

Hybrid Working

Reference Number: F4635
Date of Response: 8th June 2022

Further to your Freedom of Information Act request, please find the Trust's response, in **blue bold text** below:

Royal Devon's Eastern FOI Office Response

1. Send me a full copy of your current policy on this issue

The Trust is developing a formal Agile Working Policy. In the interim, a Guidance and Toolkit for Managers and Staff has been published as a reference source for colleagues working across locations, including from home. Please see attached PDF.

2. Let me know how many of your staff are currently approved for hybrid working - ie they do not have to be in the office every day. If you are able to say what department they are in that would be ideal i.e. 10 from communications, 5 directors/heads of service etc

This data is not collected centrally. Working arrangements are voluntarily agreed at a local level between the employee and service manager taking into consideration ability to work from home, relevant access to IT equipment, space at home, DSE assessment and work/life balance.

Managers must ensure that staff working from a location off-site, including from home, are able to carry out their duties to an equal standard as would be expected on-site, and that delivery of service is not adversely affected by staff working from home or any other location off-site. A 'Voluntary Working from Home Agreement' is to be completed and kept on the employee's file.

3. If it is not included in the policy, please let me know if there is an expected proportion of time that these staff must spend in the office each week or month

Formal and informal working arrangements agreed between manager and staff will take into consideration the ability to perform the tasks expected of the role, and whether service delivery might be impacted. As such, where it is decided that a proportion of contracted hours require attendance on-site in order for duties to be performed to the expected standard, this should be agreed and reviewed regularly, at a minimum once yearly and syncing the review in line with the colleague's annual appraisal to help keep things on track. In the meantime, both parties can regularly review and discuss working arrangements during 1:1's.



**Royal Devon
University Healthcare**
NHS Foundation Trust

Managing Teams at a Distance

Line Manager and Colleague: Guidance and Toolkit

(Including Working from Home arrangements)

Introduction

Back in March 2020, what unfolded was a year like no other, the way in which we served the patients of the Trust was transformed by the Covid-19 pandemic, our priorities and even where we worked changed. At times it may have felt like a rollercoaster ride, but the workforce response to the challenge was exceptional, engaged teams, high levels of cross team co-operation, all embracing and accelerating technology.

As we look to the future and continue on our journey of recovery to overcome the impact of the pandemic, it's clear that we may continue to face operational challenges brought about by Covid-19. The COVID 19 pandemic effectively changed "overnight" how we worked, we had to move away from the traditional model of working with many colleagues and teams working at different locations, including home, for at least some, and often much, of their working time.

As an organisation, we acknowledge that we've still got some work to do in terms of formalising and reaching agreement on an Agile Working Policy for how we operate in the post pandemic future. We understand that neither 100% working at home or 100% office based is necessarily appropriate.

Until such time that an Agile Working Policy is agreed and introduced we have developed guidance and a toolkit to assist line managers, teams and individuals when working from home and in an agile way.

While managing teams from afar isn't new per se (many global organisations have been operating this way for years), it has not been the norm for most NHS Trusts. This document sets out some guidance when leading teams remotely along with some practical pointers for supporting colleagues when working from home.

You will find guidance and information to help with:

- Managing teams at a distance
- Working from Home arrangements.
- Line manager and Colleague FAQs.

Guidance & Information

Returning to the office

It's important to acknowledge that many of our colleagues who have been working from home during the pandemic may want to continue with this way of working as it benefits their work and personal life balance, some may wish to adapt a mix of office and working from home and others may wish to return to the office on a full-time basis.

Research from the CIPD indicates most people can work just as productively, if not more so, from home and that most people would like a mix of office and home working. Many factors affect a person's professional performance, including their environment, the ability to collaborate or to work quietly and whether they feel a sense of purpose and belonging. Working in the workplace may improve the performance and wellbeing of some people, while others may be more productive working from home. (Source CIPD)

Line managers are encouraged to have conversations with their teams to understand whether they would like to return to the office or work from home on a voluntary basis. The Working from Home: Self-Assessment Checklist will be helpful when holding conversations with individual team members (**Appendix 1**). The following should be considered and discussed with individual team members during these conversations:

- Team work
- Organisational and service needs
- Colleagues individual personal circumstance
- Home Working Arrangements are Voluntary

Prior to agreeing to voluntary working from home arrangements, line managers should reassure themselves that they have the right people, in the right place, at the right time to deliver their services and that health and wellbeing is at the heart of each and every decision made.

New ways of working

It's recognised to be successful, teams and managers need a framework within which they can operate with relative freedom. You may find the framework for leadership guidance to be helpful and this was derived from the document by Derek Mowbray entitled "Together Apart – Managing Workers at a Distance". The framework has six elements leading to team adaptability. **(Appendix 2)**

You may also find the following information, tools and guidance helpful when discussing, implementing and agreeing to voluntary working from home arrangements with your team:

- Wellbeing;
- Considerations; who may be able to work from home?
- Responsibilities;
- Digital Services requirements;
- Health and Safety;
- Data Security and Confidentiality;
- Tax relief for homeworking expenses;
- Addition Equipment-office furniture;
- Additional Considerations- when working from home;

Wellbeing

We know that it can take some time to adjust to working from home for a prolonged period of time. However; it may also provide some opportunities. It's easy to neglect your own wellbeing when working hard to support the organisation, so employees should take some steps to look after their mental and physical health.

When working from home individuals may not have such a rigid work schedule when at home, but when your living space is also your work space it is easy to fall into a trap of never 'switching off'. It's really important to encourage teams to have boundary-settings and routines to improve wellbeing and prevent overwork.

Line managers should discuss and encourage teams to try and establish a new routine to help them get the most from working at home whilst looking after their own wellbeing e.g. prevent draining of energy that comes from constant video calls or team meetings, don't have an hour call, make it 50-minutes or 20-minute meeting instead of 30 minutes, this will help build natural breaks into everyone's day.

Managers play a vital role in determining the health, wellbeing and engagement of their team. This may appear to be challenging when teams are working in an agile

way, be that in the office or from home. Effective agile working is facilitated by strong communication. Communication needs to be more intentional and planned in an agile environment, as there might be fewer casual or ad hoc conversations. One of the most important factors in communicating with an agile team is ensuring that information reaches everyone, wherever and whenever they are working. Equal access to information and knowledge is key to preventing communication issues and feelings of unfairness.

As a manager, ensure that you have regular 1-2-1 time with your team. This is good practice at any time, but when you may not be working in the same place or at the same time as your team, scheduling regular time to keep in touch becomes even more important. These meetings can be online or face to face.

If you are working in an agile way yourself, don't forget to be clear with your team about when you are in the office, or when you are working so that your team know how to get in touch with you - and always provide opportunities for employees to speak with you one to-one.

Please visit the Staff Health and Wellbeing Support page for additional information and resources.

Considerations: who may be able to work from home?

Home working will be dependent on the needs of the organisation and specific teams. Line managers must be transparent, open and honest with their teams to avoid criticism when approving or declining working from home arrangements. When deciding upon suitability prior to approval, line managers should take the following into consideration and discuss with the individual:

- can the job be carried out from home?
- does the role require time spent in the workplace, if so, what does this look like?
- level of support and supervision required
- does the nature of the role enable the individual to organise their own workload?
- communication, ways of working updates, keeping in touch with each other and the wider team.
- does the colleague have the right equipment to enable them to work from home?
- lone working risks; please visit [BOB for Northern](#) and [HUB](#) for Eastern
- seek to understand how safe the home environment is for the colleague; will home working raise domestic stress for the colleague? For further information and guidance please visit the Domestic Violence and Abuse (for Staff) Policy, on [BOB for Northern](#) and Domestic Abuse Affecting Staff (Perpetrators and Victims) policy [HUB](#) for Eastern.

Previously certain roles may have been considered to be unsuitable for home working. These jobs generally have a requirement for roles to be based on a specific site for all or the majority of their working time (for example, because it involves a high degree of “face to face” interaction with, patients, colleagues or third parties or involves the provision or services or use of equipment that is only available in the workplace). However, it may be possible to also consider these roles for home working to support e.g. self-directed learning. Roles that may only be able to sustain a very limited degree of home working include, but are not limited to:

- Staff directly supporting patients in an inpatient setting
- Receptionists
- Many Hotel Services posts

Planning and implementing

It takes time to set up an agile team as it involves more than just changing processes. It also requires a change of culture, allowing the team to develop, deliver and own the new ways of working, focusing on measuring performance through productivity rather than being seen in the office or team base every day. This is achieved by managers and colleagues having a clear plan and setting tangible objectives for individuals and the team. A Manager’s Checklist is available to sense check that the colleague is fully prepared to work from home. **(Appendix 3)**

It’s equally important to plan a review, presenting both colleague and line manager with an opportunity to discuss how well the arrangements are working, and to establish if there are any further adjustments required to support ways of working, Working from Home Voluntary agreement. **(Appendix 4)**

Holding regular 1:1’s with team members is good practice, but when you and your team are not in the same place or at the same time, scheduling regular time to keep in touch becomes even more important, and the 1:1 should also cover the individual’s health and wellbeing as per the H&W Risk Assessment.

Existing work methods may need to be reviewed to ensure available resources are used to provide maximum benefit, first and foremost to patients, service users, and inclusive of the whole team.

Being part of an agile team requires trust between managers and team members that the job is being done to the required standard within contracted hours. Information on performance is provided by the way people behave, evidence of work completed and feedback from patients and service users.

To ensure team members have privacy when they are not working, enabling them to keep a healthy work life balance the following should be agreed in advance and shared with colleagues:

- working patterns,
- working hours and
- contact arrangements

Line managers may need to develop strategies to improve working practices and behaviours, for effective and productive agile working, please see **Appendix 5** for additional information.

Reviewing arrangements

To ensure that the home working arrangements is not detrimental to the individual, service delivery or the team and other colleagues, its recommended that a review should take place annually and syncing the review in line with the colleague's annual appraisal will help keep things on track. In the meantime, it's important both parties seize the opportunity to regularly review and discuss working arrangements during 1:1s. Should the colleague or manager find that the home working arrangements are unworkable or there's a change in the colleague's circumstances then both parties should discuss and reach a reasonable notice period to end home working arrangements and return to working from their workplace at the trust.

Where an agreement is in place its good practice to place a copy of the Voluntary Working from Home Arrangements (**Appendix 4**), on a colleague's personal file.

Trialling: Home Working

Where there is some uncertainty about whether working from home arrangements are practicable for the colleague and/or the organisation a trial period may be agreed. If a trial period is arranged sufficient time should be allowed for the colleague and line manager to implement and become used to the new working arrangements before taking any decisions on the viability of a new arrangement.

All arrangements should be reviewed annually or more frequently if required and as previously recommend as part of the annual appraisal cycle to ensure they remain appropriate to the individual, team and service.

Appealing an outcome

Where a colleague believes that their request for home working has been unreasonably refused the principles of the Flexible Working Policy should be followed to lodge an appeal.

Please refer to the Trust's Flexible Working Policy for further guidance. For Northern services please click [here](#) and for Eastern services click [here](#).

Responsibilities

Additional Manager Responsibilities

- as well as normal day to day supervision ensure adherence to the Trust's formal supervision standards is maintained
- as well as promoting the health and wellbeing measures detailed above, ensure that individuals are working in accordance with the requirements of the Working Time Regulations and Lone Working
- ensure that through their actions they do not expose the Trust to any unnecessary financial, legal or contractual risks
- where necessary, have suitable recording mechanisms in place to monitor "office cover" and where colleagues are working
- ensure access to files and data is provided, although this is likely to be in a central file and not alongside a specific workstation
- ensure suitable storage and filing for colleagues who leave their workplace office workstation clear for other users
- agree rules around storing information and data protection for colleagues working at home
- to assist the employee in completing the Home Working Self-Assessment Checklist at **Appendix 1** and ensure a copy is retained on the employees personal file.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees should ensure that wherever they are working, that they are fully contactable by their team and that they are doing the job that is expected of them and that they attend meetings, team days, corporate events and training when requested and is safe for the individual to do so. There is a particular responsibility to:

- follow and work to all Trust policies and procedures
- keeping line manager informed as required on the progress of work and any issues of concern
- ensure working hours are recorded accurately in Health Roster (where applicable)

- take reasonable care of their own health and safety
- be responsible for maintaining appropriate security requirements in relation to the use of equipment and information
- be open and willing to discuss alternatives or changes to working from home arrangements
- to complete the Home Working Self-Assessment Checklist at **Appendix 1**

Digital Services requirements

Recommended for colleagues when working from home:

- Trust issued Desktop or All In One device
- Mobile and/or softphone
- Trust issued monitor
- Trust issued keyboard
- Trust issued mouse
- Trust issued headset for telephone contact / Microsoft Teams meetings/Digital dictation
- Remote access to Trust network resources

Employees must ensure that they have adequate 'bandwidth' to support sufficiently responsive application performance and routine system updates for security and functionality enhancements.

Please note, Digital Service colleagues, are unable to support connectivity issues within the home environment. Also, equipment must be returned to the relevant Trust base by the employee to resolve issues, if unable to fix remotely.

Pre-Remote Working

Colleagues must log on to their device and connect via a non-trust network to test that the remote access VPN works.

Colleagues must also have their domain account in place and set up with a valid Passphrase before they commence home working. This prevents any issues with Digital Services Service Desk being able to provide support with connectivity or other technical issues.

Individual equipment may vary on a case-by-case basis, e.g. to meet DSE or Equality Act. Both line manager and individual should discuss equipment requirements and refer to IT equipment guidance prior to submitting requests or purchasing new equipment.

Additional items may be provided, for example an extra display monitor or rising desk. These requests require line manager authorisation and approval.

All IT equipment will be funded by the Department requesting, unless agreed otherwise at Executive level.

Where equipment is provided employees must:

- use it only for the purposes for which the Trust has provided it;
- use it only in accordance with any operating instructions and Trust policies and procedures; and
- collect equipment from a Trust site to support home working set up; and
- return it to site or make it available for collection by the Trust or on the Trust's behalf when requested to do so.

There may be occasions when devices require periodic updates, the user will be required to return their equipment to the Trust's IT base as and when required to do so.

Also, when support for hardware that requires physical attention will require a return to Trust base in order that engineers can ensure that all is working properly before equipment is taken away for home working.

Any hardware removed from Trust premises for home working should be recorded as such by informing the Service Desk North. (Recorded on ESR by the line manager for Eastern of the change in location).

Health and Safety

The Trust has come to recognise that the ability to work in a flexible way, including agile styles e.g. working from home, can benefit both the colleague and the organisation. However, in doing this the Trust still retains legal responsibilities including in the area of Health and Safety legislation.

When working away from work premises, there can be health and safety hazards involved which will vary depending on the work being undertaken. It is therefore important to be aware of the key health and safety issues both individuals and managers will need to consider when planning or implementing working arrangements.

Display, Screen, Equipment (DSE) Assessment

This is no different when working remotely from the office, a DSE assessment should take place.

Please use the following link by clicking here (LINK TO [BOB/HUB](#)) for further DSE guidance and the trust's DSE form for completion, the DSE should then be returned to the line manager where they can determine any actions that may be required.

Preventing injury

Home working environments tend to be very different to the working office; not everyone has a dedicated room or space to work, so sometimes we make do with the furniture we have, and do not realise this could be a contributing factor to pain and discomfort. This may be caused by poor posture, equipment or furniture design, workstation arrangements, working environment, duration of work and/or tasks involved. We all need to take responsibility to ensure our own health and wellbeing, but we do have a number of tips to help.

Bad posture and habits can lead to pain, discomfort and musculoskeletal (MSK) injuries. The effects may not be immediate, but can develop overtime. As the use of technology increases and when working in an agile way staff may not have a desk and chair similar to that which they have in the office. We want to provide as much help, support and guidance as reasonable to prevent injury when working in an agile way.

Here are some tips to use and discuss with colleagues to reduce the likelihood of injury and musculoskeletal disorders.

Setting up your working environment:

- As far as possible, set yourself up a work space as you would on site. Line managers should seek to understand if any additional equipment is required, facilitate where possible or seek further advice.
- Try to minimise distractions within your work space.
- Make sure that colleagues know they are required to set up any Display Screen Equipment (DSE) according to the advice provided by the Backcare Team, please see **Appendix 6**.

Additional guidance and resources can be found on the Health and Wellbeing support page for the Trust. (LINK TO [BOB/HUB](#)).

Accident reporting

Just like being in the workplace, accidents must be reported immediately as set out on the Trusts Health and Safety page. Staff who injure themselves at work are required to complete an incident report form known as DATIX.

For further information and guidance please visit the Health and Safety page by clicking here (LINK TO [BOB/HUB](#)).

Personal Safety

For your own personal safety, you must not have physical (face to face) meetings in your home with patients or suppliers, and you must not give patients or suppliers your home address or telephone number.

Physical environment

Existing working environment adjustments that have been made for colleagues with a disability should continue and need to be taken into consideration when planning any changes to team working arrangements. Requirements for specialist equipment need to be considered during workspace planning

A good workplace layout is required to encourage people to work at different desks. All unallocated workstations, including chairs, should be adjustable to meet the majority of employees' needs. Employees need to adjust their workstation in keeping with the DSE workstation guidance. Checklists at workstations can be provided. Similarly, specific equipment (e.g. left-handed mouse, specially designed keyboard) should be available so that adaptations can be easily made to any desk as and when a member of staff requires it.

Data Security and Confidentiality

When using trust equipment, private and confidential material, every effort should be made to keep it safe and secure. It's important that you only use equipment which has been provided by or authorised by the Trust. You should comply with Trust guidance and instructions relating to Information Governance, please click here ([LINK TO BOB/HUB](#)) for further information.

It is vital all employees understand that they are responsible for all information security at home and when travelling, including equipment and any physical documents. **When working from home it's recommended that the use of paper documents should be kept to a minimum, and where possible all information recorded electronically.** It's much safer to work in a paper-less manner, but there is understanding that some roles will require a paper-lite approach.

Document destruction is paramount when preserving confidentiality and prevents the risk of confidential patient or staff information ending up in a waste dump, found in the streets or is stolen in a burglary, resulting in a data breach.

For proper destruction, colleagues can access their workplace (a healthcare or office setting), the best method is to place paperwork into a Trust confidential waste bin so it can be shredded.

The essential approach must be that colleagues take care with any work-related paperwork at home:

- Store in a secure and confidential manner
- Avoid leaving confidential documents in a car for any length of time e.g. overnight or when working at various locations. If only option, leave out of sight.

- Blacking out (redacting) patient names and other sensitive personal information
- Ripping paper to separate names from paper records.
- Until documents can be securely disposed of consider, crumpling sheets up, ripping them, and storing safely until they can be destroyed.
- Return it to their office to store safely or scan
- Return it to their office and place in a confidential waste bin

It is the responsibility of the individual to be aware of “shoulder surfers” especially when working away from trust sites.

If you discover or suspect that there has been an incident involving the security of information (and / or equipment) relating to the Trust, patients, staff or anyone working with or for the Trust, you must inform your manager and report it immediately via Datix the Incident Reporting system, which can be found here (LINK TO [BOB/HUB](#)). For additional information related to Management of paper records please see **Appendix 7**.

Tax relief for homeworking expenses

You may be able to claim tax relief directly from HMRC. For further information how to make a homeworking tax relief claim please click [here](#) for HMRC information and guidance.

It's important to note, home working arrangements will be entered into voluntarily, and by mutual agreement. When entering into a voluntary agreement to work from home this is made with acceptance and understanding that the Trust will not make any financial reimbursements to the individual.

Working at or from home may affect your home and contents insurance policy, mortgage, lease or rental agreement. It's your responsibility to make any necessary arrangements with your insurers, bank, mortgage provider or landlord before commencing homeworking.

Additional Equipment-office furniture

When additional office furniture is required to support agile home working, it will be the responsibility of the Line Manager to make the necessary arrangements via the EROS/Web Basket system for the Trust (from the Departmental budget) to provide such equipment as this is the preferred method when providing office furniture to staff when working from home, or in exceptional circumstances reimburse the staff member for the cost of purchasing this themselves (on receipt of a valid invoice) up to a value comparable with the Trust's contracted costs.

When specialised office equipment is required to support agile home working e.g. advised by OH, line managers should process these requests through their departmental requisitioners, via Procurement.

Managers and individuals should be aware that there is a lead time of between 4-6 weeks to order a standard Trust chair via EROS/Web Basket.

Printing

Printers will not be provided as standard by the Trust when working from home.

Where documents need to be physically reviewed/signed printers will only be provided where there is an arrangement in place to securely dispose of Trust Personal Identifier (PID) data.

Collection of furniture

Furniture ordered through EROS/Web Basket for agile home working use may be delivered to private home addresses. Line managers should explore the options set up within EROS/Web Basket for “Home Working furniture” making clear the delivery address. Please contact the Procurement Team if further guidance/advice is required.

Where the staff member is purchasing an office chair themselves, they should ensure that they purchase one which has the essential features of an office chair – see the link below for guidance.

<https://www.posturedirect.com/what-to-look-for-in-a-good-office-chair>

Where any additional equipment/furniture is provided by the Trust, this must be recorded on the Asset Register on ESR by the Line Manager in order to have a log of any equipment/furniture to be returned (either on termination of this element of Home Working or upon termination of employment with the Trust).

All equipment remains the property of the Trust and colleagues must ensure that it is only used for the purposes for which it has been provided.

Additional Considerations- when working from home

Recording hours of work

The manager and the team will decide how to record work hours, e.g. on Employee Online where available. This information will also provide valuable insight into workload capacity, team capacity, training needs, and individual needs or reasonable adjustments.

Students and Learners

All students hosted by the Trust will be treated with the same respect and consideration as our direct employees; in collaboration with their academic institutions. Staff new to the Trust, in a new role or on in-house training programmes will be supported to develop in their role with the appropriate level of supervision and support required in line with existing policies/guidance and professional body requirements.

Supporting education for students is a fundamental value of the Trust and the organisation supports all of our employees to develop and establish a positive environment in which students can learn.

Students and learners must not attend another colleague's home to work or job shadow, this is outside of Trust policy and deemed inappropriate.

Performance management

Managers and staff must ensure that appropriate performance management arrangements are in place prior to working from home sign off. Any type of agile working needs to be regularly reviewed so that both service and individual needs are being met.

Consideration will need to be taken to ensure that:

- an agile workforce does not adversely affect service delivery;
- communication between managers and individual staff members continues; and
- the Trust's benefits are realised.

Where there is a concern about an individual's performance, their working arrangements may need to be reviewed to ensure that an accurate assessment of their work activity can be obtained. If an individual is working a high proportion of their time at home, they may be required to work from a Trust base instead.

Additional support

Line managers requiring further advice or support, please contact your People/Workforce Business Partner.

Additional Guidance

Further resources are also available via BOB and HUB:
Health and Wellbeing pages
Flexible Working Policy
Information Governance
Risk Assessments
Health and Safety

Enabling and supporting staff to work from home-

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/enabling-and-supporting-staff-work-home>

NHS-

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/health-and-wellbeing-programmes/nhs-health-and-wellbeing-framework/case-studies/working-from-home-pennine-care-nhs-foundation-trust/>

Domestic Violence-

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/domestic-violence>