

## Introduction

The Council has a commitment to enable flexibility of working arrangements with the aim of meeting both its and its employees' needs. While homeworking is categorised as a type of flexible working, employees should not assume that other aspects of flexible working (such as amended hours) are automatically part of a homeworking arrangement.

## Aims of Policy

This policy covers whether home or the Council's premises will be the main place of work and could include the following options:

- Home as the main place of work.
- Flexible homeworking with time split between home and the office.
- Mobile working with a base at home to travel to the Council's different premises and service users.
- The office as the main place of work with working from home occasionally.

## Scope

This policy applies to all corporate staff employed in a role where homeworking may be designated as appropriate for a proportion of an employee's contractual working hours.

## School Based Employees

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## To be read in conjunction with

Flexible Working Policy  
Travel and Subsistence Policy  
PAT Testing of DSE for Home Working  
Process for home working checklist

## Principles

The Council recognises that there are a range of benefits associated with homeworking. These can include increased productivity as output from employees working from home often improves due to fewer interruptions than in the office. There can also be greater commitment and loyalty from employees who value being able to work from home. Wider choice when hiring due to being able to recruit from a larger pool of talent because where potential employees currently live may be less of a factor in whether they apply. More ideas through attracting a more diverse workforce – including, for example, staff with disabilities or caring responsibilities – can bring the

potential for a wider range of talent and innovation. Being known as a flexible employer can help attract and keep talented staff. A homeworking policy helps the environment by cutting down on commuting. In addition, homeworkers can be less affected by bad weather or travel disruption.

## **POLICY**

Homeworking is available as a flexible working option in the Council's Flexible Working policy and employees are able to make a flexible working request if they wish to balance their working week between home and a Council workplace. This homeworking policy sets out the implications for homeworking and the considerations that employees and managers will have to be mindful of when considering an application. It should be noted that homeworking is not a substitute for suitable care arrangements and that any dependents will need to be looked after by someone other than the employee when they are working.

To apply for homeworking as a flexible working option, please use your Employee Self Serve account in iTrent and select 'Make a flexible working request.' Your application will be processed electronically and you will receive workflow notifications showing you the progress of your application.

### Which posts are suitable for homeworking?

The Council will determine which posts may be suitable for homeworking and which posts are not. It is likely that those roles providing front line support to residents and service users will not be classed as suitable for homeworking, but each application will be determined on its own merits.

In addition to whether a post is suitable, consideration will be needed regarding whether the postholder is suited to homeworking. Employees and managers should be fully aware that this working arrangement does not suit everyone. Those working from home need attributes to cope with working alone and with less supervision. Some homeworkers will miss contact with other people and feel isolated. Others may find that domestic demands cause distractions. Homeworkers ideally need to be happy to spend long periods on their own, be self disciplined and self motivated, have resilience, be confident working without supervision and be able to separate work from home life.

Additional consideration should be given to new starters who may need a period of time in the office to absorb the organisational culture before working from home, apprentices who may never have experienced the world of work before, those who need wellbeing support for physical or mental health conditions, and those where home is not always a safe environment.

The Council retains a duty of care towards homeworkers and a Health and Safety checklist must be carried out as part of the homeworking application. Assurance is required that the working environment at home is safe and the risk assessment will identify whether there are concerns that need addressing before homeworking can be approved. Where concerns are identified and mitigating measures cannot be made, homeworking may not be approved.

The Council will retain the right to consult and vary a homeworking agreement where performance, supervision or conduct impacts on successful service delivery.

### Equipment required to work from home

Every employee using Display Screen Equipment is required to undertake the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) e-learning and complete a DSE self-assessment. Those using DSE for home working are required to also complete the

Working From Home with DSE Checklist in conjunction with their manager to ensure that appropriate equipment is available and provided.

The Council will provide the equipment necessary to enable employees to undertake homeworking. These items will remain the property of Newport City Council and will be maintained/replaced by the Council. Laptops and other portable electronic devices must not be used for personal matters by the employee or their family.

Home work stations must be set up in line with the requirements of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations. Employees must ensure that equipment remains in a good condition, see Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) for Home Working, and any matters of concern must be reported immediately to the line manager. Any equipment considered to be unsafe must not be used until an alternative or replacement is possible.

Printers, scanners, shredders and general stationery will not be provided. Should any printing be deemed essential, this should be arranged through the flexi print system, as should postage for essential letters where email cannot be provided as an alternative.

If a homeworker subsequently changes job role within the Council and will no longer be homeworking, or leaves employment of the Council, equipment will need to be returned. Laptops must be returned to the Civic Centre and furniture will be collected.

#### Specialist equipment

Applications to work from home, whether this is on a regular or occasional basis, should consider any specialist equipment needs. Some specialist equipment may be easily transported for use within different settings, e.g. keyboard, mouse, wrist support etc, where practicable. Other equipment, e.g. desk, specialist chair, screens, may be required and should be considered within the application for home working. The following should also be considered:

- Individuals who have been assessed with specific needs affecting their ability to desk share, and who need an assigned work station which is set up for their needs
- Whether specialist equipment needs to be replicated within the office and home settings or whether there are tasks that can be carried out in either setting without specialist equipment, to enable a blend of work settings where required.

Managers must ensure that each application is considered fully, and that the need for specialist equipment does not automatically rule out a flexible working application.

#### GDPR

Employees are reminded of the GDPR legislation regarding sensitive information and should not have paper documents insecurely stored at home. All Council information should be retained on electronic devices.

#### Running costs and expenses

The employee will be expected to provide broadband, heating and lighting, and check whether their home insurance needs to reflect their homeworking status.

Should an employee request to work from home as part of a flexible working application, no allowance towards running costs is payable by the Council. Employees will not be able to claim tax relief on additional expenditure as a result of any voluntary arrangement to work from home.

#### Mortgage, lease and insurance issues

Employees should tell their mortgage provider or landlord and home insurer of their intention to work from home. They should check that there isn't anything preventing them from working at home – for example, in their mortgage agreement, lease or insurance. The employee should obtain from their home insurer confirmation of cover should work equipment cause damage to their home. Work property will be covered by the Council's insurance policy. Under no circumstances should service users, clients or residents visit an employee's home on the purpose of Council business, and any required visits or meetings with service users or residents must be conducted at a Council office or other location, never the employee's home.

#### PAT testing of equipment

PAT testing for homeworking guidance is attached as an appendix to this policy and employees are reminded of their obligation to adhere to this guidance.

#### Moving house

It is essential that employees ensure their home address is correct in iTrent for the purposes of the asset register.

#### Employee performance

Research has indicated that working from home may reduce promotion prospects and that the more time an employee works from home the greater the effect known as 'professional isolation' can be. Indications of 'professional isolation' can include some staff who work from home being:

- Less likely to look for promotion if this could mean spending more time at a workplace
- 'Out of sight' and 'out of mind' when managers are allocating key projects
- Less likely to be mentored as opportunities are fewer
- Less aware than office colleagues of what is happening in the rest of the organisation

To counter these effects, the monthly check-in process on iTrent will enable managers and employees working from home to have regular dialogue and opportunity to keep in touch about key developments and opportunities. The same opportunities for training and development will be provided to those working from home as those working in the office.

There may be occasions where an in-person meeting is required to discuss performance. Should under performance be identified and additional support be made available to an employee, additional time spent in a Council workplace and less time at home may be required.

#### Professional standards

When working from home there is still the expectation that employees are representatives of the Council in any online meetings that they join. Loungewear is not considered appropriate attire for meetings and employees should always consider the audience that will be present in online meetings. The same expectation around Teams

backgrounds applies – a corporate Newport City Council background should be the default choice for all external meetings. Online meetings should not be held in communal areas of the home when family members are present.

### Working hours

Employees working from home are required to complete their contracted hours in line with the business need of their individual team or service. Flexibility in working hours is available to home workers and natural breaks away from a screen are recommended. It is essential that a half hour break is taken each day as a minimum, and employees are able to balance their hours around their personal appointments e.g. health related visits (hospital, GP, dentist, optician, etc.), school drop off and collections, caring responsibilities for vulnerable relatives, etc. Care should be taken not to work excessive hours at evenings or weekends.

There should be an understanding between managers and employees over when the employee will work and be contactable, whilst managers remain mindful of the need to be flexible to support work life balance activity that occurs during the day. The homeworker will need to communicate clearly, letting their colleagues know when they will be available and when they won't. The employee should make good use of their Teams status, Outlook calendar and out-of-office email replies/voicemail messages.

### The employee's attendance at the main office/base

Attendance at a Council office may be required on an ad hoc basis to engage in training and meetings deemed essential to attend by line managers. This could include, but is not restricted to, service area meetings, workforce roadshows, consultation meetings, performance check ins and training events.

Should IT issues be identified it may be required for employees to bring their laptop to the Civic Centre for investigation and resolution.

### Access to recognised trade union advice and support

Employees who are homeworking should be supported to communicate with their recognised trade union representative and the Council will enable this to be facilitated through the use of Teams. Trade union representatives will be provided with access to equipment and facilities to carry out their duties remotely where required, but also to maintain a private space in the Civic Centre to meet with members.

Homeworking

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Document Control

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V1.0	01/01/2022	Rachael Davies	New Policy drafted and proposed to trade unions
V1.1	16/08/2022	Kevin Howells	New Policy Agreed by Cabinet Member following trade union and stakeholder comments.
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