



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle
**Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSratha Báin**

Derry Cittie & Stràbane
Destrìck Cooncil

Hybrid Working

Policy & Guidance

February 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Derry City and Strabane District Council is committed to developing work practices and policies that support work-life balance. In addition to improving health and wellbeing, hybrid working can raise staff morale, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, improve services and recruitment, and retention of staff.
- 1.2 The Council is eager to benefit from the opportunities that have emerged from the 2020 pandemic-altered working landscape, with the aim of establishing contemporary, forward-thinking working arrangements. This initiative aligns with the Council's aim to be recognised as the 'employer of choice' by its workforce and prospective employees.
- 1.3 The specifics of Hybrid Working will be contingent on the demands of the role. While not all roles are suitable for home working, the Council is committed to considering flexible working requests - in consideration of the needs of the service - and ensuring that all staff are presented with some alternatives where possible.
- 1.4 The Council will provide the necessary support and tools to maximise the advantages of adopting hybrid working arrangements, which cater to the needs of the organisation, the team, and the individual employee.

2. Purpose and Objectives

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles and procedures by which managers and employees can operate a shared understanding of hybrid working.
- 2.2 This policy aims to ensure that those working under a hybrid working arrangement are treated equally to those based in the workplace and that hybrid working is carried out safely and in accordance with the relevant Council policies and current legislation. It sets out the conditions on which hybrid working is possible and the terms that apply to all hybrid workers.
- 2.3 The Council has taken a 'principle-based' approach to the development of this policy i.e. it is a statement of the overarching principles that will inform decisions and is not intended to provide detail on every possible scenario that may be encountered. It may be counter-productive to develop a policy on flexibility which sets rigid rules and regulation.
- 2.4 Any reference to "workplace" in this policy is a reference to the work location as specified in the employee's contract of employment.

3. Basic Principles and Conditions

- 3.1 A hybrid working arrangement is an informal, flexible agreement between the manager and employee, allowing employees to split their working time between the workplace and an agreed hybrid location (normally at home).
- 3.2 Heads of Service and Line Managers will determine which roles are suitable for hybrid working, considering the impact on service delivery and team collaboration. Guidance should be sought from Human Resources or the CIPD process map in Appendix 1. Many roles may not be suitable for hybrid working and will require face-to-face interaction or a specific location.
- 3.3 Where hybrid working arrangements can be considered, the arrangements are subject to agreement with the Line Manager. This must involve a discussion, which must be formally recorded using the Hybrid Work Arrangement Discussion template outlined in Appendix 2. The discussion template must be signed off by both parties and forwarded to Human Resources for recording. If an agreement cannot be reached, the Director/Head of Service will review and seek advice from Human Resources to ensure consistency.
- 3.4 Managers should exercise good judgement within this policy's principles, considering a range of options for their staff. Hybrid working may not suit every department or post, but managers should explore how it might work in their area, thinking creatively with their teams.
- 3.5 To support teamwork, collaboration, and employee well-being, it is preferable that hybrid working is done in whole days. Employees are expected to spend approximately 60% of their working week in the normal workplace, or an equivalent proportion for part-time employees
- 3.6 All Council policies applicable to workplace employees remain in effect, regardless of hybrid work arrangements.
- 3.7 Council employees will be provided with necessary ICT equipment and technology for hybrid working. Personal adapted equipment, such as chairs and monitors, will be provided if a risk assessment deems it necessary.
- 3.8 While the Council aims to provide appropriate equipment for hybrid working, immediate provision may not always be possible. If the absence of equipment compromises health and safety, home working will not be permitted until resolved.
- 3.9 Hybrid working should not impact the level or quality of service to customers or colleagues.

- 3.10 Employees may be required to attend the workplace outside agreed arrangements for training or meetings due to service needs.
- 3.11 Hybrid working will not affect an employee's contractual terms and conditions regarding working hours or location. It is an informal arrangement that may change based on service needs and should be reviewed regularly.
- 3.12 Employees wishing to make permanent changes to working hours, location, or patterns should submit a Flexible Working request.
- 3.13 To integrate new employees effectively, they are encouraged to spend more time in the office during the initial probationary period. After this, the line manager and new employee will decide on a suitable hybrid working arrangement, with regular reviews to ensure effectiveness.
- 3.14 Line Managers should consider any disclosed information related to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and regularly discuss and review any reasonable adjustments needed for hybrid working.

4. Working Hours and Keeping in Touch

- 4.1 Employees must fulfil all job duties and work their contracted hours in a hybrid arrangement.
- 4.2 Employees and line managers should organise the workweek to balance responsibilities effectively.
- 4.3 Employees must keep calendars updated and redirect office phones to ensure seamless communication.
- 4.4 Employees must be available to attend Council premises during normal working hours when required.
- 4.5 Employees should not undertake caring responsibilities during work hours and must have appropriate arrangements in place.
- 4.6 The Council supports employees facing emergencies related to caring responsibilities through the Special Leave Policy.
- 4.7 Hours worked will be recorded using the Council's approved Time Recording Equipment and Employee Self Service Software.
- 4.8 Employees will be credited for a standard working day while hybrid working. Flexi time can be accrued in exceptional circumstances with prior approval from the Line Manager/Head of Service.
- 4.9 Normal procedures apply for reporting time off for annual leave or special leave. Employees must request time off and seek approval from their Line Manager as per applicable policies.
- 4.10 Employees should refer to colleagues based on roles and responsibilities, not work location.

5. Supporting Performance

- 5.1 Line Managers who manage hybrid teams will provide the opportunity for employees to collaborate and connect with other employees, so communication and collaboration remain a priority.
- 5.2 It is important that managers continue to support regular performance conversations, provide effective feedback, and set clearly defined goals for their employees.
- 5.3 A range of communication methods are available, both formal and informal, for example, one-to-one meetings, work plans, or professional development plans. Line Managers, teams, and employees should adopt a method of communication that works for all parties.

6. Health and Safety

- 6.1 Employees have a responsibility for their own and others' health and safety while they are carrying out work activities regardless of the work location in accordance with the Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- 6.2 Where employees use other Council locations to work, they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety.
- 6.3 DSE risk assessments must be carried out on an annual basis or at the point of any substantial changes made to the working environment or arrangement if this occurs sooner.
- 6.4 Employees must fully participate in completing the necessary risk assessments and review this with their manager. When working from home, the employee has a responsibility to ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage, and screening from activities and noise in the rest of the home.
- 6.5 Employees must not carry out face-to-face meetings in their home.
- 6.6 Any accident that occurs whilst working from home, in connection with work activities, needs to be reported to the H&S team in line with normal reporting procedures. Managers should seek advice regarding any specific concerns around health and safety issues as sign-off for hybrid working will not take place until all the Health and Safety requirements have been appropriately addressed.

7. Health and Wellbeing

- 7.1 Employees have a responsibility for their own and others health and safety while they are carrying out work activities regardless of the work location in accordance with the Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- 7.2 In line with the Council's duty of care to provide appropriate breaks to employees throughout the working day and in accordance with the Working Time Directive 1998 (as amended), all employees must take a minimum lunch period during their workday.
- 7.3 Employees have the right to disconnect outside of working hours and are not obliged to respond to work communications during evenings and weekends unless on duty.
- 7.4 Normal rules around reporting of sickness absence apply for hybrid working arrangements. It is particularly important that staff who become ill whilst working hybrid notify their Line Manager as outlined in the Council's Attendance Policy.
- 7.5 Employees and Managers are encouraged use the BeConnected App.

8. Data Security & Information Management

8.1 Maintaining the security of the information is vital and those working away from a Council office are responsible for the security of the data they keep and should comply with all relevant legislation, just as if they were working in a Council office. Managers must agree early on with their staff as to how confidential or sensitive information will be handled when hybrid working.

Some matters to consider are as follows:

- Confidential or sensitive conversations/work should not be carried out whilst in any public areas.
- Other employees (including family members) should not have any access to personal data either on paper or as electronic records.
- Family members or members of the household should not be using council issued devices for personal use such as browsing the internet or installing 3rd party unauthorised programs or apps. This covers laptops, iPads, tablets and phones.
- Home printing on personal printers is not allowed,
- All printed or other paper records must be safely locked away when not in use.
- Confidential waste should be disposed of as per normal procedures.
- All Council data stored outside of the Council's network, must only be stored on Council systems and/or encrypted Council owned devices.
- Council data must not be stored on any personal devices and/or staff should not send work related emails to their personal email address.
- Official-sensitive emails that are sent externally (irrespective of who these are sent to) must be classified as such.
- If staff are using a laptop or other portable device, they must be aware of the additional security risks if leaving this device unattended.
- All Derry City and Strabane District Council equipment must be used in line with the Digital Services Policies and Procedures document and will be audited in the same way as PCs.

- Laptops and mobile devices which do not regularly connect to the network may be recalled by the Digital Services Department for inspection at any time and on at least an annual basis for auditing. These audits will be checked and reconciled with the software licence library and all unauthorised software will be rectified. The source of unauthorised software will be ascertained, and disciplinary action may be taken.
- If required, the line manager should complete the Hardware/ Software Acquisition form and return to the Digital Services Manager to complete an equipment order.

8.2 It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that information is handled correctly and not used for personal benefit or gain. It is a mandatory requirement for all staff to complete the GDPR course and all staff are required to keep updated on good information management and security practice as required.

9. Costs and Expenses

- 9.1 An employee's contractual normal location of work will not change with hybrid working so an employee's entitlement to claim expenses will remain the same. For more information, please refer to the Travel and Expenses Policy.
- 9.2 In line with HMRC guidelines, reimbursement will not be provided for household bills including internet, heating, lighting, water, landline connection etc. Although financial assistance will not be provided, employees may find that they are still financially better off when considering personal commuting and lunchtime costs.
- 9.3 It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure their mortgage/lease agreement and insurance policy do not include a clause that would prevent them from working from home.

10. Environmental Sustainability

- 10.1 One of the primary components of the carbon footprint of work relates to travel. Travelling thousands of miles each year for work/ meetings that can be carried out using video or telephone conferencing is an unsustainable and unproductive thing to do. Decisions about where we work, where we expect our colleagues to work, and the ways in which we communicate can increase or reduce our need for travel, our energy consumption and consumption of physical resources.
- 10.2 Using hybrid working arrangements, managers and staff can help to reduce both their own and the organisation's environmental footprints.
- 10.3 Hybrid working arrangements may also support the resilience of Council services and operations to climate impacts whereby staff may avoid unnecessary travel during severe weather events.

11. Abuse of working arrangement

- 11.1 The Council will have the right to withdraw the provisions of the working arrangement from any section or employee following an appropriate investigation process, who is found to be abusing the arrangement or where the arrangement is deemed not to be working satisfactorily.
 - 11.2 Failure to fulfil work requirements or adhere to Council policies and procedures while working remotely may be regarded as misconduct and therefore result in modification or termination of the hybrid work arrangement, a performance plan, and/or other disciplinary measures.
 - 11.3 If the hybrid work arrangement becomes infeasible or problematic for the employee at any time, it may be discontinued with reasonable notice.
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12. Review of Pilot Policy

- 12.1 This policy and guidance will be reviewed regularly and, if necessary, revised in consultation with recognised Trade Unions considering changing legislation and best practice.
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13. Equality Screening

- 13.1 This policy has been screened out for Equality Impact Assessment.
Working from home has had a positive impact on most people, including those with dependents and those with a disability.
Prior to March 2020, all Council staff worked predominantly from the office. Working from home during Covid was directed due to the pandemic, in line with official guidance. This hybrid working policy now provides flexibility and a return to a new blended way of working.

14. Appendix A.

Last updated
February 2024

CIPD

Assessing a role for hybrid working

