

ET paper

Communications approach

Insight has shown that our communications about hybrid working will need to be open, honest and clear. As well as considered communications from the centre, there needs to be strong leadership communications, with messages amplified by the Permanent Secretary/DGs/Directors (and from there to and by line managers).

DGs will be asked to organise DG-wide events to explain and prompt compliance with the policy, supported by hybrid policy colleagues, and they should work with their directors to cascade communications and ensure discussions are happening at all levels. Along with role-modelling, this visible leadership will help motivate behaviour change as colleagues will understand senior leaders expect to see change (even if it isn't 'mandated'). It will also reinforce expectations of colleagues and create opportunities for them to ask questions and raise issues with their senior leaders.

Internal communications will develop a hybrid policy briefing back to support SCS colleagues to lead local communications.

All communications will reflect the following principles:

- Clear and concise – expectations of colleagues and line managers will be front and centre
- Visible leadership – ET and SCS colleagues will explain, justify, communicate and role-model the behaviours we expect to see
- Open and honest – we know not everyone will agree but we need a more balanced approach
- Responsive – taking on board and acknowledging colleagues' feedback and feelings

Timeline for initial communications

Date	Activity / message	Channel	Audience	Lead	Status	Aim
Wed 26 March - 2pm (tbc)	Potentially an opportunity to say to colleagues that there will be communications on hybrid policy later this week, Joe can seed message he thinks working in person is a positive thing, but that hybrid is here to stay,	Leadership event with JP and Joe	All colleagues	Comms		There will not be a Q&A at this session, instead it will be a conversation between Joe and JP with topics decided in advance. It's likely hybrid will be in there but not yet agreed.
Thu 27 March - 9.15am - 10.15am	Hybrid review complete, share key changes	Directors Network	SCS	Comms/policy team		To ensure directors and DGs get sight of key changes first
Thu 27 March – 10.15am	Follow up to Directors Network so senior leaders have the information in writing. It will reinforce what was said at Directors, the role directors/DDs are required to adopt in this space, and signpost to the SCS toolkit/pack (or if not ready, signal it's coming) and flag that an article will publish imminently.	Email	SCS	Comms/policy team		To make sure Directors have all the information they need to start leading from the front immediately.
Thu 27 March - 11am	ET have made their decision based on recommendations from the review group	Hybrid working group meeting	Working group members	Policy		Chance to share ET's decision with the working group before wider all staff comms

Thu 27 March - 11am	Policy and guidance published on Saltire	Saltire guidance	All colleagues	Policy		This will set out the policy and expectations of staff in as much detail as possible. We will need to put a disclaimer that the policy and guidance will be updated regularly as we finalise the details
Thu 27 March - 11.30am	Article to announce new approach	Saltire news	All staff	Comms		Ensure all staff are aware of key changes as soon as possible after Directors informed
Thu 27 March - 2pm	Ask of line managers around new policy - specifically more detail on areas like team agreements, wellbeing/worries, employee passport, line manager toolkit	Leadership brief	SCS and C band staff	Comms		Want to give line managers additional info/details quickly as possible as we won't be able to get everything into article and managers will have specific role/actions
Early April tbc	SCS briefing pack – this will include key information for SCS colleagues to organise their local comms	SCS briefing pack	All colleagues	SCS/DGs/comms		To give SCS colleagues the tools they need to effectively cascade hybrid info
April/May	DG-level events (recommended) - space for DGs to share their expectations, remind staff of changes and timeline, this is about reinforcing messaging and showing they are leading this change (accountability). They will be provided with a slide pack to support these events and policy team will also support.	Teams	All staff	DGs/policy		Leadership focus/consultation: This is a chance for DGs to show/tell colleagues that they expect them to follow the new policy. Also, potentially, a chance for colleagues to feedback and share any concerns/issues/feedback questions to policy team.

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE – FOR APPROVAL

EXECUTIVE TEAM

ET SPONSOR: Lesley Fraser, DG Corporate

DATE: 18 MARCH 2025

*Hybrid Working Policy Review – Background
evidence and information to support decision by ET*

*Lorna Gibbs &
redacted S.38 (1)(b),*

Basis of Proposed Hybrid Working policy statement for core SG

“Staff in roles suitable for hybrid working will be expected to spend a minimum of 40% of their working week in the office or in person with stakeholders, on average. As business rhythms don’t always follow a smooth pattern, that average will be estimated over a month.

The Executive Team expects hybrid working arrangements to be agreed locally and set out in Team Agreements which should be kept under regular review. These should acknowledge that business needs may vary from week to week, and that some roles will be more location-specific than others. Teams should consider guidance on business need and anchor activities when drawing up their local agreements.

Our policy is flexible and designed to also meet the needs of colleagues who have or would benefit from adjustments under equality legislation, or where adaptations are agreed via the employee passport process.

It also allows colleagues to be office based all of the time, if they want.”

Summary of evidence

- Surveys show that colleagues value flexibility but want clarity around hybrid working expectations.
- SG achieving c. 1 day/week in the office, with recent slight increases (but data quality limited and we're working to improve that).
- Recent 'return to office' drift/shift amongst some corporates – some 5/5 days/week by edict (but many of those were already on 3/5 models beforehand) **vs.**
- Increased 'right to request' flexible working via UKG legislation and consideration of four day working weeks, **plus**
- Deployment of AI starting to become a reality, further changing our future working 'mix' and experience.
- Research: e.g. [Leesman](#) (1.4m employees, >9k workplaces & 122 countries), [Andy Lake](#) (former Smart Working adviser to Cabinet Office), [Prof. Nicolas Bloom](#) (Stanford University) = Hybrid model appears good, but:
 - No perfect model. Balance is culture/context specific, and one size doesn't fit all. (SG = the sum of 8 DGs, 55 Directorates, c. 200 Divisions & c. 10,500 employees),
 - Some choice + 'purposeful presence' + support & adjustments (people, place & tech) = good,
 - Counter-productive if you get the balance badly wrong.

Summary of evidence

- Consider that much of the evidence suggests that getting our hybrid balance right can improve productivity, wellbeing, and collective as well as individual growth,
- Getting the balance wrong can result in:
 - loss of organisational cohesion and collective and individual engagement,
 - impaired learning/talent nurturing;
 - reduced collaborative insight and gain;
 - diminished wellbeing (e.g. via isolation), and
 - poorer performance,e.g., if not enough of the right kind of in person working, and
 - recruitment & retention problems (especially of scarce skills),
 - damaged diversity and wellbeing (including the experience of colleagues with disabilities, e.g. if too physically/energy demanding, and of women, e.g. if workplace use is exclusively driven by ‘first come, first served’ thinking and process),
 - disengagement (including so-called “quiet quitting”),
 - reduced employee satisfaction, and consequently,
 - poorer performance and possible legal challenges (‘reasonable’ adjustments),e.g., if policy is based on presenteeism, rather than purposeful presence, and feels exclusive.

Summary of evidence

SG estate

- Estate Strategy sets a high-level direction of travel. It has been considered by ETIM (yet to be formally adopted) and Minister for Public Finance has been briefed on, and is supportive of, its direction.
- Though serving core SG, it is also designed with the needs of the Single Scottish Estate Programme in mind.
- The Space Model on which it is based **has been informed by an assumption of 40% attendance** and is **geared towards** providing 60% collaboration and 40% traditional desk space. This model **doesn't allocate work areas** to Divisions/Directorates. They are **bookable on a first come, first served basis**.
- 5AQ is already working on this model (though more collaborative space being added on 2nd floor). Other buildings aren't, yet, but will be as existing change projects conclude, and other funding becomes available.

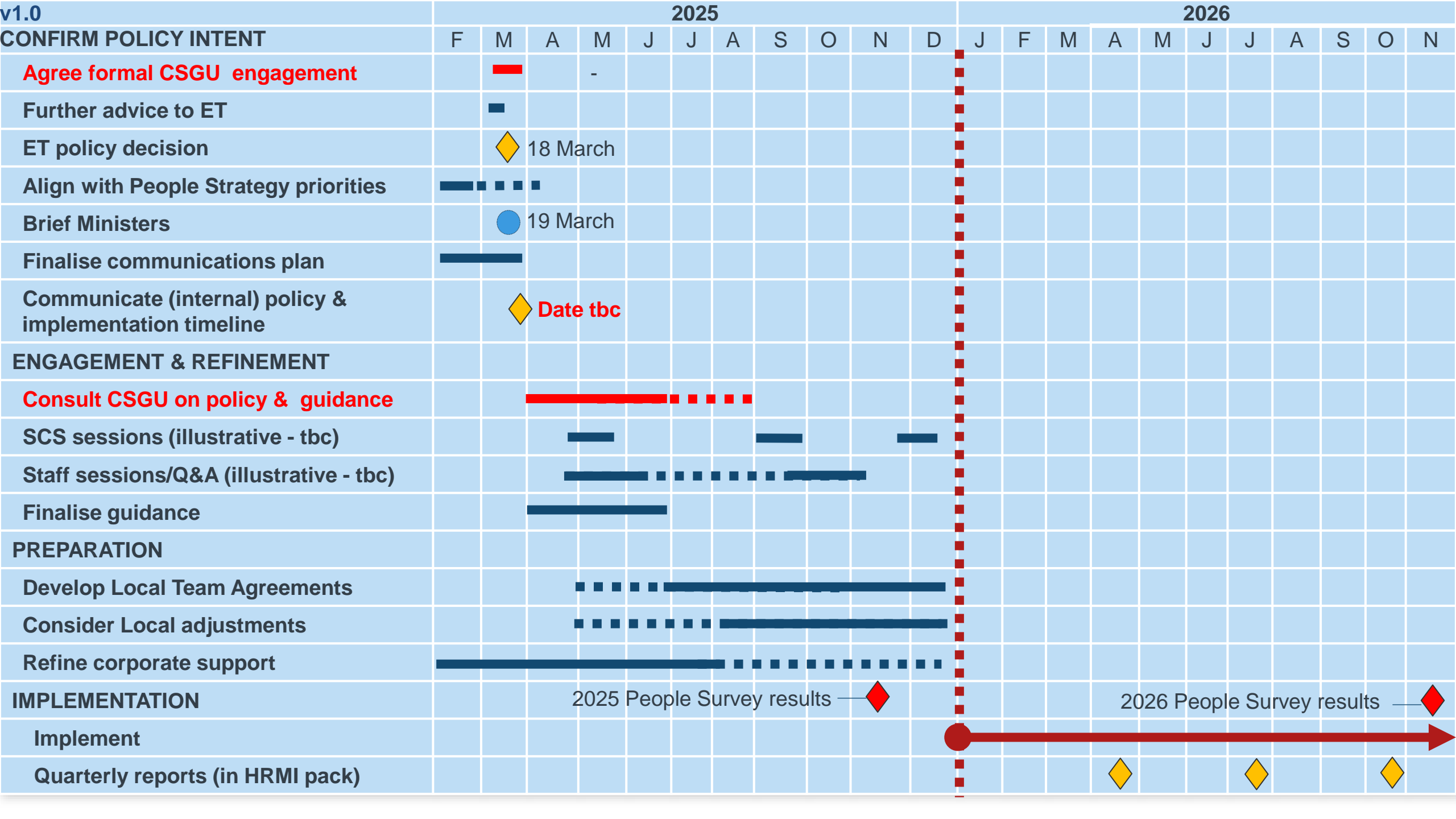
Estate management assumptions

- Meeting rooms and hot desk facilities currently available for booking through Outlook will continue to be available on a first come, first served basis.
- In buildings where the Space Model applies (just 5AQ):
 - workspaces booked on a 'first come, first served' basis.
 - Staff will use existing booking systems (separate spreadsheets) to book workspaces adjacent to their colleagues as part of 'purposeful presence'.

Summary of evidence

Estate management assumptions (continued)

- The regional estate remains an important part of SG core estate, in-line with Place Based priorities.
- Significant capacity in many buildings. We have been assured by Workplace colleagues that all can support the 40% model and all but AQ5 a 60% model without dictating which days individuals/directorates attend.
- However, to reduce pressure on SAH, create a sense of community in our other buildings, and in line with security access changes, staff will be expected to use their ‘home’ building unless there’s a business need to work from one of our other buildings.
- 5AQ would need to be remodelled (requires investment) and may require tenant occupation to be reviewed to achieve 60% attendance. Might also be a need to designate specific ‘in office’ days for teams to smooth building use over the working week.
- 15 live workplace change projects will continue, as will strategic planning for Glasgow, Edinburgh & Aberdeen.
- Decisions are needed on estate rationalisation, and change, to prioritise investment.



Corporate support offer – current vs. possible, with investment (1)

BUILDINGS/ESTATES	Current	Modest investment	Strategic investment
Workplace improvement	No new money. Improvement is piecemeal, linked to priority maintenance projects.	At £33m (25+7+1) > current budget, improvements in VQ, SH & SAH (detail shown below) by 2027/28.	At a cost of c. £280m, over [x] years, whole SG estate is modernised, excluding Net Zero and flagship SAH redevelopments.
Workspace booking	No central, unified tool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desks via Excel tool • Meeting rooms: Outlook • Conference rooms via HelpCentral. • First come, first served. 	Central space booking tool replaces separate desk, meeting room & conference room booking tools – ballpark <u>paper</u> estimates are c. £200k - £300k p.a. for min. 2 year contract.	Improved functionality, Central space booking tool replaces separate tools. Possible to include other assets/devices, e.g. car & bike parking, lockers, charging points.
Staff in AQ5	40% hybrid model OK. 60% requires designated team specific days. No divisional space allocation, so team co-location not guaranteed.	No additional spend on facilities.	Facilities modernisation included in £280m est above.

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Corporate support offer – current vs. possible, with investment (2)

BUILDINGS/ESTATES	Current	Modest investment	Strategic investment
Staff in other SG offices	40% and 60% hybrid models OK. Teams based in divisional space allocations, so team co-location better enabled.	At £25m > current budget, by 27/28 VQ converted to AQ5 space model, inc 40:60 desk:collaboration split. At £7m > current budget, SAH converted to AQ5 space model, via limited spend. At c. £1m > current budget by 27/28 SAH SCS offices become bookable meeting rooms.	Further enhancements as part of the £280 whole estate modernisation, above.
Facilities to improve Diversity and Inclusion	Actions in the current Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan will be delivered.	At a cost of c. £4m over two years, actions in the D&I Action Plan will be augmented by improving facilities for staff with various specialist needs e.g. more gender neutral changing and toilet provision and changing places facilities.	Further enhancements as part of the £280 whole estate modernisation, above.

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Corporate support offer – current vs. possible, with investment (3)

DIGITAL	Current	Modest investment	Strategic investment
Hybrid meeting experience	No new money. Current disparate facilities persist. Laptops required for meetings whether in or out of SG buildings.	For £3m capital & £0.25m annual revenue, equip <u>all</u> meeting and conference rooms with common, entry-level video & audio-conferencing kit. Only meeting hosts need laptops. Allows some remote monitoring/fault-finding.	For £4m capital & £0.35m annual revenue, equip <u>all</u> meeting & conference rooms with common, higher quality video & audio-conferencing kit. Only conference hosts need laptops. Allows room tailoring & remote monitoring/fault-finding, so speedier fixes.
Building use/ attendance data	Via existing software on laptops to report IP addresses.	Via existing software on laptops to report IP addresses, augmented by central space-booking system data.	Via existing software on laptops to report IP addresses, augmented by central space-booking system data and data on meeting room use via remote monitoring of video and audio-conferencing facilities.

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Corporate support offer – current vs. possible, with investment (4)

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT	Current	Modest Investment	Strategic investment
Support for implementing hybrid working policy	HR Business Partners support DG SMTs. PD support communications to SCS. No additional Change Management resource available.	With some additional resource, PD provide supportive facilitation support, enabling teams to embrace hybrid policy.	With further additional resource, including in Change Management expertise, PD provide highly supportive facilitation support, enabling teams to fully embrace hybrid policy.
Further CSGU consultation	PD will consult CSGU on revised policy prior to implementation.		
Hybrid adjustments	No additional PD resource to support - all new requests for support via Employee Passport & workplace adjustment processes actioned in order received.	With some additional resource, requests for support via Employee Passport & workplace adjustment processes actioned quicker.	

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Corporate support offer – current vs. possible, with investment (5)

OTHER CORPORATE SUPPORT	Current	Modest investment	Strategic investment
Facility management	No centralised support, such as concierge services, beyond current arrangements.	Light touch concierge services, to improve meeting & conference room experiences and curate those facilities, provided if c. 6 x B1 posts approved (annual cost est c. £270k).	
Guidance	Central policy guidance, including on team Agreements and anchor activities, provided on Saltire.	Limited initial virtual and physical ‘drop-in’ sessions for staff provided if current core team continues.	
Training	Existing training material revised for ongoing suitability in Pathways.		

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE – FOR APPROVAL

EXECUTIVE TEAM

ET SPONSOR: Lesley Fraser, DG Corporate

DATE: 18 MARCH 2025

Hybrid Working Policy Review – Recommendations for Decision

*Lorna Gibbs &
redacted S.38 (1)(b),*

Recap from 17 Dec ET

- Status quo not supported. Prefer “magnet, not mandate” to increase in-person working.
- Central review team asked to consider implications of a two/three-day week average.

Since 17 Dec

- Unions formalised their governance expectations. Working through these with them and PD colleagues.
- With Performance Management & Deployment, ‘How & Where We Work’ a 25/26 People Strategy priority.
- Offering review recommendations (slides 2 & 3) to ET that are evidence-based (background slides) informed by consideration of the implications of 40% & 60% models, including:
 - what our estate can currently support and levels of corporate support available,
 - local business rhythms, and degree of leadership engagement required.
- Have illustrated what short & longer-term investment in corporate infrastructure *might* buy (background slides) and where we think priorities *might* lie.
- EQIA in an advanced draft state (but not yet complete) – being refined through further engagement.
- Have developed an illustrative version of an implementation plan (background slides) which stresses the importance of pre-implementation lead time.
- Have set out potential next steps for handling & communications (background paper).

Review recommendations (1)

- Hybrid working – a blend of working from SG premises, in person with stakeholders and from home – provides flexibility valued by many of our colleagues and SG should continue to offer this option, where appropriate.
- Staff in roles suitable for hybrid working should be expected to spend a minimum of 40% of their working week in the office or in person with stakeholders, on average, a month.
- This should be a firm expectation, not a mandate, requiring local agreement on how that expectation will be met.
- The policy should apply to core SG only. Executive Agencies & NMOs may adopt, and adapt, if they wish.
- Teams should be required to discuss, and agree, their future hybrid working patterns and record their approach in a Team Agreement. These should be built into corporate assurance processes and reviewed regularly.
- Team Agreements should be linked to, and varied locally by, spans of control. (Average spans of control: DD: 40, C3: 28, C2: 10, C1: 2.5). Given their knowledge of local business needs, DDs should decide coverage and have oversight of team agreements for their Division.
- Guidance on Team Agreements, including around business need and on anchor activities, should be provided on Saltire. This should emphasise the importance of ‘purposeful presence’, based around anchor activities.

Review recommendations (2)

- The policy should include an adjustments component, built around Employee Passports, to ensure that all colleagues are enabled to do their best work. (Saltire guidance on adjustments will link to approved HR policies to respond to union and staff network concerns about potential inconsistent implementation.)
- We should allow a significant period (up to 9 months) for pre-implementation preparation given:
 - the degree of change recommended: 35% of us joined SG after April 2020, the remainder have been ‘living’ existing working patterns for 5 years,
 - the need to engage colleagues and bring people with us as we finalise guidance,
 - lead time to agree multiple Team Agreements, including, e.g., H&S roles, and consider adjustments, and
 - perennial low People Survey scores around managing change.
- Senior and local leadership must be visibly involved in engaging colleagues to support and embed this change.
- We should all strive to ensure that colleagues are included and engaged, regardless of their work setting.
- SG should develop a business case for procuring & implementing an estate wide space booking tool (high-level, desk-based, market testing suggests running costs i.r.o. £200,000 to £300,000 p.a., depending on functionality/range of bookable assets/resources we want to be in play).

Leadership challenges

- Colleagues have been living current working patterns for c. 5 years – mustn't underestimate the importance of visible, engaged leadership and need to invest leadership capital to bring people with us.
- Clarity of purpose, pragmatism and resourcefulness to help teams get the best 'in office' experience:
 - wise use of the Team Agreement process and outputs,
 - estate not yet where we want it in terms of, e.g., access to collaborative space,
 - new space planning model being rolled-out as funds permit brings challenges around closer in person working. E.g. first come, first served space booking already operating in 5AQ – working well?
- Including and engaging all colleagues, regardless of their work setting. Perhaps particularly important where policy adjustments vs. 40% minimum are in play - and also about careers, not just immediate needs.
- Confidentiality & data security around policy adjustments – just as with existing Employee Passport process, but Team Agreements bring into sharper focus.
- Consistent application of policy across spans of control.
- Keep 'reasonable request' test in mind.

Handling and communications

- Some pre-briefing has taken place.
- Draft handling and communications grid is provided (background slides).
- Timings may evolve, but key components are expected to be:
 - Core messaging amplified initially by the Permanent Secretary, then by DGs and Directors,
 - Communications begin Thurs 27 March, at Directors with an update (followed by an email). Saltire article announcing the changes will be published later that day, followed by a Leadership Brief,
 - Recommend DG-wide events to ensure colleagues can hear directly from their DG on expectations of hybrid working, as well as giving them a chance to ask questions. (A Q&A will be provided to support DGs and Directors with events),
 - SCS similarly supported via comprehensive communications packs to hold events within their divisions,
 - subsequent staff events – e.g. use of “Ask ET”, being considered.

Questions for ET

- Do you support the minimum 40% model?
- Do you support the use of Team Agreements to agree hybrid working patterns at team level, and should these be mandatory or advisory?
- What are your views on the level at which Team Agreements should operate?
- Do you agree that the adjustments component of the policy should also deal with issues wider than the needs of colleagues who have or would benefit from adjustments under equality legislation (e.g. location related issues)?
- Do you support a significant period of pre-implementation preparation and, taking account of that, when do you think the policy should take full effect from?
- Do you agree with the key activities from the communications grid, and DG roles in them?

Executive Team

Title	Please insert the title of your item
1. Mode of ET	People
2. Why does this item need discussion/consideration by ET?	<p>This activity fulfils an ET commitment to review the current hybrid working policy by April 2025. 'How and Where We Work' is also one of SG's three People Strategy priorities for 2025/26.</p> <p>Though the current hybrid working policy has been in place since April 2023, broadly speaking colleagues have been working current hybrid patterns for up to five years. The review found that colleagues value the flexibility that hybrid working can provide but want clarity around expectations. ET will be aware that the outcome of the review will be eagerly awaited.</p> <p>ET will want to consider and approve the recommendations of the review, which include an expectation of increased levels of in person working and allowing appropriate lead time to prepare for related change.</p>
3. Which ET Shared Objective(s) does this progress and how?	<p>COLLABORATE: stronger accountability & coordination</p> <p>DESIGN: organise the SG for success</p> <p>DELIVER and PERFORM: improved outcomes on our strategic priorities</p> <p>DEVELOP: engaging & learning together</p> <p>LEAD: collectively lead out a compelling vision for the future of SG (embedded in In the service of Scotland) and its role in the wider Scottish Public Sector landscape.</p>
4a. Which SG priority does the item support? Please Specify if other	Improving Public Services

4b. Which Statutory targets does this item contribute to?	Choose an item.
5. Which Corporate Risk does this item relate to?	<p>CRR044: Employee Engagement and Wellbeing.</p> <p>Effective hybrid working policy and practice should form part of SG's emerging Target Operating Model, support achievement of the ITSoS Vision, is one of SG's three People Strategy priorities for 2025/26, and is linked to our Estate Strategy and the iTECS Digital Roadmap.</p> <p>IF related change is not managed well, THEN there may be negative impacts on morale/engagement, wellbeing, productivity, and delivery.</p>
6. What is the ask of ET? What are the decisions required?	<p>ET is asked to consider the review recommendations, and specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) approve the recommended change to a 40% minimum model, b) approve the use of Team Agreements to agree hybrid working patterns at team level, and confirm whether their use should be formally required (must) or advised (should), c) confirm that Deputy Directors should decide the level at which Team Agreements should operate for their area, d) approve the inclusion of an adjustments component, built around the Employee Passport process, e) approve a policy start date of January 2026, f) confirm that it is content with the thrust of the communications grid and strategy and key roles for senior leaders.

7. Impact Assessments	An EQIA is at an advanced draft state and will be completed before the new policy takes effect.
8. Lead DG	Lesley Fraser
9. Attendance	Lorna Gibbs, DD Improving Public Engagement and Hybrid Working Policy Review SRO; redacted S.38 (1)(b);