Agile Working Arrangement

Contents:

1.0 Statement of purpose/objectives

This arrangement will assist in meeting Shropshire Councils objective to care for staff and also to meet the legislative requirements. The main health risks associated with agile working are musculoskeletal disorders, stress and visual fatigue. Whilst the risk to individual users is often low, they can still be significant if good practice is not followed.

2.0 Scope

This arrangement follows the principles of the Shropshire Council Flexible Working Framework and applies to any office-based employees at any level within the organisation.

The nature of agile working will depend upon the job undertaken.

3.0 Criteria to be used for Agile Working Arrangements

Each post will be considered separately according to the potential impact on the service area, including customer needs and the effect on work colleagues.

The manager and employee will determine which category of agile worker is most suited to the post.

4.0 New Ways of Working

Shared workstations should be analysed and assessed for each DSE user. Home workers must also complete DSE assessments and these employees should be suitably trained to carry out their own DSE risk assessment.

5.0 Information, Instruction and Training

The employer has a duty to provide adequate information, instruction and training to employees. All DSE users should receive appropriate training in the use of their Visual Display Unit VDU/DSE. This training will allow DSE users to carry out their own DSE workstation risk assessment(s).

6.0 Implementation of the Agile Working Arrangement

Management guidance in the form of Frequently Asked Questions will be provided and updated to support the implementation of the Agile Working arrangement.

7.0 Compliance

This arrangement will enable Shropshire Council to conform to the statutory requirements and best current practice. Further references are provided in Appendix 3

8.0 Review of Arrangement

This arrangement will be reviewed every two years or if legislative changes occur. This will be carried out by the Occupational Health and Safety Team, in consultation with recognised trades unions.

Approving Body

Health Safety & Welfare Group   January 2013
Reviewed- Health and Safety Team   January 2018
Reviewed- Health and Safety Team   June 2019

Agile Working Frequently Asked Questions

Contents:

1.0   Roles and Responsibilities

1.1   Shropshire Council as an employer, through its elected members, has ultimate responsibility for compliance with health and safety legislation.

1.2 The Chief Executive and Corporate Directors are responsible for ensuring:

- That adequate resource is available for the implementation and management of safe display screen equipment in use at all workplaces.
- Corporate Directors will ensure adequate arrangements are in place monitoring safe working practice
- That the safe management of display screen working is promoted.

1.3 Area Directors / Heads of Service shall be responsible for:-

- The safe management of display screen equipment working in respect of workplaces under their control and in full compliance with all relevant legislation and Approved Codes of Practice (ACOP)
- The nomination of sufficient and appropriately trained employees to whom the function of "Display Screen Assessor" are available at workplaces.

1.4 Line Managers are responsible for:-

- Identifying all Display Screen users within their teams and maintaining records of DSE users
- Ensuring that all DSE workstations within their team comply with minimal statutory requirements
- That all DSE users are trained in the correct use of DSE equipment
- Ensuring that sufficient DSE workplace assessors are available to support employees where necessary
- Ensuring all DSE workstation risk assessments within their teams have been completed and are reviewed as necessary and at least annually

1.5 All Employees

Employees of the Council have general duties under health and safety legislation in relation to agile working principles

2.0   What is Agile Working?

Agile working is a term used to describe how employees can work flexibly from any location, whether it is from a Council building, in the community, from home or any combination of these.

3.0   What are the categories of Agile Workers?

The nature of most of the Council's services place certain requirements on its employees that prevents their working being totally flexible, but there is considerable scope in many cases for some form of agile working to assist with this flexibility. The different ways in which agile working can be undertaken is dependent on the demands and needs of the Council, but includes:

3.1 Mobile Worker

Mobile workers are employees who spend most of their time working at a variety of locations and spend some of their time interacting with the core service area. The main aspect of the employee's job involves visiting other local authority locations and/or client sites around the Authority.

Mobile workers are able to work from a variety of locations, which may include Shropshire Council and non-Shropshire Council sites or from home. Employees who operate in a mobile manner will have access to bookable work space.

3.2 Hot Desk Worker

This category of worker is primarily required to work from a single building, but is not required to have a fixed desk location. There is an option for teams to have zoned areas where sitting together is an essential element of their role. However, only some of the team is in one place at any one time (facilitated by natural absences, working offsite, attending meetings, working from home etc.). This will mean that there will be less workstations than there are workers, and they will be required to share.

3.3 Fixed Desk Worker

This is an employee whose role is required to be in a fixed location for the majority of their time. A desk in a fixed location is usually required, although this desk could be shared with another employee for example a receptionist within a fixed reception area.

3.4 Home Worker (Home Based)

This is an employee who spends the majority of their time conducting their job role from home rather than on the Council's premises. The Employee Handbook 'Home Working' Policy provides further guidance.

4.0   What Criteria Should Be Used To Identify Agile Working Arrangements?

4.1 Each post will be considered separately according to the potential impact on the service area, including consideration of service/public needs and the effect on work colleagues.

4.2 The manager and employee will determine what category of agile worker is most suited to the post.

The following will be taken into account:
- The effect on the ability to meet citizen demand.
- The ability to organise work among existing employees.
- The impact on work quality or performance.
- Planned structural changes to the workplace.
- Rotas of individual departments.
- Whether the job can only be carried out in an office environment (but hot desking may apply).
- Performance related issues as already discussed between the manager and employee.

5.0 What is a Normal Designated Work Base?

5.1 An employee's designated base must be agreed with their manager and used in relation to mileage claims. The office base is an important distinction for travel expense purposes. The following will apply –

- If you are categorised as a home based worker this will be your designated base
- If you are categorised as a fixed desk worker your base will be where your fixed desk is located
- If you are a hot-desk 'zone' worker your designated base will be your zone location
- If you are a mobile worker your base will be the nearest office 'touch down' area to your home
- It is important that all employees manage their travel and limit it in order to achieve the environmental benefits of agile working.

6.0. Health and Safety Issues for Employees Who May Work From Home

6.1 Lone Working
Lone working arrangements are in place and routinely tested to ensure they are adequate

6.2 Property Risks and Liability Insurance
Computers and other items of equipment provided by the Council as part of the Agile Working Arrangement will be covered by the Council's insurance policy. If risk assessments are completed satisfactorily, the liability insurance arranged by the Council will operate. If, as a result of the risk assessment, risk control measures are identified, then these must be addressed prior to the arrangement commencing.

6.3 Legislation
The Council must comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (HSWA) (1974).
Appropriate risk assessments must be carried out on the work activities of agile workers in order to comply with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
Shropshire Council Health and Safety Policy and arrangements can be found on the Intranet and Learning Gateway, which provides supportive information and guidance.

Employees who have an agile pattern of working have responsibilities under the HSWA 1974 in the same way as other employees and must take reasonable care of their own safety and maintain a safe working environment.

6.4 Health & Safety Risk Assessment
A Health and Safety Risk Assessment will be carried out at least annually or when any changes are made to the working environment. Employees must complete the Council's workstation assessment on their workspace at the Councils premises, at home and whilst in the community and review this with their manager.

Risk Assessments must be completed with regards to health and safety whilst working at home. Arrangements for risk assessments, associated forms/check lists and guidance can be obtained from the intranet/Learning Gateway or the Health and Safety Team. See appendix 2, 3 & 4.

When working from home, even if it is only on an ad-hoc basis, the employee must ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise in the rest of the home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting.

6.5 Data Protection issues
The provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 must be complied with in relation to the security of information.

Appropriate security requirements must be met in relation to equipment and Council information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. When dealing with personal information the same measures must be applied as if working in the office.

When working in a mobile manner, the employee is responsible for the security of equipment, software, files and any other information in their possession. It is particularly important to ensure that non-authorised personnel (in the home environment or whilst working off site) cannot gain access to confidential or personal information as defined by the Data Protection Act 1998.

All Council paperwork should be securely locked away and only be accessible to the employee. Considerations should be made when working remotely on laptops to ensure that the screen cannot be overseen by others and precautions taken to avoid laptops being stolen or lost.

7.0. What Health and Safety Training Should be Provided?

7.1 All agile workers should receive health and safety training as appropriate to their work activity. This would include
- Cardinus DSE Workstation Plus for those using any computerised equipment as 'work equipment' for example; desktop, laptop/netbook or similar, PDA, Tablet
- Lone working arrangements

8.0. Communication and Contact Issues

8.1 Arrangements should be made for effective communication to be maintained between the employee, line manager and colleagues / team whatever the category of agile worker the employee falls into.

8.2 It is essential for regular team meetings to be undertaken in order to develop and maintain relationships. Appropriate communication and support channels must also be made available.

8.3 Employees must ensure that they do not give out their personal telephone number for work purposes.

8.4 Any employee undertaking visits or attending meetings must follow the same "lone working principles" that they would if leaving from their office base.

9.0. Personally Adapted Equipment

9.1 Where staff have their own personally adapted equipment (e.g. mouse with left hand orientation) they will be able to keep this for their personal use and move it with them

10.0 What is 'Cardinus Workstation Safety Plus'?
Cardinus Workstation Plus is an interactive training and risk assessment package, which provides the opportunity for staff to take immediate action to address workstation issues where possible.
The training concludes with a short multi-choice test. DSE users then complete their own risk assessment; the results of the risk assessment are stored on the PACE data base for individual statistical reporting.
On completion of the risk assessment, users are then presented with an action report detailing the measures required to rectify issues raised.
The data base allows for scheduled e-mails to remind employees to complete the training/risk assessments or other specific tasks allocated.

11.0 I use a portable computer – are there any precautions I should take?
The use of laptops, notebook computers, PDA's and similar equipment has increased considerably. Laptops and other portable devices have to be compact and easy to carry. The resulting design features, like small keyboards, can make prolonged use uncomfortable, unless steps are taken to avoid problems i.e. the provision of docking stations.
Portable DSE is only exempt from the regulations if it is not in prolonged use.
Employees using portable computers for a significant part of the working day either instead of or as well as a desk top computer in any location, including at home, must carry out a separate DSE assessment. Employees must be suitably trained to carry out this self-assessment (i.e. completion of Cardinus Workstation Plus training and risk assessment).

12.0 What are the minimum standards for a DSE workstation?
The minimal standards of all DSE workstations must comply with the Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended)

13.0 Is there a minimum legal desk size?

There is no legal requirement for any particular desk size but, to reduce risks, work surfaces need to be large enough to allow the user to find a comfortable working position.

14.0 I have to hot desk; do I have to carry out a workstation assessment every time I use a different desk?

Initially, to ensure that the workstation you are using is not likely to cause you any health risk;

- Follow requirements of Appendix 2
- Once trained always carry out a 'pre-flight check' of your workstation prior to use.

15.0 What should I do if I have any concerns with my workstation?

If you think that you have problems connected to your DSE you should talk to your line manager in the first instance.

Alternatively you may want to discuss with the Occupational Health and Safety Team or your Trade Union Safety Representative.

16.0 Where can I go for further advice?

Please contact the Health & Safety team in the first instance and see Appendix 3 for further information

Appendix

Appendix 1   Agile Worker Definitions
Appendix 2   Pre-Flight Checklist
Appendix 3   Link to further information and references
Appendix 4 – Home Worker Checklist for All Staff to Complete and Submit to
                    Manager

Appendix I

Agile Worker Definitions

Mobile Workers
Mobile workers are employees who spend most of their time working at a variety of locations and spend some of their time interacting with the core service area. The main aspect of the employee's job involves visiting other Council locations and/or client sites around the Authority.

Mobile workers are able to work from a variety of locations including home, Council and non-Council sites. Employees who operate in a mobile manner will have access to bookable work space within a council building.

Hot Desk Worker
This category of worker is primarily required to work from a single building, but is not required to have a fixed desk location. There is an option for teams to have zoned areas where sitting together is an essential element of their role.
However, only some of the team is in one place at any one time, (facilitated by natural absences, working offsite, attending meetings, working from home etc.). This will mean that there will be less workstation's than there are employees.

Fixed Desk Worker
This is an employee whose role is required to be in a fixed location for 100% of the time. It is not expected that many people will fall into this category as it will only be required where the role demands that special fixed machinery is used or in reception areas.

Home Worker (Home Based)
This is an employee who spends the majority of their time conducting their job role from home rather than on the Council's premises.

Specific Equipment Requirements
"Mobile" workers who need to access Shropshire Council systems from home or non-Shropshire Council sites, will be issued with an encrypted memory stick.

The council will provide where relevant, the necessary hardware (i.e. Citrix) to enable the employee to perform their role whilst working in a mobile manner with e.g. PDA, Laptop, mobile phone.

When working from home, the employee must ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise in the rest of the home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting.

The employee is responsible for providing an appropriate chair and desk for home use (if relevant). The chair should be stable and allow freedom of movement and be adjustable in height with an adjustable back (height and tilt). Appropriate H&S checks must be carried out.

Employees must complete the online Cardinus Workstation Plus training and risk assessment on their workspace at home and review the results with their Line Manager.

Equipment

Hot desk workers will have access to desk space and IT equipment, though the same equipment may be used by other employees. Hot desk workers will have access to workstations which can be booked in advance in any of the Councils Buildings. They can also use equipment provided within team 'zone' areas. Hot Desk workers will not have a workstation which is for their exclusive use only.

Office cover

Arrangements should be made for effective communication and appropriate office cover to be maintained. Core contact time and office cover arrangements should be agreed between the team and the line manager.

Management of staff

In considering hot desk arrangements, managers need to take account of the following:

A satisfactory working environment must be established. This includes the provision of a suitable workstation environment and communication mechanisms to contact other team members and line manager.

Employees must maintain appropriate security requirements in relation to the use of equipment and Council information.

Appropriate communication and support channels must be made available e.g. weekly team meetings to monitor work programmes and co-ordinate office cover.

Suitable recording mechanisms must be in place to monitor office cover, who is working from home, attending meetings etc.

Access to files and data must be provided, although this is likely to be in central file areas rather than alongside a specific workstation.

It is essential to plan and agree a work programme with the line manager, the employee and team to ensure suitable office cover is provided and equipment is available when needed.

Equipment

The organisation will ensure the provision of an appropriate chair and desk for home use, in line with Health and Safety requirements.

Home workers will also be provided with IT equipment, telephony and business broadband.

Clear desk policy

Hot desk employees will adhere to a clear desk policy as they will be sharing the desk with other employees. Appropriate facilities will be provided to secure personal effects e.g. lockable pedestals /cabinets.

Fixed Hours

Core hours, flexi and time keeping issues will be in accordance to the terms and conditions of the employee's employment contract. Due to the nature of a fixed desk worker, core working hours will need to be in operation e.g. office cover arrangements between the hours of 07:00 – 19:00 where necessary.

Isolation

Arrangements will be made for effective communication to be maintained between the employee, line manager and colleagues / team. It is good practice for home workers to spend time with their team to develop and maintain relationships.

Appropriate communication and support channels with managers and colleagues must be made available. Employees must ensure that they do not give out their home number to customers or contractors.

Appendix 2
Spot Check (Pre-Flight Check)
Hot-Desking & Mobile Workers Ergonomic

Employees who have previously completed the Cardinus Workstation Plus training and risk assessment (within the last 12 months) and have also completed any requirements raised in their user action report, may be deemed competent for carrying out their own 'Pre-Flight Check' at any additional hot-desks or mobile workstations whilst at work.

There are **6 key elements** to check on each occasion, these are;

1   Person (back, shoulders, neck, eyes, head):
Make sure that you sit with a neutral posture, where the three natural curves of your spine are in their naturally balanced alignment.
Avoid twisting or reaching while seated.
Ensure that you have your eyes tested regularly.

Don't sit in the same position for long periods. Make sure you change your posture as often as practicable. Some movement is desirable, but avoid repeated stretching to reach things you need (if this happens a lot, rearrange your workstation).
Most work activities provide opportunities to take a break from the screen, eg to do filing or photocopying. Make use of them. Frequent short breaks are better than fewer long ones.

2   Arms & wrists:
Make sure that your wrists do not bend up, down or sideways while using the keyboard and mouse.
Make sure your seat height is adjusted so that there is no shrugging or hunching of the shoulders.
Ensure that you do not need to overstretch/reach for your mouse

3   Legs & feet:
The soles of your feet should rest flat on the floor or a footrest.
Your thighs should be approximately horizontal to the floor and your hips slightly higher than your knees.
Ensure there is plenty of clearance between the top of your legs and the underside of the desk.

4   Chair:
Ensure that your backrest fully supports your lower back (i.e. lumbar region).
Make sure that your arm rests do not stop you from moving close enough to the desk.
Your chair should be adjusted so that your feet are supported and your hands and wrists form a horizontal line

5   Monitor:
Ensure that your monitor is free from glare and reflections.
Your eyes should be level with the top of the screen's viewing area.
The monitor should be roughly an arm's length away from you so that you do not strain your eyes.

6   Keyboard & mouse:

Make sure that you do not use excessive force while typing.

Ensure that you have enough space to move your mouse in all directions.

Ensure you know how to change the settings of your keyboard and mouse.

Adjust your keyboard to get a good keying position. A space in front of the keyboard is sometimes helpful for resting the hands and wrists when not keying.

Try to keep your wrists straight when keying. Keep a soft touch on the keys and don't overstretch your fingers. Good keyboard technique is important.

Position the mouse within easy reach, so it can be used with the wrist straight.

Sit upright and close to the desk, so you don't have to work with your mouse arm stretched. Move the keyboard out of the way if it is not being used.

Support your forearm on the desk, and don't grip the mouse too tightly.

Rest your fingers lightly on the buttons and do not press them hard.

Pre Flight Check - Making adjustments to suit your needs

What can I do to help myself?

Make full use of the equipment provided, and adjust it to get the best from it and to avoid potential health problems

Appendix 3

Further information and references

Corporate health & safety policy -See H&S Intranet

Health & Safety Executive CLICK HERE

HSE Books CLICK HERE

Employee Handbook- See H&S Intranet

Hardcopy DSE Workstation Checklist- See H&S Intranet

Working with VDU's INDG 36 (revised) CLICK HERE

VDU's an easy guide to the regulations: How to comply with the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (as amended)

If the Task Fits: Ergonomics at Work INDG 90 (revised)

Seating at Work HSG 57

Lighting at Work HSG38

Work Related Upper Limb Disorders: A guide to prevention HSG 60

Appendix 4 – Home Worker Checklist for All Staff to Complete and Submit to Manager

Home Working Health and Safety Checklist

This checklist is to be completed by the employee, by ticking the boxes as appropriate. If you have identified any problems (by ticking 'NO') that you cannot resolve, these should be referred to your manager for action, as soon as possible.

1. **Home Worker**		**Date**	
<u>Address</u>			

1. Documentation and Insurance		**YES**	**NO**
1.1	Has the Mobile and Flexible Working policy been brought to your attention?		
1.2	Have risk assessments related to your work been brought to your attention?		
1.3	Have you checked any restrictions on working from home with your insurance company / mortgage provider/ landlord?		

2. Working Area and Computer Use		**YES**	**NO**
2.1	Is there enough natural or artificial light to make your work area and work activities safe and to avoid problems of visual fatigue?		
2.2	Is there enough space to do your work safely, and for safe storage and use of work materials and equipment?		
2.3	Are there cables which create tripping hazards?		
2.4	Is the floor covering in good condition?		
2.5	Are you a Display Screen Equipment User? (A DSE User is someone who spends a significant amount of time using a computer and couldn't do their job without one)		
2.6	If so, has a separate Cardinus workstation assessment been carried out under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations?		

3. Electrical Equipment		**YES**	**NO**
3.1	Is the electrical supply/equipment safe and in good condition to be used for work purposes		
3.2	Do you check the electrical equipment visually before use?		
3.3	Has the electrical equipment provided by Shropshire Council been tested? Is a sticker visible?		
3.4	Is there a system for ensuring that repairs and maintenance to the computer supplied by the Council are carried out?		

4. Accident and First Aid Reporting	YES	NO
4.1 Are you aware of the need to report all accidents/incidents/near-misses via the online Council's accident reporting system?		
4.2 Do you have access to suitable communications devices to summon help in the event of ill-health and/or accident?		

5. Security and Lone Working	YES	NO
5.1 Are there arrangements in place for making regular contact with managers and colleagues?		
5.2 Do you understand that work meetings with clients / service users are not to be carried out in your home environment?		
5.3 If you spend a substantial amount of time travelling, is there a defined lone work system to advise your line manager where you are? (NB there is access on request for teams to the Council's Lone Worker Monitoring System)		

6. Fire	YES	NO
6.1 Is there a smoke alarm in your property and is this in working order and tested regularly?		
6.2 Are all exit routes available and clear from obstruction?		
6.3 Are all work-related waste materials regularly removed from the working area?		

Additional Comments / Information

Is further action required?	YES		NO		If yes give details below

Controls /Action required	Action By	By Date	Date Completed

Review Date		Employee's Signature		
		Line Manager's Signature		