

REMOTE WORKING

1. In 2005 the Council embarked on the first of a series of trials of remote working, by identifying and setting up five volunteers to carry out Council work from home. Equipment and management arrangements were put in place to support and control the remote workers, all of whom also worked from Council buildings for the main part of their working lives.
2. Having reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of this experience after six months, the Council went on trial remote working through technology which allowed mobile working. In this model of remote working a Council employee was mainly working outside the Council's offices, leaving from home to visit a number of customers in their own homes, and returning home to carry out follow up administrative tasks without using a Council work space daily.
3. An initial evaluation of these trials showed that there were productivity gains in both models. Among the benefits were:
 - More time spent with customers;
 - Reduced travelling time and costs
 - More flexibility in carrying out Council work and other responsibilities
 - More quality time to complete tasks requiring concentration.
4. There were few disadvantages, but there were a few challenges which require resolution for remote working to run smoothly:
 - Managers of remote workers have to have different arrangements from those for managing work-placed based employees.
 - The technology is key to success and the Council's IT team must be able to support remote working arrangements.
 - Contact arrangements for customers with remote workers could be more difficult or costly.
5. The costs of setting up a full-time home worker would be around:

One off (PC, licensing, printer, office furniture etc)	£880
Monthly (broadband, telephone line)	£40

Savings could arise from car mileage allowance, productivity gains and desk space.
6. Business continuity, particularly in times of flu pandemic, is becoming a greater concern for all organisations. Remote working is sometimes suggested as a measure that can strengthen business continuity, and the Council may receive requests from employees to work at home in those circumstances. Although no decisions have been taken about the advisability of this sort of arrangement, it is proposed that the Council should put in place a policy to set out the principles of remote working in future.
7. The proposed draft policy is recommended as the basis of the Council's remote working in future.

APPENDIX A

DRAFT REMOTE WORKING POLICY

1. Purpose and Scope

The Council's policy on remote working is designed to enable employees to work in places away from the Council's main offices safely, securely, effectively and efficiently. It applies to:

- 1) those employees whose managers have decided that employees working remotely will support the delivery of business objectives; and
- 2) employees who have applied for and been approved to work remotely for work/life balance reasons.

It is not anticipated that all Council employees will be able to work remotely. The decision on who will work remotely will be made by Heads of Service giving priority to business needs.

2. Definitions

Remote Working is defined as:

- 1) **Mobile Working** -where employees spend much of their working time outside the Council's premises on site or in service users' premises, and return home or to a Council office to process information or download customer data. This is often associated with hot-desking.
- 2) **Home Working** -where employees are able or required under the terms of their employment contract to work from home for the majority of their working time.
- 3) **Occasional Home Working** – employees who have their managers' agreement to work from home on a limited basis to undertake specific pieces of work or to improve logistic efficiency.

3. Business Reasons for Remote Working

The advantages to the Council of increasing flexibility of employees' working arrangements (place and time) include:

- Customer service - able to provide service to the Council's customers more conveniently at places other than in the main offices;
- Productivity – remote working can increase quantity and quality of work, through allowing more customer-facing time or fewer interruptions.
- Environment – opportunities to reduce business miles by better journey planning through omitting unnecessary trips to Council offices;
- Finance – opportunities to reduce costs in office accommodation and miles driven for business;
- Employee motivation – remote working can be more flexible and allow work/life balance to be improved. This can support recruitment and retention.

4. Policy on Remote Working

1. Copeland Borough Council recognises the potential advantages of remote working and supports its development. Some employees will be enabled to work remotely with adequate safeguards for the Council and the employees themselves. However there will be some roles within the Council for which

remote working will not be available, due to the nature of the duties.

2. The decisions on which roles can be carried out remote from the Council's places of work will be made by the relevant Head of Service, with advice from the direct line manager, the HR manager and the ICT manager. It is anticipated that remote working will be agreed where:
 1. A financial case for remote working can be made;
 2. The employee is able and willing to work remotely;
 3. Customer service is enhanced by remote working;
 4. There is no detriment to the environment from remote working;
 5. Service productivity will not be adversely affected.
 6. Adequate security can be achieved.
3. Heads of Service will also take into account factors relating to individuals' suitability to work remotely, for example with very much reduced supervision, in isolation and in premises that are not equivalent to what the Council provides.
4. The Council will provide equipment and training, including a dedicated landline telephone, in its use for remote workers to enable them to work remotely. IT equipment provided must be used in accordance with the Council's relevant IT user policies amended to meet Government Connect C-Co requirements. Remote workers are required to safeguard the Council's equipment and information, and prevent unauthorized access or use.
5. If remote working is to be carried out as full home working, the Council will pay an allowance towards the costs of heating, telephone and insurances, at a level to be reviewed every year. If remote working is occasional home working or mobile working, only the cost of official telephone calls made from home will be reimbursed.
6. To support employee morale and avoid isolation among remote workers, line managers must make additional arrangements to ensure that they are in frequent contact with them. This will be by dedicated telephone landline, email or mobile phone. It is required that remote workers will be present for team briefings, performance management discussions and training opportunities. Remote workers should be in touch with the section on a daily or more frequent basis and attend team meetings at least monthly.
7. Line managers of remote workers must agree with the remote workers additional ways of monitoring work carried out remotely. This can be done through casework numbers, project plans, diary sheets, written reports or electronically through secure meeting systems and system access logs. Line managers will ensure that Council policies and procedures are understood and adhered to by remote workers.
8. Line managers must carry out a risk assessment for each employee working remotely, including of the employee's home, if that is where remote working is to take place. A risk assessment form can be found in the Council's Remote Working Procedure. Managers with remote working employees should consult the relevant IT Security policies.
9. All the Council's policies and procedures will apply to employees working remotely as they would if working at a Council office or other place of work.

10. The Remote Working Policy will be subject to full Equality Impact Assessment in due course, and the Council will take account of the impact of the various types of remote working on enabling equal access to services.
11. Termination of the remote working arrangement is at the manager's discretion linked to work demands, under-performance, work reorganization or departmental reorganization.

Doubt over this Policy

Queries about this policy should be referred to the Head of Policy and Performance, ICT Manager or HR Manager.

Review of this Policy

The operation of this policy will be reviewed by Corporate Team at least annually and more frequently if it is necessary by reason of circumstances.