

EXAMPLE POLICY

Posturite Limited | 2022

Hybrid Working Policy

Incorporating home, remote working
and use of multiuser workstations

Purpose

This policy is intended to facilitate hybrid working practices. Hybrid working is an approach to work that aims to improve flexibility by taking a fresh look at where and how tasks are carried out.

It should enable individuals and managers to review the way they work and consider if there is a more effective way of achieving work tasks and personal life commitments by adapting working patterns, hours or location with resulting personal, economic, social and environmental benefits. The approach is being introduced in response to:

- infection control
- a recognition of increased effectiveness of remote working
- a desire to achieve cost savings through a reduction in office accommodation
- changes in the wider working environment and a desire for flexibility
- support employees' physical and mental wellbeing.

Hybrid working works on the assumption that few staff will have a permanent desk in offices. Working at home, on client sites, using co-working spaces or from multiple offices using a multiuser desk and workspaces, and that this will now be the normal way of working for the majority of staff.

Scope

This policy extends beyond the legislation which gives some employees the right to request **flexible working** and intends to enable hybrid working in all situations where it is feasible.

This policy details the procedures relating to requesting hybrid working. It also provides links to the various part-time working and flexible working policies which may be more appropriate for those who require a more formal variation to terms and conditions.

This policy is non-contractual and does not form part of an employee's contract of employment. This policy may be amended or withdrawn at any time.

Policy statement

Well-designed hybrid working practices have benefits to individuals, the business, and the wider society. These include:

- reduced office space requirements
- increased efficiency for employees and the business, due to a reduction of commuting and business travel time
- availability of a wider skills pool for many roles, as location becomes less of a deciding factor in resourcing decisions for some tasks
- a better work-life balance for employees which supports their other commitments
- reduced environmental impact as a result of reduced transport.

Hybrid working recognises employees often have responsibilities and commitments in addition to the responsibilities they have at work. It appreciates that, at times, it is difficult to balance these demands and that undue pressure is caused when a conflict occurs between work and home life, affecting the wellbeing of those concerned.

Hybrid working agreements

Hybrid working arrangements will need to be mutually acceptable to the business and the employee, and not all roles are suitable for hybrid working arrangements. Employees and managers need to work together to explore options which can meet the needs of both parties.

Hybrid working will be widespread and so the decision-making process for hybrid working applications is as streamlined as possible. It is the line manager for the individual asking for routine hybrid working who will make a decision about whether hybrid working practices are appropriate in that individual's case.

A hybrid working arrangement may be permanent for a role or for a defined period of time, or for the duration of a specified role. However, it may not be appropriate for all employees in the same roles due to the employee's personal circumstances. It is likely to include one or more of the following elements:

- home working
- remote regional office/site working using shared spaces
- use of co-working spaces
- use of multi-user workstations (hot desks) on site
- varied hours or working pattern.

All staff who are undertaking to work from home should refer to the Company Home Working Guidelines below, to ensure that they are aware of the implications. An assessment of domestic premises will also be needed, and any necessary adjustments made prior to commencing working from home as part of the hybrid working strategy. If the domestic situation changes, there will need to be a new review.

Wherever and whenever employees work, the employer has the same duty of care to their employees. They will support them to ensure that the working environment and practices are suitable.

Informal hybrid working arrangements are likely to be only for the duration of an agreed role or project. They will need to be revisited and any appropriate revisions agreed at the end of this period, or when a role or project changes.

Changes in domestic circumstances or a significant change in the employee role or project are possible reasons to review and possibly make changes to the hybrid working arrangements. All proposed changes will be considered on an individual case basis in the same way as an initial assessment.

If an existing agreement has included home working and a house move is planned, the continuation of home working will be subject to the location and facilities of the new accommodation being acceptable. A new assessment of domestic premises should be required.

The manager should have the right to alter or end a hybrid working agreement by giving reasonable notice and reason.

Home working guidelines

It is usually the case that working from home forms part of hybrid working and that a combination of home, office and/or other site working forms the working week. However not all jobs are suitable to be performed from home, just as not all employees will be suited to work from home or their home situation suitable. The employee and manager should refer to the company guidelines before agreeing to any form of home working.

Where the role is appropriate and the situation permits, employees and managers may agree to a suitable arrangement where all or part of a working pattern may take place from home. In this situation, an office-based desk is unlikely to be assigned to that employee and they would be required to use a multiuser workstation when spending time in the office. To be able to work from home at all a member of staff does not need to have *home* as their contractual base. In order to have a formal contractual base of *home* the staff member would normally be expected to work from home for the majority of their working hours. There are tax implications to changing a base office which need to be considered.

Employees who have been given approval by their manager to work from home should follow the company **home working guidelines**. An assessment of homework environment must be undertaken to ensure its suitability for work, before commencing working from home.

Process for agreeing to home working

In order to include home working as either part of an informal hybrid working arrangement, or as part of a more formal change to terms and conditions of employment, the following process should be followed:

1. An agreement in principle to home working should be gained from the line manager
2. An assessment of their homework area should be undertaken, to identify any issues that may prevent them working from home
3. Any issues identified in the assessment prior to commencing home working need to be resolved
4. An annual review of the assessment is required to ensure the home environment continues to be suitable.

Health and safety issues

Risk assessment of home working environment

If an agreement is in place for hybrid working which includes home working, the employee will need to demonstrate that they have a suitable home working environment by successfully completing a risk assessment.

Initially this will be a self-assessment to ensure that the homework environment is suitably set up and equipped. If any additional equipment is required as a result of the assessment, this should be discussed with the manager.

Ongoing self-assessment

It is important that you undertake a self-assessment for every work environment (office, home, co-working spaces, multiuser workstation) that you use to ensure they are of acceptable standard and that you can achieve a suitable set-up. If additional equipment is required in any regular situation, you need to discuss this with your line manager.

General considerations

Managers should be given specific guidance on how to enable the company hybrid working. For home working in particular, they must consider the risks of isolation (e.g., having an accident in working time). The manager will decide if home working is feasible and appropriate for employees and must do this by applying the same principles for all employees. Working from home is subject to the following:

- it is possible to perform the individual's role or job from home
- the employee is willing to do so
- it is reasonably practicable for the employee to do so
- an assessment of homework environment being successfully undertaken. Any risks identified must be managed to ensure that the home working environment is suitable and complies with legislation governing health and safety at work and the company policies. Assessment for home-based working is mandatory and must be repeated on a regular basis at least annually
- the employee has notified the company of any pre-existing health conditions or concerns which may be affected by hybrid working
- the employee has confirmed that they have notified their landlord/mortgage provider and insurance provider(s) of their intention to work from home
- the assessment of the homework environment has been signed off by the manager to show that the necessary checks have been undertaken and equipment ordered/provided
- an agreement to home working has been given
- the assessment form is stored in the employee's personal file.

Working hours and time management

Working times and availability should be agreed between employee and manager, as well as how to make contact in an emergency. If no specific arrangements are made, standard working hours will apply, as in the employee's terms and conditions of employment.

Where the employee works away from the office, they must ensure that their manager or other nominated person knows their whereabouts whilst they are at work. If electronic diaries are used these must be kept up to date with location information.

Maintaining contact

The employee's location should not change the tasks undertaken or negatively affect people that the employee is in contact with. Staff working at home should be just as easy to reach as those in an office.

Arrangements should also be made for contact and for dealing with post.

It is vitally important that supervision of the hybrid worker is arranged to ensure the health and safety of that person. Appropriate contact with the employee must be agreed and maintained.

An appropriate escalation procedure must be in place should an arranged contact not be made.

Expenses

Should the employee incur additional home insurance premiums as a result of working from home, these need to be discussed with the line manager.

Should the employee need consumables these need to be discussed with the line manager.

Travel between an employee's home and a permanent workplace is not considered business travel and therefore expenses for such journeys cannot be claimed. An employee's permanent workplace is considered to be that which is stated in their contract of employment.

Where an employee has approval to work from home and their employment base remains unchanged, then travel expenses to and from their normal office base may not be claimed. Travel to any temporary workplace may be claimed.

For employees who have their contractual base office changed to "home", and who travel to and from any temporary workplace, including to any company office or client site, in the performance of their duties, may claim business travel expenses for such journeys. It should be noted however, from a tax perspective, that a temporary workplace may become a permanent workplace if the employee attends regularly or follows a pattern.

IT support and security

Company computer use policy applies to all employees, whether they are working from home or from an office. Support calls should be logged using the normal procedures, employees will be instructed to bring or arrange delivery of faulty equipment to a suitable location if it requires repair.

Employees will be required to take company equipment that they use away from the office to locations for routine maintenance and repair as requested. This will enable the company to ensure the safety of employees and fulfil its legal obligations. If an employee is unable to take equipment to a location for inspection/testing or repair, this must be discussed with their manager at the earliest opportunity.

Connection faults due to power or internet connection issues will usually need to be dealt with by the staff member. Should such a fault be more than of a very temporary nature, they may need to go to a company office in order to carry out their work duties until the problem is corrected. The employee is required to advise their manager of the situation if the problem lasts for more than one hour.

Personal equipment is not supported by the company. The company's confidentiality policy applies to those working at home or other sites and care should be taken to ensure adequate security measures have been taken to prevent either deliberate or inadvertent breaches of this policy.

Access

In order to comply with Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, 'not to hinder any procedure that is specifically designed to safeguard the health and safety of the employee', employees who have been given approval to work from home or other sites should allow the company reasonable access to their home, if necessary, by mutual arrangement. On such occasions, the company must provide advance written notice, stating the reasons access is required and who will be attending on behalf of the company.

The company retains the right of access to any company information that is held at the home of the employee, and the right to review use and confidentiality of this information and of any company equipment.

Office equipment and furniture

If the assessment of homework environment shows that additional equipment and/or furniture is necessary to enable home working, then:

- furniture and equipment need to be discussed with the line manager
- all office furniture and equipment used must meet health and safety standards
- the employee must take reasonable care of any company equipment provided while it is in their home.

If the home worker chooses to purchase or use personal equipment and/or furniture for work purposes, then:

- it must be suitable as per the standards specified in the assessment of homework environment and meet the requirements of DSE regulations (this covers furniture as well as equipment); and,
- they do so at their own expense.

Should the home worker require additional furniture and/or equipment for the purposes of their work, they should raise this with their manager. The final decision lies with the budget holder.

Contractual changes

The majority of existing terms and conditions of employment will continue to apply to Hybrid employees; however, specific home/hybrid working terms and conditions may supplement these.

A change of contract would occur where the contractual base office changes. Such a change needs HR authorisation to ensure that all the legal, tax and social implications have been considered. Any agreement that is linked to the employees' current address and any planned changes to the home address will require a new contractual agreement.

However, with all contracts the company reserves the right to require the employee to work from other locations in line with standard contractual mobility clauses, for example on client site. The company may also require attendance at a company office.

Multiuser workstations

To ensure that employees are able to work effectively, it is vital that when staff with hybrid working agreements need to work in an office at which they do not have an allocated desk, that they are able to reserve and have guaranteed use of a desk in a known location. For this reason, a booking system should be used by all staff to ensure that capacity planning can be undertaken and that business requirements can be met as efficiently as possible.

The company will be operating a clear desk policy to facilitate the use of Multiuser workstations.

Associated procedures and information

- Hybrid pages on company intranet/SharePoint
- Hybrid working FAQ's
- Health and safety policy
- Assessment process for homework environments
- The following related policies
- Accidents, incidents, and investigations
- Safe use of computer equipment
- Eyesight testing
- Working time policy
- Stress policy
- First aid policy and procedure
- Lone work policy and procedure