

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All office based employees [except those in schools]  
**FROM:** Amanda Lowe, Head of People and Culture  
**REF:** AL/LM  
**DATE:** 21 June 2023

## CIRCULAR PER 09-23

### FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Flexible Working Policy was approved at Cabinet on 16 March 2022 and [Circular Per 06-22](#) confirmed the main changes to previous arrangements. The updated [Flexible Working Policy](#), following minor administration changes detailed in [Circular Per 24-23](#), was approved at Cabinet on 14 June 2023.
- 1.2 In April 2022, all office-based employees [with the exception of those working in schools] were issued with a letter to confirm the workstyle which had been allocated to their post to reflect what had been deemed the most appropriate way for their duties to be carried out and was an amendment to their contract.

#### 2. CONFIRMED ARRANGEMENTS FOR OFFICE WORKING

- 2.1 Since the COVID-19 pandemic, employees have returned to offices to varying degrees and as you will be aware there are no longer any restrictions in place. I can advise that on 5 May 2023, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation, on the advice of the Emergency Committee, which was convened under International Health Regulations in response to Covid-19, declared “an end to the public health emergency of international concern”. The Director General stated that this does not mean that Covid-19 is over as a global health threat, but that “it is time for countries to transition from emergency mode to managing Covid-19 alongside other infectious diseases”.
- 2.2 The aim of the Flexible Working Policy was to facilitate more flexibility in working arrangements for the benefit of the Council and employees by providing opportunities to enjoy a better work-life balance, contributing to increased motivation, performance and productivity. It is also recognised that hybrid working can support employee wellbeing with increased communication, collaboration and support from colleagues which in turn positively impacts and should lead to improvements in service delivery. Therefore, it is important that employees are working within the parameters of the workstyle which they have been allocated in order to fulfil the requirements of their contract.
- 2.3 As a reminder, the four workstyles as set out in the Flexible Working Policy are as follows:
- 2.4 For clarity, the requirements of each workstyle is set out as follows:

Fixed	Flexible	Mobile	Remote
80-100% of time is primarily working at a single office base or work location.	50-79% of time is office based. Able to work at different/multiple work locations. Occasionally works at home, or another location 1-2 days per week, or directly home to external appointments.	20-49% of time is office based. Able to work at home, or another location, or travel directly from home to other locations and client visits out in the field.	Less than 20% of time is in office base. Able to work at home, or another location or travel directly from home to other locations and client visits out in the field

**Fixed** – working at your administrative base or another office location between 4 and days per week

**Flexible** – working at your administrative base or another office location between 2.5 to 4 days per week and only occasionally working from home or another location for 1 to 2 days per week

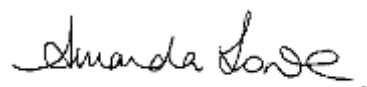
**Mobile** – working at your administrative base or another office location between 1 to 2.5 days per week and the remainder of the week at home or other work locations as required

**Remote** – working less than 1 day per week at your administrative base and the rest of the week working at home or in other work locations as required. An element of working in the office will still be required on a regular basis.

The detail of these arrangements will be agreed with your line manager as appropriate. Please note that these requirements in terms of days are based on employees who work over 5 days per week and that the percentages will still apply to employees who have different work patterns, so the number of days should be adjusted accordingly.

- 2.4 It must be noted that there is no category of “homeworker” and that all employees will attend the office as detailed above. Formal homeworking was removed in the revised policy in April 2022 and is no longer applicable.
- 2.5 **It has been confirmed that all office-based employees must attend the office for a minimum of the days set out above, depending on your workstyle, by the end of August 2023. However, it is expected that you will work towards the average or higher end of the parameters described.**
- 2.6 When the Flexible Working Policy was issued in March 2022, a set of Frequently Asked Questions were attached which related to changes in flexible working hours arrangements at that time. These have been updated to include some more detail on workstyles which may be of benefit and are attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.7 For information, a working group is in place to continue to review the layout of office accommodation to ensure it meets the requirements of current office working with suitable spaces for collaboration, virtual meetings etc., as well as ensuring appropriate IT equipment is available.

2.8 If you are unsure of the workstyle you were allocated or have any other queries in this regard, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance or alternatively your Human Resources Business Partner will be able to assist you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Lowe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Amanda Lowe**  
**Head of People and Culture**

## APPENDIX 1

### Frequently Asked Questions

	Question	Answer
1	What has changed?	<p>The new policy introduces the following key changes in relation to working hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Removal of the formal flexi time recording system;</li><li>(ii) Removal of standard core times, although services may determine appropriate times to suit their operational requirements</li><li>(iii) Removal of the 4 weekly credit/debit accounting periods with contracted hours generally being worked within the week resulting in full flexi days being less of a regular occurrence.</li><li>(iv) Removal of the requirement to formally apply for periods of time off e.g. for appointments unless a full day is being requested.</li></ul>
2	Does this mean there will be less flexibility?	<p>You will have greater flexibility to work your hours to suit your personal circumstances, whilst ensuring you are available at times required by the Service.</p> <p>In addition, rather than having to apply for half day to attend a private appointment or arrange doctors/dentists appointments outwith core hours, you will now have greater flexibility to attend such appointments during the working day and work the time back in the course of the week.</p> <p>As outlined above, other policies remain in place to provide support for employees where time off is required for specific circumstances e.g. <a href="#">Special Leave</a>, <a href="#">Career Break</a> or <a href="#">Carer's Leave</a>. Where a permanent or longer term change to working hours is required the relevant section in the <a href="#">Flexible Working Policy</a> should be referred to.</p>
3	Can I just decide to work the hours I want or from the location I want without consulting my manager?	<p>No.</p> <p>Whilst we wish to allow employees flexibility in their working hours/location, communication with the line manager is essential to ensure there is no impact on service delivery.</p> <p>Discussions should take place at team level to agree how this work will in practice. Employees should also ensure they update their outlook calendar/out of office message to reflect their availability.</p>

	Question	Answer
		<p>In addition when considering the location you will be working from you will need to ensure that you continue to fulfil the requirements of the workstyle assigned to you/your post.</p>
4	<p>Are there a minimum number of hours I should work in one day?</p>	<p>Normally you would be expected to work a minimum of three hours each day. However, this will depend on each individual role and their workload, and will require agreement with the line manager to ensure work performance and service delivery is maintained. (Refer to Q8 for guidance on full days off).</p>
5	<p>What is the maximum time I could work in one day?</p>	<p>You should generally not exceed your contracted daily hours and the hours should normally be worked between 7am and 8pm. You should also ensure that you take a minimum rest break of 30 minutes away from your workstation where the working day exceeds 6 hours (4.5 hours for those employees under the age of 18).</p> <p>As above, working hours should be determined based on the needs of the service and agreed with your manager. It is important that you do not work excessively long hours in the interests of your wellbeing.</p>
6	<p>What is the minimum/maximum time I could work in one week?</p>	<p>Employees should ordinarily complete, but not exceed, their contracted hours on a week to week basis.</p>
7	<p>How would this work in practice?</p>	<p>It may be that you want to start or finish earlier/later one day or attend an appointment during the day. Existing local communication/approval arrangements would apply, and you would work the hours back at another time, ordinarily that same week.</p> <p>There may be ad hoc occasions where an amount of time off is required, where the hours cannot be worked back that same week, in which case you would work the hours back at another time, as agreed with your manager. Alternatively additional time may have been accrued in advance.</p> <p>The key factor here is that these instances should be the exception, rather than the norm, and require to be agreed with your line manager in advance.</p>

	Question	Answer
8	Can I still take a day off, if required?	<p>Yes.</p> <p>As stated above, whilst there will no longer be a facility to regularly take flexi-days, there will still be scope to take ad hoc time where there are occasions when additional hours have been accrued as a result of a particular business need.</p> <p>In all instances, this should be discussed with your line manager and will be subject to their approval. In these cases a request for time off should be done via HR21.</p>
9	Does this mean that I will end up working additional hours, but not have the benefit of time off at another time, as per current arrangements?	<p>No.</p> <p>A key principle of the revised arrangements is that employees do not ordinarily exceed their contracted hours, thereby supporting an effective work/life balance. Where there are occasions when additional hours are accrued as a result of a particular business need then these can be taken in agreement with your line manager.</p>
10	If I am working outwith normal business hours or working remotely what happens if the systems go down and ICT support is not available/can't immediately resolve the issue?	<p>If you are unable to undertake other meaningful work in the absence of the system (as you would do if systems went down when at your normal base during normal business hours), then you should amend your planned working hours or base that day accordingly, seeking advice from your manager as appropriate. This should be done at the earliest opportunity.</p>
11	I know of people in other teams who are able to work more flexibly than I am.	<p>There are some roles where flexibility over working hours and location is not possible due to service requirements.</p> <p>For the same reasons, the degree of flexibility which exists may legitimately vary across different service areas.</p>
12	Does this mean that there will be a risk to service delivery?	<p>No.</p> <p>Managers will plan and put in place required staffing levels just as they do at present, with existing local communication/approval arrangements applying as normal in relation to employees looking to work their hours flexibly.</p>

	Question	Answer
13	Is there a risk in terms of cover by removing organisational core hours?	<p>Core time is the period of the working day during which all employees must work.</p> <p>Whilst there is no longer any fixed organisation-wide core times, services will identify their own requirements, ensuring that minimum levels of cover are in place in order to maintain service delivery.</p>
14	I am a mobile worker which requires 20-49% of my time to be office based but I am often attending meetings at different offices?	<p>Attending meetings at offices other than your administrative base would be classed as being office based and would therefore form part of the percentage of office based working for that week.</p>
15	I am a part time worker with a flexible workstyle working 3 days per week. Am I required to be in the office the same number of days as a full time worker with the same workstyle working 5 days per week?	<p>The percentage of time referred to in the workstyles relates to the percentage of your working week.</p> <p>Accordingly for a flexible worker (where <b>50-79%</b> of time is office based) working 3 days per week this would translate to 1.5 to 2.5 days being office based.</p> <p>For someone working 5 days per week this would be between 2.5 – 4 days per week.</p>
16	If my team are working flexibly in terms of times and locations, how will I know that they are working during those hours and doing so effectively and in line with the agreed workstyle for their post?	<p>The removal of the formal flexitime recording system, enabling retrospective monitoring of time, should not in, and of itself, give rise to abuse of working hours.</p> <p>Managers should agree the methods of communication with employees when working remotely and ensure that employees are clear on standards of performance expected.</p> <p>There are a number of options that can be used to communicate whilst working away from the main work location. Free and virtual means of communication e.g. BT Conferencing, Microsoft Teams, should be used where this is possible. These are currently being used widely across the Council as an alternative to standard telephone calls and provide audio and/or video communication.</p> <p>If someone is not working their contracted hours, then this is likely to be apparent to the manager. However, it will also be evident in terms of performance outputs.</p>

	Question	Answer
		<p>The communication systems put in place should enable you to monitor working arrangements to ensure that the requirements of the workstyles are being met.</p> <p>Abuse of the system may result in employees being required to work at a fixed base and/or hours, as well as it potentially being dealt with as a disciplinary matter.</p>
17	<p>Is there scope for an informal recording mechanism to capture employee working hours?</p>	<p>Whilst the formal recording system is being removed and employees will no longer need to submit a flexi sheet for sign off by their managers, sections should agree an appropriate mechanism which enables employees to log the daily hours they work. A template is available for use in the absence of any other mechanism. A copy can found on the <a href="#">intranet</a></p> <p>As there may now be more variation in the way hours are being worked on a day to day basis this allows employees to keep a record of the hours they are working to ensure they are meeting their contractual requirements.</p>
18	<p>How will implementation of the revised arrangements be supported and monitored?</p>	<p>HR will support the rollout of the revised Flexible Working Policy and will build on these FAQs if further questions arise in relation to the new flexible working hours arrangements.</p> <p>Managers will monitor the working arrangements of their teams to ensure hours are being worked in a way that supports the needs of the service, that an appropriate work life balance is being achieved for their team and that the workstyles for the posts are being adhered to.</p> <p>HR will also maintain communication with managers and trades unions to identify and resolve any issues which subsequently arise.</p>
19	<p>Due to the nature of my duties, there are times I am in the office more than the parameters of my workstyle and other times when it is less. Does that meet the requirements of my contract?</p>	<p>Managers should have taken these considerations into account when agreeing the most suitable workstyle for your post. When there are variances at different times of the month or the year, this can be taken into account for the overall average and does not need to be over each week if there are fluctuations which are necessary. Managers should continue to monitor this in accordance with Question 18.</p>