



## Agile Working Policy

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## 1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 This Policy provides a framework for consistent and fair application of agile working arrangements and aims to support the continued provision of fair and decent work for our employees.
- 1.2 It follows the principles and values of the Well Being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, particularly with regard to the cultural change identified to meet future needs. Technological improvements will inevitably change the way we work. This includes the ability to work agilely and will require a change in behaviours and culture in some environments. Guidance and learning and development will be provided for all employees in managing and supporting that change.
- 1.3 Agile working is the ability to work in the place and at the time most appropriate for the task in hand, and is about providing a working environment and way of working that allows choice and flexibility. Though the nature of some of the roles within the Council cannot be classed as totally flexible, there is considerable scope in many cases for some form of agile working. The different ways in which Agile working can be undertaken is dependent on the demands and needs of the role and the service, the employee's individual circumstances and the type of work undertaken. It is possible, with careful planning and a degree of best practice evaluation, for many employees to carry out their duties from a variety of different locations and environments. However, the Council will continue to require some employees to undertake their duties in a specific Council location to meet service delivery needs.
- 1.4 Agile working provides options on where, when, and how roles can be undertaken by introducing an element of choice and flexibility which will ensure that the needs of the service are met in the most effective way. It is based on work is an activity we do rather than a place we go to.
- 1.5 All employees working under this Policy will still be covered by the [ICT Code of Practice](#) even when working from home and must remain vigilant, especially in the more relaxed home environment, with regards to the security of Council ICT systems.
- 1.6 The benefits of agile working can include:
  - a) For the organisation

- employee retention,
- increased productivity
- Reduced costs of accommodation and other overheads.
- work life balance opportunities
- flexible working
- improved work environments and productivity
- greater collaboration within and between Directorates
- reduced travel and associated costs
- reduced carbon footprint
- reduced absenteeism and its related costs
- enhanced business continuity

b) For the employee, there are benefits to agile working, *such as:*

- better work life balance
- more autonomy on work productivity
- ability to up-skill
- establish increased trust between manager and employee
- less commuting
- location independence
- save on travel costs when working from home
- customisable work space
- flexible working times

- 1.7 Agile working provides employees with more options with regards to where, when and how they undertake their roles by introducing an element of choice which will ensure that the needs of the service are best met.
- 1.8 Agile working allows employees to influence how they carry out their role and promotes varying levels of flexibility within the workplace. It is based on the concept that work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go to.
- 1.9 Agile Working does not solely refer to working at home and can apply to working at other remote locations.
- 1.10 This policy clarifies how employees can work 'agilely' and for the majority of them this will mean working from home or other locations. However, when working from home for full contractual hours, please refer to the **Home Working Policy**.

## 2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to Council employees (except school based employees) working at any level within the organisation and any third parties working in a Council building or workplace. The nature and extent of Agile Working will depend upon the job undertaken and considerations will include the impact on

the ability to meet customer demand (internal and external) and employee welfare. Some employees will continue to work at their designated Council locations in order to meet service delivery needs.

- 2.2 Schools' employees may be covered by this Policy by specific acceptance of the Governing Body.
- 2.3 Within integrated services, some Council employees will be working alongside those employed by other organisations, for example, NHS, Swansea University, etc. who will need to refer to their own organisational policies or appropriate joint protocols regarding Agile Working.
- 2.4 This policy covers all agile working arrangements, and there is an expectation that sharing work stations will apply.

### 3.0 Equalities

- 3.1 Managers must ensure that they pay due regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 in relation to agile working. Reasonable adjustments may need to be considered for those with specific requirements arising from a particular protected characteristic, e.g. disabled employees, which may include physical disability, mental health or any other relevant additional needs. Refer to sections 4 and 5 for responsibilities regarding employee and manager duties referencing the implementation of agile working arrangements.

### 4.0 Roles and Responsibilities - Managers

- 4.1 As with all roles, the manager will support the agile employee by:
- ensuring that the employee can undertake the role safely and by providing any reasonable adjustments (Please see Staffnet for further guidance: [www.swansea.gov.uk/staffnet/riskassessments](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/staffnet/riskassessments))
  - setting clear objectives
  - agreeing working arrangements and timescales for work
  - undertaking regular 1-2-1s and team meetings, appraisals and Supervision
  - agreeing output and productivity
  - agreeing any training and development required

- 4.2 The Manager will consider the Health and Safety implications of any agile working arrangement and seek advice from the Corporate Health, Safety and Well Being Team regarding any specific concerns around health and safety issues, ensuring suitable control measures are in place. This will include supporting the mental, as well as the physical, wellbeing of agile workers.
- 4.4 Premises managers must make sure health and safety measures are clearly marked for all visitors.
- 4.5 Managers are responsible for undertaking training available on this policy and ensure that their team complete any relevant training provided. Guidance is available on Staffnet.

## **5.0 Roles and responsibilities - Employees**

- 5.1 It is the employee's responsibility to comply with this policy in a reasonable, constructive and appropriate manner. The employee should be flexible, open and constructive in discussing and agreeing Agile working arrangements, whilst remaining focussed on the needs of service. Agile working is not restricted to 'working from home' and therefore security should be of paramount consideration if working outside usual Council locations.
- 5.2 It is the employee's responsibility to work safely and report any hazards or risks to their manager, including reporting any defects that arise in the equipment provided while working agilely.
- 5.3 While working in an agile way, current policies and procedures for reporting sickness absence and approval for applying for annual leave will apply.
- 5.4 Employees should:
- complete any relevant health and safety forms and checks;
  - ensure that all reasonable care is taken of all Council supplied ICT equipment
  - Comply with confidential, data protection and internet security policies.
  - comply with their responsibilities within the authority's DSE policy
  - undertake any training available
- 5.5 It is the employee's responsibility to take reasonable care of others who may be affected by their work activities.

- 5.6 The employee must report immediately once known, any loss, theft or damage to Council IT equipment or the loss of confidential information.
- 5.7 Where employees use other Council locations to work, they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety. They should ensure they are aware of fire safety arrangements to ensure they are fully conversant with the actions to be taken in the event of discovering a fire or on hearing the fire alarm signal and ensure they adhere to the local signing in and out arrangements.
- 5.8 Whilst the Council is responsible for providing equipment to work in an agile manner, e.g. when working from home, or any other location, it remains the employee's responsibility to ensure that the working environment is safe. Procedures relating to a risk assessment will apply. See attached procedure.

## 6.0 Business Travel while Agile Working

- 6.1 Generally, employees have a standard base allocated to them when they join the Council as an employee, as outlined in their contract of employment, where a fixed base is identified. The contract of employment will stipulate the 'base location' for each employee and this will remain even when working 'agilely'. Employees who work from home for all of their contractual hours should refer to the **Home Working Policy**.
- 6.2 Where it is necessary to claim travel (according to the Council's Business Travel Policy), this base location, as identified in the employment contract, will form the starting point for each work related journey undertaken.
- 6.3 It is important that all employees manage their travel and limit it in order to achieve the environmental benefits of agile working. Where possible, ICT should be used to reduce the need to travel. This can include conference calling, video conferencing and web conferencing. With the implementation of agile working, excess mileage claims will be reviewed as the aim is to reduce all travel where possible.
- 6.4 Refer to **Business Travel Policy** for more details.

## 7.0 Liability insurance and property risk

- 7.1 Computers and other items of equipment provided by the Council as part of agile working arrangements will be covered by the Council's insurance policy, with a £500 department excess applied to each and every claim. It is essential that all Council equipment is stored securely if not in use to ensure that insurance cover is valid.
- 7.2 A higher duty of care is expected from insurers for portable equipment such as laptops and ipads. All employees have a duty to take reasonable steps to safeguard equipment from loss or damage. Devices must be secure at all times, and measures taken to protect against theft, such as locking the device away at the end of the day. Devices should not be left unattended in cars, hotel rooms, conference centres and meeting places etc. All employees must comply with the ICT equipment for working from home policy. For more information: [www.swansea.gov.uk/staffnet/ITequipmentforhome](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/staffnet/ITequipmentforhome)
- 7.3 A police report is required in the event of a theft and for any theft cover to be valid there must have been either:
- forcible and violent entry to or exit from the building; or
  - violence to persons or threat of violence to persons
- 7.4 As outlined in this policy, employees must report any loss or damage to Council equipment immediately to their line manager.
- 7.5 It is the employee's duty to ensure that they have the relevant house insurance for any time spent working at home. The insurer needs to be aware that the home is used for 'work' to ensure that insurance cover remains valid.

## 8.0 Data Protection and GDPR

- 8.1 The Council's Information Security and Data Protection Policies apply at all times regardless of location where work is undertaken.
- 8.2 It is the employee's responsibility to ensure the security of equipment, files and any other information in their possession, including the transportation of such items whenever outside of the Council office environment. It is particularly important to ensure that non-authorised personnel (in the home environment or whilst working off site) cannot gain access to confidential or personal information.

- 8.3 All efforts must be made to secure Council equipment when being used at home or other locations. Wherever possible, this equipment should be locked away. At a minimum, all equipment should be stored out of sight of windows and doors to deter equipment being stolen. Council equipment must not be left in a parked vehicle overnight and should never be left in sight of passers-by when a vehicle is temporarily parked.
- 8.4 Any paper based documentation that contains personal or confidential information must be disposed of securely, as outlined in the procedure. Employees are encouraged to fully utilise the document management system, to reduce paper file storage, printing costs and increase security.
- 8.5 No work related emails or sensitive data should be sent to the employee's home email addresses. No work related files should be stored on an employee's personal computer.
- 8.6 Any loss of equipment or information must be reported immediately to the employee's line manager.
- 8.7 The manager must consider the Data Protection implications of any agile working arrangement, with reference to the Council's Data Protection Policy.
- 8.8 It is the responsibility of employees to ensure they comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 and any arrangements put in place by the manager. See attached procedure.

## 9.0 Policy Monitoring

- 9.1 The Council will monitor the application of this Policy and has discretion to review it at any time through the appropriate consultation mechanisms and in light of any developments in employment legislation or good employment practice.
- 9.2 Responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and development of this Policy lies with the Strategic HR&OD Manager. Day to day operation of the Policy is the responsibility of nominated officers who will ensure adherence to this Policy.

Version Number	Details of Change	Date
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2.0	Revision of Agile working Policy and update to separate policy and procedure.	February 2021
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## PROCEDURES

### 1.0 Agile Working - Arrangements

- 1.1 Managers are required to ensure all employees undertake a DSE risk assessment of their working environment to ensure they are appropriately equipped to work in an agile manner.
- 1.2 Managers are required to discuss agile working arrangements with their employees, and be aware of any health, safety and welfare concerns related to agile working, and escalate them as appropriate.
- 1.3 Although employees working from a location other than the 'office' do not necessarily have to work normal office hours, it is essential to plan and agree a work programme with their manager, to ensure the rest of the team and clients are able to contact them. Line managers and employees must ensure outlook calendars are up to date to reflect the agreed work programme.
- 1.4 Managers are responsible for making appropriate arrangements for their employees to have regular meetings to support them during agile working.
- 1.5 The hours of work and any variation of normal working patterns should be agreed with the manager in advance, and noted appropriately so that working time and health and safety can be monitored.
- 1.6 According to Working Time Regulations, employees must take rest breaks during the working shift. The Regulations state that an employee working more than 6 hours a day is entitled to take a minimum 20-minute unpaid break (30 minutes for employees under 18). The Council allows for a 30 minute unpaid break. Employees should take these breaks if possible away from the workplace / work station. The break should be during the working shift, not at the beginning or end.
- 1.7 Employees must keep their managers regularly informed regarding their workload and issues that require support. Employees must ensure that they are accessible to the manager and other work colleagues during agreed working hours.

## **2.0 Data protection and compliance with UK GDPR**

- 2.1 All Council paperwork should be securely locked away and be accessible only to the employee.
- 2.2 If working away from a Council building, any confidential waste is to be gathered up, securely stored, and securely transported to the office on the next scheduled visit. Once in the office it will be disposed of in the normal way.
- 2.3 When working in an agile manner, the employee is responsible for the security of equipment, software, files and any other information in their possession. It is particularly important to ensure that non-authorised individuals (in the home environment or while working off site) cannot gain access to confidential or personal information.
- 2.4 Consideration should be made when working remotely on laptops to ensure that the screen cannot be overseen by others and precautions taken to store and transport equipment safely and securely, and avoid laptops/storage devices being damaged, lost or stolen. All equipment, storage devices etc. must be encrypted.
- 2.5 Where possible, to ensure confidentiality, agile working employees should use appropriate head-sets when participating in online calls and meetings.

## **3.0 Communication and contact arrangements**

- 3.1 Arrangements should be made for effective communication to be maintained between the employee, line manager and colleagues/team. To facilitate communications the use of ICT should be explored including mobiles phones, soft-phones (telephone calls delivered via software on a PC or laptop), and Microsoft Teams.
- 3.2 Employees and managers should maintain regular contact while working agilely. It is essential for regular team meetings and 1-2-1 meetings to be undertaken in order to develop and maintain relationships, promote collaboration and joint working. These meetings may take place face-to-face or electronically. Appropriate communication and support channels must also be

made available. Appraisals and Supervision must also continue if working agilely.

- 3.3 It is essential for employees to make time for impromptu and spontaneous calls to colleagues and use this time as a break away from work.
- 3.4 Employees must ensure that they do not give out their personal contact details e.g. telephone number, e-mail address to clients and service users for work purposes.
- 3.5 Any employee undertaking visits or attending meetings from a location other than a Council office must follow the same lone working guidance (available on the Council's Staffnet) that they would if leaving from the office.

#### **4.0 Arrangements for office working**

- 4.1 When an employee plans to work in the office e.g. for planned events or essential face-to-face meetings, or unplanned occasions (e.g. cover for absent team members, a surge in workload in the office, etc.), then the appropriate steps must be taken, as follows.
  - A desk must be booked via Microsoft Shifts within the allocated service area to ensure desk availability for the day that the employee plans to be in the office.
  - Employees should be considerate to other people using the office, e.g. returning general stationery items to the central stationary point after use.
  - When travelling to and from a work location employees must ensure that all Council information/data is kept secure and confidential and that they understand the Council's policies for Data Storage and HR & Data Protection. In particular, any portable storage device must be encrypted, laptops must not be left unattended, e.g. in a car, and where unavoidable, Council paperwork must be transported securely.
  - Employees using an adapted workstation as a hot desk must ensure that the equipment is returned to their original setting if they are changed.
  - Employees must keep a clear desk policy and ensure all areas used while in the office are cleared before leaving for the day.

- If an employee is working in the office, then the employee's Outlook calendar must be updated to reflect the change in location, even if this is for part of a day.

## **5.0 Network availability and computer systems**

- 5.1 ICT Systems are available 24hours a day, seven days a week. ICT systems are supported between 08:00 and 17:00 Monday to Thursday, 08:00 and 16:30 on a Friday. Outside of these hours may be subject to minimal disruption (System backup and maintenance). Emergency support is available on a reasonable endeavours basis for critical support. ICT Service Desk portal is available 24/7 to log support calls.
- 5.2 Hours of working are subject to ICT system availability. Wherever possible employees will be advised in advance of system availability and disruption will be kept to a minimum. Employees will be informed when the system is unavailable due to planned maintenance, upgrades, at the end of the year, etc.
- 5.3 If there is disruption to the network connection to an employee's home, employees will be required to come into the office to work. If the system goes down or is otherwise unavailable and no other work option is feasible the employee will have the option to either attend the workplace or make the time up when the system is available at the discretion of their line manager.
- 5.4 All agile employees will be supplied with a laptop and associated equipment to enable an employee to work effectively. Employees are also able to claim reimbursement for the purchase of specific ICT equipment to support working away from the office subject to set criteria and a maximum value.
- 5.5 Computer equipment must not be used by anyone other than the employee(s) designated to do so and for Council business only.
- 5.6 Where employees have adapted equipment e.g. left hand orientation, this will be made available to assist agile working if applicable or on a hot desk if applicable.
- 5.7 Anyone using an adapted workstation as a hot desk in the office must ensure that either the equipment settings are not changed or are returned to their original setting if they are changed.

- 5.8 If an employee requires additional ICT equipment due to an occupational health assessment then the principles of the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Policy will apply.

## **6.0 Employee Agile Working Safely guidance**

6.1 When working agilely, the employee will:

- Work in a location with good natural or artificial lighting and ventilation.
- If possible, sit at a desk or table which is at the right height and use the laptop on a stable base.
- Take regular breaks away from the computer and ensure that they are not sitting at the computer for long periods. Move around regularly throughout the day and have a stretch; by moving around there is a lot less stress on your muscles and joints
- Sit properly with lower back support and ensure any other equipment needed is within reach.
- Avoid awkward, static postures by regularly changing position
- Avoid eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time. For every 20 minutes spent looking at a computer screen, spend 20 seconds looking at something else 20 feet away. This gives eye muscles a break and helps reduce eye strain.

6.2 Employees who wish to access further support to ensure safe agile working may wish to access the Corporate Health and Safety training pages on Staffnet or the Corporate E-Learning provided by the Learning and Development team.

6.3 Further support is available to support employee well-being from the Stress Counselling team or from Helping Hands volunteers.

6.4 Managers and employees must ensure that they undertake any relevant training provided.

## **7.0 Additional Employee Support**

7.1 It is recognised that employees working agilely may require additional support, advice and guidance to maintain a healthy work life balance. A selection of such resource links is included below, but others can be accessed through Staffnet or the Council's external website:

[Swansea Staffnet - Buying ICT equipment to use at home](#)

[Swansea Staffnet - Employee Assistance Resources](#) (mainly relevant for Social Services)

[Swansea Staffnet - HR - Supporting employees affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence policy](#)

[Swansea Staffnet - Helping Hands](#)

7.2 Employees may wish to access online training available:

[Swansea Staffnet - e-Learning \(learning pool\)](#)

7.3 Employees may be eligible for tax relief to support additional expenses incurred from regularly working from home:

[Claim tax relief for your job expenses: Working from home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

7.4 Employees and managers should refer to Staffnet for further information.