

Human Resources Policies

Contents

Contents.....	1
Version Control	2
1. Introduction	3
2. The Scope of This Policy.....	3
3. Main Considerations.....	3
4. Personal Costs and Expenses	4
5. Office Base	4
6. Fairness and Consistency	5
7. Review	5
8. Home Working	5
9. Health and Safety.....	6
10. Property & Insurance.....	6
11. Information Security	6
12. Communication and Contact	7
13. Equipment.....	7
14. Office Cover	8
15. Employee Welfare.....	8
16. Fixed Hours.....	8

Agile Working Policy



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Version Control

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1. Introduction

Monmouthshire County Council has developed modern working practices that help employees to do their jobs in the heart of the community, whilst at the same time allowing them to balance work and life demands. We know that work performance is better if employees are able to have flexibility in their working arrangements, and we want to help with this.

Agile Working is the term used to describe how employees can work from any location, whether it is from a Council building, in the community, from home or any combination of these.

We want to make sure that working in an agile way doesn't mean that service delivery suffers in any way. In fact, we want it to be a better service. We also want to make sure that employees know what is expected of them when working flexibly, to ensure that there is fairness and equity and that working arrangements are safe. This policy addresses these issues.

2. The Scope of This Policy

Agile Working is about flexibility and as such it is difficult to apply a rigid set of rules around it. Employees are expected to enter into the spirit of this policy and to remember that flexible working brings a responsibility to co-operate with colleagues and managers.

It applies to all office based employees at any level within the organisation. The extent of agile working will vary according to the job role, and the main consideration is the impact on access to services by the public and employee welfare.

The policy supports the sharing of office facilities and no employee will have an office or workstation for their exclusive use only.

Agile Working isn't about home working it's about being where you need to be to do your job. If employees wish to work from home that's fine as long as the service needs are met. Home working won't be forced upon employees.

3. Main Considerations

The main things to consider for agile working are –

- The effect on the ability to deliver public services
- The setting of work output and outcomes

- The ability to work safely and healthily
- Fairness and equality.

Although agile workers don't necessarily have to work regular office hours, it is best to plan and agree a work programme to ensure that contact is always in place. Employees should be able to separate their working and home lives, and they can agree boundaries with their managers and colleagues to suit them.

Managers and employee should discuss and agree the level of flexibility that is most suited to the job and meets the service need. Both need to have open minds when considering requests. Situations will vary from person to person but it must be fair so it is wise to consider the effect upon –

- The ability to organise work among team members
- Knowing where people are and what they are doing
- Organising rotas for essential services
- Work performance and output.

Work performance can often improve with flexible working arrangements, though where performance issues develop as a result of Agile Working managers must address them with employees, and adapt the arrangements accordingly.

4. Personal Costs and Expenses

Printing is actively discouraged, but if there is a need to print anything it is expected that employees working remotely will use council facilities to minimise personal costs. This is particularly relevant for bulk printing or postage as it is far cheaper to use office based Multi-Functional Devices and franking machines.

Employees who want to access the workplace electronically from home will need to use their own broadband facilities and won't be reimbursed for doing so. It works on the same principle as getting to an office base – it's at their expense. The council won't supply mobile broadband (laptop dongles) for home use. The same principle applies to increased energy costs arising from home working.

Designated home based workers will receive a tax free contribution from the Council, which will be the Revenues and Customs agreed rate is at the time. Designated home workers will be very few in number, if at all, as mixing with your colleagues and speaking to your line manager is always necessary and you will be allocated abase to do so.

5. Office Base

All employees will have a designated office base where their team work zone is situated, along with shared workstations and limited storage facilities (electronic storage is the norm). This base will be used for mileage claims.

Very few posts will be designated as 'home based' and it is expected that it will apply where the employee never needs to visit an office base or go into the community to work. All

employees will be given a normal office base to meet with colleagues and this base should be used for travel claims.

It is important that all employees manage their travel and limit it in order to achieve the environmental benefits of agile working. Video conferencing is to be used in preference to travelling to meetings.

Mileage claims will be reimbursed under the usual terms and conditions of claiming expenses and subsistence allowance. The mileage policy is [here](#).

Travel time between the designated office base and home isn't refundable.

6. Fairness and Consistency

It is essential that managers and employees alike enter into the spirit of agile working within the constraints of normal service provision. As each service offering is different a 'one size fits all' approach can't be applied.

It must be remembered that the final decision will be based on the impact it has on the Service, so although all employees have access to agile working not all outcomes will be the same.

7. Review

Not all agile working arrangements will be successful either from the service point of view or the individual's point of view, so they are open to review at any point.

If problems arise every effort will be made to resolve them, but in some cases it may be necessary for some form of mediation between managers and employees to take place to find a way forward.

Managers will only stop agile working arrangements for sound business or performance reasons and after consulting fully with the employee.

8. Home Working

This section is for anyone who may work from home, whether it is an occasional ad-hoc basis or on a more permanent 'designated home worker' arrangement.

Employees may want to contact anyone with an interest in their property (e.g. mortgage lenders, landlords, leaseholders, Building and Contents insurer) to make sure there isn't anything they need to consider when home working.

Tax – Dedicated home workers (employees who are permanently home based) will be paid an allowance by the council to cover the costs of working from home. This will be the rate by HMRC each tax year and so won't be taxed.

9. Health and Safety

A Health and Safety Risk Assessment will need to be carried out at least annually or when any changes are made to the workspace. This must be agreed by the manager before employees will be allowed to work from home. The risk assessment form is [here](#) or from the councils' H&S officer.

When working from home, even if it is only on an ad-hoc basis, employees must ensure they have suitable workspace with adequate security, storage, seating, space and screening from noise in the rest of the home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting. Employees will provide this equipment at their own expense, and if it can't be provided they should work from an office base.

The council isn't responsible for supplying any equipment for employees to work from home, so if anything is needed the employee will have to buy it themselves.

Employees who need to carry equipment and documents must ensure they use suitable trolleys and carriers.

Finally, if an employee doesn't have the facilities to work safely from remote locations they simply won't be allowed to do so and will have to work from an office facility.

10. Property & Insurance

Computers, laptops, phones and other items of equipment provided by the Council are covered by the Council's insurance policy. You will still need to make sure the equipment AND ANY INFORMATION ON IT is safe.

If H&S risk assessments are completed by each Agile employee the Councils liability insurance will work. If not, the insurance is void so remote working isn't possible.

11. Information Security

The Data Protection Act 1998 must be complied with in relation to the security of information. Here is the [Information Management Policy](#) Read it and understand it as it is essential to protect information.

It's common sense and probably shouldn't need to be stressed, but when dealing with personal information the same measures must apply to remote working as working in the office. All Council paperwork should be securely locked away and only be accessible to the employee – or better still it should be in electronic format! Make sure that your screens and documents can't be overlooked by other people when you are working remotely on laptops.

You must take care of equipment, software, files and any other information to make sure it isn't lost. It is particularly important to ensure that other people (in the home or whilst working off site) can't access confidential or personal information.

12. Communication and Contact

All employees are provided with laptops with VoIP softphones and video conferencing facilities, so there is absolutely no reason why working remotely should be any different to working in the office. Remote workers must be contactable in exactly the same way as if they were in the office. They **must** log into their VoIP phone and make any divers to mobile phones if needed.

Arrangements should be made for effective communication to be maintained between employees, line managers and colleagues. It is essential for regular team meetings to be held in order to develop and maintain relationships. Communication and support channels must also be made available.

Electronic diaries are to be used **at all times** and they must be open for colleagues to view. Employees must ensure that their contact details are up to date, including the publication of mobile phone numbers. There are no excuses for not doing so.

Please don't give out your personal telephone number for work purposes, unless you are using your own phone instead of a work phone by your own agreement.

Any employee undertaking client visits or attending meetings must follow the same "lone working principles" that they would if leaving from the office.

13. Equipment

All employees who are able to work remotely have laptops to do so. Some people may need to have extra security on their laptops by use of a key fob if they work remotely. This is where they deal with especially sensitive information. This can be arranged through their manager from the SRS helpdesk.

Mobile phones won't be issued simply because an employee wishes to work remotely or from home. Laptop VoIP phones must be used for this purpose. Mobile phones will only be issued where the job role demands it i.e. it is a requirement of the job that the employee is mobile.

It isn't expected that home working will be any more than ad-hoc and so the employee will be responsible for providing their own broadband.

Where employees have their own personally adapted equipment (e.g. left hand keyboard and mouse) they will be able to keep this for their personal use and move it with them when working in any offices or remote sites. For H&S purposes if an employee can't work safely from remote locations without their specially adapted equipment they won't be able to do so.

Employees will be able to use their laptops in an MCC office or any other remote location where public access Wi-Fi connectivity is available.

Where an employee can't connect to the central Citrix facilities for any reason it is their responsibility to travel in their own time to an office facility where they can work effectively.

14. Office Cover

Arrangements should be made for appropriate office cover. Core contact time and office cover arrangements should be agreed between the team and the line manager.

15. Employee Welfare

In considering Agile Working arrangements everyone needs to take account of the following:

- A suitable working environment must be made. This includes the provision of a suitable workstation and communication mechanisms to contact colleagues.
- Employees must keep equipment and Council information safe.
- Appropriate communication and support channels must be made available e.g. weekly team meetings to monitor work programmes and co-ordinate office cover.
- Managers must be able to monitor office cover i.e. who is working from home, working in the community, attending meetings etc.
- The default is for electronic file storage. Other files must not be stored at a workstation
- It is essential to plan and agree a work programme with a line manager, and colleagues to ensure suitable office cover is provided and equipment is available when needed.
- All employees will adhere to a clear desk policy as they will be sharing facilities with other employees and it isn't pleasant to work in someone else's muddle. Lockable pedestals /cabinets are available for your personal effects.

16. Fixed Hours

Some employees have fixed working hours in their contract and if this is the case agile working may not apply. The remaining staff will arrange their working hours to suit the needs of the service, but must always make sure they have the statutory breaks.