

## **STAFFING COMMITTEE**

**Date and Time: - Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 2.30 p.m.**

**Venue: - Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Membership: - Councillors Alam (Chair), Allen, Read, Reynolds and Singleton**

This meeting will be available to view [via the Council's website](#) after the meeting has concluded. The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

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### **AGENDA**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend the meeting.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

**3. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

**4. Hybrid Working Policy (Pages 2 - 20)**

**5. Employee Supported Volunteering Policy (Pages 21 - 31)**

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Staffing Committee – 22 September 2021

**Report Title**

Hybrid Working

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

**Report Author(s)**

Ian Henderson, HR Manager

01709 822467 or [ian.henderson@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:ian.henderson@rotherham.gov.uk)**Ward(s) Affected**

None

**Report Summary**

This report provides background changes to employee working arrangements and the introduction of a Hybrid Working policy.

**Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the introduction of the Hybrid Working policy (Appendix 1).

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Hybrid Working Policy

**Background Papers**[Year Ahead Plan](#)[Chartered Institute of Personnel Development \(CIPD\) Planning for Hybrid Working](#)**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## Hybrid Working

### 1. Background

- 1.1 Since March 2020, approximately half of the Council workforce has been working from home using technology to access information remotely to deliver services.
- 1.2 The Year Ahead Plan outlines further steps to support staff and improve services for residents, which includes supporting staff to work more flexibly by building on recent experiences of home working.
- 1.3 Any decisions to adopt hybrid working within services will be dependent on maintaining the best possible service for residents, service users and customers.
- 1.4 The Council has benefited from increased productivity, through reduced sickness absence in these services, increased employee engagement, and a lowering of emissions within the borough due to reduced travel.
  - Assistant Chief Executive's sickness reduced from 9.39 to 3.57 days and Finance & Customer Services from 10.14 to 7.06 days per FTE
  - Increase in uptake for engagement sessions and feedback from focus groups
  - As at the 6 June 2021 R&E traffic flow monitoring showed travel in the borough was 20% less than that at pre-pandemic levels.
- 1.5 Nationally a wide range of research, including a YouGov survey and CIPD research, indicate that after the pandemic the majority of workers would like to continue to work from home at least some of the time, presenting new opportunities for organisations to establish new ways of working.
- 1.6 Employee feedback on new ways of working has been positive, with employee surveys showing two thirds of employees enjoying the greater flexibility in managing their working day and improving their work life balance.
- 1.7 To develop modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity to deliver the Council Plan, a Workforce Recovery Cell has been charged with delivering four key outcomes:
  - A revised approach to flexible working is implemented that enables delivery of Council services, supports new ways of working and recognises the importance of sustaining the health and wellbeing of the workforce
  - That staff are able to safely transition to new working arrangements, based on service need and in line with government guidance
  - That new ways of working are facilitated through IT infrastructure and asset management proposals
  - The whole workforce feels supported in improving their health and wellbeing

1.8 A range of flexible working practices are currently afforded to employees to allow them to achieve a better balance between work and home life. Wherever it is practicable managers try to accommodate requests to work flexibly but access to schemes is dependent on the nature of the work undertaken.

- Flexi-time scheme - The scheme is available to many office-based jobs and operates within the hours of 7am-7pm. Within the rules of the scheme up to one flexi-day per month can be taken subject to approval
- Part-time working - Depending on the job role, this can be worked in a variety of patterns including part day, part week and part year
- Job share - The duties and responsibilities of one full-time job are divided (normally between two people). This arrangement is open to many jobs
- Compressed weeks or fortnights - Contracted hours are worked over 4 days instead of 5 or 9 days instead of 10
- Term-time working - This enables parents to spend time at home during school holidays
- Averaged / annualised hours - This allows employees to vary their working hours over a year enabling them to match their working hours to personal commitments
- Staggered hours - This enables a team to work a variety of start and end times covering a specific period
- Occasional home working - This allows employees to be more flexible with their workplace providing the opportunity to work from home on an 'as and when' basis
- Permanent home working – An employee works solely from home

1.9 Flexible working arrangements have always existed, but their prevalence has increased because of the pandemic and subsequent advances in remote working technology. At the core of this approach, is an arrangement in which an individual or team can work part of their time at the office and part remotely, based on customer and service need. It does not just cover working hours, locations, and workstyles, it provides responsiveness and adaptivity to service needs and utilises advancements in technology.

## **2. Key Issues**

2.1 The significant interest at both a national and local level in more flexible hybrid forms of working, has shifted employee expectations, which could potentially impact on attraction and retention of employees. Organisations who do not support flexible hybrid forms of working risk increased employee turnover, reduced employee engagement and limitations on the ability to attract talent in the future (CIPD Planning for Hybrid Working).

2.2 Despite the many complexities and challenges of living and working through the global pandemic, many benefits have been identified from working from home, for both employees and organisations. These benefits include a better work–life balance, greater ability to focus with fewer distractions, more time for family and friends, saved commuting time and costs, IT upskilling and higher levels of motivation. For the Council, directorates with higher proportions of

home workers have seen significant reductions in sickness absence rates, increasing productivity.

- 2.3 Hybrid working provides other benefits including higher levels of employee job satisfaction, enabling employee wellbeing, supporting diversity and inclusion and reduced absence rates (CIPD Planning for Hybrid Working).
- 2.4 Introduction of hybrid working also provides an opportunity to review wider flexible working policies and procedures to determine if they are fit for purpose in other areas.
- 2.5 Decisions on how hybrid working is adopted within services will be dependent on the nature of the work being delivered. Adopting hybrid working must ensure the best possible service is maintained for residents and service users, both now and in the future

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 The introduction of an overarching hybrid working policy supports:

- a phased return to office working
- employee expectations
- increased employee engagement
- the introduction of new ways of working
- increased productivity
- improved recruitment and retention
- potential savings from a review of the Council's operational office estate
- the Council Climate Change strategy, through reduced emissions from reduced commuting in the borough

3.2 It is therefore recommended that the hybrid working policy (appendix 1) is introduced.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 Consultation has taken place with recognised Trade Unions who are supportive of the policy introduction.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 A phased implementation of the policy will commence from October 2021, with mitigating measures such as continued two metre social distancing and the wearing of masks when away from desks, to be retained in the medium term.

5.2 Plans will be led by Assistant Directors, with relevant Heads of Service, to assess how hybrid may be supported across their services, subject to service user needs and impact on delivery. Strategic Directors will be accountable for

monitoring the implementation across their services and ensuring the best possible service is maintained for service users and customers.

**6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)**

6.1 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

6.2 The financial implications of introducing the Hybrid Working Policy cannot be fully assessed until all teams across the Council have had time to consider more fully how they will implement the Hybrid Working Policy. Whilst there will potentially be savings to be generated through a reduction in the Council's Assets due to a reduced need for office space, there needs to be consideration of any potential impact of increased costs in equipment to support homeworking, though decisions will need to be assessed on a case by case basis and based on insight from home working and DSE risk assessments.

**7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)**

7.1 Legal Services were engaged early in respect of the drafting of the policy and advised specifically in respect of the impact upon reasonable adjustments. Legal Services now have no issue with respect to both the report and the policy at Appendix 1.

**8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 The HR implications are in the main body of the report.

**9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 Implementation of the hybrid working arrangements are expected to have a positive impact on service delivery, increasing staff engagement and with benefits for productivity.

**10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 In making any decision the Council is required to have due regard to its equalities duties and in particular with respect to the Equality Act 2010, section 149, part 11 of the public sector duty:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and eliminate any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act,
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who are a protected characteristics and persons who do not share it and to
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

10.2 The recommendation before the Council will not have any adverse impact on anyone with one or more protected characteristics, namely age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## 11. Implications for Partners

11.1 Engagement through the Rotherham Place Chief Executive Group is planned for September. At service specific level, managers will also be required to consult partner organisations on the impact of any agreed hybrid working arrangements involving delivery of services with partner organisations, subject to maintain the best possible service for residents.

## 12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 If the policy is not implemented there is a risk the Council will suffer recruitment and retention issues as people may choose to work for organisations who do offer the increased flexibility afforded by hybrid working.

## 13. Accountable Officer(s)

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	14/09/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	09/07/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	01/07/21
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Lee Mann	30/06/21
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.

*Report Author:* **Error! Reference source not found.**

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

## Assistant Chief Executive's Human Resources

# Hybrid Working

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September 2021

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## **1 Introduction**

The Council recognises the need to develop modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity to deliver the Council Plan, whilst maintaining a good work life balance. In addition, new technologies are making it easy to access information remotely, work from a variety of locations, whilst promoting a more joined up service.

Hybrid working builds upon previous flexible working policies and supports a culture of working wherever, whenever and however is most appropriate to get the work done.

This does not just cover working hours, locations, and workstyles, it is about being responsive and adaptive to service needs and advancements in technology. Hybrid working provides greater flexibility, particularly in relation to the time and location employees can work, subject to the requirements of the service and individual jobs.

Our approach to hybrid working also links to the Council's vision to address the climate emergency, placing emphasis on the importance of sustainability and the health and wellbeing of both staff and the community. The benefits of improved work life balance, employee engagement and reduced travel make a direct contribution to this strategic priority.

Although the nature of most of the roles within the Council cannot be classed as totally agile, there is considerable scope in many cases for some form of hybrid working. The different ways in which hybrid working can be undertaken is dependent on the demands and needs of the role, the individual's preferences and circumstances and the service an employee is engaged in. It is possible, with careful planning and a degree of best practice evaluation, for staff to carry out their duties from a variety of different locations recognising that all decisions regarding hybrid working will start from what provides the best possible outcomes and services for our residents, service users, customers and stakeholders.

## **2 Principles of hybrid working**

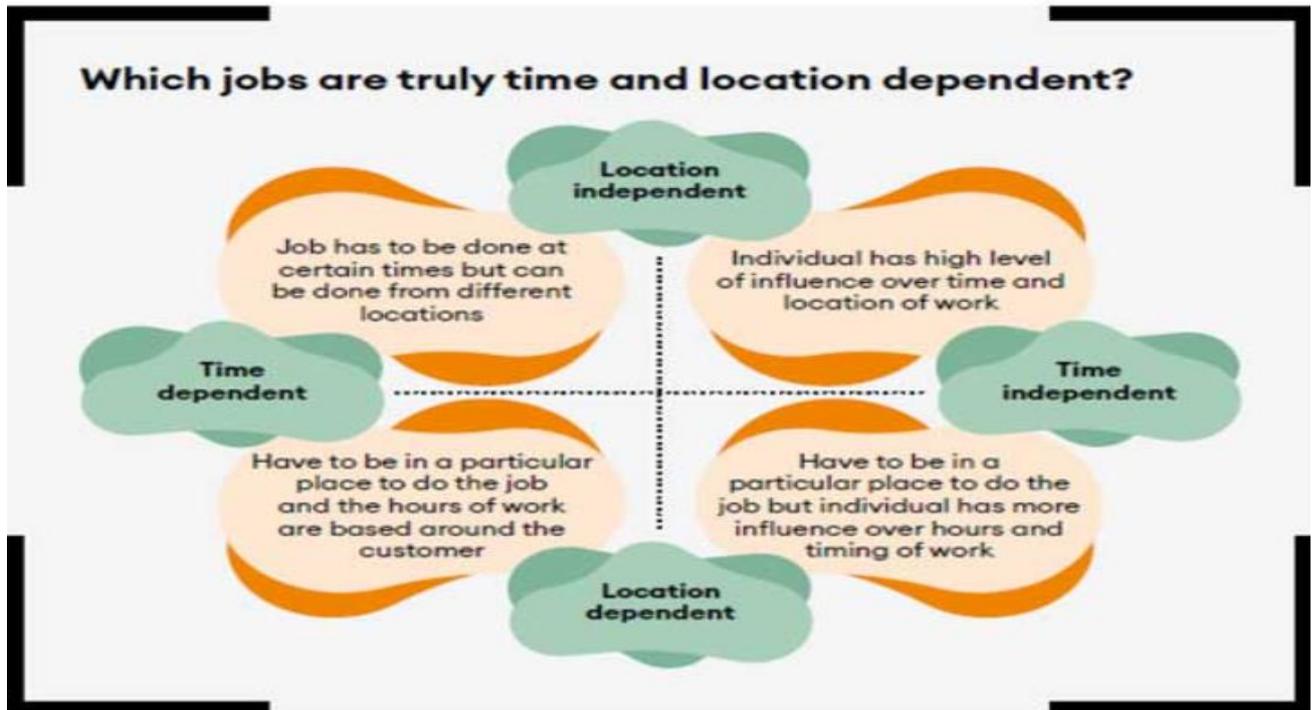
Introducing hybrid working practices will involve developing a new work culture. It is not about doing things in the old way with some new technologies and redesigned offices – it is about new ways of working using new tools, new processes, and new approaches to management and teamwork. This requires different types of behaviours and different expectations about how work is done.

Plans to allow increased flexibility of where and when work is carried out must ensure the best possible outcomes and services are maintained for residents and service users, both now and in the future.

The work delivered by services, teams and individuals should be assessed against time and location dependency prior to any agreements taking place (see diagram)

and plans to work from an alternative location or time is informal and subject to ongoing review of its operational effectiveness.

**Final decisions in relation to hybrid working will be taken by Strategic Directors to ensure that services and outcomes remain high.**



The hybrid working principles in the Council include:

- Plans to allow increased flexibility of where and when work is carried out **must ensure the best possible service is maintained for residents and service users, both now and in the future**
- The work delivered by services, teams and individuals should be **assessed against time and location dependency** prior to any agreements taking place (see diagram)
- All plans to work from an alternative location or time is **informal and subject to ongoing review** of its operational effectiveness
- **Related costs or savings** are factored into all team's plans for hybrid working
- **Leadership and engagement of teams** is critical to planning assumptions
- **Inclusivity** – unless an agreement has been made for face to face attendance, virtual meetings should be used
- Rather than replicating how we have previously delivered our work together, a **commitment to flexibility** and being constantly open to challenging

ourselves in relation to **new ways of working** and delivering services is required.

- Work has **less impact on the environment**, reducing the Council's carbon footprint and making the best use of its assets.
- **Performance is managed on results and outcomes** rather than presence
- An **open, fair, and consistent** approach is applied within teams based on service needs, residents, and personal preference
- **Decisions in relation to hybrid working are approved by Strategic Directors.**

### 3 The Potential Benefits

It is anticipated that the expansion of hybrid Working will offer benefits to our residents, service users, employees, and the Council.

The key benefits of hybrid working are as follows:

- Increases productivity, enabling employees to manage their working day more efficiently and focus more effectively on a piece of work, where concentration is important, by avoiding the interruptions that are part of the office environment
- reduces unnecessary travel time, and related cost
- lowers our carbon footprint, through reduced emissions from reduced travel
- creates an environment which allows employees to achieve an improved work life balance, increase their wellbeing, health and happiness, reducing stress and provides greater job satisfaction, motivation, morale and engagement
- improves the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees by offering a range of work styles to match individual work preferences; and
- reduced absenteeism and related costs.

### 4 Scope

The Hybrid Working Policy applies to all Council employees working at any level within the organisation and the nature and extent of hybrid working will depend upon the job undertaken and considerations will include the impact on the ability to meet service demand and employee welfare.

Decisions in relation to the nature and extent of hybrid working will be taken by Strategic Directors to ensure that all arrangements start from the perspective of ensuring the Council the best possible service to the Borough.

The policy enables both managers and staff to gain a better understanding of hybrid working and understand the basic principles, which can then be considered and applied to specific roles. The policy covers all hybrid working arrangements and

there is an expectation that sharing desk space will apply unless this is deemed necessary to undertake the job role or as part of a reasonable adjustment.

## 5 Hybrid Working

Hybrid working provides staff with more options with regards to where, when, and how they undertake their roles by introducing more opportunities to flex locations and times of work whilst ensuring that the needs of the service are best met. It allows staff to influence how they carry out their role and promotes varying levels of flexibility within the workplace. It is based on the concept that work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go to.

It must be noted however, that there is no expectation for staff to work at home and managers cannot force any member of their team to do so. It has been recognised that personal circumstances or personal preference may influence an employee's decision with regards to home working. In such cases where an individual does not want to work at home, other elements of hybrid working can still be considered, for example, working outside the traditional 7am to 7pm parameters (subject to building access times), working at Riverside House or other Council/Partner premises.

A hybrid working environment not only relies on IT infrastructure but also on staff engagement and how managers engage with each member of their team to ensure the successful adoption of this new way of working.

### 5.1 Hybrid Working Styles

The matrix below defines the four workstyles as a guide for Council staff, as defined under the Hybrid Working Principles, to clarify the concept of hybrid working. It can empower employees to work where, how, and when they choose, subject to service needs.

- **Fixed location worker** - Workplace based employees who operate from an office or shared work setting. A Fixed Worker will typically remain at a workstation or place of work for most of the working day. They will only be allocated a fixed workstation in limited circumstances due to the nature of the job or specific workstation requirements.
- **Flexible worker** - The role is not tied down to one location, employees can successfully and regularly carry out their activities from a mixture of appropriate facilities. For example, to attend meetings, work from home, council buildings or on the move according to the needs of the job that day.
- **Home worker** - employees carry out most of their work at their home. However, they are still required to attend work locations as required to ensure the best possible outcomes and services and this may include meetings, supervisions etc in council premises.

- **Mobile worker** - Most of their time is spent either visiting people, attending meetings, or carrying out work across various external sites, e.g. field workers.

Strategic Directors will ensure that the services they are responsible for have appropriate working arrangements and through their Directorate Leadership Teams determine the working arrangements for teams that best deliver outcomes and services.

Hybrid working must not affect the provision of services and therefore managers must ensure that they and their teams have systems in place to maintain suitable service presence as required, and to monitor the level of available front line staff on duty at any one time.

An initial discussion will be held with teams and individual employees, to ensure they fully understand hybrid working arrangements, service requirements and most importantly, consider the best practical and operational arrangements for working in this way. Expected work outputs for the teams and the individual employees and the arrangements for communication, support and housekeeping rules need to be in place before hybrid working commences. Clear and realistic objectives should be agreed between the manager and the employee to enable performance to be managed by agreed outcomes rather than presence.

Arrangements should be reviewed regularly through service performance data at team meetings and individual Performance and Development Reviews and regular one to one discussions.

Methods of communication should also be agreed to ensure both parties are fully informed, using a combination of virtual, electronic, face to face conversations, emails, telephone, and team meetings/briefing etc.

Although hybrid workers will not necessarily work between the 7am to 7pm parameters (unless the role dictates this), it is essential to plan and agree a work schedule so that colleagues are aware of the individual's working pattern, where they are located and know when and how to contact them. The hours of work must be agreed in advance allowing employees who are using their homes as part of their hybrid working arrangements, to have a right to privacy out of hours and be able to separate their working and home lives.

Employees must note that the ability to work from home is not a substitute for childcare or similar carer responsibilities and it is their responsibility to ensure adequate provision is in place to avoid conflict with work performance when they are working from home.

## **6 Allocation of Equipment**

Council employees will be provided with the necessary ICT equipment and technology to work in a hybrid way.

Personal adapted equipment such as chairs, monitors, desks etc. will be provided to an individual should a risk assessment deems this necessary.

## **7 Costs**

The employee will not be eligible to claim expenses for home working and should weigh up the benefits of any home working when considering that no reimbursement for household bills will be provided. This includes but is not limited to, broadband, heating, lighting, water, landline connection etc. and, although financial assistance will not be provided, employees may find that they are still financially better off when considering personal commuting and lunchtime costs.

Tax relief for household bills may be also be available to employees who should contact the HMRC directly for more information. This is entirely a private matter to be settled between the individual employee and the tax authorities.

## **8 Responsibilities**

### **8.1 Corporate responsibility**

- The Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) on behalf of the Council carries overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council has the appropriate processes in place which adequately and appropriately support its employees, regardless of what working pattern or arrangement they have.
- The Human Resources team is responsible for providing advice, guidance, and training on this procedure.
- The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development is responsible for reviewing, updating, and amending this policy and procedure to reflect changes in legislation or employment practice in conjunction with the trade unions.
- Strategic Directors are responsible for establishing their own arrangements to ensure:
  - Effective fair and consistent implementation of the policy
  - Continued service delivery; and
  - Engagement with their employees on these arrangements
- Strategic Directors are responsible with and through their Director Leadership Teams to ensure the principles of this policy are maintained and that there is no degradation in service due to any increased flexibility in working arrangements.

## 8.2 Management Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring flexibility, openness, and constructiveness in relation to discussions and agreements about hybrid working with employees within their area of responsibility, whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service.
- Making arrangements for both regular individual and team meetings, ensuring regular communication is maintained between themselves and team members, providing support for employees and implementing ways of measuring and monitoring work output that have been mutually agreed.
- That the relevant technology is used to ensure inclusive meetings can be conducted on a hybrid basis i.e. a mixture of physical and virtual attendees involving all available colleagues irrespective of their work location.
- Setting and monitoring defined performance measures for their team and individual employees in line with the Council's Performance Development Review and regular one to one supervision.
- Allowing employees who are using their homes to work from to have a right to privacy out of working hours and the ability to separate their working and home lives.
- Meeting their duties in relation to health and safety by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern for employees who they are responsible for.
- Jointly agreeing with the employee their hybrid working style and how this will be achieved.
- Ensuring good communication with employees and agree clear communication lines and methods. This includes arrangements for employees to report sickness absence.
- Regular reviews of the hybrid working arrangements should take place to ensure arrangements are working and delivering required outcomes.

## 8.3 Employee Responsibilities

Employees who are participating in hybrid working are responsible for:

- Complying with this procedure in a reasonable, constructive, and appropriate manner.
- Jointly agreeing a hybrid working arrangement with their manager. When agreeing how this will be achieved, careful consideration should be given to all the necessary requirements to determine how / if their post can adopt this style of working.
- Being open and constructive in discussing and agreeing hybrid working arrangements, whilst remaining focused on the needs of service.
- Maintaining regular contact with their manager and team.

- Working within the agreed "housekeeping rules" (appropriate work area for working at home etc) and abiding by all the Council Policies (available on the intranet) whilst working in this way.
- Optimising meetings to minimise the amount of travel time when working off site.
- Complying with Health and Safety policy and procedures by participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety
- Complying with confidentiality, data protection and internet security policies.
- Ensure that all reasonable care is taken of all Council supplied ICT equipment
- Reporting immediately once known, any loss, theft or damage to Council IT equipment or the loss of confidential information.
- Consulting and in some cases getting written agreement from any necessary parties, such as landlords, insurance, or mortgage companies, regarding home working.

## **9 Health and Safety**

Employees have a responsibility for their own and others health and safety while they are carrying out work activities regardless of the work location in accordance with the Council's Health and Safety Policy.

Where employees use other Council locations to work, they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety. They should ensure they are aware of fire safety arrangements to ensure they are fully conversant with the actions to be taken in the event of discovering a fire or on hearing the fire alarm signal and ensure they adhere to the local signing in and out arrangements.

Due consideration to lone working arrangements should be explored fully between the line manager and employee to ensure safe working arrangements are in place. Home working and DSE risk assessments will be carried out if any part of an employee's working style requires them to work from home. This will need to be carried out on an annual basis or at the point of any substantial changes made to the working environment or arrangement if this occurs sooner.

Employees must fully participate in completing the necessary risk assessments and review this with their manager. When working from home, even if it is only on an ad-hoc basis, the employee has a responsibility to ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise in the rest of the home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting.

Employees must not carry out work meetings in their home with customers, elected members, or officers from other agencies. If homeworkers need to attend site

meetings direct from home, they must notify their line management of their itinerary. Employees will also be asked to agree with their manager whether the risks of violence/difficult situations justify a telephone call to the office by the employee at the end of each appointment to confirm the safe completion of the visits.

Any accident that occurs whilst working from home, in connection with work activities, needs to be reported to the H&S team in line with normal reporting procedures.

Managers should seek advice regarding any specific concerns around health and safety issues as sign off for hybrid working will not take place until all the Health and Safety requirements have been appropriately addressed.

### **10 Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality**

Maintaining the security of the information we work with is vital and those working away from a council office are responsible for the security of the data they keep and should comply with all relevant legislation and Council policies, just as if they were working in a fixed Council office.

Access to Council systems and the processing of data must only be done on approved devices and the employee is responsible for the security of equipment, files, and any other information in their possession, including the transportation of such items whenever outside of the Council office environment.

Managers must agree early on with their staff as to how confidential or sensitive information will be handled when working in hybrid ways.

Principally managers must ensure their staff:

- Know their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the Council's Security policies
- Do not send work related emails or sensitive data to the employee's home email addresses
- Employees do not store work related files on an employee's personal computer
- Any loss of equipment or information is reported immediately to the employee's line manager
- Never leave a computer with personal confidential information on screen or leave a computer 'logged on' when unattended
- Confidential or sensitive conversations/work should not be carried out whilst in any public areas
- Other individuals (including family members) should not have any access to personal data either on paper or as electronic records
- All printed or other paper records must be safely locked away when not in use
- Confidential waste should be disposed of in the normal way

## **11 Insurance, Mortgage and Tenancy Arrangements**

Computers and other items of equipment provided by the Council as part of the hybrid working arrangement will be covered by the Council's insurance policy.

Home workers are required to contact their own insurance company to inform them that they will be working at home. This does not usually result in an increase in premium and it is unlikely that working from home will affect cover.

Liability insurance arranged by the Council will operate once risk assessments are completed satisfactorily; Risk control measures identified because of risk assessment must be addressed prior to the hybrid working arrangement commencing.

Employees working at or from home are covered by the Council's Employer's Liability Policy. Any accidents must be reported immediately in accordance with the Council's reporting guidelines. Although covered by the Council's Employer's Liability Policy, employees working at or from home are advised to ensure their home contents policy has public liability cover for at least £1 million. This is a standard clause in most home insurance policies. Before commencing home working, employees should advise mortgagees or landlords that they intend to work at home.

The Council will not be responsible for any additional costs as a result.

## **12 Council Tax and Business Rates**

It is extremely unlikely that there will be any change to an employee's Council Tax or any liability for business rates. Business rates could only be levied where a homemaker has an area of their home dedicated exclusively to their work (e.g. a study with PC, filing cabinet etc.)

Where the business use of a part of the house is subsidiary to the domestic usage (e.g. a desk in the corner of a living room) then rates should not be levied. Should an employee have any concerns, they should address their queries to their local council.

## **13 Review and Revision Arrangements**

Arrangements made between line managers and employees should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain suitable for the employee and service delivery outcomes. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by Human Resources.

Employees should familiarise themselves with the following Council Policies:

- [Flexible Working](#)
- [Information Governance Framework](#)
- [Health and Safety](#)

- [Lone Working](#)

Date Revised	Date Approved	Summary of Changes	Author
26/04/2021		First Edition	Ian Henderson
15/06/2021		Review of principle wording	Ian Henderson
11/08/2021		Updated roles and responsibilities	Lee Mann

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Staffing Committee – 22 September 2021

**Report Title**

Employee Supported Volunteering (ESV)

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

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01709 255012 or [martin.hughes@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:martin.hughes@rotherham.gov.uk)**Ward(s) Affected**

None

**Report Summary**

This report provides background on Employee Supported Volunteering and a proposal to introduce into the Council.

**Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the introduction of the Employee Supported Volunteering Policy (Appendix 1).
2. Promote Employee Supported Volunteering and encourage uptake of opportunities when available.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Employee Support Volunteering Policy

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**  
No

## **Employee Supported Volunteering (ESV)**

### **1. Background**

1.1 In June 2019, the Chief Executive and members of the Strategic Leadership team facilitated a series of staff engagement events called 'Working Together'; with over 300 staff from across the Council attending. These events were focused on raising awareness of the Council's Thriving Neighbourhood's Strategy and ways of working.

1.2 A focus of the events was to obtain employee feedback on the strategy, alongside suggestions for ways in which to improve the levels of trust with residents. A consistent piece of feedback from staff engagement events since has been that employees would like to engage more with local communities, potentially through voluntary work.

1.3 The Council does not currently offer any provision for employee supported volunteering but many organisations, including other Local Authorities, support their staff to volunteer or engage with voluntary bodies. Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) is when employers actively support and encourage staff to volunteer in local communities, or further afield in activities such as, but not limited to:

- Coaching and/or one-to-one mentoring
- Skills workshops
- Schools career talks
- Community youth projects
- School governor / trustee positions
- Supporting charity infrastructure
- Offering work experience
- Volunteer days e.g. River or Park cleaning
- Social Care work
- Team building exercises

1.4 The Office of National Statistics calculated the economic value of volunteering to be £23.9 billion per year, accounting for 1.5% of the UK's gross domestic product (ONS, 2016) and is expected to undergo unprecedented growth, driven by a blend of economic, technological and policy factors. Organisations who embrace this change have a tremendous opportunity to make a greater social impact, while also benefiting their organisation (Accenture, 2020).

### **2. Key Issues**

2.1 There is a strong business case for the Council to implement an ESV scheme (CIPD, 2015; 2016), which has the potential to deliver positive impacts for both the Council and the local community as well as wellbeing benefits for those undertaking the volunteering, creating a win-win situation for all involved.

- 2.2 Through an ESV the Council can support its work towards creating social value and contribute to achieving the outcomes set out in the Year Ahead Plan.
- 2.3 The Rotherham Together Partnership brings together the Council, public services, housing associations, businesses, the voluntary and community sector, and a range of other groups to ensure strong communities and a vibrant, caring, safe and creative borough. ESV has a role to play in achieving this aim.
- 2.4 Recipient organisations, whether charities, public sector bodies or community groups, gain skills, advice, and expertise, whilst employees achieve a sense of giving back and making a difference. In return, employers enhance their employer brand and reputation with their employees, local residents, and wider society.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 It is proposed to introduce an ESV for the Council which is primarily focused on creating opportunities for the workforce to collectively engage in social action days/events which have a direct impact on local communities within the borough.
- 3.2 The ESV will be administered by the HR Organisational Development Team with support from the Neighbourhoods Team during the implementation stage of the policy, including liaising with the Voluntary Sector and identification of volunteering opportunities.
- 3.3 HR will identify case studies which can be used as positive promotion both to the workforce and communities to include on a dedicated ESV intranet page. HR will also monitor and analyse associated data and provide reports to SLT on the uptake and impact of Employee Supported Volunteering.

#### **Volunteering Approaches**

- 3.4 Managed appropriately the social action events would provide an opportunity to call to action/mobilise a number of the workforce in a collective effort to support an identified community project. Dependent upon the nature of the project there would be the potential to link in with partners to deliver a high impact, visible and reassuring approach to an identified community need.
- 3.5 This approach will aid the workforce volunteers in feeling a sense of achievement and being an integral part of a collective force for good, as well as having a positive impact on the community and demonstrating the how the council is putting the community at the heart of service delivery.
- 3.6 Social action opportunities may be staffed by teams as part of a team building exercise, or by a number of staff from across a range of services. Advice on the suitability of a specific opportunity being used as a team building exercise will be provided by HR & OD.

### **Individual Volunteering**

- 3.7 The ESV will make provision for individual staff members to identify potential volunteering opportunities within the borough area which would be undertaken during working hours. Where an individual wishes to undertake an individual volunteering opportunity they must refer to the staff volunteering policy and seek line manager approval before any commitment is made.
- 3.8 HR Consultants and OD colleagues will provide general advice and guidance in these instances and to both the individual staff member, line manager and the key lead representing the recipient organisation.
- 3.9 Following assessment of the individual opportunity including appropriate risk assessments, the Council may consider that this is suitable for social action and it may therefore be offered on a Council wide basis.

### **Promotion of Opportunities**

- 3.10 All volunteering opportunities identified will be promoted on a dedicated ESV intranet page with additional communication support provided by HR Organisational Development (OD) via internal communication channels.
- 3.11 All opportunities promoted will state the location and nature of the volunteering activities, length of commitment e.g., 3 hours/1 day, the number of volunteer places available and how to apply.

### **Line Managers**

- 3.12 Where an individual identifies a volunteering opportunity which will be undertaken in working hours, line managers should refer to the staff volunteering policy and seek advice from HR before they give approval to proceed. This must take place prior to the individual giving a commitment to volunteering.
- 3.13 When a social action opportunity is offered by the Council, line managers will be required to approve an individual volunteering prior to the individual applying to take part.
- 3.14 Line managers will need to give consideration to the impact on team deliverables and staffing levels – however managers are strongly advised to facilitate/support individuals to undertake volunteering if they wish to do so.
- 3.15 In all cases line managers have the discretion to support an individual in volunteering up to a maximum of 3 working days per calendar year. All volunteering must be recorded on the HR system.

#### **Team building:**

- 3.16 Line managers should consider how social action volunteering opportunities offered by the Council may be used as team building exercises. General advice on the benefits of team building can be sought from HR & OD.

- 3.17 Prior to any decisions being taken on teams taking part in social action volunteering opportunities, the proposal should be discussed and approved by the relevant Assistant Director.
- 3.18 HR Consultants and the OD team will provide advice to line managers on the benefits of team building, promote opportunities as they are made available and provide advice in relation to risk assessments. OD will provide internal communication support to promote the opportunities across the workforce.
- 3.19 Depending on the nature of the volunteering opportunity, not all will be suitable for all staff depending on reasonable adjustments. HR will be able to offer advice and support to individuals and managers when assessing suitability.

### **Benefits of volunteering**

- 3.20 Ongoing workforce engagement is a priority for the Council. A key enabler of workforce engagement is for individuals to have a sense of being part of a collective movement with a compelling narrative giving direction of travel and a reason why action is being taken. This ultimately increases productivity and discretionary effort which leads to increased customer service, levels of innovation, positive outcomes in public services and staff advocacy.
- 3.21 On an individual level volunteering can help to support wellbeing and mental health by providing an opportunity to participate in social and community life. Research into actions promoting happiness and feeling of wellness has shown that committing an act of kindness or giving is associated with an increase in wellbeing, (Mind, 2021).

### **Covid-19**

- 3.22 The impact of Covid has been far reaching and more sustained than was envisaged twelve months ago. There are still many unknowns related to Covid including the transmission of emerging variants and ongoing restrictions. There is potential for levels of restrictions to vary according to the time of year over the next two to three years. The types of ESV activities which are offered/supported may need to be adjusted over time dependent on the Covid situation and restrictions which are in place.

## **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with recognised Trade Unions, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA) and Rotherham Federation of Communities (ROTHERFED) have indicated their support and VAR have agreed to help identify suitable opportunities.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 Key aspects of the ESV process which will be developed including the launch of an intranet page which will be used to promote the opportunities and be a

call to action to the workforce, in conjunction with a range of internal communication channels.

5.2 If agreed, the policy, dedicated intranet page and promotion of volunteering opportunities will begin in October 2021.

**6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)**

6.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

6.2 There are no additional financial impacts on the Councils budget as a result of the recommendations within this report. Council employees who embark on an ESV will already be budgeted for, as such the cost to the Council, is the opportunity cost of staff time spent on an ESV placement rather than fulfilling their substantive post. Therefore, the role of the line manager as identified within the report, is vital to ensure that ESV placements are carried out having ensured the impact on day to day Council work is minimised.

**7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)**

7.1 Legal Services have no issues with the content of the report.

**8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 The HR implications are in the main body of the report.

**9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 Employees volunteering for community projects may have a positive impact on the welfare of children and young people, depending on the nature of the project

**10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 In making any decision the Council is required to have due regard to its equalities duties and in particular with respect to the Equality Act 2010, section 149, part 11 of the public sector duty:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and eliminate any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act,
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who are a protected characteristics and persons who do not share it and to
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

10.2 The recommendation before the Council will not have any adverse impact on anyone with one or more protected characteristics, namely age, disability,

gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## 11. Implications for Partners

11.1 There are no implications for partners

## 12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 There is a risk employee's may not take up volunteering activities. To mitigate uptake will be reviewed to inform future publicity.

## 13. Accountable Officer(s)

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	14/09/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	09/07/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	30/06/21
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Lee Mann	08/07/21
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

# Assistant Chief Executive's Human Resources

## Employee Supported Volunteering Policy

### Introduction

In support of the Rotherham Together Partnership and the Council's social commitment, the Council encourages its staff to engage as volunteers in a broad range of social, environmental and economic initiatives across the Borough.

By actively supporting the community and continuing to be a socially responsible organisation, allowing the sharing of employee's skills, expertise and time by way of social action days and individual activities which have a direct impact on residents, the Council believes that this will have a positive impact for both our communities and staff.

This policy applies to Council employees who are not directly employed by schools, enabling employees to undertake volunteering during working hours as part of their normal working day. This policy cannot be used to 'claim back' any time spent volunteering outside of these hours.

### Scope

Voluntary activity can be defined as: 'any activity that involves spending time doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives' (National Council for Voluntary Organisations).

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual and whilst employees will be in receipt of their contractual pay when volunteering (in line with this policy), they must not receive payment (apart from claiming expenses) from the organisation where they choose to volunteer.

Volunteering can cover numerous activities such as care work, conservation projects, team challenges, one to one support, using professional skills or board membership and fundraising.

Opportunities do not necessarily need to be related to an employee's current role or skills; they can be a chance to try something new.

The Council supports employee volunteering that contributes to social value and to achieving the Council's priorities.

Up to three days' paid leave per year is available for employees to undertake volunteering activities. Employees can use the volunteer leave flexibly, for example three days in one block, one day at a time or in half days.

Volunteering may be undertaken in two ways:

1. Social Action – Opportunities may be staffed by teams as part of a team building exercise or by a number of staff from across a range of services. Social Action volunteering provides the opportunity for a collective effort to support an identified community project. Where appropriate staff will work alongside partner organisations to deliver a high impact, visible and reassuring approach to an identified community need. Advice on the suitability of a specific opportunity being used as a team building exercise will be provided by the HR Consultancy Team and Organisational Development.
2. Individual Volunteering – these opportunities will be identified by individual staff members independent of the Council. Where an individual wishes to undertake an individual volunteering opportunity they must refer to the staff volunteering policy and seek line manager approval before any commitment is made. HR Consultants, working alongside Organisational Development, will provide general advice and guidance in these instances and to both the individual staff member, line manager and the recipient organisation.

### **Applying for Leave**

Approval for Social Action or individual volunteering leave rests with line managers and before agreeing to undertake any type of volunteering activity during working hours, employees need to speak to, and get agreement from, their manager.

Where a whole team or multiple team members request to be involved in a social action volunteering activity, final decision to approve the request must be taken by the relevant Assistant Director.

All managers are encouraged to support staff volunteering in line with this policy, however there are no additional resources available for covering time off and therefore each volunteering request must be considered on its own merits. Before approving an individual or social action volunteering activity, managers should consider the amount of time required to undertake the volunteering opportunity and the impact on service delivery, in addition to the wellbeing and motivational impact on the wider team and the individual/s making the request.

The Council will not normally approve any requests that lead to additional costs or operational difficulties to the Council.

The application for paid leave to undertake voluntary work must meet the following criteria:

- Involvement helps employees engage with and achieve a better understanding of the needs of residents and local communities
- Involvement contributes to the development of the individual/team wellbeing, team building and engagement
- Involvement benefits the local community/residents
- Involvement must support Council priorities and the Council's social value commitment

Reasonable requests for volunteer leave that meet the criteria will be approved. However, the request could be declined if:

- There is a potential conflict of interest with the employee's substantive role or Council interests
- The activity will bring the Council into disrepute
- There are health and safety concerns
- There is no apparent benefit to the Council's priorities
- There will be a detrimental impact on the needs of the Council and its services

- The member of staff's work commitments cannot be rearranged to accommodate requested time off
- The employee's individual performance level is likely to suffer
- The volunteering is being undertaken during the employee's own time

The Council reserves the right, having considered each individual case, to refuse an application where any of the above criteria are not met.

If an employee feels that their request has been rejected wrongly then they can ask for a review by outlining their reasons in writing and sending this to the manager of their manager within 10 working days. Following this review there will be no further right of appeal.

### **Responsibilities**

Employees are trusted to use this time for its intended purpose, any suspected instances of misuse will be investigated in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures.

As representatives of the Council employee's actions directly reflect on the organisation and all employees must act in line with the Employee Code of Conduct whilst using volunteering leave.

Any concerns with an employee's conduct whilst volunteering will be investigated in line with the relevant Council disciplinary procedures.

It is the manager's responsibility to be satisfied that the employee has considered and accepted any risks associated with the proposed volunteering activity. The Council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur whilst volunteering and it is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the host organisation has its own Public Liability Insurance in place as required. Advice is available from the Neighbourhood Team on request.

### **Recording of Voluntary work**

As well as providing much needed support to the local community, volunteering allows employees to develop new skills both for their own personal development and for the benefit of the local communities.

It is therefore important that we capture this information in a similar way to other training activity undertaken. This will enable the Council to keep records and monitor the effectiveness of all volunteering undertaken.

Employees should record the volunteering activity via [Employee Self-Service](#)