

Committee: Finance and Resources

Date: 5 December 2023

Report: Home Working Policy Review

Purpose of the report

1. To agree changes to the Authority's Home Working Policy.

Recommendation

2. That Members approve the Home Working Policy, set out in **Appendix A**.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework and specifically Corporate Action Plan Objective 33, "Ensure we have HR policies, procedures, terms and conditions to attract and support the right people with the right skills to deliver the work of the Authority effectively".

Background

4. The current Home Working Policy was last reviewed in 2018.
5. The Authority has historically had a Home Working Policy in place for 'ad hoc' working from home arrangements only.
6. Although the Authority remains primarily an office-based organisation, Members asked that the experience of working through Covid and providing more flexibility as to when and where staff can work should be built upon, whilst maintaining or improving the services provided by the Authority. As a result, blended working was formally launched in March 2022.

Proposed changes

7. It was recognised the current Home Working Policy needed to be updated and amended to provide clarity to the arrangements in place and for the recently introduced blended working arrangements to be included within the policy.
8. The proposed changes have been discussed and agreed with UNISON.

Staffing implications

9. Improving flexibility for staff aligns with the requirements of the Investment in People standard of 'Leading and inspiring people' within the theme of 'Creating transparency and trust'.

Equality implications

10. An equality impact assessment (EIA) has been undertaken and it is considered that adoption of the revised policy will have either a neutral or positive impact on individuals with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Conclusion

11. The revised Home Working Policy, allows the Authority to enhance its position as an attractive employer, in conjunction with the range of other benefits without compromising service delivery.

Vikki Thomas
Head of HR

15 November 2023

Home Working Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Authority is committed to promoting flexibility in order to facilitate effective and efficient working and this policy outlines the circumstances under which the Authority will allow and enable staff to work from home and details the actions required to facilitate a home working arrangement.
- 1.2 Flexible working arrangements can offer benefits for both staff and the Authority. However, when deciding if home working is appropriate, the implications for service provision, members of the public, colleagues, Members and other stakeholders, must take priority.

2. Types of Homeworking

- 2.1 There are various ways that home working may operate, ranging from rare occasions through to regular formal arrangements that are identified in the contract of employment.

Occasional Home Working – Working from home occasionally may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where a specific task needs dedicated and focused input and/or could be dealt with more efficiently at home, e.g. with no interruptions, etc.;
- Where it is difficult for staff to get in to work e.g. adverse weather, etc.;
- A short but unavoidable commitment at home; or
- Work is being undertaken on site/out of the office and nearer to the member of staff's home.

Blended Working – Primarily workplace-based but with a combination of working in the office, on site and from home. There will be no change to the contractual work base, which remains as the office.

Regular reviews will take place to ensure the blended working arrangements are effective, service delivery isn't negatively affected and there are no other factors affecting the member of staff and/or their work (e.g. communication, wellbeing, etc.). If there are any concerns that can't be easily resolved, a blended working arrangement can be amended and/or withdrawn, as necessary.

Staff may be required to attend their workplace on a 'home working' day, for whatever purpose.

Flexible Working Agreement – When a formal arrangement has been requested and approved, through the Flexible Working Policy, to regularly work at home for one or more days a week.

An agreement will result in a change to the employment contract, which will confirm the contractual place of work as being the home address and the applicable Authority workplace, with the days of the week specified for each workplace.

Contractually home-based – When a member of staff has their home address assigned as their permanent and only work base.

3. Suitability of Home Working

- 3.1 Requests for home working will be reviewed and determined by the manager and/or Section Head on individual merits. The primary consideration will be whether the service provision, relationships with colleagues, or access by Members/members of the public would be adversely affected.
- 3.2 **Posts**
Many posts within the Authority may be considered for home working. In general, any position that does not require time to be spent in a specific location (e.g. to undertake tasks that can only be completed within the workplace or outdoors within the Park, deliver face-to-face customer service etc.) may be considered for home working.
- 3.3 **Staff**
Having established the suitability of a post for home working the suitability of the member of staff also needs to be considered, as home working does not suit everyone.
- 3.4 Office dynamics and the sharing of informal information may have a significant impact on staff performance. Some members of staff may perform better in a traditional work environment, and those with little experience in their role are likely to need closer supervision, which may be more of a challenge if they were working from home.
- 3.5 Individuals may also have a distorted view of home working – often “rose-coloured” – with little recognition or understanding of the potential drawbacks, and it is important that both the advantages and the disadvantages are considered.
- 3.6 A trial period may be appropriate in order to gauge suitability before any longer term arrangements are put in place.

4. Requests to Work from Home

- 4.1 The process for dealing with requests to work from home consists of three steps:
- i. The request is considered by the manager and/or Section Head, focussing on whether the post and the individual are suitable for home working;
 - ii. The type of home working arrangement is agreed, i.e. Occasional Home Working or Blended Working. Please note: if a contractual change of work base is being requested, for all or some of the working week, the process detailed in the Authority's Flexible Working Policy should be followed.
 - iii. The final consideration is the suitability of the home environment of the member of staff.
- 4.2 Once a request has been agreed in principle, the assessment form at Appendix 1 should be completed for occasional home working arrangements and Appendix 2 should be completed for more regular blended working arrangements.
- 4.3 If a request is not accepted, the member of staff should be provided with the details of the reasons for rejecting their request, from their manager and/or Section Head

5. Assessing the Home Environment

- 5.1 A member of staff who works from home needs to take personal responsibility for the health, safety and wellbeing aspect of home working.

- 5.2 Staff are entitled to the same protection under health and safety legislation as if they were office based. It is, therefore, vital to ensure the home working environment is suitable and deemed safe to work before a home working agreement is finalised.
- 5.3 If an assessment form identifies any particular risks, it is the responsibility of the manager and/or Section Head and member of staff to discuss ways in which the risks may be minimised or eliminated.
- 5.4 Completed assessment forms should be submitted to HR.
- 5.5 The member of staff is responsible for checking their own home insurance and/or tenancy agreement to ensure there are no restrictions regarding working from home. The Authority will not reimburse any additional premiums which may become payable nor will any contributions to any incidental costs (for example, energy/heating costs) be made.

6. Management of Home Working Agreements

- 6.1 As part of any home working agreement, staff are expected to be contactable at all times during their working day by diverting their office telephone to either their mobile or home telephone, keeping their Outlook Calendar up to date and checking and responding to emails and other messages regularly.
- 6.2 On no account should members of the public be invited to a member of staff's home address. Visits by colleagues should not be made to home addresses, with the exception of Health, Safety and Wellbeing reasons, including sickness absence management, and for the delivery and collection of work, and then only with the agreement of the member of staff concerned.
- 6.3 Staff should use the Civica self-service portal to clock in/out during the day as usual. Managers are responsible for monitoring the working times of their team.
- 6.4 To make the arrangements work effectively, there needs to be mutual trust between staff and managers.

7. Equipment

- 7.1 It is the Authority's responsibility is to provide staff with the required equipment and a workstation at their contractual work base in order for them to undertake their role. The Authority will not provide additional and/or duplicate equipment or furniture for staff to use at home.
- 7.2 Staff who cannot confirm that their home workstation is suitable and comfortable, must work at their contractual work base.
- 7.3 The Authority's IT policies and procedures will apply equally to staff working at home as they do within the workplace

Appendix 1

Occasional Home Working Assessment Form

Name of Member of Staff:		Job Title:	
Manager's Name:		Name of Section Head:	
Officer's home address:			
Detail of Authority equipment supplied, if any:			

This assessment is to be completed for those officers who may work from home occasionally on an ad hoc basis. Completed assessments should be shared with HR for saving on personal files.

Job role – to be agreed by the Section Head and Manager	Yes	No	Comments
1. Can the service provided by the member of staff be delivered, when occasionally working from home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Working Environment – to be completed by the member of staff	Yes	No	Next steps for information and support
1. Are suitable arrangements in place to ensure you can work whilst at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have somewhere appropriate to work which is comfortable, safe and free from interruptions?
2. If you use a computer or laptop, have you completed a display screen equipment (DSE) and work station risk assessment for your home work station?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If 'yes' your completed assessment should be forwarded to HR@yorkshiredales.org.uk The DSE and work station risk assessment is available in this folder X:\Health and Safety\06. DSE\Forms\ .
3. Do you have a reliable Wi-Fi connection at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Is your workspace safe, i.e. clear of trip hazards, adequate lighting, electrical fittings free from defects, suitable heating and ventilation etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Are you aware that you must not arrange to meet people at your home or give out personal contact numbers, e-mail addresses etc. to members of the public for work purposes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Management of homeworking and staff wellbeing – to be completed by the member of staff with the manager	Yes	No	Next steps for information and support
1. Do you suffer from any medical condition that may affect your ability to work from home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This may be a pre-existing condition or a new condition. It is important that you discuss this with your manager and, in some cases, you may be referred to occupational health
2. Where you live with someone, for whom you are a carer, are adequate arrangements in place to provide this care while you're working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	You should discuss your caring responsibilities with your manager. Children should not be allowed to use Authority equipment and extra care must be taken to prevent access to this equipment.
3. Are you aware when working at home you should report accidents in the same way as usual to your manager?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Other arrangements - to be completed by the member of staff with the manager	Yes	No	Next steps for information and support
1. Have you taken reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality and security of information and Authority property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data protection and information governance arrangement and policies continue to apply when you are homeworking. Data breaches must be reported to your manager immediately.

Miscellaneous - to be completed by the manager	Yes	No	Comments
1. Have all relevant issues been addressed in this assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Is further advice needed e.g. from HR or anyone else?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Acceptance			
Member of staff signature:		Date:	
Manager signature:		Date:	

Please forward the completed form to HR@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Appendix 2

BLENDDED WORKING ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Member of Staff:		Job Title:	
Manager's Name:		Name of Section Head:	
Officer's home address:			
Detail of authority equipment supplied, if any:			

This assessment is to be completed for those officers who may be working from home for part of their working week. Completed assessments should be shared with HR for saving on personal files.

Please note, when completing the checklist if answers are:

Yes - no action is required

No - recommendations are to be entered on the action plan at the end of the assessment

Job role – to be agreed by the Section Head and Manager	Yes	No	Comments
1. Can the service provided by the officer be of the same standard, or better, when working from home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Working Environment – to be completed by the member of staff	Yes	No	Next steps for information and support
1. Are suitable arrangements in place to ensure you can work whilst at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Do you have somewhere appropriate to work which is comfortable, safe and free from interruptions? A photograph of the work area may assist the discussion with managers about suitability of working arrangements
2. If you use a computer or laptop, have you completed a display screen equipment (DSE) and work station risk assessment for your home work station?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If 'yes' your completed assessment should be forwarded to HR@yorkshiredales.org.uk The DSE and work station risk assessment is available in this folder X:\Health and Safety\06. DSE\Forms\ .
3. Do you have a reliable Wi-Fi connection at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4. Is your workspace safe, i.e. clear of trip hazards, adequate lighting, electrical fittings free from defects, suitable heating and ventilation etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Are you aware that you must not arrange to meet people at your home or give out personal contact numbers, e-mail addresses etc. to members of the public for work purposes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Management of homeworking and staff wellbeing – to be completed by the member of staff with the manager	Yes	No	Next steps for information and support
1. Are arrangements in place for supervision and speaking with your manager on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good practice is to speak to your manager regularly.
2. Do you suffer from any medical condition that may affect your ability to work from home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This may be a pre-existing condition or a new condition. It is important that you discuss this with your manager and, in some cases, you may be referred to occupational health
3. Where you live with someone, for whom you are a carer, are adequate arrangements in place to provide this care while you're working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	You should discuss your caring responsibilities with your manager. Children should not be allowed to use Authority equipment and extra care must be taken to prevent access to this equipment.
4. Are you aware when working at home you should report accidents in the same way as usual to your manager?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Other arrangements - to be completed by the member of staff with the manager	Yes	No	Next steps for information and support
1. Have you taken reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality and security of information and Authority property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data protection and information governance arrangement and policies continue to apply when you are homeworking. Data breaches must be reported to your manager immediately.

Miscellaneous - to be completed by the manager	Yes	No	Comments
1. Have all relevant issues been addressed in this assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Is further advice needed e.g. from HR or anyone else?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Agreed arrangements – to be completed by the manager	
Please provide details of what blended working arrangements have been agreed, e.g. working in the office for a minimum of 2/3 days per week/fortnight.	

Acceptance			
Member of staff signature:		Date:	
Manager signature:		Date:	

Please forward the completed form to HR@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Blended Working Assessment Action Plan			
Action	By whom	Date	Review comments
Informal review after the first month of the impact internally and externally, assess the quality of service and the impact on the officer			
Formal 3 month review of the impact internally and externally, assess the quality of service and the impact on the officer			
Formal 6 month review of the impact internally and externally, assess the quality of service and the impact on the officer			