# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The vision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging how we currently work</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstyles and flexible working options</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The law on flexible working</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New environments for new ways of working</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk sharing and hot desking principles</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De-cluttering offices and storage</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agile workplaces</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies for agile working</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data security</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy working</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal considerations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The human factor</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agile; sustainable</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The council is going through a period of significant change. The financial pressures facing the organisation and the scale of the financial savings that need to be made over the next few years mean that we need to take every opportunity to assess the way the council currently operates. One of the key aims of the Better Places for Work programme is to get rid of some of our old, unsuitable properties which will ultimately mean working from reduced desk spaces.

However, whilst property is one of the drivers for the programme it is also important to recognise that introducing more agile working practices offers an opportunity to change some of our current working practices to ensure that they are as effective and efficient as possible. Being more flexible and working in more agile ways should be at the heart of transforming and streamlining organisations. This journey is one that councils across the country have been embarking on, in recognition that wasteful practices are built into traditional ways of working.

This handbook has been developed to provide information on how to introduce agile working practices, and to address some of the common questions and challenges staff may face in developing more agile ways of working. This is supported by e-learning modules, which will take you through a number of practical activities that will support you in challenging ‘the way we do things now’ and in thinking about ways to overcome some common obstacles.
The vision for Better Places for Work is to improve service delivery by changing the way we work and improving the facilities where we work. The programme is about both people and culture change. It is about encouraging and supporting changes in the way people work, and empowering them to challenge current work practices and introduce more agile working in order to deliver better services.

Our vision for transforming the way we work through agile working focuses on achieving the following benefits:

- Increasing the effectiveness of our activities;
- Reducing the costs of running the council through making best use of our assets;
- Focusing our work on outcomes rather than processes;
- Meeting the aspirations of staff for an improved work-life balance;
- Creating office environments to allow collaboration and innovation;
- Reducing the environmental footprint of our working practices.
Agile working in Cumbria County Council will be a journey, with the aim of making continuous progress towards achieving these benefits. The Better Places for Work programme will provide a framework for developing and implementing new working practices that will enable our staff to work seamlessly across different locations, and at times that are more advantageous to both customers and employees. Our workforce will be empowered by a new trust-based working culture. They will have access to offices that are designed for better interaction with colleagues, partners and customers.

Agile working gives us the opportunity to modernise our working practices, moving away from command and control assumptions of traditional working about where, when and how work should be done to a culture of doing more with less, working wherever, whenever and however is most appropriate to get the work done.

This doesn’t just cover our working hours, locations and workstyles, it is about being responsive and adaptive to service needs and advancements in technology. Agile working aims to provide greater flexibility particularly in relation to the time and location employees can work, subject to the requirements of the service and individual jobs.

The aims of the Better Places for Work programme are to implement:

- A range of flexible working options to benefit staff and customers;
- Environments that enable the greatest flexibility;
- Technologies that support the practice and management of flexible working;
- New forms of collaboration (e.g. in virtual teams) that reduce the need for physical meetings and travel;
- Culture change to enable greater organisational agility and innovation.

Principles of agile working

Agile working is about taking a more comprehensive and strategic approach to modernising working practices. It is based on the following principles:

- Work takes place at the most effective locations and at the most effective times;
- Flexibility becomes the norm rather than the exception;
- Everyone is in principle considered eligible for flexible working, without assumptions being made about people or roles;
- Employees have more choice about where and when they work, subject to business considerations;
- Space is allocated to activities, not to individuals and not on the basis of seniority;
- The costs of doing work are reduced;
- There is effective and appropriate use of technology;
- Managing performance focuses on results rather than presence;
- Agile working underpins and adds new dimensions to diversity and equality principles;
- Employees have the opportunity to lead balanced and healthy lives;
- Work has less impact on the environment.

In summary there are positive impacts from agile working and benefits for the council, our workforce, and for the environment.
Introducing more agile 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.

The agile working culture in Cumbria County Council will include:

- More joined up working – between individuals, between teams, with external partners and with the wider public;
- Continuous service improvements, in particular through the use of new technologies to increase efficiencies;
- A commitment to flexibility – being constantly open to new ways of working and delivering services;
- An emphasis on management by results rather than management by presence;
- An emphasis on working in shared spaces and with shared resources, rather than with territorial or personalised ones;
- An emphasis on promoting higher levels of staff empowerment and autonomy, to maximise the benefits arising from the new working styles;
- An emphasis on using new ways of working to assist employees to achieve a better work-life balance;
- A commitment to using new technologies and new ways of working to reduce the environmental impact of workstyles, processes and delivery of services;
- A commitment to using new technologies and new ways of working to recruit, retain and develop a more diverse and inclusive workforce;
- A culture of learning using the new technologies to help employees, wherever they are located, to develop their skills and capabilities and move forward in their careers.

Challenging how we currently work
It is important to recognise that developing this culture and ensuring that the changes become embedded is a collective responsibility, not one that can be imposed from above and will therefore need the involvement and commitment from all levels of staff across the authority.

The culture change journey

Changing to an Agile working culture can’t be carried out in isolation. It will involve engaging and working with all staff throughout the programme in making changes to workplaces, technologies and processes. This process will include a combination of:

- Establishing the expectations for the new work culture;
- Supporting staff through the changes;
- Agreeing protocols for new working practices;
- Management and staff training through workshops and online learning.

The Better Places for Work programme is following a four stage process. The following stages have been designed to ensure that we are prepared for a different way of working and that agile working arrangements can be considered in a structured way and in the context of the whole team and service delivery.

Stage 1: Education
Ensuring there is a common understanding about the gradual introduction of agile working, the importance of service delivery and the culture we are aiming to achieve as an organisation.

Stage 2: Preparation
This stage involves “getting ready” for the changes to come and ensuring a structure is in place to support agile working when it is introduced during Stage 3. This will involve a number of practical tasks for you and your team including challenging current work practices, working through potential obstacles and barriers to implementing new working practices and developing proposals for workstyles and the introduction of agile working in individual teams.

Stage 3: Implementing agile working
This is the formal implementation stage where you will be introducing the new workstyles and working practices, and will be required to engage with staff prior to aligning individuals to a workstyle.

Stage 4: Embedding
This will be an ongoing stage whereby agile working practices will be reviewed to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose and continue to be embedded into the culture, reinforced by further advances in technology and finally “better” buildings.

Challenging current thinking

Changes to current ways of working can be challenging for staff and this process needs to be managed well. It is partly about managing work in new ways and partly about managing behaviours. What underpins the whole programme is the need to challenge the way we currently do things, and think about whether the move to agile working offers us the opportunity to do things differently.

Better Places for Work is an opportunity to take the time to think about what modern, ‘ideal’ ways of working mean for your service and to think about the long-term vision for your service. This will involve taking positive steps to challenge you and your staffs’ current thinking around workstyles, working arrangements, line management practices etc. Key questions to consider are therefore:

- What would a modern council/service look and feel like?
- What benefits would it bring for customers, staff and managers?
- How different could your team look?
- What challenges are there to change?

This needs to be a collaborative approach with staff so there is a need to actively engage your staff in analysing what they currently do and how they work and challenging how they could be doing things in the future, using the opportunities offered by flexible working practices.

Managers must consider how services are actually provided to users, the relationships within the team, how managers supervise their staff and how the team relate to other parts of the county council and any external partners.
Work styles and flexible working options

Under the Better Places for Work programme, five different types of work styles and a range of flexible working options will be available:

**Fixed 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 the majority of the working day. They will only be allocated a fixed work station in limited circumstances. This will be due to the nature of the job or specific workstation requirements.

**Home worker** - Employees carry out the majority of their work at their home. However, they are still required to attend meetings, supervisions etc in council premises. For these employees their home becomes a contractual place of work (with the relevant assessments and control measures (i.e. risk assessments in place).

**Externally mobile** - The majority of their time is spent either visiting people, attending meetings or carrying out work across various external sites, e.g. field workers. Externally mobile employees have the greatest flexibility in where they work. Their work can potentially be carried out from a variety of locations including council buildings, the premises of service users, community based locations, partner organisations or from home.

**Internally mobile** - The role is not tied down to one particular location. Internally mobile 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.

**Customised worker** - Employees who work in a “fixed worker” way but who also work from home for less than 50% of their time on a regular and fixed pattern.

**Flexible time options**
There are also a range of flexible time options available to support staff and service delivery. These include:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Flexible working</th>
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<tr>
<td>Part time working</td>
<td>Part time working is when an employee works less hours per week than a standard full time contract.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compressed hours</td>
<td>Compressed hours give employees the opportunity to request a change to their working pattern so that their contracted hours are worked over a reduced number of days. For example; working full time but over a “9 day fortnight” or “4 day week”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job share</td>
<td>Job sharing is a contractual arrangement, with a working pattern where two or more people share the responsibilities and benefits of one full time position. There are specific employment law issues associated with job share arrangements and therefore before considering or entering into such an agreement, advice should be sought from your directorate HR officer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annualised hours</td>
<td>Annualised hours is where the weekly hours are tailored around the peaks and troughs of the service requirements over a year. For example, services that are affected by weather, the financial year, tourism or project demands etc may benefit from an annualised hours contract. Employees receive a salary based on their annual contracted hours and this is paid in equal monthly instalments throughout the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td>Flexitime allows employees a degree of choice with when they work their contracted hours. With prior agreement by their manager, staff can vary their start and finish times within set parameters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term time working</td>
<td>Term time working is when an employee works during school term times and does not work during school holidays. The employee receives a pro rata salary, but this is paid all year round in equal instalments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career breaks</td>
<td>A career break is designed to provide employees with the opportunity to take an extended unpaid break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional annual leave</td>
<td>The additional annual leave purchase scheme allows employees to buy in up to 10 working days (pro rata) per year.</td>
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In many cases, employees may blend different agile/flexible working options, according to the need of the tasks in hand. This involves a substantial move away from the idea that an individual applies for and is granted a single particular alternative workstyle that is set in stone. It is important to take a team approach so that agile working arrangements can be strategically planned to cover the service as well as promote more flexible working arrangements for employees.

All of the agile working options have an impact on how space is used. Flexible location options will mean that the base office will be used less, though it may be used somewhat more by visitors. Managers need to think through how the changes in occupancy affect the way the office is used.

Choosing which styles of work are appropriate

This will depend on:

- Analysing the tasks involved in the job role, in terms of how effectively they can be done at different times and in different locations;
- The preferences of the employee and being able to meet their aspirations;
- The potential of the agile working choices to reduce the financial and environmental footprint of Cumbria County Council’s working practices;
- Any impacts on teamwork that may arise.

There are a number of practical exercises for managers and teams to work through in order to develop their thinking around the issues above. These exercises form part of the Stage 2 e-learning tool.
The law on flexible working

Legislation in the UK gives the ‘right to request’ flexible working to any employee with 26 weeks continuous service.

Employers are not obliged to grant a request, but must give sound organisational reasons if they refuse. The law requires employees to make a case showing that the new work arrangements are workable and will not adversely affect the organisation.

Cumbria County Council’s “Application for Flexible Working” scheme sets out guidelines in respect of this legislation.

This scheme is currently being reviewed to compliment the agile working arrangements that will be introduced to all staff under the agile working programme. The review will propose that in the future, applications to change agile working arrangements can be open to all employees.

The introduction of agile working under the Better Places for Work project is a separate, one-off exercise that will see agile working being launched on a wider platform and in line with the considered impact of the team and the strategic objectives of the organisation.

The introduction of agile working under Better Places for Work will not affect employee’s individual statutory rights but will allow us to take a step back, consider flexible working from a higher viewpoint and allow for a more agile working environment going forward.
New environments for new ways of working

**Better Places for Work** aims to create attractive and inspiring work environments that support the new work styles, increase the adaptability of space, and increase organisational performance.

Agile working also enables a range of new working environments beyond the traditional office. Unlike traditional offices, which are based on having ranks of personal standard desks, the agile office will have a mix of desk types and meeting spaces where work activities can be carried out.

**How much is your office used?**

- A traditional office used between 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday;
- Holidays can account for up to 11.5% of an employee’s time;
- Flexitime can account for up to an additional 9% of an employee’s time;
- Meeting time reduces daily occupancy;
- External visits/training sessions time can reduce occupancy more;
- The typical occupancy at a workstation is well below 100%.

While one of the aims of agile working is to have offices utilised more efficiently and to save costs by eliminating wasted space, it is also an aim to use under-occupied space to provide other desirable work spaces that are closely aligned to the needs of modern flexible workers.

As desk-based tasks can increasingly be carried out from anywhere, the need in offices is less for ranks of workstations, and more for:

- Flexible meeting spaces – small meeting rooms, breakout spaces and café areas;
- Space for quiet and concentrated working;
- Spaces for confidential work and phone calls;
- Touch-down spaces for people working on the move;
- Resource areas;
- Special project areas;
- Flexible multipurpose spaces.

**Understanding space requirements**

It is essential to have an evidence-based approach to understanding the amount of space needed in the office, and the mix of different kinds of spaces. This should be based on:

- An analysis of how, when and where work is carried out;
- An analysis of work processes and technology use, and how changing these creates opportunities for change in the workplace;
- A storage audit and an assessment of the scope for storage reduction;
- Consultation with staff to understand their working practices and preferences;
- Mapping of the relationships and interactions between departments and teams.

Space audits carried out in offices with traditional working practices elsewhere have shown average desk occupancy levels of well under 50% over the working day. The main value of a space audit is that it will deliver objective figures in terms of how often desks are occupied, how often they are “claimed” but with no one at the desk, and how often they are empty.

Figures of less than 45% average occupancy are normal for professionals and managers in most “pre-agile” office environments. Average occupancy for admin and support staff rarely rises above 60%, despite what most managers would expect. Peaks may be around 60% for managers and professionals and around 80% for administrative staff, but are rarely higher. Individual teams will show higher peaks, but these peaks do not occur at the same time: this is the main reason why staff often have a perception of higher occupancy.

**Modern, more mobile working practices and current flexible working options lead to a lower overall requirement for desk space.**
Desk-sharing and hot desking principles

As properties are vacated under Better Places for Work and the number of desks is reduced to align more closely with actual occupancy, desk-sharing and hot desking solutions will become increasingly prevalent.

Agile working does not envisage a hot desking arrangement that moves teams all around buildings from one day to the next, divides colleagues or provides service users with uncertainty about whereabouts.

Although agile working encourages remote and mobile working, maintaining team cohesion and joint access to nearby resources is important. For this reasons “team zones” are more likely to work well than other arrangements.

Team zones are not necessarily fixed to one location only but will be viewed as the “central base(s)” for the department and where team files are stored and/or where team meetings regularly take place.

However, it is a key principle that while broadly defined team zones can be useful, these cannot be exclusive spaces.

To increase occupancy levels and achieve the savings necessary to support new working styles, vacant desks must be open to people from other teams to use, without them being made to feel that they are intruders or that they are violating someone else’s personal space.

As well as helping to clear the way for more collaborative space, desk sharing can help to break down barriers between teams, and help to end ‘silos working’.

**Desk sharing needs also to take into account the needs of staff with disabilities for any specialist IT or ergonomic equipment.**
Clear desk and clear screen principles

Successful desk sharing requires a clear desk and clear screen policy. This means that personal items – including ‘personal professional’ items – must be cleared from desks when the desk is vacated. These items should be stored in personal and/or team storage areas respectively. It also involves keeping a clear screen and ensuring that all staff lock their computers when leaving their desk and to log off when leaving for an extended period of time.

Even those who aren’t mobile and work only in the office should be part of the clear desk and clear screen policy, not only to allow all desks to be available for use but also to maintain the quality of the working environment and a consistent storage and security discipline.

It is generally not good practice to allow someone to claim a workstation for a whole day when during that day they may be gone for hours at a time. If the desk is to be left unoccupied for a specified period, then it must be cleared for someone else to use.

Desk-sharing and clear desk protocols

The following are the protocols that should be adopted to ensure that space-sharing works effectively:

1. Use of space is determined on the basis of the activities being carried out.
2. While there are team priority zones allocated, this should be seen as non-exclusive team-space, available to other employees as the need arises.
3. Non-team members working in specified team areas should be made to feel welcome. This will help to break down silos and encourage cross-team working.
4. Staff should use the appropriate space for the activity – e.g. informal meetings should not take place at desks but in break-out areas or meeting rooms.
5. If your plans change, rethink your space requirements and move to a more appropriate work setting.
6. Where needed, calls or discussions with private or confidential subject matter should be held in a workspace designed for privacy.
7. Space is not to be allocated on the basis of seniority, habit or personal preference.
8. Work-in-progress should not be stored on desks, but in team storage or project areas
9. Personal items should be stored in personal or team storage areas, and only located on desks during periods of active occupation
10. If a desk or other work area is to be left unoccupied for more than two hours, the desk should be cleared for use by others.
11. When a desk or other work area is vacated, it should be left completely clear for use by other members of staff
12. Teams are advised that exceptions to these protocols should be few, and based on genuine need, e.g. reasonable adjustment for staff with disabilities, or a specialist function that requires a particular location, e.g. receptionist or team administrator.
13. Finally those employees who are allocated personal desks should still abide by the clear desk policy and expect others to use their desks when they are absent.

Hot desk locations

As the programme progresses, a number of hot desks will be established within different team zones across the county. The locations of these hot desks will be communicated and available on the Better Places for Work pages on Intouch.

The council are exploring the requirements for a hot desk booking system. However it is important that local arrangements are made in the interim to establish simple-to-manage alternative systems to locate where colleagues are and to understand where there are available seats. A location board system – e.g. a white board is a useful tool and as a matter of course all employees should ensure that Outlook diaries are kept up to date and colleagues know the whereabouts of other members of staff.
A key constraint on the introduction of agile working is a dependency on paper documents and other physical resources. While there are some statutory obligations to retain paper documents, the reasons for using and generating paper are becoming less and less compelling in an age of electronic based working.

In most departments where paper-dependency is high, there are significant space savings that can be made by reducing duplication, archiving, and moving to electronic-based working. All teams should be de-cluttering and more information can be found on Intouch.

In developing agile working practices, where information can be shared and accessible, there are essentially three movements for reforming storage practices:

**Personal**

- Physical
- On office floor

**Team**

- Electronic
- Off floor/offsite

In a desk-sharing environment, there can be no personal shelves or storage allocated to individual desks, nor can there be permanent desk pedestals. Files and resources used for professional work should be kept in team storage areas – this is good practice anyway, reduces duplication and makes resources easier for other people to find.

Increasingly, the use of paper processes is being replaced by electronic ones. There is still some way to go before we reach the ‘Paperless Office’. All the same, it is important as an aspiration to move towards.

The use of electronic processes and appropriate on-line storage is essential to agile working, and ‘un-tethers’ people from the office, enabling more effective working from other locations. It also enables a rethink and helps to challenge assumptions about the location of work for those involved in process work.

As much storage as possible, if remaining in physical format, should be moved off the office floor. Office space is extremely expensive, and must be prioritised for human interaction, not storage.
Agile workplaces

Home working

Many employees view home working as a employee benefit but it isn’t for everyone. For example some staff may have other family members who work from home, or their rental agreements may have restrictions which make it difficult for them to work in this way.

All arrangements for home working will be voluntary and mutually agreed between the manager and employee. Under the Better Places for Work programme, expression of interest in home working will be considered during Stage 3 of the agile working programme, where preferences from the whole team are known and can be considered collectively. The arrangement must have a mutually beneficial balance between the needs of the service and the individual.

When people are working more than occasionally from home, it is important that the home working environment is set up properly, with a desk and appropriate chair. More information can be found under the “healthy working” section page 19. In general, however, the evidence is that working from home does not carry substantial additional risk, and where it reduces travel it plays a part in reducing risk. Even so, it is necessary for everyone to be aware of the regulations that need to be observed and how to optimise their remote work spaces ergonomically.

It is important that working from home is not a degraded experience compared to working in the office. When working at home, staff should be fully contactable and able to connect to all office systems and processes.

The ideal scenario is one of seamless connection, with the computer integrated with the office network and the mobile phone or blackberry acting as if it were an extension within the office. It is also important that home-based working has a ‘professional face’. While it can help staff achieve a better work-life balance, it is important that home does not intrude into work, e.g. having domestic interruptions when on organisational calls.

The reverse also applies – staff need to feel able to feel in control of the home/work interface, and not feel pressured into allowing work to intrude into their personal time.

Any home working arrangements will be agreed following an initial assessment regarding the suitability of that particular environment. If an employee moves home or wishes to undertake home working elsewhere, either on a temporary or permanent basis, a new assessment will need to be done and management approval provided.

If the new household environment is not deemed as a suitable place to carry out working activities, home working may no longer be suitable either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Employees must be aware that home working may be withdrawn for this reason and alternative arrangements made for the employee’s way of working.
Working on the move

In addition to home working and traditional office spaces, a growing proportion of work is being done in ‘third places’, for example:

- Other people’s offices: clients, organisational partners, shared offices, etc;
- Cafés, hotel lobbies, libraries;
- In trains, buses and cars.

The ability to work anywhere is made possible by laptops, blackberrys and mobile phones. The main issues with working on the move are to do with security, confidentiality, safety and health. These areas are covered in more detail under the “Data security” and “Healthy Working” sections of this handbook.

Technologies for agile working

With the right technology choices, people can work just as well away from the office, using the internet and wireless communications to work anywhere and at any time.

A number of WiFi areas have been set up within council locations to enable mobile working. A list of wireless hotspots can be found on Intouch here.

Access to the network can also be gained from hot desks and touch down areas equipped with network cables or docking stations. External wireless hotspots such as hotels, conference centres and public buildings can also be accessed providing the necessary security standards are maintained.

Staff accessing the network via such external WiFi hotspots signals should always use the VPN and be mindful of information security and confidentiality when working on the move.

A technology and equipment recommendation list is available in Appendix A. This list is available to provide a guide to managers and teams when they begin to think about the type of technology needed.

However, this list illustrates the technology and equipment needed for “office-type” roles only. It is recognised that technologies need to be appropriate to the role. Staff need to be able to work comfortably as well as productively and therefore the technology and equipment needs of the team will need to be discussed between individuals and the manager. Needs will largely depend on:

- Specialist service technology requirements;
- The types of agile workers in the team;
- Individual health and safety considerations;
- Individual equipment requirements.

Working at home for at least some of the time is now viable and attractive for many people. If working from home, it is an employee’s responsibility to ensure they have an appropriate broadband connection and / or phone reception to enable them to work effectively. Employees should note that inadequate signal and access problems may result in home working being unworkable.
Personal usage of equipment and technology

The council will provide all required equipment to support them carrying out their role. However in some circumstances and as an alternative to council equipment, employees can voluntarily choose to use some of their own equipment to carry out their activities whilst working from home.

For example, this may be preferable if the employee already has a suitable workspace, desk and chair in their home and doesn’t wish/have room for an additional one.

It is important that any use of personal equipment meets the minimum health and safety and data protection requirements. Personal laptops and computers cannot be used for council business and Appendix A illustrates the type of personal equipment that could be suitable for work purposes.

If employees use their own equipment for council work, then their own insurance should specifically cover this. In this respect, financial reimbursement for damage or loss of personal equipment will not be provided by Cumbria County Council.

Technologies for teamwork over distance

One of the major concerns that people have before bringing in agile working is about maintaining the integrity of teams and preventing isolation and ‘atomisation’ of the workforce.

Good communication planning can help overcome this as well as effective use of technologies for remote meetings using phone and video conferencing. These not only enhance productivity, they also contribute to council savings through a reduction in travel.

Video conferencing has been around for some time as an alternative to long distance travel to meetings and investment has been made in these facilities over the last couple of years so that they can be used more widely and effectively. It is important that all staff understand how to use these facilities and use them frequently as an alternative to unnecessary travel.
Data security

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, just as if they were working in a fixed council office.

Managers must agree early on with their staff as to how confidential or sensitive information will be handled when working in agile ways. It is also advisable to visit the different locations that the employee may work from and agree basic principles regarding information that can be discussed or handled in these locations.

Principally:

• 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.

Before any agile working arrangement is put in place, managers should discuss how confidential and sensitive conversations/work will be handled in an agile environment.

Each service will be different and consideration needs to be given to:

• Any relevant legislation or government guidance;
• The potential impact of the information being disclosed in the environment;
• The obligations of all employees to ensure that information is handled correctly and not used for personal benefit or gain.

If a particularly sensitive issue cannot be discussed in a particular open plan office, employees must take a sensible approach and use the confidential facilities available in the building. This can include meetings rooms or quiet breakout areas if appropriate.

Whatever approach is taken it is vital that staff are made aware of and trained in good information management and security practice.
Healthy working

Full-time employees spend almost half of their waking hours working, travelling to and from work or thinking about work. It therefore makes good organisational sense to take care of their health and fitness. Agile working tends to attract a number of questions about health and safety considerations and precautions that that may be required.

These kinds of issues are sometimes raised as reasons for not working more flexibly. However the key principle is the same for all health and safety issues, that is, the employer’s duty of care is the same wherever employees are working, whether in the employer’s workplace, at home, on the move or in some other working environment.

In general, when it comes to health and safety, the aim has to be to enable rather than prohibit – that is to enable staff to work safely wherever is the most effective and efficient location to get the work done.

A suite of health and safety policies and risk assessments are available and it is important that employees and managers understand the implications of these. These documents can be accessed through the health and safety pages on Intouch. The guidance below covers some key areas that you may need to consider before agile working is implemented within your team.

Home working

It is best if there is a separate room to work in at home and that it can be closed off from the rest of the house if needed. For people working regularly from home, a health and safety risk assessment must be carried out. The county council has a Safety for Homeworkers procedure that contains a checklist to cover the main risks of home working. It is important that this is considered before any arrangements are put in place.

If you are working from home then your comfort and safety is just as important as it is when working in an office. Using laptops for prolonged periods in an office or home office environment requires the use of a laptop stand and/or additional properly positioned screen, with a separate keyboard and mouse.

There are no specific health and safety regulations for homeworking: all the provisions that apply in the workplace apply wherever an employee is working.

Particular regulations to consider include:
• Display screens;
• Heating, lighting and ventilation;
• Workplace ergonomics;
• Electrics, cabling and trip hazards;
• Working time;
• Lifting and carrying equipment;
• Security, including data security;
• Safety of third parties, including family members.

You need to have a workstation that meets the minimum requirements of the Health and Safety (Display Screen) Regulations 1992. To establish that workstations meet these requirements we use The “Safe use of your Workstation” module on Learning Pool.

The only time that you should ever work on DSE equipment without a proper set up would be when you are working for a very short length of time usually under an hour at a touchdown space etc.
Working on the move

The main issues are to do with security, safety and health. Safety concerns relate both to personal security (e.g. using portable equipment while driving, or the risk of being mugged).

In general, other organisations that have implemented agile working arrangements have not reported an increase in the number of incidents reported as a result of carrying laptops. However precautions are still needed and all staff are already encouraged to carry laptops and similar devices in an inconspicuous bag to avoid drawing attention to the equipment.

If you are ever the victim of crime and challenged for your equipment you should always give this up.

Whatever your work style, you should never give out your home address, phone number or arrange to meet with clients at your own home. You should also be aware that when travelling on work business, you will still need to make sure that someone at work knows where you are going and when you have returned safely.

Hot desking and health and safety

One of the common questions that arise when introducing hot desking is about retaining personal chairs. The Health and Safety (Display Screen) Regulations indicate the minimum requirements that an operators chair should meet. In the case of chairs for shared or hot desks, these need to meet the minimum requirements and be adjustable for all those likely to use them. The Health and Safety Team have looked at this issue and have identified standard operators chairs that meet this criteria for the majority of workers. If for medical reasons, it is highlighted that you require a specific, specialised chair then you need to raise this with your manager. Then arrangements can be made to look into individual requests in relation to health needs and work styles. This will be done with the advice and involvement with the Occupational Health Service.

Working Time

One of the benefits of agile working is that it can help create a work-balance. For example, it can ease the daily commute and/or help employees manage family, caring or domestic responsibilities during lunch breaks or directly before and after they “clock on” and “clock off”.

However it is important that the number of hours being undertaken is managed effectively and employees don’t work excessively large or low hours on a regular basis.

Having the facility to work at home or in different locations can sometimes tempt employees to work over and above their required number of hours. Managers must ensure that all staff work within the provisions set out within the working time regulations.

Absence and healthy working

Alongside other initiatives to promote a healthy workplace, agile working practices can reduce absence and in particular reduce stress.

A significant proportion of absence from work is due to minor ailments that make the thought of commuting and sitting in an office with colleagues unbearable – being able to work on occasions from home can have a significant impact on ‘sick leave’.
We have mentioned before in this handbook that all forms of home working, whether ad hoc, full time or part time, will be voluntary following mutual agreement between the employee and the line manager.

It is important that employees consider and weigh up the implications of home working before they request to work in this way.

Key considerations are:

- The impact on service delivery;
- Work-life balance benefits;
- Caring or childcare responsibilities;
- A reduction in commuting time and costs;
- The suitability of the home environment;
- Insurance implications;
- Employee contractual changes;
- A potential increase in household bills;
- Tax relief;
- Rental and/or mortgage agreements;
- Broadband and/or line rental agreements;
- Family members;
- Health and Safety considerations;
- Other.

The guidance below covers some further detail that you may need to consider:

**Household bills and facilities**

Although there are many benefits to home working, employees must weigh these up when considering that no reimbursement for household bills will be provided. This includes but is not limited to: internet, heating, lighting, water, landline connection etc. Although financial assistance will not be provided, employees may find that they are still financially better off when considering personal commuting and lunchtime costs.

The only exception to the above is in cases where employees have had to use their personal home telephone to make business calls. The regular use of home/personal telephone lines is not encouraged, however where the employee uses their home land line to make ad hoc work-related calls, the costs of these calls can be claimed back, within reason, provided an itemised bill is produced.
Tax relief for household bills may be available to employees who should contact the HRMC directly for more information. Employees usually need to demonstrate that they have incurred expense “wholly exclusively and necessarily” as a result of their employment.

Employees would be required to complete a self-assessment form but any claim must be evidenced by being able to demonstrate the difference in costs incurred by working from home, compared to those that were incurred before home working was undertaken. The tax office can ask for up to twelve months worth of evidence. This is entirely a private matter to be settled between the individual employee and the tax authorities.

For more information please contact the HRMC directly or refer to their website here [www.hmrc.gov.uk/incometax/relief-household.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/incometax/relief-household.htm)

**Facilities**

It is necessary for employees to have the facilities necessary to work from home. Cumbria County Council will provide appropriate equipment and technology. However employees must ensure they have an adequate mobile phone reception and an appropriate internet connection to allow them to work seamlessly from home.

Employees are advised to contact their internet provider to ensure that the terms and conditions of their internet/broadband package cover provision of internet connection for business use at home. Internet provision companies differ in their stance regarding this.

Employees who are considering working from home on a permanent or ad hoc basis are required to check that no restrictions apply in mortgage or tenancy agreements.

**Insurance**

The council’s existing liability insurance is not limited to covering a particular place or building and there are no exclusions or limitations in cover for staff working at home or on the go.

However it is important to ensure that reasonable care and precautions have been taken to minimise accident, injury, loss or damage and before any ways of working change. The relevant health and safety policies and risk assessments should be undertaken to ensure that precautions have been satisfied,

In terms of personal motor insurance, employees are reminded that if they use their private vehicle for work, they have the appropriate level of insurance that includes business use on behalf of Cumbria County Council. Full details can be found under the Travel and subsistence Scheme and Rates document.

**Employee Insurance**

If employees will be undertaking any type of home working, it is advisable that they notify their own household insurance that they intend to work from home as it could affect the terms of their own instance. Some household insurance providers may charge an additional premium if homes are used for business purposes. Each insurance has its own attitude to business use at home and the council will not provide any allowance for personal household insurance.
The human factor

Because of the complexities of the work involved, it is tempting to see agile working as being all about designing offices and setting up new IT. But this really misses the point. While these are key enablers, agile working is essentially about people and culture change. It is about bringing about change in the way people work, and empowering them to work in more flexible ways to deliver better services.

Managing agile working

Managing agile working involves moving away from managing by presence to managing by outcome. This involves different ways of keeping in contact with staff, of assessing workloads and monitoring and measuring performance.

For the team this will involve greater sharing of schedules with colleagues and managers, and updating about work-in-progress.

Many of the management skills required are the same, only applied over distance. In addition, only in relatively few cases will people be spending most of the time in a different location from their manager and other team colleagues.

Over time, however, the amount of working in geographically dispersed and virtual teams can be expected to increase, and management and teamworking skills need to evolve accordingly.

For teams it is important to develop protocols about communication and reporting, so as to work effectively and maintain team cohesion. When working in different locations and at different times, social relationships need to be maintained and appropriate online and offline mechanisms need to be developed, such as buddy and mentoring schemes for new recruits, regular team meetings, staff briefings etc.

New working patterns, trust and autonomy

The most successful agile working arrangements are built on a culture of trust and responsibility. Building trust in an agile working team can sometimes involve meeting several challenges that with planning, openness and good communication can be overcome. For agile working to be effective, it is important to promote a motivated team with a strong work ethic.
Agile workers require more autonomy, and to be trusted more to make their own choices about how to organise their working lives.

For managers used to close supervision and managing by presence, this is a challenge. It involves a new kind of dialogue with staff, based on clarity of expectations and good communications – and much more trust.

It involves understanding that someone who is not in the office at the same time is not out of touch or out of control. Using the new technologies effectively, and new management techniques, managers can be more in touch with their team’s work than ever before.

**Teamwork protocols**

It is important to have clear expectations about what is to be done and about communications within the team.

Protocols should be established to cover:

- A requirement to let others know where and when you are working;
- Clear reporting structures;
- Sharing of calendars and schedules;
- Rigorous use of electronic document management systems, to ensure work is easily accessible;
- Being flexible about flexible working – to ensure that no individual is disadvantaged by the choices of others, e.g. in providing office cover or attending meetings;
- Etiquette in online communications, and behaviour in virtual meetings;
- Signposting availability for phone contact or online discussion;
- Fairness in use of space when in the office.

Just as with desk-sharing, there needs to be a degree of enforcement, at least in the initial stages, to bring about the changes in work culture required. But to a large extent teams should be able to do this themselves, and monitor their own team members’ adherence to the standards required.

**Managing outputs**

It is essential for managers to obtain regular progress updates so they can monitor service delivery and performance. The frequency and method of these updates will depend on the type of work being carried out, but could include a mixture of:

- Review meetings/team meetings;
- Daily/weekly email updates;
- Video conference meetings;
- Scheduled telephone calls.

Agreement needs to be reached about appropriate targets, goals and objectives and about the frequency and timing of communications to discuss these.

The focus should be on:

- Planning and scheduling work;
- Setting clear, specific, measurable objectives;
- Agreeing reasonable and manageable deadlines;
- Applying standards and procedures to maintain quality.

Managing outputs may be a more structured management style to what colleagues are used to. How they react will largely depend on how well the changes are communicated and how involved they are in the process.
It is important that managers explore the different options above with their teams, and develop solutions together which work best for the team, management and service users. This process should enable managers to gain employee support and commitment.

**Rethinking meetings**

It is important also to rethink meetings. Routine sharing of information can be carried out through online processes: physical meetings should be reserved for important collaborative work involving activities such as training, brainstorming and decision-making.

The benefits of agile working can be undermined by insisting on being present in person for routine meetings. Wherever possible, meetings should be structured and held using telephone or video conferencing. In reaching decisions about holding meetings, attention should always be given to the cumulative effects of meetings, and the need to reduce our need for office space and to reduce the need to travel.

**Dealing with problems and issues**

Before adopting flexible working practices, people are sometimes worried about issues such as:

- Being isolated;
- Loss of personal space in the office;
- Difficulties with time management;
- Loss of team spirit or team effectiveness;
- Dealing with technology and getting appropriate levels of support when working remotely;
- Intrusion of work into home life;
- 24/7 working;
- Managing performance;
- Loss of opportunities for career progression or training.

The evidence from implementing flexible/agile Working is that many more problems are anticipated than actually arise and that, once any initial problems are overcome, most people appreciate the greater flexibility and autonomy that agile working brings. (Reference: [www.flexibility.co.uk](http://www.flexibility.co.uk))

All the same, problems can occur. It is the responsibility of teams to look out for each other, and in particular for managers of dispersed teams to spot problems and resolve them before they become major issues. These may be teased out through regular conversations, or clues may be spotted in terms of performance.

If necessary, the manager and team member can agree an alternative work style. It is about finding the right work style for the individual, and about providing the appropriate support to overcome the particular problem.

**Highly collaborative and dynamic teams**

The aim in moving to agile working is to create the context in which teams can operate more dynamically, and have better physical and online spaces in which to interact. Though they may no longer sit next to one another, the new technologies and team protocols should allow much more effective sharing of work, and enable team members to communicate more effectively than before. Agile working will also support more effective cross-team working.
Environmental sustainability

The Better Places for Work project are taking steps to ensure that the office buildings we work from are more sustainable. These steps need to be complemented by the development of more sustainable working practices. One of the primary components of the carbon footprint of work relates to travel.

The carbon cost of work in the UK
- Every year UK workers clock up 80 billion car miles commuting to work;
- The typical carbon footprint of a workers in an office is around 1.5 tonnes of CO₂ per year;
- Organisational travel accounts for around 70 trips per worker per year, with an average distance of around 20 miles. 69% is by car;
- Mobile workers using company cars clock up an average 6000 miles per year.

Source: Department for Transport and RAC Foundation

Becoming a sustainable organisation is not just about engineering property solutions and complying with new building standards. It involves changing behaviours and assumptions about how we work. Travelling thousands of miles each year for meetings that can be carried out using video or telephone conferencing is an unsustainable and unproductive thing to do.

The decisions we make on a daily basis about where we work, where we expect our colleagues to work, and the ways in which we communicate can increase or reduce our need for travel, our energy consumption and consumption of physical resources.

Of course agile working can help address the daily commute as well as business mileage. Working from home is only one way of reducing travel. Working a compressed working week – doing all your working hours for 5 days in 4 – has the same effect on the road’s annual savings as working from home one day per week, though there may be performance or customer service reasons why this is not possible.

Using online conferencing (audio, video, etc.) will save Cumbria County Council tens of thousands of organisational miles, saving costs and increasing productivity as well as playing a role in saving the planet.

Social sustainability

Working in an agile way can also bring benefits to society, by:

- Extending work opportunities into more remote areas and to disadvantaged groups;
- Enabling people with disabilities or caring responsibilities to work in places or at times more suitable to them;
- Indirectly supporting local communities and services by enabling people to work at or nearer to home.

Using agile working principles, managers and staff can help to reduce both their own and the organisation’s environmental footprints.
Conclusion

We hope this Agile Work Handbook has provided you with a good understanding of some of the key principles of the Better Places for Work programme, along with some practical issues you will need to consider.

There are a number of supporting documents and e-Learning modules available to help you assess and introduce the right level of agile working within your team.

If you need any advice or support in introducing agile working, please refer your queries to the appropriate Better Places for Work officer below:

**Better Places for Work Directorate Leads:**

- **Adult and Local Services:** Lynne Davidson 07818 511829
  Children’s Services : Anita Kerrigan 01228 227060
  Resources: Val Slack 01228 221719
- **Chief Executive’s Office:** Paul Stafford, 01228 226288
- **Environment:** Wendy Power 07500 854282 Helen Younger 07974 327385
If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 01228 606060.