

SMART Working

Managers Guidance

Managing Smart Working

The guidance notes have been developed to assist managers when managing employees who work in smart ways. The guidance is to support the application of Council's policy on Smart Working and is not intended as a substitute.

The guidance is based on best practice and does not form part of the Council's Smart Working policy.

For further information, please contact HR on (01902) 552345 or email HR.supportdesk@wolverhampton.gov.uk

1.0 Introduction

1.1 City of Wolverhampton Council recognises the need to develop modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity whilst maintaining work life balance. Through our Smart Working approach, we support employees to work in the most effective and efficient way possible.

1.2 This will involve ensuring we are all 'Smart' in the ways we work:

- **Supported-** through policies, processes, procedures, technology and buildings.
- **Measured-** by the work we do, not by where we do it.
- **Aware-** of any changes to the ways in which we work and able to have input into decisions about our working styles.
- **Responsive-** to our customers' needs, no matter where, when or how we work.
- **Trained-** to use any technology or policies that we are expected to use.

1.3 Smart Working provides a strategic and business-focussed framework for adopting smart, agile working as the norm. This means taking a proactive rather than a reactive approach to flexibility, by seeking out the benefits rather than waiting for individual employee requests. Limitations on flexibility need to be based on clear operational need.

1.4 It is accepted that not all roles within the Council can be categorised as totally flexible but in most instances, there is scope for smarter ways of working. This will be dependent upon the demands of the business and individual preference. With the right planning it is possible for employees to carry out their duties from a variety of locations.

1.5 Smart working necessitates a culture change to empower employees to work in smarter ways and deliver better services. It will require some managers to change the way that they manage employees and behaviours.

1.6 Employees will also need to consider the best methods of working to get the best outcomes for themselves – i.e. where a specific piece of work needs to be carried out which requires no distraction, work from home or an area of the office that is designated for this type of work. Managers will need to encourage employees to think smartly about the way in which work is conducted and where it is undertaken.

2.0 Determining the appropriateness of Smart Working

2.1 In order to assess whether Smart Working may be appropriate for a role a manager may wish to:

- Examine the tasks involved within the job role, in terms of how effectively they can be done at different times and at different locations
- Consider the preferences of the employee and the ability to meet their expectations
- Consider the potential to reduce the financial and environmental footprint of the organisations working practices
- Consider the impact on teamwork – for example how communication and grouping of tasks may need to evolve to maximise the benefits
- Consider the impact on service delivery
- Consider colleagues and effect of working away from the office could have – i.e. additional workload for others. Where this may be the case, managers may need to decline requests.

3.0 Managing Smart Working

3.1 Managers have a key role to play in the effectiveness of Smart Working and leading by example. On a day to day basis managing Smart Working means moving away from monitoring from behaviour-based to managing by outcome-based controls. Behaviour-based controls often refer to the practice of assessing performance based on employees' observable actions, whereas output-based controls involve assessing performance based on output, products, or other deliverables of the work rather than on the process or behaviours used to generate the output. This may involve different ways of keeping in contact with employees, assessing workloads, monitoring and measuring performance.

3.2 For the team it will involve an increase in sharing of schedules with colleagues, updating skype location and status, filing of information so it can easily be found and accessed by others and methods of updating others about work-in-progress.

3.3 Many managers may already be doing this – the management skills are the same but are required to be applied with more discipline so as to:

- Treat all employees according to their needs – regardless of their location
- Ensure those working at a distance do not feel excluded from the team
- Managing by results should be the norm and not the exception
- Ensure those working in the office do not have increased workloads due to other employees working remotely

3.4 As well as familiarising themselves with the Smart Working policy and managers guide, managers are expected to:

- Undertake the e-learning module 'Agile Working for Managers'
- Undertake the e-learning modules under 'Health and Safety' and encourage Smart Workers to apply the principles of Health and Safety wherever they work
- Carry out performance appraisals as usual
- Manage performance of all employees regardless of work location – ensure employees are aware of their work programmes, responsibilities, tasks, targets, objectives etc and these are met on time and as specified.

- Continue with one to one meetings – keep the lines of communication open, request employees come into the usual office base to keep in touch and avoid the feeling of being isolated
- Provide constructive feedback to all employees on their performance, output and the impact Smart Working may be having on them, the team, customers and service delivery.
- Where Smart Working may be having a negative impact or the individual is not performing to a satisfactory level, managers should address the issues as soon as possible to allow improvement. If an improvement is not made to further address this and review whether Smart Working for that individual is necessary.
- Seek advice from Human Resources where required

3.5 A performance record can be found **attached as appendix 1 to this guidance** - this can be used by employees and managers to record work progress and 1 : 1 discussions to enable management by outcome. This method should be applied equally to all employees regardless of their work location. The performance record is intended to be used as guidance, managers can adapt this record to suit as necessary.

3.6 Managers should ensure employees understand:

- What tasks they are expected to complete – agree objectives, competencies and development needs, provide deadlines, targets and stretch targets (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-framed)
- The method of agreeing/monitoring workload – measured against objectives and competencies
- How success will be measured
- How this feeds into the one to one and appraisal process
- What communication is required from them and
- How you will communicate with them

4.0 Review Performance

4.1 Reviewing performance should be a continuous process which usually has three elements:

- Regular informal meetings where managers discuss current work, development and offer feedback on achievements. Additionally, any areas for improvement should be discussed and agreed.
- Formal one to one meetings which are usually held monthly. Line managers must discuss progress against objectives and competencies and recorded formally on the one to one template – this has been incorporated into the performance record should managers wish to use it.
- The annual appraisal review where both the manager and the employee have the opportunity to discuss the employee's performance, if objectives set have been met and to plan future targets; to recognise any achievements made since the last review, and address any weaknesses in performance.

4.2 Both employees and managers should keep a record of progress and managers should ensure employees are clear on how they should record this. An example of a performance record can be found **#**.

5.0 Teamwork protocols

5.1 It is important to establish teamwork protocols about communication and reporting to work effectively and maintain team cohesion. Teamwork protocols should cover:

- A requirement to let others know where and when employees are working (diary entries, including start, finish and break times and details of work location)
- Clear reporting structures
- Sharing of calendars and schedules
- Rigorous use of electronic document management systems to ensure work is easily accessible
- Ensure everyone is flexible about flexible working so not to disadvantage others in office cover provision or attendance at meetings etc
- Etiquette and behaviour in online communication and virtual meetings
- Fairness in usage of office space
- Encourage random discussions between team members – Microsoft Teams can facilitate impromptu chats. This can help to maintain team cohesion and prevent resentment from office based workers as they can maintain contact with colleagues who work away from the office efficiently.

5.2 Initially this may require some enforcement in order to bring about a change in work culture.

6.0 Self-help protocols

6.1 It is important that individuals are encouraged to work in Smart ways but also that they help themselves to make this seamless. Managers should ask employees to:

- Undertake the e-learning module 'Agile Working for Employees'
- Undertake the e-learning module 'Introduction to Health and Safety'
- Familiarise themselves with online tools such as Skype for Business
- Co-operate with team members and management whilst working away from the office
- Update and share on-line diaries
- Undertake the e-learning modules within 'Information Governance' and ensure they are aware of their responsibility to secure Council information
- Adhere to the Council's Working Hours policy

7.0 Rethink Meetings

7.1 It is important to rethink meetings. Routine sharing of information can be carried out through online processes. Physical meetings can still be held for collaborative work such as training, brainstorming and decision making.

7.2 The benefits of Smart Working may be limited by an insistence on employees being physically present for routine meetings. Alternatives if possible could be that meetings can be held using audio, video or web conferencing.

7.3 Managers should consider:

- Replacing physical meetings by online interaction

- Reducing the number of people required at meetings for the entire session, inviting people in remotely by prior appointment and priming them by sending them questions to respond to in advance
- Setting targets for reducing the number of meetings
- Encouraging Skype meetings to prevent unnecessary travel

8.0 Communication

8.1 Having a remote workforce may mean that you may not be able to deal with an issue if it was urgent as work colleagues may not be present. However, online communication tools allow teams to interact just as effectively as if they were in the office. The following strategies can assist in ensuring communication remains open within the team:

- Provision of email updates
- Use of Skype calling, video calling and messaging
- Ensuring skype location and status is updated regularly
- Use of skype video calling and conferencing for virtual meetings
- Telephone contact – provision of telephone numbers to colleagues where skype maybe out of use or not appropriate
- Regular one to one and team meetings
- Keeping calendars up to date
- Address any communication concerns as soon as they arise – record any individual concerns in one to one meetings and if these continue, withdraw the individual from smart working arrangements.

8.2 Remember that a face to face meeting may be the best method of communication when there is bad news or complicated information to impart.

9.0 Time Management

9.1 The Working Hours Policy will continue to apply in the usual manner and employees and managers should ensure this is adhered to unless there are other locally agreed arrangements in place.

9.2 Subject to service needs and with **managerial consent**, employees have the option of working flexibly between the hours of 7 am to 7 pm with no core hours. Full time employees should work a minimum of 37 hours a week between these times and do an average of 7.4 hours a day (i.e. where someone is employed to work Monday to Friday, 37 hours a week, they **cannot** complete 37 hours a week across four days). Part time employees must still continue to spread their contracted hours across the number of days they are contracted to work.

9.3 Employees must work a morning and afternoon in a day (where contracted to work a full day) – smart working cannot be used by employees to take a morning or afternoon off work – annual, flexi or other leave can be used for this purpose.

9.4 In agreement with their line manager, an employee can request to start work later, finish earlier, have a longer lunch and so forth to help manage personal commitments and fulfil their workload, whilst ensuring the team is adequately resourced to meet the business and service needs.

10.0 Time Recording

- 10.1 Time should be recorded using the time sheet available for employees on the intranet. Managers may at their discretion use another time recording method – employees are requested to familiarise themselves with the local practice.
- 10.2 It is the employee's responsibility to keep accurate records of hours worked. Anomalies may result in disciplinary action. Employees should remind themselves of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct and observe and lead by our values and behaviours.
- 10.3 The line manager should oversee the employee's record of hours – if they fail to do so, they may face disciplinary or capability proceedings in line with their responsibilities and expectations to observe and lead by our values and behaviours.

11.1 Rest Breaks

- 11.2 Employees should continue to take rest breaks in accordance with DSE Regulations, contractual requirements and the Working Time Regulations (more information can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website).

12.0 Be aware of burnout

- 12.1 In Acas' research paper (2013) 'Home is where the work is' Acas found that performance is slightly higher for homeworkers and mobile workers. In addition, work hours were the shortest amongst office workers and homeworkers and partial homeworkers are more likely to work in excess of their contracted hours, while mobile workers work significantly more hours in excess of their contracts than all other groups of workers.
- 12.2 Managers must conduct checks to ensure employees who work away from the office are taking regular breaks and are not working excessively over their contracted hours as this could cause employees to 'burnout'. Signs to look out for are a reduction in productivity/output, uncharacteristic detachment and increased cynicism or complaining. Where managers notice these signs, you could have a conversation with the employee and explore reasons for the changes in behaviour – such as 'what are you working on right now?' or 'I have noticed a reduction in productivity – is there a reason for this', 'do you need any support/assistance' etc. City of Wolverhampton Council have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which can be accessed by employees if they feel they need to talk to a professional in confidence (i.e. for help in dealing with unexpected situations/feelings etc). Information on the EAP can be found on the intranet. For further assistance please contact Human Resources.

13.0 Health and Safety

- 13.1 A DSE self-assessment should be completed (by employees) and managers should identify and implement control measures and effectively communicate the outcomes to employees and others as appropriate.
- 13.2 Managers should advise employees to:

- Be aware of any risks as an outcome of the risk assessment and to work within the parameters of control measures
- Be advised to familiarise themselves with fire evacuation and health and safety procedures relevant to their location of work (when working at satellite offices)
- Be advised not to carry out any meetings from home although skype meetings may be considered
- If working from home, ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise in the rest of the home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting
- Complete the e-learning module on Health and Safety
- Complete a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessment form (if they are a habitual user of DSE equipment) for their desk at the office - the principles of which should be followed when working at home. The form can be found on the Health and Safety Intranet.

14.0 Sick Leave and Time off for Dependents

14.1 Where an employee is too unwell to work regardless of work location, the usual sickness reporting procedures apply. Managers should not permit employees to work from home if they have informed them they are not well.

Similarly employees should not be permitted to work from home instead of taking time off for dependents or similar carers leave.

Managers can ask employees who work from home to come into the office to cover emergency situations or where circumstances may change (i.e. another member of staff calls in sick and office cover is required) and employees should be in a position to oblige.

15.0 Confidentiality and security of data

15.1 Managers should ensure employees are aware of their responsibilities when working remotely in relation to maintaining confidentiality and the security of data.

- All employees should complete the Information Governance e-learning modules on Data protection, Information Protective Marking and Protecting Information.
- Where employees will not be returning to their usual base to store data or equipment such as a tablet, laptop or phone that holds confidential information, they should ensure they are stored at secure premises, inside a lockable cupboard or desk.
- When taking short breaks or moving away from the laptop employees must ensure the laptop is kept locked.
- Both paper and electronic records of information must be kept secure and confidential at all times.
- Any paper based documentation that contains personal or confidential information must be disposed of securely using the Council's confidential waste bins.
- Employees are encouraged to use electronic files and documents wherever possible to reduce paper file storage, printing costs and increase security.
- Electronic formats of documentation should only be processed and stored on Council equipment or storage drives.

- If using a USB stick or external drive to store Council information then this should be encrypted and obtained from ICTS. Employees are not permitted to store Council data on any personal hard drives or personal computers etc.
- The Council's policy on Acceptable use of ICT Assets and Social Media contents must be adhered to.

16.0 File Sharing

16.1 Employees must have access to the files and materials they need to get work done. However, many people rely on email to send and share documents, which could create numerous problems; documents get lost, breaches in data protection, senders forget to attach, no one knows which version is the latest etc.

16.2 Employees should be encouraged to save documents where all employees have access (such as a sharepoint site). Protocols can be developed for version control, naming of files, creating folders etc.

17.0 Manage under-performance

17.1 If through regular, informal and/or 1:1 meetings managers feel that an employee is underperforming, they should discuss this with the individual concerned as soon as practicable and provide a reasonable amount of time for improvement. If thereafter improvement is unsatisfactory the employee should be managed using the capability procedure. The manager may also wish to consider whether the employee is suited to continue to undertake remote working and remove this privilege where it is having a negative impact on output. Further advice about managing underperformance can be sought from Human Resources.

18.0 Further support

Managers can obtain further support from Human Resources who can offer further advice and guidance on Smart Working – contact the HR Support Desk via the Hub Customer Portal (HR), email hr.supportdesk@wolverhampton.gov.uk or telephone (55) 2345, option 1.