

Hybrid working policy

Policy statement

We believe that our colleagues are our most valuable asset and we are committed to attracting and retaining the very best talent. We also appreciate that the workforce is becoming increasingly diverse and includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with caring responsibilities, as well as those whose interests and aspirations impact on their time.

We recognise the importance of helping our employees balance their work and home lives by offering flexible working arrangements that enable them to balance their work commitments with other priorities. One such flexible working arrangement is hybrid working.

This policy aims to set out the ways in which hybrid working will be managed. Our continued aim is to increase the rate of retention of staff, reduce absence, attract new talent, promote work-life balance and reduce stress.

What is hybrid working?

Hybrid working is defined as a working arrangement where staff conduct their duties both in the workplace and remotely, such as from home. Whilst working remotely, employees maintain the same contractual obligations, such as core working hours.

We recognise that homeworking can be beneficial for individuals and, to this end, will seek to accommodate it wherever possible. However, we also recognise the benefits from on-site working that are difficult to replicate from home, such as direct interaction between colleagues and support from management.

Hybrid working is designed to offer the flexibility of homeworking whilst also maintaining the benefits associated with on-site working.

There are two main categories of hybrid working.

- Occasional hybrid working: this arises in relation to specific pieces of work or for specific periods. It does not follow a regular pattern and is subject to the prior approval of a line manager and HR. It may be granted as part of a phased return to work after a period of extended absence or be a temporary arrangement due to personal circumstances.
- Regular hybrid working: this is an agreement between the Company and the employee for a permanent combination of homeworking and attendance at the workplace, on a regular basis.

Whatever the circumstances leading to a situation where employees are moved into, or recruited under, a hybrid working arrangement, this policy applies, and all employees must comply with the requirements set out below.

Please note that this policy should not be taken as forming an employment contract and may be updated at any time.

Eligibility

We maintain discretion to offer homeworking to colleagues, either during their employment or before commencement of a new role. Overall, colleagues will be eligible to be permitted a form of hybrid working in the following circumstances.

- The role can be completed at home without a negative impact on the customer or the Company.

- Where the employee has successfully completed the probationary period/a period of training attached to their job role.
- Where their home environment is suitable.
- The employee is not under any form of performance management, whether informal or formal.
- The employee's disciplinary record is clean.

We will carefully assess the needs and requirements of a role before determining how the hybrid working relationship will work. It will only be permitted where the employee's line manager is satisfied that the needs of the business can continue to be met while the employee works from home.

Hybrid working must be cost-effective and ensure that there is no significant increase in workload on colleagues. The work done by the employee must be capable of being done from home.

The line manager may liaise with the HR department in relation to applications for homeworking, to confirm the arrangements.

Making permanent hybrid working applications

Employees that wish to apply for permanent hybrid working should submit an application to their line manager. If the request is for a permanent arrangement, it could be treated as a statutory flexible working request subject to eligibility.

Please refer to the separate flexible working policy for eligibility requirements for flexible working.

Employees in all areas and levels of the Company will be considered for flexible working regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, or gender reassignment status. All requests will be considered in line with the Company's policy on flexible working.

If the employee is not eligible to make a statutory flexible working request, they may still be able to make a separate request for hybrid working arrangements and should speak to their manager.

Homeworking may invalidate an employee's home contents insurance policy. Employees are required to check the policy prior to applying and, if successful, provide a copy of the policy wording and schedule to their line manager if their application is granted.

Please note that, separate to requests from staff, management may also seek to agree the implementation of permanent hybrid working arrangements.

Occasional homeworking applications

The application should set out the reasons for requesting hybrid working.

Examples may include a project or set of tasks that requires peace and quiet and a lack of interruptions. A backlog of tasks or a major project may also give rise to an employee wishing to request temporary hybrid working.

There may be family commitments such as the long-term illness of a relative or dependant. In this situation, we would also ask that you refer to the Company's policy on time off for dependants.

There could be benefit in hybrid working during recovery from mental or physical illnesses and/or to support in a phased return to work.

Various transport considerations may give rise to a request for hybrid working.

Process for submitting applications for hybrid working

Prior to making an application, you must discuss your proposed application with your line manager. During the discussion, you should consider the following aspects of the formal application and discuss any issues arising from the points below.

Once a discussion has been held with your line manager, you should submit a formal application, which should address the following points:

- confirmation that you meet the eligibility criteria for hybrid working
- the date from which the arrangements are intended to start
- the proposed number of days to work from home (maximum of 2 days at home is permitted by the Company, in the case of exceptional circumstances additional day may be approved by the area Director and HR)
- proposed hours of work
- the proposed organisation of the homeworking environment — available separate room, DSE desk set up, security arrangements for Company equipment and Company materials/documentation, etc
- extent of availability to attend the workplace, for meetings, to cover colleague absences, etc
- how you propose that contact will be maintained with your line manager
- home contents insurance allowing work to take place at your home address

As part of the application, you should demonstrate how you will achieve the following:

- managing workload independently
- self-motivation and working to own initiative
- adapting to the different working practices involved
- problem-solving and different pressures associated with working alone
- adapting to different methods of being line managed and liaising with colleagues.

If the application forms part of a statutory flexible working request, you should also provide additional information as outlined in the Company's policy on flexible working.

Application decisions

The Company aims to respond to formal applications for hybrid working within 4 weeks of the application being received by the employee's line manager.

Line managers may need to meet with the employee to discuss the issues arising from the application. A Company representative will likely visit the employee's home to carry out a risk assessment or conduct one virtually using Teams (or similar) video call.

Accepted applications

If the line manager accepts the employee's application, written confirmation will be provided, and a Homeworking Agreement will be issued for the employee to sign and return.

Each request is considered on its own merits.

Rejected applications

If the line manager is unable to accept the employee's application, the reasons for the rejection will be issued in writing to the employee. If the application formed part of a statutory flexible working request, employees will be permitted opportunity to appeal in line with the Company's usual process.

Hybrid working agreements and trial period

Accepted applications will be subject to the signing of a Homeworking Agreement and the successful completion of a trial period.

The aim of the trial period is for both the employee and the Company to evaluate whether the new working arrangements set out in the Homeworking Agreement work as expected.

At the end of the trial period, the line manager will meet with the employee to evaluate the success of the trial. The line manager will determine whether the trial has been successful and confirm that the Homeworking Agreement may continue. During the trial period, or at the evaluation meeting, either side may propose reasonable amendments to the terms of the Homeworking Agreement to facilitate a smoother working arrangement. The Company reserves the right to terminate the Homeworking Agreement by declaring the trial has been unsuccessful if proposed amendments are unreasonable or unworkable, no amendments can be implemented, or the employee's work output, quality, oversight, etc suffered to the detriment of the Company.

Homeworking Agreement

The Homeworking Agreement drawn up during the application process, and bespoke to the employee's circumstances, sets out the terms of the arrangement for the employee to work from home. It will reflect the following points, subject to any modification agreed during the trial, as well as the practical considerations to enable the homeworking to operate smoothly.

- The Company reserves the right to terminate the homeworking arrangement at any time for any reason on reasonable notice.
- Employees are required to be available during the core hours specified in their homeworking agreement.
- If any issue arises that causes an employee to no longer meet the eligibility criteria at the outset of this policy, the Company will review the homeworking arrangement and may terminate it on reasonable notice.
- The homeworking arrangements will be subject to regular review.
- Employees working from home will be expected to attend meetings and other office-based events as and when required by their line manager.
- Employees working from home are required to comply with Company policies, including holiday, performance targets, sickness, absence, etc.

Homeworking practical arrangements

All homeworking arrangements are agreed on the understanding that, at no time, you are working outside of the UK or from your mobile phone as opposed to utilising your desk set up and equipment.

The Company supplies homeworkers with the necessary equipment relevant to their job role. The equipment remains the Company's property and will be installed and removed at the Company's cost. The Company may need to attend the employee's home to update, maintain or repair/replace the equipment and will give the employee reasonable notice of the need for this.

Employees should take reasonable care of the Company equipment and only use it for Company business. IT and telephony equipment may only be used in accordance with the Company's IT, telephony, data protection and monitoring policies.

Personal equipment that an employee uses for work purposes remains their responsibility and the Company is not liable for any loss, damage, repair or replacement of any personal equipment. If an item of equipment is deemed necessary for work, the employee should contact their line manager.

Employees should maintain regular contact with their line manager so that the Company can work

towards early resolution of any problems. This applies to problems with Company equipment and also in relation to the ongoing suitability of the homeworking arrangement; pressures and stress occur equally to homeworkers as they do to those working at the Company's offices and the Company encourages the early reporting of these issues so that practical steps can be considered and implemented to the mutual agreement of both the homeworker and the line manager.

The costs of electricity, water, heating, telephone, broadband and other utilities will not be covered by the Company. These costs will remain the employee's responsibility.

Employees must keep Company data and Company materials safe and secure at all times, ensuring reasonable precautions are being taken to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the data protection policy. No PM (secure protectively marked) projects are to be worked on off site unless a clear strategy has been put in place with the Security Controller.

Employees should refrain from revealing to customers/clients that they work from home. Employees must not provide their personal address or personal contact details to customers/clients or third parties associated with the Company. In person meetings between customers/clients and employees at home are prohibited. All communications should be routed through the Company.

While working from home, any childcare responsibilities or other caring responsibilities should be treated in the same way as they are while you are in the office. For the avoidance of doubt, this means that under no circumstances should you be fulfilling caring responsibilities during your working hours.

Health and safety for homeworkers

The Company's health and safety policy applies to homeworkers. Employees should refer to the separate health and safety policy for more details.

Homeworkers are required to comply with a number of health and safety considerations in respect of the space utilised as their workplace in their home environment. Homeworkers are required to attend the office to undergo health and safety training.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment will be undertaken to determine any relevant risks and to prevent harm to the homeworker or anyone else who may be affected by their work, in respect of the workplace itself and the working arrangements. The Company may need to check such workplaces from time to time as the homeworking arrangement proceeds. The Company may require self-assessment of some of the aspects of the workplace and training may be provided as necessary. Any steps necessary from these various risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure the homeworker has a safe workplace.

A specific risk assessment will be done on employees who inform the Company that they are pregnant. In order for this to take place, homeworking employees who become pregnant should notify their line manager of their pregnancy immediately.

Moving home

If employees move home, the hybrid working arrangement will be reassessed. If the Company considers that the house move would make, or has made, homeworking unsuitable, this may result in the homeworking period coming to an end.

Electrical equipment

Homeworkers are required to use all equipment supplied by the Company safely and in accordance with best practice and manufacturer's guidelines. The Company will check all Company electrical equipment for safety. Homeworkers will be responsible for any other electrical equipment used by them in their work activities and will continue to be responsible for the safety of electrical sockets and wiring

in their home.

Working hours

Employees are responsible for ensuring they complete their working hours as defined in their contracts of employment whilst working from home.

Working time

Employees are responsible for ensuring they take their rest breaks as defined in their contracts of employment. Working time should be monitored and rest breaks of at least 20 minutes for every six hours of working should be taken.

Positioning of equipment

Training on the ergonomic positioning of IT equipment will be provided during the implementation of the homeworking arrangement, together with best practice guidance on breaks. The Company will provide checklists for this for the benefit of employees.

Employee conduct

If hybrid working becomes unsuitable due to employee conduct or performance, the homeworking arrangement may be terminated immediately. Further disciplinary action may also be taken in line with Company policy.