



Remote and Hybrid Working Policy

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1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Remote working is where an employee works away from their employer's location for all or part of their working week on a permanent, ad hoc basis or hybrid basis. The practice has been around for a long time but has become increasingly popular and widely used across all sectors.
- 1.2 Southside Housing Association want to support staff to do their best work, have a good work life balance, work flexibly whilst staying connected and getting the job done.
- 1.3 For many where and how we work changed radically because of the pandemic. Expectations about what work looks like have also changed.
- 1.4 The purpose of this policy is to set out a framework for building on the positive lessons learned while working from home during the pandemic whilst returning to office-based working as the norm and looking at how the office space can support everyone to stay connected and work in the best way.
- 1.5 Hybrid working won't work for or be available to everyone. It will depend on nature of the role, the level of supervision and collaboration needed, minimum levels of physical cover required as well as the technology and environment available when working away from the office.
- 1.6 Remote working can be:
 - requested by an employee as part of a flexible working statutory entitlement (see Flexible Working Policy),
 - a reasonable adjustment,
 - a change in organisational culture to provide employees with choice and utilise the benefits of remote working,
 - implemented Southside Housing Association, following the necessary consultation and contractual change processes,
 - used as a mechanism for employee and public safety in the event of a public health emergency or other exceptional external circumstances.
- 1.7 There are three main types of remote working:
 - **Occasional:** employees have a contractual work base (i.e. office location), but work remotely on an ad hoc basis, through informal arrangements with their team and line manager.
 - **Contractual:** employees that work off-site as defined in their contract of employment for a specified period of their working week.

- **Hybrid:** employees work between their office base and remotely depending on the needs of the business and the employee's personal circumstances.

2.0 Policy Principles

2.1 Southside's Remote Working Policy must:

- Benefit the business from creative solutions, ideas and projects by allowing staff to do these remotely, without interruptions.
- Ensure our high level of service is maintained at all times.
- Better meet the demands of our service requirements.
- Promote our culture of inclusion.
- Integrate into and complement our health and wellbeing strategy.
- Support and embed our commitment to our environmental sustainability practices.
- Set out the parameters to ensure the above conditions are met.

3.0 Occasional Remote Working

3.1 For occasional remote working, an employee works their contracted hours from the location specified in their contract of employment. However, on occasion, it may be more effective if an employee has an ad hoc day working remotely. This can be effective when managing certain situations such as:

- Disruptions to dependant's care arrangements,
- Project work,
- Adverse weather,
- Commuting disruptions,
- An injury where the employee is fit to work but is unable to commute to their contractual work location.

3.2 In all the above situations, work will be carried out effectively and efficiently with the appropriate resources, including an electronic device, e.g. laptop or tablet with sufficient broadband speed and functioning phone.

3.3 All situations for occasional remote working will be discussed individually with the employee's line manager, and they will consider the request balancing employee and business pressures and provide a decision.

4.0 Costs/Allowances for Occasional Remote Working

4.1 Employees who on occasional working remotely will not have expenses approved for items such as for paper/ink/subsistence/internet service/wear and tear on equipment. The saving in time and money getting to/from work is a reasonable notional offset to any minimal personal cost of occasionally working remotely.

5.0 Contractual Remote Working

5.1 Contractual remote working can occur by making a Flexible Working Request: An employee with the required continuous service can request via their statutory entitlement to request Flexible Working.

6.0 Flexible Working Request

6.1 Employees wishing to request remote working as a contractual arrangement can discuss the request with their line manager and follow up with a formal request in writing. The process outlined in the Flexible Working Policy must be followed. Any decision to accept or reject the application will be based on Southside's business needs and requirements at the time of the request and, in line with the policy. Any change to the employee's working arrangement would be regarded as a permanent contractual change and therefore, must be confirmed in writing. Due to the change being permanent, a 3–6-month (depending on the nature of the role) trial period will take place first before any permanent change takes effect.

7.0 Hybrid Working

7.1 Southside wishes to embrace the benefits remote working can bring such as the efficiency of performance, health and wellbeing of employees and the positive environmental impact through reduced commuting.

7.2 Southside supports a culture of remote working as a flexible arrangement as long as business and service delivery needs are met and enhanced. Southside trusts its employees to fulfil their contractual obligations concerning their job role. Whether an employee is working remotely or, at Southside's location/s, the expectation on performance standards remains the same.

7.3 Southside believes a model of blended/hybrid working can suits the business needs. This means a mixture of remote and onsite working, which brings the most benefits for both business and employees. It allows for continuing face to face social interaction, collaboration, along with enjoying the benefits of remote working.

7.4 Underlying how managers approach Hybrid working will be the principle that all staff will be in the office the majority of their working week, irrespective of role and that, where work can be reasonably carried out at home, staff will be

able to work from home at least one day per week if work commitments permit. However, this is not contractual and staff must be available to be in the office or on site at short notice.

7.5 In order to make Hybrid Working successful, the following additional key principles need to be applied:

- It is based on trust. Staff should work during office hours and be readily available to colleagues and customers.
- Work is an activity and not a destination. Your performance will be evaluated on the impact you have and the outcomes you deliver.
- It is open to everyone who has a suitable role regardless of how long they have worked for the Association. This also includes contractors and temporary agency workers who are working for us.
- We commit to making sure that you have the right technology and equipment to support you to work in this way.
- Hybrid working should not impact the level or quality of service to customers or your colleagues.
- The Association policies apply in every location you work from
- Community and connection are part of who we are and we know they are important for your wellbeing. We will continue to provide safe office spaces for you to collaborate and connect with each other and expect staff to be in the office for all or most of their working week.
- Cover in the office is essential. To ensure this staff are expected to ensure that their time in the office includes a Monday or Friday.
- We know that there might be times when being onsite is crucial, such as when you first start working with us, have started a new role, emergency situations or during times with particular work pressures and deadlines.

7.6 Southside appreciates that not all employees would like to work remotely, some employees may prefer to attend the office for their working week. There is no expectation that staff will work from home.

7.7 Section managers will discuss with employees how remote working arrangements will work within teams and sections, including any rota for office cover and existing working patterns.

7.8 Each team will be expected to have a reasonable office presence. It is accepted that those staff working from the office may be out undertaking their duties. This representation from all teams is also an important part of ensuring that health and safety is maintained in the office, for example minimising lone working and ensuring sufficient cover of fire wardens. This will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

7.9 Staff are reminded that working from home does not guarantee that you will be able to work at home all day. You may be required to attend appointments, come into the office or attend on site, even at short notice.

8.0 Key Points about Hybrid Working

8.1 Hybrid working won't work for or be available to everyone. It will depend on the kind of role you do, the part of the Association you work in, the level of supervision you need in your role, any minimum levels of physical cover required as well as the technology and environment you have available to you.

8.2 Hybrid working will not be available for those who need to be on site to do their jobs (e.g. Facilities Management or Handyperson roles).

8.3 Working in this way will not change your contractual terms and conditions of employment in respect of working hours or normal location of work; it's an informal arrangement that may be changed from time to time depending on business needs.

8.4 The expenses you can claim will be unchanged.

8.5 Hybrid Working is not the same as a Flexible Working Agreement. If you want to make a more permanent change to your hours, location, place of work and/or hours of work/working pattern, you will need to request this separately through our Flexible Working Policy.

8.6 Hybrid working may be considered as a reasonable adjustment.

8.7 Your manager will work with you to explore how hybrid working could work for you and your team based on your preferences, the needs of your role and the needs of the business.

8.8 We will always try to support this way of working if we can and if your role is suitable. However please remember that any hybrid working arrangement is subject to the ongoing agreement of management and sometimes might need to be changed for business reasons.

9.0 Working Hours and Keeping in Touch

9.1 Staff must be aware of the following:

- You should expect to make yourself fully available to others during working hours when you are needed by your team.
- We may ask you to be available at certain times to meet the needs of the business, to physically be in the office to collaborate or attend training. We will endeavour to provide a minimum of 24 hours' notice, however, emergency situations may require your attendance at the office with no notice.

- your working arrangements must not result in extra work for other members of the team or compromise the objectives of your team.
- We know that working in this way can help you balance your home and work life. However Hybrid working is not suited as a way of managing emergency leave or for long term childcare or any other reasons which may have a significant impact on your ability to carry out your day-to-day role.

9.2 Flexibility should be within the parameters set out in the Flexi Time Policy.

10.0 Equipment and Environment

10.1 It is important for us to know that wherever you are working from, you have the equipment and environment you need to do your job well and that you feel safe, well and comfortable.

10.2 If you are setting yourself up to work at home, you will need to complete the Display Screen Equipment learning you have been assigned. The learning will take you through a workstation self-assessment to help you make sure that your place of work is safe, supportive, free from risk and that any access to confidential information or data is treated with care.

10.3 Staff working at home must ensure they have a secure, private and appropriately lit and heated space to work in, with a reliable and secure internet connection.

10.4 If you are working from a public place, please be mindful of any potential confidentiality or IT security risks and comply with GDPR at all times.

10.5 If you have a disability and need any reasonable adjustments to be made to your workstation whether in the office or in another location, please let us know by speaking to your line manager.

10.6 If any equipment gets lost, damaged or stolen, you will need to let your line manager know immediately and agree the appropriate course of action.

10.7 If you are working from one of our Association offices or sites, please make sure that you know how to evacuate the building in the case of an emergency and that you have completed the fire safety training assigned to you.

11.0 Your Wellbeing

11.1 We know that for many, working in this way can boost wellbeing, however there are still some important things to be aware of:-

- It can be easy to lose track of time and work more hours than you usually would when working remotely. It is important that to remember to take regular rest breaks; at least 20 consecutive minutes if working

for 6 hours or more and make time to switch off. Working in this way should not significantly change how many hours you usually work. Staff should clock in and out of work in the same way as they would if office based.

- Hybrid working should not be used as a way of carrying on working when you are sick. If you are ill, then you would need to take time off until you have recovered.
- Where working for long spells at a screen make sure you take regular breaks away from your screens
- We know that collaboration, connection and having a sense of belonging can help you stay well. We encourage you to think about what this means for you and to actively make time to connect with your colleagues.

12.0 Costs and Allowances

- 12.1 Your contractual normal location of work won't change when you adopt a hybrid way of working so your entitlement to claim will remain the same.
- 12.2 We will provide you with the IT equipment that you need to be able to do your job. If working from home is mandatory, the Association can also provide you with a suitable workstation.
- 12.3 Any costs for Wi-Fi, heating, lighting and electricity and commuting costs to your designated place of work will always be a personal expense in line with HMRC guidelines. There may be expenses that can be claimed directly by employees from HMRC. Please refer to HMRC website for the most up to date information.
- 12.4 You may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you have to work at home on a regular basis, either for all or part of the week. This includes if you have to work from home because of coronavirus (COVID-19), however, you cannot claim tax relief if you choose to work from home. As Hybrid working is entirely voluntary, then the Association will not make any payment towards these costs. Only if you are working from home as part of a government directive or on a mandatory basis for business continuity reasons, will the Association assist with meeting these costs. . . I these circumstances the Association will pay the HMRC tax free allowance which is currently £6.00 per week for the duration of the arrangement being compulsory.
- 12.5 We would advise that you check that there is nothing that would prevent you working from home, for example in your mortgage agreement, lease or insurance. You should also get confirmation of cover from your home insurer should work equipment cause any damage to your home.

12.6 If you are an essential car user your business mileage reduces significantly as a result of hybrid working, we may review whether you continue to be eligible for this allowance. You will be given notice of this changing.

12.7 Work-related travel expenses will be paid at the rate stated in your terms and conditions of employment, and as specified in Southside's Expenses policy. Please note, if you are travelling from home to a work appointment (not to the office) you should deduct your usual daily mileage from home to the office and return from the claim for that day.

13.0 Working outwith commuting distance from the office or outside the UK

13.1 Staff may work outwith commuting distance of the office or outside the UK in emergency or other exceptional situations, when it's necessary for specific roles or for short periods of time.

13.2 Advance permission must be sought from a member of the Leadership Team to work outside the UK.

14.0 Trial Periods

14.1 At the end of a trial period, be that for formal or informal arrangements, the arrangement will either be amended or confirmed. The decision at the end of the period will not be a surprise; this will be due to regular communication on the effectiveness of the working arrangement throughout the trial. Any adjustments can be made during the trial and can be put forward by the line manager or by employees.

15.0 Performance Management

15.1 Southside has a culture of trust and respect for all. Performance Management will be carried out in the same way as if employees were in the office. As in the office, if the quality or volume of work while working remotely is not at the required standard, this will be addressed via Southside's performance management process initially on an informal basis. Matters will be managed confidentially with individual employees.

16.0 Health & Safety

16.1 A health and safety assessment will be carried out according to Southside's health and safety checklist (**Appendix 1**), which covers VDU risks and general precautions for house-holder electrical safety. Domestic electrical supply configurations are out with the control of the employer and are the responsibility of the staff member. Employees will perform their assessment, and their line manager will then validate results during a discussion, video call or remote visit. The employees will be expected to report any changes that may affect the arrangements in the future (in which case another assessment may be necessary).

17.0 Technical Support

- 17.1 Southside’s IT infrastructure is capable of supporting remote working and gives employees remote access to calendars, [phones], mails and documents. Employees are required to have their broadband at sufficient speed in place. Southside will, where practical, provide the appropriate equipment and/or software to allow people to work remotely.
- 17.2 It will be required that employees have the necessary firewall and anti-virus software installed on their remote computers, to protect Southside’s office IT system from any harm.

Appendix 1

Southside Housing Association’s Health & Safety Checklist for Employees Working Remotely

This list is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with section 3.20 of the Health and Safety Manual.

Electrical Equipment

The safety and maintenance of the domestic electrical supply/installation is the responsibility of the house-holder. Southside will only take maintenance responsibility for any equipment it directly supplies.

House-holder checklist:

- Ensure electrical equipment is turned off when not in use and before performing any checks.
- Check plugs are not damaged.
- Check domestic electrical supply is suitable for the equipment in use.
- Check plugs are correctly wired and that the outer cable covering is gripped at the point it enters the plug or equipment.
- Check outer covers of equipment are sound and have no loose parts or missing screws.
- Check all leads and cables routinely against damage to the outer covers.
- Check for burn marks or other signs of overheating.
- Repair any electrical equipment with the potential to harm.
- Check and secure all trailing wires – the best way is to use power outlets nearest to the equipment. Where this is not possible tuck trailing wires securely under desks etc. and out of typical walkways
- Do not have young children unsupervised in any area where you are using electrical equipment.

Working with VDU’s

Southside’s self-assessment tool will be used to ensure workstations are set up appropriately.



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