NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

HUMAN RESOURCES
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

AGILE WORKING

Version	1.2
Sub Committee & approval date	
Date ratified by Assurance Committee	
Name of policy author	**Hugh Cadwallader**
Date issued	**January 2017**
Review Date	As required but no later than 1 year from adoption
Target audience	All Staff except school based employees, where schools need to give consideration to their own policies.

This Policy has been Impact Assessed against the Equality Act 2010

Impact Assessments :

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Version: 1.2
Policy Author: Hugh Cadwallader
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History of previous versions of this document:

Approved Where	Approved Where	Version	Issue Date	Review Date	Contact Person

Statement of changes made in most recent version:

Version	Date	Description
1.0	January 2016	New policy
1.1	July 2016	Amendments to draft policy in respect of eligibility criteria and authorisation
1.2	February 2017	Amendments to draft policy in respect of monitoring and review of policy

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL – AGILE WORKING POLICY [REFERENCE NUMBER]

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HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Title	Agile Working	Reference Number: HRP-03-V1

1. Operational Summary

1.1 Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for effective working practices based on work as an activity rather than a place. This will be achieved by empowering employees to work where, when and how they choose (subject to business needs and managerial approval) to maximise their productivity and thereby deliver the greatest value to the Council.

1.2 Policy Summary

This policy sets out an overall framework for agile working, to enable the workforce to carry out duties in a more efficient and effective way.

More detail of how to apply the principles of agile working can be found in the Agile Working Guidance for employees and managers.

1.3 Responsibilities

All County Council staff

● Should ensure they are aware of the Council's approach in respect of Agile Working and seek opportunities to do so when this suits the requirements of their job role.
● Work within any agreed "Housekeeping Rules", established by each team.
● Abide by the Council's various Health & Safety policies and other relevant policies.
● Proactively engage in problem solving and troubleshooting to ensure that any new working arrangements are effective.

Managers

● Responsible for facilitating a culture and working environment to enable staff to work in an agile way, when this suits the service.
● Monitoring flexible working and management arrangements within their teams.
● Continue to support their teams.
● Establish housekeeping rules consistent with applicable Council standards

2. Introduction

2.1 The County Council is committed to providing a range of agile working options for employees in order to empower staff to work more effectively with maximum flexibility,

whilst providing a high quality service to all its customers. This will include the provision of appropriate tools and facilities for staff to carry out their job role.

2.2 The options available for agile working are; working outside 'traditional' office spaces via 'hot desks' across the county', working within one of the Council's partner organisations, working from home or working in another suitable location. Such work will be supported by the ongoing development of new technologies.

2.3 Agile working means staff at all levels of the Council can work differently, supported by mobile working technologies. The degree of work agility will depend on the service being delivered and the role of individual employees and the nature of the role they perform.

2.4 This policy outlines the key elements of managing and supporting agile working and is applicable to all County Council employees, except staff employed in schools (and where such schools are responsible for producing their own policies and procedures). This policy has been developed to demonstrate a consistent and clear process for supporting and managing employees classed as agile workers.

2.5 It is an accepted principle that no employee should suffer a financial detriment, or make financial gain, through the application of this policy. For travel expenses, staff will retain a contractual work base.

2.6 Related policies should be taken into account when implementing agile working, these include: -

- Flexi Time Scheme
- Travel & Subsistence
- Health & Safety
- Travelling & Subsistence Guidelines
- Code of Conduct
- Flexible Working
- Management of Change
- Performance Appraisal
- Stress at Work

3. **Purpose**

3.1 Agile Working aims to improve the overall performance of the Council by optimising the opportunities for working effectively to meet the needs of the service. The increased efficiency will enable the Council to provide greater value for money to the residents of Northumberland. Agile working is the term used to describe where and how employees can work from any location, whether it is from a recognised site, from home, hot desking facility, etc. Flexible working is the term used to describe the hours of work and how these may distributed.

3.2 This document provides the framework for consistent and fair practice on the issues to be taken into account when implementing and managing employees who adopt agile working arrangements

3.3   Working arrangements should always be discussed and agreed between the manager and employee to ensure that the arrangements are beneficial to the customer, the Council and the employee. All staff are encouraged to maximise agile working. Any decision to implement this type of working pattern is subject to a number of factors including the: -

- Benefit to customers and the Council
- requirement of the role
- facilities required to support such a role
- service being delivered and the availability of staff to undertake the role
- the welfare of the employee
- agreement by the employee and their line manager

4.   Duties

4.1   There is no blueprint for each team to follow. Managers will need to establish the best way of supporting their team to achieve the maximum benefit from agile working. The most appropriate place for an employee to undertake their work will vary across functions and may change from one day to the next.

4.2   **Managers** – are responsible for acting as agile role models. Managing agile workers brings different challenges to managing staff that regularly attend a single office base and are seen every day. Establishing effective team communication and trust between managers and staff is vital from the start. Aspects to consider are: -

- Regular formal and informal contact, which may not need to be "face to face".
- Ensuring supervision, including annual appraisal and mid-year reviews with a clear focus on objectives setting and outcomes.
- Continuous management of team and individual performance, including regular reviews of agreed working practices, and appropriate action where this is not to an acceptable standard.
- Regular review of health and well-being of individuals, including consistent application of Absence Management Policy and Procedure and Stress at Work Policy where necessary;
- Ensuring staff are working in the most cost effective and productive place to achieve their and the team's objectives.
- Ensuring the Agile Working Policy, together with other policies which have an impact on agile working, are applied consistently
- To have joint responsibility with employees to come to agreement regarding working in an agile way;
- Provision of a suitable working environment, including the provision of means of communication and support with fellow workers and line managers. This could include regular weekly team meetings to monitor work programmes and co-ordinate officer cover, etc;
- Appropriate access to files and data, even where this is stored in a specific central location;
- Access to suitable work and personal storage areas (consistent with established standards) for staff, thereby facilitating clear workstations for other users.

4.3   All Staff

● Demonstrating behaviours that are professional, considerate and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct when dealing with colleagues, stakeholders, service users and members of the public;
● To have joint responsibility with managers to come to agreement in working in an agile way;
● Maintain focus on needs of the service, and both service and individual objectives;
● Be responsible for working within agreements made and abiding by all Council Policies and Procedures, which include the recording of completed, visible and accurate flexi-sheets;
● Responsibility for maintaining the security of all Council owned equipment and information, and abide by its Information Governance Policies at all times;
● Maintaining a clear desk at the end of each day where suitable work and personal storage space is available.

5.   Working Arrangements

5.1   Support
Managers with team members who are moving to a more agile way of working should be aware that some staff may be uncomfortable with change and may mourn the loss of a permanent workstation. They will need extra support during the transition period to get used to the new way of working. Both managers and employees must be willing to engage in joint problem solving and troubleshooting to ensure that any new working arrangements work effectively. Both parties are responsible for maintaining good working relationships and for regularly reviewing the arrangements.

5.2   Communication
Managers need to ensure that communication protocols are put in place to ensure that information is frequently shared and that their staff remain briefed of corporate and team developments.

5.3   Hours of Work/Availability

Employees and managers should agree an appropriate work pattern which meets the needs of the service.

If an employee is occasionally working from home, there must be clarity about the times during which the employee is available for contact and about any requirements to make regular contact with the office/manager. At the same time, managers need to be aware of and agree rules about acceptable and unacceptable contact. All employees have the right to privacy out of hours.

Managers can also request employees to attend meetings at different locations if required, ensuring that adequate notice is given.

In the exceptional circumstance of working outside of their normal working hours, all staff should log this. In the event of an accident, it is important to be able to ascertain whether an employee was working or not, for insurance purposes. Any overtime working must be agreed in line with the County Council's established procedure.

5.4　Absence Reporting

The Council's Sickness Self Certification Reporting Procedure applies to all employees regardless of their workstyle or base. If a member of staff is not well enough to work from an office it is deemed, for the purposes of being available to work, that they are also not well enough to work from home. Staff are responsible for contacting their managers, by telephone, before they are due to start work. Managers are responsible for ensuring that arrangements for sickness absence reporting within their service are in place and must agree reporting arrangements with their team.

5.5　Performance Management

Managers need to agree measurable outcomes with all team members, and what constitutes effectiveness for their service areas. This should cover issues such as productivity; quality of work; service standards and timeliness. These will need to be regularly reviewed by both manager and employee in accordance with established arrangements.

The most effective way of monitoring the work of an employee is to concentrate on outputs, rather than time spent at their desk or workstation. This relies less on traditional "command and control" management and more on collaborative working through agreement and regular monitoring of clear, realistic and achievable objectives.

5.6　Training and Development Opportunities

An employee's access to training and development opportunities will not be adversely affected by their working arrangements. The Council runs training sessions to prepare staff for working agily, these should be accessed by both managers and employees.

Through the appraisal process managers will ensure that staff who work agily receive appropriate training in areas such as time management, agile working etc and up to date technology training.

5.7　Induction
It is essential that all employees have a structured and full induction period within their first weeks. For new staff, effective induction may initially mean spending more time in one particular place than their eventual work pattern.

5.8 Equipment

The Council will supply equipment needed to enable an employee to work in a variety of locations. All Council owned premises will be furnished with adaptive desks and chairs which will be suitable for the majority of staff.

Employees who have been provided with specialist equipment, as a result of a workplace assessment, will not be provided with duplicate equipment to work at home. Any specialist equipment will be provided in one work location only. Employees who have a disability and require reasonable adjustment will continue to be assessed and supported on an individual basis.

Should an employee choose to occasionally work from home (with the agreement of their manager) it their responsibility to ensure that they have a suitable work environment at home. Small, portable equipment may be taken to different work locations, if staff wish.

Occasional home workers will be responsible for the installation of their own broadband.

5.9 Equipment Security

Equipment provided by the Council for work purposes must be kept secure and stored in lockable storage cabinets. Employees have a duty of care to take all reasonable steps to safeguard equipment from loss or damage.

Valuable objects, such as laptops should not be left unattended in motor vehicles or bags. Items left in a vehicle should always be locked in the boot. Failure to do this will be treated very seriously.

5.10 Data Security & Confidentiality

Current policies applicable data security and confidentiality continue to apply when working in an agile way.

All employees have a personal and professional responsibility to keep information safe and secure at all times. The amount of confidential information carried should be carefully controlled and employees must adhere to the requirement of relevant policies and standards regardless of the working environment.

For staff taking material home, paper based confidential information should be minimised. Any such information should be stored in a portable secure, locked container, i.e. case, etc.

5.11 Insurance

Employer's Liability: The Council has insurance cover should the Council be proven negligent and legally liable in the event of any accident or illness to an employee whilst carrying out Council business. Any accidents must be reported immediately in line with the Council's guidelines.

Public Liability: The Council has public liability insurance. This protects the Council in the event of any incident involving a third party who may suffer injury or loss alleging negligence by the Council resulting in it being found legally liable to pay compensation to the third party.

Household: occasional home workers should inform their insurance company that they occasionally work from home. This does not usually result in an increase of premium and it is unlikely that it will affect cover. The Council will not be liable for any increase in the cost of such an individual's policy.

5.12   Mortgage and Tenancy Agreements

Staff must contact their mortgage provider or landlord as some mortgage and lease agreements do not permit homeworking. It is the responsibility each member of staff to do this if they work from home, even if only occasionally.

5.13   Expenses

Travel: All staff will continue to have a designated administrative centre for travel claim purposes. The rates of the allowance is set out in the relevant guidance. Staff may chose to work from a different administrative centre to allow for improved time efficiency and a more effective service. Mileage or other travel costs will not be paid from home to designated base. On the occasions where an employee visits a site on the way to their administrative centre, the claimable mileage is the total mileage undertaken less the normal mileage between home and administrative base. The same arrangement applies where an employee travels from base to a site and on to home. Where an employee does not visit their administrative base, i.e. spends a full day on a site visit, the claimable mileage is the total mileage undertaken less the normal return mileage between home and base. It should be noted that each day stands on its own for the purpose of calculating claimable mileage. Agile workers cannot claim mileage which they would normally undertake travelling to and from their home address to their designated administrative centre.

Other: For staff who chose to occasionally work from home (following agreement with their line manager), they will be responsible for any additional household and / or related expenses that may be incurred.

All employees should arrange journeys to car share where possible.

6.   Eligibility Criteria and Authorisation

6.1   Eligibility Criteria

There are certain criteria which must be agreed by both the manager and staff members prior to agreeing upon the degree to which agile working can be adopted by a particular member of staff. For example, careful consideration and additional processes may need to be put in place if one or more the following apply:

- · Burden of Additional Costs
- · Detrimental impact on quality
- · Detrimental affect on ability to meet Service User demands
- · Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- · Inability to reorganise work among existing Staff
- · Detrimental impact on performance
- · Inability to recruit additional staff
- - Planned structural changes

6.2 Management Arrangements

Managers reserve the right to review and decline an Agile Working arrangement, for example due to reasons which may include but not exclusive to:-

- ● Job Role
- ● Job Grade
- ● Service Need(including operational and customer considerations)
- ● Level of authorisation/supervision required for job role
- ● Departmental cover arrangements
- ● Safe minimum staffing levels

7. Monitoring and Audit

7.1 Monitoring

The Council will monitor the application of this policy and review it through the appropriate consultation mechanisms as required and no later than 1 year after adoption. This will initially be reviewed by HR with input from the recognised trade unions and any amendments will be considered by corporate audit. Thereafter, any significant changes will be considered by the Council's joint consultative committee.

7.2 Management Responsibility

Responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and development of this policy lies with the Director of Human Resources. Day to day operation of the policy is the responsibility of Directors and Heads of Service who will ensure this policy is adhered to.

8. Training and Support

Advice can be gained from the HR department in relation to the implementation of this policy and associated procedure.

Training for managers and other staff on Agile Working is available and can be accessed via Learning Together.