

Report of Human Resources Manager

Subject: Home Working & Hybrid Working Policy

Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from NPA, for the adoption of the Home Working & Hybrid Working Policy, which is attached.

Background

2. At the Employee Forum Meeting dated 10 March 2021, Staff Representatives asked Members for their views on the 'future of work in the 21st Century' in light of how workplaces are responding to 1) the Work/Life Balance agenda and 2) learnings from the Government's measures to encourage home working during the continued Covid-19 Pandemic.
3. PCNPA's Human Resources Manager was tasked with consulting staff and managers across the Authority with a view to reviewing and amending the existing Flexible Working Policy.
4. Following wide consultation, an amended Flexible Working Policy was adopted at the Leadership Team Meeting on 14 September 2021. However, in light of the complexities of home working (which is only one of many approaches to flexible working), it was agreed that a standalone Home Working Policy was required.
5. Subsequently, at the NPA meeting dated 3 November, Members were asked to approve a Home Working Policy. Feedback on the policy was provided by Members at the meeting and the Human Resources Manager was asked to reflect on this and present a revised policy for approval at a future meeting.

Risk Considerations

6. The Policy fully complies with UK legislation on flexible working. It was also drafted to mitigate against any risks in relation to any associated Insurance, Data Security, and Taxation, Health and Safety and other risks of home working. The Authority fully supports home working where the role enables it, but it is essential to ensure requests are managed in a measured way – this policy does just that.

Financial Considerations

7. There are limited costs associated with implementation of this policy and requests will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
8. Since the report was last presented, staff working from home have been paid a one off payment to compensate for 'out of pocket' expenses, in light of 'enforced' home working for HQ staff, which has impacted on fuel and lighting bills for staff, especially during the winter months. The payment was made in line with HMRC guidelines.

Welsh Language Considerations

9. When approved, the policy will be drafted in Welsh to comply with Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

Human Rights Issues

10. Full consideration of the Human Rights and Equality provisions were considered in drafting the new policy.
11. Members may know that the Government have launched a consultation to remove the service requirement for making flexible working requests. In addition it proposes requiring employers to suggest alternatives if they reject an employee's flexible working request; allowing the change to be temporary rather than permanent; and, reviewing the eight business reasons for refusing a request. Members will be informed of any changes affecting this policy after the Government consultation ends.

Recommendation: Members are asked to approve the adoption of the amended Home Working & Hybrid Working Policy (annexed to this paper)

(Further information is available from the Kelland Dickens, Human Resources Manager, on 01646 624825 – email kellandd@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)



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Home Working & Hybrid Working Policy

Internal Policy

Review

Version	Effective Date	Document Owner	Review Date Trigger
V1.1	DRAFT	Human Resources Manager	Every 3 years. Legislative / organisational changes.

Target Audience

All Officers of the Authority.

Consultations

Group	Date
Staff Reps Leadership Team	14.09.2021

Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Approved by	Name	Date	Signature
NPA		2.02.2022	

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1. Policy Statement

In order to provide the best service to members of the public, we aim to ensure that all staff work in the most effective and efficient way possible in a work environment which optimises productivity and performance. As an Authority operating across 615 square kilometres of Pembrokeshire, we recognise that the traditional 'office based working' approach is no longer the best delivery model for all areas of our operation.

We aim to be a 'modern' employer, fully supporting home and hybrid working, so it helps to reduce our carbon footprint through reduced fuel usage, less air pollution and less office waste. We also promote hybrid working as a way for staff to achieve a better work-life balance and be more productive because of it.

This policy (which should be read in conjunction with the Flexible Work Policy), outlines how we will support home and hybrid working. It also details the commitment required by both parties, to ensure this way of working is a success.

PLEASE NOTE:

The Authority continues to issue separate guidance to staff on Home Working during Covid-19. This continues to be a temporary measure aimed to support Welsh Government guidance and would not be considered as a permanent change to any contract of employment.

2. Definition and Scope

Hybrid working is where an employee splits their time between home and office.

Home working is where an employee uses their personal home address as a base for work instead of them using PCNPA premises.

The scope of this policy currently does not cover working at other locations, such as community hubs, wider family addresses or other UK and overseas or holiday locations, which PCNPA are presently unable to support.

As an employer with a developing IT infrastructure, aimed at trying to facilitate remote working functionality, the aim of this policy is to support and enable hybrid and home working arrangements where these allow effective service delivery.

This policy applies to all employees of the Authority, but it also acknowledges that a proportion of roles across the Authority may not lend themselves to this type of working, for example - Discovery Guide and other customer facing roles or that of Warden and other roles where work is physically delivered within the National Park.

3. Benefits of Home / Hybrid Working

We encourage our staff and managers to reflect on the positive benefits of hybrid and home working when considering a request. For the Authority this may be:

- contributing to the reduction of the Authority's CO2 emissions by reducing employee commutes;

- retention of motivated staff, for whom the ability to work at home is a preferred option;
- accommodation of reasonable adjustments for disabled employees with temporary or permanent health conditions; or
- potential reductions in terms of travelling allowances for staff.

For employees this may include:

- improvements in work-life balance issues;
- savings in travel time and costs; or
- increased work motivation from less work place disruptions.

4. Types of home working and definitions

The Authority supports four types of home working, ranging from the odd occasion to formal arrangements that are identified as part of a flexible working request.

1. Occasional Home Working

Taking work home occasionally on an ad-hoc basis to concentrate on a particular task is encouraged where:

- 1) a specific tasks needs dedicated and focused input and can be dealt with more efficiently at home with less disruption; or
- 2) it is difficult for the staff member to get to work, e.g. adverse weather or more time efficient following an out-of-county meeting undertaken near to home.

*Working in this way will not change your contract of employment in respect of working hours or normal location of work and would be considered as an arrangement that may be changed from time to time depending on your and the Authority's needs.

2. Hybrid Working

Hybrid working gives an employee more choice over deciding how, when and where they work best in a way that balances the needs of the Authority, the team and the staff member. It's about giving more choices about how employees do - the right work, in the right place, at the right time for them. It offers a mix of working at home and working in the office.

*Working in this way will not change your contract of employment in respect of working hours or normal location of work, if it is done on an occasional basis; and would be considered as an arrangement that may be changed from time to time depending on your and the Authority's needs.

3. Regular Home Working

Working from home for a percentage of the time on a regular basis, the individual would then come into the office for the balance of time, for example, 3 days in the office and 2 days at home. This may be more suitable:

- When the role / job requires little face-to-face contact with colleagues or members of the public;
- To facilitate and accommodate other demands such as caring responsibilities;
- To enable the achievement of defined outputs each week/month from home, for example financial month end; or
- The job requires regular and frequent outside visits.

**Regular home working will change your contractual terms and conditions of employment.

4. Permanent Home Working

Working from home 100% of the time, or spending a percentage of time working from home and making outside visits for the balance of time. This may be suitable where:

- The job can be done just as effectively and efficiently from home;
- Where IT and telephony systems exist to support the job being performed at home; or
- The job requires frequent and regular visits outside.

**Permanent home working will change your contractual terms and conditions of employment.

5. Issues to be considered with Home or Hybrid Working

The working relationship at PCNPA is based on trust. We trust our staff to choose the best time, place and resources to match the work they do, their personal preferences and balance their own needs with the needs of the wider team.

Home and Hybrid Working is open to everyone who has a suitable role regardless of how long they have worked for PCNPA. Physical presence should not equal great performance. Your performance will be evaluated on your achievements and outcomes for the Authority.

We aim to ensure that staff have the technology and equipment needed to support Hybrid and Home working. However, it should not impact the level or quality of service to customers or colleagues.

Home working won't work for or be available to everyone. It will depend on the kind of role the employee does, the part of the Authority they work in, the level of supervision they need in their role, any minimum levels of physical cover required, as well as the technology and environment available to them. The Line Manager and employee requesting Home Working should discuss the potential implications and impacts on others in a team, including rota's and front line service delivery.

Not all jobs are suitable for home working. Jobs that require a low level of internal or external customer contact are more readily adaptable for home and hybrid working.

Having established the suitability of the job, remember that home working does not suit everyone. Team dynamics have a significant impact on performance and staff may feel a traditional office environment with closer management supervision and direction is better for them.

Personal qualities which make home working successful include:

- Strong self-motivation
- Ability to work for long periods of time without day-to-day social interaction with colleagues
- Ability to focus on work without home life distractions, such as chores, children or pets, etc.
- Ability to switch off from work and maintain a proper balance between working and non-working hours.

Quite often a trial is appropriate to gauge if home working and hybrid working is right for an individual – this is detailed in section 9.

6. Requests to work from home

The process for dealing with requests to work regularly and permanently from home should follow those laid out in the Authority's Flexible Working Policy by way of a formal written request.

Where a member of staff wishes to occasionally work from home (as defined in Section 4), they should adhere to any Health and Safety guidance issued in this document, but will not be required to submit a written request. Requests for occasional home working will be through discussion between the employee and their Line Manager.

7. Assessing the home environment

PCNPA want to ensure that when staff work at home, the home environment is safe. Therefore, we require an assessment is carried out before a Home Working agreement begins.

Health & Safety is a joint responsibility and in making a request to home-work, an employee also takes responsibility for the health and safety aspects of the home working environment. They would need to ensure:

- A suitable and dedicated office space is available;
- Adequate security and confidentiality is in place;
- That home based working is not combined with dependent care during contracted working hours.

Employees will need to complete a Health and Safety Home Worker Self-Assessment Checklist (see Appendix A). If this identifies any particular risks, Human Resources will work with the employee and the Line Manager to ensure any risks are minimised or eliminated.

8. Agreement

As soon as the home environment is set up, PCNPA can issue a new contract of employment / home working agreement. Employees will be asked to sign and return a copy of the new contract of employment / agreement as acceptance and a copy will be placed on the personal file.

9. Trial period and time limited requests

Employees and Line Managers may agree an initial trial period to ensure that the new working arrangements meet the needs of both parties.

Trial periods should last no longer than six months and are an opportunity for both parties to assess the success of the new working arrangements.

If the new working arrangements are not working, after exploring possible solutions to make them work, the arrangement may end. This would always be done in consultation with the employee and sufficient notice provided.

Alternatively, an employee may not want the working arrangements to be permanent and only require them for a set period of time, for example, to support medium term child care arrangements. This will be detailed in any written agreement.

10. Turning a home working request down and appeals

Line Managers, will wherever possible aim to support staff when making flexible working requests. However, in exceptional circumstances, home working may not always be feasible. The default however should be how can we make the arrangement work, not why it just won't work.

If a Line Manager still feels they are unable to agree to a home or hybrid working request they should liaise with Human Resources to seek advice. If after talking it through, it is not feasible, a written response should be provided to the employee, including details of the reason(s) for turning down the request.

Employees have the right of appeal if their request is refused or is only agreed in part. Appeals must be lodged within 14 calendar days of the date of the letter confirming the decision. This should be in writing and clearly state the grounds on which you are appealing. Appeals should be addressed to the Line Manager and a copy sent to Human Resources.

Employees can be accompanied at an appeal meeting by an accredited Trade Union representative or Authority work place colleague.

11. Responsibilities

We want to empower staff to work in a way, so they can balance home life around the needs of their job. We trust our staff to manage their time working at home and make sure they do the things they are contracted to. However, there are responsibilities we want our staff and managers to be aware of.

Employees should:

- carefully read and acceptance of the Home Working and Flexible Working Policies.
- cooperate with their manager regarding home visits, communication and attendance at the office in line with the needs of the Authority.
- attend training on sight when provided with notice.
- alert their manager to any problems with their work or home environment promptly.
- continue to follow normal arrangements relating to booking and taking holiday and notifying any sickness absence or injuries at work.

Updating the team when not 'at work' is important as physical presence in the office will no longer be an indicator.

Employees should also ensure they research and understand all the issues affecting home-working, especially their own tax and insurance situation.

Managers responsibilities include:-

- maintaining regular communication and feedback with the home-worker, including day-to-day contact
- monitoring arrangements and supporting the employee when difficulties arise
- helping set targets to support effective performance and motivation
- organising and facilitating regular team meetings and communication between staff
- respecting the out-of-hours privacy of home-workers.

12. Insurance

The Authority provides Public Liability, Professional Indemnity and Directors' and Officers' insurance for employees working from home. It also provides insurance cover for any Authority equipment located at the employee's home.

However, employees are advised to notify their landlord/mortgage company and insurance companies about their home working arrangements.

13. Health & Safety

It is important to us that staff working at home are afforded the same health and safety protection in law as office based staff. As such all Authority's health and safety policies and procedures will apply to home workers. This includes the need for employees to report any 'work-related' accidents and to undertake Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessments and training.

The Authority may require access to an employee's home address (at reasonable times as agreed) to carry out a formal health and safety risk assessment (to be carried out by the relevant manager or other competent assessor).

Any improvements or repairs necessary to the domestic services will be the responsibility of the employee. The Authority will be responsible for any repairs and maintenance for equipment or services it supplies.

PCNPA will expense and supply portable Fire Extinguishers for any employee working from home permanently and/or regularly and who requests one. Requests should be made by the employee through their Line Manager or through Human Resources.

Home working should not be used as a way of carrying on working when you are sick. If you are ill, then you would need to take time off until you have recovered and follow our Absence Procedure.

It's all too easy to neglect our health and safety when working from home. Where working for long spells at a screen, make sure you take regular breaks away from your screens. We also know that collaboration, connection and having a sense of belonging can help staff stay well. We encourage home workers to think about what this means for them and to actively make time to connect with colleagues.

Finally, but equally important, if you have a disability and need any reasonable adjustments to be made to your workstation at home, please let us know.

14. IT Equipment and Data Security

In most cases, the Authority will supply the IT equipment needed for Home Working, so that this can be maintained and licensed by the Authority and support provided by the Authority's IT department.

Internet service provision is however the responsibility of the employee and it will be incumbent upon employees to ensure they have sufficient service to enable them to carry out their role from home. Employees will be solely responsible for the cost of Internet and coverage must be sufficient to secure a consistent phone coverage through 3CX.

Where this is not possible, the Authority may not be able to support Home Working.

The Authority is unable to supply individual printing facilities and employees are asked to utilise those provided at PCNPA office locations.

Employees who work from home are required to comply with all IT security and confidentiality requirements of the Authority. The home worker will have a direct responsibility for all Authority information held at their home and should ensure that it is not accessible to non-authorized people (e.g. other members of the household).

Home workers are reminded to follow the Authority's policies and procedures in relation to working with personal data as if they were still based in the office. There are additional risks relating to working remotely and the following should be kept in mind:

- a) Never leave a computer with personal confidential information on screen. An unauthorised person reading personal data is a data breach.
- b) Never leave a computer 'logged on' when unattended. Think about who may access the device when you are not around – whether deliberate or accidental.
- c) Ensure that rooms containing computers and other equipment, are secure when unattended, with windows closed and locked and blinds or curtains closed.
- d) If making a phone or online conference call remember that it is confidential and consider who is around who might overhear.
- e) Levels of Home Security should be at the same level as at work.

15. Working Hours

Employees working from home should be available during normal office hours, unless otherwise agreed.

The flexi-time scheme will continue apply to home based staff in the same way that it does to office based staff.

Any flexible working pattern outside of normal working hours may not be within the bandwidth as per our existing flexi-time scheme, so employees should consider this carefully before making a request.

When working from home it can be tempting to log-on outside of normal working hour, so employees are reminded not to work hours in excess of those in their contract of employment and in any case those applied through the Working Time Directive.

16. Home Visits

On occasion, home working employees are required to allow appropriate Authority staff access to their home-working area at reasonable times. This would be limited to their work area and for work purposes only and by agreement (other than in emergency circumstances). Advance notice will be provided to employees.

Due to insurance and health and safety risks, the Authority WILL NOT permit employees to allow members of the public to visit them at their home address. Meeting with both members of the public and other PCNPA members of staff must be carried out on PCNPA premises at all times.

17. Travel and other Expenses

For occasional home workers, car mileage expenses will only be paid for those miles travelled which are over and above the number of miles which the home worker would previously have incurred by having to travel into the office and return home on a daily basis, i.e. their normal commuting journey. The 'normal commuting base' will be set out in an employee's contract of employment.

For permanent and regular home workers, travel between home and Authority offices may be claimed for days on which the employee is 'contracted' to work from home. Other business related journeys will in line with PCNPA policy and HMRC guidance.

Where expenses incurred to and from home to PCNPA sites is shown to be excessive, a review of the home working arrangement will be made, as it may no longer prove a suitable option.

18. Tax Relief

Employees may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs if they have to work at home on a regular basis, either for all or part of the week. This includes if they have to work from home because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Employees cannot claim tax relief if they choose to work from home.

It is the responsibility of the employee to research and make any such claims through HMRC.

For detailed information visit: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/incometax/relief-household.htm>

The Authority is unable to compensate employees for additional household costs where the home working request it is made of the employee's own volition.

19. Ending a Home Working Agreement

PCNPA hope this to be the rare exception, but the Authority reserves the right to serve notice on any home working agreement, should after investigation, an employee be found in breach of their contract of employment or this policy.

20. Reference

1	Flexible Working Policy	TBA
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21. Version History

Version	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
1	TBC	Adoption of new Home Working Policy.
1.1	TBC	Committee feedback

Appendix A – Home Worker Self-Assessment				
Employee Name:				
Home Address:				
Date of Assessment:				
Assessment reviewed by (Line Manager):				
Assessment reviewed by (Human Resources):				
Hazard	Checks required	Yes	No	Comments
Fire	Is the working environment free of unnecessary clutter and excessive combustible material?			
	Is confidential waste disposed of correctly?			
	Are exit routes clear in case of an emergency?			
	Is a smoke alarm fitted and regularly tested?			
	Do you have a suitable fire extinguisher at hand and are you trained on its use?			
Electrical Equipment	Any apparent damage to equipment, plugs or cables?			
	Any evidence of overheating such as discolouration?			
	Has all equipment been PAT tested?			
Slips/Trips	Floor covering sound and without defects and clear of trip hazards?			
Ergonomics/ Work environment	Is there adequate lighting, including task lighting?			
Manual Handling	Does the employee carry out manual handling activities?			Attach Risk Assessment if yes
DSE	Does the employee use DSE for more than 2 hours a day?			Carry out annual DSE assessment if yes.
Lone Working	Is there a requirement for a call in procedure if employee lives on their own?			If yes, establish a procedure

Phone / IT	Has the employee strong WIFI coverage for 3CX to work effectively?			
	Is WIFI coverage sufficient for home working?			
COSHH	Does the home work involve the use of any hazardous substances?			If yes, Risk Assess
Accidents / First Aid	Does the employee have adequate first aid facilities whilst working at home			
Wellbeing	Has the employee previously suffered from discomfort, stress or ill health which they believe to be as a direct result of work?			If yes, discuss further to assess whether home working is suitable
Security	Is the final exit door secured by mortice deadlock to BS3621 standard?			
	All other external doors similarly secured?			
	Are all external doors and windows secured by locks?			
	Is there the ability to lock laptop and confidential files away when not in use?			
Miscellaneous Items				

Appendix B – Check list for assessing if home working is viable.

The following issues should be considered when considering hybrid or home working:

<i>Points to consider</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
Does the role involve very little face to face contact with internal or external customers?	
Does the role lend itself to home working?	
Will working at home save considerable time and energy otherwise spent commuting?	
Can you work without distraction (e.g. family, pets, visitors etc?) If interruptions cannot be avoided then homeworking may not be a feasible option.	
Are you available during normal office hours? If not, how will internal and external customer's expectations be managed?	
Will staff working in the office be required to respond to last minute queries and ad hoc queries if the employee is at home? Will other staff be inconvenienced? Will this reduce their effectiveness to do their own jobs?	
Is the employee best suited to working at home? i.e. self-motivated and disciplined, do they work well with their own ideas or do they need to "bounce ideas off others", are they likely to get lonely or suffer if on their own for long spells?	
What equipment and systems will they need at home to work effectively and how can this be achieved? Is this feasible full time or part time only? Will home working require duplication of IT kit?	
What will the costs be to the Authority? Are additional costs reasonable?	
Can the employee secure a safe working environment at home? <u>Minimum requirement</u> is a dedicated work space / area.	
Can data and systems be secured adequately?	
How will the employee stay in touch with/remain part of your team?	
Is the employee prepared to attend the office for meetings with others and training when required and at short notice if necessary?	
Will working at home enable you to release working space in Authority premises for someone else?	
Has the employee checked with their home insurer and mortgage provider / landlord about working at home?	

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

1. *What is the name of the policy, strategy or project?*

Home Working Policy

2. *Briefly describe the aim of the policy, strategy, and project. What needs or duty is it designed to meet?*

This policy provides a framework for guidance in managing home working requests.

3. *Is there any evidence or reason to believe that the policy, strategy or project could have an adverse or negative impact on any of the nine protected characteristics?*

Yes. Staff with known mental health issues are at greater potential risk of feelings of isolation, working from home. Occupation Health advice may need to be sought when accepting home working requests.

4. *Is there evidence or other reason to believe that anyone with one or more of the nine protected characteristics have different needs and experiences that this policy is likely to assist i.e. there might be a relative adverse effect on other groups?*

Yes. See above.