Smarter Working

Working Practices and Protocols for Flexible Offices

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Introduction

Nottinghamshire County Council is modernising buildings, working practices and technology to enable you to work flexibly, where and when it suits your customers and service users. You will have more choice about where and when you work, connected by more effective technology enabling teams to work together, regardless of location.

As a result of greater flexibility, the Council will become more adaptable to change.

When adopting new working practices, many more problems are anticipated than actually arise. Once the new ways of working are embedded most people appreciate the greater flexibility when they have the technology and new work spaces to support it. Few want to return to the old ways of working once they get used to it.

Please see the Smarter Working information hub for further information.

Important Advice

- Display your employee ID at all times.

- Employees can access work settings throughout the building - *other than where access is restricted for security or health and safety reasons*.

- Ensure visiting colleagues are made aware of the office protocols.

- Help new employees familiarise themselves with the team neighbourhoods and work settings, facilities and protocols.

- Ensure you take responsibility for information security.

- If you leave your desk <u>always</u> ensure that you lock your PC to protect confidential information.

- Lock all cupboards containing confidential material or valuable items and store keys securely.

- Be mindful of hygiene and cleanliness when using the flexible desks and ICT equipment.

- The County Council's Code of Conduct stipulates that all employees carry out their duties to the highest standards of conduct and behaviour, with integrity, fairness and honesty, and have a duty to maintain confidentiality as appropriate in the performance of their duties.

Choice of Work Settings

The office space provides a variety of work settings in addition to your flexible team neighbourhood. You can use any of these work settings to suit the different types of activity you might do during the course of your day and you will be able to use technology in all of the work settings.

Flexible Team Neighbourhoods

The flexible offices are, where possible, open plan based on an overall **average** sharing ratio of 6 desks for 10 employees. Each team will have an allocated team neighbourhood with a number of flexible desks. Where an individual has specific Equality Act or occupational health requirements, then a fixed desk may be provided in consultation with the employee and their manager.

You can choose any free desk to sit at within your team neighbourhood and therefore **need not** necessarily sit at the same desk every day. If there are no free desks available, please check with your neighbouring team to determine desk availability or use one of the alternative work settings. Non-team members may also ask to share your space and sharing arrangements that are agreed by colleagues in teams are more likely to work well.

Other work settings

As desk-based tasks can increasingly be carried out from anywhere, there is a greater need for a mix of other functional workspaces such as:

- Flexible/multi-purpose meeting spaces
- Break out areas and open plan meeting areas
- Space for quiet and concentrated working
- Spaces for confidential work and phone calls
- Meeting pods
- Sit-stand desks to vary working position and posture

These work settings create an environment for everyday work that can maximise wellbeing.

Touchdown Areas

A list of corporate touchdown areas includes details of the equipment available, opening hours and parking facilities etc. Touchdowns should only be used for short periods of time and are intended to help you work more effectively by cutting down on unnecessary travel. You should adhere to local protocols and should also avoid confidential conversations when using touchdown facilities.

Working in flexible offices

Forward planning in your team is important. For example:

- Clear desk principles are a key part of sharing desks and working flexibly.
- Consider how you could make the most of the different work settings.
- Do you always need to book a meeting room?
- Maybe you want some quiet focused time away from the team area?
- Avoid setting formal flexible work patterns which would cause under/over capacity of desks at certain times or days of the week.
- Try and avoid team meetings on the same days as other teams located near to you.
- Keep lines of communication open for all colleagues, irrespective of working location.
- Review content of routine meetings – can information be shared in different formats?
- Use the Working from Home Policy to be clear about expectations required of employees working from home in advance, but demonstrate trust.
- Focus on what work is produced and not where.
- Be flexible to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by the choices of others.

Clear Desk Principles

Why a clear desk is necessary:

- A key principle of working in flexible offices is that "personal space" is replaced by "team space" which is shared.

- Desks need to be accessible for immediate use when unoccupied for long periods.

- Security of confidential information - physical work documents should be stored securely in the allocated team storage space when not in use.

- Anyone with a fixed desk should also clear it for use by others in your absence.

Benefits of a clear desk:

- Improvement to the quality and cleanliness of the working environment.
- Improved security of documents and information.
- Improved ability for others to access information.
- Facilitation of flexible working practices.
- Increased personal organisation and information management.

When to clear your desk and log-off your PC:

- All flexible working employees should clear their desk and log of the PC if they are likely to be away from the desk for **two** hours or more.

Hygiene

- Hygienic wipes will be provided to clean shared desks and equipment before and after use.
- Seek to take food away from your desk as a break from the workspace is encouraged and also in the interest of cleanliness and hygiene.

Personalising Desk Space:

- Temporary personalisation of desk space is permitted but should be cleared away at the end of the day.
- Chairs should not be personalised unless they have been DSE adjusted for individuals who have medical requirements or provided following an Occupational Health assessment.

What to do with your personal belongings

- Personal belongings including handbags, photographs, and personal working files should be stored within your secure personal locker after you have finished working at the desk.

Storage

It is accepted that a percentage of readily accessible physical files is necessary to support business needs. However, the long term intention for the Authority is for electronic file management to become the norm, reducing traditional requirements for the office-based storage of documents. The digital mail project to roll out a system which scans incoming mail supports this approach.

Team Storage

- Team storage largely consists of tall and medium sized tambour units, with shelves or hanging files, to suit the requirements of the team.
- Some bespoke storage systems may be in use to meet identified business needs.
- Physical storage volumes should be reviewed and rationalised regularly.

Work documents should be returned to the allocated team storage space after you have finished working at the desk, in accordance with clear desk principles. All stationery items should be stored within the centralised resource hubs.

Working Remotely

Many employees cover a wide geographical area during the day, including visiting customers and service users, working at other Council buildings, partner organisations or from home.

It is important to have clear expectations about how teams communicate when not everyone is in the office. There is a requirement to let others know where and when you are working and the best way to contact you by keeping your Outlook calendar up to date.

Using online systems rather than paper-based ones or whiteboards means that everyone has access to the same up to date information. When planning your day, consider whether it is really necessary for you to attend the office if you have lots of meetings or whether starting and/or finishing your working day at home is more effective.

There are eLearning packages about remote working available on the BMS Learning Pool for both employees and managers.

Working from Home

Not all jobs are suitable for working from home and for those which are suitable, employees may not want to work at home. Where key health and safety requirements cannot be met, requests may not be approved. The Working from Home Policy provides a framework for working from home where this is both feasible and desirable. This policy is currently under review by HR.

Any arrangement for working from home should be voluntary on the part of the employee and at the discretion of the manager. It is critical that any arrangement does not impact detrimentally on the quality and continuity of service provision.

Employees and managers are encouraged to move away from the mind-set of physical presence to one of outcomes, clearly defined objectives and trust. This is consistent with the Council's approach to Performance Management, Employee Performance and Development Reviews and the Competency Framework.

Technology and working flexibly

As the world of work changes, technology needs to be flexible to allow people to stay connected and participate from any location, at any time. Effective use of new and existing technologies is a key enabler for smart working.

Smart technologies need to be appropriate to a range of working environments, and enable staff to work comfortably as well as productively. Microsoft Lync has made a significant difference to how we communicate with each other, how we stay connected and how we organise our working time.

There is an even greater potential to rethink a large number of meetings by using Lync audio or video conferencing and document sharing to conduct online meetings across different locations. Try to:

- Have more meetings by telephone and video conference when appropriate.
- Ask for help or take time to set up in advance if you are unfamiliar with equipment and software.
- Use the same standard meeting etiquette as regular face to face meetings.
- Use Lync desktop sharing at online meetings to discuss documents.

New Skype Meeting

Skype Meeting

Diary management and Lync Presence

Microsoft Lync automatically detects your presence on the network when you log in – make sure your status and location settings are up to date – this is to allow colleagues to determine the best way to contact you. Your Outlook calendar updates your Lync presence and should be kept up to date with appointments and meetings.

For more information, including guidance and fact sheets, visit the Lync Knowledge Portal.

Wi-Fi and 3G/4G

A list of Council and NHS sites with available Wi-Fi facilities are available on the intranet. Wi-Fi is also available in Nottinghamshire Libraries. For a list of available Libraries look on the Inspire Website.

Mobile devices have 3G/4G connectivity where there is a requirement to have it, to support users out in the field.

Remember:

- Be aware of [health and safety guidance](#) when using technology.
- Don't leave devices unattended and make sure you are familiar with [ICT security.](#)
- Always save data to secure NCC networks and not direct to the device.
- Do not write down or share passwords.
- Make sure you are sending the email to the right person. Double check the spelling and don't rely on autofill for the email address.
- Send emails containing sensitive information or attachments using Cryptshare. The recipient doesn't need Cryptshare installed on their device to open and read the email.
- Do not forward emails containing confidential documents.
- Make sure you visit ICT's [Knowledge Portal](#) for support and guidance on common issues.
- Think about how you share information as a team and whether OneSpace would be suitable.

ICT support, policies and information management

ICT have developed a number of usage policies and codes of practice for the use of internet, email and mobile devices such as tablet computers. Additional information can be found within the ICT security pages on the intranet.

If your device is lost or stolen, guidance is available on the intranet about what to do and who to contact, so that data can be removed from the device and a replacement arranged.

The information management pages on the intranet include important advice about data protection and information security.

Please see ICT's Knowledge Portal, as well as the mobile support site. Business System Support Officers can also offer local ICT advice and support.

Problems and faults should be reported to the ICT service desk on **0115 977 2010** or by email ictfirst.line@nottscc.gov.uk.

Specialist Equipment

Some employees may need specialist equipment or furniture e.g. ergonomic chair and/or keyboard, height adjustable desk etc. If so, a desk should be set up to provide for their needs.

- It shall be used by the individual when they are in the office.
- The clear desk principles will continue to apply.
- Portable equipment such as a specialist keyboard, mouse or wrist support pad should be kept in personal lockers.
- If employees need help in setting up their desk, team managers should ensure support is provided.

Disabled Employees

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers are responsible for making any reasonable adjustments required by disabled employees. This might include IT equipment or office furniture. It is important that should such equipment/furniture be provided, it remains accessible for use by the disabled employee.

Health and Safety

Managers should:

- Make the team aware of any new Health and Safety procedures in relation to fire safety, first aid and new technology.
- Address the Health and Safety requirements of staff working at home.

All Employees:

- Must undertake mandatory Display Screen assessment and Fire Awareness eLearning on BMS.
- Follow the Health & Safety guidelines by reading the guidance on using technology.

For further guidance refer to the following:

- Personnel handbook and Safety Manual
- Working from Home policy
- The Health and Safety Team on tel: 01623 434033, email: hands@nottscc.gov.uk