



Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council  
Pobl a Threfniadaeth | People and Organisation

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## Interim Hybrid Working Policy



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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Hybrid Working Strategy sets out the Council's vision and priorities in adopting a hybrid working model and facilitating a modern and efficient way of working that is sustainable and fit for the future. It is anticipated that the adoption of a hybrid working model will offer many benefits to our residents, service users and employees.
- 1.2 Whilst implementing its Hybrid Working Strategy, the Council is also responding to changing internal and external demands resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this changing landscape, this policy will be piloted over an interim period and reviewed in January 2024.
- 1.3 The introduction of an interim policy will provide an opportunity to assess the operational effectiveness of the policy as well as provide an opportunity to consider any adjustments that might be necessary to support new ways of working in the future.

## 1.4 Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide detailed information around what hybrid working means for the Council.

This policy is intended to provide guidance and good practice to enable employees to work from home effectively and safely.

It will assist both managers and employees in implementing hybrid working by providing practical advice and information.

## 1.5 Scope

The policy applies to all Council employees but excludes those employed under the delegated powers of School Governing Bodies.

Policy provisions and procedures contained within this document will temporarily override other Council policies and procedures where they conflict.

## 1.6 Definitions

Where reference is made to hybrid employees within this policy, this refers to all those who have the ability to submit an application for hybrid working and have had their application approved. This will be limited to employees who undertake Flexible Hybrid, Limited Hybrid and Roaming workstyles as defined in Section \*\*\*\*.

## 1.7 Responsibilities

### 1.7.1 Corporate responsibilities

- The Chief Executive on behalf of the Council carries overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council has the appropriate processes in place to adequately and appropriately support its employees, regardless of what working arrangement they have.

- The Corporate Lead Officer: People and Organisation Service is responsible for reviewing, updating, and amending this policy and procedures to reflect changes in employment legislation or practice. This will be done following consultation with recognised trade unions and due democratic approval where required.
- The People and Organisation Service is responsible for providing advice, guidance, and training on this policy and procedures.
- The People and Organisation Service is responsible for maintaining and monitoring of the Health and Safety asset register as well as ensuring appropriate support is provided to on equipment use.
- The Corporate Lead Officer: Customer Contact Service is responsible for reviewing, updating and amending any policies in relation to Information Governance and Security in light of this policy, as well providing any necessary advice and training.
- The Customer Contact Service is responsible for maintaining and monitoring an ICT equipment asset register as well ensuring appropriate technical support is provided to staff on equipment use.
- Service Areas are responsible for allocating and maintaining any service specific equipment.
- All Corporate Lead Officers are responsible for ensuring:
  - Effective fair and consistent implementation of the policy
  - Continued service delivery; and
  - Engagement with their employees on these arrangements

### **1.7.2 Line Manager responsibilities**

Managers are responsible for ensuring:

- Compliance with the requirements and procedures as set out in this policy.
- Flexibility and openness in relation to discussions and agreements with employees around hybrid working, whilst remaining focussed on the needs of the service.
- Arrangements for both regular individual and team meetings, ensuring regular communication is maintained between themselves and team members.
- Employees are given clear work expectations on outputs, actions and activities.
- Employees meet their responsibilities in relation to health and safety by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern.
- A review of hybrid working arrangements will take place during the annual appraisal.
- Appropriate systems are in place to ensure information security and compliance with data protection legislation.
- That they have completed all relevant management training.

### 1.7.3 Employee responsibilities

Employees who are participating in hybrid working are responsible for:

- Complying with the requirements and procedures as set out in this policy.
- Being open and constructive in discussing and agreeing hybrid working arrangements, whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service.
- Ensure they have completed the mandatory e-learning modules for hybrid employees.
- Ensuring a minimum broadband connectivity (minimum of 8 Mbps).
- Maintaining regular contact with their manager and team.
- Complying with Health and Safety Policy and Procedures by participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety.
- Taking responsibility for maintaining appropriate security requirements in relation to the use of equipment and information. Reporting immediately any loss, theft or damage to Council equipment or the loss of confidential information.
- Ensure the return of all equipment when they leave or transfer to a different role where the equipment requirement no longer applies.

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## 2. Hybrid Working

### 2.1 Principles

2.1.2 As set out in the Council's Hybrid Working Strategy, the aim of the Council is to adopt a hybrid working model which maximises flexibility in terms of where and when work is carried out, whilst never compromising service delivery.

2.1.3 To assist services in balancing these priorities and ensuring hybrid working is implemented across the organisation in the desired way the following principles have been agreed:

- Where our employees can work as efficiently remotely or in the office they can choose where they work on any given day.
- Our hybrid working employees will have no permanent personal space in the office, other than in exceptional circumstances.
- Where service needs allow and with agreement from their Line Manager, hybrid employees may fulfil their contractual hours between a bandwidth of 6am and 9pm, Monday to Friday, with at least 4 core hours worked between 9am and 5pm each working day.
- It is essential that our meetings with colleagues and external partners will be virtual wherever possible
- Our priority is to work in a paperless way. We are committed to investing in systems and resources to support digital ways of working.

### 2.2 Work Styles

2.2.1 The ability to work in a hybrid way will be dependent on the demands of the role, the needs of the service and the employee's individual circumstances.

2.2.2 To assist with the identification of roles which may or may not be eligible for hybrid working the Council has identified four work style categories:

- **Fixed:** A role which requires the employee to attend the workplace throughout the day due to the nature and requirements of the role (e.g. Library Assistant, Receptionist, Caretaker, Care Assistant).
- **Limited Hybrid:** A role which can be undertaken as effectively remotely as in the workplace but due to certain responsibilities/client demand the employee will be required to visit Council buildings or schools on a regular basis with little notice (e.g. Social Worker, Planning Control Officer).
- **Flexible Hybrid:** A role which can be undertaken as effectively remotely as in the workplace.
- **Roaming:** A role which requires the employee to consistently carry out over 50% of their work at various public and private locations across the county (e.g. Building Control, Environmental Operative, Mobile Librarian, Cycling Instructor)

2.2.3 Work style categorisation will be the responsibility of the Corporate Manager subject to approval from the relevant Corporate Lead Officer. Role categorisation will be monitored by the People and Organisation Service and Customer Contact Service.

## **2.3 Hybrid Working Application**

2.3.1 Working in a hybrid way is an optional benefit. Any arrangement for working from home should be voluntary on the part of the employee and with the agreement of their line manager, taking account of the requirements set out in this policy.

2.3.2 The availability and extent of hybrid working will depend upon service demands, requirements of the role as well as the personal circumstances of the individual employee. Any hybrid working arrangement must not impact detrimentally on the quality and continuity of service provision in any of the Council's functions and activities. The needs of the service must be the over-riding priority when considering any hybrid working application.

2.3.3 Employees who occupy a post which has been designated as Flexible Hybrid, Limited Hybrid or Roaming may make an application to work in a hybrid way by completing the Hybrid Working Application Form. The application should be dealt with as soon as possible and no later than within three months of submission.

2.3.4 When considering any application, Line Managers should refer to the guidance on Ceri Net. Once the Line Manager has reached a decision, this should be recorded on the application form and forwarded to their Corporate Lead Officer for final approval.

2.3.5 All applications will be subject to monitoring by the Customer Contact Service for the purposes of ensuring information security and acceptable digital connectivity.

2.3.6 Employees can only make one hybrid working application a year in accordance with Flexible Working employment legislation, unless circumstances relating to the refusal of their previous application have changed.

2.3.7 Where a hybrid working application has been refused, employees can submit an appeal. Appeals must be submitted by completion of the relevant form, available from Ceri Net. Appeals will be considered by a Corporate Director, whose decision will be final.

## **2.4 Withdrawal of Hybrid Working**

### **By the employee**

2.4.1 Employees may decide at any time that they no longer wish to work in a hybrid way and would prefer to work in a fixed office. In this event, employees should complete a 'Withdrawal of Hybrid Working Request Form' and are required to provide their Line Manager with a minimum of 4 weeks' notice in order that necessary arrangements can be made.

2.4.2 Depending on logistical considerations, there may be a delay in providing a dedicated fixed desk.

## **By the employer**

2.4.3 Hybrid Working is a discretionary benefit. The following are reasons why hybrid working may be withdrawn (this list is not exhaustive):

- Work circumstances: e.g. work location, changes in technology or other service reasons that result in hybrid working no longer being viable.
- Employee health: Where concerns arise that employee health is being negatively affected it may be necessary to withdraw hybrid working, either temporarily or permanently, following advice and guidance in an occupational health report. professionals.
- Disciplinary reasons: If hybrid working is withdrawn as a result of a disciplinary concern which relates to hybrid working, then the provisions of the Council's agreed Disciplinary Procedure will apply and no notice may be given. The right of appeal against such a decision is provided within the Disciplinary Procedure.
- Capability reasons: Where there is concern about the capability of the employee hybrid working may be temporarily suspended to enable the Line Manager to provide further training/evaluation at the workplace. Where capability concerns persist hybrid working may be permanently withdrawn.
- Change of address: There is no automatic right to continue hybrid working at a new address. Employees must report a change in address to their Line Manager in order that they may determine whether the new address is suitable for home working.
- Change of post: There is no automatic right to continue hybrid working in the event of a change of post. Continuation of hybrid working will be in agreement with the new Line Manager subject to the standard application assessment.

2.4.4 Employer led withdrawal of hybrid working must be with agreement of the relevant Corporate Lead Officer, in consultation with a Human Resources Officer.

2.4.5 The employee will be given a reasonable period of notice to make any necessary arrangements.

## **2.5 Attendance at the workplace**

2.5.1 As per our principles of Hybrid Working, an employee who has been granted hybrid working status can choose whether they work at home or in the workplace on any given day, subject to the needs of the service.

2.5.2 Employees in posts which are eligible for hybrid working, but who do not have hybrid working status, may not work from home and must attend the workplace.

- 2.5.3 There will be occasions when hybrid employees will be required to attend the workplace as required by their Line Manager. Reasonable notice (minimum 24 hours) must be provided.
- 2.5.4 If a hybrid employee experiences connectivity issues which they have been unable to resolve within 30 minutes they must inform their Line Manager. Line Managers must determine whether the employee can continue working productively without a connection or whether the disruption in connectivity is such that the employee is required to attend a Council building to ensure continuity of work. Travel time to a council building to resume work will not be classed as working time nor will it be classed as a business-related journey. Depending on the circumstances, employees may be required to record a break in working time under the Council's flexi-scheme arrangements or as Annual Leave or Flexi Leave.
- 2.5.5 Hybrid working employees will not have a dedicated personal space in any workplace and will instead have use of a hot desk. A hot desk refers to a designated workstation for employees to use at any time. All hot desk use should be recorded using the desk booking system.
- 2.5.6 Employees in posts which are eligible for hybrid working, but have chosen to have fixed working status, will have dedicated personal space in the workplace to ensure their productivity.
- 2.5.7 The Council will operate a clear desk policy in all of its offices which operate a desk booking system. This will apply to all desks, including fixed and hot desks.

## **2.6 Childcare and Caring Responsibilities**

- 2.6.1 Hybrid employees must note that the ability to work from home is not a substitute for childcare or similar carer responsibilities. As with all Council employees, it is the employee's responsibility to ensure adequate provision is in place to avoid conflict with work performance.
- 2.6.2 Reference should be made to the following policies, which offer options and support to staff in such circumstances:
- Work Life Balance Policy
  - Carer's Policy

## **2.7 Travelling**

- 2.7.1 In all but exceptional circumstances the contractual location of hybrid employees will be a Council location, which will be noted on their contract of employment.
- 2.7.2 In line with existing business travel arrangements, the commute between home and the contractual work location will not attract travel allowances. Business-related journeys will be claimable when employees deviate from their usual home to work journey.
- 2.7.3 Journeys to attend team meetings located at other Council buildings will not be classed as business-related journeys unless the employee has been directed to

undertake the journey by their line manager. It is essential that every effort is made for these meetings to be held virtually.

- 2.7.4 To meet our commitment of reducing our carbon footprint, employees will attend out of county meetings virtually. Where this is not possible out of county travel must be approved by their Corporate Director.

## **2.8 Locations when working remotely**

- 2.8.1 The expectation will be that hybrid employees will undertake work remotely from their home address or any other address included in their Hybrid Working Application.
- 2.8.2 There may be occasions where employees wish to work from an alternative location for short durations, e.g. one working day. This may be done with prior agreement from their Line Manager.
- 2.8.3 There may be occasions where employees wish to work from an alternative location for extended periods e.g. one week or more. In this circumstance, a 'New Remote Work Address Form' must be completed and approved by the Corporate Line Manager.
- 2.8.4 Where the employee has asked to undertake work from an alternative location and is unable to work productively (such as experiencing unresolvable equipment, connectivity issues) they may, depending on the circumstances, be required to take Annual Leave or Flexi Leave or record a break in working time under the Council's flexi-scheme arrangements.
- 2.8.5 Employees are not able to claim business travel from their alternative location and should wait until they return to their normal home address(es), as recorded on their Hybrid Working Application, before arranging repair of their equipment.

## **2.9 Communication and contact**

- 2.9.1 Hybrid employees should receive the same level of information, with the same frequency, as those without hybrid status. Contact needs to be two-way, so it is important that open channels of communication are set up and maintained. Regular contact will also allow the line manager to pick up on any issues of concern and offer appropriate support.
- 2.9.2 Hybrid employees should be contactable, normally via Teams, email and/or Skype, for the duration of their agreed working hours. An employee's Skype status should not be placed to 'Do Not Disturb' without prior agreement from their line manager.
- 2.9.3 Employees must keep their Outlook calendar up to date and provide their line manager with review access.
- 2.9.4 In line with our hybrid working principles and our commitment to reduce our carbon footprint, all internal meetings will be held virtually by default. All participants dialling in to a virtual meeting from an office building must do so individually (even if they are sitting next to each other) to ensure equality of presence in the meeting.
- 2.9.5 To replicate in-person meetings as far as possible employees must have cameras on for all virtual meetings, unless there is prior agreement from their line manager

or meeting Chair. Employees are expected to be dressed as you would when attending the office.

- 2.9.6 When attending virtual meetings with partners and service users, employees must apply a corporate background (available from Ceri Net).
- 2.9.7 Employees must not, under any circumstances, give details of their home address or telephone number to clients/customers or third parties. An employee's home must never be used for the purpose of holding work related in-person meetings and external mail should always be directed to Council offices and not to the employee's home address.

## **2.10 Equipment**

### **ICT Equipment**

- 2.10.1 In line with recommendations made by the ICT Service, our hybrid employees will be provided with the necessary ICT equipment to work efficiently remotely. Employees will need to accommodate the recommended equipment in their home.
- 2.10.2 Requests for ICT equipment over and above the standard recommendation will be subject to approval by the ICT Service. There may be occasions where additional equipment is recommended following medical and/or health and safety advice. Approval will be subject to consultation with the People and Organisation Service and the employing service.
- 2.10.3 In the event of enforced homeworking as a result of a local or national decision, Line Managers are responsible for ensuring employees are provided with the opportunity to take suitable ICT equipment home, thereby allowing them to work effectively remotely for as long as the enforced homeworking is in place.

### **Workstation Equipment**

- 2.10.4 Employees can use their own furniture e.g. desks, chairs, provided that it is compliant with health and safety requirements as identified in the Council's DSE Assessment.
- 2.10.5 Additional workstation equipment may be provided to an individual should a workstation DSE Assessment deem this necessary or due to the requirements of the role.
- 2.10.6 Additional equipment may also be provided for staff who require reasonable adjustments as determined by occupational health.
- 2.10.7 In most circumstances, and in addition to their home workstation set up, equipment will be provided at the place where they indicate that they predominantly work and not across multiple sites.

## **2.11 Health and Safety**

- 2.11.1 In addition to the employer's statutory duty of care, employees have a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of themselves and others while they are carrying out work activities, regardless of the work location.

- 2.11.2 Hybrid employees will have the same health and safety duties as other employees and will be required to take reasonable care of their own health and safety whilst working from home. All employees must comply with all health and safety instructions issued by the Council.
- 2.11.3 A DSE Assessment will be carried out by all hybrid employees, supported by their line manager. This will need to be reviewed if any substantial changes are made to the working environment or working arrangements, or if the employee's physical needs change. Employees must fully participate in completing the necessary risk assessment paperwork and review this with their manager. If the employee has any complex health or physical needs, the health and safety team can support with a specific workspace assessment.
- 2.11.4 Hybrid employees have 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. There must also be adequate ventilation, sufficient electric point access and lighting.
- 2.11.5 Employees must report to their line manager any work related incident, accident or near miss which has occurred at home, in line with current arrangements.
- 2.11.6 Employees should report any health and safety concerns to their manager, as soon as possible.
- 2.11.7 Managers should focus on, and prioritise, employee well-being. Employees should contact their manager if they have any concerns regarding well-being. Advice can be sought from the Council's Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer. The employee assistance helpline, Care First, is also available.
- 2.11.8 Hybrid employees should ensure that the general fabric of the home and its fixtures and fittings, including in any area in which they work, is/are maintained in a safe and functional state for performance of work e.g. electrical sockets. Employees should ensure that no equipment is left to charge unattended and that the correct charging device is used in relation to each item of equipment. Any electrical equipment provided by the Council should be visually inspected by the employee regularly for signs of wear, scorching, overheating, cable faults etc. Any defects should be reported to their line manager as soon as possible so that a replacement can be arranged.
- 2.11.9 Hybrid employees will be required to bring work equipment into a specified Council building for PAT testing, when requested to do so.
- 2.11.10 Managers should seek advice regarding any specific concerns around health and safety issues as all health and safety requirements must be appropriately addressed.

## **2.12 Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality**

- 2.12.1 Maintaining the security of the information we process 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 and Council policies, just as if they were working in a Council office.

2.12.2 Managers must agree at the outset with their staff as to how confidential or sensitive information will be handled when working in hybrid ways.

## **2.13 Allowances**

2.13.1 The employee will not be eligible to claim expenses for hybrid working and should weigh up the benefits of hybrid working when considering that no reimbursement for household bills will be provided. This includes, but is not limited to, broadband, heating, lighting, water, landline connection etc.

## **2.14 Insurance**

2.14.1 Equipment provided by the Council as part of the hybrid working arrangement will be covered by the Council's insurance policy, where it has been declared to the Insurance Team.

2.14.2 Hybrid employees are advised to contact their own insurance company to inform them that they will be working at home.

2.14.3 Liability insurance arranged by the Council will operate once risk assessments are completed satisfactorily. Risk control measures identified during risk assessment must be addressed prior to the hybrid working commencing.

2.14.4 Employees undertaking their duties remotely are covered by the Council's Employer's Liability Policy. Any work-related accidents must be reported immediately in accordance with the Council's incident reporting guidelines.

# **3. Other Policies**

## **3.1 Recruitment & Selection Policy**

3.1.1 In all but exceptional circumstances Line Managers should aim to hold interviews virtually.

3.1.2 Line Managers may hold face to face interviews if they believe there is strong justification in doing so.

## **3.2 Work Life Balance Policy**

### **Home Working**

3.2.1 Whilst this interim policy is in place it will supersede the 'Home Working' provisions contained within the Council's Work Life Balance Policy.

### **Flexi-time Scheme**

3.2.2 All flexi-time scheme arrangements outlined in the Council's Work Life Balance Policy will remain in force subject to the following amendment to the Scheme parameters which will apply to Hybrid status employees only:

With agreement from their Line Manager, and in line with the needs of the service, hybrid employees may fulfil their contractual hours between a bandwidth of 6am - 9pm, Monday to Friday, with

at least 4 core hours worked between 9am and 5pm each working day. This will be on a pro-rata basis for part time employees.

3.2.3 The scheme parameters as outlined in the Council's Work Life Balance Policy will apply to all other employees.

3.2.4 Where any employee (hybrid status or not) is frequently recording working hours in excess of their carry over entitlement, Line Managers must hold a meeting to discuss with the employee to identify the reasons for this.

### **3.3 Sickness Absence Policy**

3.3.1 Normal sickness absence reporting procedures will apply.

3.3.2 Return to work meetings may be held virtually with employees. Consideration will be given on a case by case basis as to whether other sickness absence meetings are held virtually or face to face.

### **3.4 Inclement Weather Policy**

3.4.1 The Inclement Weather Policy will not apply to hybrid employees.

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