



# Managers' Briefing

## Phased return and hybrid working



**1 March 2022**

Hybrid working means a mixture of both home and office working. For everyone whose role is suitable for hybrid working you should plan a work pattern that involves splitting time between home and office. For most office staff, this will mean spending more time in the office than has been possible over the last two years.

Staff can return to their own desk in their normal place of work following their agreed work pattern, as all office capacity restrictions have now been removed, in line with government guidance.

Updated service and team plans for hybrid working should be in place **no later than 4 April**, allowing a few weeks to prepare our offices for more staff to return and for staff to adjust personal arrangements, if required.

A one size will not fit all – managers, staff and teams will need to reach a balance of days for home and office working. Your head of service will give you more direction to create your plans for your teams based on the principles below.

Your local HR teams will provide additional support for your plans and sessions will be arranged; in the meantime, you can contact your HR team.

### **Your role**

Develop and implement team hybrid working plans to start **no later than 4 April**, following the managers' actions and key messages below, and the latest message from the Chief Executive.

## **1. Hybrid working principles**

**Action:** Develop hybrid working plans for your area based on these principles, considering conversations with your staff and in consultation with your head of service.

**Flexible** - we will aim for flexibility in where and how we work to introduce a sustainable level of home and office working for benefit of our services and staff.

**Collaborative** - we will come together to sustain team working and gain the benefits of working together in person.

**Supportive** - we will spend enough time in the office to support colleagues, the team and service delivery, learning and developing through the process.

**Resilient** - through talking with individuals and at team level, we will meet the needs of the service internal customers and citizens, adjusting arrangements as required.

**Adaptable** - we recognise that one size does not fit all and individuals, services and roles vary, as will hybrid arrangements and we will all contribute to find mutually beneficial solutions.

**OFFICIAL**

## 2. What does it mean to be a hybrid worker?

**Action:** Discuss what it means to be a hybrid worker with your teams including the service priorities and their individual and team needs, and make a hybrid working plan.

A one-to-one discussion should be offered to each team member.

**Clarify the needs of your service**, internal customers and citizens.

**Agree the best operating patterns** between home and office, considering individual needs and the needs of the team.

**Be flexible** because plans may change as service needs change and we will all learn as the models are tested in practice.

**Tell your teams** that these arrangements will be subject to change as plans will be constantly reviewed in line with service requirements and everyone needs to stay flexible and test the approach. Team members should be encouraged to raise any concerns directly or changes which they would find helpful.

**Remind your teams** that the council is committed to retaining flexibility for staff with home working but a balance with office working must be struck, where we come together face-to-face to maintain team working and business relationships, to support each other, particularly new starts and less experienced colleagues and have more informal and impromptu conversations to find solutions to our problems.

## 3. Questions and answers

**Action:** Use the frequently asked questions to support you with hybrid working plans, and for staff and team conversations, go to the website [here](#). Encourage your staff to read these too.

## 4. Health and safety risk assessments

**Action:** Managers are responsible for the health and safety of their staff whilst they carry out their work and they must make sure that risk assessments are carried out for home and work locations and the relevant mitigations are in place.

For the interim period, all staff working at display screen equipment (DSE) must complete a risk assessment for both working at home and in the office at the earliest opportunity and no later than 1 May 2022. They should also refresh DSE training on **GOLD** before they do the DSE risk assessments.

If any issues are identified from the DSE risk assessments, then these must be discussed with you and you may then wish to ask a trained DSE assessor to complete an in-person risk assessment.

If you have staff who were previously considered to be more at risk from coronavirus and are concerned about returning to the workplace during this time, an individual risk assessment can be completed.

Your local Health and Safety team will have updated your work premises risk assessments appropriately and a copy of this can be obtained from your normal contact. You can also contact your local health and safety teams for advice.

- You'll find all risk assessments in the hybrid working section for managers on the website [here](#).
- Visit the Health and Safety section on connect for additional guidance [here](#), key contacts are [here](#).

## 5. Covid mitigations in the office

**Action:** Make sure that your staff are aware of the covid mitigations in the workplace described below before they return to the office.

The health and safety of our workforce and citizens is paramount as more staff return to the workplace under the hybrid working pilot. We continue to follow the government advice for safer workplaces and our risk assessments are regularly updated with the relevant covid mitigations, as required.

We can all play our part as we adapt to living with COVID-19. You should remind staff to continue to take personal responsibility to protect themselves and others.

The government has removed the legal requirement for physical distancing however, the government advice is that we should try to maintain our distance from others, wherever possible. Signage about one-way systems and other restrictions have been removed.

Everyone should continue to respect the space of others as you go about your work and move around our buildings – be aware of your distance from others.

Ventilation is also an important covid mitigation for indoor workplaces, particularly where staff are spending up to seven hours in an indoor workplace – open windows and doors on a regular basis to improve ventilation, while maintaining a comfortable temperature.

Other safety measures will also remain in place in our buildings until further notice, measures include cleaning materials for you to wipe down your desks before and after use, hand sanitisers placed around buildings and day cleaning of surfaces.

You should continue to wear a face covering indoors for now (unless exempt) in all communal areas and when you're moving around our offices as this remains mandatory.

From 21 March wearing a face covering will no longer be a legal requirement but we are encouraging staff to continue to do so in line with our risk assessments based on ongoing government advice.

There is separate government guidance that applies to education establishments and healthcare settings.

## 6. Preparing the office space and IT equipment

**Action:** Review the office readiness [managers' checklist here](#) to help you to prepare the office for your staff to return and support staff to work between home and office.

After two years of finding our way through this pandemic and adjusting to mainly working from home, we can't expect to return to the office to find that everything has changed to suit hybrid working, that's simply not possible. We will use our current accommodation and IT solutions to test hybrid working.

It won't be perfect as we adjust to more office working but we're asking you to be flexible and open minded as we test new ways of working. Use the checklist provided to prepare for your hybrid working plans.