

## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

<b>Proposal name</b>	<b>Ways of Working Policy</b>		
<b>Directorate</b>	Resources and Transformation		
<b>Service</b>	HR Strategy and Planning		
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Rebecca Lloyd		
<b>Proposal planning start</b>	September 2022	<b>Proposal start date (due or actual date)</b>	July 2023
<b>1</b>	<b>What is the purpose of the proposal?</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>	<b>New / revision</b>
	Policy	Yes	New
	Procedure	Yes	New
	Guidance	Yes	New
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	No	N/A
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?		
	Other - give details		
<b>2</b>	<b>What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?</b>		
	<p>The Agile Working Policy was developed as a response to the home working situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The council is now no longer operating under the day to day restrictions of the pandemic, part of the resetting process and the Proud plan saw the council agree the customer focused ways of working principles (Personnel Committee 5 December 2022). The ways of working principles were agreed to ensure the council is fit for the future, efficient and an attractive employer to an increasingly, limited talent pool.</p> <p>Using these principles the Ways of Working Policy and Procedure has been developed building on the current agile working policy to incorporate the learning from the pandemic, ensuring the council adapts to new customer focussed ways of working.</p> <p>The policy takes forward the ways of working principles (in summary);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer focused ways of working that are designed to deliver the best outcomes for our residents;</li> <li>• An outcomes based approach that centers on 'work is what you do, not where you do it';</li> <li>• Employees will work flexibly based on customer and operational service needs, being accountable and remaining focused on delivering the council's outcomes and priorities;</li> <li>• Managers will manage within a flexible hybrid environment, being accountable for performance management of individuals and the team(s), setting objectives and monitoring delivery, regular communication and employee development, and health and wellbeing support.</li> </ul>		



	<p>The Ways of Working Policy and Procedure has been split into two documents following feedback from consultation over the length of the document but the need for the content;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policy sets out the principles, accountabilities, what is expected of employees in the ways of working (flexibility based on customer/operational need to deliver outcomes, use of technology, wellbeing etc.) and the expectations on managers when managing the ways of working (objectives / performance management, communication, health and wellbeing support etc.).</li> <li>• The procedure set out how to manage arrangements / practicalities, including healthy and safety, equipment / furniture / consumables, information governance/data protection and risk / insurance.</li> </ul>		
<b>3</b>	<b>Who is the proposal likely to affect?</b>		
	<b>People in Walsall</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>	<b>Detail</b>
	<b>All</b>	<b>No</b>	This policy applies to all council employees. With the exception of; school based employees/workers where the governing body has delegated authority and for whom separate arrangements apply.
	<b>Specific group/s</b>	<b>No</b>	
	<b>Council employees</b>	<b>Yes</b>	
	<b>Other (identify)</b>	<b>N/A</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.</b>		
	<p>As of 31 March 2022 the total number of Walsall Council employees (excluding Schools) were 2998.</p> <p>The Council's workforce is made up of 66.94% females.  21.68% of the workforce are classified as minority ethnic.  In total there were 133 employees (4.44% of the workforce) who declared they had a disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.  The age profile of Walsall Council employees is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age under 25: 3.20%</li> <li>• Age group 25-39: 24.35%</li> <li>• Age group 40-49: 24.72%</li> <li>• Age group 50-64: 44.09%</li> <li>• Age 65 and over: 3.64%.</li> </ul>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).</b>		

Specific collaboration has taken place to aid the development of the policy and procedures with colleagues from Corporate Landlord, DaTS, Information Governance, Health and Safety, Risk and Insurance. In addition, discussions on the Ways of Working has taken place in various forums with Senior Managers, including managers in the Ways of Working working group and ECC.

The policy and procedures was formally consulted upon with senior managers and trade unions colleagues across the council between 3 April and 25 April 2023. The policy was briefed at ERF on 4 April 2023.

The ways of working policy is subject to endorsement with CMT on 01 June 2023.

The ways of working policy is subject to approval with Personnel Committee on 12 June 2023.

The intention is for the policy to be launched as soon as possible after Personnel Committee approval with publication of communications via Inside Walsall / all staff comms email roundup, the SMG Teams Channel and all manager email distribution.

**Consultation Activity.**

Type of engagement/consultation	Email / Teams Channel	Date	03/04/23 to 25/04/2023
Who attended/participated?	Senior Managers across the council		
Protected characteristics of participants	A range of protected characteristics including, gender, race, age, disability.		
<b>Feedback</b> As part of the consultation process, the policy was emailed to senior managers across the council welcoming feedback and comments and suggested improvements. Comments raised included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Additional points to be included in Teams and email etiquette (e.g. use of backgrounds, meeting times, meetings being recorded, times emails are sent / responded to).</li><li>• Guidance on working remotely outside the UK.</li><li>• Concerns over when to claim home to office mileage and travelling time (and vice versa), especially when home working and visiting clients / service users / sites.</li><li>• Request for payment / allowance for home working to cover increased costs of electricity, heating, broadband etc, particularly given the cost of living crisis.</li><li>• Query on why managers are required to keep an inventory when DaTS should have records – DaTS will only have record of IT equipment (silver label) not furniture or other equipment purchased by the council for home working.</li></ul> On the whole the general feedback was that managers agreed with the new policy and that it provided clarity on the new ways of working.			

Type of engagement/consultation	Email / ERF	Date	03/04/23 to 25/04/2023
Who attended/participated?	Trade Unions: Unison / GMB / Unite		
Protected characteristics of participants	A range of protected characteristics including, gender, race, age, disability.		
<b>Feedback</b> As part of the consultation process, the policy was emailed to each of the trade unions and presented at ERF. Comments raised included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concern managers defining hybrid working at their discretion, not at business / customer need, nor as fits with the needs of the employee.</li><li>• Clarity on the council reserving the right to withdraw mobile / remote working, and the notice period required.</li><li>• Needing a clear process for if someone moves and are then told they need to be back in the office.</li><li>• Guidance on working remotely outside the UK.</li><li>• Clarity on when to claim home to work mileage (and vice versa).</li><li>• Clarity on the council reserves the right to visit employees in their home.</li></ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policy not addressing domestic abuse – separate domestic abuse guidance.</li> <li>• The policy not addressing working hours – this would be in the Flexi time and TOIL policy.</li> <li>• Concerns on the point that remote working should not be used as a substitute for childcare – that flexibility should be reasonable to maintain productivity, service delivery, efficiency/effectiveness.</li> <li>• Health and safety and support for disabled workers (reasonable adjustments) are not in the policy where they were in the Agile Working Policy – this section (health and safety and equipment) has moved into the Ways of Working Procedure.</li> </ul>			
<b>6</b>	<b>Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation</b>			
	<p>Formal consultation with trade unions raised concerns in relation to protected characteristics related to the reasonable adjustments for disabled employees which was in the Agile Working Policy.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments are referenced in the Ways of Working policy (para 4.2). The information from the Agile Working Policy regarding the provision of IT equipment / workstations to support home working is now in the Ways of Working Procedure (the document that contains the health and safety / equipment practicalities) (paras 2.5, 3.4, 3.8), which accompanies the Ways of Working Policy. In addition, for remote / mobile workers coming into the office there is the ability to book equipment /suitable desks though Corporate Landlord for some locations (para 3.9 of the procedure).</p> <p>Domestic abuse and socio-economic issues were also raised in consultation. It has been added to the policy (7.15) that managers may consider as a temporary measure fixed office working where necessary to support employee well-being (mental, social, financial, physical and emotional wellbeing e.g. support for employees experiencing domestic abuse). Support for health and wellbeing is in the policy specifically at paras 7.12 to 7.15, however wellbeing is referenced throughout the policy.</p> <p>Following consultation amendments were made to the policy, procedure and associated guidance, however the majority of comments received weren't specifically related to protected characteristics.</p>			
<b>7</b>	<b>How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group?</b> <b>The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.</b>			
	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Affect</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Action</b>

				<b>needed Yes / No</b>
	<b>Age</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen.	<b>No</b>
	<b>Disability</b>	Negative	Potential impact on employees who require reasonable adjustments for communication who do not understand the policy e.g. employees with learning disabilities.	<b>Yes</b>
		Positive	Potential impact on employees who require reasonable adjustments as a result of a disability-related condition. The policy allows for reasonable adjustments in the ways of working / equipment required.	<b>No</b>
	<b>Gender reassignment / confirmation</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	<b>No</b>
	<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	<b>No</b>
	<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	<b>No</b>
	<b>Race</b>	Negative	Potential impact on employees where English is not their first language as they may not understand the policy.	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>Religion or belief</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	<b>No</b>
	<b>Sex</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	<b>No</b>
	<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	<b>No</b>
	<b>Armed Forces</b>	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	<b>No</b>
	<b>Care responsibilities</b>	Neutral	The policy allows for flexibility in where and how an	<b>No</b>

			employee works, which may support those with caring responsibilities.	
	<b>Health, Social and economic inequalities</b>	Neutral	The policy allows for flexibility in where an employee works, and mentions supporting health and wellbeing, including using fixed office working as a measure where there are health, social or financial concerns for home working.	<b>No</b>
	<b>Other (Give Detail)</b>			
	<b>Further information</b>			
<b>8</b>	<b>Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.</b>			(Delete one) <b>No</b>
	N/A			
<b>9</b>	<b>Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?</b>			
	A	No major change required		
	B	<b>Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality</b>		
	C	Continue despite possible adverse impact		
	D	Stop and rethink your proposal		

Action and monitoring plan				
Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome
Day of launch	The policy to be explained/made available to employees	Employee's line manager should make themselves available to explain the policy to ensure understanding and offer support to allow individuals to achieve the requirements.	As and when required	
Day of launch	The policy to be explained/made available in other languages on request for	Appropriate liaison as required with the council's Interpretation, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read (ITTE) service provider.	As and when requested	

	employees whose first language is not English.			
Day of launch	Alternative formats (audio and Easy Read) for disabled employees to be made available on request.	Liaison as required with the appropriate council procured services; audio formats from Walsall Society for the Blind and Easy Read from the Community, Equality and Cohesion team.	As and when requested	

Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail

### Contact us

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