Overview of hybrid working

Hybrid working blends working in Scottish Government workspaces, from home and in the community with stakeholders.

'In the service of Scotland' is our organisation vision for how we can deliver for ministers and the people of Scotland in any scenario. This should be driven by our values of integrity, inclusion, innovation, collaboration and kindness. Successful hybrid working practices ensure we can deliver for ministers and the people of Scotland. It also enables us to work together in the most effective way, attract and retain great and diverse talent, and support the long-term wellbeing of colleagues.

Hybrid working principles

Shaped by your feedback about how you would like to work in the future, there are eight hybrid working principles. Most of our roles in core Scottish Government are suited to hybrid working. The principles should be applied consistently across the organisation although not necessarily mean the same outcome regarding working location pattern.

Hybrid working encourages an approach to leadership that is activity based, outcome focused, and principle led rather than about rules. Our collective challenge is ensuring this continued way of working is effective from an organisational, team and individual perspective.

It is up to all of us in the organisation to make hybrid working a success.

There are many tasks and circumstances where virtual working can be a good option. Nevertheless, we are not a virtual organisation and there are some activities which are best done in person. The Executive Team's vision is for an organisation that thrives on connections, such as:

- bringing people together regularly enhancing the quality of the work we do
- collaborating and working across boundaries
- noticing and supporting each other's wellbeing
- nurturing long term organisational health and development
- assisting those new to the organisation to learn and feel a sense of belonging

For this to work well, setting expectations on how regularly and in what ways we bring people and stakeholders together in person will be required.

Local agreements for hybrid working

The Executive Team expects agreements to be reached locally for roles suited to hybrid working. These agreements should ensure colleagues combine working from home with a presence in a workplace (and for some roles, with stakeholders and in communities) each week. This may vary from week to week depending on business need and we recognise some roles will be more location-specific than others. For instance, some will have more interaction with colleagues in roles not suited to hybrid working. We must also meet the needs of colleagues who have adjustments in place under equality legislation, or where adaptations are agreed via the employee passport process. If colleagues wish to be office based all the time, this should be accommodated.

Business needs

Business need will look different for different directorates, so there is no centrally fixed amount of time to be spent in the workplace each week. Directors are expected to agree this locally and support their leadership teams to discuss with colleagues how the principles will work in practice and what it means for teams. Some examples of different situations in the workplace are available to give a sense of some of the patterns that may be agreed.

There may be work required that cannot be done from home and is therefore not suited to hybrid working. Local leadership should discuss and agree with colleagues what, if any, flexibility can be offered, and how often this will be reviewed.

We will embed learning as we continue to develop our practices and transform our estate and opportunities will also be available for you to feedback and share your experiences. Our intention is to review these hybrid working arrangements again in two years.

Hybrid working principles

We've set out eight principles to help demonstrate what hybrid working will look like:

1. We plan our activities with purpose by ensuring where and how we work is a productive fit with our business commitments.
2. We take a customised approach, trusting each other to agree arrangements that respect business, colleague, team and role requirements.
3. We manage performance based on outcomes and understand when our performance may be enhanced by face-to-face contact.
4. We provide an inclusive space to accommodate our activities based on needs.
5. We support each other to get the best from hybrid working by familiarising ourselves with our collaboration tools and maintaining our wellbeing.
6. We simplify collaboration and connectivity by sharing information and work with others regardless of location.
7. We each take responsibility for our shared spaces by leaving space available for others to use when we are finished.
8. We are open to change and innovation by learning as we go.

These principles should be considered when developing hybrid working practices for you and your team.

Hybrid working - terms and conditions

This page sets out the terms and conditions that apply to hybrid working.

Contractual place of work

We won't issue contracts that have a colleague's home as their contractual place of work, and working from home will be on a voluntary basis. An exception may be where it's appropriate for a formal homeworking agreement to be put in place as part of an adjustment under equality legislation.

This won't prevent you from working on a hybrid basis by splitting your time between your home and your contractual place of work.

Workplace attendance

While every effort will be made to accommodate your personal choice, it must always be weighed against business and operational needs. The Executive Team expects colleagues who have a hybrid work style to combine working from home with presence in a workplace (and for some roles, with stakeholders and in communities) each week. This expectation means you may have to come into a workplace to do certain tasks, functions or take part in certain events.

Examples might include:

1. Your role is in a specific location working with specific equipment (for example, working within a security control room, on a ship, or because you need confidential printing).
2. You work closely with ministers on a day-to-day basis (for example in the same office). Having formal meetings and informal discussions between meetings is easier and more effective if you're together for at least some of the week.
3. Your colleagues are planning to get together for a group session, white board exercise, or just to check in. This may be ad hoc or you have agreed having a regular get together in person, for example around once a week or month, is beneficial for colleagues.
4. You're working closely with a colleague on a task where you agree working face-to-face would be easier.
5. Training sessions or group events where, because of the nature of the course or subject, having one or some of the team in a room and some online would reduce the quality of the experience for everyone.
6. You're inducting a new colleague or you're learning something new or helping someone learn. In this case, being beside someone and enabling them to ask questions throughout the day would be beneficial.
7. You're about to start working with new processes or technology that has just been launched. There will be collective learning where face-to-face conversations throughout the day may be helpful. You're

meeting with external parties that aren't set up effectively for online working.
8. You've been asked to work on-site to provide support to other less experienced colleagues who are working on-site.
9. You're interviewing job applicants.
10. A large all staff event is happening that involves presentations, break-out sessions and networking opportunities.
11. Where people work on issues with a security classification above OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE. You may need to work on material or have conversations above that level in an appropriately secure location.

Remote working

In a role with a hybrid work style, you can work from home remotely. If you plan to do this, you should read the [guidance about working from home](#).

You can work remotely on the understanding you're still able to attend your contractual work location in line with the hybrid working arrangement agreed with your manager.

Capacity to attend a specified Scottish Government work location will remain a contractual requirement. Our expectation, therefore, is that you'll be able to attend your Scottish Government work location as and when needed. This aligns with the Executive Team's and ministers' expectations that colleagues combine working from home with presence in a workplace (or for some roles, with stakeholders and in communities) each week. This means you can choose to live some distance from your contractual work location, but in doing so you accept travel to and from home will be in your own time and at your own expense. Commuting costs can't be paid for by the Scottish Government.

Working abroad

We're unable to support remote working abroad, unless there's a genuine requirement to do so in the role. Very short-term requests may be possible though – you can find further information in the [international travel guidance](#)). Specific examples of a genuine role requirement would be official business travel overseas to attend conferences, meetings and networking opportunities. It could also be required if the role is attached to working from one of our overseas Scottish Government offices.

These conditions are in line with the position agreed across the UK Civil Service. The position reflects significant issues of compliance related to employing individuals resident in another country. This includes immigration or the right to work in that country, security, taxation, pensions, social security and employment law.

If you live overseas and successfully apply for a Scottish Government position, you must become resident in Scotland, or be within commuting distance of your contractual work location.

Working from abroad for very short-term periods may be possible, where an application form is completed and approved. All compliance measures must be met and there can't be any cost to the public purse. The maximum period that can be supported in these circumstances is four weeks in a rolling twelve-month period.

If you had a pre-existing arrangement in place before coronavirus (COVID-19), this will continue. However, any future arrangements agreed between a manager and colleague (or a job applicant) will follow this principle.

It's important to make sure when working from any location that conversations can't be overheard and screens can't be read by others. You should also never leave mobile phones and laptops unattended.

Expenses

As home working under a hybrid model will be voluntary, you won't be eligible for any specific allowances. However, business expenses like phone calls may be reimbursed. There won't be a home working allowance to cover costs such as home insurance, broadband, heating or lighting.

The base location set out in your contract (for example St Andrew's House, Saughton House, Atlantic Quay) will be seen as your ordinary commute. This is regardless of how frequently that journey is made. You can only claim travel and subsistence expenses for journeys to another location that are in excess of that commute. Business areas are allocated to a building and contractual work locations reflect that. These cannot be amended to another building to suit personal preference. However, colleagues can hot desk from any Scottish Government building where there is space available.

Finding your own work style

There are three work styles you can adopt:

1. Home - for roles where the employee is able to work permanently from home, generally as part of an adjustment under equality legislation. We don't expect many roles to fall into this category.
2. Hybrid - for roles that include a regular mix between working from home, offices and/or other on-site location. There is no singular or pre-determined ratio between the number of days in each location. This is a matter for agreement between managers and their colleagues to suit business requirements and personal preferences. This work style may also include field roles that require regular attendance at a location rather than an office. In those cases, colleagues may also do a proportion of their work from home.
3. On-site - for roles that require colleagues to be somewhere specific, for example in a Scottish Government building. This could also be because they prefer to work predominately in a Scottish Government building or they're unable to work effectively from home.

For most areas, there will be an obvious work style for your role and team. For others, you may need time to consider the relative merits, needs and preferences of the team to find the right balance. These examples of different situations in the workplace may help you find the right working style as a team.

The availability of desks or other working spaces in the workplace will also be a factor in deciding when you'll attend workplaces.

It will be important for discussions to consider the hybrid working principles and how teams and groups of colleagues will work together. We recommend teams or groups of colleagues also come together to discuss the work style that best reflects the needs of the work being done. You should also be mindful that some staff have contractual hours, work part-time or within set hours. When discussing work styles, you should consider all the different working patterns within a team to ensure equal opportunity and inclusion.

We each have different circumstances at home, preferences and needs. The best teams will consider all these needs and do what they can to support colleagues. Flexibility and hybrid work styles are far more likely to succeed over the long term if we're flexible, reasonable and supportive of our colleagues.

While you may agree a hybrid way of working with your manager, you should not assume this schedule can or should remain fixed. Business needs change, situations arise and requests will likely be made of you that don't fit within a fixed schedule.

When considering hybrid working arrangements, all existing personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEP) must be reviewed. You should do this with the building fire precaution officer and the colleague who has the PEEP's manager to ensure arrangements are in place. Any colleagues with new, temporary or permanent impairments must also agree a PEEP. Colleagues who are new to the role may need to be trained to perform these duties.

Managers - how to support a hybrid working team

If you're managing a hybrid team, you must consider their range of work styles to ensure fairness and that no one is excluded due to their working pattern or location.

For example, you should talk to your team about:

- how the team will keep in touch to discuss work issues and provide mutual support
- being mindful of different working patterns, including those that are contractual or within core hours, and avoiding colleagues' non-working days for meetings
- how to ensure all team members, regardless of location, have the same opportunities, for example for training, networking and career progression
- using shared calendars to show availability (while ensuring confidential meetings are marked as private)
- using collaboration tools for team working

- using MS Teams to ensure those in the office and working from home feel equally involved in meetings
- how the workplace is to be used, for example for one-to-ones and team events

As a manager, you should discuss work styles regularly at monthly conversations. This is to make sure working arrangements continue to meet individual and business needs. It also addresses any concerns colleagues may have about their working environment, both at home and when in the workplace. You can use this opportunity to discuss their ability to work effectively under their hybrid working arrangement.

You should continue to check colleagues are taking regular breaks, regardless of work location.

We've also developed [learning resources to support hybrid working and managing hybrid teams](#).

Caring and childcare when working from home

Working from home can bring benefits to carers and those with school age children. It can enable colleagues to work around their caring role.

However, it's important that colleagues keep their caring role separate from their work on days when working from home and record their hours accordingly. For example, you should clock out of flexi to do the school run and be realistic about the number of hours you can work when children are also at home.

Childcare costs for days you need to work in the office will not be met by the Scottish Government. Childcare expenses can only be paid in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances. For example, the provision of childcare if you're kept on duty for longer than anticipated or called out at short notice.

Hybrid working – learning resources

The following learning resources are available to support hybrid working and managing hybrid teams.

Leading in a hybrid world

Subject	Format	Description
Leading in a hybrid world	Webinar	This session looks at the challenges presented by hybrid teams to a manager and explores ways to meet those challenges. The module is designed to sit alongside the performance module course and deal with separate elements, with this course focussing on the leadership elements.
Leading a hybrid workforce	Article	This Centre for Creative Leadership article looks at how leading a hybrid team requires adaptability to change and an openness to experimentation. It outlines fives handy steps to leading a hybrid team.
Leading in a hybrid world	Open-sourced learning	Leading others pathway - select the 'Leading in a Hybrid World' section for links to a selection of articles and guides focussed on leading and manging hybrid or remote teams.

Leading and managing through change

Subject	Format	Description
Peer to peer learning - managing and supporting your team through change	Webinar	This is an interactive 60 minute webinar. It gives colleagues the opportunity to discuss how they have managed and supported their teams through change. It will look at the value of peer to peer learning and give a recap on the top tips from the learning in action resource.
Managing and supporting your team through change	Webinar	This session helps managers understand emotional responses to change and how they can lead others effectively through it.
Leading, managing and navigating change	Pathway	The Pathways launched in May 2023. It has a range of learning resources to support colleagues leading, managing and navigating through change

Performance and career conversations

Subject	Format	Description
Performance management and monthly conversations. You should also read performance management process.	Pathway and Saltire guidance	Vlogs, podcasts and guidance based around performance management and how to get the best out of conversations around performance.
Career conversations	Toolkit	Resource to help individuals and managers reflect on and take stock of your career so far, consider future options and discuss potential and aspiration. It's a useful tool for unlocking potential, recognising everyone's talent and encouraging greater self-awareness.

Difficult conversations

Subject	Format	Description
How to have the conversations we don't want to have – part one How to have the conversations we don't want to have – part two	Webinar	Difficult conversations are often around less than effective performance, a conflict or sensitive subject. To help support colleagues having difficult conversations, you can book a place on these webinars.
Difficult conversations You should also read sensitive communications – handling difficult conversations.	Pathway and Saltire guidance	Vlogs and guidance to support colleagues in having difficult conversations.

Developing high performing teams

Developing high performing teams webinar. This session outlines the three Ts of high performing teams: team clarity, team climate and team collaboration. It explores how to do a simple pulse check for team performance and introduces colleagues to our team development booster activity digital toolkit.

Workplace adjustments

Employee passport and workplace adjustments includes vlogs, blogs and guidance on the employee passport and making workplace adjustments.

Effective planning

[Plan, track and delivery](#) webinar which gives some simple techniques on how to plan and track activity to deliver effectively on agreed individual or team goals and objectives.