

SMARTWORKING POLICY

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SMARTWORKING POLICY

Policy Summary

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. Different work calls for different environments where we can connect, collaborate and concentrate. SmartWorking is about working flexibly in ways that help us deliver our priorities as effectively as possible. The Welsh Government values the benefits of bringing colleagues together in an office setting for in-person collaboration, supporting new starters, and enhancing morale and emotional connection through face-to-face interaction for some. At the same time, this policy is designed to enable colleagues to continue working remotely, promoting a better work-life balance, saving time and costs, and contributing to a reduced carbon footprint.
- 1.2. This policy outlines the principles, eligibility, application process, and operational expectations for employees wishing to use the SmartWorking provision in the Welsh Government.
- 1.3. This policy applies to employees whose role allows them to use the WG 'SmartWorking' arrangements.
- 1.4. This policy sets the parameters for the employee's usual working pattern and location, and the ability to work away from the office when the business can accommodate this flexibility.
- 1.5. All our policies are fully inclusive of all staff regardless of age, marriage and civil partnership (both same sex and opposite sex), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, whether they have an impairment or health condition, are neurodivergent or use British Sign Language, their gender identity or gender expression. We acknowledge that the terms 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' are not protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, however, we believe that Government policy which includes provision for those persons who identify within the 'trans' umbrella (rather than on the basis of binary gender) is a more inclusive approach and one which ensures the Welsh Ministers are in a position to comply with all their statutory duties related to equality and the promotion of well-being in Wales. If you have any feedback on the inclusivity of this policy, please email EqualityintheWorkplaceTeam@gov.wales

2. Definition

- 2.1. SmartWorking is a voluntary flexible workstyle arrangement where employees can undertake their duties partly in the workplace (a WG office or site) and partly from home or another remote location.
- 2.2. SmartWorking does not require a change in contract even where most of the employee's contracted hours are undertaken in their home or at other remote locations. The way in which working time is split between WG premises and other

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locations will be set out in the employee's Workstyle Arrangement and not defined in the contract of employment.

3. Eligibility

3.1. Employees who wish to use the SmartWorking flexibilities must work in a role which allows for Smartworking. Within the WG there are two distinct workstyles – Blended Workstyle and Contractual Homeworker.

3.2. **Blended Workstyle** (majority of roles), which could include:

- Fixed pattern (roles that need specific patterns of work or office attendance)
- Regular pattern of both face-to-face and remote working which can include individual workplace and location arrangements with homeworking as a workplace adjustment agreed through a Workplace Passport. These passports and arrangements should continue to be regularly reviewed, to take account of any change to the individual's health or condition, or the job role.

3.3. **Contractual Homeworker:**

- An employee whose contract specifies their home as their primary workplace. This differs from SmartWorking, which is a flexible, non-contractual arrangement. For more information, please see the [Contractual Homeworking Policy](#).

3.4. Regardless of working location, the WG requires all employees to observe and comply with the policies and procedures set out in their terms and conditions of employment when undertaking their roles.

4. Individual Workstyle Arrangement Process

4.1. Employees could agree an Individual Workstyle Arrangement. To agree an Individual Workstyle Arrangement, a line manager will discuss with each team member their preference for Smartworking. The line manager will consider all proposed arrangements and provided business, and team needs permit an employee's preference to be accommodated, they will agree and sign an Individual Workstyle Arrangement with the employee.

4.2. The Individual Workstyle Arrangement will include a statement to confirm that the employee has read and understood the obligations and commitments that are part of this SmartWorking Policy.

4.3. Once agreed, individual arrangements will be monitored and reviewed during performance check-ins as necessary to ensure they are working for both the business and the individual. If an employee has concerns or cannot agree the expected levels of attendance in their Individual Workstyle Arrangements or

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otherwise, they should raise the issue with the Head of Branch or Deputy Director before considering raising a grievance.

4.4. In addition, employees must:

- familiarise themselves with this policy in particular the core principles set out in the policy summary
- Undertake and keep up to date [online DSE assessments](#) relevant to the remote location they plan to work in

5. Equipment and Resources

5.1. WG will provide necessary IT and office equipment on a [loan](#) basis.

Employees may request some or all or of these items:

- 1 x standard office chair
- 1 x fixed or folding desk
- 1 x standard monitor
- 1 x keyboard
- 1 x mouse
- 1 x footrest
- 1 x laptop riser
- 1 x headset

5.2. A height-adjustable desk or any other items deemed to be necessary workplace adjustments following a health and safety risk assessment / DSE assessment may also be provided on a loan basis. Approval from the Workplace Adjustment Team will be required. If any non-standard software is required, this must be ordered via MyIT. SmartWorkers will be expected to collect any stationery they require from their nearest WG office.

5.3. All equipment supplied by the WG should be stored appropriately and must be used for official business only. All equipment remains WG property and must be returned upon termination of the arrangement or if the employee leaves the organisation.

5.4. For furniture returns, line management must contact the Shared Service Centre. Where furniture and equipment have been provided following the advice of OH or the Workplace Adjustments Team, employees should discuss the return or movement of this with those teams.

5.5. The employee is responsible for arranging pick up and the return of all equipment unless alternative arrangements are agreed.

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5.6. If equipment becomes faulty, you must report to MyIT rather than order replacement items.

6. Office/Site Attendance

- 6.1. Each employee's work location will be stated in their contracts. The employee's usual working pattern and preferred location could be set out in their Individual SmartWorking Arrangement or agreed by alternative format. It is important that when we bring people together, it is for an essential or good business purpose. 'Purpose' should mean doing something collectively that is best achieved face-to-face and may involve attending Cabinet or briefing a Minister in person. Alternatively, it may involve connecting with colleagues as part of an anchor day or problem-solving event that brings different teams together. It could also include face-to-face training or performance check-ins.
- 6.2. While leaders and managers should be able to bring colleagues together for purposeful, in-person meetings and events, they must ensure that all colleagues feel part of the team and can contribute, taking careful consideration of team members working locations and any reasonable adjustments. Meeting inclusively is an important part of our organisational commitment to the social model of disability.
- 6.3. Normally these occasions will be agreed in advance but there may be emergency or critical situations when employees will be required to attend and work from a specific location for a set period and/or at short notice. Such situations will be determined by management and, wherever possible, employees will be given notice of any on-going requirement to work from a specific office/site which could impact on the arrangements set out in their Individual Workstyle Arrangement or contract of employment
- 6.4. Further guidance to support the implementation of this policy, including expectations for Team Charters and Individual Workstyle Arrangements are available in the [SmartWorking Guidance](#).

7. Travel to their contracted place of work and Other Locations

- 7.1. As SmartWorking is a voluntary workstyle arrangement, there are no flexi credits available for journey time to an employee's contracted place of work (office) and employees are responsible for covering the costs of commuting journeys to their office.

8. Working Outside the UK

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- 8.1. Due to the potential security, tax, visa, employment law, and other complexities surrounding remote working abroad, the WG is unable to consider requests to work outside the UK for personal reasons on a long-term basis. However, in exceptional circumstances, short-term requests (of up to 4 weeks' duration) will be considered. Please see our [Guide to Working/Travelling Overseas](#). Spending time at a holiday home, visiting relatives, being a foreign national living and working in the UK, study leave or wishing to combine annual leave with work time are not considered to be exceptional circumstances.
- 8.2. The WG will consider requests for remote working outside the UK from employees who wish to accompany a spouse/partner who works for the WG or another Civil Service body and has been posted abroad, or where the spouse/partner is a member of the UK Armed Forces serving overseas. In these circumstances, the request will be considered sympathetically and approved where the business, IT and Security can support it. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.3. To request approval to work outside the UK for a short period of time on an exceptional personal basis, employees must complete the request form at Annex 1 of the [Guide to Working/Travelling Overseas](#) and send to their line manager and DG for approval in principle. The request form must then be sent to SecurityPolicy@gov.wales for final authorisation by the Departmental Security Unit and the HR Director. Each request will be considered on its own merits, considering business and individual needs and security, IT and HR policies.

9. Caring Responsibilities and Working from Home

- 9.1. Working from home (either under the SmartWorking arrangements or on a contractual basis) can bring benefits to those who are carers and those with school age children. It can enable employees to work around their caring role. However, it is important that employees keep their caring responsibilities separate from their work on days when working from home and record their hours accordingly. For example, if an employee is providing care for dependents i.e. school pick up or a welfare check, this should be reflected on their flexi time sheet and not be included in their total hours worked for that day.
- 9.2. Where children or other dependants cannot be left unsupervised, employees must have alternative care arrangements in place. Working from home is not a substitute for childcare. Employees with caring responsibilities should provide information on how they will manage these responsibilities while working at home by completing a [Carer's Passport](#). This provides line managers with valuable information and will support employees with their preferred workstyle arrangement. Employees must also inform their line manager of any changes to

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their care or domestic arrangements that could affect their agreed working pattern.

10. Health and Safety

- 10.1. While working away from WG premises, employees must ensure they comply with this policy and the related security and health & safety policies/procedures. This includes undertaking and completing all relevant training and risk assessments.
- 10.2. As part of the Welsh Government's health and safety training programme, regular DSE users are required to complete [an e-learning module](#) for their computer workstation. This is mandatory and has been designed to make staff aware of how to set up and use their workstation correctly whilst working at an office or remotely.

11. Security and Data Protection

- 11.1. The [WG Security Policy](#) sets out the security obligations that apply to all employees regardless of working location. Employees who work remotely from home must ensure that they have an appropriate space in which to do so, where they can conduct official/sensitive business and should also note the following:
- WG-supplied software or IT equipment / furniture must be used solely by the employee and is provided for business use only.
 - Unauthorised software must not be installed on WG IT equipment.
 - Employees must protect all confidential information and make sure it is disposed of in a manner agreed with their line manager and consistent with the WG Security Policy. The employee and line manager may need to specifically consider how they will comply with confidentiality issues, the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 as part of their blended working or contractual homeworking arrangement.

12. Mortgage and Insurance

- 12.1. Employees are advised to check with their mortgage lenders/landlords and home buildings/contents insurers to clarify whether working at home would place any restrictions on their cover. It is possible that working from home would increase the premium and, if this did happen, the employee would bear the cost.

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Annex A

Roles and Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves and complying with this policy.
- Discussing SmartWorking with line manager and agree a suitable working pattern.
- Completing the online [DSE Assessment Training and Risk Assessment](#) (ensuring that the module relating to home working is chosen), so that due consideration is given to the suitability of SmartWorking for the individual and their team;
- Confirming that they have the necessary home insurance and /or tenancy mortgage agreement to provide appropriate cover for homeworking.
- Working with their line manager to ensure all necessary actions are cleared.

Line managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves and complying with the SmartWorking policy.
- Considering the suitability of SmartWorking both for the employee and the team concerned.
- Ensuring that all decisions on SmartWorking arrangements are appropriate, justifiable, consistent with previous decisions and based on the relevant policies, so that they can be explained to the employee and line management.
- Ensuring SmartWorking arrangements with the employee ensure all issues are carefully considered
- Meeting the employee to go through the requirements and application process for furniture, IT, and telephony for SmartWorking
- Ensuring that all ICT service requests are raised appropriately
- Ensuring SmartWorkers do not feel isolated and arranging specific regular catch ups.
- Reviewing any SmartWorking arrangements with the employee on a regular basis (at least six monthly).

The relevant Director and nominated HR Deputy Director are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all SmartWorking arrangements are dealt with fairly.

The ICT Strategy & Services Team is responsible for:

- Once SmartWorking arrangements are agreed, supporting employee to request any additional IT kit that may be required, via e-mail to the MyIT catalogue which will then be taken forward by ICT services.

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The Health & Safety Team is responsible for:

- Arranging for a specialist DSE assessment to be conducted by the Workplace Adjustments Team, if required.

The Workplace Adjustments Team is responsible for:

- Arranging a specialist DSE assessment if required.

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Annex B

SmartWorking Policy – FAQs

What is SmartWorking?

SmartWorking is a voluntary, flexible workstyle where employees split duties between a WG office/site and home or another remote location. It does not require a contract change.

Who is eligible for SmartWorking?

Employees working in roles that allow SmartWorking.

What is a Blended Workstyle?

A mix of office and remote work with patterns agreed with a line manager. Most roles fall into this category.

What is a Contractual Homeworker?

An employee whose contract specifies their home as their main workplace. This is different from SmartWorking, which is non-contractual.

What equipment is provided?

IT kit and basic furniture are provided on loan. Workplace Adjustments Team may approve additional equipment if needed.

Do SmartWorkers need to attend the office?

Yes, when there is an essential business purpose such as meetings, training, or anchor days.

Can I work outside the UK?

Only in exceptional personal circumstances for up to 4 weeks, or when accompanying a partner posted abroad. Each request is case-by-case.

What are the rules for carers?

Employees must not combine caring and working simultaneously. A Carer's Passport should outline care arrangements.

Do I need a DSE assessment?

Yes. Regular DSE users must complete mandatory online training and risk assessments for each remote location they work from.

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Who approves SmartWorking?

Line managers approve SmartWorking arrangements, with oversight from Directors and nominated HR Deputies.

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Annex C

Glossary of terms

SmartWorking

A voluntary, flexible workstyle where employees split their duties between a Welsh Government office/site and home or another remote location. No contract change is required.

Blended Workstyle

A workstyle involving a mix of office and remote work, with patterns agreed with a line manager. Most roles fall under this category.

Contractual Homeworker

An employee whose contract specifies their home as their main workplace. This is different from SmartWorking, which is non-contractual.

Individual Workstyle Arrangement

An arrangement between an employee and their line manager, setting out the employee's usual working pattern and location.

Workplace Passport

A document for agreeing alternative working arrangements with a line manager. Often used for staff with an impairment or who are managing a health condition and needing workplace adjustments but can be used in any situation where this is helpful.

DSE Assessment

Display Screen Equipment assessment—mandatory online training and risk assessment for regular computer users, ensuring safe working conditions.

Anchor Day

A day when teams gather in person for essential business purposes, such as meetings, training, or team events.

Carer's Passport

A document for employees with caring responsibilities, explaining how these will be managed while working from home.