

Hybrid working toolkit for team charters

This toolkit proposes a four-stage approach to implementing a model of hybrid working that works effectively for your department or team.

The toolkit is not prescriptive and individual areas will need to adapt their approach to meet local needs. It is intended to allow for clarity on each team's way of working as part of its team charter. This should be read in conjunction with the [hybrid working policy](#).

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Stage 1: Senior Management/Line Management discussion

The Senior Manager/Line Manager, in discussion with their Assistant Director, should identify the parameters and expectations for hybrid working within the department or team, guided by the organisational context and operational requirements. If this has been previously undertaken, it should be reviewed at least once a year, or when there is a larger-scale change – e.g. new legislation implementation resulting in reviewed or new working practices, restructure.

Questions to consider:

- Do you have a defined set of services that you need or wish to have an on-site presence to deliver optimally? What is the regularity of the service need?
- Are there any specific objectives, outside service delivery, that you would like hybrid

working to support? E.g., customer service, agility, empowerment, addressing work life balance.

- Are there any specific stakeholder needs that should be considered? Stakeholders can be both internal departments as well as external customers or residents.
- Do you need cover for certain activities on site? If so, how many staff, and in which roles?
- Are there particular times of the year/operational cycle which would require more or less site-based presence?
- Which of your departmental/team meetings can or should be hybrid, virtual, or face-to-face?
- What are the potential risks or challenges for the department/team about working in a hybrid way? How can we overcome them?
- How do we ensure workload and opportunities are fairly distributed across the team? There is the potential that additional work might fall on those who spend more time in the office, however, some of this work might be development opportunities.
- How can you ensure that you are inclusive, fair and facilitate hybrid work in a healthy way?
- How will the department/team contribute to site life and develop the connections you need?
- Are there any teams that need to be able to work closely together? Or colleagues across multiple teams that could benefit from the flexibility of hybrid working by scheduling time on site together? What about teams that work across multiple sites?
- What are the on-site space constraints that you need to consider?
- Are there operational differences between any service teams that means that there will be local variations in the approach to hybrid working within the department? E.g., some teams are delivering a daily front of house service daily while others have a more back-office function but need to be available to answer messages/ calls and queries.

Having worked through these questions, the leadership team/service leads should agree the hybrid working parameters and expectations for the department and its constituent teams.

- How often does our team need to be in the office, aligned to organisational principles for hybrid and how often can we work remotely?
- Are there particular teams or groups of staff who would benefit from being on site on the same days?
- What would be an appropriate balance to ensure we meet the needs of our stakeholders, colleagues, residents and customers?

In considering these questions, it will be important to consider how the parameters established by the organisation ensure that all colleagues are able to engage in the culture and life of our various sites, fostering a shared sense of community, inclusivity and belonging.

The opportunity for teams to come together in person provides a vital support structure as well as enabling cohesive functional team working. Our shared workspaces also provide our staff with important opportunities for informal communications, development through shared experience and observation, and networking, that are crucial, particularly early on in a career

and for new staff.

Stage 2: Team discussions

Team discussions should be led by the relevant service lead.

Explore as a team how you will make hybrid working successful so that colleagues:

- can work productively
- contribute to a vibrant site
- develop deeper connections and collaboration to meet departmental priorities and create a tailored, seamless service

Ensure that individuals feel heard, supported and that they belong within the team.

Emphasise that team discussions will be followed by 1:1 meeting so that colleagues will be able to make their individual preferences and concerns heard.

Agenda

1. Purpose of the discussion (to ensure all are on board and aware of what is going to be changing, and their role in the change).
2. Summary of the parameters and expectations agreed by the leadership team.
3. Group discussion about how the parameters and expectations are adopted within the team.
 - Consider the nature of each of the tasks/outputs of the roles in the team and what specific aspects can be successfully or better conducted in different locations on site or remotely. Some jobs will vary depending upon circumstances (i.e., project stage, seasonal variation/ end of financial year etc.). Reviewing roles in broad terms is sufficient for this purpose although identifying particular times of the year/business cycle which would require more/less site-based presence may also be sensible. Please see Appendix 1 for some ideas.
 - Think about other teams or members of other teams and how your team can interact effectively with them in the hybrid way of working (sometimes at home/ an alternative site and sometimes in the office).
 - Consider how the team's emerging approach to hybrid working will benefit its stakeholders.
 - Consider how the team ensures workload and opportunities are fairly distributed.
 - Consider how the team can ensure it is inclusive, fair and undertakes hybrid work in a healthy way.
 - Consider how the team contributes to site life including role holders who spend more time with other teams or in matrix teams rather than their own team.
 - Consider the team's approach to communication and meetings. Please see Appendix 2 for some ideas.
 - Encourage all the team to make suggestions or raise issues. Ensure that the views of all team members are sought and respectfully heard.
4. Discussion about operational approach and ways of working - manager to summarise how they envisage the team will maintain cohesion and communications when undertaking team hybrid working and staff acknowledge different work styles and

preferences of their colleagues. The list below provides some examples of ways of working you could adopt.

- Arrangements for regular team meetings – e.g., Team meetings will be scheduled in advance and held on the first Wednesday morning of each month. All team members to be in the office unless they are on leave.
 - Weekly manager/individual 1:1s – e.g., these will normally be done via Teams, provided at least one meeting per month takes place face to face.
 - Keep up to date with what each other are doing, how we are feeling, successes and learnings through daily updates on a MS Teams channel.
 - Encourage stakeholders to contact the most appropriate members of the team rather than the ones visible in the office.
 - Working hours – e.g. Those working remotely will be available 10am to 4pm, for ease of contact – remainder of working hours (where these exist) will wrap around these times – in line with the relevant flexible working.
 - Location – e.g., Staff will keep their Outlook calendar up to date with their location. The whole team will be given access to each other's Outlook calendars. Use your Teams 'do not disturb' status to indicate that you need quite focussed time with minimal interruption. This will not prevent contact being made with you but does reduce interruptions.
 - Post - e.g., post will be opened at the office by <name> and individuals contacted to ascertain what is to be done with it.
 - If needed, identify how cover will be ensured, particularly with regards annual leave and sickness, particular times of the year. Identify any process needed to agree occasional/ad hoc remote working.
 - If we want to talk anything through or ask for feedback on a document, we will put a request on x channel of MS Teams – we all commit to supporting when we can.
 - Use MS Teams channels to update team on particular projects.
 - Monthly “cup of tea/ breakout chat” on MS Teams to stay connected with team socially.
 - At the end of any meeting, we go to we will consider if there is any information worth sharing with whole team or individuals. We will also consider this in our weekly check ins, including any issues around under or over sharing information.
5. Department manager confirms working arrangements
- The department manager should confirm the working arrangements for their team – after discussion with their Assistant Director or appointed senior manager (where these roles exist). This should be revisited over time in the light of experience and changing organisational requirements. It is important that the arrangements are written up and shared with the team including a review period. Any actions or next steps should be agreed (including identifying the date for a follow up review and the person responsible).
6. Any other business and agreement for when follow up or check in meetings will take place.
- It is important to reflect that the hybrid approach to working will involve some planning, modification, flexibility, and experimentation on the part of everyone involved with the individuals who are adapting to hybrid working. It is important to be clear that operational needs are paramount. There will be occasions when staff need to be flexible to accommodate team or organisational requirements.

The manager of a team – aligned to the corporate ways of working - will have responsibility for determining the appropriate work pattern and approach to hybrid working for their team in the delivery of operational goals. The Assistant Director (or appointed senior service manager – where these roles exist) has ultimate responsibility for ensuring hybrid ways of working supports the delivery of and achievement of outputs from work effectively.

7. Line managers should communicate regularly with everyone they manage. An employee should not miss out on anything because of their or their manager's hybrid working.

Stage 3: One to one discussion

It is suggested that 1:1 meeting with your team may help to clarify understanding and expectations and address any questions and concerns.

Suggested agenda:

1. Discussion of the role and how it is currently organised and performed by the individual. How much time is spent on different aspects and how it is or might be undertaken effectively in the hybrid working model the team intends to adopt.
2. Questions and answers that the individual may wish to raise associated with hybrid working.
3. Address the specific questions listed below to ensure that the individual is set up for hybrid working.
4. Any next steps or actions and later reviews.

Be prepared to discuss concerns honestly and openly, to encourage a frank dialogue which seeks to find an optimum solution to any issues. While it is important to consider individual needs and requirements, the organisational requirements must be achieved. The discussion can also develop the trust needed for a good working relationship in general and for hybrid working in particular. We are confident that hybrid working arrangements will be of benefit to the organisation and our employees whose work type allows for this consideration.

If there are current performance issues e.g., a member of staff is not meeting expected objectives, these should be addressed through setting expectations, regular reviewing of objectives, and giving feedback in regular one to one meeting.

Managers should address the following question with their teams:

- Have you completed all relevant identified risk assessments?
- Have you completed a DSE (Display Screen Equipment) assessment for your home working area? Has anything changed? If so, review this.
- Have you read the hybrid working policy?
- Do you require any wellbeing support to enable you to work remotely in a safe and healthy way (e.g., what check-ins would you like)?
- Are you able to use council-owned equipment safely and securely in your home, preventing unauthorised access and use?
- Have you notified your landlord, insurer or mortgage provider that you will be working from home? (if applicable)

- Do you have any questions about working remotely?
- Effective communication is the responsibility of everyone in the team, especially when teams are not all together all of the time.
- All hybrid workers should continue to deliver the full requirements of their role and perform at the same standard as their peers working full time at their workplace. They are also required to adhere to all the council's policies and procedures in the normal way, as if they were working from the workplace.

After the team and individual meetings, the manager will confirm the reviewed hybrid arrangements for the team and role type by email (noting sometime individual arrangements need to be made with the support of Access to Work or Human Resources). You will find a template email below. This makes clear that this arrangement is kept under review and is not a contractual change.

Template email. Copy in human.resources@harlow.gov.uk

Dear <name>,

The council's definition of and approach to hybrid working is based on hybrid working primarily being undertaken from the Council workplace as the normal place of work. More details on this can be found in the [hybrid working policy](#).

Further to our recent discussions in relation to hybrid working, I am writing to confirm the following arrangements:

<state arrangements agreed during team discussion, i.e., what days/number of days – what type of pattern e.g. 60:40, 50:50, 40:60 in different locations etc for your team>

Working in a hybrid manner provides an efficient use of time, a greater ability to focus with fewer distractions aiming to improve your wellbeing and productivity at work. It continues to be the case that collaboration and communication are key requirements of hybrid working.

You must maintain your broadband connection to be able to work from home. If your broadband connection is not working, then you must contact me to discuss the alternative work you will complete during your working hours. This may include site visits or attending the office location and will depend on your scheduled work plan.

We expect our teams to take personal responsibility, be contactable (via Microsoft Teams or phone) during their working hours and attend meetings as per their Outlook calendars.

<state any individual preferences/needs agreed during 1:1 meeting/ reference any support for training/ support for those who require assistance from Access to Work/ HR support >

We have also discussed the need to be flexible, and with that in mind the above arrangement is not a contractual change. Hybrid working arrangements are kept under regular review aligned to directorate needs. We agreed that the above would start/continue with effect from <date> and would be reviewed/ again </ in three/six/twelve months' time>.

The arrangement can be reviewed and amended or ended at short notice, should the need arise.

Yours sincerely,

<Manager name>

Stage 4: Implement and review

Once colleagues have started working in their reviewed hybrid way of working, it is important to keep the arrangements under review. People need time to adapt – there can be many practical and behavioural aspects that need time to bed in. If arrangements do not work well initially, often they can be addressed very easily – but only if they are vocalised constructively, with commitment to address anything that is raised within the team.

It is also important to note that circumstances change – team needs, team tasks, and objectives – as well as personal circumstances and preferences. Changes will require some flexibility to accommodate, but everyone should be aware that it is acceptable to raise and discuss things that have changed. Paying attention to team dynamics is critical – as they can come under strain if people see each other less often and do not put other mechanisms in place to ensure good communication and trust.

Recommendations:

- Add hybrid working to the agenda of your regular 1:1 and team meetings, so that you can consider some of the following points as appropriate:
 - What is working well - for individuals, the team, customers and stakeholders?
 - How can we do more of those things that work for us?
 - Are we sharing best practices – among ourselves and with other teams?
 - How are we sharing information?
 - What could be improved?
 - How are we building trust e.g., open communication, do what you say, getting to know each other personally, do not place blame (look at the process not the person). How can we minimise and address those things that need to be improved?
 - Team dynamics come under pressure when working apart – we must pay attention and do things proactively to address issues. How can we make the most out of time together?
 - Are people 'owning' hybrid ways of working and taking responsibility for success?

Consider 'hybrid working review' meetings for your departmental leadership team/service leads (for example, every three or four months after the start of hybrid working) to collate the feedback gathered as above. Take time to reflect on what is and is not working and consider changes to be made to working practices accordingly – keeping in mind that Stage 2 and 3 will also have to be reiterated.

Keep in mind that many changed ways of working arrangements can fail because there is a reluctance to address performance issues.

It is important for all to focus on outputs and maintaining the quality and consistency of standards, regardless of working location.

Appendix 1: Considerations of where activities are best carried out

Different activities may be most effectively carried out in different locations. For example:

- collaboration space - on site
- concentration space - at home or quiet space on site
- catch up space - meeting room or communal area

Example: For the task of updating a policy or updating a system, the most appropriate location may be at home or a concentration space on site.

Remote activities

Activities that are independent and can be undertaken anywhere or at any time. These roles may permit remote working.

Characteristics that may make activities suitable for remote working include:

- Activities that are undertaken in a solitary way, or with suitable inputs from others via MS Teams or collaborating on a document on SharePoint.
- Activities where a high degree of focus and concentration required, requiring the member of staff to be free from distraction.
- Where there is no daily requirement for immediate and unplanned face to face interaction with clients (whether internal or external), colleagues, or managers.
- Where there is no daily reliance on equipment or resources that are only available on site.
- Where the member of staff prioritises their own work, or it can be prioritised (and re-prioritised) when the member of staff is working remotely.
- If activities best performed remotely can be grouped together and/or the collaborative elements of the role can either be carried out when on site, or some can be carried out remotely using video or audio conferencing.

On site activities

Activities that are undertaken with other people or resources, at the same time and at the same place. Such roles may not permit hybrid working, or only a minority of time spent working remotely.

Characteristics that are likely to require site presence:

- Activities that require physical customer contact or are delivering a physical service, e.g. delivery of face-to-face contact services with residents, across teams, steward services, site-based work that requires the usage of fixed equipment
- Activities that require relationship building or networking
- Activities that require face to face collaboration
- Team building activities
- Personal performance plans

- Personal or performance related conversations
- Group learning or information sharing activities
- Induction
- Supporting information sharing and development of newer team members.

Appendix 2: Communication

Communication in a hybrid team requires a different approach to communicating within an office-based or fully remote team. However, the key principles of good communication remain: Colleagues need to have the information that they need, in a timely way, to allow them to successfully undertake their work and feel connected.

Communication is a shared responsibility across the team. Consider:

- What do we want to know about? e.g. Updates to each other projects, feedback on work
- What's the best tool to use? What communication should take place synchronously (at the same time, e.g., by Teams meeting) and what could be done asynchronously such as via e-mail or a shared document

Discussing and agreeing arrangements for meetings

Working within the parameters and expectations established by the leadership team/service leads, consider the following questions:

- How often does the team need to meet, and for what purpose?
- When should meetings be online, and when should they be face-to-face? Hybrid meetings can be difficult; those together in the office are often at an advantage, as discussions can continue after the meeting.
- Do we have meetings/events where people must be on site, e.g., one team meeting a month?
- How should we share where people are? Normally, the Outlook calendar will be the best way as it will mean people outside your team can view it. When not working on site, you can create all-day appointments and select the option "working elsewhere".
- How do we ensure that everyone is included in information sharing wherever they are working (home, different sites)? For example, how will decisions made during post-meeting conversation, or informal chats in the office, be shared with colleagues working remotely? How are we going to ensure that everyone has access to this information? For example via Team's channels.