



Workstyles Policy

Version 1 - xx 2026



Belfast
City Council

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Belfast City Council 'The Council' recognises that increased flexibility in respect of workstyles can assist with staff retention, in attracting new talent and in contributing to the Council's overall strategic objectives.
- 1.2 The Council's Workstyles Policy allows for BCC employees and where applicable, agency assignees¹, whose job role is defined as hybrid or field, to work remotely for 40% of their working week.
- 1.3 The policy aims to create a more agile, responsive, effective and efficient organisation which advances business performance, increases customer satisfaction and improves the health, wellbeing and diversity of our staff.
- 1.4 The policy formalises the Pilot Workstyles Policy and will be implemented from [date of implementation].
- 1.5 The policy replaces the Homeworking Information Pack (October 2004).
- 1.6 The policy is supported by guidance for managers and employees including a framework for identifying the most appropriate workstyle.
- 1.7 The policy has been developed in consultation with the Council's Trade Unions. Any revisions to the policy will be subject to consultation in accordance with the Council's Industrial Relations Framework.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The policy applies to all BCC employees and where applicable, agency assignees, whose role is defined as hybrid or field, as set out at 6.0.
- 2.2 The arrangements set out in the policy can be adapted as needed should they pose a challenge for disabled people in terms of access, participation or support required. The Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its policies and procedures.
- 2.3 The policy does not form part of any contract of employment.

¹ For the purpose of the policy where 'employee' 'staff' or 'worker' is referenced this includes a comparable agency assignee.

3.0 Strategic position

- 3.1 The Council has opted for standardised office attendance, whereby individuals should work approximately 60% in the workplace. Therefore, individuals who work five days per week can work remotely two days per week (40%). Other working arrangements will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.
- 3.2 The implementation of the policy must not impact on the Council's ability to deliver its core business activities, to maintain its excellent levels of customer service, or to have a detrimental effect on individual and/or team performance and staff development.

4.0 General information

- 4.1 For employees with permanent formal homeworking arrangements in place, approved before 1 April 2023, and approved in accordance with the Homeworking Information Pack (2004) their formal homeworking agreement will continue to apply. Depending on the formal arrangement in place, that is, the number of days an individual currently works remotely, it may be the case that the individual can also avail of the Workstyles Policy.
- 4.2 Employees who apply for a formal homeworking arrangement after 2 June 2026 will be subject to the arrangements as set out in this policy.
- 4.3 As the policy formalises the pilot arrangements, as set out in the Pilot Workstyles Policy, employees whose formal homeworking arrangements were approved during the period 1 April 2023 and 1 June 2026, will continue to be subject to the arrangements as set out in this policy.
- 4.4 Should an individual wish to apply for homeworking or any other flexible working arrangement on a permanent basis they should follow the process as set out in the Council's Worklife Balance arrangements.
- 4.5 The remote working arrangement, as set out in the policy will not impact on an employee's contractual terms and conditions of employment in respect of hours of work or normal working location. The arrangement may be changed from time to time based on service, departmental or organisational need.
- 4.6 Individuals will be required to attend the workplace, outside of the policy arrangement, and on a particular day(s) at the request of management. This could include attendance at team meetings, training etc. or where for

operational reasons the meetings should be in-person or where management has determined that work is best conducted in-person.

- 4.7 In-person onboarding is considered to have significant benefits, such as, immediate interaction with colleagues and managers, hands on training and experience, social integration and learning in a supportive environment. Given this it is expected that individuals, as part of the induction process, will be required to attend the office for all or for the majority of their working week. Line managers will ensure that appropriate in-office arrangements are in place during the induction period to ensure individuals are supported in their new role. This may also require existing colleagues and line managers to attend the office on a more frequent basis and in excess of 60% of their working week during the on-boarding of new staff.
- 4.8 Individual working arrangements are subject to ongoing review. The Council reserves the right to modify or to withdraw an individual's hybrid working arrangement for reasons including a change in business need, lack of flexibility or performance concerns.
- 4.9 The policy seeks to offer choice to employees. As such, it is recognised that personal circumstances and preferences may influence an individual's decision with regards to remote working and there is no expectation for an individual to avail of the Workstyles Policy or to work remotely. An individual who does not wish to work remotely will be facilitated and a manager cannot force any member of their team to do so. Similarly, if an individual's personal circumstances change and they wish to increase their presence in the workplace this should be discussed with the line manager in the first instance.
- 4.10 Should it be the case that an individual does not have a suitable remote workstation and/or they cannot work safely and securely in their remote setting, the Workstyles Policy will not apply, and they will be required to attend the workplace.
- 4.11 Managers must apply the policy consistently and without exception.
- 4.12 Employees availing of the Workstyles Policy must adhere to the arrangements as set out.
- 4.13 Failure by managers or employees to apply or adhere to any of the policy arrangements may result in the arrangement being modified or withdrawn or formal action being initiated in accordance with the Council's HR processes.
- 4.14 Departmental Directors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the policy is being applied correctly within their respective department.

5.0 Principles

- 5.1 The Council's approach to its Workstyles Policy is based on the following key principles:

Service delivery

The Council will continue to deliver its core business activities, to maintain its excellent levels of customer service, and to provide the best possible outcomes for residents and city visitors both now and in the future.

Visibility

Senior leaders will be visible in the workplace to provide leadership to the organisation.

Realism

While committed to providing modern working practices, managers and employees must be realistic and recognise that flexible workstyle options will not be appropriate for all jobs across all areas of the Council.

Trust and confidence

Managers and employees must be able to have trust and confidence in each other's ability to work effectively and perform well, wherever the working location.

Training and support

A more flexible workstyle presents unique challenges and demands on people managers and individuals who are working remotely. The Council will endeavour to support managers and employees by providing the correct tools, guidance, and training to maximise the success of the Workstyles Policy.

Managing performance

The introduction of a more flexible workstyle will mean, on occasions, moving away from physical supervision to managing outputs / performance and supporting individuals. Individuals will need to know what is expected of them and how they will be managed when working remotely.

Supporting external and internal organisational strategies

The introduction of this policy will assist the organisation in meeting its internal and external priorities, including climate, resilience, and sustainability and worklife balance.

6.0 Job role profiles

- 6.1 The default position for the Council will be a place based, role dependent working style model.
- 6.2 Identification of a workstyle is the responsibility of each Departmental Director.
- 6.3 For the purpose of the Workstyles Policy roles will be identified as one of the following:

Static worker (in the main the worker is in a fixed location)

An employee who spends the majority of their time working within an office location, or a centre or a depot, or are out daily in the public domain as a front-line worker and where there is a clear operational or business need for them to be present within Council premises or within the Council area and without the possibility of remote working.

Hybrid worker

An employee who spends the majority of their time working within an office location, (that is, approximately 60%) but with the possibility of remote working subject to operational and business need, service demands and a suitable remote workspace.

Field worker

An employee who uses an office or remote location as a base but predominately works in the field. There is a clear operational or business need for them to provide a service by operating in a mobile way for the majority of their time.

- 6.4 Given what is set out above, the Workstyles Policy will only apply to individuals who fall within the profile of a hybrid or field worker.
- 6.5 As set out at 4.6 regardless of an individual's employee profile, they will be required to attend the workplace, outside of the arrangements, and on particular day(s) at the request of management. This could include attendance at team meetings, training etc. or where for operational reasons the meetings should be in-person or where management has determined that work is best conducted in-person.

7.0 Arrangements for remote working

7.1 Remote working location

- 7.1.1 For the purpose of the policy, it is expected that an individual's remote working location will be their residential address.
- 7.1.2 It is not expected that individuals will work outside of Northern Ireland. In addition to the potential impact on tax and national insurance, there are a number of HR, technical and digital issues to be considered. Given this, a request to work outside of NI will need to be considered on its own merit.
- 7.1.3 Individuals are required to provide their remote working location on the Homeworker Self-Assessment checklist [further information in respect of this is set out at 7.11, 'Health and Safety']. Individuals must notify their line manager of any change of address and complete a new Homeworker Self-Assessment checklist and the Homeworking DSE Self-Assessment checklist.
- 7.1.4 Individuals are not permitted to work in settings such as cafes, co-working spaces, libraries, etc. where Council confidentiality could be compromised.
- 7.1.5 The ability to work remotely is not a substitute for childcare or other caring responsibilities or to facilitate individuals to carry out these responsibilities during core working hours. Individuals are required to have adequate provision in place to avoid conflict with work performance when working remotely.

7.2 Flexible Working

- 7.2.1 The Council's Flexi-time Scheme as set out in the Worklife Balance arrangements will continue to apply, if appropriate.
- 7.2.2 Individuals should use the on-line clocking system to record their hours worked when working remotely.
- 7.2.3 Individuals must only make clockings at their working location for the day in question unless there are specific circumstances which make this requirement impracticable, for example, an individual works remotely in the morning and attends the office in the afternoon or where the individual is attending another building for a business related meeting. Such circumstances should be discussed and agreed with the individual's line manager in advance.
- 7.2.4 Failure to apply or adhere to the arrangements, as set out above, may result in the flexible or remote working arrangement being modified or withdrawn or formal action being initiated in accordance with the Council's

HR processes.

7.3 ICT, equipment, and furniture

- 7.3.1 It is considered that the introduction of a more flexible workstyle is mutually beneficial and that the costs and benefits of working remotely will cancel each other out. Consequently, the Council will not provide individuals with equipment or furniture for the purpose of working remotely.
- 7.3.2 The use of laptops will continue to support the working model. In all cases, all equipment will remain the property of Belfast City Council.
- 7.3.3 As set out at 4.10 individuals when working remotely are required to have a suitable workstation where they can work safely and securely.
- 7.3.4 Individuals working remotely must have access to a reliable and secure broadband service capable of supporting the systems and applications required to carry out their duties effectively. It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that their home broadband is sufficient to permit remote working without disruption to performance, service delivery, or communication with colleagues and customers. Where broadband provision is inadequate and adversely impacts work, the Workstyles Policy will not apply, and the individual will be required to attend the workplace.

7.4 BCC policies, confidentiality, and security

- 7.4.1 Individuals are required to comply with all current Council policies, procedures, guidelines, agreed working practices and any relevant collective agreements.
- 7.4.2 Individuals are required to adhere to the rules on the processing of personal data and ensure the security of all personal information being processed, as set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and Data Use and Access Act 2025.
- 7.4.3 Individuals should familiarise themselves with the guidance on Homeworking and Data Protection.
- 7.4.4 It is vital that individuals are vigilant against cybercrime, both for the security of Council information and for the security of their own personal and financial information.
- 7.4.5 Individuals should familiarise themselves with Appendix A of the Computer use policy - security tips for laptops and other mobile equipment and with the Provision of mobile and smartphones, terms and conditions of use.

7.4.6 Individuals must comply with all Digital/ICT, cybersecurity, and information governance policies, and any associated guidance, as a condition of remote working. This includes adherence to updated or newly issued policies and cyber security controls as technology, security standards and cyber-threats evolve. Individuals are responsible for ensuring their continued compliance to protect Council systems, data and equipment.

7.5 Communication

7.5.1 Individuals must be contactable during their working day by their line manager and by colleagues.

7.5.2 Individuals should ensure that their Outlook calendar is shared with their team and is kept up to date.

7.6 Annual leave

7.6.1 Annual leave should be applied for in the same way as it would if the individual was in the workplace. It is important that individuals take annual leave throughout the year not only to support operational planning but also for their own health and wellbeing and worklife balance.

7.6.2 Further information on annual leave can found in the Council's Worklife Balance arrangements.

7.7 Sickness absence

7.7.1 Individuals should not work if they are unwell / unfit. Regardless of working location, if an individual is unwell / unfit for work they should follow the absence reporting procedure in accordance with the Council's Attendance Policy and Attendance Booklet.

7.8 Remote working costs

7.8.1 Individuals will be responsible for all costs associated with their place of residence for example, heating, lighting and broadband.

7.8.2 Individuals will be responsible for any home insurance to cover loss or damage to personal property in use while they undertake work duties.

7.8.3 Individuals may need to inform their household insurer if they are working at home to ensure that buildings and contents insurance is not invalidated.

7.8.4 Individuals may need to refer to their tenancy agreement or landlord for advice to ensure that they have agreement to use the premises for work purposes.

7.9 Mileage claims

7.9.1 Mileage claims for car users will be in accordance with the Council's Car User Policy.

7.10 Health and well-being

7.10.1 Individuals should ensure that they are not overworking. Downtime from work is essential and individuals should make every effort to look after their own health and well-being.

7.10.2 Individuals should take adequate breaks throughout the working day and meetings should be scheduled to allow for adequate breaks in-between.

7.10.3 Individuals are encouraged to raise and discuss any concerns regarding their health and well-being with their line manager at the earliest opportunity.

7.11 Health and Safety

7.11.1 The Council is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for all, ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all employees.

7.11.2 A greater responsibility, in respect of health and safety, is inherently placed on individuals when working remotely given that options for supervision, control etc. are generally significantly reduced.

7.11.3 Individuals should familiarise themselves with the Homeworking Code of Practice which details the health and safety roles and responsibilities of both managers and employees and the procedure to be followed when an individual is working remotely.

7.11.4 Individuals must complete the Homeworker Self-Assessment checklist and the Homeworking DSE Self-Assessment checklist.

7.11.5 The Council will make every effort to meet the needs of those individuals, where possible, who require specialised equipment as a reasonable adjustment or if related to a disability.

7.11.6 In-person work meetings or other work-related activities with colleagues, customers, etc. should not be carried out at an individual's remote working location.

7.11.7 Any accident that occurs while working remotely, in connection with work-activities, must be reported to the line manager in accordance with BCC accident reporting procedures.

7.11.8 As set out at 4.10, should it be the case that an individual does not have a suitable workstation and/or they cannot work safely and securely in their remote setting, the Workstyles Policy will not apply, and they will be required to attend the workplace.