

Hybrid working policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. North Halifax Partnership (NHP) believes that our staff are our most valuable asset, and we are committed to attracting and retaining the very best talent. We understand that our workforce is diverse and includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with caring responsibilities, as well as those whose interests and aspirations impact on their time.
- 1.2. To support employees in their home/work life balance we understand that flexibility in how they undertake their roles is an important engagement tool and one that can help us attract and retain talent. This policy aims to set out the ways in which hybrid working will be managed. Our continued aim is to increase the rate of retention of staff, reduce absence, attract new talent, promote work-life balance and reduce employee stress.
- 1.3. We recognise that staff are able to successfully work in locations other than 'the office'. Hybrid working is, therefore, an opportunity for NHP to develop their working practices and support employee engagement strategies.
- 1.4. Increased flexibility that hybrid working can bring will support employees, helping them to better work towards a work-life balance, something that is becoming increasingly popular with a modern-day workforce. This can be crucial in maintaining morale and staff retention as we go forward.
- 1.5. Of course, hybrid working isn't a perfect solution for all roles. It is the case in NHP that some roles cannot be done remotely, even on a part-time basis, and we are aware that hybrid working is limited to identified roles.
- 1.6. This policy supports requests for regular hybrid working. This is an agreement between the employer and the employee for a permanent combination of remote working and attendance at the workplace, on a regular and on-going basis. Arrangements for occasional remote working arrangements should be discussed with your line manager, as and when the need arises.
- 1.7. Hybrid working does not extend to requests for working outside the UK. There are complex legal and tax implications of an employee working outside the UK that bring additional costs to support such an arrangement. Working outside the UK may be agreed in exceptional circumstances (e.g. an emergency).

Agreement must be sought, in writing, from a Senior Leader before undertaking any remote work outside the UK.

2. What is hybrid working

- 2.1. Hybrid working is defined as a working arrangement where staff conduct their duties both in the workplace and remotely, such as from home. Whilst working remotely, employees maintain the same contractual obligations, such as core working hours.
- 2.2. We recognise that remote working can be beneficial for individuals, and, to this end, we will seek to accommodate it wherever possible. However, there will always be a degree of on-site working, such as to cover colleagues or to undertake duties that are difficult to replicate remotely, such as direct interaction with colleagues.
- 2.3. Hybrid working is designed to offer the flexibility of remote working whilst also maintaining the benefits associated with on-site working. For the purposes of this policy when not working in the office, the usual workplace will be an employee's home, and this policy is written as such.
- 2.4. Whatever the circumstances leading to a situation where employees are moved into, or recruited under, a hybrid working arrangement, this policy applies and all employees must comply with the requirements set out below.
- 2.5. Please note that this policy is non-contractual and may be amended at any time.

3. Eligibility

- 3.1. Team Managers have the discretion to offer hybrid arrangements to staff, either during their employment or before commencement of a new role. Overall, employees will be eligible to be permitted a form of hybrid working in the following circumstances:
 - where the employee's role does not involve supervisory duties that need to be undertaken in person, alongside the team members involved
 - where their home environment is suitable
 - no aspect of the employee's recent performance, conduct or absence record is a concern
 - the employee's role can be undertaken remotely.
- 3.2. Team managers will carefully assess the needs and requirements of a role before determining how the hybrid working relationship will work. It will only be

permitted where the employee's manager is satisfied that the needs of the business can continue to be met while the employee works from home.

3.3. Hybrid working must be cost-effective and ensure that there is no significant increase in workload on colleagues. The work done by the employee must be capable of being done from home, with minimal adjustments.

3.4. The line manager may further seek advice in relation to applications for hybrid working, before confirming the arrangements.

4. Making permanent hybrid working applications

4.1. Employees that wish to apply for permanent hybrid working arrangements should submit a Flexible Working request in writing, to their line manager. The request will be treated as a Flexible Working request. Please refer to the Flexible Working policy.

5. Process for submitting applications for hybrid working

5.1. Prior to making an application, employees must discuss their proposed application with their line manager. In this discussion, the employee should consider the points in 5.2 and 5.3 and discuss any issues arising from these with their line manager, informally.

5.2. Once a discussion has been held by the employee's line manager, the employee should submit a formal request, which should address the following points:

- confirmation that the employee meets the eligibility criteria for hybrid working
- the date from which the arrangements are intended to start
- the proposed number of days to work from home
- proposed hours of work
- the proposed organisation of the home working environment - available separate room, security arrangements for equipment and any materials/documentation etc
- extent of availability to attend the workplace, for meetings, unplanned cover for colleagues' absences etc
- how the employee proposes that contact will be maintained with their line manager.

5.3. As part of the application, employees should be prepared to discuss how they will achieve the following:

- managing workload independently

- self-motivation and working to own initiative
- adapting to the different working practices involved
- problem-solving and different pressures associated with working alone
- adapting to different methods of being line managed and liaising with colleagues.

5.4. When a new employee starts their employment in a role that would be suitable for hybrid working, they are able to make an application as soon as their employment commences. Employees should be aware that in their early induction period it is likely they will be based in the workplace to support their initial induction. For example they will need to meet colleagues and ensure they have IT equipment set up correctly. Hybrid working arrangements will be discussed in their induction and probationary period, to establish a successful hybrid working pattern.

6. Application decisions

6.1. We aim to respond to applications for hybrid working within four weeks of the request being received by the employee's line manager. Line managers may need to meet with the employee to discuss the issues arising from the application.

6.2. A Health and Safety advisor has the right to visit an employee's home to carry out a risk assessment. A time/date for this visit will be agreed with the employee.

7. Accepted applications

7.1. If the line manager accepts the employee's application, written confirmation will be provided and a Hybrid Working Agreement will be issued for the employee to sign and return. Please note each request is considered on its own merits.

8. Declined applications

8.1. If the line manager is unable to accept the employee's application, the reasons for declining will be confirmed in writing to the employee. If the application formed part of a statutory flexible working request, employees will be permitted opportunity to appeal in line with the Flexible Working policy.

9. Hybrid Working Agreement

9.1. The Hybrid Working Agreement will be drawn up during the application process and sets out the terms of the arrangement for the employee to work from home. Please be aware that the Agreement can be bespoke to the employee's circumstances. It will reflect the following points:

- employees are required to be available during any core hours specified in their Hybrid Working Agreement
- if any issue arises that causes an employee to no longer meet the eligibility criteria at the outset of this policy, the manager will review the arrangement and may terminate it
- the arrangements will be subject to regular review
- employees working from home will be expected to attend meetings and other office-based events as and when required by their line manager
- requests to work from the office may be made with minimal notice, such as to cover an unplanned absence of a colleague
- employees working from home are required to comply with all NHP policies, including holiday, sickness, absence etc.

9.2. The Hybrid Working Agreement will be signed by the individual and their line manager. It will also include:

- Inventory of NHP equipment and declaration of receipt by the individual
- General provisions for remote working
- Health and Safety risk assessment of the individual's home workspace, completed by the individual

9.3. NHP reserves the right to terminate the hybrid working arrangement at any time for any reason. Equally, an employee can request to terminate the hybrid working arrangement at any time for any reason

10. Hybrid working practical arrangements

10.1. NHP will supply hybrid workers with the necessary equipment relevant to their job role. The equipment remains NHP's property and will be installed and removed at our cost.

10.2. We may need to attend an employee's home to update, maintain or repair/replace the equipment and will give the employee reasonable notice of the need for this.

10.3. Employees should take reasonable care of NHP's equipment and only use it for NHP's business. IT and telephony equipment may only be used in accordance with our IT, telephony, data protection and monitoring policies.

- 10.4. Personal equipment that an employee uses for work purposes remains their responsibility and we are not liable for any loss, damage, repair or replacement of any personal equipment. If an item of equipment is deemed necessary for work, the employee should contact their line manager.
- 10.5. Employees should maintain regular contact with their line manager so that managers can work towards early resolution of any problems. This applies to problems with equipment and also in relation to the ongoing suitability of the hybrid working arrangement. Pressures and stress occur equally to hybrid workers as they do to those working in an office environment. We encourage the early reporting of these issues so that practical steps can be considered and implemented.
- 10.6. Employees should refrain from revealing to clients that they are working from home. Employees must not provide their personal address or personal contact details to clients or third parties.
- 10.7. Employees working at home must ensure they have a secure, private and appropriately lit and heated space to work in, with a reliable and secure internet connection. If an employee has a disability and needs any reasonable adjustments to be made to their workstation, whether in the office or in another location, please speak to your line manager.
- 10.8. If any equipment gets lost, damaged or stolen, you will need to let your line manager know as soon as possible.
- 10.9. In person business meetings at home are prohibited. This includes meetings with clients, third parties and other staff.

11. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- 11.1. All hybrid workers will be asked to confirm they have read the Data Protection Policy and Staff use of ICT policy.
- 11.2. All equipment and information must be kept securely. Employees must take any necessary steps to ensure that sensitive information is kept secure at all times. Employees must ensure reasonable precautions are being taken to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Data Protection policy. Equipment and/or devices must be locked whenever they are unattended.
- 11.3. Any breaches of Data Protection must be reported, in line with the Policy, to the Data Protection Officer (Business Support Manager Diane Coenen)

- 11.4. All employees must ensure that they understand their obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and take appropriate security measures to protect personal data held on electronic systems, physical devices or in manual format, from unauthorised loss, destruction, corruption or disclosure. The Data Protection Policy provides detailed guidance on the security of personal data.
- 11.5. If it is suspected that a hybrid working arrangement has resulted, or has the potential to result in, a data breach, the arrangement may be terminated and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 11.6. Under no circumstances should NHP data be downloaded to a personal device. Please refer to the Staff use of ICT Policy.

12. Hybrid working outside the home

- 12.1. Whilst most hybrid working will take place in the employee's home, it is recognised that occasionally employees will work outside the office in other locations, for example a coffee shop or other public space.
- 12.2. Occasional working from public spaces is permitted under this policy, however, employees should ensure that they meet the expectations of Data Protection policies and confidentiality arrangements when working in these spaces. This includes ensuring conversations are held in a confidential manner and data, particularly hard copies of information, is used securely.
- 12.3. Employees should ensure they access their device via secure settings and that network security is maintained whilst working in a public space.

13. Contract of employment

- 13.1. When a hybrid working request is accepted, the employee's place of work, as documented on their employment contract, will not change.

14. Expenses

- 14.1. In line with the expenses policy, any expenses claims are limited to 'out of pocket' expenses. Expenses involved with travelling to your usual workplace cannot be claimed.
- 14.2. Any items of furniture, hardware or software will be purchased directly by NHP Ltd.

- 14.3. The costs of electricity, water, heating, telephone, broadband and other utilities will not be covered by NHP. These costs will remain the employee's responsibility.
- 14.4. Home Working Tax Relief is a tax relief scheme that gives employees tax relief if they work from home. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>. Please note any claims for tax relief are the employee's individual responsibility.
- 14.5. Employees are reminded to contact their mortgage providers, landlords and house insurance providers to ensure there is nothing preventing them from working from home. Homeworking may invalidate an employee's home contents insurance policy. Employees are required to check the policy prior to applying and, if successful, provide a copy of the policy wording and schedule to their line manager on request. NHP will not meet the cost of any additional premiums.
- 14.6. NHP will not pay any costs involved in creating or improving a home office or workspace.
- 14.7. Please refer to full information about expenses in the Expenses Policy. Any expenses can be claimed via the usual process.

15. Sickness and other absences

- 15.1. The usual sickness absence procedures apply to hybrid working. Employees, if they are unwell, should consider their fitness to work. An employee must be fit to undertake their usual duties. Known as 'presenteeism' this is when an employee continues to work, despite being unwell. This can delay recovery and impact on an individual's standard of work.
- 15.2. Similarly, when working from home, an employee must be able to undertake their usual duties. Work should not be undertaken whilst attempting to provide care for children or other dependants. Please refer to the Absence policy for information on emergency family leave. Hybrid working should not be used as an ongoing solution to an employee's difficulties with providing care for a dependant.

16. Health and safety for hybrid workers

- 16.1. The health and safety policy applies to hybrid workers. Employees should refer to the separate health and safety policies for more details.

16.2. Hybrid workers are required to comply with a number of health and safety considerations in respect of the space utilised as their workplace in their home environment. Employees are required to attend the office to undergo health and safety training.

17. Risk assessment

17.1 A risk assessment will be undertaken to determine any relevant risks and to prevent harm to those working from home or anyone else who may be affected by their work, in respect of the workplace itself and the working arrangements. We may need to check such workplaces from time to time as the hybrid working arrangement proceeds.

17.2 We will require self-assessment of some aspects of your home workspace and training may be provided to complete this assessment, as necessary. Any actions identified from these various risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure the employee has a safe workplace.

17.3 Identified NHP staff are trained on the positioning of equipment, ensuring that guidance on the correct ergonomic positioning of IT equipment is available. If the risk assessment indicates an employee requires assistance with setting up their equipment, this will be provided. This is also available on request and individuals should discuss this in their regular reviews with their line manager.

17.4 A specific risk assessment will be done on employees who inform us that they are pregnant. In order for this to take place, hybrid workers who become pregnant should notify their line manager of their pregnancy immediately.

18. Moving home

18.1 If employees move home, the hybrid working arrangement will be reassessed. If the manager considers that the house move would make, or has made, homeworking unsuitable, this may result in the arrangement coming to an end.

19. Electrical equipment

19.1 Employees are required to use all equipment supplied safely and in accordance with best practice and manufacturer's guidelines. NHP will check all electrical equipment for safety. Employees will be responsible for any other electrical equipment used by them in their work activities and will continue to be responsible for the safety of electrical sockets and wiring in their home.

20. Working hours

20.1 Employees are responsible for ensuring they complete their working hours as defined in their contracts of employment whilst working from home.

20.2 Employees are responsible for ensuring they take regular rest breaks. Working time should be monitored and rest breaks of at least 20 minutes for every six hours of working should be taken. Employees are reminded that a 30-minute unpaid lunch break is expected to be taken during the working day. Where working for long spells at a screen employees should make sure they take regular breaks away from their screens

20.3 We know that collaboration, connection and having a sense of belonging can help everyone stay well. We encourage you to think about what this means for you and to actively make time to connect with your colleagues.

21. Accidents

21.1 Employees are covered under our accident insurance policy in their home. Accidents must be reported immediately to the Health and Safety Lead. Employees are referred to the Health and Safety policies which contain details on the health and safety obligations including RIDDOR.

22. Working in the office

22.1 All hybrid workers will be expected to work at their usual workplace for some part of their working week. Refusal, or obstructions to requests to work in the office (or other contractual workplace) will be considered a conduct matter.

22.2 It is the responsibility of the manager to plan when office-based work will be scheduled.

23. Responsibilities

23.1 Manager's responsibilities:

- It is responsibility of managers to consider and agree the work styles that will apply to specific posts. They will take steps to provide all equipment necessary for employees to undertake their role.
- Managers will make arrangements to keep in regular contact with staff who are hybrid workers and, specifically, to encourage them to come forward with any issues they may be having. Remote working may not

work for everyone, and the arrangement will be regularly reviewed, and ended if necessary.

- Managers will work to agree with employees how they will monitor their performance whilst working under a hybrid working arrangement. This may include setting of key targets, holding of regular meetings and ongoing performance reviews.
- Managers will also work to ensure that hybrid working does not reduce any career development of employees, such as them missing out on key training opportunities. It is the responsibility of management to ensure all employees are provided fair opportunity in which to take part in these types of activity.
- Managers must ensure that all communications are reasonable and be alert to the signs and symptoms of stress. Managers should also be alert to any signs that an individual cannot 'switch-off' and home working is encroaching on work life balance. Any concerns should be raised in supervision or 121 discussions.
- Managers will attend any training on managing remote teams, recognising that managing a remote teams may require different managerial techniques.

23.2 Employee's responsibilities:

- Employees must ensure that they take rest breaks during their working day.
- Employees who are working remotely may not be as regularly observed, meaning that an element of trust will need to be maintained between all parties in order for the hybrid working arrangement to work. It is the responsibility of employees to make sure any remote working arrangement does not impact upon their productivity and output.
- Employees working from home need to ensure a safe working environment that complies with NHP's policies on health and safety. Full details can be found in these policies.
- Employees who are working from other buildings separate to the usual workplace are expected to leave their workspace clean and tidy following use and remove all personal items. Standards of hygiene will be expected to be maintained throughout their period of working in this environment.
- Employees will attend any training on working in a remote team, recognising that working remotely may require different ways of working.

24. Employee conduct

24.1 If hybrid working becomes unsuitable due to employee conduct or performance, the arrangement may be terminated immediately. Further disciplinary action may also be taken in line with the disciplinary policy.

24.2 Any abuse of this policy will be dealt with under the disciplinary policy. Abuse of the policy could include; not being available to take calls or return calls within a defined period, failure to produce work undertaken and evidence that work has not been undertaken.

25. Support

25.1 Employees are reminded of the health assured employee support scheme 0800 028 0199 NHP unique code MHA290647.

25.2 In addition, Appendix 1 has best practice ideas for ensuring hybrid working is a success.

Appendix 1 – Best practices when hybrid working

For employees:

- Use your designated workspace. Separate space for yourself to work in, somewhere you can focus on tasks without being distracted and set up with everything you need for a normal working day e.g. computer, phone, stationery etc
- Make sure you have all the tech you need. This includes a reliable and secure internet connection, any necessary files, hardware and software, remote access to the network and, importantly, knowledge of how to get IT support.
- Get dressed. Changing into working clothes will help you mentally switch to productive work mode. It will also help you distinguish between 'homeworking' and 'home life'.
- Write a daily to-do list. Set out a list of realistic, achievable tasks to keep you focused.
- Know when to step away from your desk. Be clear about when your working day begins and ends and take breaks to refresh. It's easy to let yourself be 'always on' when your home and office are the same place. When work is over, be sure you switch off to avoid burnout. Think about having 'core hours' which people you work with are around for.
- Cultivate healthy habits such as taking exercise and fresh air every day.
- Stay in conversation. Contribute regularly to team chats/group emails so you don't drop off the radar. Ask about what people are working on and share what's on your plate. Being physically separated means you miss the 'water-cooler moments' so this is a means to keep informed.
- Foster relationships. Make time for non-work chats as you would in the workplace and use video calling to maintain face-to-face contact.
- Be clear in your communication. Speaking in person gives you visual and audio cues that help you communicate. Conversing remotely removes a lot of that extra information so make your communications extra clear and concise.
- Ask for support when needed. Speak out when you need assistance, further training or support. Your manager, colleagues and you are part of a team and should be supporting each other, especially remotely.

- Take breaks between video calls, don't schedule calls back to back.
- Identify which tasks are more effective face-to-face and plan these into your working week.
- Don't underestimate the value of face-to-face time, team building and 'going to the office' to talk to colleagues.
- Make remote working work for you. Change where you sit, put on music, whatever helps you work. And enjoy the perks – no commute or uncomfortable shoes, and all your home comforts!

For managers:

- Agree ways of working. Make sure every team member is clear about how you will work together remotely, how you keep each other updated, and how frequently.
- Show the big picture but prepare to flex. Remind your team about the big picture and how their work fits into it. Review short-term goals regularly and adjust as needed. If some members can't carry out all their usual work, consider other skills they can lend to others to meet team goals.
- Set expectations and trust your team. Be clear about mutual expectations and trust your team to get on without micromanaging. Focus on results rather than activity. Working relationships can deteriorate quickly and well-being suffer without trust.
- Make sure team members have the support and equipment they need. This includes any coaching they might need to use online systems or work remotely. Keep your calendar visible and maintain a virtual open door.
- Have a regular virtual (or in-person) huddle. This is essential for keeping connected as a team, to check in on each other's well-being and keep workflow on track. It needn't be long, but regularity is key.
- Keep the rhythm of regular one-to-ones and team meetings. This maintains a sense of structure and continuity for all.
- Share information and encourage your team to do the same. Without physical 'water-cooler conversations', opportunities to pick up information in passing are more limited. Share *appropriate* updates or learnings from other meetings and projects and invite your team to do the same.
- Tailor your feedback and communications. People can be more sensitive if they're feeling isolated or anxious, so take this into account when talking or writing. Communicate regularly, not just when things go wrong, whether it is information, praise or criticism.
- Listen closely and read between the lines. Not being in the same room means you don't have extra information from body language or tone to get the sense of what people are thinking or feeling, particularly in more difficult conversations. Home in on what's not being said and ask questions to clarify your interpretation.

- Help foster relationships and well-being. Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport and eases communication between people who may not meet often. It also reduces feelings of isolation.
- Seek advice when managing employees who have mental health conditions.

For all:

- Put safety first. Know about your health and safety policies. Use equipment safely.
- Know when to step away from your desk. Be clear about when your working day begins and ends and take breaks to refresh. When work is over, be sure you switch off to avoid burnout.
- Minimise stress. People managers should set clear expectations about the way employees should deliver and receive communications throughout the working day. This will help alleviate pressure and anxiety.
- Keep in regular contact. This is essential for keeping connected and a means for line managers to check in on their team's physical and mental well-being, and discuss any additional support they need to fulfil their roles from home.
- Be kind. Remote conversations can easily be misinterpreted as it's harder to read body language, tone of voice and other visual and audio cues. Stay mindful of this when delivering difficult messages or feedback. Challenging times call for greater sensitivity and kindness.
- Avoid presenteeism. If you're unwell, take leave and do your best to give an update or handover on urgent work. As a manager or team leader, encourage people to take time off if unwell and model the behaviour yourself.
- Remember there is support on well-being, and seek occupational health advice, where appropriate.