

Smart Working Policy and Procedure



How and where we work
Agile, adaptable, accessible

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Slough
Borough Council

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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 a 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 Appendix C.
 - 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	My main place of work is or could be at home
Mobile worker	I spend a significant proportion of my time delivering my services out in the field
Smart worker	I have the potential to work flexibly from any location providing I have the right technology
Fixed location worker	In future I will need to work from a fixed location because I need to work with specific equipment or technology or with customers (internal or external) in a specific location

4. Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 Service leads, 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 service lead 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 fixed at a specific location.
- 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, mobile, smart or fixed location 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 service lead 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 D 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 service lead 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 A. 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 email 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 service lead. 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 six 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.

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