Hybrid Working Policy & Procedure – Manager FAQs

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with the Hybrid working policy and the Employee FAQs.

Hybrid Working Principles

1. What is Hybrid Working and what does it mean for me as a manager?

Hybrid working is a work arrangement where employees have the flexibility to split their time between working remotely (from home) and working in an office or other designated space.

As a manager, it means you will lead and support a team with members working in different locations (e.g., some in the office, some at home).

For those staff who are in a role that is suitable for hybrid working, e.g., they have a non-customer facing role and their work is office/desk based, they will be able to work from home for two, maximum three days per week. The remaining days within the week will be required to be in the office (e.g., Observatory House). This will be pro-rated for part time workers.

2. Is Hybrid working the same as Remote Working?

No. Remote work is a work approach where employees work from a location away from their office, while hybrid work is a flexible approach that allows a mix between remote work and work in the office.

3. Who does the hybrid working policy apply to?

The policy applies to all permanent staff. The policy does not apply to agency workers, interims or contractors. However, they will be expected to attend the office. These arrangements however should be agreed with the line manager.

4. What do I do if an individual in my team wants to permanently alter their working hours/pattern?

The hybrid working policy does not deal with requests to permanently alter an individuals' working hours/pattern. In respect of a situation where an individual wishes to make a flexible working request, the council's flexible working policy encompasses the statutory right to flexible working and contains the statutory procedure for employees to make such requests.

5. I have some individuals in my team who work part-time. How does the policy apply to them?

The policy principles for full time staff outline that staff can work from home 2 days, maximum 3 days per week. The remaining 2 days are required to be worked from the office. This works out to be 40% of the working week. Therefore, if you work part time, you will be required to come into the office 40% of your working week. If you work 4 days per week for example, this would be 1.5 days in the office.

Practically this may not work so it is for you and the individual to take a pragmatic approach with this. You could for example agree that one week they attend the office once per week and then the next week twice per week.

6. I have individuals in my team who took a role in Slough on the basis that they didn't need to attend the office at all or more than 1 day per week/they have a contractual arrangement which states that they don't need to come into the office. What do I do?

You should have a discussion with individual's regarding their personal circumstances. If you are unsure, you can contact the HR team for advice.

Attendance and Availability for work

7. Can individuals in my team choose when and where they work?

As a line manager, it is your responsibility to ensure that the residents of Slough and your service area needs take priority, that staff are treated fairly and are trusted to take responsibility for themselves and their work when working in a hybrid way.

With this in mind, in consultation with your team, you should agree a rota pattern that best meets the needs of the service and team. You should outline to your team that there is no entitlement to work from home on specific days of the week, however you should work with each individual to ascertain their personal circumstances and to explore what can be accommodated.

These rotas should be subject to change.

8. Am I able to require staff to come into the office on days that they would normally work from home?

Yes. Whilst we allow employees to work from home, the needs of the residents, team and service take precedence. Therefore, if you want your team to come into the office for meetings, training, collaboration, to cover sickness, service requirements, then you are entitled to require staff to come into the office. Of course, good practise dictates that you should give sufficient notice of this requirement (although it's recognised that this cannot always happen).

9. What should I do if an individual refuses to come into the office?

Slough is at a critical point in its recovery journey, and having staff in the office together to collaborate and meet face to face is an essential part of this journey. Asking staff to come into the office is a reasonable organisational request. You should discuss with the individual why they don't want to come in and whether there are any barriers you could help them to overcome. However, if they repeatedly refuse then this will be deemed as misconduct, and you may instigate formal proceedings under the disciplinary policy if this is deemed necessary.

10. What should I do if a member of my team doesn't want to work from home?

You should have a discussion to ascertain the reasoning for this. If an individual decides that they cannot and do not want to work from home, then you can arrange for them to work mainly from a Slough office.

11. Can individuals look after their children whilst they are working from home?

Working from home is not a substitute for caring for dependants. Employees are expected to have made alternative arrangements for the care of their dependants during their working day.

12. During the pandemic, some individuals in my team moved to another part of the country. This means that they have an extremely long commute. How will the hybrid working policy impact them?

The council understands that some people made personal decisions that meant they moved far away from the office. Slough is now at a point in its recovery where we need staff attending the office more. We therefore cannot make special dispensation for those individuals. You should however discuss this issue with individuals to see how they can accommodate the new policy into their working schedules.

Performance Management

13. How can I ensure that my team remains productive in a hybrid working setup?

You should focus on setting clear expectations, goals and objectives, measuring outcomes rather than hours worked. Conducting regular 1:1's and recording these on Cornerstone is crucial to ensure you are providing your team with the necessary support to ensure they meet their objectives. Regular team meetings with feedback sessions will enable all members of the team to understand their requirements, and will foster a culture of open communication, collaboration and a sense of unity.

14. I am concerned about the outputs of a member of my team when they are working from home. What steps should I take to address this?

If an individual is failing to deliver the required outputs and you have taken all of the steps outlined in question 9, then you should consider formal performance management in line with the Managing Performance policy on Insite. If you have concerns regarding someone's conduct when they are working from home e.g., not logging on, not being contactable, you should consider formally investigating this in line with the disciplinary policy and procedure. You should always discuss your concerns with the employee in the first instance, and you may consider asking them to attend the office more than 2 days per week.

15. What behaviours should I be looking for when recruiting staff to work in Hybrid roles?

At the recruitment stage, you should be outlining in the person specification that you are looking for individuals who are able to display and evidence their ability to be self-motivated, self-reliant and disciplined to work without direct supervision. Individuals who can evidence their ability to complete work on time and to scheduled deadlines, demonstrate initiative, flexibility and good time management and communication skills.

16. I have new starters in my team. How should I manage them in line with the policy?

For the first few weeks of an individual joining slough, they should attend the office more. This is to ensure that they are inducted properly in line with both the local and corporate inductions, and to understand the culture within the team and Slough, and the organisations objectives. Once you feel that they are settled in and are understanding their role, service area etc, then you can allow them to work in a hybrid way.

17. How can I lead by example as a manager in a hybrid working model?

You should demonstrate your commitment to the hybrid model by abiding by the principles the policy and participating in both remote and in-office work. Be visible and accessible to all team members, treating everyone fairly and encouraging flexibility and adaptability.

Employee Wellbeing

18. How do I ensure that members of my team are not feeling isolated?

As a manager, it is your responsibility to regularly check in with your team, not just from an output perspective, but also in terms of their health and wellbeing. Some individuals may struggle more than others. Bringing the whole team into the office together for team meetings, training, sessions, workshops or just to have a day together is a good way to ensure people are feeling included and not isolated. The use of MS Teams chat and phone calls ensure that people stay connected.

19. Should I make an individual who has stated that they are unwell, work from home to save them coming into the office?

As a guide, hybrid working is not to be used as a substitute for a working in the office day when an employee feels unwell. It is however recognised that there may be specific circumstances where such requests may be agreed. If an employee is able to work, you should consider the hours the employee expects to be able to work and their likely output before determining whether it is appropriate for them to work from home in this situation.

An employee who has reported in as sick is not expected to work either in the office or remotely. You should be mindful of this and not pressure them into working, simply because they have the equipment to work from home.

20. How can I help my team members establish boundaries between their personal and work life whilst working hybrid?

It is important that you and your team members look after their health and wellbeing. You should ensure that individuals establish a dedicated workspace, define their working hours and communicate their working schedules with you and colleagues. You should encourage staff to utilise tools like outlook calendars and other time management techniques to stay organised.

Staff should be taking regular breaks from work in accordance with the working time regulations and contracts of employment. Working hours and break periods are confirmed in individuals' contract of employment, but must include:

- A break of at least 20 minutes if working more than 6 hours per day.
- A rest of at least 11 hours between working days.
- An uninterrupted break of 24 hours each week.

Where an individual is working in front of a screen for long periods of time, you must encourage them to take regular breaks.

If an individual wishes to work outside of the normal office hours, you must give your agreement to this. Staff should be courteous and respectful to other colleagues. They are not obliged to respond to emails or other forms of communication during unsocial hours, unless in the case of an emergency.

Health and Safety

21. Do I need to arrange for staff to have a DSE assessment?

Most of the regulations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 apply to individuals who are working from home as well as to employees working at council accommodation. If you use a computer, laptop or tablet whilst working in the office, or at home, or in other remote location, you are required to undertake a self-assessment to ensure that the work can be undertaken safely without endangering your health and wellbeing. At the council we use an online e-learning training and assessment program,

located within the H&S Modules of Learning Pool, called 'Display Screen Equipment Training and Self-Assessment'. This course is mandatory for all visual display screen users and should be repeated if there is a change in circumstances i.e., location, health etc.

You are responsible for completing this training and self-assessment and highlighting any concerns to your manager. You are also responsible for implementing any actions identified in order to reduce or mitigate the risks in your home and make your work environment safe. If you are unable to put suitable safeguards in place, you may not be able to work from that location and will need to work at council sites.

Whilst accidents at work are rare, they can happen. It is important that any accidents that happen whilst working remotely are reported to your line manager. An 'Accident, Incident and Near Miss Form' must be completed and forwarded to your manager. The forms can be found on SBC Insite.

22. My staff are complaining to me that they don't feel safe walking from Hatfield car park to Observatory House with their IT equipment and personal belongings. Is there anything I can put in place as their manager?

You should encourage your team members to arrange a system where they walk to the car park together to ensure no one is alone. You can also make suggestions as to how Slough can support with this too, such as arranging staff walking groups to the car park.

IT and Equipment

23. What technology/equipment is available for staff to work in a hybrid manner?

Staff will be given a laptop and mobile phone. If an individual requires specialist equipment, an Astro ticket will need to be raised for such a request. If a lightweight laptop is required, a DSE assessment will need to be carried out.

24. Are there any requirements for staff in relation to the security of Slough data?

The council will ensure that appropriate technical security measures are in place and provide suitable equipment to protect the information used by the employee, as required by the Data Protection Act 2018.

It will be the responsibility of the employee to maintain a secure environment in order to safeguard the confidentiality of information and the physical security of furniture and electronic equipment, and all council records in line with current council policies and the employee code of conduct. Council records must be kept secure at all times and where necessary and appropriate, the council will support the employee with suitable facilities. Wherever possible employees should not store any paper records outside of the office.

Managers are responsible for reclaiming any allocated equipment when an employee leaves the council or moves to another directorate in order for it to be reallocated to the next post holder.