

Policy – Agile Working

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Version control

This document is subject to regular review due to legislative and policy changes. The latest versions of all our publications can be found on our website. Before contacting us about the content of this document, we recommend that you refer to the most recent version on the website and any relevant guidance.

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Notes / changes
v1.0	23/05/2023	Cabinet	New policy
v1.1	19/10/2023		VIVUP

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Guidance to accompany policy

- Guidance for Employees – How to work in an agile way
- Guidance for Managers – How to engage an agile team
- Guidance for Managers – How to induct agile employees
- Guidance – Meeting Etiquette
- Office Buildings Guidance

Definitions that apply to this policy

Agile Working	<p>Agile working is the term used by the council to describe how employees can work flexibly from different locations, at different times and using mobile devices.</p> <p>This could be from a council building, within the community from home working or any combination of these.</p>
Flexible Working	<p>Flexible working is the term used to describe the different ways in which employees can change the ways in which they work and can include changes to their working pattern including part time hours, job sharing, annualised hours and term time only working as some examples.</p>
Work Styles	<p>The different work styles describe and define the mobility and flexibility of location for each individual member of staff</p>
Hot-Desking	<p>A hot desk is a desk that can be used by any employee to complete work from, if not occupied by a “Desk Based” employee.</p> <p>A “Desk Based” employee’s desk can be used as a hot desk, if the employee is not using the desk e.g. due to a non-working day, working remotely or being on annual leave.</p>

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Purpose of the Policy

The Agile Working Policy sets out an overall framework, enabling the council's workforce to carry out duties in a more efficient and effective way. The framework, as set out by the policy, provides a medium for consistency and fair practice when implementing and maintaining agile working.

This policy will enable both managers and employees to gain a better understanding of agile working and understand the basic principles, which can then be considered and applied to specific roles.

This policy covers the provision of facilities by the council to enable employees to have secure and reliable access to any of the council's information systems which they have been authorised to use.

Introduction

What is Agile Working?

'Agile working' is an arrangement which enables employees to work from a variety of locations to best serve the customer and the service without changing contractual hours or base of work. Agile working allows the council to deliver its services in the most cost effective manner whilst providing greater flexibility for employees in how they work, subject to business need and manager approval.

What is Flexible Working?

Flexible working is about how we work, e.g. different working patterns such as annualised hours, 9-day fortnight or even the flexibility to take lunch breaks at a different time of day.

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The Benefits of Agile Working

It is anticipated that agile working will offer benefits to our employees, residents, service users and the council. The key benefits of agile working are as follows:

- Increased productivity – enabling employees to manage their own workload effectively, enabling concentration and avoiding office environment interruptions.
- Reduces unnecessary travel and time related costs.
- Lowers our carbon footprint, through reduced travel and emissions.
- Improving work life balance which in turn can increase employee wellbeing.
- Improve the recruitment and retention rates of experienced and skilled employees by offering a range of workstyles to match preferences.
- Reduced absence rates and any associated costs.

Our Approach to Agile working

The Council's aim is to enable employees to have a greater choice about how and when they work. All decisions regarding agile working will start from what provides the best possible outcomes for residents, service users, customers, the council and stakeholders both now and in the future. Managers are required to identify and maximise the agile working of their employees. In support of the delivery of the service, employees will be encouraged to work in a number of ways. Typical examples include:

- Working from their contractual base of work
- Working from home
- Working from a council office desk anywhere in the County
- Working from customer / clients premises
- Working in a council library.

Managers are expected to:

- Enable employees to maximise agile working where possible (business needs will take priority), ensuring that adequate cover is available during business hours

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- Agree a working style and working pattern with their employees
- Work with their employees to ensure that work activities and environments are Risk Assessed
- Ensure employees carry out Workstation Risk Assessments (please see section Health and Safety Risk Assessments)
- Review working styles and patterns with employees on a regular basis
- Agree how and when they will communicate with employees
- Agree and carry out regular 1-2-1 meetings. Record the 1-2-1's on iTrent
- Ensure frequent check ins with employees take place to ensure health and wellbeing is not being negatively impacted by working arrangements
- Ensure employees take responsibility for the security of council equipment and sensitive /confidential information, ensuring they comply with GDPR and report any breaches, loss or theft immediately.

Employees are expected to:

- Discuss, agree and review their working pattern and working style with their line manager on a regular basis
- Discuss and agree methods of communication
- Complete a Workstation Risk Assessment for any workplace/workstation that they operate from (please see section Health and Safety Risk Assessments)
- Have adequate internet access and ICT equipment.
- Inform their line manager of any requested changes to agile working arrangements in a timely manner
- Be contactable via Jabber (during working hours) and ensure their calendar is kept up to date
- Be available for face to face or online meetings as and when requested (please refer to Guidance for Employees - Meeting Etiquette for further details)
- Raise any concerns with their line manager regards to their health, safety, wellbeing, information security or any other matter.

Our approach to agile working links to the council's vision to address the climate emergency, placing emphasis on the importance of sustainability and the health and

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wellbeing of both employees and the community. The benefits of improved work life balance, employee engagement and reduced travel make a direct contribution to this strategic priority.

For administrative purposes, including the claiming of travel expenses, employees working in an agile way will retain a designated contractual work base.

Our Principles for Successful Agile and Working

1. The council will support the principles of this agile working arrangement. Where the job role allows, employees will work in an agile manner. As a general principle, employees will be given greater flexibility to work from home (providing they have a suitable working environment). Visits to a traditional workplace should be reduced where possible, however, this will depend on business and operational needs.
2. Agile working must not impact the provision of services, therefore managers are to ensure they have systems in place to maintain a suitable level of service as required and to monitor the level of front line facing staff on duty at any one time.
3. In order to ensure that practical and operational arrangements are considered, an initial consultation will be held with individuals and teams about working in an agile manner.
4. Methods of communication should be agreed to ensure that both parties are fully consulted and informed, using a combination of virtual, electronic, face to face conversations, emails, telephone and team meetings/briefings. Managers will need to ensure that employees have regular one to one meetings and are subject to regular catch ups and conversations.
5. Agile working arrangements should be reviewed on a regular basis through one to one discussions. These discussions should include expected work outputs and performance. Significant findings or conclusions should be recorded on the employee's personnel file.
6. Employees who work in an agile manner will have a base of work for administrative purposes, which is usually where the main function is based. Travel will only be permitted when online meetings are not possible or suitable for the subject matter etc. Managers will be required to monitor and approve all travel claims. Employees

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will be able to claim travel and time expenses in line with the Travel and Subsistence Policy based on the following principles: -

- Deduct home to contractual work base travel mileage and time from the total journey
- Mobile workers will need to refer to the Travel and Subsistence Policy for further details on travel and time.

Please see section on Travel

7. Employees may be required to attend work on a particular day, at the request of their line manager or Head of Service for meetings, training, customer appointments that the line manager and/or Head of Service have determined should be conducted in person. Similarly, there may be circumstances in which employees are asked to work remotely or from other work locations, when employees would otherwise expect to attend the workplace. In such cases, employees will be given as much notice as possible, however they will be expected to attend.
8. Working patterns for agile working might fall out of the normal office hours. It will therefore be essential to agree a work schedule so that managers and colleagues are aware of individual working patterns, where they are located and how to contact them. The hours of work must be agreed in advance for those employees that will be working from home as part of the agile working arrangements. For those subject to the flexi time system, your working hours of work (including start and finish times) must be agreed in advance for those employees who work from home as part of this agile working arrangement, employees who work more than 6 hours in a working day must take a break of at least 30 minutes. Further details can be found in the Vision Time policy.
9. Employees must note that the ability to work from home is not a substitute for child care or similar carer responsibilities. It will be an employee's responsibility to ensure that adequate childcare / caring facilities are in place.
10. Agile working is based on the concept of mutual trust between the employer and the employee, any fundamental breach of that trust will be viewed as a conduct matter and will be addressed under the council's Disciplinary Policy.

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Workstyles

The council has 3 workstyles that have been created:

- **Fixed Location Worker** – a workplace based employee who operates from an office, depot or DCC Building, i.e. receptionist, street scene operative, catering assistant. A fixed worker will typically remain at a workstation or place of work for most of the day. Employees will only be given a fixed workstation in limited circumstances due to the nature of the job or specific workstation requirements.
- **Agile Worker** – an employee can carry out their activities from a mixture of appropriate locations, e.g. work from home, work from a council building, in the community visiting people and/or to attend meetings where required. An agile worker could be an Admin Officer, Project Manager, Finance/HR Officer for example.
- **Mobile Worker** - an employee who works at different locations on a daily basis within the community normally away from their contractual base e.g. building maintenance operatives. Please refer to the Travel and Subsistence Policy for further details on travel and subsistence for Mobile workers.

In assessing whether a role is suitable for agile working, managers will need to consider the nature of the work being undertaken. There will be roles that are not suitable for agile working and business needs will take priority. For those who do not fit into the above categories, their circumstances will be considered on an individual basis.

Working Environment

All employees will be provided with a contractual base from which they can work. Employee's will also be able to access other council buildings to work from.

Subject to agreement with Managers, there are a number of working environments employees will be able to work from, the main environments are as follows:

- **Denbighshire Buildings (Offices, Depots etc.)** – the council will be responsible for ensuring office and building spaces are available for employees to use. The Council

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is responsible for this working environment and will provide, desk, chair, heating, lighting, ventilation and connection to the Council's ICT network.

- Home – the employee will be responsible for this working environment and the safety aspects of this environment including desk, chairs, heating, lighting, ventilation and enabling connection through broadband to Denbighshire's ICT network. Working from the home will not be authorised if any of these factors cannot be met.
- In the Community. Line managers with employees will be responsible for understanding and risk assessing the work environments and the activities carried out in them.

If an employee is working from home, the expectation is that this will be the home address supplied to the council. If employees wish to work from another address or location, then the employee should seek authorisation via their line manager.

Undertaking work from a second home / holiday home location in the UK will only be permitted with line manager approval. Employees who wish to work outside of the UK will need to seek authorisation from their Head of Service and the Head of ICT and this will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Technology and Work Equipment

Employees will be provided with the necessary ICT equipment and technology in order to work in an agile manner. As a minimum you will be provided with:

- A laptop
- Keyboard and Mouse
- Laptop stand
- Headset

Employees may discuss any additional requirements they have with their line manager.

Employees will be responsible for providing their own broadband for agile working purposes. Employees working from home are required to provide suitable working

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conditions including a chair and desk, however, in line with the Equality Act 2010, the council will consider and support any reasonable adjustments. All requests for special equipment will be considered by Occupational Health.

Employees must take care of any equipment provided. All equipment will remain council property and employees should notify their line manager and the ICT helpdesk if there are any faults or issues with the equipment.

Employees will not be permitted to buy their own equipment and claim this back, instead they will need to discuss with their line manager and contact ICT. All equipment must be returned to the employee's line manager upon leaving the council.

Where an employee cannot connect to the ICT (CAG) facilities for any reason, they will need to travel to an office facility where they can work effectively.

Communication and Contact

Communication arrangements must be open and robust. Employees working in an agile manner should be contactable, via teams, email, telephone and Jabber during their working day. Employees must keep their calendar up to date at all times and ensure that read only access is given to managers and colleagues.

It is the responsibility of line managers to agree the communication arrangements with their employees and ensure these are reviewed on a regular basis and at one to one discussions.

Managers and Employees are encouraged to have face to face contact agreed as part of their communications on a regular basis.

- Employees must not carry out face to face meetings in their own home with customers, elected members or officers from other agencies.
- Employees must keep their electronic calendar up to date if they have plans to attend site meetings or site visits direct from home. Lone working arrangements must be put in place for these circumstances.

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Lone Working

Line managers must ensure that a Lone working safe system of work is in place for their employees. Any Lone worker safe system of work will be determined from the findings of a lone worker risk assessment.

New Starters

Agile working should be encouraged, where appropriate, for new starters. Where possible there should be opportunities to integrate the new starter into the team, in person, on a regular basis. As part of the employee's probation review, agile working arrangements should be discussed and documented alongside performance expectations.

Please see Manager Guidance – How to Induct an Agile Working Employee.

Corporate Image

For those employees who work in an agile manner, Denbighshire adopt the 'Dress for your day', allowing employees to tailor their clothing choice to suit their day and demands of the role. Employees should consider their day's schedule, tasks being performed and the people they will be interacting with. Good judgement should be applied when making decisions on workday attire, e.g. if you are attending face to face or virtual meeting with a Councillor, member of the public or customer then smart/professional clothing must be worn.

Formal face to face or virtual/webcast meetings such as; Planning Committee, Licensing Committee, Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and Council (not exhaustive) will require professional work attire at all times.

Clothing should always be suitable and safe for the work being performed.

Employees may not opt out of using/wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) whenever it is identified as a requirement in the findings of a risk assessment.

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Travel and Expenses

It is anticipated in the majority of circumstances, the costs of working from home will be offset by the savings in the cost and time of commuting to work, and the benefits of an improved work/life balance. Therefore, any additional costs incurred by working in an agile manner will not be met by the council.

Mileage claims will be reimbursed under the usual terms and conditions of claiming expenses and subsistence allowance. For the purposes of mileage claims, agile workers will have a nominated base of work. This will be the main location that their department/service operates from.

Employees will be reimbursed for any additional mileage undertaken. Where an employee is undertaking a business journey which starts or ends at their home, there is a requirement to deduct the normal home to work mileage from the total business mileage incurred. Employees must also deduct the time for the normal home to work journey from any claim.

Employees who have been identified as Mobile Workers will need to refer to the Travel and Subsistence Policy for details on travel and time.

Please refer the Travel and Subsistence Policy for further information.

Additional Allowances for working from home

Employees will not be eligible to claim expenses for homeworking.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Regulations apply to the employer and to all employees. Employees have a responsibility for their own (and others) health and safety whilst carrying out any work activities regardless of the work location and in accordance with the council's health and safety guidance.

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- When agile working is employed, line managers with their employees must ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are in place and reviewed when necessary. (see below Health and Safety Risk Assessments section).
- Accidents or incidents at home during work time are classed as work related accidents/incidents and must be reported immediately to the line manager and also be reported by the employee on the DCC online incident/accident form. This form can be found on the Corporate Health and Safety pages on Linc (Intranet). Employees will only be required to report incidents if they are related to the work activity being done and the equipment DCC have provided to carry out that work.
- Employees will be provided with equipment which is appropriate for their job roles and in line with any reasonable adjustments that an individual has. Any other equipment requested outside of the standard equipment provision will need to be considered once a clear business reason has been made by the individual.
- Employees who use other council locations to work should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety. Particular attention must be paid to fire safety arrangements and actions required when hearing a fire alarm and ensure they adhere to the signing in and out arrangements. Please see the attached **Office Building Guidance**.

Health and Safety Risk Assessments

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations requires employers to ensure that a risk assessment of all activities is carried out with the significant findings being recorded and safe working systems developed where necessary. Agile working requires the following:

Managers are required to:

- Develop and record an Agile Working Risk Assessment with their employees.
- Ensure that employees understand the findings of their risk assessments and follow them.

Employees are required to:

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- Complete a Homeworking Checklist and share any significant issues with their line manager.
- Carry out a Workstation Risk Assessment and feedback any significant findings to their line manager e.g. requirement for additional resources or unsuitability of their home setup.
- Follow the findings of any team risk assessments and report any concerns or lack of understanding to their line manager.

The above documents can be found on the Intranet (Linc) under the Corporate Health and Safety pages.

Risk Assessments must be carried out and reviewed periodically or when there are any significant changes or when an accident/incident has occurred. Line managers must keep records of Risk Assessments, Checklists and working agreements. The records may be held in any format e.g. on paper or electronically but they must be available to employees.

If an employee is unable to work safely at home, then they will be required to work from an appropriate council office.

Wherever an employee is working with DSE equipment they will need to assess its suitability for their individual needs.

Further information can be found in the attached Guidance for Employees – How to Work in an Agile Way.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Working in an agile manner will contribute to improved wellbeing. Employees and managers must communicate on a regular basis to ensure that the workloads, demands and training needs are discussed.

Employees are encouraged to use their annual leave and take regular breaks, avoiding working long hours and replying to emails outside of normal working hours. Employees will need to ensure that they take at least 30 consecutive minutes if working more than 6 hours

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and make time to switch off. Working in an agile way should not significantly change the hours an employee works.

Support your mental health and wellbeing with our Vivup Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Whether you're facing problems at work or at home, you can access impartial confidential advice from qualified counsellors for a range of different issues. A free telephone helpline is available 24/7 365 days a year – 0800 0239387

Username and password details can be accessed via the Occupational Health page on the Intranet (LINC) or by asking your line manager, Occupational Health or Human Resources.

See attached guidance on Guide for Employees – How to Work in an Agile Way

Sickness Absence

When working remotely, if an employee is not able to work due to being unwell, the council's sickness absence reporting procedures apply as it would if the employee was attending the workplace. Please refer to the council's Attendance at Work Procedure for further details.

Return to work interviews can be carried out via telephone and Microsoft Teams if it is not practical to meet face to face on the employees first day back at work.

Data Protection and Security

Employees who are working in an agile manner must comply with all relevant legislation and council policies. Access to council systems and the processing of data must only be carried out on approved devices. The employee is responsible for the security of equipment, files and any information in their possession. This includes the transportation of such items when working in an agile manner.

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The Council's Information Security Policy must be followed in relation to protecting information appropriately. If handling personal data, the council's Data Protection (GDPR) Policy and procedure must be adhered to.

Managers must ensure their employees:

- Understand their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the councils Information Security Policies.
- Do not remove or store work files off the corporate network and save to home computers.
- Do not send work related emails or sensitive data to an employee's personal computer.
- Understands that any loss of equipment or information is reported immediately to their line manager.
- Never leave a logged on computer with an 'unlocked screen' when unattended.
- Ensure conversations of a sensitive / confidential nature should not be carried out in public spaces.
- Family members or any other individuals should not have access to personal data on paper or as electronic records.
- Printed documents must be kept locked away when not in use.
- Confidential waste should be disposed of in the normal way.

Please refer to the Data Protection Policy and Procedure which is available on the Denbighshire website.

Insurance, Mortgage and Tenancy Arrangements

Computers, laptops, phones and other items of equipment provided by the Council are covered by the council's insurance policy. However, employees will still need to make sure the equipment and any information on it is safe and secure.

Employees should only use equipment that they are competent to use and all equipment should be checked by the user before use to ensure that it shows no signs of fault or damage. Faulty or damaged equipment must be replaced.

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Employees are responsible for contacting anyone with an interest in their property (e.g. mortgage lenders, landlords, leaseholders, building and contents insurer) to make sure there is nothing they need to consider when working from home. The council will not be responsible for any additional costs as a result.

Employees working at home or from home will be covered by the council's Employers Liability Policy. Any accidents must be reported immediately in accordance with the councils reporting guidelines.

Requesting Flexible Working

This policy is for agile working arrangements, but there are other forms of flexible working. Employees can refer to the Employee Handbook which contains details on the formal Right to Request Flexible Working.

Flexi Time (Vision Time) will remain in place and should be used in accordance with this policy. Further details and guidance on Vision Time can be access on the Denbighshire website.

Reviewing Arrangements

Arrangements made between managers and employees must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are suitable for service delivery and business need. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by Human Resources.