consider include:

- Whether you are capable of working from home/remotely without having an adverse effect on the level and quality of service (this will include consideration of what proportion of duties and responsibilities can effectively be completed remotely.
- Whether you can work without ongoing face to face contact with colleagues and/or direct supervision
- Whether work can be measured on the basis of outputs and through clear objective setting

- Whether your work is dependent on large numbers of paper files or other work-based records/equipment that cannot be accessed from other locations.
- Whether the work can be performed on an individual basis, e.g. drafting reports, planning, reviewing, researching, computer programming, data entry, word processing.

3. Competencies and behaviours for effective smart working



It is important to also consider the competencies and behaviours required you would need for effective smart working. These include:

- Self motivated, self reliant and disciplined to work without direct supervision
- Completes work on time and to scheduled deadlines
- Demonstrates initiative, flexibility and good time management skills
- Able to communicate well by telephone, email and in writing
- Able to cope with reduced social contact
- Able to cope with any additional pressures of working remotely (e.g. distractions from family members at home)
- Able to come into the office if required to attend meetings or cover absent colleagues at relatively short notice.

Your manager is unlikely to agree to regular smart working arrangements if they have identified performance concerns with you or if you require additional support to meet performance targets.

4. Equipment

If your role has been identified as one that can be effective through smart working we will provide you with the necessary equipment fulfil your duties. Where possible equipment will be provided that is portable and can therefore be used from any location, including council premises.

The specific equipment provided will depend on the nature and requirements of your position but may include:

- a laptop (instead of an allocated igel or desk top PC)
- telephone headsets that can be used for making calls via your laptop (rather than a desk based telephone and landline extension)
- a mobile phone if appropriate to the position
- a tablet such as iPad (for roles that are based in the community and where a laptop would be impractical)

If working from home you are responsible for ensuring you have appropriate furniture to work from including adequate table space and suitable chair.

The council will be responsible for the installing, maintaining and servicing of ICT equipment and will also replace/repair lost, stolen or damaged equipment unless the damage or loss occurred as a direct result of negligence. It is therefore important that you take good care of any equipment provided to you including:

- using any protective cases provided
- not leaving equipment in your vehicle
- not allowing family or friends to use your laptop/tablet/phone
- ensuring that equipment is charged correctly

- using laptops on a suitable surface such as a desk or table to avoid overheating
- keeping any equipment out of the way of water or direct sunlight

All equipment and software supplied will remain the property of the council and must be returned in good condition should your work style change or if you leave the council.

If you experience any difficulties or faults with your ICT equipment please raise a request with the IT service desk in the usual way. Electrical equipment supplied by the council should be regularly tested, in line with the annual frequency at the employee's designated office location.

5. Disability and reasonable adjustments

If you require specific equipment as part of a reasonable adjustments for a disability these will be considered in the usual way. This is likely to include an assessment by a trained work station assessor or occupational health as it would if you were solely based in the office. Recommendations will be made about any specialist equipment needed (e.g. special computer mouse, or specific type of chair). We anticipate that in most circumstances the recommendations will be reasonable and that we'll be able to accommodate them in such a way as to support smart working. However, if the cost of providing additional/specialist equipment for working is high and it cannot be easily transferred between home and the office then the council would only provide the equipment for council premises and you would not be able to work from remotely.

Car parking passes for SMP will not be provided for smart workers and you will need to use public car parks such as the Montem Leisure Centre. However, an exception will be made for any employee who hold a blue badge and have a disability that affects their mobility.

6. Insurance and expenses

Equipment provided will be covered by the council's our insurance policies and you are not expected to cover equipment through your own home insurance arrangements.

If you decide to work from home, you will need to ensure that you have suitable internet broadband services to enable you to remotely access the council's IT networks. We do not reimburse employees for broadband service at home or for utilities used whilst working from home. We recognise that many employees will already have home broadband and that working from home offers savings in travelling costs. However, working from home is not mandatory and you may chose to work from council premises, including hot desks and hub spaces, if you prefer not to use your own facilities at home.

Office supplies, such as stationery, should be ordered through your department in the usual way and collected from the main office location. Similarly, any printing or copying required should be completed on council premises, which removes any need to reimburse printing or stationery costs.

7. Home working environment

Dealing with distractions:



Whilst working from home or other remote location helps to reduce the distractions associated with working in an office environment, there are other distractions that may arise when working remotely. These could include interruptions from family and friends and if applicable you will need to let them know that you are working and unavailable despite being physically

present at home. In addition, the temptation to engage in household matters whilst at home may cause some difficulties and you would need to draw a line between home and work activities to avoid both areas suffering.

Health and Safety Risk Assessments:

Most of the regulations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 apply to home workers as well as to employees working at Council accommodation. If working from home, or other remote location for the majority of your working time, you will be required to undertake a self-assessment to ensure that the work can be undertaken safely without endangering your health. The self assessment risk assessment form is available in appendix F.

You are responsible for implementing any actions identified in order to reduce/mitigate risks in your home and make your work environment safe. If you are unable to put suitable safeguards in place you will not be able to work from that location and will need to work at council premises instead.

Whilst accidents at work are rare, they can happen and it is important that any accidents that happen whilst working remotely are reported to your line manager and an accident at work form completed.

Keeping in touch:



As part of your smart working arrangements, your manager will agree protocols with you for attending team meetings and one to ones. It's important to maintain good contact with your work colleagues and so you should feel able to call them/video link them during the day to speak with them just as you would if you were in the office. Just because colleagues are working remotely doesn't mean they are not contactable. It is recommended that you and your colleagues share your outlook diaries so that you can find convenient times to speak. Where you are visiting clients/other sites, you must ensure that you make frequent contact with the office, usually after each visit in line with the service's lone working policy.

Information security:

It is important that smart workers take care in maintaining the security of our information (including data held electronic devices). To help protect our data please:

- Work from electronic documents rather than paper documents as much as possible
- Make sure your electronic equipment is kept secure and password protected
- Only use council provided encrypted USB sticks
- Ensure that work taken home is kept in a secure environment
- Do not allow family or friends to use your IT equipment
- Only print documents in the office
- Do not leave files or equipment unattended in your vehicle

Mortgage and lease agreements:



Homeworking sometimes has implications for mortgage or lease agreements. In most cases there is no difficulty; however it is your responsibility to tell your landlord or mortgage provider that you are working from home. The council will not be responsible for any additional costs in respect of mortgage and lease arrangements.

8. Office environment

Workstations:

If you are a smart worker, you will not be allocated a designated work station back in the office. Whilst departments will continue to have areas of office space, the number of desks available will be reduced in recognition of smart working. If you are working in the office and need a desk please use a desk vacant by colleagues (for example if they are on leave, if it's a day they don't work or if they are working off site).

If there is no desk available in your department's usual section please make use of one of our hot desks, use the business suite or use one of our hub locations. After using the workstation please ensure that it is left clean and tidy for the next user.

Storage:

As smart workers will not have an allocate desk, you will be provided with lockable storage in the office area for your personal items, any papers, stationery and equipment. This may take the form of a pedestal, cabinet space or locker.

9. Sickness and annual leave

If you are unable to work due to sickness you should inform your line manager in accordance with the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, regardless of which location you are working from. Annual leave should be booked in the usual way

FAQs for employees

Is smart working the same as flexible working?

Smart working may incorporate flexible working practices but the aims and scope of policy is significantly different to the Flexible Working Policy. Flexible working is a work pattern which has been designed for an individual employee, usually to help that person balance work and personal commitments. Smart working is based on the most effective operation of working tasks, hours and work location and is focused on the needs of the position, department and organisation. Whilst smart working often benefits both the employee and the employer, the agreement to work smartly is driven by business needs.

How do I apply for smart working?

Rather than considering individual applications, the Head of Service will review all the positions within their section to identify which could benefit from smart working. The Head of Service will discuss their assessments with position holders and the wider team to ensure that you have an opportunity to outline the benefits that you anticipate or any questions that you may have.

Are there different smart working options for different categories of staff?

All positions can be considered for smart working. Smart working can include a range of working practices including remote and home workers and those who work at a combination of locations depending on business needs. The most efficient pattern of smart working will be identified during the assessment process by the Head of Service in discussion with the position holder(s).

My manager has agreed to a smart working pattern on a temporary basis. Why is this?

Where smart working is new to a team and individual or if there are any uncertainties about the best way to operate working hours and location(s), a manager may agree to smart working on a temporary basis. This allows for regular reviews (at least every 6 months) ensuring that smart working is successful for the department and for you personally.

I am a new employee and am on probation. Will my position be considered for smart working?

Employees who are on probation are not normally asked to work smartly. This is because new employees often need additional support during their first few months as they get to grips with their new role and with the council. Being office based during this time will help new employees to settle in.

I am working as an intern/apprenticeship. Will I be considered for smart working?

Interns and apprentices are not able to work smartly. This is because they will require additional supervision and to ensure that they have immediate access to assistance when needed and to ensure that they can benefit from shadowing and working directly with a team. Depending on the nature of your work, it may be possible to work remotely on an occasional and ad hoc basis and this should be discussed with your manager.

Is it possible to change a smart working arrangement or to revert back to an office based location?

If the smart working is agreed it will be on either a temporary or permanent basis. If the arrangement is permanent there will be no automatic right to return to a previous working pattern. However, your manager will want the department and your position to be as effective and successful as possible and so if you have concerns about smart working please do speak with them.

If the circumstances around seeking a change in working arrangements relate to personal circumstances you may still submit a flexible working request as outlined in the council's Flexible Working Policy.

Colleagues in my team are able to work smartly but my role is required to be office based. Why is this?

This is probably because there would be a detrimental impact on the business in some way if your position was not office based. Your manager will document the specific reasons as to why your position can not work smartly using the suitability checklist and can share this with you.

If I apply for a new position in the council, will I be able to take my agreed working pattern with me?

Not necessarily. The Head of Service for that area will need to decide whether the new role is suitable for smart working. If you are applying for a vacancy that has a different working pattern you should discuss this at the application stage.

Can I work more than my full time hours and be paid extra?

No – smart working is about the most effective operation of your working hours and does not attract additional pay.

My position has been identified for smart working but I am concerned about the lack of interaction with colleagues

If working remotely it is important that you still have regular contact with your colleagues. Ad hoc discussions are more likely to take place by telephone, email, messenger and/or video conferencing. We recognise the importance of good face to face communication in the workplace and your manager will ensure that there are regular opportunities for team meetings.

My position has been identified as suitable for home working but I do not have room for an office set up at home.

Many colleagues work from home without a dedicated office/study space providing they have table, such as kitchen/dinning table, that allows them to work in a comfortable and safe position. However, working from home is not mandatory and if you do not feel you have an environment at home for productive working you may work instead from shared or hot desks as well as from council hubs.

What should I do if I need to pop out whilst working from home?

Protocols for time away from work will be agreed with your manager as part of the operational agreement for smart working. Often these arrangements will mirror the same protocols as you had when office based.

If I am working from home and I feel unwell and am unable to continue working what should I do?

You should follow the usual absence reporting procedures and telephone your manager to let them know that you will be unavailable for work.

What should I do if my IT equipment stops working whilst I am working remotely?

Please notify the IT service desk in the usual way if you experience any difficulties with your equipment and they may be able to resolve the issue for you. Where repairs will take longer you should contact your line manager to let them know and you can then agree with them whether you work on other tasks that can be completed remotely or whether it is necessary for you to come into the office or work from another hub location.

1. Introduction

The council assesses the risks of work activities carried out by employees. In addition, employees also have a responsibility for their own health and safety. Where employees are spending most of their time working from home or other remote location they should complete the risk assessment provided in this appendix and report any concerns to their manager. Further support is also available from the health and safety team in ODHR.

In normal circumstances positions will only be deemed as appropriate for smart working (including home working) if they pose minimal risk to health and safety. However, you should be aware of the common hazards detailed below.

2. Handling loads

Handling loads can cause serious injury, particularly to the back. Some activities that may increase the risks are:

- Handling loads that are heavy, bulky, difficult to grasp or unstable;
- Awkward lifting, reaching or handling;
- Twisting or stooping.

Good moving and handling techniques can help reduce risks.

3. Using electrical equipment

If you use electrical equipment provided by the Council as part of your work, the Council is responsible for its maintenance. The electrical sockets and circuits in your house are your own responsibility and must be adequate for equipment being used.

In addition, from time to time, you should ensure that the equipment is switched off and the plug removed and check the following:

- Electrical equipment is turned off at the socket when it is not in use, and that the plug is removed before it is checked;
- Plugs are not damaged and that the outer covering of the cable wire is gripped where it enters the plug or the equipment;
- The outer cover of the equipment is not damaged, e.g. look for loose parts of screws;
- The outer covering of leads, wires, or cables is not damaged;
- There are no burn marks or staining (this indicates overheating);
- There are no trailing wires, if there are, tuck them out of the way, e.g. under a desk or table.

All electrical equipment should be switched off at the socket when not in use.

4. Working with display screen equipment (DSE)

It is important that you adjust your DSE workstation to a comfortable position and take breaks from DSE work. This will help to prevent undue tiredness and prevent pains in the hands, wrists, arms, shoulders or back.

All employees should undertake a DSE assessment of your desk prior to commencing smart working. An e learning training module is available on the Council's Intranet.

5. Accident reporting

If you have an accident whilst working, you should report this to your manager immediately in the usual way. Please note that if the accident takes place at home your

6. Home working self assessment of premises

Undertaking a home working risk assessment enables you to consider potential risks to both your own health and safety and council data.

You must have completed training on how to undertake a risk assessment before completing this form. An e learning training module is available on the intranet. The risk assessment must be undertaken before working from home. Once complete the risk assessment must be signed by you and your manager.

HOME WORKING SELF ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of employee:

Position:

Section/Division:

Home address:

General Conditions of home-base	Suitable: Yes/No/N/A	Any action needed? Who by? When by?
1. Lighting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there adequate natural lighting? • Is there adequate room lighting? • Are there adequate blinds/curtains? • Is the lighting likely to cause glare? 		
2. Heating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the room heated safely? • Will room temperature be maintained? 		
3. Ventilation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there adequate natural ventilation for the work undertaken? 		
4. Electrical installation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a 13-amp 240v AC supply? • Are there a sufficient number of sockets for the equipment that you will be using? 		
5. Fire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an accessible escape route? 		
6. Rooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the working space adequate (3.7 square m suggested minimum area)? • Is there sufficient and safe storage available if required? 		
7. Workstation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the furniture suitable for home-based work? • Is there adequate equipment to work? • Is the equipment set up correctly? • Have you undertaken a DSE assessment if VDU is involved? 		
8. Visits to customers/clients <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will you be visiting customers/clients direct from your home? If so: • Has a lone working risk assessment 		

