**FINAL Hybrid Working Policy: May 2022**

**Introduction**

This policy sets out MVDC’s approach to hybrid working.

Hybrid working allows staff to split working time between attending Pippbrook, Dorking Halls, Park House (or any other MVDC offices) and working remotely.

It is incumbent on individuals who are notified they are eligible under this policy, in discussion with line managers as relevant, to determine the most suitable place of work.

A place of work will not be suitable if it leads to a reduction in productivity and/or performance, as determined by the relevant line or business manager.

At all times it is necessary to protect confidentiality and comply with data protection. Working or meeting in a busy or public place will not be suitable if processing or discussing sensitive or confidential data or information.

Hybrid working is considered to contribute to MVDC’s:

* Ability to deliver services in an effective and efficient manner;
* Strategy for adapting to, and thriving in, the new working environment following the coronavirus pandemic;
* Commitment to supporting a positive work-life balance for our employees.

Hybrid working supports our [Organisational Development Strategy](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/at-work/mvdcs-od-strategy-2019-22-2/) 2019-22, developed to improve capacity to deliver, and specifically to enhance our flexible work offering under Priority 5. It is anticipated to support (and must not be in conflict with) our [Council Strategy](https://molevalley.gov.uk/home/council/about-mvdc/council-strategy) and our [Values](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/corporate-values/).

Productivity and performance are key drivers in assessing whether a service, post or individual is eligible for hybrid working, and to inform any decisions made under this policy.

It is a requirement of this policy that the potential enhanced flexibility of location provided is informed by sound situational judgment so that access to services are not, in any way, compromised or impeded. A successful hybrid working policy provides seamless access to services, as well as ensuring we continue to function well as a whole organisation, and will therefore be invisible to all but those benefitting from it.

**Policy summary**

* This policy sits alongside our existing policies and procedures relating to GDPR and health and safety. For an overview/links, [see 1: Health and Safety](#Health) and [2: Data Protection](#Data). If anything in this policy conflicts with GDPR or Health and Safety policy, the discrete policies focused on those areas will take precedence.
* Anybody who wants to, can choose to spend all their working time at their contractual base/MVDC offices[. See 7: Using the office](#Using)
* Some *services/jobs* will not be eligible for hybrid working – these will be identified, reasons given and individuals notified by the relevant manager in advance. [See 3. Who is covered by hybrid working](#Who)
* Some *individuals* will not be eligible for hybrid working - these will be identified, reasons given and individuals notified by the relevant manager in advance. [See 4: Performance, probation, Apprentices, new starters.](#Performance)
* It is an expectation that everybody attends the office for a minimum of two days per week. [See 5: Minimum office attendance](#Minimum)
* There will be key activities or meetings which are identified as being office based and there are things you can do to compensate for not being in the office as much [See 6: Meetings/communication](#Meetings)
* Contractual base (place of work) will not change. This policy operates as a concession to contractual workplace provisions. [See 8: Contractual base](#Contractual) In order to be successful, this policy must operate according to trust. Managers may therefore need to adapt management styles with increased emphasis on leadership, support and a focus on outcomes. [See 9: Leadership and Trust](#Leadership)
* This policy sets out the way flexibility can be provided in relation to work location only. Regardless of where an individual works, they will be expected to work the agreed hours and pattern as appropriate to the role. Whilst MVDC supports a flexible approach to working hours where possible, this is not within the scope of this policy. [See 10: Working Hours](#Hours).
* Wellbeing considerations may impact eligibility, either at the outset or if they later develop, but a desire to see members of staff every day in an office is not considered generally sufficient to over-ride flexibility in the absence of any specific concerns. If concerns develop, support is available and must be provided. [See 11: Wellbeing](#Wellbeing)
* There are specific considerations – e.g. in relation to part-time staff and caring responsibilities. [See 12: Part time workers](#Part); [13: Childcare and other caring responsibilities](#Childcare) and [14: Pets](#Pets)
* It is not envisaged that an employee’s choice to work from home will incur expenditure by MVDC. [See 15: Expenses](#Expenses)
* Nothing in this policy prevents a manager requiring a member of staff to attend their contractual place of work on any given day if required. [See 16: Requirement to attend the office](#Office)
* This policy has been trialled from October 2021 to April 2022 and generally agreed to be successful. A change of circumstances may require the arrangement to be ended though this is not currently envisaged and any decisions or arrangements would be entered into reasonably after thorough discussion, consultation and consideration of individual circumstances. [See 17: Ending the arrangement.](#Ending)
* By exception, bespoke arrangements may be made. These must be evidence based decisions sponsored by an individual Executive Head and agreed at an SLT meeting. See [18: Bespoke arrangements](#Bespoke)
* In the event of any disagreement as to the way this policy applies to an individual, [see 19: Disagreements](#Disagreements)
* To make a different type of request for flexibility, see [20: Flexible Working Requests](#Flexible)

**Policy detail**

1. **Health and safety**

Nothing in this hybrid working policy changes the existing health and safety practices, procedures and requirements. Wherever you are working, including your home, you must liaise with your line manager to ensure that remote working set-ups are appropriate and safe. Display Screen Assessments are expected to be undertaken on a regular basis whether at home or at work and concessions under this policy may be withdrawn if you do not participate in regular Display Screen Assessments as requested. Please speak to your manager if you are unaware of this or have any problems with your work set up.

Everybody takes responsibility for their own health and safety and that of anyone else who is affected by their work (for example others in a household when working from home).

You must notify your line manager if:

* You feel any discomfort due to working remotely (such as back pain); or
* You believe that there are any work-related health and safety hazards;
* Any work-related accidents occur in your home.

See [here for Health & Safety guidance](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/myhr/health-and-wellbeing/health-safety/).

If a home work station is inadequate it may be preferable to work in MVDC offices.

If you have concerns about health and safety that you do not feel able to raise directly with your manager, please contact Staff Hub who act as the Health and Safety committee.

1. **Data protection**

Anybody working remotely is responsible for keeping information associated with MVDC or client partners secure at all times and nothing in this policy changes the existing obligations or policies to protect data.

Specifically, remote workers are under a duty to:

* Practise good computer security, adhering to the [ICT Security policy](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/gdpr/)
* Keep all hard copies of work-related documentation secure, including keeping documents locked away at all times except when in use; and
* Ensure that work-related information is safeguarded when working in public spaces, for example by:
  + positioning laptops so that others cannot see the screen;
  + not leaving laptops unattended and/or unlocked;
  + not having confidential/business-sensitive conversations in public spaces (some particularly sensitive conversations should not be able to be overheard by other household members); and
  + making sensible decisions where to work

In addition, the laptop [and other equipment] provided by MVDC must be used for work-related purposes only and must not be used by any other member of the household or third party at any time or for any purpose.

Breaches of data protection must be reported to the Data Protection Officer or deputy.

See [here for quick tips](https://molevalleydc.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Team-HRa/Ef7msK095pVDnvYPEqW2JJkB1lp2vMf3SM54tokeYdBOfg?e=09zSuX) and here for further details of [GDPR requirements](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/gdpr/)

**3.**  **Who is covered by this policy?**

Not all services, jobs or people will be eligible for hybrid working. Business managers will assess services or jobs that are potentially eligible, discussing with/notifying teams as appropriate.

The Business Manager for each service may also make decisions as to any additional parameters (beyond those identified in this policy) or team agreements around hybrid working and how it fits best.

In some instances the Business Managers will have determined that hybrid working is not appropriate, in which case the rationale will be shared. In some cases, it will be self-explanatory (e.g. mobile patrols and enforcement are self-evidently not possible from home), however there may still be agreement as to the degree of office attendance around patrols and enforcement, which can be discussed on an individual basis.

You will be notified by your line manager if your job is not eligible; in the event that specific circumstances render you ineligible at a particular time these will also be identified and communicated including an anticipated timescale (or conditions that need to be met) for when you may become eligible.

If you work in a shared service, your manager will need to discuss with the other relevant authorities in the service. Even if you are generally working under another authority’s policies, MVDC will be an interested party in determining work location requirements.

**4.** **Performance/probation/Apprentices/new starters**

Managers of junior posts/Apprentices/new starters are likely to need to plan in office attendance more frequently, to ensure the worker has ability to learn from others informally in an office environment. To compensate for time not spent in the office, a comprehensive and structured induction incorporating full use of technology (Teams introductions, screen sharing, etc.) will also be required. Please see the relevant sections under MyHR (Recruitment and Induction) for more guidance.

Anybody who is subject to discussions around performance or relevant health or wellbeing concerns, or who is under probation, may be required to attend the office for their whole working time. This will be if such attendance leads to an increased ability to monitor or support, or to improve performance or wellbeing, and until such period as specific performance concerns/probation are no longer applicable.

**5.** **Minimum office attendance**

In the absence of bespoke arrangements, everybody is expected to attend the office regularly in order to feel part of, and contribute to, an MVDC community. This is expected to be at least two days per week. There will be situations, week to week, where this varies according to job need, but as an average two days per week must be planned to be spent, and spent, in the office. Job need, as opposed to personal need, to adhere to these minimums is expected to be the over-riding determining factor.

If you work in a highly mobile role, where you spend large parts of your working day on visits or tours of the district, this policy should be applied so that you base your visits around your office for two days per week, you are not expected to sit at your desk for the full two days.

For some jobs/teams there is an opportunity to structure workload to take account of this, e.g. activities that are best spent in the office may be clustered together over those days (meetings, discussions, using enhanced systems for example), allowing remote working days to focus on conducting activities that are best spent away from an office (e.g. regular calls, report writing, research, processes benefitting from lower levels of interruption). Teams/individuals will have their own ideas about how to maximise productivity working in different places, and are encouraged to talk to their manager about these.

If an individual has completed two days in the office but there is a further need to attend later that week, the fact that the required minimum office attendance has been completed is irrelevant. Decisions must be made on the best place to work. Access to services should not be impacted by where you work, it needs to be seamless and irrelevant to the user where you are located.

See [below for part-time worker considerations.](#Part)

**6.** **Meetings/communication**

Calls and emails

Working remotely should be no different to working in the office so far as the service user is concerned. Calls and emails must be responded to in the same way.

Working in different locations can increase incidents of emailing colleagues where you would previously have spoken in person. Emails can lead to misunderstandings; sometimes it is better to have a face to face conversation. Depending on how sensitive or complicated the topic is, if you are unable to meet in person, using technology such as Teams (or even making a phone call) can have more positive results so do consider which method of communication is most appropriate in all the circumstances.

Team meetings & 121s

Team meetings are strongly encouraged. Meetings held in person are a good way to bring the team together and can generate spontaneous conversations much more easily than those held on a screen, improving productivity, morale and team bonding. Your manager is likely, therefore, to expect you to attend team meetings.

With regards to 121s, some managers and their employees may have become used to Teams calls that are far more frequent than the previous monthly 121. This is encouraged and should be continued. At least once a month, however, managers should sit down with their employees in person.

The ability to share and consider each other’s perspectives, to enhance empathy and understanding, to problem solve and build relationships, and to provide reassurance to support wellbeing, is greatly enhanced by meeting in person.

Other internal meetings

For day to day and regular interactions, depending on the nature of the service, managers may allow hybrid meetings whereby some individuals meet in person and others join virtually.

Member or senior management meetings may be subject to different rules with the requirement to meet in person wherever possible. Arrangements will be made in advance, please make sure you are familiar with them and do not assume the meeting can be attended remotely.

Currently there is a legal requirement for decision making democratic meetings to meet in person.

Hybrid meetings

Hybrid meetings need to be facilitated more actively than meetings that are exclusively virtual or attended in person. For example, it is important to ensure that those in the room do not break into separate conversations that cannot be heard or contributed to by those on a screen. This prevents full contribution by those attending remotely and can lead to a sense of exclusion.

Meeting chairs should therefore be appointed in advance and may wish to set ground rules for participation. For useful tips – [see here](https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/hybrid-meeting-top-tips?msclkid=b1d09f4ccfb711eca822dc14f58946c2).

Meeting chairs should also ensure headsets or quiet meeting spaces are used as appropriate (see below section [Using the Office](#Using)).

General communication

It is recommended a team charter is developed for each team, to include how the team, or specific members of the team, plan to communicate. You can ask your manager to see or discuss the team charter if you are not aware of it, and if you have ideas or wish to make any suggestions on this, you can discuss it with them.

‘All-in’ Days

From time to time there will be days designated for all staff to attend the office on the same day so that people can meet in person e.g. for All Staff Briefings. These may be accompanied by leisure activities or modest hospitality arrangements where possible for the purpose of maintaining staff morale, wellbeing and retention. Different days of the week will be rotated to ensure part-timers do not miss out. It is not anticipated that ‘All-in Days’ will take place more often than once a month though the frequency will depend on a number of factors including assessing positive impact. Any such dates will be communicated with plenty of notice so that everybody working that day can prioritise attendance.

Photographs

Being able to see someone helps people get to know each other. This is especially important for people joining MVDC. You are therefore requested to add a ‘selfie’ to your Teams profile so your colleagues recognise you when they see you in person (tips on how to do this can be found [here](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fmolly.molevalley.gov.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2022%2F05%2FPutting-a-photograph-on-Teams.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)).

Photographs of new starters will also be included in Molly messages going forward.

All photographs should be appropriate wearing clothes that would be suitable in the office and in a setting that is appropriate to be shared with colleagues.

**7.** **Using the office**

It is acknowledged that not everybody likes home working. Some people may not have the right home environment for working, and some people may be at a stage of their career, or life, that makes working at home less beneficial, or suitable, than working in an office.

For this reason, anybody who wants to, can choose to spend their whole working time in the office.

It is possible, however, depending on the impact that hybrid working has on desk/office space, and/or potential opportunities that MVDC may pursue in the future, that it will no longer be possible to provide fixed desks for all staff.

Your manager will speak to you if they intend to operate a hot-desking approach in your team area. This may be required particularly as teams change size and your manager may decide it is no longer viable for every team member to have a fixed desk particularly if it is only being used for part of the week. If you have a specially adapted chair please label it and make sure your manager/team are aware that this has been configured for your personal needs so that the settings are not adjusted by anybody else who has to use it when you are not in. If you are worried, talk to your manager about developing a team habit to keep calendars up to date so your colleagues can tell if you are likely to be in that day and to make sure your immediate team are aware of the situation.

In the event that hotdesking becomes organisational policy across the Council (as opposed to within teams), consultation and engagement will be conducted through the usual channels.

On occasions when the office is relatively empty, voices can carry – particularly if all the participants in the conversation/meeting can be overheard (as opposed to telephone calls which are not put on speakerphone). There are a number of options to help with this.

Headphones are required for any virtual meetings in the office, remember not only can it be noisy and disruptive to others in the office, but remote meeting participants may not be aware their contributions are being overheard by non-participating staff in a quiet office. It is therefore advised that the meeting chair checks at the beginning of the meeting that any office attendees are using them.

Speak to your manager if you do not have any headphones you can use or if you have trouble using them. Orders for specialist headsets should be raised through the Servicedesk upon approval by the manager/budget holder.

You can also use designated areas that provide enhanced sound proofing, more details [can be found here](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/2021/05/24/hot-desks-and-team-call-areas-at-pippbrook/). However, meeting rooms must booked when any office attendees are likely to need to discuss confidential matters.

**8.** **Contractual base**

Your contractual base remains as specified in your employment contract. This policy does not change or over-ride individual contracts, hybrid working arrangements operate as a concession. This impacts a variety of provisions set out in this policy.

**9.** **Leadership and trust**

Many staff have told us they could in theory have worked remotely before but did not do so for fear of negative judgment which could compromise career progression or success. This underlying concern impacts everybody, even those who are working at home, who may develop compensatory behaviours (e.g. multiple unnecessary emails, emailing very early or late in order to demonstrate that they are working hard). This is not conducive to wellbeing or productivity, either for the individuals or others on the receiving end, and if left unchecked it could jeopardise the success of this policy.

We are now working in a new era that allows people at all levels (once assessed as eligible, and in accordance with this policy or the specific application of it) to work in the place that makes most sense.

Individuals who are working remotely will not be subject to any negative judgment – either implied or explicit, providing both the terms and spirit of this policy are adhered to.

Whilst the ‘spirit’ of the policy is not easy to define, there is a need to ensure that MVDC continues to operate as one organisation, with cross collaboration and fertilisation of ideas and support both across and within teams.

Whilst the intention of the policy is to allow greater freedom to view work as an activity rather than a place, it is acknowledged that this is complex and there will be occasions when some colleagues or other stakeholders would prefer a particular member of staff to be physically present, and these are not always possible to foresee and therefore to plan in advance.

In such an event, colleagues are not expected to criticise an individual for following the policy, providing they have chosen to work remotely having made the best decision on the facts available at the time. In the much less likely event that it is clear that the individual opted to work from home in a situation where they have understood it was a legitimate and reasonable expectation to attend the office/a meeting/visit etc., this should be identified by the relevant line manager, for discussion with the employee. Any concerns by someone other than the individual’s line manager must therefore be raised, confidentially, with them.

If this becomes a problem and/or a repeat pattern, eligibility for hybrid working may be suspended or end altogether.

This policy operates on a trust basis. In the vast majority of cases, individuals work most effectively when they are trusted and empowered to work at their best, not when it is assumed they are taking time out or working differently/less effectively purely on the basis they cannot be seen.

Good management includes discussion of shared expectations as to what an individual needs to do to perform well, in accordance with their role. Depending on the job, moving to hybrid working may benefit from a change in management style – with management becoming much less based on time spent and more based on outcomes, reviewing what is delivered. If this is done well, it is not necessary, or useful, to see somebody just to monitor that they are working. Managers who are sufficiently connected to their staff will be able to tell how hard/effectively they are working without being in an office to do so.

Some jobs however are less outcome based – e.g. those whose job is predominantly to answer calls during pre-defined hours. Managers are in the best place to assess this, and any consequent impact on hybrid working.

**10** **Working hours**

Nothing in this policy alters working hours or patterns, this policy purely provides flexibility in terms of location.

Within the scope of prior agreed working patterns, you must be as clear as possible with your line manager about hours of work particularly for days during which working remotely. Making use of tools such as shared calendars and out-of-office messaging (e.g. on Teams, voicemail) can also help colleagues/customers to be aware of availability on these days.

All staff are reminded be mindful to avoid overworking - "downtime" from work is essential. You should continue to take adequate rest breaks, such as:

* Even if busy, it is essential to find the time to take a break of at least 20 minutes after six hours of working, for example:
* Take time off for lunch each day – go for a short walk outside if you can.
* Have a break of at least 11 hours after you stop work one day before you begin the next.
* As an average, don’t exceed 48 hours’ total working time per week (even if you’re working a particularly busy period that requires you to temporarily exceed your contractual hours)
* Plan holiday breaks – even if you are not going anywhere – discuss with your line manager when you can use your annual leave.

Any concerns about inability to do this this should be raised with the line manager.

Depending on the job and agreed working pattern, the degree to which it is acceptable to have flexible working hours day to day may vary, regardless of where you work. Wherever you are, you must always ensure you are sufficiently responsive, to colleagues or service users, during the working day. On occasion if starting later, finishing earlier or taking a longer break than would normally be anticipated this should be reflected in outlook calendars, so that colleagues are aware.

Generally speaking, particularly if in a job that allows you to enjoy some flexibility, it is not expected that anybody will ‘work to rule’ when hours have been completed. Unless you are in an extreme or unusual situation, you are expected to have sufficiently well-developed skills to structure your working time so that the job requirements are managed proficiently. If anybody seeks or relies on flexibility, they will be expected to give it too. Flexibility works both ways.

For those in highly customer facing roles there is less flexibility in working hours. Staff in these roles must work the agreed and normal shift requirements for the role wherever based. Unavoidable gaps in anticipated service delivery must be discussed with relevant stakeholders (e.g. the CSU).

Anybody scheduled to attend a meeting or a course must make sure they can attend the whole meeting/course (or alert the organiser in advance if there are problems with this), regardless of whether working virtually or attending in person.

It is not healthy or expected, in any job, that you remain glued to your screen/phone all day – you must take proper breaks. Short regular breaks can be surprisingly energising.

You should discuss with your manager whether or how they require you to log your working hours. Not all services are eligible or appropriate for flexi-time, if in doubt discuss with your line manager. At the time of writing consideration is being given to withdrawing the flexi-time clock as it has reached end-of-life and is not considered appropriate for the current work environment. Your manager may wish to replace it with alternative methods of time tracking however this is a work in progress and for the time being the flexi-clock remains available for use.

Time spent driving to the office during the working day (e.g. for a meeting, having spent the morning at home, is not working time). Similarly, driving to/from first or last appointments of the day are not working time.

**11.** **Wellbeing**

Performance and wellbeing go hand in hand. If there are concerns that working in a ‘hybrid’ manner are causing or contributing to health or wellbeing problems, you may be required to end the ‘hybrid’ arrangement for an agreed period. This includes physical wellbeing (e.g. due to muscular skeletal issues caused or exacerbated by home-working) or emotional/mental (e.g. due to the type of calls/interaction received, handling conflict without colleagues to offload to or learn from, and without the ability to separate that an office provides, or if demonstrating behaviours that are concerning to your manager and considered to be exacerbated by the way you are working).

In some situations, there may be agreement that the nature of the work of a whole service is such that wellbeing risks are too high without the protection of colleagues in an office. Difficult calls in the home can be much harder to take. This is likely to have been brought out in service discussions at the time this policy was piloted but there may also be periods (such as those following a change in service approach or mail out) where it can reasonably be predicted that there will be more hostile customer contact than usual. During these times consider working in the office for this period as heated conversations in your own home may feel more of a personal attack.

Although some managers prefer to keep a regular eye on their employees in order to monitor their wellbeing, in the absence of any specific factors (e.g. that the type of service is not suitable for home working) or specific individual reasons for concern (e.g. issues about wellbeing have surfaced) it is generally preferable to allow an individual to participate in ‘hybrid’ working, however a vital part of the role of a manager is to ensure there is sufficient scope for catch-ups. These should be in person (during the days of co-ordinated office attendance) and virtually (using video calls to enable sight of each other). This will include team meetings, 121s, etc.

It will not be conducive to productivity or wellbeing to require excessive office attendance for monitoring without specific reasons; or to fail to use all the available technology to continue working relationships virtually.

When working remotely, it is important not to work if too unwell to do so. Sickness and reporting policies continue to apply in exactly the same way as when working in the office. [See here for full guidance](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/myhr/leave-and-time-off/sick-leave/). There may be circumstances when an individual cannot, or it is better that they do not, attend the office but can safely work from home. Some of these have been identified in the current [Office Rules](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/2022/05/10/new-office-and-external-visits-rules/).

There are lots of different places individuals can get wellbeing support; mental health concerns about team members can be approached by managers with support from the HR team and must not be ignored – it is very rare that an individual’s mental health improves by being left completely alone.

See [here for health and safety guidance](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/myhr/health-and-wellbeing/health-safety/)

See [here for the Molly guidance on physical and mental wellbeing](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/homepage-2-column-coa/winter-wellbeing/)

See [here for tips on maintaining good mental health](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/homepage-2-column-coa/corona/page-3/)

See [here for tips and contacts for good mental health](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/homepage-2-column-coa/corona/page-3/box-3/)

See [here for Mental Health First Aiders](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/myhr/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health-first-aiders/)

See [here for support in crisis](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/homepage-2-column-coa/corona/page-3/tips-contacts-for-good-mental-health/)

**12** **Part-time workers or those working a condensed pattern**

For these workers, depending on the working pattern it may be less useful to apply a pro rata time rule, if this results in an awkward/small percentage. For example, it may be reasonable to expect somebody working 2 days per week to attend the office for one day per week (instead of less than 3 hours, which equates to 20% of working time).

The objective of determining potentially higher minimum periods for part-time workers is to ensure that there is enough office presence to facilitate the overall balance this policy seeks to achieve – improved performance and productivity levels by working in the best place for the job, subject to contributing to, and benefitting from, a workplace community. There is also a need to benefit from and contribute to unplanned acquisition of/transfer of relevant skills or knowledge. This is easier to both manage and do when regularly meeting in person.

Details will be determined between the manager and employee and will be subject to the particular facts and circumstances. As a guide office time should not be less than 20% of working time and in all likelihood will need to be more if, due to working patterns, this means less than one day.

If you are part-time and eligible under this policy, expectations of minimum attendance will be discussed with you individually by your manager. The same considerations are relevant to those working a condensed hour’s pattern.

**13** **Childcare and other caring responsibilities**

Under normal circumstances (other than when schools etc. have been shut unexpectedly or in response to ‘lockdowns’), arrangements for caring for children or elderly or vulnerable people must be made so that these responsibilities do not compromise anybody’s ability to work.

Primary school age children will be considered too young to look after themselves in most situations, pre-school age children will be considered too young to look after themselves in any situation. For other elderly or vulnerable individuals, it will depend on the circumstances but as a general rule if you are a primary carer for somebody who cannot look after themselves, you will need to do this outside your working time so you should not be in a position where you are primarily or solely responsible during your working day.

If, however, childcare or other caring arrangements have broken down unexpectedly (or there is a ‘lockdown’), more flexibility may be agreed. See [here for Family Friendly policies.](https://molly.molevalley.gov.uk/myhr/leave-and-time-off/family-friendly-policies/)

Working from home when older children who are more self-sufficient are around, or are leaving/returning from school etc., can be agreed, providing performance and productivity (whether quality or rate of output of work) is not adversely affected. This will be determined as a normal part of the performance management of an individual’s work. It is advised to plan ahead so that being home, for e.g., for older children does not impede ability to attend the office when required (and for any minimum office periods identified). Training courses, planned meetings or fixed work commitments should not be disturbed by household interruptions or requirements.

**14** **Pets**

Staff are not permitted to bring pets into the office. It is not permissible to refuse to attend the office for pet-sitting purposes. Any attempt at doing so may be dealt with as a performance and potentially disciplinary issue if it is the manager’s view that this is necessary.

Pets are however welcome to make guest appearances on Teams calls.

**15** **Expenses and insurance**

Expenses for home working (e.g. printing, heating, lighting, mobile usage, travelling to or from the office) are not chargeable to MVDC.

Mileage expenses to or from client meetings are claimable in the normal way and should be calculated from contractual office base unless the actual mileage, e.g. from home, is cheaper.

If office stationary is required this should be discussed with the team manager in the usual way, but will not include printer ribbons or cartridges unless this has been explicitly agreed.

If there are problems identified with a home work station (e.g. health or muscular-skeletal problems), systems or logistical issues that are, in the opinion of the budget holding manager too expensive to remedy, the member of staff may be required to end (or reduce) hybrid working arrangements to attend the office.

Please note there were tax concessions during lockdowns where you were required to work from home, but if you elect to work from home (e.g. under this policy) this is a different matter.

You are advised to check that no issues arise with any mortgage provider, landlord, local authority, revenue or home insurer when homeworking. This responsibility is with you as the employee. MVDC owned equipment continues to be covered by MVDC insurance.

**16** **Requirement to attend the office**

The vast majority of our staff are contracted to work in one of MVDC’s offices with some flexibility around reasonable location distance for other appropriate workplaces (in the case of some shared services other local government offices will be relevant too). Therefore if your manager needs you to come to the office, in the absence of extenuating circumstances which you should discuss in advance wherever foreseeable, this is likely to be a reasonable management instruction.

If you intend to travel to a location which is not commutable, you will need to agree this in advance with your manager. If you don’t do so you are at risk of your pay being deducted if you cannot fulfil the requirements of your role in line with your manager’s expectations on any given day. In exceptional circumstances you may be required to come to your work base.

Teams may agree particular approaches on the above in development of a Team Charter.

You are expressly not permitted to work outside the U.K. without prior SLT agreement. ICT access will need to be granted to enable you to access the systems. Any agreement will only be given when there are exceptional and extenuating circumstances and must be for a short period of no more than 30 days in order to avoid punitive tax consequences.

**17** **Ending the arrangement**

Hybrid working is a concessionary policy for those who are eligible as notified by their line managers. The policy has been piloted for at least a 6 month period and has been determined to be successful based on the circumstances at that time. A change of circumstances may require the arrangement to be ended though this is not currently envisaged and any decisions or arrangements would be entered into reasonably after thorough discussion, consultation and consideration of individual circumstances.

Ability for an individual or team to take advantage of hybrid working arrangements as provided for by this policy may be terminated or suspended by a line or business manager providing they give reasons for the decision which are in keeping with the provisions and intention of this policy. If there are serious performance, wellbeing or disciplinary reasons, decisions can be taken and expected to be implemented quickly, reasonable notice will be determined according to the circumstances.

**18** **Bespoke individual arrangements**

On occasion there will be a requirement to recruit to a post (or retain) in an area that is acknowledged as particularly hard to fill. Where the posts/work is agreed to be almost exclusively desk based, consideration can be given to recruiting a home worker in these circumstances.

This would mean that individual would have their home as their place of employment and any requirement to attend the office would be pre-agreed (e.g. to attend monthly team meetings) or agreed on an individual basis as a contract change.

Generally speaking there is an intention for MVDC staff to feel part of a bigger community, this includes the need to fall in with MVDC norms and procedures, and potentially to attend the office for purposes that are not always predicted. There may also be ICT consequences which should be assessed in advance to ensure the work can be effectively done remotely. This policy will therefore only be agreed as an exception where there is an evidenced requirement to flex our usual policy, and approved at an SLT meeting.

Where agreements such as these have been made, there must be consideration to ICT challenges that would normally be resolved by coming to the office. A good induction process and making sure a remote worker can talk to colleagues in their own team about day to day non-specialist issues will improve the way they work, and it may be an idea to appoint a ‘buddy’. In addition the manager must ensure there are robust arrangements for the return of any MVDC equipment by any leavers and this may necessitate the individual travelling to MVDC on their last working day, or before payment of their final salary. If equipment is not returned before this date, there may be a requirement to with-hold salary (or part-payment of salary) to cover the costs in the event of non-return. (Managers are responsible for making the arrangements to ensure safe return of equipment).

**19.** **Disagreements**

If you disagree with your manager’s decision about your eligibility for hybrid working or the way in which it is applied you are encouraged to talk directly to them in the first instance.

If you are still dissatisfied, a Flexible Working Request can be made.

**20.** **Flexible Working Request**

This policy focuses on how our organisation operates hybrid working, but there are many other forms of flexible working.

Examples of other types of flexible working that can be requested are:

* reducing working hours;
* changing working patterns;
* compressing working hours into fewer days (for example moving to a nine-day fortnight)

To request another form of flexible working, or to request management re-consideration of eligibility for hybrid working, [you can make a formal request](https://molevalleydc.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Team-HRa/EZIJ__Ck-S5PuL4_Meq2NxIBCYvwK2bQU4Y9rQUSYmbM_A?e=LEUTac) by notifying the HR team who will acknowledge receipt and arrange further consideration under the framework provided by the policy.

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| **Version** | **Version Status**  ***(Draft, Approved /Published Internally or Externally)*** | **Date** | **Version Comment** | **Version Author** |
| V0.1 | Draft | 23rd July 2021 | Creation of the document for SLT meeting 29/7 | KI |
| V0.2 | Further draft | 29th July 2021 | Changes to reflect SLT discussion on 29/7 | KI |
| V1 | Final Pilot Policy approved for BMT/Staff Hub | 9th August 2021 | SLT approval for document to be shared with Business Managers and Staff Hub | KI |
| V1.1 | Amends made post BMT/Staff Hub | Not before third week of September | Proposed amendments following BMT/Staff Hub engagement and consultation for SLT discussion and approval | KI |
| V2 | Approved for wider consultation | 20/9/21 – 29/9/21 | SLT approved version for wider consultation | KI |
| V2.1 | Amends made post all staff consultation | 30/9/21 | Proposed amendments following consultation | KI |
| V3 | FINAL Pilot Policy | 30/9/21 | Policy finalized for publication and implementation |  |
| V4 | Review | 28th April 2022 | Proposed policy changes following initial trial period for SLT consideration | KI |
| V5 | Final Hybrid Working Policy | 9th May 2022 | Final Hybrid Working Policy in place – to be subject to default review on 3-yearly basis in line with other policies (or earlier as required) | KI |