

Diversity impact assessment

TITLE <i>Name/description of the issue being assessed</i>	REVISION TO THE FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY (OUR WAYS OF WORKING)
DATE <i>Date the DIA is completed</i>	09 July 2021
LEAD OFFICER <i>Name of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.</i>	Nick Morgan HR Policy Manager

1 Summary description of the proposed change

- *What is the change to policy/service/new project that is being proposed?*
- *How does it compare with the current situation?*

As a result of the covid pandemic there has been a drastic change to the way we work. As a result there is a need to update the current flexible working policy to include hybrid working and promote the use of flexible working across the organisation. The revised policy combines three existing flexible working policies into one and by creating a suite of guidance documents to inform both manager and employees on the use of flexible working this allows the new policy to be more concise.

2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

- *Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.*
- *Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile*

Medway Council's recent Flexible Working Survey results showed that currently 53% of employees have remained working at home full time when they would ordinarily have been based in a Council building. In addition, 40% of employees have had a hybrid approach of working between both their home and the workplace. Importantly the survey results showed that looking to the future 63% of employees would like to take a hybrid approach to work, with 95% agreeing that they could

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take a hybrid approach to their role. 65% of employees also reported that they could work from home in the long term.

The revised policy has been shared with Trade Unions and Staff groups and to date (12/08/21) no feedback has been received to amend or raise concerns.

There has been a drop in overall absence rates during the time of the pandemic Q1 2018/19 shows 2.1 days lost per employee to sickness absence compared to Q1 2019/20 at 1.93 and Q1 2021/22 at 1.54. More analysis would be required but at high level this could indicate that one benefit of a flexible workforce has been a reduction in sickness cases supporting the proposed move to a hybrid working environment where possible.

The application of this policy will be applied to all employees regardless of any individual protected characteristic.

3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to :

- *Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*
- *Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*
- *Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?*

(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)

Protected characteristic groups	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age			X
Disabilty		X	

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Gender reassignment			X
Marriage/civil partnership			X
Pregnancy/maternity		X	
Race			X
Religion/belief			X
Sex			X
Sexual orientation			X
Other (e.g. low income groups)			X

4 Summary of the likely impacts

- *Who will be affected?*
- *How will they be affected?*

Through the pandemic employees have shown that, where their role allows, they are able to successfully manage their work virtually. With an increased use of digital tools such as Teams and Chat functions work can be carried out at home or in another location and be as productive as when in the office. The pandemic has accelerated the change to working practice and where there may have been some hesitancy in regards to flexible working and requests the last 18 months have shown that work can be completed successfully with an agile workforce.

It must be noted that working through the pandemic has not been normal working (e.g. with home schooling, additional caring responsibilities, isolation) so the full benefits of this may not yet have been realised.

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For those with a disability having more flexibility around where, when and how they work may have a positive impact on equality, allowing them to manage their condition without having such an impact on their work as if they have been in the office. For those pregnant again this will help being in a comfortable home environment (however it is noted that not all homes are able to accommodate working from home effectively in relation to space etc).

However being more flexible in terms of how, where and when we work can only serve to advance equality for those that would benefit from these arrangements.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

- *Are there alternative providers?*
- *What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?*
- *Can demand for services be managed differently?*

Research has indicated that there could be some negative impact on career progression and equality for those who reduce their hours or work predominantly from home. Workforce development and the HR Policy Manager are working collaboratively to identify any further training needs for managers, this will also be covered in the accompanying guidance for managers to promote awareness of inclusion and equality within Our Ways of Working.

6 Action plan

- *Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence*

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date

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Identity, develop and communicate learning programme	Nick Morgan	15/09/21
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7 Recommendation
The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:

- *to proceed with the change implementing action plan if appropriate*
- *consider alternatives*
- *gather further evidence*

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

Proceed with the change and review training requirement and guidance as this is implemented, including reference to flexible working within future staff surveys and incorporate any other good practice that is identified as organisations adjust to new ways of working post pandemic.

8 Authorisation
The authorising officer is consenting that:

- *the recommendation can be implemented*
- *sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned*
- *the Action Plan will be incorporated into service plan and monitored*

Head of HR	Samantha Beck-Farley
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Date	
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Send completed assessment to the Corporate Performance & Intelligence Hub (CPI) for web publication