

## Flexible Working Policy

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### Introduction

The County Council believes that it has a major role to play in improving the quality of life (for its service users and employees) and the local environment and recognises the need to embed its flexible working arrangements/practices, in order to help the Council realise efficient and cost effective service delivery, and to help its employees achieve a sensible balance between their work and home lives.

This policy explains, in broad terms, the flexible working arrangements that may operate within the County Council, and the basic principles upon which these are based. Links to more detailed guidance are provided as necessary.

### Aims

By adopting flexible working practices, the Council aims to:

- maximise the effectiveness of its two largest resources – people and property, by supporting its office accommodation strategy, i.e. making better use of accommodation and facilities through desk-sharing and home/teleworking, supporting its environmental

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- and transport strategies, i.e. using Travel to Work plans to help reduce travel to work, traffic congestion and travel costs, and reinvesting savings made in front-line services;
- improve sustainable local economies in geographically remote areas, e.g. home-workers tend to use local shops and services on a regular basis, which can help generate employment opportunities for others;
  - positively support partnership working and community projects, by providing employees with flexible working arrangements that allow voluntary work to be undertaken, e.g. work undertaken by Special Constables;
  - make a positive and proactive response to 'family friendly' [legislation](#) as it is introduced by central Government, which aims to establish a more flexible workforce;
  - encourage diversity in the workforce and enhanced employee work/life balance by allowing employees choices in where and how they work, e.g. by offering increased options for candidates/employees with disabilities; and
  - enhance its reputation as an 'employer of choice', which has a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of the right people with the appropriate skills, experience, aptitudes and qualifications to deliver Council services to the highest standards.

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### Principles

The following basic principles apply to the introduction and implementation of flexible work styles:

- there is an expectation that all employees will be prepared to work flexibly;
- flexible working applies to all employees and service areas within the County Council, though the exact arrangements agreed will depend on the job role, needs of the particular service and the individual employee;
- the County Council expects managers to embrace the advantages of flexible working practices and to make every effort to overcome any obstacles to their achievement;
- where flexible working is a specific requirement of the job/service, employees will be consulted fully on the implementation and implications of such practices;
- employees should, wherever possible, implement flexible working on a voluntary basis;
- an employee can request at any time, and for whatever reason, that his/her working hours and ways of working be varied (some may have a statutory right to do so);
- flexible workstyles will be supported by the provision of:
  - ICT facilities and equipment;
  - management and administrative support; and
  - training and development in 'managing diversity' for both managers and employees;
- the Council's rules in relation to tele/homeworking arrangements will be adhered to where such arrangements are introduced; and
- all flexible working arrangements will be subject to regular review to ensure that they remain suitable and effective and meet the needs of both the service and the employee concerned.

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### Flexible Working Arrangements - Working Patterns

The County Council advocates and positively encourages the use of flexible contracts as detailed below.

#### Part Time

A standard full time week in the Council is 37 or 32.5 hours, which is determined by National Terms and Conditions of Service. Part-time working (working less than 37/32.5 hours per week), can create greater flexibility for the County Council and its employees by:

- attracting back to the workforce trained and experienced people who are unable to work full-time; and
- helping employees to arrange their hours to suit domestic, leisure or educational needs.

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As an equal opportunities employer the Council ensures that part-time employees are treated no differently from full-time employees, i.e. part-time employees:

- receive the same rate of pay for the job as full-time employees;
- enjoy all terms and conditions of full-time employees on at least a pro-rata basis; and
- are given equal training and development opportunities.

### Job Share

Where two (or more) people share the responsibility for a full-time job, which means that people with a different range of skills, experience and knowledge base can work together to deliver specific tasks. Greater flexibility in providing cover for holiday periods and peaks in service demand can be achieved. In these cases the employment of each partner is dependent upon the employment of the other partner(s) and communication between the job-share partners is of paramount importance and is addressed in the Council's formal job-share contract. Detailed guidance on the use of job-share contracts can be viewed on the intranet under 'Job Share Contracts'.

### Term Time

This is a contractual arrangement, whereby a part time employee works term times only, which is encouraged as a means of providing support to schools and allowing employees to balance their work/child-care responsibilities. Council employees who do not provide support to schools may also consider term time only working, but only if the service they work for can accommodate it. For example, if the relevant service has increased pressures during the school holidays, it may not be appropriate for an employee to work term time only. Salary is paid for the 38 weeks worked, plus an agreed number of weeks annual leave (usually 6), which has to be taken during school holiday periods. The total number of weeks pay each year is divided by 12 and paid in equal monthly payments, which is known as 'equated pay'.

### Fixed Term

These contracts, which have a specific meaning in law, enable managers to cope with variations in demand and cover time-limited vacancies.

### Relief

Where people work on an 'as and when' required basis, to suit the needs of the service and their personal needs.

### Annualised Hours

This arrangement allows an employee to work a contracted number of hours per year, rather than per week. The hours worked per week, therefore, can vary according to the needs of the service and the needs of the employee. Annual salary is divided by 12 and paid in equal monthly payments. Although there are few examples of 'annualised hours' within the County Council, the use of such contracts is encouraged where they would help to reduce working hours OR to reduce/control overtime OR to cope with seasonal variations/foreseen surges of activity.

### Contracts for Services

This is where people are engaged not as Council employees but as self-employed consultants or as employees of other organisations, e.g. from a firm of consultants, undertaking a clear consultancy project or from an employment agency, where payments are made to the organisation rather than the individual. This is a complex legal area – guidance on determining the legal status of a worker, i.e. whether s/he can be contracted to provide a service or must be given a Council employment contract can be viewed on the intranet under 'Contract for Services'.

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### Flexible Working Arrangements – Working Hours

#### V' Time

This is a temporary arrangement, which allows an employee to voluntarily work a reduced number of hours for an agreed period, with an appropriate reduction in salary. The employee is guaranteed the right to return to his/her original hours at the end of the temporary arrangement.

#### Compressed Hours Working

This contractual arrangement allows an employee to do a full time job in, say, four days a week instead of five or nine days a fortnight instead of ten, e.g. 37 hours in four days or 74 hours in nine days. Compressed working weeks can aid recruitment and reduce overtime, turnover and absenteeism. However, these arrangements require careful monitoring to ensure that the employee does not work excessively long days to the detriment of his/her health and in contravention of the Working Time Regulations.

#### Flexi-Time Scheme/TOIL

These are both systems of taking back hours worked over the normal contracted hours, which can provide mutual benefits for the County Council and its employees by:

- providing cover outside standard County Council office opening hours and thereby reducing the need for overtime payments; and
- giving employees greater freedom to organise their working lives to suit personal needs.

The Flexi-Time Scheme is a contractual term and condition for some, mainly office-based, workers.

TOIL (Time Off In Lieu of overtime payments), can be used by most workers (with no contractual entitlement to use the Flexi-Time Scheme).

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### Flexible Working Arrangements – Work Location

The County Council recognises that for some tasks (not all) varying the location of work from the fixed office base and encouraging employees to 'work down the line' rather than 'down the road', will if properly planned and implemented, allow employees to work in a manner that offers mutual benefits and savings through the improved use of time, accommodation and available technology. The outcomes should be better value services to the public, whilst providing a valuable contribution to, and lead on, environmental and sustainability issues. Therefore, where work tasks are not location dependant, the County Council positively supports the establishment of the following arrangements on an informal or contractual basis.

#### Hot-Desking

This may involve an employee being equipped with a lap-top, which s/he can 'dock into a station' at his/her main office base, his/her own accommodation and other suitably equipped locations, e.g. touch down centres or other nominated Council offices/establishments. It may also mean logging in to a desk-top PC that is permanently located at a 'hot desk', i.e. a desk designated for shared use.

Typically this would be adopted by whole teams/sections in order to maximise the use of WorkWise accommodation and flexibilities for employees, though there will be teams where because of software usage or other issues, only some desks are 'hot'.

#### Teleworking

This involves an employee working away from his/her main (contractual) office base with the

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aid of appropriate information and communication technologies (ICTs). The employee may alternate between his/her main office base and other suitably equipped locations, e.g. touch down centres or other nominated Council offices/establishments.

Typically, this would suit employees who live nearer to a County Council touch down centre than their main office base, and whose work can be conducted from different sites, provided that they remain contactable by the main office. In such cases the Council's rules in relation to teleworking must be adhered to.

### Mobile Teleworking

A mobile worker would spend 50% or more of his/her work time away from his/her main base, e.g. at other County Council sites or client sites. The contractual base would be either a County Council premise, with shared desk space, or his/her home where if there is no one site that would be predominantly used as a work base. However, the employee would not spend significant time (more than one day a week) working from home. The employee would be given appropriate mobile technology, e.g. laptop and mobile phone, but not home office equipment.

### Homeworking

This is where work is carried out at an employee's own accommodation. There are three categories of homeworking:

**Permanent Homeworking**, where the employee spends the majority of his/her contracted hours either working at home or visiting sites from his/her home base, rather than working at a particular office base. Therefore, the employee's home is his/her contractual work base and s/he is provided with appropriate home-based technology and equipment. Typically permanent homeworking is undertaken by peripatetic types of employees such as inspectors, who spend much of their working time travelling between sites.

**OR**

**Occasional Homeworking**, where the employee works from home regularly, for significant periods of his/her contracted hours (where a period of time is at least 7 and half hours in duration), but for a minority of his/her contracted hours, and an office base remains as his/her contractual base for the purposes of employment, travelling and subsistence payments. The employee would use portable technology or that owned/approved by the County Council and would be contactable by the office base. Typically occasional homeworking is undertaken as part of a ['hot-desking'](#) arrangement.

**OR**

**Ad-hoc Homeworking**, where the employee works from home as and when necessary, for short periods of time, within or outside his/her normal contracted hours, (where a period of time is less than 7 and half hours in duration). The use of portable technology at home (or that approved/owned by the Council) is not required in this arrangement, as typically the employee will be reading and/or drafting reports/papers for typing back at the main office base.

Permanent and Occasional Homeworking are formal arrangements (normally reflected in the terms of the employee's contract), which require employees to provide a suitable area within their homes as a dedicated workspace. In both cases the Council's rules in relation to homeworking must be adhered to. Ad-hoc homeworking is an informal arrangement that requires no variation to an employee's contract and to which the Council's homeworking rules do not apply.

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### **Flexible Working Arrangements – Work Life Balance**

The County Council recognises that its employees, at all stages of their lives, work better when they are able to balance work and all other aspects of their lives. Therefore, one of the major objectives of introducing flexible working practices is to help employees achieve a sensible balance between their work and personal responsibilities, i.e. achieve a 'Work/Life Balance'.

The County Council also recognises that to remain competitive it must not only deliver challenging jobs and recognition, but also opportunities for employees to achieve work/life balance. Therefore the Council positively supports the use of flexible 'time-out' options for its employees.

In relation to this, and in response to legislation, the County Council has developed appropriate policies and procedures, which have regard to fairness and consistency and value employees for their contribution rather than their working hours/patterns. These include:

- the Honorarium Scheme, which rewards outputs rather than inputs;
- the Disability in Employment Policy, which positively encourages the use of flexible working arrangements as a principal means to recruit and retain the skills of disabled applicants/employees;
- comprehensive maternity/adoption/paternity leave schemes;
- system for employees to request flexible working arrangements (both as a contractual and statutory right)
- a collective agreement with the trade unions on unpaid parental leave; and
- a collective agreement with the trade unions on paid/unpaid compassionate leave.

As part of its leave arrangements the County Council has also introduced the provision of career breaks (unpaid leave for maximum of 1 year), depending on length of service.

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### **Office Accommodation Strategy**

The County Council's Office Accommodation Strategy aims to use office space more efficiently and to improve environmental conditions. A key objective of the strategy is to create an office environment that supports much more individual flexibility, both within the office and for mobile and flexible working. Recognising the role of the workplace as a lever for change and improvement in order to accrue business benefits, the strategy has been developed to provide a vision of the Cambridgeshire County Council office that will improve workplaces, complement culture change, improve branding of the organisation and ultimately improve productivity levels.

However, the Council recognises that office layouts alone will not enable flexible working and expects local managers to review working methods alongside accommodation reviews in order to maximise the benefit from flexible working.

The Council expects managers to consider individual flexible working requests in the context of the WorkWise approach to flexible working, where all teams are positively encouraged to work this way. In that context, maximising the use of accommodation while providing sufficient access to desk space, office-based ICT equipment, filing cupboards and other stationery and office equipment, e.g. fax machine and photocopier should become a "business as usual" consideration.

The Council expects managers to establish, in agreement with employees, protocols on the use of office space and equipment, e.g. clear-desk policy and instructions for booking meeting rooms.

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### Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Strategy

Flexible working not only involves the better use of employee time and office space, but the more effective use of ICT, which should enable employees to work at any desk, stay in touch and have access to the relevant information. The County Council's ICT Strategy <link> underpins and supports the Council's approach to flexible workstyles.

The County Council expects managers to consider the ICT systems and equipment required to support flexible working practices and to ensure that these are sufficient for their purposes. Any proposed changes to workstyles must be made in discussion with the relevant manager/s responsible for ITC provision, in order to minimise disruption and maximise the use of appropriate ICT equipment.

For example, tele/homeworkers may require the provision of mobile phones, dedicated land phone-lines, lap-top computers or desk-top computers, all of which have health and safety, insurance and security implications that need to be discussed with employees or formalised in contracts of employment as appropriate.

Security policies are being developed in relation to the business use of personal IT equipment at home, which must be communicated to employees as appropriate. These are summarised in the Council's Teleworking and Homeworking Rules.

Managers must also ensure that employees receive appropriate training to ensure that they are competent in the use of the ICT equipment and facilities provided.

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### Communication Strategies

To enable flexible working the County Council recognises that protocols will need to be established in relation to communication, i.e. how the team/unit/section/individual are going to "work together".

Managers, therefore, in discussion with affected employees, must establish a set of rules regarding how, what and when employees will communicate (see tele/homeworking rules).

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### Health and Safety

The Council, as employer, is responsible for:

- assessing work activities, systems and premises for significant risks, their mitigation and recording them;
- ensuring that the worker is suitably trained and equipped for the work;
- ensuring proper insurance cover;
- ensuring the security of County Council property and information; and
- ensuring that employees' working time is appropriately monitored.

These responsibilities apply wherever an employee undertakes their work activities, e.g. office base, touch down centre and / or home. The County Council takes these responsibilities seriously, and it expects managers and employees to assess and address any health and safety issues associated with flexible work styles, e.g. the provision of appropriate equipment, dedicated work areas and the potential risks where lone working may be a factor. It is important that managers and employees refer to the Flexible working – Health & Safety Standards guidance when considering flexible work style arrangements.

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### **Training & Development**

#### Management Development

The introduction and implementation of flexible working practices requires a major cultural shift for the County Council, i.e. to concentrate on the management of outputs rather than the traditional inputs, e.g. 9-5 working in a fixed office location.

The Council recognises that some managers may require support and assistance in adapting their management style to accommodate flexible working and, therefore, will ensure that suitable training is made available to these managers, which will include:

- applying the concept of location independence in work, i.e. assessing which elements of work can be undertaken in a different setting;
- challenging traditional assumptions of WorkWise accommodation provision, e.g. being needs not status based, and the sharing of facilities;
- consideration of how tele/homeworking and hot-desking can meet customer needs better;
- acknowledging the rights and responsibilities involved in managing more flexible working patterns; and
- discussing the support systems necessary to facilitate successful flexible working arrangements/practices.

#### Team Building

Teams are now required to move to more flexible working practices should attend WorkWise flexible working workshops, which are designed to help team members adjust to new ways of working and can be arranged through directorate HR Operational Teams.

#### Individual Training

The Council recognises that some employees may require additional assistance to help them to operate in a flexible working environment and will ensure that appropriate training is provide, e.g. ICT skills training.

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### **Employee Requests for Flexible Working**

The Council expects all employees to work flexibly where the tasks and job roles makes this way of working appropriate. In addition, the Council positively encourages employees to consider flexible working arrangements, (decrease or change in the pattern of the hours worked, or tele/homeworking – on a permanent or occasional basis), as a means to managing their work/life balance, e.g. to:

- accommodate child care/elder care/other dependant care responsibilities;
- take account of a disability or medical/health condition; and/or
- undertake a part time training course.

#### Statutory Right To Request Flexible Working

Employees who are 'eligible parents' and/or 'eligible carers' may have a statutory right to ask for a flexible working arrangement to be considered. The Council has established separate procedures, which must be followed in such cases.

Where an employee wishes to exercise his/her statutory right to request flexible working arrangements, the Council's established procedures for this will be followed. Employees who wish to move to more flexible working arrangements for work/life balance reasons should submit requests, in writing, to their immediate line manager, detailing:

- the reason(s) for the request;
- the proposed variation to working hours/patterns or work location, and whether these arrangements are proposed on a fixed term/temporary/permanent basis; and

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- how the proposed arrangements would work in practice, and how they would maintain and/or improve standards in service delivery.

### Employees Without A Statutory Right

Guidance for employees on how to make their business case for the proposed changes can be viewed on the intranet un 'Flexible Working'.

On receipt of such requests managers must:

- consider the proposal seriously;
- make no formal decision until a meeting and full discussion has taken place with the employee; and
- confirm the final decision in writing.

Detailed guidance for managers on dealing with such requests can be viewed on the intranet under 'Flexible Working'.

There is no appeal process, however an employee may wish to raise the issue as a grievance, if no satisfactory solution can be found.

### Review of Flexible Working

All decisions, i.e. to implement or to refuse a request for flexible working, should be reviewed on at least an annual basis, to check whether:

- an agreed arrangement is working well and/or needs adjustment; OR
- circumstances have changed that would now enable a declined flexible working arrangement to be implemented.

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## **Monitoring and Review**

Line managers will review individual/team flexible working arrangements on a regular basis to ensure that they remain effective and sustainable.

The implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Director of People and Policy and members of the Directorate Management Team (DMT) in accordance with agreed performance indicators for each directorate:

- number and type of flexible arrangements introduced; and
- number and type of flexible arrangements discontinued.

Any amendments will be made following endorsement by DMT.

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## **Further Information**

All policies and procedures form part Council employees' terms and conditions of employment and therefore care should be taken with their application.

Information on how to apply this policy is available from your HR contact. Contact the [Employee Relations Team](#) to give feedback on this policy

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