

Flexible Working Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose of the policy

- 1.1 Barnet Council is committed to empowering its employees and managers to organise and perform work and deliver services in ways which are flexible and balance the needs and preferences of Council staff, Barnet residents and service users, partner organisations, and other stakeholders.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach that the Council will take to facilitate the delivery of services in ways which meet the needs of Council employees, Barnet residents, partner organisations, and other stakeholders.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Council employees. It does not apply to agency workers, contractors, or consultants.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to employees working in schools under the direction of a Governing Body. The Council nevertheless recommends Governing Bodies in community schools within the London Borough of Barnet to adopt the principles of this policy.

3. References

- 3.1 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Future of Work Guiding Principles. Other policies associated with this document include:
 - The Council's Code of Conduct
 - Particulars of employment and other documents setting out relevant terms and conditions.
 - Policies relating to the use of Council offices and other workplaces.
 - Policies relating to Data Protection and the use of Council IT equipment and networks.
 - Grievance Policy and Procedure
 - Health and Safety at Work Policy (including Remote Working arrangements)
 - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

4. General Principles

- 4.1 The Council embraces flexible working as the default option for service delivery. Flexible working practices should be the norm and not the exception.
- 4.2 The key aspects of flexibility in carrying out work concern timing (**when** the work is done) and location (**where** the work is done).
- 4.3 The Council will not seek to place any blanket restrictions on either the timing or the location of the performance of work duties by its staff.
- 4.4 The Council believes that employee performance should be assessed and managed on the basis of outcomes in relation to specific objectives defined as part of relevant performance review processes, together with the broader expectations for each role. Similarly, behavioural

competences and the expectations set out in the Code of Conduct should be assessed and managed through relevant channels.

- 4.5 Unless otherwise specified (e.g. as part of terms and conditions for senior management), all Council employees will have a 'principal place of work' and be expected to work for a set number of weekly contractual hours. The Council expects employees and managers to consider the practical aspects of these terms (e.g. in co-ordinating availability for meetings and ensuring that any documents received by post are processed in a timely manner) while supporting flexibility in service delivery.
- 4.6 The nature of a variety of roles and services within the Council will mean that a significant number of employees are required to undertake work at defined times and/or locations. The Future of Work Guiding Principles include guidance and illustrations around how flexibility can be applied to the various types of work activity undertaken within the Council.
- 4.7 Managers are responsible for outlining any restrictions and requirements on when and where duties are performed to staff reporting to them as well as job applicants and new starters. Managers should regularly review such restrictions in line with evolving service needs- this should happen both on a team level and for individual posts. Restrictions and/or requirements will generally relate to the nature of the work and not the grading of the post or the individual characteristics of one or more employees.
- 4.8 Employees should be aware of the possibility of evolution in the duties within their roles and the consequences that it may have on flexibility. The Council appreciates that restrictions on flexibility and other changes of similar nature will sometimes have an impact on an employee's personal and professional life. Managers should endeavour to provide employees with as much advance notice of possible changes to working arrangements as possible, together with an opportunity to discuss the implications of such changes and raise any concerns which they may have.
- 4.9 The Council does not operate a formal process for requesting flexible working arrangements. Employees who wish to work more flexibly than is currently allowed by the parameters of their role should discuss the matter with their line manager in the first instance.
- 4.10 If a line manager does not believe that they can accommodate a request by an employee to work more flexibly, they should provide the employee with a written summary of the reason[s] for turning down the request. Any related complaints or concerns should be addressed in line with the provisions of the Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure.

5. Flexible working and meetings

- 5.1 Any references to 'meetings' (or 'hearings', or any other similar term) in any Council policy or process will be applicable to discussions held in a defined physical location (normally on Council premises) as well as those held remotely through the use of teleconferencing or videoconferencing facilities.
- 5.2 In line with its Transport Strategy, the Council is committed to supporting behavioural change in work-related travel to generate savings in time and minimise environmental as well as

financial costs. The Council encourages employees to keep business travel to a minimum by adopting a remote-first approach and participating in meetings by teleconferencing or videoconferencing wherever possible and appropriate.

- 5.3 The Council will configure its premises and systems to facilitate ‘blended’ meetings, where some participants are co-located and some participate through teleconferencing or videoconferencing.
- 5.4 The Council trusts employees and managers to make appropriate decisions on venues for physical meetings. However, formal meetings must not be held in residential premises unless exceptional circumstances apply (e.g. where one of the participants is unable to leave home due to medical reasons and holding the meeting remotely would not be feasible/practicable) and all participants agree.
- 5.5 When organising remote meetings which include participants from outside the Council, care should be taken to ensure that they have access to, and information about, any equipment required to participate.

6. Health and Safety

- 6.1 The Council will make reasonable efforts to support employees with appropriate equipment for working flexibly or remotely (e.g. by providing them with laptops and office chairs). The Council will also provide employees with guidance on DSE assessments and sympathetically consider employee requests for non-standard equipment (e.g. adaptations connected to a disability or long-term health condition).
- 6.2 It should be noted, however, that the Council has no control over the layout, ergonomics, or environment of non-Council workplaces. Consequently, employees working from home or another non-Council location are responsible for ensuring that suitable arrangements are made. Additional information, support, and advice for employees will be available on the intranet, the Council’s e-learning system, and/or from the Council’s Safety, Health, and Wellbeing team.
- 6.3 Each employee is primarily responsible for ensuring that they take regular breaks and do not work excessive hours, while line managers should ensure that realistic expectations and workloads are set which can be performed within the employee’s contractual hours. Employees should raise any concerns about workload and/or working time (e.g. around the timing and length of meetings) with their line managers.
- 6.4 Employees who organise any work meeting that is not held on Council premises should consider relevant access and health and safety requirements for participants.
- 6.5 Any issues relating to an employee’s health, including sickness while working remotely and Occupational Health recommendations on the timing and location of work, will be managed under the provisions of the Council’s Absence Management Policy and Procedure.