

HR02

Agile Working Policy

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1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust is committed to making the most of work flexibilities to support the delivery of high-quality services alongside work life balance through impacts such as making best use of the Trust's estate, improving the work life balance of staff by reducing travel, reducing unnecessary exposure to on-site risks (particularly in view of the COVID-19 pandemic) and improving retention of staff.

- 1.2 The aim of this Agile Working Policy is to support the workforce in working in an innovative, dynamic and flexible way from different locations, at different times and using mobile devices. This could include varying degrees of homeworking, or hot desking within a Trust building, within the community, or at a partner organisation.

- 1.3 Although the nature of a number of roles within the Trust means it cannot be classed as totally agile, there is considerable scope in many cases for some form of agile working and therefore the Trust encourages an 'agile first' approach wherever possible. That said staff members must not be required to work from home and in circumstances where a member of staff is unable or unwilling to work from home, facilities (which may include hot desk facilities) must be provided.

2.0 Definitions

Agile working	Working in a flexible way from different locations, at different times and using mobile devices. This could include varying degrees of homeworking or hot desking within a Trust building, within the community, or at a partner organisation.
Flexible working	Any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works. See

	Flexible Working Procedure for more details.
Homeworking	When an employee uses their home as a work base.
Hot desking	A desk that can be used by any employee to use as a work base. Quite often this means that employees will use different desks possibly in different locations on different days.
Mobile devices	A mobile device is a portable computing device such as a laptop, smartphone or tablet.
Remote working	Work undertaken away from the main designated base which is enabled through the use of mobile devices.
Work styles	The different work styles describe and define the mobility and flexibility of location for each individual member of staff.

3.0 Accountabilities

- 3.1 The **Director Sponsor** will be accountable for the revision of this policy which will be necessary from time to time as a result of changes in legislation or in the light of experience when applying the policy and its associated procedures. Any revisions will be agreed through the Trust's Joint Negotiating Committee.
- 3.2 The **Directors, Deputy Chief Operating Officers, Deputy Directors, Divisional Managers, Group Managers, Department Managers, Heads of Service and Directorate Managers** will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is fairly and consistently applied within their area of responsibility in the Trust, and to actively support developing an agile working culture.
- 3.3 **Managers** will be responsible for ensuring that they apply this policy fairly and consistently, and to actively support developing an agile working culture.
- 3.4 **Employees** will be responsible for complying with this policy, including openly engaging with their managers to facilitate developing an agile working culture.
- 3.5 The **HR Advisory Department** will be responsible for supporting the implementation of this policy, including providing advice to staff, and advice, guidance and relevant support for managers.
- 3.6 The **Health and Safety Department** will be responsible with supporting managers and staff with queries around risk assessments for working environments.
- 3.7 The **Occupational Health and Wellbeing Department** is responsible for promoting the physical and mental wellbeing of Trust's staff, including providing support and guidance to them and managers in the form of medical advice, guidance, support and health promotion.

4.0 Policy Detail

4.1 [Benefits of agile working](#)

- 4.1.1 There are many benefits for the Trust and staff to agile working, including:
- Aiding the retention of skilled and experienced staff.
 - Enabling the Trust to respond to an individual's need for flexibility in working arrangements (for example to attend ad hoc appointments or fulfil the school run).
 - Supporting continuity of service and the efficient functioning of the Trust.

- Increased diversity as agile working may help to overcome artificial barriers to progression, such as carer responsibilities for working parents.
- The creation of a more cost effective and efficient service provision.
- Increased productivity.
- Providing a decreased reliance on office space and alternative solutions to short or longer term office accommodation issues.
- Reduce the Trust's carbon footprint and help to support a commitment to sustainability through a reduction in unnecessary mileage and production of paper documentation.
- Help to facilitate social distancing, particularly in the case of homeworking.

4.1.2 For staff it can also:

- Enable them to work more effectively on a particular piece of work, where concentration is important, by avoiding the interruptions that are part of the office environment.
- Enable greater flexibility and autonomy for staff to work in a way that suits their needs and improves their work life balance.
- Increase morale and promote positive health and wellbeing.
- Reduce the time spent travelling to a specific base.
- Reduce travel and parking costs.
- Provide a solution to a temporary logistical difficulty in getting into work, e.g., inclement weather, car issues, or an unwell dependent where travel to the office is not possible.

4.1.3 Agile working requires developing a culture of focusing on results and performance and removing artificial measures of success such as whether someone is visible and at their desk during 'work hours'. The main barriers to agile working revolve around culture and mind set, enabling staff to work in an agile manner requires trust and responsibility. The primary focus must be on meeting the needs of the service within boundaries that are agreed between the manager and the member of staff.

4.2 Identifying agility

4.2.1 In order to support an 'agile first' approach managers must reconsider their services and where it is identified that some aspects of their service could work in a more agile fashion, service redesign will take place.

4.2.2 Managers within these areas must take the opportunity to discuss workstyles with their staff members to allow agile working solutions to be explored. The extent to which a member of staff is able to be agile will be dependent on service need, the best practical and operational arrangements, the role and the individual's preference and circumstances.

4.2.3 Agile working is not prescriptive in its application, i.e. one size does not fit all, but it is underpinned by key principles which should be evident in all decisions taken and all new ways of working. It will be used as a tool to maximise efficiency and improve service delivery.

Agile workers are more likely to be those who:	Fixed workers are more likely to be those who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spend some degree of time working away from their desk; ▪ May travel across Trust sites; ▪ Carry out assessments in the community; ▪ Attend meetings or spend time working at other sites; ▪ Workload is not location dependent; ▪ Have the option to work away from base including from home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work in a patient facing role where the fundamental duties of the role require the member of staff to be in a particular location; ▪ Spend most of their time working at a fixed location (estimated 90%)*; ▪ Have specific individual equipment/furniture needs to enable them to perform their role effectively; ▪ Are seldom away from their desk except for meeting with colleagues in the same location; ▪ Do not have an option to work from other locations/are unable to undertake a high proportion of their tasks in an alternative location. <p>Example roles may include inpatient based staff, receptionists, and those leading a team of locally based staff.</p>

* Note, there may be some ‘fixed workers’ who spend much of their time at their desk and in a modern workplace with technological solutions could undertake their role from home e.g. recruitment staff, secretaries etc.

4.2.4 When considering the practicalities of agile working, and in particular during initial discussions between the manager and employee, both parties must be mindful of the following principles:

- Some agile working options may not be operationally practical for certain jobs or in some locations;
- Operational feasibility and quality standards must not be compromised, including Health and Safety, Information Governance, legislative and security of equipment requirements;
- Managers should choose to consider a particular arrangement or set of arrangements to improve and enhance service delivery.

Overall, any agreement to adopt a flexible working approach should support the delivery of a high-quality service.

4.2.5 In respect of homeworking, as well as considering the type of work that can be undertaken in the home it is also important to recognise that there are certain personal attributes and skills that can contribute to the ability to undertake a role effectively from home. These include the ability to work independently, self-motivation, self-discipline, good time management, and being able to separate work and home life.

4.2.6 It must be noted however that there is no expectation for staff to work at home and managers cannot demand that any member of their team does so. It is recognised

and acknowledged that personal circumstances or personal preferences may influence an employee's decision with regards to homeworking. However there are clear benefits and efficiencies that can be aligned to more flexible and agile working and therefore these staff may be expected to adopt other elements of agile working, for example remote working from other locations and hot desking.

- 4.2.7 Employees who are not required/identified to be agile workers but would like to move to this method of working may request this in line with the [Flexible Working Procedure](#) having given due consideration to the detail within this policy in relation to their role, duties, and department.

4.3 Agile working agreement

- 4.3.1 Where staff are identified as having the potential to work in an agile manner, a discussion must take place between the manager and staff member to agree the arrangements for how they will work. The [Agile Working Agreement Form](#) will assist this discussion.
- 4.3.2 Where departments have already successfully implemented agile working, discussions with new employees will take place and agreed prior to commencing employment. Again, the [Agile Working Agreement Form](#) will assist this discussion.
- 4.3.3 It is essential to plan and agree a work programme so that the staff member, their manager and their colleagues are aware of the individual's working pattern and location and know when and how to contact them. Where the staff member is not required to work standard office hours, this must be agreed in advance allowing employees who are using their homes as part of their agile working agreements to have a right to privacy out of hours and be able to separate their working and home lives. The expectation is that, unless agreed otherwise the staff member would be available and contactable as they would be if they were in work.
- 4.3.4 Agile working can bring with it increased risks in relation to:
- Loss and theft of equipment and data, including removable media;
 - Disclosure of confidential information to unauthorised persons;
 - Access to confidential information by unauthorised persons;
 - Insecure disposal of confidential information.
 - Internal fraud

Therefore, the agile working agreement will recommend the most secure solutions for the proposed user activity.

- 4.3.5 Where agile working agreements are in place, annual reviews will be undertaken as part of the appraisal process to ensure that the working pattern is not detrimental to the individual, the service delivery or the team and other colleagues. If at any point the employee or manager finds that the working arrangements are unworkable or there is a change in the employee's circumstances then this must be discussed at the earliest opportunity to enable future working arrangements to be put in place that ensure minimal disruption to service delivery. A notice period of 4 weeks may be given on either side to revert to either the former working arrangement or a suitable and agreed alternative.

4.3.6 The ability to work from home enables employees to manage their health and wellbeing as well as their domestic responsibilities providing this does not have a negative impact on the individual's ability to carry out their work, or on service delivery e.g. receiving delivery of goods or assisting with childcare arrangements (for example, allowing parents to complete the school run and make up their time later in the day). Employees must note that the ability to work from home is not a substitute for childcare or similar carer responsibilities. It is the staff member's responsibility to ensure adequate provision is in place should they work from home, excepting where other arrangements have been agreed with their manager which may be appropriate to be facilitated in line with the [Flexible Working Procedure](#).

4.3.7 If agile working becomes unsuitable due to the staff member's conduct or performance, the agile working arrangement may be ceased immediately, and it may be necessary to implement the Trust's [Disciplinary Policy](#) (HR03) or [Performance Capability Policy](#) (HR19).

4.4 [Facilitating and managing agile working](#)

4.4.1 Basic equipment that may be required for agile working such as a laptop, mobile phone and stationery will be provided by the Trust and the principles of their usage will be in line with Trust policies and procedures. The nature of any equipment required beyond this basic equipment for any homeworking will be determined by the manager (as it would be in the office environment) and will be appropriate to the role the individual is undertaking. For example a member of staff who is required to review large volumes of data, but who does not have cause to make or receive many phone calls may be provided with an additional monitor but may use their own mobile phone. Any equipment issued by the Trust remains the property of the Trust; any loss or damage to equipment must be reported immediately. Where additional equipment is deemed necessary, for example as part of a reasonable adjustment, these will be discussed and arranged locally between the line manager and the employee and may require an assessment by Health and Safety or Occupational Health and Wellbeing.

4.4.2 Any office equipment will be provided at the Trust location where the staff member predominantly works and not across multiple sites unless agreed otherwise (for example as part of a reasonable adjustment). Where homeworking is agreed, the employee will be required to provide a suitable working area with internet access and a risk assessment must be completed with the line manager. It is the individual responsibility of all employees using a hot desking facility to adjust the set-up of the workstation to meet their individual health and safety preferences, wash their hands and make use of antiseptic wipes, and to leave the workspace in an appropriate, clean and tidy state. Where a staff member cannot provide a suitable working area with internet access at home, they will be provided with a work space/ access to the appropriate facilities on Trust premises.

4.4.3 All employees who work on an agile basis have a duty to ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that they work in a safe manner and that they follow the principles of the Trust's health and safety policies. This includes working alongside their managers to carry out any necessary risk assessments as well as ensuring that they take adequate rest periods and breaks. Staff must discuss with their line manager if they believe they are subject to any health and safety risks, including

whilst working from home. Further information can be gained in the [Display Screen Equipment Protocol](#) (HS01 attachment 2).

- 4.4.4 Agile workers are subject to the same standards of behaviour, conduct and performance as all employees working for the Trust. Contractual obligations, duties and responsibilities remain in place, as do workplace policies and procedures including in relation to security, confidentiality and data protection.
- 4.4.5 If an agile staff member cannot work due to illness or injury, the normal attendance management process will apply in line with the Trust's [Supporting and Managing Staff Attendance at Work Policy](#) (HR13).
- 4.4.6 Agile working is not 'flexible working' however the adoption of agile working may also provide an opportunity for some degree of flexibility in working arrangements providing service provision is unaffected and agreed outputs are achieved. This may therefore be appropriate to be facilitated in line with the [Flexible Working Procedure](#).
- 4.4.7 The Trust is committed to maintaining an honest, open and well-intentioned culture within the Trust. It is therefore committed to the elimination of any fraud within the Trust. If fraud is suspected in relation to the Agile Working Policy, please report to the Trust's Local Counter Fraud Specialist or Chief Finance Officer or call the National Fraud and Corruption reporting line on 0800 028 40 60. For more information/ guidance on reporting concerns please refer to the [Trust's Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy](#).

Clear desk principles

- 4.4.8 Every desk is a potential hot desk and as such it is encouraged that personal belongings such as photographs, plants, mugs etc. are removed or kept to a minimum. Desks not allocated to a fixed worker should be clear with the exception of any IT equipment located on the desk to support staff in carrying out computer work. This is also encouraged for desks allocated to 'fixed' workers, as their desks should be available for use by other staff during periods of absence such as annual leave, sickness, or non-working hours.

Designated bases

- 4.4.9 Many staff will have a fixed base for their service even when agile working principles have been implemented, however where this is not the case a designated base will be agreed between the member of staff and the manager. In these unique circumstances the designated base would likely be the first site that the agile worker would pass on their natural commute.

Supervision, support and communication

- 4.4.10 In an agile working environment communication becomes even more vital and agile working provides opportunities to consider more efficient and effective means of communication. It is important to acknowledge the role of both formal and informal communications and the limitations of them, and adopt new communications strategies including the use of technology. Managers must adapt to the needs of the individual, the team and the service in their methods of communication. This will mean that managers will need to be explicit about the type and regularity of communication at the outset.

- 4.4.11 Managers and staff will explore opportunities for both formal and informal supervision and agree any changes to the current format as part of the agile working agreement. Supervision should be a forum for monitoring wellbeing, discussing performance and discussing any concerns related to agile working practices as well as an opportunity to discuss additional support and training opportunities.
- 4.4.12 The Trust wants staff who work in an agile way to remain as involved as those who have a fixed desk on a Trust site, therefore contact will be maintained through means such as phone, email and video conferencing. It is essential that time is built in to enable face-to-face meetings and communication where appropriate. If at any point staff feel isolated, left out, or lacking in guidance or support they should in the first instance discuss this with their line manager.
- 4.4.13 Managers should be aware that some staff may be uncomfortable with change, feeling the loss of a permanent desk and the reduced face to face contact with colleagues. They may need extra support during the transition period to get used to the new ways of working. Agile working may not be appropriate for all staff and managers should observe for early warning signs that a team member is not working well. Both managers and staff must be willing to engage in joint problem solving and troubleshooting to ensure that the agile working arrangements work effectively. Both parties are responsible for maintaining good working relationships.
- 4.4.14 Staff become less 'visible' when working in an agile manner, this can in turn create anxiety for some managers. Monitoring staff output must go beyond looking at the artificial measures of success such as whether someone is visible at a desk during 'work hours' and instead managers will need to focus on and manage deliverables and results as there is an expectation that staff working in an agile manner will improve efficiency and effectiveness. It must be made clear to staff on how they will be managed and what is expected of them. The main barriers to agile working revolve around culture and mind set; enabling staff to work in an agile manner requires trust and responsibility. The primary focus must be on meeting the needs of the service within boundaries that are agreed between the manager and the member of staff.
- 4.4.15 Staff who primarily work from home may be requested to attend site as and when required e.g. for completion of mandatory training.

Homeworking practicalities

- 4.4.16 With regards to homeworking, staff are responsible for making sure that their mortgage/lease and home insurance do not restrict or prevent their home being used for work. Failure to inform domestic insurers may result in home insurance cover being rendered invalid.
- 4.4.17 Staff members are responsible for exploring and considering any additional costs that they may incur as a result of homeworking as the Trust will not provide contributions to the cost of utilities necessary for homeworking, such as heating, electricity, broadband, and increased home insurance premium. This is recognising that employees retain the ability to work on site at the Trust should such costs be

prohibitive and that one key benefit of homeworking is the expected reduction in the amount of travel by staff and a reduction of travel and parking costs.

4.4.18 Where homeworking is an ongoing requirement staff may be entitled to tax relief on a proportion of the additional costs incurred. Please see <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home> for more details and eligibility.

4.4.19 Where an IT or other problem prevents a staff member from working effectively from home, contact should be made with the line manager as this may require on-site working until the issue has been resolved.

5.0 Financial Risk Assessment

1	Does the implementation of this policy require any additional Capital resources	No
2	Does the implementation of this policy require additional revenue resources	No
3	Does the implementation of this policy require additional staffing	No
4	Does the implementation of this policy release any staffing costs through a change in practice	No
5	Are there additional staff training costs associated with implementing this policy which cannot be delivered through current training programmes or allocated training times for staff.	No
	Other comments	

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

An equality analysis has been carried out and it indicates that:

Tick	Options
✓	A. There is no impact in relation to Personal Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
	B. There is some likely impact as identified in the equality analysis. Examples of issues identified, and the proposed actions include:

The policy does actively support staff to manage their health and wellbeing, disability, childcare arrangements or pregnancy (e.g. this may enable them to continue to remain working but from another location or with some flexibility whereas in other circumstances they may have been left with little alternative but to go off sick/commence maternity leave early/reduce working hours etc.).

7.0 Maintenance

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if warranted by a change in standards or if changes are deemed necessary from internal sources.

8.0 Communication and Training

8.1 The HR Department will provide advice on the policy to staff, and advice and support to managers in the fair and equitable application of this policy as appropriate.

8.2 A [HR Advisory Toolkit](#) is available to provide further guidance and support.

8.3 All Group Managers, Matrons, Departmental/Directorate Managers are responsible for the communication of this policy to their staff.

9.0 Audit Process

Criterion	Lead	Monitoring method	Frequency	Committee
Fair and consistent application of this policy	Divisional HR Manager/ Divisional Management Team	Feedback from staff-side and managers	Every 3 years prior to policy review	POD Committee

10.0 References

- ACAS, undated, 'Working from home'
- Capsticks Insights, July 2020, 'A short guide to the legal considerations regarding homeworking'
- CIPD, April 2020, 'Preparing your organisation for home working'
- CIPD, November 2014, 'Getting smart about agile working'
- Daniel Barnett Employment Law Services, April 2020, 'Homeworking Policy guide'
- Eversheds, May 2020, 'Home-working for the foreseeable future: how should employers respond?'
- Gov.uk, undated, 'Expenses and benefits: homeworking'
- XpertHR, April 2020, 'Temporary homeworking policy during the coronavirus outbreak'

Part A - Document Control

Policy number and Policy version: HR02 version 2.0	Policy Title Agile Working Policy	Status: Final		Author: HR Manager - Advisory Chief Officer Sponsor: Group Chief People Officer
Version / Amendment History	Version	Date	Author	Reason
	1	October 2020	HR Manager – Advisory	New policy
	2	October 2023	HR Manager – Advisory	Policy review
Intended Recipients: All staff and managers seeking advice in relation to agile working				
Consultation Group / Role Titles and Date: Staff Side – July 2023				
Name and date of Trust level group where reviewed		Joint Negotiating Committee – September 2023 Trust Policy Group – September 2023		
Name and date of final approval committee		Trust Management Committee – October 2023		
Date of Policy issue		November 2023		
Review Date and Frequency (standard review frequency is 3 yearly unless otherwise indicated – see section 3.8.1 of Attachment 1)		September 2026 (then every 3 years)		
Training and Dissemination: Information sharing and engagement at manager’s meetings, launched via Divisional Management forums. Advice and guidance available from the HR Advisory Department as and when required by managers and staff				
To be read in conjunction with: Flexible Working Procedure Display Screen Equipment Protocol				
Initial Equality Impact Assessment (all policies): Yes Full Equality Impact assessment (as required): N/A If you require this document in an alternative format e.g., larger print please contact Policy Administrator 85887				
Monitoring arrangements and Committee		People and Organisational Development Committee (POD)		
Document summary/key issues covered. The aim of this policy is to support the workforce in working in an innovative, dynamic and flexible way from different locations, at different times and using mobile devices. This could include varying degrees of homeworking, or hot desking within a Trust building, within the community, or a partner organisation. The policy provides a framework to enable managers and staff to consider and deploy agile working on a local basis dependent on their own needs and requirements.				
Key words for intranet searching purposes			Agile working Home working Hot desking Remote working Working from home	