

# Hybrid Working Scheme

## 1. Purpose

The aim of this scheme is to provide guidance on the way of working within the Council in the future, after revising our working arrangements for a period of time during the past few years. We will continue to support and get the best from our staff in order to provide the best possible services to the people of Gwynedd.

The Council is eager to promote a work-life balance amongst staff and acknowledges the positive impact that flexible working arrangements can have on staff motivation, well-being, performance and productivity.

## 2. Scope

This scheme is relevant to staff employed by Cyngor Gwynedd, whether on a permanent, temporary, full or part-time basis. The scheme does not apply to schools' staff where their employment is regulated by the governing bodies of schools. Neither does it apply to those employed via an agency or self-employed consultants.

Any flexible working arrangement will be subject to the nature of the post and there will be a need to strike a balance between the wishes of staff and the needs of the service. It is essential to ensure that there will be no negative impact on services for the people of Gwynedd, whilst also acknowledging and taking advantage of the opportunities that flexible working offers in terms of service development and improvement.

Due to the varied nature of posts within the Council, the scheme will not be suitable for every post. Many posts will be excluded from the scheme due to operational and practical needs.

Any variation beyond what is noted in this scheme will be an exception. Any routine / permanent variation to the working pattern should be agreed under the [Flexible Working Policy](#).

## 3. Vision

The Council's Vision when considering our future working arrangements is to ensure;

- A workforce that provides quality services for the people of Gwynedd and is always ready to improve.
- For Cyngor Gwynedd to be a good place to work, which attracts and retains quality staff, and promotes work-life balance for the benefit of all.

## 4. Benefits and drivers

The main drivers for hybrid working are as follows;

- Promote staff well-being by improving work-life balance, which will lead to more productive staff.
- Staff satisfaction levels improve their commitment to their work.
- Strengthen the Council's ability to recruit staff while offering flexible working arrangements where possible.
- Reducing the Council's carbon footprint as staff drive fewer miles to work and on business journeys.
- Make better use of our offices and buildings.
- Make full use of technology to improve our services.
- Promoting equality, e.g. by offering better opportunities to disabled people or individuals with caring responsibilities.

In order to ensure the best benefit from any hybrid working arrangement, it is important to ensure a balance between being at home and presence at the work centre. By getting the right balance, we will ensure effective collaboration and communication between teams since face-to-face contact is essential in order to ensure the workforce's well-being.

## 5. Main principles

Cyngor Gwynedd ensures that employment policies and procedures respect the principles of equality, safety/well-being, data protection, language, well-being of future generations, reducing carbon footprint, etc.. More detailed information about these principles can be seen in [\(link\)](#). Cyngor Gwynedd supports flexible working and acknowledges the benefits that options such as hybrid working offers staff as well as our services. Taking this into account, officers may work **up to 3 days from home per week** where their posts allows hybrid working. *See part 6 for more information regarding the definitions of hybrid working.*

- Any hybrid working arrangement will be based on **trust** and will depend on the nature of the post. Individual wishes will need to be balanced against service needs, ensuring that there will be no negative impact on services for the people of Gwynedd.
- Any home working arrangement will be subject to space and circumstances at the home allowing the individual to achieve their post effectively and safely and there will be an expectation for a satisfactory workstation assessment to be completed before the arrangement can be implemented.
- All Council staff are responsible to ensure that a "one Council" culture is exercised, including effective communication and working as a team. Teams will be expected to set out their expectations / working arrangements, considering hybrid working as a part of their operating principles.
- Microsoft Teams / Zoom meetings will continue as part of officers' daily work; however, managers and team leaders are expected to conduct the majority of their team meetings and 1:1 conversations face-to-face with staff.
- Staff well-being will be central and we will continue to receive regular support such as timely communication, training, health, safety and well-being support (including mental well-being) from their line manager and the Council more widely.

- It is essential that any hybrid working arrangement has at least a neutral impact on our work and that it does not establish any inflexible working practices that cannot then adapt to business changes in the current climate or when individual needs change.
- Staff have a contractual responsibility to continue to work in line with the policies and procedures in place within the Council and normal workplace rules, such as [Codes of Conduct and Practice](#) and the Council's procedures will apply to every employee, regardless of where they are working.

## 6. Hybrid Working Arrangements

Hybrid working is an example of flexible working that is permitted by the Council. It involves sharing working time between attending the normal office / work centre (contractual) and working from home. These arrangements are different to situations where staff complete all of their work from the office on a permanent basis ('office' workers).

Cyngor Gwynedd supports flexible working and acknowledges the benefits that options such as hybrid working offers staff as well as our services. Taking this into account;

- **Officers can work up to 3 days per week from home where their posts allows hybrid working.**
- **Every officer where their work situation allows hybrid working will work a minimum of two working days per week from the normal work centre (contractual) or an equivalent proportion of the working week for part-time employees.**
- **Except in exceptional circumstances, officers will not be able to work from home on a full-time basis, and consequently, there will be no contractual changes as a result of these arrangements.**

Meeting the service's needs will take priority in a hybrid working arrangement, and the work pattern must be agreed with the manager.

The line manager will consider whether a role is suitable for 'hybrid' working or not before recruiting to the post.

It is considered that the working arrangements can vary subject to individual circumstances, what is happening within the role and the team at any given time and the needs of the organisation. As a result, flexibility is afforded to work the above hours in the work centre on an average basis over the month, where required.

Unless a staff member's work contract already states what dates they are expected to attend the office, any arrangement is to be confirmed within the team based on business needs. Teams will be expected to set out their expectations/working arrangements, taking hybrid working into account as a part of their operational principles.

The employer may withdraw the right to hybrid working provided that there is a valid reason for doing so, e.g. change in working circumstances, health circumstances, associated capability reasons, etc.. Reasonable notice will be given in such circumstances. Similarly, the employee may

apply to work from the office on a permanent basis at any given time (e.g. there may be a need to provide time to ensure that permanent office space is available).

## 7. Exceptions

The Council acknowledges that there may be circumstances where it is necessary to make exceptions to the procedure on occasion. Any exception that diverts from the expectation for hybrid workers to spend two days per week away from the normal work centre (contractual), or an equivalent proportion of the working week for part-time employees, will be subject to exceptional circumstances only. Staff will be expected to obtain the agreement of their line manager (to be given final approval by the Head of Department), under those circumstances in accordance with the provision in the [Flexible Working Policy](#).

There may be a need to consider amending the work pattern temporarily in circumstances where:

- there is a clear business case for doing so, e.g. inability to recruit to a post meaning that there is a need to attract someone who lives far away from the normal work centre (contractual).
- temporary health circumstances mean that there will be difficulties to travel into work, e.g. leg fracture or extreme back pain.
- staff member disability, which means that full consideration must be given to any reasonable adjustments that the individual requests and putting appropriate support in place in accordance with the 2010 Equality Act (any appropriate medical reports can be considered when making a decision).

See the 'FAQs' spreadsheet (link) for more information on what are considered to be exceptional circumstances. It is emphasised that these are only examples and there may be other situations beyond those listed.

As employees, we are all responsible for ensuring that sufficient provision is in place to avoid conflict with performance and the ability to deliver the duties of our posts. Under those circumstances, the [Annual Leave and Free Time Policy](#) + [Carer Support Policy](#) can be used.

**Field Workers** - The nature of responsibilities within some roles will mean that employees will need to conduct a high percentage of their work by travelling to various public and private locations across the county without much prior notice (e.g. building control, social workers). Under those circumstances, consideration will need to be given to flexibility in the definition of 2 working days per week from the normal work centre (contractual) or equivalent for part-time employees, ensuring at the same time that employees are able to take advantage of the benefits of face-to-face contact with their colleagues.

Subject to the nature of the additional flexibility sought by the staff member, they may be required to make a formal request for flexible working - see the [Flexible Working Policy](#).

The line manager may ask for support and advice from the Human Resources Advisory Services or Occupational Health under those circumstances where they are considered to be exceptional circumstances.

## 8. Health, Safety and Well-being

Hybrid working employees will have the same health and safety responsibilities as other employees and they will be required to take reasonable care of their own health and safety whilst working from their home location, e.g. ensure honesty when completing a home workstation assessment, taking breaks from their screen, adhering to working hours regulations.

**Workstation assessments** - There is a legal duty to ensure that workstations do not create long-term risks. Bearing this in mind, authorisation for hybrid working is subject to staff completing a workstation assessment, i.e. hybrid working will not be permitted until there is assurance that there is a suitable workstation at the home.

**Equipment** - Equipment provision will need to be based on the workstation assessment, with any hot-desk set-up in the office in compliance with the requirements and completely adjustable. A full assessment will be conducted on anyone who suffers from health problems associated with the use of workstation equipment, or who identifies problems with their workstation and has a legal request for reasonable adjustments.

**Safety** - If there are risks from lone working or abuse at work, the service's normal arrangements should be followed, as recorded in the service's relevant risk assessment. The responsibilities of managers and staff are outlined in the relevant corporate procedure, namely the [Personal Safety Procedure](#).

**Keeping in Touch** - Keeping in touch will be essential to any successful hybrid working arrangement and teams will be expected to keep in regular contact with each other on-line and face-to-face.

Employees should receive the same level of information in terms of content and frequency as any other employee without 'hybrid' status and managers and team leaders will be expected to conduct the majority of their team meetings and 1-1 conversations with staff face-to-face to ensure regular support and attention to mental well-being.

**Working hours** - Hybrid working employees should be available and working during their normal working hours, as noted in the employment contract of every staff member.

Staff should be aware that they should take sufficient breaks away from the screen in order to support and maintain mental and physical well-being.

Where their posts allow, 'hybrid' employees may work [Flexible Hours \(Flexi\)](#) and the scheme will be regularly reviewed to coincide with the needs of services.

Any working hours arrangement should conform with the Working Time Regulations 1998, (e.g. ensuring an appropriate break between one working period and the next), and the expectations within the Council in terms of supporting staff well-being.

## 9. Data Protection

Services will need to consider and implement appropriate responses to data protection liabilities in terms of sensitive / confidential conversations and the security of hard copy documentation in the home locations as well as the work location. Headphones should be used to ensure the security of information whilst conducting virtual meetings (e.g. Microsoft Teams).

Every team will be responsible for ensuring that risk assessments have been completed in order to ensure that they have the required resources to enable them to work from home safely. There will also be a need to ensure that every member of staff has read and accepted the relevant policies and training.

Data protection policies will be reviewed and relevant guidance will be shared with staff in a timely way.

## 10. Estates and facilities

As the number of flexible working employees increases within the Council, we anticipate that there will be a reduced need for permanent personal space in terms of desks in our offices. This in turn could lead to the possibility of rationalising buildings in the future. In response to this change, it is anticipated that there will be a need to look at different types of spaces based on departments, i.e.;

- **Confidential/quiet space:** suitable space to hold on-line meetings in the office or respond to phone calls - quiet and confidential.
- **Hot-desks** - adequate equipment on hot-desks available to the entire workforce, which meets standard requirements.
- **Social / team meeting spaces:** space for teams and officers to hold team meetings or informal meetings.

The image and design of offices will be based on attempting to improve collaboration and improving creativity within teams, as well as ensuring a suitable, confidential and safe space for our workforce.

It is unlikely that a permanent designated workspace/desk will be available in the office for staff members who will be working to hybrid arrangements and staff members will be expected to work according to the basic principles of hot-desking, e.g. clean desk.

Departmental space will be available as well as the possibility of creating more local community hubs as workspaces for Council staff, or jointly with our partners.

## 11. Costs and subsistence

The normal work location (contractual) of any member of staff will not change when considering future working arrangements, therefore the provisions of the [Travelling and Subsistence Policy](#) will remain applicable.

The Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions should be considered, especially if staff members will be required to attend meetings outside the County and/or where circumstances allow for meetings to be held on-line.

## 12. Information Technology

The Council will ensure that all hybrid working employees have all of the correct technology and equipment in order to allow them to work flexibly.

Any employee will be expected to ensure that they are responsible for the safety of the equipment that they use or transport between the work centre and the home. It must be ensured that any property will be used appropriately and that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent damage and theft.

Consideration will be given to providing additional equipment based on workstation assessments to comply with the requirements of the Visual Screen Equipment Regulations 1992.

The individual will be responsible for returning and Council property should they leave the Council's employment. This is considered the case in circumstances where the employee undertakes hybrid working as well as office working.

### 13. Induction arrangements

Getting to know colleagues and learning from others is much more challenging when working from home; virtual communication does not fully fill this gap every time. Robust induction and communication arrangements will be required in order to give new staff the necessary support.

To that end, it is expected for teams where their posts allow for hybrid working to come together face-to-face more regularly than 2 days per week in line with the new employee's induction programme (or an equivalent proportion of the working week for part-time employees). This is considered essential in order to introduce the new employee effectively to their colleagues and to work responsibilities and duties.

### 14. Flexible Working

Although this scheme focuses mainly on how our organisation implements a hybrid working arrangement, it is important to remember that many other types of flexible working are available and that all employees have the right to submit a request for flexible working. Examples of other types of flexible working that can be requested may include; reduction in hours, changing start and finish times, compacting working hours to fewer days, school term working, etc.

In order to submit a request for flexible working, or for more information, please refer to the Flexible Working Policy.

### 15. Other relevant policies

- [Recruitment and Appointment Policy](#)
- [Guidance on Determining the Work Location](#)
- [Travelling and Subsistence Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Policy](#)
- [Sickness Policy](#)
- [Lone Working Policy](#)
- [Annual Leave and Free Time Policy](#)
- [Carer Support Policy](#)
- [Flexible Hours \(Flexi\) Policy](#)