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Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board

Arrangements for Blended Working

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1. Preface

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a framework within which Longford and Westmeath Education & Training Board (LWETB) can operate blended working arrangements. The guidelines are developed on the basis of providing arrangements on a trial basis and are subject to change pending national clarifications that may issue from Department of Education and/or Department Expenditure and Reform.

2. Introduction

European and Irish Government policy promotes flexible work arrangements. Blended working is one aspect of flexible work arrangements. Blended working has been defined by the 2020 European Framework Agreements as:

“a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in context of an employment contract/relationship, where work, which could also be performed at the employer’s premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis”.

For the purpose of this arrangement, Longford and Westmeath ETB will be operating blended working which is defined as working from home for an agreed period of not more than 40% of your working week.

The benefits of blended working as part of the flexible work arrangements are multifaceted such as: -

- Promotes employee well-being.
- Can increase productivity.
- Increasing participation in the workforce: Women, older people, and people with disabilities.
- Widens the talent pool for jobs.
- Supports regional growth.
- Supports transition to a greener economy.
- Supports government policy.

This along with changes in work methods, facilitated by advances in technology, provides opportunities to LWETB in terms of allowing employees to work from home for the agreed period.

LWETB recognises that we are a public body providing a public service and that we have a substantial employee base who are all our internal customers i.e. School, OSD and FET services. The support of services to both the public and employees takes precedence and will be prioritised by LWETB at all times when any arrangement for blended working is being considered.

In tandem with blended working LWETB also recognises the importance of face to face working with colleagues, the conduciveness of the office environment to collaborative working, access to facilities/equipment, importance of meeting with customers/public, and our overarching duty to good public and customer service.

The increased flexibility of blended working arrangements also brings greater responsibilities to all concerned to ensure that service delivery is not compromised, and efficiencies are maintained. The manner in which individual employees and managers undertake and deliver in their roles under these arrangements, will determine the success of blended working into the future.

3. Scope

LWETB aims to facilitate blended working for staff where the nature of their work and work systems allows them to work from home and to do so effectively.

It is recognised that the suitability of the job role and function for blended working may vary over the course of the any given year. In such instances, at the discretion of the Manager, specific periods may be designated as more suitable for blended working.

Blended working will not be possible for all roles as the core function of LWETB is the provision of education and training services for our learners. Central to this delivery is the support roles/services which enable LWETB to deliver a high-quality service that is responsive to the varying needs of our learners.

As an elective benefit for employees, access to blended working will not be an automatic entitlement, nor will an employee be entitled to retain a blended working arrangement where the role and/or individual is no longer deemed suitable to blended working.

4. Implementation Date

The implementation date of this policy is the date of Chief Executive approval.

5. Principles

The following principles are confirmed to underpin this policy.

Organisation Needs

Blended working must only be undertaken in circumstances where there is appropriate work and a suitable environment to do so including adequate Broadband/WIFI to allow for full team's meetings with cameras on, capable of sharing files etc. and no other conflicting demands on the employee. The organisation needs will always take priority when considering blended working arrangements.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Blended Worker and Manager*

**The term Manager is used to represent Principal / Centre Manager /Area Training Manager/Adult Education Officer/ Co-ordinator / Director / Head of Department as appropriate.*

The Employee and Manager both have a role to play in ensuring the success of blended working arrangements. Employees must be proactive in identifying how their roles can be performed effectively in the blended working environment. Employees must accept a high level of responsibility for ensuring the success of the blended working arrangement. Managers at all levels are expected to be supportive in adapting to the new working environment so as to enable employees to avail of blended working arrangements if approved. More information on the role of managers and employees is attached at **Appendix A**.

Eligibility

Participation in the scheme is subject to the job role, business needs, employee and workstation being suitable for blended working. Authority to remote work (i.e. the specific days to be blended worked) is at the discretion of the Manager and Director.

New employees will be required to work in the relevant office for a minimum of six (6) months to ensure they are fully trained in their job role. The six (6) month term may be extended at the discretion of the Manager and Director, subject to the role responsibilities. In exceptional circumstances, due to business requirements, this term may be less than the statutory minimum/term.

Employees availing of working arrangements of less than full time are eligible to apply for blended working. *(In the case of less than 4 days per week, arrangements will be based on a maximum of one day per week blended working).*

Responsibility

In making an application for blended working the employee is agreeing not to engage in any form of conflicting non-office work or home activity during blended working hours.

Custom and Practice

After a period of time, blended working arrangements cannot be claimed on a custom and practice basis. Every arrangement is subject to ongoing review and can be ceased where it no longer works to the benefit of LWETB.

Exceptions

There may be occasions where circumstances outside the control of the employer dictate that all employees or a cohort of employees must work fully remotely e.g., public health emergency, red weather warning, etc. In such circumstances, this decision will be communicated to all affected employees as soon as possible and the application procedure as set out below will not apply.

6. Application Procedure

- Prior to an application being submitted by the employee, it is a requirement that the employee first discuss with their manager their intention to apply, the intended dates and duration and agree how blended working will transact for their job role.
- In normal circumstances, new applications, or an application to change existing arrangements should be made no less than 4 weeks in advance of the proposed start date. The Manager may agree to a shorter period at their discretion.
- As part of the discussion process the employee must complete the required documentation/ risk assessment form for remotely and submit to their manager. This form will be kept as part of a blended working file and as part of an overall risk assessment file for Health and Safety.
- In deciding to grant or refuse, the Manager will consider:
 - the operational needs of the service
 - the management of a service
 - the role and function of the applicant.
 - number of employees on other various types of leave or due to go on leave

- the availability of suitable equipment
- risk assessments and other relevant factors as determined by LWETB
- applicant's length of service
- Other key management considerations may include but are not limited to the following: -
 - Employee's eligibility and suitability (self-directed etc)
 - Nature of employee's role and duties
 - Frequency and duration of blended work
 - Availability and communication/systems requirements
 - The requirement to work as part of a team which has to respond to service needs and users in a timely manner
 - The necessity to collaborate with other staff
 - Availability of suitable and safe blended workspace (strong secure WIFI etc)
 - Costs and measures required to facilitate blended work
 - Risks associated with blended Work and controls required
 - Operational needs of the Team/Department/Organisation
 - Additional training requirements
- Managers may need to rotate/timetable those on blended working arrangements to ensure good continuity of service in the workplace. On this basis, the Manager may, at their discretion, decide to designate specific day(s) on which blended working will not be available
- Once verbal agreement has been reached on arrangements with their manager, an employee can make an application for blended working for period of up to 12 months
- Once established, the agreed days for blended working will be reviewed at least quarterly, and more frequently if required, by Managers to ensure continuity of service and to take account of additional staff requesting blended working
- Agreed days may change periodically during the course of the year if necessary due to continuity of service requirements and ensuring fairness to all employees
- All policies and procedures that are relevant. e.g. ICT Usage Policy, Safety and Wellbeing Documentation, GDPR, Risk Assessment Guidelines and Documentation etc are available on www.LWETB.ie through the document section
- Employees availing of blended working arrangements cannot use to fulfil other personal responsibilities such as caring for a dependant/child or other non- work-related responsibilities
- Where consideration is being given to not granting an application for blended working, the Manager must consult with the HR department prior to any discussion with the employee
- Where a manager decides not to grant blended working in accordance with the arrangements set out, the employee must be provided with the rationale for the decision after consultation with HR
- An employee may request a review by the Chief Executive who may delegate the function to a director in accordance with the Education and Training Board Act, 2013. This request for a formal review must be made, in writing, within 10 days of the decision to refuse the application

7. Requirements

Availability and Hours of Work

- Employees working remotely are in work although in a different location. On this basis the normal working time arrangements i.e. the office attendance hours apply in respect of structuring work, subject to the standard daily working hours being delivered
- Employees are expected to be available to their colleagues, work calls, meetings, and transactions during normal working time outside their agreed breaks
- Employees on blended working are expected to fulfil their standard daily and weekly hours only and there is no facility for flexi time or overtime to accrue
- It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that they take the appropriate rest breaks during the working day to ensure that they operate within the requirements of the Organisation of Working Time Act (OWTA). It is expected that all employees avail of the same rest break opportunities as if they were physically in the office. A minimum of 30 minutes must be taken each day for lunch. Employees are advised not to work excessive hours and maintain a healthy work-life balance and to set boundaries in relation to working hours in order to facilitate disconnection from work outside of these hours
- Employees are advised not to work excessive hours and maintain a healthy work-life balance and to set boundaries in relation to working hours in order to facilitate disconnection from work outside of these hours
- When applying for blended working, the employee will be required to confirm their agreement to operate with the requirements of the OWTA and to avail of all rest break opportunities, including a minimum of 30 minutes for lunch. Start, finishing and rest/lunch break times must be submitted on application form for blended working. Should an employee find they are not in a position to avail of the required rest breaks on any given day, they are to notify their manager
- When working remotely the employee is to ensure that their desk phone is forwarded to their mobile/other arranged system in order for them to manage telephonic interaction as required. While the employee is expected to be available to take calls, in circumstances where returning a call may lead to a cost to the employee, this should be discussed with their Manager in the first instance
- Should any health and safety risks emerge the employee must immediately act and notify their manager
- In the event of a staff member feeling unwell the provisions of the sick leave policy will apply, policy available on LWETB website
- Once a remote working day has been agreed, employees cannot without prior consultation with and approval by their manager decide to change to an alternative day.

Reporting Procedures

Each Manager will be responsible for the administration of Blended Working Scheme within each pillar/department/centre and for liaising and feeding back to the HR Department and Senior Management.

Employees, when working remotely, continue to report to their Manager and are accountable for their work on the same basis as if they were on site for work. When working remotely, designated platforms such as Microsoft Teams, are to be utilised for scheduled meetings. Where there are meetings scheduled onsite on a day when a person is working remotely and the presence of the employee is required, the employee is expected to attend onsite to participate in such meetings. Where an employee is required to attend onsite on any day in a specific week when blended working was designated, arrangement to avail of an alternative day within that week can be made only with the agreement of their Manager and only if this is possible subject to organisational /section needs. Days cannot be carried over.

It is important that Managers and the person working remotely maintain contact and that the person working remotely continues to be involved in the normal decision-making processes as if they were on site.

Monitoring of work and availability, as outlined above, will be monitored by Managers and where concerns arise in respect of performance, such concerns will be addressed using the appropriate procedures.

8. Terms and Conditions including Leave Arrangements

Terms and Conditions

When blended working, the employee's terms and conditions of employment remain the same and all policies and procedures continue to apply for the duration of any blended working arrangements unless otherwise detailed.

Leave Arrangements

All other types of leave, both Statutory and Non-Statutory, e.g. Annual Leave, Sick Leave, etc will continue to operate as normal without being impacted by the blended Working Arrangements.

Employees who are blended working are deemed to be at work therefore it cannot be used in conjunction with or to replace other leave arrangements. On this basis, the requirement for employees to take appropriate leave, depending on the nature of the leave type remains in place, for example, annual leave, sick leave, parental leave, etc. Applications for leave and notification processes in respect of same remain unchanged including any deadlines specified within the relevant leave arrangements.

All leave arrangements must be taken in accordance with their purpose, respective legislation and/or circular.

Training and Attendance at Office

Where a team/management meeting or training is scheduled or where attendance at the office or at a work event is required on a blended working day the employee is to make themselves available to attend. The manager may on some occasions be able to facilitate an alternative day within that specific week only, subject to organisational/section needs.

9. Equipment / WIFI

Where blended working is agreed the employee will be provided with the following equipment:

- Laptop or tablet device
- Headset
- Additional monitor (on request)
- Keyboard
- Mouse
- Diacom set up
- Other as agreed by the Manager following consultation with ICT Dept and /or relevant Director

The provision of such equipment is on the understanding that:

- Employees may be required to bring some ICT equipment to and from their normal place of work as such equipment may form part of their place-of-work setup
- Employees will also be expected to bring in such equipment on the request of the IT department to facilitate repairs, upgrades, or preventative maintenance
- Employees will follow the necessary ICT security requirements in respect of multi factor authenticator (MFA) and any other arrangements as determined by the ICT Department and will partake in any related training

All equipment provided by LWETB remains the property of LWETB. Employees are expected to treat the equipment appropriately and to notify ICT support immediately of any defects that may occur. Equipment supplied to staff to enable remote working are work devices and must not be shared with other users in the home.

The individual will be required to ensure that they have an appropriate workstation available at home in order to be in a position to participate in blended working arrangements, this includes meeting any health and safety requirements as specified in the Health and Safety section.

Employees must also have strong, uninterrupted, and secure WIFI/Broadband to ensure MS Teams meetings can be held with camera on, file sharing etc. to be in a position to apply for blended working arrangements. Any expenses incurred for working remotely such as broadband, heating etc. will be the responsibility of the employee and tax relief may be applied for by employee from Revenue (see section 11). For employees looking to work from a Hub any cost associated with this will be the responsibility of the employee. Employees must comply at all times with LWETB ICT Usage Policy and GDPR requirements. In the event of a disruption to WIFI/Broadband signal, the employee should notify their Manager immediately and depending on the circumstances, the employee may be required to attend their work location. Repeat disruption to WIFI/Broadband signal will be grounds for the removal of the employee from the blended working arrangements.

10. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

Risk Assessment

LWETB, as the employer, has specific duties to ensure the safety, health, and welfare at work of all employees, a risk assessment will form part of the decision-making process in respect of granting blended working arrangements. The full list of issues that need to be considered and addressed by the employee in making an application are available as part of the Health and Safety Procedures which are available from Corporate Services.

Employees also have a responsibility to engage in the safety, health and welfare systems as set out by the employer; the employee in applying for blended working will be required to submit a self-evaluation risk assessment/checklist. Your blended working location may be subject to an onsite risk assessment by the employer. A completed risk assessment/checklist is required as part of the application process.

Employees are required to familiarise themselves with **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** of this document to support a healthy and safe work environment. Further information can be found on the HSA website. https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/Blended_working/

A risk assessment is required to be conducted on an annual basis no later than 01 September and given to the employee's manager for inclusion in the health and safety records. Any issues which arise on the risk assessment will be discussed with employees by their manager to address same.

The obligation on employees to report work related accidents or health and safety concerns remain in place while working remotely or in the office.

Dignity at Work

LWETB is committed to protecting dignity and respect across the organisation, whether this be in the work premises or when working remotely from home. The Employment Equality Act 1998-2015 place an obligation on employers to prevent harassment in the workplace. Every employee should be aware that all forms of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment are unacceptable, and every employee has a duty to behave in a courteous and respectful manner. This continues to apply when working remotely from home.

Under the Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act 2005, employers have a duty to prevent any improper conduct or behaviour which is likely to put the safety, health and welfare of employees at risk, and are required to deal with complaints appropriately.

Details of the nationally agreed procedures are available on the employee's intranet or on request from the Human Resources Department.

Employee Assistance Programme

The wellbeing of all employees is paramount. Employees who are blended working are reminded to familiarise themselves with LWETB's employee assistance arrangements and supports. The employee assistance service is a free confidential service available to employees of LWETB and their families. Contact details can be found on our website www.lwetb.ie or through the Human Resources Department on request.

Right to Disconnect

LWETB recognises the importance of appropriate work life balance to the wellbeing of all our employees. This encompasses the employees right to disconnect outside of their normal working hours. Where an employee exercises this right there is no expectation by the organisation or their fellow colleagues to engage in relation to any work-related matters outside of their normal working hours unless in the event of a critical incident.

11. Expenses for Blended Working

Revenue Relief

Remote working expenses are not paid by LWETB. Revenue relief for working from home expenses e.g. light, heat etc. is the responsibility of the individual once a formal arrangement is entered into. It is open to employees to make claims directly from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners in respect of certain costs incurred in working from home, at the end of the relevant tax year, in accordance with relevant tax laws. Further details of eWorking and tax are available on revenue.ie. Any claim made in this regard is solely a matter for the employee concerned.

Travel and Subsistence

Travel to and from the normal work location, where required on blended working days, is not covered by the T&S arrangements. T&S arrangements for necessary business travel and associated expenses are covered under the relevant policy.

12. Data Protection / GDPR

Employees should be aware that their obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 are not confined to the employer's work premises. They also apply when working from home.

Each employee should be alive to the risks associated with processing personal data while carrying out their duties remotely and must ensure the security of confidential, personal and sensitive data during blended working.

A copy of the Data Protection Policies and guidelines are available on LWETB website and must be read and understood.

13. Security, Confidentiality and Standards of Behaviour

In addition to Data Protection/GDPR requirements employees working from home are responsible for both the security of any official devices issued to them and the information stored on these devices. The same responsibilities apply to employees enabled to work from home using their own device. The following protocols apply;

- Storing of work-related documents – these should be locked away
- Work documents should not be disposed of in general household waste but should be stored securely and brought to the office regularly for confidential shredding
- Business calls and online meetings should be conducted in a confidential setting
- E-Filing – maintain security by password-protecting sensitive/confidential documents, and devices such as laptops should be shut down when not in use
- Screens should be locked when the employee is away from the device at any time
- Use of IT equipment – Organisational IT equipment should be used in line with relevant organisational policies
- Freedom of Information (FOI) – all records on computers/laptops etc., including instant messaging conversations are encompassed under the FOI Acts
- Standards of Behaviour – employees working from home are governed by the same standards of behaviour as when in the office environment – respect, dignity, conduct, professionalism etc. and
- Disclosure of information - employees remain subject to obligations in respect of confidentiality and to avoid improper disclosure of information gained in the course of their official work

14. Suspension / Cessation of Blended Working

There may be an occasion where blended working arrangements for an employee may have to change or be temporarily suspended. Such situations will normally occur in response to specific organisational needs e.g., during peak business periods, peak holiday periods or to ensure all employees are given an equal opportunity to avail of the scheme. In such circumstances as much notice as possible will be given.

Where an arrangement has been suspended indefinitely all LWETB ICT Equipment etc must be returned to LWETB.

Where an employee has an arrangement in place for blended working and concerns arise in relation to their overall performance and / or attendance, a decision may be taken to suspend blended working to provide the necessary supports required to address concerns.

Once satisfactory performance / attendance has been established the employee may make a new application for consideration.

Should there be no improvement in performance a decision may be taken to cease blended working arrangement for the employee. Reasonable notice will be given to the employee of same and all ETB ICT equipment must be returned to LWETB. It is the responsibility of the Manager to inform HR of any changes in blended working arrangements.

15. Review

This document is subject to review/amendment every six (6) months in light of changes in legislation and guidance from sources such as Internal Audit, C&AG, the Department of Education, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, or on the issuing of circular letter or by the Chief Executive in response to business needs. The date of implementation is the date of Chief Executive approval.

16. Ownership and Authorisation

OWNER	DATE	SIGNATURE
Organisation Support & Development Director	Nov 10, 2023	<u>Charlie Mitchell</u> Charlie Mitchell (Nov 10, 2023 16:10 GMT)
APPROVED BY	DATE	SIGNATURE
Chief Executive	Nov 13, 2023	<u>Liz Lavery</u> Liz Lavery (Nov 13, 2023 14:34 GMT)

17. Appendix A – Guide to Working Remotely

Employee Guide – Working Remotely

All employees should all be aware of the importance of communicating and staying connected with each other during this time and be proactive in maintaining effective communications. Practical considerations include:

Your working day

- Comply with your organisation's arrangements for recording hours.
- Maintain a healthy daily routine as far as possible. Keep set times for your breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Eat nutritious meals and drink plenty of water. Build time in your schedule to exercise
- Ensure you take your normal breaks away from your work area and take a short walk, if possible
- Aim to stand and move for at least one minute in every hour
- Try to vary work tasks to ensure that you are not working in the same position for long periods of time
- Be mindful of your phone usage while working to avoid distractions from social media notifications. This allows you to stay focused on the task at hand
- Avoid eye fatigue by resting your eyes periodically
- Set boundaries – be mindful of your working hours
- Ensure your manager is aware if you are unable to work on a given day for example, due to scheduled leave, illness etc. Normal procedures regarding notice continue to apply
- Protect yourself and others from harm during the course of your work, for example, take care of any equipment provided and report any issues appropriately
- Notify HR if you have a disability or are sensitive to risk (for example, pregnant, mobility needs) and have specific workspace or equipment needs/concerns

Staying Connected

- You may be working alone for a long period in the day, so having the mechanisms and structures to stay connected with colleagues will be very important not only from a work and delivery perspective, but also an individual and team perspective
- Everyone should continue to be available and contactable to their teams and managers during the working day bearing in mind the work patterns of team members
- Communications at a team level should continue, maximising the use of the technology available
- Meetings should be arranged using available technology with colleagues expected to participate in the same way, albeit remotely
- Where access is possible, please ensure you are saving your relevant files in a shared location so the wider team can access as required

Planning and Prioritising

- While work and tasks will continue to be assigned in the normal way (i.e. through your manager, colleagues, in boxes etc.), working without face-to-face contact will require more self-discipline, organisation and clearer two-way communication
- Ensure you are clear on what your priorities are and any deadlines you may be working to
- Please speak to your direct manager on an ongoing basis and don't delay in asking for clarification, support or assistance on your work if you need it

Use of Video Conferencing/On Line Meetings

Working from home has resulted in most communications now being carried out via video conferencing/online meetings. The following are general tips and associated risks in the use of video conferencing/online meetings.

- Appropriate internet connectivity speed for specific tasks will be required e.g. audio/video conferencing, cameras turned on, collaboration, file sharing, presentations, attending or delivering professional development/training etc.
- Be aware of contention on the line within the house.
- Turn off smart speakers (especially for phone and video calls)
- LWETB Background should be used on all video calls/meetings.
- If getting an echo on call reset (unplug and plug back in) headset/microphone
- Mute microphones if on video conference calls when not talking.
- Turn off internal microphone on laptop if using an external speaker as it may lead to echoes.
- Use a headset if possible as it reduces speaker and microphone issues.
- Ensure all devices are secured at all times including at home and travelling to/from work.
- Be mindful when using video conferencing for conversations on matters of a highly confidential nature.

Role of the People Manager

Leading and Managing Teams

People managers at all levels should

- Promote a positive, open, and inclusive working environment where individuals and teams feel valued and supported.
- Be open to new ways of working - discuss and agree flexibility around work times with their teams and managers.
- Examine and reimagine the roles of their teams. Consider if new ways of working have emerged during the crisis that have enhanced productivity and could be embedded on a permanent basis.
- Actively foster innovation - encourage their teams to share ideas, use their initiative, take informed risks and develop their confidence to make decisions.
- Empower their team members to take responsibility for their work and give them the authority to do so.

- Help their teams to avoid burnout and overworking by encouraging a healthy routine. around the hours they work, for example, take tea breaks and a lunch break each day and set their start time and end time – allowing flexibility around other responsibilities where needed.
- Ensure all team members including themselves are not working excessively long hours and understand their rights under the Organisation of Working Time Act, including their right to uninterrupted rest breaks.
- Act as a role-model and support a healthy work–life balance. Lead by example, for example, by taking leave, rest breaks, and actively participating in remote social events.

Maximise Individual and Team Productivity and Performance

People managers at all levels should:

- Proactively manage, motivate, and support individual and team performances. Continued engagement between people managers and their employees is a key element of the management of performance, including employees on probation.
- Continue to use support tools recognising that these are in place to support effective people manager/employee engagement – not to replace direct engagement and conversation.
- Set clear work priorities, objectives, and expectations. Focus on what employees should be accomplishing by emphasising objectives and outcomes over processes – be flexible. People managers should consider how they can best support employees in achieving their agreed objectives in the short term while at the same time developing their skills and capability in the longer term.
- Trust teams to get on with their work but provide them with ongoing support and supervision.
- Ensure as far as is practicable that team members have access to the relevant tools, systems and equipment to perform their jobs and help them adjust to new ways of working.
- Review their own and their team members' individual learning needs considering blended working and changing job requirements.
- Encourage team development as far as is practicable including exploring innovative development methods.
- Enhance opportunities for recognition to motivate the individual team member and encourage similar behaviour from their team members.
- Leave space to discuss career development.
- Address performance issues appropriately and without delay, seeking HR advice as required.

Engaging Employees and Communicating

Effectively People managers at all levels should:

- Maintain close and regular contact with their team members to maximise engagement at an individual and team level.
- Identify where employees are having difficulty adjusting to working from home in order to offer support as and when required.
- Keep teams informed of ongoing developments by regularly communicating relevant organisational and team information.

- Stay in touch with their own manager, teams and colleagues for both work and social engagements.
- Hold regular online team meetings to share updates, discuss the work programme, agree ways of working, and support each other.
- Hold frequent one-to-one conversations to discuss outputs, progress and development options.
- Acknowledge that virtual communications are different — and won't be perfect — but should still be professional and respectful of others. People managers should actively instigate contact with their team members to promote involvement and engagement and should encourage people managers within their teams to do likewise.
- Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport, reduces feelings of isolation and eases communication between people working from home.
- Look after the health and wellbeing of the individuals on your team – keep a look out for any signs of anxiety or distress caused by the current circumstances.
- Remind team members of existing health and wellbeing supports, for example EAS, organisational wellbeing programmes.

Onboarding and Induction

People managers at all levels should:

- Ensure as far as practicable new employees have the equipment and access required to carry out their role effectively.
- Have a one-to-one discussion with new employees to welcome them to your team, set out business objectives and work expectations and to explore development needs.
- Use video conferencing where possible to introduce new employees to their team members and colleagues.
- Arrange for key team members to introduce themselves and welcome the new employee, ideally one-to-one or in a small group setting.
- Give new employees the opportunity to attend team meetings as quickly as possible so that they can form an understanding of the organisation's culture and the interaction between roles/divisions/units.
- Adopt innovative solutions to facilitate the delivery of information, training, and/ other supports that would traditionally have been provided in person by IT, HR or people managers to assist employees with reaching the expected standard of performance.
- Set objectives and carry out the probationary process without delay to ensure performance expectations are clearly communicated to the new employee from the outset. The same principles of performance management apply, even when probationary reviews are taking place remotely. Consult local HR without delay in the event of probationary difficulties.
- Schedule regular video conferencing/phone calls with new employees. Use this time to check how the employee is settling in, encourage and answer any questions they may have and discuss progress with assigned tasks in order to identify any support they may need.
- Encourage team colleagues to pro-actively engage with the new member of the team to ensure that they are actively involved in social and work initiatives.

18. APPENDIX B – Working from Home Safely Checklist

Working from Home – Safely Checklist (must be read in conjunction with HSA guidelines)

Working Environment

- Ensure there is sufficient space to work comfortably.
- Ensure you can access the workspace easily and safely.
- Ensure workspace is kept in a safe condition.
- Ensure adequate lighting, heating and ventilation is provided at the workspace.
- Ensure there are no trips and/or hazards (e.g., cables, electrical wires).
- Ensure electrical sockets, plugs and cords are in good condition (for example, no charring, exposed wiring, or frayed cables).
- Ensure where possible there is sufficient privacy and freedom from disturbances.
- Do not place laptop/monitor in a position that may result in a glare on the screen.
- Report any equipment defects to your employer.
- Report any injury arising from work activity to your manager immediately.
- Keep flammable materials (e.g. paper) and ignition sources (cigarettes) to a minimum
- Ensure smoke detectors/fire alarms are present and in working order.

Ergonomic Checklist

- When seated, feet should be flat on the floor, thighs parallel to the floor and lower legs approximately vertical.
- Sit upright whilst using laptop/computer.
- Use an upright chair that fits and supports the small of your back.
- Position screen level with, or slightly lower than, your eyes and therefore avoiding bending the neck for sustained periods of time.
- The screen should be positioned at approximately an arm's length away from your seated position.
- Space should be allowed in front of the keyboard to provide support for the hands and arms.
- Follow up after the assessment to ensure that any corrective actions required have been completed.
- Laptops/Computers or other work devices should not be left unlocked when employee leaves their workspace.
- Business calls should be made/taken in a private space.

Security and Confidentiality

If you are concerned about or identify any specific risks, these should be flagged and discussed with your manager in the first instance.

Safety Risk Assessment

A homeworking risk assessment/checklist must be completed and submitted with your application for blended working.