

HR Guide: Agile Working Version: 1.0

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North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Contents	
<u>Section 1</u>	Introduction to Agile Working
<u>Section 2</u>	What are the Aims of Agile Working
<u>Section 3</u>	Can all employees undertake Agile Working?
<u>Section 4</u>	How do I apply for Agile Working?
<u>Section 5</u>	Does my manager have to agree to Agile working on a day to day basis?
<u>Section 6</u>	How should employees be supervised whilst Agile Working?
<u>Section 7</u>	Do I have to work from home?
<u>Section 8</u>	Where can I go to 'log in' to the Council network?
<u>Section 9</u>	Will I have to share a desk?
<u>Section 10</u>	Health & Safety Implications
<u>Section 11</u>	IT Equipment, Email, Internet and Intranet facilities
<u>Section 12</u>	Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality
<u>Section 13</u>	Review of Agile Working Arrangements
Related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Work Life Balance Policy & Procedure ➤ HR Guide: Work Life Balance Options

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1.0	01.09.14	New document

1. Introduction

- 1.1 North Ayrshire Council employees can apply to request changes to their contractual working arrangements through the Council's Work Life Balance Policy & Procedure.
- 1.2 Through this avenue employees can apply to change their existing working arrangements in a variety of ways, for example, annualised hours, compressed hours, home working, part-time and term-time working.
- 1.3 In addition to the options above, the HR Guide: Work Life Balance Options now includes information on Agile Working.
- 1.4 The term 'Agile Working' means empowering employees to work where, when, how and when they choose (subject to business needs), to maximise their productivity and deliver the greatest value to the business.
- 1.5 This guide has been produced to assist managers and employees who are working agile.

2. What are the Aims of Agile Working?

- 2.1 With advances in technology, there are numerous tools available to help employees work in new and different ways, to meet customer needs, reduce costs, increase productivity and improve work life balance.
- 2.2 North Ayrshire Council believes that service provision can be enhanced by employees being able to work in a different way which could also assist in achieving a better balance of home and work life. Different working arrangements can also enhance the efficiency of service delivery.
- 2.3 It is anticipated that the implementation of Agile Working, where appropriate, will;
 - allow the Council to be more efficient through better use of employee resources;
 - reduce unnecessary travel time, which increases productivity and reduces costs, allowing us to provide improved services to our customers;
 - create an environment which allows employees to achieve an improved work-life balance, greater job satisfaction, motivation, morale and productivity;
 - result in reduced costs through reduced travel and expense claims;
 - lower our carbon footprint, through reduced emissions from reduced travel;
 - Improve the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees by offering a range of work styles to match individual work preferences.
- 2.4 For employees, Agile Working can;
 - Provide an opportunity to manage their working day more efficiently;

- Enable them to work more effectively on a particular piece of work, where concentration is important, by avoiding the interruptions that are part of the office environment;
- Reduce the time spent travelling to a specific base in order to access administrative systems.

3. Can all employees undertake Agile Working?

3.1 All employees of the Council may, at some point in their careers, be eligible for Agile Working, however the extent to which it is undertaken will depend on the employee's role and the exigencies of the service.

3.2 It is recognised however that not all posts are suitable for Agile working e.g. some manual worker posts where the employees work must be carried out at a specific location and specific time.

3.3 Broadly speaking, posts suitable for agile working can be categorised within the following four terms;

- **In-Building** – These employees work full time (90%+) in the office with a traditional one desk per person arrangement
- **Flexible** – These employees work at least 50% of the time in the office. They may have their own allocated desk, or they may share a pool of desks with a ratio of at least 7 desks per 10 people.
- **Mobile** – These employees work mainly remotely or out of the office, requiring access to corporate systems in the office and the field. They may work from multiple Council facilities and/or home.
- **Home** – These employees work full time (at least 90%) of the time from home, requiring access to corporate systems from home.

3.4 Agile Working also relies on having the appropriate technology available. However, even employees with a fixed PC can undertake Agile Working on some occasions.

3.5 Below are some examples of how Agile Working might operate in practice;

- Example 1: an 'in-building' employee who needs to be in the office (e.g. Cunninghame House) the majority of the time has to attend a training course at Greenwood. The training course finishes at 3.30pm. If this employee was to travel back to the office they could spend 30 minutes on travel/parking time. However, if they had booked a PC at the Greenwood touchdown they could 'log in' and respond to emails/finish off a piece of work at Greenwood and contribute to service delivery for that same 30 minutes.
- Example 2: A 'flexible' employee, for example, based at Bridgegate who is out the office at least 50% of the time attends a meeting in Ardrossan. The meeting finishes at 3.00pm. The employee lives in Saltcoats, so instead of

travelling back to Bridgegate they travel to their home and work from home for the remainder of the afternoon

3.6 It is anticipated that as Agile Working becomes more widely used the number of places where employees can work from, out with their usual office base, will increase.

4. How do I Apply for Agile Working?

4.1 You do not need to formally apply for Agile Working. Employees are encouraged to consider how their job can be undertaken in a more agile way, and discuss this with their manager. Managers can also put suggestions to employees but these would only be progressed with the employee's agreement.

4.2 It is recognised however that not all posts are suitable for Agile Working. Before agreeing Agile Working, managers will consider;

- Is the nature of the work suitable for agile working?
- How would the service be maintained or improved, for example, access by customers, speed of response?
- What would the implications be for other employees?
- What are the cost implications, both in the short and longer term?

4.3 Agile working may be introduced on a trial basis in order to assess the practical issues that may arise in each situation.

4.4 Where an employee and their manager agree that Agile Working can be implemented the line manager must ensure that the employee is aware of the local arrangements/expectations whilst working agile. This may include agreeing that electronic diaries are kept up to date with regards to an employees work location.

4.5 As noted above, there is no need to formally apply for Agile Working, this is because the times and locations of where an employee works will vary on a day to day basis, depending on the work being undertaken and the exigencies of the service at a given point in time.

4.6 However, where an employee wishes to undertake Agile Working on a set location/day/time each week they would need to apply via the Council's Work Life Balance Policy, as this would be considered a fundamental change to the contract of employment. For example, if an employee wanted to work from home every Monday, this would need to be agreed through the Work Life Balance Policy.

4.7 Employees should informally discuss the details of their request with their line manager to decide whether a formal Work Life Balance application is required.

5. Does my manager have to agree to Agile Working on a day to day basis?

- 5.1 Agile working must not affect the provision of services and therefore managers must ensure that they have systems in place to maintain suitable office presence, as required, and to monitor the level of available front line staff on duty at any one time.
- 5.2 Therefore, an employee's manager may request that they return to the office to work instead of working from another location. As noted above, if an employee wishes to work from an alternative location on a regular/set basis they would need to apply for this through the Work Life Balance Policy.
- 5.3 It is important that employees and managers agree a process for keeping each other up to date with work location and work undertaken out with the employee's normal workplace.
- 5.4 Agile workers will be required to attend their normal office as requested by their manager for team meetings, training and development or other such event as instructed.

6. How should employees be supervised whilst Agile Working?

- 6.1 Some Agile Working arrangements, such as homeworking and mobile working, will result in little or no direct supervision of work. A high level of trust and confidence is expected between the line manager and the employee.
- 6.2 Local arrangements must be put in place to monitor work output and performance including effective workplace communication and support.
- 6.3 Both parties must recognise that the success of any arrangement will depend on this collaborative constructive relationship being in place and requires a different approach to supervision.
- 6.4 The line manager must establish clear arrangements for supervising the agile worker including;
- a) Setting clear objectives and targets in relation to the work completed;
 - b) Implementing procedures, in consultation with the employee, for monitoring the employee's job performance and outputs and recording hours worked, including the frequency of telephone contact, meetings and any home visits
 - c) Ensuring effective communication between the agile worker and other team members.
- 6.5 Agile workers are responsible for and required to record hours worked via timesheets, electronic diaries and other formal means as instructed by their line manager.

7. Do I have to work from Home?

- 7.1 There is no requirement for employees to work from home. Home working may not be a suitable option for employees, for example, lack of suitable desk space or a noisy environment.
- 7.2 If an employee wishes to work from home, either on a regular or ad-hoc basis, a Health and Safety risk assessment must be undertaken.
- 7.3 There is significant guidance on homeworking included the document HR Guide: Work Life Balance Options.

8. Where can I go to 'log' in to the Council network?

- 8.1 There is a master list of available locations (touch down spaces) available on Navigate.
- 8.2 Employees should ensure that they respect the premises being visitors and are considerate of other users.
- 8.3 Employees with Council laptops or tablets can use any free desk space to work agile from buildings with Wi-Fi. A list of available Council premises with wireless access is available on Navigate.
- 8.4 If an employee shares a desk, they should ensure that they book shared desks in accordance with the local service requirements.

9. Will I have to share a desk?

- 9.1 Shared desks will be at the determination of management. Trade union colleagues will be consulted as early as possible when service changes that involve desk sharing are planned.
- 9.2 Agile Working may incorporate the concept of desk sharing, but not exclusively. For example, an employee who works agile may have their own desk, however when they use a desk in a 'touch down zone' this will be a shared desk – for use by anyone.
- 9.3 There will also be agile employees who do not have their own desk who always desk share. However they may have a dedicated zone of desks for their use.
- 9.4 If you do share a desk, or use another desk which is not your own, it is important that clear desk principles are followed.

9.5 Adopting clear desk principles will ensure that employees feel more comfortable working from a desk that has not been personalised. There is a clear expectation therefore, that when an employee vacates a desk to enable usage by another member of staff, it will be left clear, with no materials left other than the standard desk equipment provided by the Council.

10. Health & Safety Implications

- 10.1 Employees have a responsibility on a day to day basis for their own and others health and safety while they are carrying out work activities regardless of the work location. Any work should always be in accordance with the Council's Health & Safety Policy.
- 10.2 Most Agile Working at Council locations and the home environment will generally be considered to be low- risk office type work. Where staff use other Council work locations for Agile Working they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety and ensure that they exercise reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others at all times.
- 10.3 Employees should also ensure that they are aware of the fire safety arrangements to ensure that 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 that where there may be local arrangements for signing- in/ out that they adhere to these arrangements.
- 10.4 The main risks to health and safety will be related to computer use and where this exceeds 1 hour per day at home or at an alternative Council work location, then Agile workers will require to complete the 'Display Screen Equipment' training module available via the Study it e- learning portal to ensure they are aware of the risks to health from computer work and that they have the necessary training to reduce those risks. In addition, staff will also be required to complete a display screen equipment risk assessment for their home/ other Council location workstation.
- 10.5 The completed risk assessment must be passed to the relevant line manager and any issues identified should, in the first instance, be actioned by the line manager.
- 10.6 Prior to any homeworking taking place, the employee and line manager must complete the 'Homeworking risk assessment' checklist as part of the homeworking approval process.

- 10.7 Where Agile Working involves the use of Council or privately owned motor vehicles used on official Council business, then the Council guidance document 'Driving at Work B24' should be consulted by the line manager and the general risk assessment must reflect any use of vehicles for work. Similarly any instances of lone working must also be reflected in the general risk assessment. For further information and guidance on lone working refer to the Council Guidance document 'Lone Working B13'.
- 10.8 In the event of any work- related incidents of an injury, illness or near miss, then Council employees have a duty to report these in accordance with the Council's Health and Safety Policy using the 'Incident Report Form'.
- 10.9 All of the relevant Health and Safety forms are available on Navigate:
<http://navigate.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/EmployeeInfo/HealthandSafety>
- 10.10 Employees who have any concerns relating to any health and safety aspect of their work they must raise this without delay with their line manager.

11.IT Equipment, Email, Internet and Intranet facilities

- 11.1 The manager, in consultation with the employee and based on the work activity, will be responsible for determining the equipment requirements for the employee undertaking an agile working arrangement.
- 11.2 The work style of the employee will inform the type of equipment required. The cost of any additional equipment should come from existing service budgets.
- 11.3 If there is an issue with hardware or communications failure, employees are expected to attend their designated office during work time to fulfil their duties as normal. The line manager should be contacted in the first instance to make them aware of the problem.
- 11.4 Employees who have access to email at home should ensure that they only check and respond to work emails within their normal working hours, and should not feel pressured to respond out with these times.
- 11.5 Employees need to complete a '[Remote Access Form](#)' and send this to IT Services if they require access to email and systems from their laptop out with the Council network.

12. Data Protection, Security & Confidentiality

- 12.1 All of the Council's policies and procedures relating to Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality also apply when an employee is working agile.
- 12.2 North Ayrshire Council provides employees with access to the personal and confidential information they need to do their job. This information must not be disclosed to others who are not authorised to see it.
- 12.3 In general employees must ensure that;
- Printouts or documents containing personal or other confidential data are not displayed where they can be seen by unauthorised persons.
 - Confidential documents which are no longer required MUST be returned to the main office for appropriate confidential disposal.
 - When not in use any print outs or documents are locked away in a secure container.
 - If data is stored on a memory stick this must be encrypted.
 - If employee is using a council laptop for agile working this must also be encrypted.
 - No work related emails or sensitive data is sent to their home email addresses.
 - No information is stored on their personal computer.
 - Any loss of equipment or information is reported immediately to the employees line manager.
- 12.4 When transporting equipment or files these should not be left unattended in any location out with secure Council offices, and never left in plain sight in unsecured office areas, cars, a, public areas, public transport or hotels. Where available, employees should use a locked box/case for transporting information.
- 12.5 Where an employee is working from home they should use the same principles which would apply in a public area when viewing and storing documents. Any confidential information should not be visible to other people who may live in the home.
- 12.6 All of the relevant ICT policies are available on Navigate e.g. Acceptable Computer Use Policy, Information Classification Guidance, and Information Security Management Policy.
- 12.7 Should an employee be required to report a security breach they should inform their line manager in the first instance and then contact the Council's ICT Security Officer.

13. Review of Agile Working Arrangements

- 13.1 The Council will keep any Agile Working arrangements under review and, with the exception of any trial period, will reserve the right to end the arrangement with reasonable notice and following consultation with the employee.
- 13.2 Where there is a change in the employees personal circumstances in respect of their agile working arrangement, the employee will be required to advise their manager and this could trigger a review of the arrangement.