

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday 29 March 2022

## Our Future Work Strategy - Progress Update

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| Executive/Routine<br>Wards<br>Council Commitments | Executive<br>All |
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### 1. Recommendations

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It is recommended that the Policy and Sustainability Committee:

- 1.1 Note the progress made to date on delivery of the Our Future Work strategy.
- 1.2 Note the programme of work currently underway to enable colleagues to return to buildings across the Council estate.
- 1.3 Note the focus group work undertaken to date with frontline colleagues as to what flexible working means for them.

**Richard Carr**

Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services

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# Report

## Our Future Work Strategy - Update

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 In October 2021 the Policy and Sustainability Committee approved the Our Future Work strategy. The Strategy set out a vision for how the City of Edinburgh Council could return to office-based working in a new and modern way. It was agreed at this point that a six-month update would be brought to a future Policy and Sustainability Committee to update members on progress.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The Our Future Work Strategy (Appendix 1) built on colleague feedback and set out a vision for a modern Council which makes full use of hybrid and flexible working. In the Strategy, it was proposed that trials would be run to test new technology prior to inviting all colleagues back into buildings.
- 3.2 Over the last 6-months, a small programme team has been created to deliver this work, whilst responding to changes in Scottish Government guidance. The focus has been on enabling teams to return to buildings and face-to-face meetings at a point when it is safe to do so.

### 4. Main report

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#### **Trialling different ways of working**

- 4.1 Our Future Work set out an intention to establish buildings-based trials to test Audio-Visual technology and hybrid working. After identifying suitable spaces in Waverley Court and City Chambers the team invited a small number of officers to take part in the trials. The team worked closely with Health and Safety Colleagues to set up safe workstations and the trials commenced in November 2021.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government's advice on working from home, reinforced due to the Omicron variant, meant the trials were paused on 9 December 2021. After the First Minister's announcement on January 25, 2022, CIMT agreed that the trials could resume, and teams returned to Waverley Court and City Chambers from January 31, 2022.

- 4.3 Given that colleagues were returning to the office for the first time in two years, information sessions were set up. These sessions outlined what colleagues could expect and the safety measures being put in place to protect against the transmission of Covid-19.
- 4.4 To ensure a cycle of continuous feedback members of the Our Future Work team have also spent time in Waverley Court, to support colleagues in using the new technology. Trial participants have also been asked to respond to a survey on flexible and hybrid working which will be used to inform future phases of work.

#### **Enabling teams to hold face-to-face meetings**

- 4.5 All other colleagues have been asked to continue to work at home wherever possible until they can safely phase back into buildings. However, as of 28 February, meeting rooms have been made available in City Chambers and Waverley Court so that teams who are not included in our trial can come in to meet face-to-face. The purpose is to enable teams to reconnect and run collaborative activities that are trickier over Teams. This also gives colleagues the opportunity to test out what it is like to come back into an office, many for the first time in two years.

#### **Progress to date with returning to the office**

- 4.6 With the announcement that rules will be relaxed on 21 March, work is underway to enable a phased return to offices. Despite this, colleagues will still be encouraged to wear face masks when moving about buildings and to be respectful of personal space. We are mindful that many colleagues may feel nervous about coming into the office for the first time in two years.
- 4.7 The phased return to buildings will be based on requirements which have been submitted by all buildings-based teams, including working patterns and desk requirements. As much as possible, the programme team will return teams to their original working space and this will be monitored over a longer period to establish the future office footprint.
- 4.8 **Fire Wardens and First Aiders**  
Before returning to buildings, services will be asked to ensure they have appointed Fire Wardens and First Aiders to meet the legal requirements. This will then be reviewed over the longer term, once new patterns of work are established and building usage assessed. If appropriate, buildings will return to a more holistic approach to the provision of first aiders and fire wardens.

#### **Use of Audio-Visual**

- 4.9 Before the pandemic, most meetings were conducted in-person with little demand for hybrid or AV technology. AV equipment across the estate has therefore had to be either installed or upgraded to support the increased demand for hybrid

meetings. The programme used the trials to test this equipment and refine the specifications suited to each room.

- 4.10 To support use of AV, the room booking system is also being upgraded and further work is underway to enable colleagues to book hot desks.

### **CO2 Monitors**

- 4.11 CO2 monitors are a proxy for ventilation levels and based on Health and Safety Executive guidance have an upper tolerance level for identifying rates of ventilation in a room. In an office environment, the target rate of air is 800 – 12,000 parts per million. Above 15,000 part per million suggests need for improvement and an alarm will sound and the room should be vacated until a safe level of ventilation returns. This could be done through mechanical ventilation or by opening a window or door.
- 4.12 CO2 monitors have been trialled in Waverley Court and City Chambers meeting rooms. More have now been ordered and the programme team are working with individual buildings as to how many monitors they require.
- 4.13 CO2 monitors are not suitable for open plan spaces. However, given that officers will be encouraged to continue to wear face masks when moving around the building this risk is mitigated for the time being. As assessment is underway as to whether we need to model ventilation in open plan spaces.

### **Engagement with colleagues in frontline services**

Many colleagues work in frontline services with specified operational hours. This means that working in a flexible manner may mean something different to them. To date eight focus groups have been held with frontline colleagues to explore what flexibility means for them in their role. This work will be brought together under key themes and presented to senior managers for further discussion. A toolkit will also be developed to enable teams to hold their own discussions as to what flexible working means for them.

## **5. Financial impact**

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- 5.1 A budget of has been allocated from the Covid-19 recovery fund to enable the purchasing of equipment and support a return to office-based building.

## **6. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 6.1 The programme team has been engaging directly with employees and elected members on the development of the strategy, as well as with the Trade Unions.

## **7. Background reading/external references**

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7.1 None.

## **8. Appendices**

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8.1 Appendix 1 – Our Future Work Strategy

8.2 Appendix 2 – Manager's Toolkit

# Our Future Work

Flexibility, Trust and Empowerment



# Contents

Introduction ..... 2

Chapter one: why now is the right time for flexible working ..... 3

Chapter two: building blocks..... 4

Chapter three: hybrid working, a closer look ..... 6

Chapter four: trialing different ways of working ..... 8

# Introduction

The impact of coronavirus has changed the way many of us work. Never did we think we could collectively achieve so much while working apart. It has shown us that there are options about how we work, and that technology plays an important role. What was once just theory has now been shown to work well in practice.

We've asked our colleagues how the pandemic has changed how they work and what they want for the future. The response was resoundingly 'flexibility' underpinned with an ask for more trust and empowerment.

This strategy sets out a way forward for adopting and facilitating a new approach to how, where and when colleagues work, where roles allow. In an organisation as large as ours, doing this properly will take time and, as shown in our case studies, working flexibly will be different depending on where you work. We're much clearer about what flexible working means for our office-based colleagues who, over the coming months, will be encouraged to start using our buildings again and move to hybrid working.

To ensure we've understood what flexible working could mean for front-line colleagues we'll be running focus groups. In these focus groups we'll be trying to identify changes we could make now to enable frontline colleagues to also work more flexibly. We already have examples of this as shown in case study one.

The strategy therefore sets out the changes we can make now, along with our longer-term ambitions. Most importantly, the strategy looks at the type of culture and behaviours we need to develop to ensure a flexible model works for everyone. It builds on the values and behaviours we've demonstrated during the pandemic, such as trust and collaboration. As we start to think about flexible and hybrid working, we must remember that the experiences of our 18,500 colleagues have been, and will be, very different. For some, home or remote working has been positive in that it has enabled them to find a greater balance between home and work life. Whereas for others it has been more challenging to find a suitable space to work, or it has negatively impacted on their wellbeing and led to periods of isolation. More than ever, we need to find a way to balance the needs of the different services and expectations of our colleagues. For example, the work expectations of a 'baby boomer' are very different to those of a 'millennial'. We need to work together to balance these differences in our workforce.

This is why taking a flexible approach to how we work in the future is key to achieving a sustainably high performing council. We want to support different lifestyles and wellbeing needs while maintaining high quality services for the people of Edinburgh.

## Our Vision

The workplaces of the future will be environments designed, built and adapted to drive the Council forward with a shared sense of purpose within a culture of collaboration aiming to improve outcomes for local people.

Our approach to hybrid working sets out to achieve more dynamic work settings and effective ways of working. We hope this will improve performance, knowledge sharing and autonomy leading to greater employee satisfaction and improved service delivery.

## Case study one: working flexibly in the cluster assessment and care management teams

Assessment and care management colleagues have been working remotely from home since March 2020 and have all been given laptops, iPhones, Personal Protective Equipment and lateral flow tests. They use MS Teams to meet each other and their managers regularly. They've created specific channels on MS Teams to share information and request assistance throughout the day. Where possible they meet service users, their families and other professionals on MS Teams.

Locality offices are now used as touch down space between visits or for welfare breaks. Colleagues who work on a shift basis can pre-book a desk before they go into the office if needed. They have regular Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessments for home working and support is offered with equipment, if required e.g. adjustable office chairs. Everyone is encouraged and supported to look after their wellbeing.



# Chapter one: why now is the right time for flexible working

There are seven drivers which guide this work:

1. **Feedback and learning from the past 18 months:** There's little appetite for returning to work exactly as we did before the pandemic. Of the colleagues who completed our November 2020 survey, almost everyone said they'd like to retain a more flexible approach to work in the future. Colleagues who are buildings-based showed a desire to retain a hybrid model of working from a mix of locations – for example home, or other permitted locations, and a Council workplace. On average, colleagues who can work from home would like to do so 70% of the time.
2. **We need to be a modern, attractive workplace:** All organisations are now considering their approach and hybrid working is likely to become common place across many sectors. For the Council to continue to remain competitive and to attract and retain the best talent from Scotland and beyond, we need to offer modern working practices. In doing so we can also widen the talent pool available to us.
3. **Sustainability:** It's not yet clear whether home working has reduced carbon emissions, however the collective impact of colleagues working locally and not using transport is recognised. By changing our work practices, we have the potential to make a significant contribution to the Edinburgh 2030 carbon net zero target and show leadership to other organisations.
4. **Culture:** In our People Strategy we committed to supporting colleague wellbeing through enabling a healthy work-life balance. We have an opportunity like never before to achieve this.
5. **Collaboration:** Using our buildings differently creates more opportunity to share them with other bodies from the voluntary, public and private sectors. This can only support improved collaboration and the way in which we work together for communities. In time there are likely be financial benefits in addition to the creation of spaces for collaboration and partnership working.
6. **20-Minute Neighbourhood:** Our 20-Minute Neighbourhood strategy commits us to trialling new ways of working, including delivering our services closer to communities and enabling colleagues to work closer to home.
7. **Our Buildings:** As set out in the 20-Minute Neighbourhood strategy, better management and use of our buildings across the city will help us to deliver our ambitions to reduce carbon emissions. This is also about creating spaces where colleagues want to work.

“I've benefitted from working from home and feel I now have a better work-life balance. However, I still have a lot of meetings every day, and it can be quite tiring. I welcome spreading my time at home and in-office, but I do need to get out and about to visit colleagues working in our frontline services. So I plan to spend two days at home and three in the office or out and about.

I encourage all colleagues to embrace this new way of working and focus on their health and wellbeing. Our Future Work is a real step-change for our organisation, and together we can create a better working environment for everyone.

**Andrew Kerr**  
Chief Executive

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## Case study two: wellbeing phone calls

Since April 2020, the Health and Social Care Partnership has made over 46,000 calls using Assistive Technology Enabled Care 24 service (ATEC24). This new approach meant we could check on individuals' wellbeing, provide companionship and offer advice and support on coping with lockdown. Of those participating in a service user satisfaction survey, 96% felt the wellbeing phone calls during the pandemic had been helpful and enabled them to feel well-supported.

We also made wellbeing calls to 457 people identified with dementia who prior to the pandemic were not receiving formal service involvement. These calls enabled a focus on wellbeing, including food/medication/shopping checks, daily living activities, general wellbeing and carer support, with advice and onward referrals provided as required.

# Chapter two: building blocks

## Embedding a flexible working model

We'll support colleagues and teams to agree how they want to work together, the frequency that they need to meet face to face and the type of office space they need. For example, some teams will want to come together to collaborate for some activities but may also prefer to work from home or local offices for the majority of the time. It may be the case that even more roles could become permanent home working roles.

In the discussion with teams, managers will want to think about the types of roles they deliver. Broadly these can be broken down into four categories:

- Mobile Working: roles which by their nature require colleagues to be out and about to deliver services;
- Hybrid Working: roles which can be undertaken from a mixture of locations including home or other locations on the Council estate;
- Home Working: roles which are contractually home based; and,
- Building Based Working: roles which need to be based in a Council workplace

### Case study three: hybrid working in practice

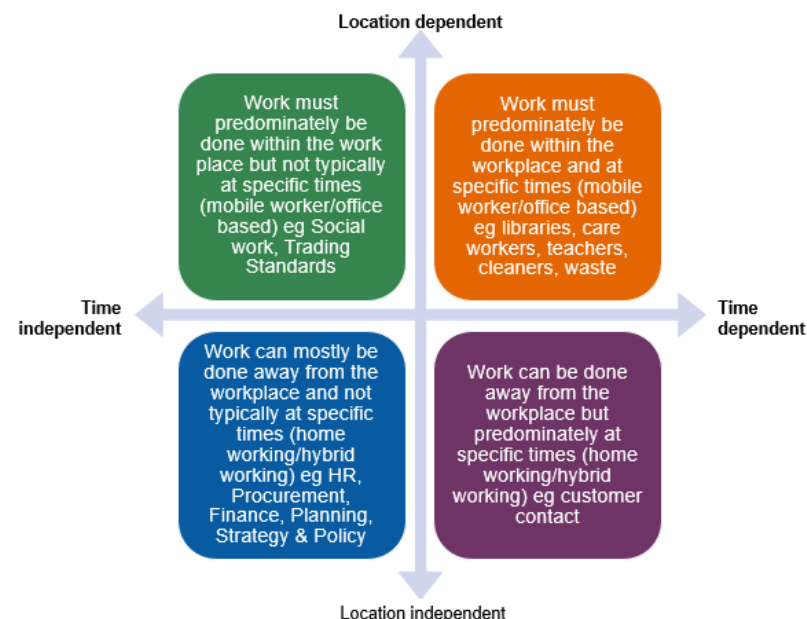
Simone spends two days a week working in the office. She then spends the other three days working from home or in a local coworking space. This enables Simone to have dedicated time working on reports in a quiet environment.

Working this way has also improved Simone's wellbeing as she is able to collect her children from after school club early on the days she is not in the office because she does not have commuting time.

### Mindset

Making the leap to flexible working can be hard but that doesn't mean we should shy away from exploring this and just revert to how our working lives were pre-coronavirus. We want to engage and support managers and teams to decide what's best for them. The answer will be different for each team depending on preferences and delivery requirements. We'll provide frequently asked questions

(FAQs) and a toolkit to support discussion over the coming months. We need to challenge ourselves at each step along the way to ensure we're striving to achieve excellence in service delivery while also improving the work-life balance for colleagues. Here is a helpful tool for managers to use with their teams:



### I don't work in a building or at a desk. Does Our Future Work apply to me?

We have many different roles in the Council. Some colleagues were previously buildings based, whereas others needed to move around the city. As part of this strategy, we want to explore opportunities to apply the principles of Our Future Work to those services that aren't building, or desk based.

While recognising that some roles are more fixed in nature, we want to work with colleagues to hear ideas on how and where flexibility could be introduced to help improve work-life balance and support wellbeing for all. You'll be invited to complete our survey or take part in a focus group to share your views about what flexible working could mean for you and your role.

“Commuting for over two hours was previously part of my working day. While I did sometimes work from home, it was never regularly. However, since we've all had to change how we work, I've had a much better work-life balance. As a result, I now plan to continue working from home three days a week, where I will use the time to focus on specific issues.

I can also use this extra time to exercise at the end of the day rather than having a long commute. It helps my physical and mental wellbeing, and it's essential we all take the time to focus on ourselves.

**Jackie Irvine, Chief Social Work Officer, Service Director of Children's and Criminal Justice Services**

“Being able to work flexibly allows me to balance different parts of my role. My personal plan for the future is to be in a work location each week for three days with two days from home.

I recognise that this might need to flex depending upon my commitments, from time to time, but I also think role modelling flexible working is not only good for me, it will hopefully help others feel able to make that shift.

**Stephen Moir, Executive Director of Corporate Services**



# Chapter three: hybrid working, a closer look

## Does hybrid work change how I work?

Hybrid working does not change the support that we can expect. Colleagues will have the same access to work, and opportunities for learning, development and progression. No one should miss out on anything because of where they work. While we all have a role to play in creating a positive work culture, the role of line managers remains especially important in ensuring everyone works together collaboratively.

## What do teams need to think about when moving to hybrid working?

What works for one person, won't necessarily work for everyone. It's important that teams discuss a work pattern that works for everyone. When having these discussions, managers will need to explore:

- The needs of the service and how this drives work patterns. In particular, if a service user or stakeholder expects meetings or work to be done at specific times.
- How to welcome and induct new colleagues to the organisation and ensure they develop and build a network.
- Whether a task needs to be carried out in the workplace or at home.
- How the team communicates, works together and ensures everyone is included. 'Out of sight' must not mean, 'out of mind'.
- Any health and safety concerns that need to be addressed.
- The frequency that teams should meet in person and whether there are core times that everyone needs to be available.
- How to ensure everyone takes a break from their screen or work on a regular basis.

## How will technology support hybrid working?

We're at the start of our journey on exploring hybrid working and know that we'll need to continue to evolve as we learn best practice. However, we have already made huge progress as an organisation over the past 18 months.

We'll need to optimise our technology in rooms to ensure we can smoothly hold meetings where some attendees are dialing in. Investment in technology will be our key to supporting our future way of work. As part of our plans we'll look at the

right technology to support working in our buildings, working remotely and working in a hybrid way.

Our audio-visual equipment will be required to connect colleagues and other stakeholders in both remote and hybrid settings. We will also need to look at meeting etiquette in a hybrid setting.

## Case study four: future vision for hybrid working

I start my day at home by having breakfast with my children and I then walk them to school. On my way home I buy a coffee and speak to a colleague about preparing for a meeting later in the week. It's also an informal chance to check in with each other. I then spend a couple of hours working on my report at home and managing my inbox.

In the afternoon I walk to my local office where I've arranged to meet colleagues for a workshop. The hub has been set up with other public sector partners and it's a great place to network and share ideas. I've used a phone app to book a space for five people so we can run a workshop. Two members of the team needs to join us virtually, so I've booked a space with a visual screen to dial them in. Before starting the meeting, everyone familiarises themselves with meeting etiquette which is especially important when there are virtual and in person attendees. The technology works and we have a productive session.

I then head home and have my 1:1 with my manager virtually and then finish my working day. My partner collects the children as they have a different flexible working pattern to me.

## Combatting virtual fatigue

Not commuting to and from work, coupled with going from meeting to meeting without a break can be really hard both mentally and physically. While meeting virtually is a good use of time, the lack of physical connection or opportunity to move between meeting rooms means there is no chance to decompress or chat informally.

We need to redefine our home working culture to rediscover these moments again. In effect, we need to recreate time away from the screen.

Practical changes that teams could make could include:

- Ensuring meetings end at a time that will allow colleagues to have a break before the next meeting.
- Encouraging everyone to set their MS Outlook so that meetings start at 5 minutes past the hour and end at ten minutes to the hour.
- Ensuring everyone has the right type of homeworking space and, if this is not possible, agreeing they can return to building based working.
- Using daily connect and finish meetings could help structure work and ensure nobody gets into a habit of working long hours.
- Keeping virtual coffee breaks and holding time in diaries for fresh air and exercise.
- Setting up wellbeing groups or buddy systems for new starters.
- Encouraging face-to-face meetings near you and your colleagues' homes.

#### **Case study five: a day in the life of Heather a Senior Occupational Therapist**

I work as a Senior Occupational Therapist in the South East Locality. I live outside the city, and my commute to the office is about 20-30 minutes. More recently, I've returned to the office twice a week to support my role.

This week there was an emergency adult protection situation concerning equipment provision, manual handling and care and support needs. On two consecutive days, I was had to visit the family first with a social worker and with an occupational therapist the following day. On both these days, I chose to base myself in the office. This allowed me to meet with colleagues before the visits and complete the visits when needed rather than having to factor in the commuting time and distance.

As some of the homecare managers were also in the office, I could quickly and more easily discuss the issues with them and other colleagues. This meant they were able to work on the support needed for the client. Being based in the office (rather than home) means if I need to contact someone timelier, it benefits the person I'm working with. It also feels I'm giving a better and more personalised service.



“ The last 18 months have undoubtedly bought challenges for us all, but equally it's paved the way for us to think differently about how and where we work. Our expectations and needs have changed.

Consistently colleagues have fed back that they want to be more empowered and trusted – what a great opportunity we have to respond to this and try different ways of working. Let's move where we focus on what colleagues have delivered and not the hours they've spent in the office.

**Katy Miller, Service Director  
Human Resources**”



## Chapter four: trialing different ways of working

Supporting flexible working, whether digitally or in our buildings, will require investment over a number of years. Any change we make needs to be led by colleague feedback so we're not rushing into immediate changes. Instead, we'll take an agile approach and trial different ways of working across our operational estate. Working in an agile way means we test and evolve plans as we go, based upon feedback.

Our workplace of the future needs to provide spaces where people can come together to interact and connect. We'll need spaces that enable quiet working and rooms that allow for confidentiality. We'll also need space that embraces current and new technology and allows us to connect with our citizens and services users, as well as people working from different locations. Most importantly, the spaces we create must support the mentoring of our new employees or those who are just starting out in their careers. We must ensure new and positive relationships continue to be forged as we embrace a different way of working.

We want to start this journey by investing in three trials that, if successful, could see us make these changes permanent.

### Waverley Court

Waverley Court sits in the centre of Edinburgh with excellent transport connections. We'll always want to use this space to come together, collaborate or meet with partner organisations. The changes we make need to support social connection and the other aspects of work we miss. This could include:

- team tables and collaboration rooms to support delivery
- quiet rooms to provide people with space to support thinking and report writing
- individual rooms where colleagues can take confidential calls or have a private meeting with others
- secure environments provided for tasks covered by legislation which require privacy
- space to relax
- space to log into a laptop or contact digital services for support
- space for mentoring and development.

Getting this right will require technology that includes everything from keeping colleagues safe within buildings to apps to book space in buildings and systems which allow up to invite others to attend meetings virtually.

### City Chambers

Sitting over ten floors in a grade A Listed Building, the City Chambers is the civic and democratic heart of the Council and is where our elected members are normally based. The chambers are also occupied by a variety of Council services and partners, including social work, registration services and the resilience centre. Additionally, there is a customer hub and several spaces which support numerous civic and public events, including weddings and civil partnership ceremonies.

There are various spaces in the City Chambers that lend themselves to supporting hybrid working. We propose to better use some of the agile space we already have, such as the business centre, and we will create four hybrid meeting rooms with audio visual capabilities for elected members and officers to trial.

“ We started flexible working in response to the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic and teams across Edinburgh have done amazing things to support the most vulnerable while working agilely and flexibly. It's great that we can now extend that flexibility in how we work into the future.

We've been listening to what colleagues have said over the past 18 months and the strategy reflects that. I'm now planning a split between being building based when we need to be and working from home.

**Judith Proctor, Chief Officer, Edinburgh Integration Joint Board** ”

### Case study six: waste and services technical team

At the start of Covid-19 we knew that we had to work differently. In particular, we changed our working hours so that we could balance out our roles with caring responsibilities.

We didn't ask colleagues to submit time sheets, instead we worked on the basis of trust. Walking meetings have become part of our culture and a great way to step away from the screen. Some teams' meetings have been held in parks, which helps new starts get to know their new colleagues.

However, we've also found that MS Teams has helped us to have really productive meetings which are more efficient and focused. For our new starters we have also arranged a virtual meeting with the manager of the Technical Team to welcome them to the Service. Going forwards we'll want to maintain this balance of using available technology but also holding face to face meeting locally.

### Local 'near me' offices

The 20-Minute Neighborhood Strategy sets out a vision for local areas. This includes enabling people to work locally to reduce the need for commuting. In turn this will also have positive benefits on local economies and reduce traffic congestion. There are three key reasons why now is the right time to make this change:

- investing in local working and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods will contribute to reducing local emissions which is essential if we're to deliver our target to be a net-zero city by 2030;
- supporting local economies and businesses who can provide for the daily needs of communities but also create employment opportunities; and,
- future opportunities to share the space with partners and third-party organisations.

### Timelines

The trials will run in parallel with our engagement workstream and we will continue to review and adapt our plans as we develop our understanding of the future needs of our services and colleagues, alongside current public health guidance.

A cross-council project team is working on plans for a phased approach. The initial focus will be City Chambers and Waverley Court. From October, teams will be invited to participate in trials on a gradual basis starting with Human Resources, Committee Services and the Corporate Governance Team. As we're able to rollout more changes in Waverley Court, we will invite more teams to start using the space in the coming months.

In the meantime, a toolkit will be provided to all managers to support them to have discussions with their teams about how they would like to use flexible working going forwards.

The local offices trial is a longer-term plan that will be developed in line with the town centre strand of the 20-Minute Neighbourhood strategy.

“The aftermath of the worst of the pandemic gives us an opportunity to re-evaluate how and where we work.

Let's use this chance to make lasting change for the better.

**Paul Lawrence, Executive Director of Place**

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# Our Future Work

Flexibility, Trust and Empowerment

Team discussion workbook  
November 2021





# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction .....  | 2  |
| Shaping our plans through your feedback.....  | 3  |
| Key principles – Yes Check .....  | 4  |
| Identifying how we work.....  | 5  |
| Questions to work through individually and with your teams.....   | 6  |
| Appendix A - Supporting your own and your team’s wellbeing as you consider future working options ..... | 10 |
| Appendix B - Sustainability .....   | 13 |
| Appendix C - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) .....  | 16 |

# Introduction

## An opportunity to improve our work/life balance

Coronavirus has impacted our personal and work lives, so we want to learn from it and see what we can do differently.

Our colleagues have told us that they'd like to work more flexibly and have an improved work life balance. So, this gives us a fantastic opportunity to work together and explore how we can reshape how we work to achieve this goal.

As leaders, I need you to help plan and support this as much as possible by focusing on embedding Flexibility, Trust and Empowerment within your teams.

## Your essential role - in two steps

1. Read through the Our Future Work Strategy and this workbook closely. Thinking about how you can support your service and team to work differently in the future in line with the key principles of Our Future Work.
2. Then, work through the questions with your teams and share the input with your service leadership team – they will advise how you should do this at your service workshop.

We know that taking a flexible approach will mean that different teams take different approaches – and that's ok. We need to understand what the right balance is for each team, taking account of **service** needs, **team** needs, **individual** needs and accepting the constraints of the role.

This is a learning process for us all, and we expect that we'll continue to evolve as we work through this next period of change. We'll face challenges and may not get things right first time – but by continuing to talk, listen and learn, we can create a culture of flexibility, trust and empowerment. This will help us to achieve our best every day and deliver for our citizens.

If you have any questions about the workbook, please talk through with your service in the first instance. For anything you're unable to answer, please contact [OurFutureWork@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:OurFutureWork@edinburgh.gov.uk).

Thank you

**Andrew Kerr**  
**Chief Executive**

# Shaping our plans through your feedback

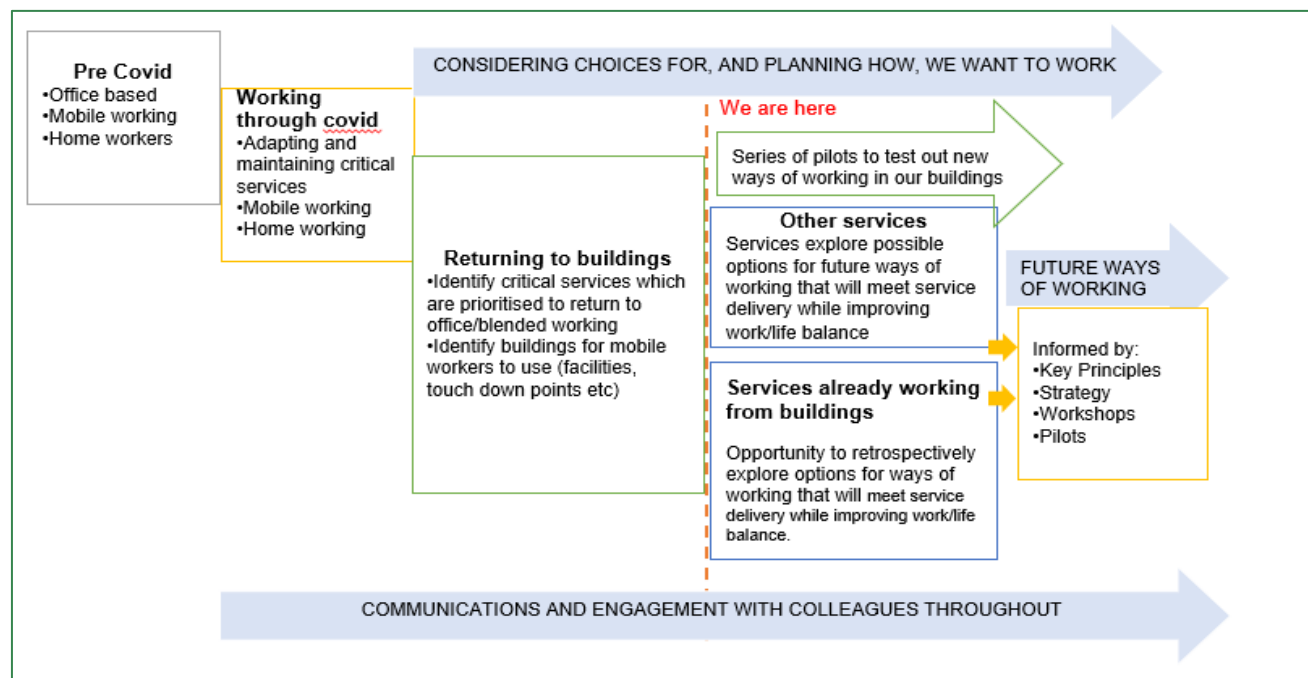
## Our journey so far

We're a large and complex organisation (delivering around 700 services) so we need to make sure our approach in creating a more flexible way of working is right for everyone no matter their role. Therefore, we're deliberately taking a phased approach in our planning.

As part of this, we're about to run pilots with a small number of teams who will return to Waverley Court and the City Chambers. We'll use their experiences along with the feedback from your team discussions to help shape what a return to our buildings could look like for colleagues. We'll review what has and has not worked well and build our plans from there.

We'll also speak to those teams who are already working in our buildings to gather their thoughts.

Taking this approach means we may take a little longer to build our final plans, but it will mean that everyone has had an opportunity to contribute to how they'd like to work in the future, so we think it's the right thing to do. With your help, we want to make the most of this opportunity to change the way we work for the better.



# Key principles – Yes Check

## Flexibility – Trust - Empowerment

As you consider how our teams may work in practice, please check that you are meeting our key principles.

By adhering to them we can be sure that, even though we may be working in different ways in different teams, all colleagues are being treated fairly.

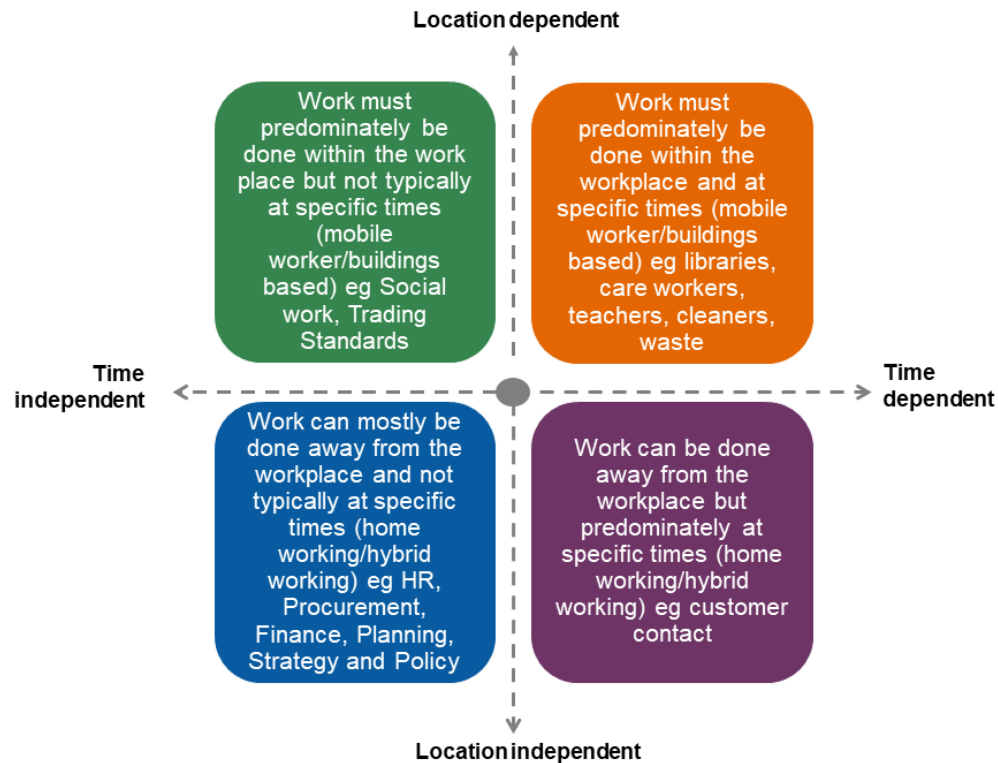
- ✓ **Outcome focused** - maintaining and enhancing service delivery remains our priority but we will focus more on what colleagues achieve (outcomes), rather than where and when they do it (which can lead to presenteeism).
- ✓ **Autonomy and flexibility** – teams can explore what could work for their service delivery, their team members and themselves as individuals.
- ✓ **Not a one size fits all** – different teams will have different needs at different times and the role of our leaders is to continually engage with teams to find the right balance, taking account of service needs, team needs, individual needs, and accepting the constraints of the role.
- ✓ **Trust and transparency** - colleagues are trusted and empowered to manage their working time.
- ✓ **Working flexibly** – where colleagues are working flexibly, leaders are expected to continue to make this possible. Where colleagues are keen to work flexibly, and this can be accommodated, leaders are expected to [explore the options available](#) to make this possible.
- ✓ **Wellbeing** - colleagues' circumstances are all different, and their wellbeing is paramount within any future working arrangement.
- ✓ **Inclusivity** – where we can, we support further inclusivity for our colleagues through enabling better work life balance choices.
- ✓ **Sustainability** – we will consider how we can make changes to the way we work to contribute to the Council's 2030 carbon neutral target.
- ✓ **Technology** – we will ensure colleagues have the technology needed to work in a flexible way where their role allows.

# Identifying how we work

To help prepare for your team discussions, take some time to think about how your team could work. Broadly, this can be described in four ways:

- **Mobile Working:** roles which by their nature require colleagues to be out and about to deliver services
- **Hybrid Working:** roles which can be undertaken from a mixture of locations including home (or other permitted locations) or other Council locations
- **Home Working:** roles which are contractually home based
- **Building Based Working:** roles which need to be based in a Council workplace

By categorising our roles in this way, we can begin to see where there are opportunities to be consistent in the flexibility we offer.



# Questions to work through individually and with your teams

**Before engaging with your teams, reflect on your own experience from the past 18 months and work through these questions on your own so you have a chance to consider how you'll talk your team through them in line with our key principles.**

You may also find it helpful to refer to **Appendix A - Supporting your own and your team's wellbeing as you consider future working options** where you'll find information on having good team conversations and looking after your team.

## Questions for me as a leader

You may not have all the answers to the questions in this section – that's ok, remember we're all still learning.

If you're not confident about a topic, please discuss with your manager who will help you identify opportunities to develop your skills further and how to help you support your team in the meantime.

1. How have I worked differently as a manager throughout the pandemic? Reflecting on this, what are the management tasks I feel strong in and those I am not as confident in?
2. Am I comfortable and confident managing my team from different locations if this is what they would prefer? If not, what can I do to develop myself to achieve this? Would I benefit from training on how to manage a flexible, digital and dispersed team?
3. How can I provide team members with autonomy to structure how they work in a way that suits them?
4. How will I manage performance based on output, rather than presence?
5. How can I help build a culture of trust and transparency in the team?
6. Do I feel confident that I can support the wellbeing of my team remotely?
7. What can I do to facilitate learning opportunities for my team under our new way of working?

**Notes:**

**Once you feel prepared, discuss these questions with your team:**

### **Service**

8. What are the outcomes our team needs to deliver to support our service?
9. Have we been able to deliver our outcomes throughout the pandemic? If yes, how have we worked differently to achieve this? If no, what have we been unable to do and why?
10. Are there any elements of our outcomes that don't lend themselves to flexibility that we need to discuss upfront?
11. Are there any parameters that have been agreed by our Service we need to work within?

**Notes:**

### **Team**

12. How have we traditionally worked in our team – Mobile, Hybrid, Home, Buildings-based?
13. Has the way we've worked through the pandemic changed this mix? Has this created an opportunity for us to continue to work in different ways if we'd like to?

14. What are our parameters as a team? For example, do a certain number of us need to be physically present at any given time? Do we have a rota system, varied working patterns or fixed hours? How do we consider that when exploring flexible options?
15. Do we engage with clients / customers / citizens in person? If so, how often? Are there alternative ways of engaging with these stakeholders?
16. Can we change our working practices and structure to adapt to work in a more flexible way e.g. admin tasks can be done from home?
17. Are there certain activities that we do as a team that we'd like to do in person? How often do we need to do these? What type of space do we need to enable this, e.g. meeting room, collaboration space?
18. Are there any practices we can set up to allow us to work in different locations but still connect regularly? E.g. weekly team meeting on Teams, daily morning check-in through Teams chat, weekly 1:1s, monthly social gathering – either via Teams or in person, as decided by the team each month?
19. Are there things we can do together as a team to support each other's wellbeing?
20. Using Appendix B - Sustainability are there ways we could work more sustainably to contribute to the Council's 2030 carbon neutral target.
21. Given our thoughts on the questions above, how often do we want to be in a Council building, e.g. office? Do we require desks? If so, how many and when for? What equipment do we need in the building? Does it need to be a specific building? (The space and requirement form in the toolkit will help you with this).

**Notes:**



## Individual

- 22. Has working differently throughout the pandemic had a positive or negative impact on your wellbeing? In what ways?
- 23. Has homeworking offered you a greater flexibility and improved work-life balance?
- 24. How do you feel about returning to work in one of our buildings when the opportunity arises?
- 25. Are there elements of the way you are currently working that you would like to retain to support your wellbeing and work-life balance?
- 26. Are there elements you would like to change/stop to better support your wellbeing and work-life balance?
- 27. What role type do you see yourself as? Do you want this to continue?
- 28. If you want to work at home for some of your time, do you have a suitable workspace? (If the answer to this is no, please reassure your team member that a space will be made for them in the appropriate Council building.)
- 29. Would you like any training or guidance on how to use systems while working remotely?

**Notes:**

# Appendix A - Supporting your own and your team's wellbeing as you consider future working options

We know that we are not going to return to working as we did before the Covid pandemic, whether that's in a front-facing or buildings-based role. We're now moving into our next phase of change, where we work together to consider how we might continue to deliver our services differently in the future. There will be a range of views and reactions to this and we want to make sure you have the tools and resources you need to support your own and your team's wellbeing as you lead them through this.

## Having Good Conversations

You'll already be having regular conversations with your team, individually and collectively, as part of normal performance management including conversations about wellbeing. As we move into a new phase of change, conversations that focus on wellbeing are more important than ever.

As you start to discuss future working options with your team, ask them how they're doing, what they can be doing to look after themselves, and what they need from you. If you can't help with any issues they're having, you can still listen and help them find a way forward.

Make sure they're aware of the different support options available, especially from [PAM Assist](#), who provide help and support on a huge range of subjects. Familiarise yourself with what they offer and signpost that support if you think it would benefit any of your team. In addition, encourage them to make time for themselves. Simple things such as encouraging breaks and offering a level of flexibility in how they do their work can also make a big difference.

You can use our [Team wellbeing check-in tool](#), which guides you through the sort of questions you should be asking in terms of wellbeing. If you want a refresher course on how to have good conversations, book yourself on to the [Conversation Spotlight workshop](#) which is now a one day online workshop.

We recognise that having conversations around health and wellbeing can be daunting, then you may find our [coaching and mentoring support](#) helpful.

While having good conversations about wellbeing is part of your ongoing conversations with your team members the pandemic has obviously brought many additional challenges to colleagues. We have [wellbeing advice specific for this](#) too, which you may find useful.

## Looking After Yourself

We know that you've been supporting colleagues through the pandemic and we're very grateful for that. Making time to look after your own wellbeing means you'll be in a better position to help others.

You can find out more about ways to promote your own wellbeing by booking yourself onto our [Be Well to Lead Well workshop](#), which can help you find the energy and headspace to be at your best.

Some of our people managers who've been on the workshop have shared how it's helped them:

“ I think that was the first time in weeks I've actually stopped, breathed properly and considered where I'm at ”

“ I think one thing I'll do differently is not feel guilty about looking after me ”

“ Just knowing I'm not alone is the most helpful ”

## Looking After Your Team

You've been supporting your team and their wellbeing throughout the pandemic and before then, as part of the regular conversations you've been having. To get yourself into the best position possible to give advice and support to your team as future working changes, make sure you're familiar with these tools:

- [Our Occupational Health Service](#)
- [PAM Assist \(our Employee Assistance Programme\)](#) - you can call PAM Assist to get advice on how to support your people if they're dealing with health and wellbeing related issues and you're feeling out of your depth.

- [Our stress related policies and toolkit](#) – read up on your responsibilities in relation to managing stress in your team(s), including when to carry out individual and team risk assessments.
- Our fantastic selection of [online learning](#) covering mental health, wellbeing and stress-management, which you or your team can access.

Look out for our two new wellbeing resources launched on MyLearningHub recently:

- [Keeping Well through Change](#) – an interactive PDF with sources of help on a wide range of health and wellbeing matters
- [Energy MOT](#) – a learning resource to help you understand and optimise your energy at work



## Having Good Team Conversations

To help you think through how to get the team thinking about their own wellbeing, work through our [Leadership Wellbeing Plan](#), which will help guide you through team meetings keeping the focus on wellbeing and the support that's available to both you and the team.

Another tool we have is our [Team Wellbeing Check-In Tool](#), which can be used as part of your team meetings, as well as for one-to-one meetings.

You should also encourage everyone in your team to create a [My wellbeing plan](#), which can help them to think about what things they find most helpful in managing their own wellbeing.

## Appendix B - Sustainability

As you consider returning to working from different locations, it's a good time to think about your travel to and from work and work out ways in which this could become better for your health, save you money and cut emissions.

- **Walking and cycling** to work for all or part of a journey can help you arrive awake and ready for work. Find out more about [walking and cycling](#) on our website, including Edinburgh [walking groups](#) and [safer routes to schools](#). We also run a [Ride to Work scheme](#) to help encourage employees to cycle to and from work
- We offer a **salary advance for bus and train season tickets**. [These are like an interest free loan and can reduce travel costs](#).
- **Car sharing** supports our sustainable travel policy objectives by reducing single car occupancy car journeys. It also helps to reduce carbon emissions, air pollution, road congestion and can help save money. [Register with the Council's trip share group](#).
- If you're thinking of getting back on a bike but feel a little daunted by the idea, **using an e-bike** maybe a good option for you. [You can cover a lot of ground easily and quickly and there's loans which help make them more affordable](#).

Whether working from home or in a Council building there are several small changes we can make to be more sustainable and improve our health and wellbeing.



- Consider **meeting up with colleagues for a walking meeting**. This works best with up to five people. Simply walk and talk. You can stop at the end to recap and note actions.
- Try putting in a **'commute' time at the start or end of your day and spend time outside**. Not only does it help separate work and home life but is a great stress buster and will help you feel alert and positive.

- Make sure to look after yourself:

- ✓ **Take regular breaks** – if you have a day of back to back meetings, arrange for them to finish five minutes early so you can get time away from your screen
- ✓ **Get some fresh air** when you can by getting out for a quick walk
- ✓ **Have a clear time at which you finish work**, so you literally and mentally switch off

- A **walking meeting by phone** can keep you alert and getting exercise and fresh air at the same time. You might get inspired.
- **Adjusting your home thermostat by two degrees** can help reduce your energy use at home – saving you money on bills and helping the environment. [Did you know you can still claim tax relief for working from home? Claim today.](#)
- **Unplug whenever you can:** Electronic devices use energy when they are plugged in but aren't being used. Unplugging electronic devices that aren't in use like your phone, laptop, coffee machine, microwave or television when you aren't using them, will help save energy and bills.
- Look at your daily habits and see what you could do differently by **calculating your carbon footprint and working out which changes you can make to decrease it**. There are hundreds of free calculators out there including [PawPrint](#) , [WWF](#) and [Carbon Footprint](#)

### Helpful travel links

**Plan a journey by bike:** <https://www.cyclestreets.net/>, which lets you plan routes from A to B by bike. It is designed by cyclists, for cyclists, and caters for the needs of both confident and less confident cyclists. Or use Google maps

[Discover your nearest EV charger:](#)

# Appendix C

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Some questions that your team may ask you will fall under our **working flexibly guidance** – please make sure you have read this before you have your conversations as it will also be very useful.

### FAQ contents – click on each title to go to that location:

1. [Caring responsibilities](#)
2. [Health, Safety and Legal](#)
3. [Hybrid Working](#)
4. [Office/Building Working](#)
5. [Permanent Home Working](#)
6. [Technology and equipment](#)
7. [Wellbeing](#)
8. [Working from other locations](#)
9. [Working patterns and recording hours](#)
10. [Is working from home better or worse for the environment?](#)



## Caring responsibilities

### Can team members undertake caring responsibilities while working from home?

Whilst working from home may make caring responsibilities easier, it's not a substitute for suitable care arrangements. Dependents need to be looked after by someone else while colleagues are working. Care arrangements should be in place to cover the time when colleagues are working.

## Health, Safety and Legal

### What are the Health and Safety requirements and responsibilities when working at home?

The [Working from Home Guidance](#) will guide you and colleagues through the Health and Safety assessments for working at home.

What Data Protection and confidentiality issues should I consider?

All the normal Data Protection and security of information requirements will apply to any work that is undertaken away from an office. Your assessment of flexible working should take into account the storage and disposal of information in a flexible or hybrid working environment.

## Hybrid Working

### What do you mean by the term "Hybrid working"?

Hybrid working is a type of flexible working where an office based colleague can request to work from a mix of locations e.g. home (or other permitted location), or Council workplace, in a way that works for the delivery of the service and the individual.

**If we want to put in place hybrid working, can I go ahead and agree that with the team now?**

Once you've discussed what options are best with your team, you'll feed this back to your service leadership team. Your service will then put a collective plan in place that considers the feedback from all teams and establishes what space they need in an office/building to accommodate colleague's desired ways of working. They will then work with our Facilities Management and Property colleagues who will manage the holistic plan and be able to agree a date for when the office/building will be ready. From that point can commence working as outlined in the service plan. This will not be before the one metre distancing rule is lifted.

**If we choose to put in place hybrid working, is there a limit on the split between office/building and home working I should consider?**

No, you should agree this with your team, based on what works and agree how service delivery will be achieved. Think about the type of work being done and individual circumstances, and what working styles might work best for each of those tasks. Any solution will be focussed on outcomes and service requirements. You might agree a framework where there are a set number of days of the week where a colleague is working in the office, or you may agree a more fluid arrangement.

**How do I ensure that my team are available when I need them under a hybrid model?**

This can be achieved through meaningful conversations with your team. If you propose to implement a hybrid model, you need to be clear on the types of tasks that can be carried out from a mix of locations including the office/building and set clear expectations around when you might need individuals to be available or to attend an office/building.

Remember to follow the principles set out in the [working flexibly guidance](#) around empowering your team to manage their time and duties and focus on output rather than time at a desk.

**Many of my team want to work in a hybrid model, but what if my service can't support this?**

There are some roles that won't be suitable for any degree of working away from the office/building. You need to include this in the conversations you have with your team. Ensure that they understand the needs of the service and why this might constrain the opportunity for hybrid working. Remember to be flexible and open to new ideas and suggestions. If the opportunity for hybrid working is limited, you should discuss other options for working flexibly with those who are asking for it, including permanent changes available through the [flexible work options policy](#).

**If I agree hybrid working with my team, does this need a change to terms and conditions?**

No, as long as your team aren't expected to work from home permanently then all existing terms and conditions would continue to apply for those team members, including their designated office/building location. You do need to consider the home working environment and ensure that risk assessments have been carried out and are reviewed on a regular basis.

**I already have members of my team working a Hybrid model. Can they continue with this?**

The arrangements currently in place should be reviewed in line with this guidance. However, if, after a review, the working arrangements in place are suitable to the delivery of the service and continue to meet the individual needs, then any existing arrangements can continue.

**If a team member travels for work, will they claim mileage from their home or an office base?**

There is no change to the way travel allowance work - [car mileage, travel and allowance claims information on Orb](#). If the individual works outside of the city or abroad, travel would also be at their expense.

## Office/Building Working

**I have some team members who want to be back in the office/building permanently.**

There'll be colleagues who don't have, for whatever reason, the desire or suitable set up to work from home. An office/building base must be made available for these colleagues.

**Will my team have a designated area in an office that we can use?**

This will form part of your service's plan based on your team feedback.

## Permanent Home Working

**I have team members who want to work permanently from home, which the service can accommodate.**

We've a contractual framework in place for permanent homeworkers – this would become a permanent change to their terms and conditions. Those interested in permanent homeworking should apply under the flexible work options policy, which would require approval by your Service Director.

**We'd like to offer more homeworking, but we don't have the technology needed to support this.**

You should discuss this with your Service Director in the first instance. We understand that there may be some investment required to enable aspects of Our Future Work for some teams. We're collecting this information during our workshops so we understand what technology would be needed.

## Technology and equipment

### **Will colleagues have the necessary equipment to work at home?**

Getting the technology and equipment in the right places for colleagues will form part of the discussions that you have with team members. Workspaces in an office will be set up for collaborative working and, through conversations, you can determine what any one individual needs to support their way of working.

### **Will hybrid workers be able to claim for any additional costs of working from home, for example upgrading their broadband?**

The [Working from Home Guidance](#) outlines the rules and allowances available from HMRC if you're working from home.

## Wellbeing

### **How do I support my and my team's wellbeing as we consider future working options?**

We know there will be a range of views and reactions as you begin to talk with your team about how they'd like to work in the future, and we want to make sure you have the tools and resources you need to support your own and your team's wellbeing as you lead them through this.

We have created a [wellbeing conversations guide](#) to support you as you do this. This is a brief reminder to signpost the wellbeing support that is available to help you look after yourself and your team.

## Working from other locations

### **Can my team members work from any location / somewhere other than their home?**

We recognise that many people have been unable to connect with friends and family throughout the pandemic and being able to work from another location temporarily may be a huge benefit to them. If you agree they can successfully undertake their role in this way, you can capture it as part of your feedback and feed into your service area plan for your Service Director to review.

Please note: temporary working from another location [or from abroad for up to six months in a tax year] is subject to approval of the Service Director and requires full compliance with our ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

### **Can my team members work permanently from abroad?**

Working from abroad for more than six months in a tax year will not be possible due to tax implications of changes to UK tax residency status.

### **Can team members hold work meetings in their home?**

If your team wants to meet at home, all parties will need to agree and provided it's safe to do so under current Covid guidance.

## Working patterns and recording hours

Working patterns are for you as a manager to agree based on the needs of your service, team and individual. All services will have operating hours that it will need to be available to deliver the service. Adequate resources need to be available to deliver this service during these hours. Colleagues are likely to be able to work flexibly within these hours providing there is sufficient cover to deliver the service required at the right time.

The [Working Flexibly Guidance](#) will help you to have these conversations with your team and reach a good outcome for each individual.

We know some services have fixed hours of work and all colleagues will need to be available. However, any extra hours worked will need to be taken back or paid as authorised overtime.

### **How can I keep a record of the hours my team is working if the flexitime clock is not going to be available?**

We appreciate that flexible working is already a part of daily life within some teams, without the need to record hours formally. However, we also know that some individuals, teams and service areas might need to track extra hours and time taken back to ensure wellbeing and balance is achieved.

Where there's an agreement to work flexibly, managers and colleagues should simply have a conversation about the best way to manage these hours and, if needed, record it using the [excel template](#).

### **When would colleagues be expected to take time back if they work additional hours?**



Typically, colleagues would be expected to take time back within a month. If this isn't possible, you should agree with the individual when the time will be taken, which should be within a reasonable timescale.

There should be no circumstances where colleagues have agreed to work additional hours and don't get that time back. As a manager, you should take the needs of the service into account and agree when time can be taken.

### **Is working from home better or worse for the environment?**

The answer to this question depends on your circumstances. The way your home is heated, how many other people are at home with you whilst you work and how you used to travel to work will all help to shape the environmental impact that homeworking has for you.

The following table, by Climate XChange, gives you an overview of the impact that working from home may have on your greenhouse gas emissions. The green squares show emissions savings made from working at home, the red squares signify an increase in emissions from home working and the white squares show no change in emissions.

|   |   |   |                  |                        |                  |                               |
|---|---|---|------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| <br>Increased building emissions | Working at home along in a large house with oil heating     |   |                  |                        |                  |                               |
|   | Working at home alone in a mid-sized house with gas heating |   |                  |                        |                  |                               |
|   | Sharing a mid-sized gas heating home with another worker    |   |                  |                        |                  |                               |
|   | Sharing a home with electric heating with another worker    |   |                  |                        |                  |                               |
|   | Working at home when the house is already occupied          |   |                  |                        |                  |                               |
|   |   | Walking and cycling   | Public transport | Shared car (2+ people) | Lone car driving | Long distance lone car driver |
| Increased commuting emissions   |   |  |                  |                        |                  |                               |