

North Somerset Council

# Hybrid Working Policy

Updated: 9 November 2022

Hybrid working will help us become a more dynamic and flexible organisation that fosters creativity, efficiency, and collaboration.

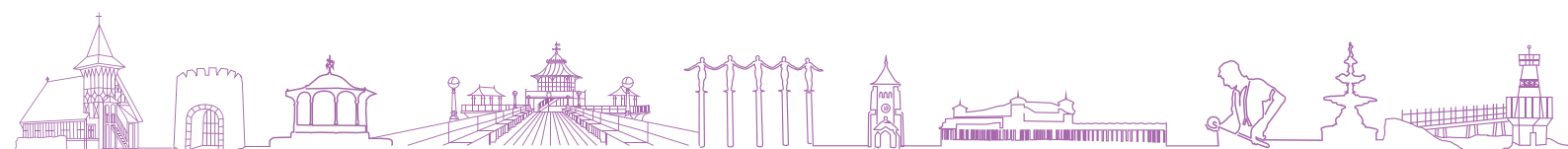
Our new ways of working will enable us to better meet service users and community needs, balanced with the ability to choose where and when we work.

Here at North Somerset Council, we want to enable everyone to do their best work. We know that having some flexibility over our working arrangements helps us to be more productive and supports our day-to-day working lives.

Working in this way supports our vision (open, fairer, greener), by helping to tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development. It also contributes to our People Strategy encouraging an enabled and responsive working culture and is consistent with our values.

Our Hybrid Working Policy describes how employees can work from a council building, in the community, at home or a combination of these.

This is a non-contractual policy, which may be adjusted depending on the circumstances. North Somerset Council reserves the right to vary this policy.



## What is Hybrid Working?

Hybrid working is a flexible working model. Employees may spend time working remotely (at home or in the community or other locations), and/or at council sites.

Where you work will depend on the task you are doing and the kind of role you have.

We want to ensure that we all work in a way which enables North Somerset Council to carry out its activities as efficiently as possible, whilst providing you with some flexibility to decide how, when and where you work best. Simply, it's about how you do the right work, in the right place at the right time.

The hybrid working approach relates to the physical design of offices as well as the culture of the workplace. It's important that we can respond to the changing needs of the communities we serve both now and in the future.

This policy is not exhaustive. It's important that everyone adopts the **principles** of the policy.

## How does this work with other policies?

The policy aims to provide a framework for consistent and fair practice when implementing and managing hybrid working practices. We still need to work towards delivering a better service, ensure that working arrangements are safe, be fair in our approach, and understand what is expected of us.

You may find it helpful to read the **Homeworking Policy**.

If you are looking to permanently change your work pattern or the hours you work, please use the **Flexible Working Policy**.

## Useful terms

Here is a brief explanation of some terms often used in association with hybrid working:

- **Ways of Working**: the overall programme covering the cultural change in the way we work
- **Hybrid Working**: the flexibility to work from the office, home, community or a combination of these to meet the priorities of the working day.
- **Agile Working**: when people, processes, and ICT all come together at the right time in the right location to achieve a task.
- **Touchdown space**: is a desk or place to work, available for those who usually work elsewhere

- **Team touchpoints:** any time when team members interact or communicate with each other. This is usually with a particular purpose such as a meeting or working together.
- **Focus working:** Also known as focus time – this is when time is spent working on a specific activity to the exclusion of others. It's positively regarded as highly productive: quick and effective.
- **Virtual connections:** keeping in touch or communicating via a network (computer or phone) – any means other than 'in person.'
- **Collaboration:** working with at least one other person to complete a task. For North Somerset Council values: collaboration is demonstrated when working with people outside your own team.
- **Clear desk policy:** Also known as clean desk policy – this is when all work and personal items are removed from a desk or area when the person using them leaves at the end of their working day.
- **Flexible Working:** Working with a change to your usual working pattern such as different times or days
- **Homeworking:** working from your usual home address on a regular, occasional, or temporary basis
- **Remote Working:** working from another location other than your work base
- **Community based:** working from a location in the local area other than your work base

## Delivering our services

The extent of opportunities for hybrid working will vary according to your job role, as it's important that we remain accessible to our communities and our colleagues, where our job demands this.

We've identified four work styles:

**Fixed Worker** Majority office-based role. Roles that align to this workstyle will be in the office on average 4+ days a week.

**Flexible Worker** Time is split between office and home. Roles that align to this workstyle will be in the office on average 2-3 days a week.

**Mobile Worker** Majority home-based. Roles that align to this workstyle will be in the office or community based up to 1 day a week.

**Field Worker** Majority home based. Roles that align to this workstyle will spend minimal or no time in the office.

More details can be found in the **Appendix** and on **the Source**.

**Note:** The time spent in the office is a 'typical' amount which can be agreed with your manager and where appropriate applied pro-rata for part time workers.

Your manager will discuss with you which work style best fits your role, taking account of the level of flexibility that is most suited to your job and meets the service need.

If you do not wish to work remotely or at home, or your circumstances have changed, please discuss this with your manager.

Where changes are needed to reflect how work is allocated and organised, your manager will discuss this with you at the relevant time.

Temporary changes to how you work (e.g. to accommodate a short term project or to provide cover for a colleague) will not result in a change to your workstyle.

Line Managers will need to agree any permanent change to work style, taking account of:

- The effect on the ability to deliver services
- Work output and outcomes
- The ability to work safely and healthily
- Personal reasons – this could include any impairment you may have
- Fairness and consistency

Managers must notify the HR Team of any changes to work styles for their team. You can view the details via iTrent Manager Self Service.

Your work style may change if you move to a different job role within the council.

## Key Principles

Here are some key principles that underpin us working in a more flexible way:

- It's based on trust. We trust you to choose the best times, places, and available technology to match the work you do, with your personal preferences, and to balance this with your own needs and the needs of your team and service users. Note: your 'best times' should fit within the bandwidth for your role – see flexi-time section of the **Leave and Time Off Policy**.
- Work is an activity and not a destination. Your performance will be evaluated on the impact you have and the outcomes you deliver.
- It is open to everyone who has a suitable role regardless of how long they have worked here. We'd also like to support contractors and temporary agency workers to work flexibly.
- We commit to making sure that you have the right technology and equipment to support you to work in this way.
- Hybrid working should not impact the level or quality of service to customers or your colleagues.

- Our policies apply in every location you work from. You may find it helpful to refresh your knowledge of our **Code of Conduct** and **Information Security Policy**.
- We know that connecting with your colleagues and others is important for your wellbeing. We will continue to provide safe office spaces for you to collaborate and connect with each other.

### **Some key things to remember about hybrid working:**

- It will depend on the kind of role you do, the directorate you work in, the level of supervision you need in your role, any minimum levels of physical cover required as well as the technology and environment you have available to you.
- **Our business needs will take priority when considering our approach and individual roles.**
- Working in this way will not change your contractual terms and conditions of employment in respect of working hours or normal location of work; it's an informal arrangement that may be changed depending on business needs.
- The location of your base for expense claim purposes is unchanged. Claims are made from your work base location (not home).
- It's not the same as a flexible working agreement. If you want to make a more permanent change to your hours or working pattern, you will need to request this separately through our **Flexible Working Policy**.
- Hybrid working may be considered as a reasonable adjustment for those with a disability and in some other circumstances. The HR Team can provide further guidance.
- If you identify as a disabled person and have any access needs or accessible equipment, these will be considered when planning for hybrid working.
- Your manager will work with you to explore how hybrid working could work for you and your team based on your preferences, the needs of your role and the needs of the business.
- We will always try to support this way of working if we can and if your role is suitable. However, please remember that any working arrangement is subject to the ongoing agreement, and sometimes might need to be changed for business reasons.

## Benefits

Hybrid Working has benefits for both the council and employees.

### Benefits for individuals include:

- enabling greater flexibility and autonomy that suits your needs
- the opportunity to improve work/life balance
- reducing time spent travelling
- less interruptions and the potential for improved productivity

### Benefits for the council include:

- aid the attraction and recruitment of new employees and the retention of those whose personal circumstances change
- improvements in engagement and motivation due to great flexibility
- better use of space assets with the potential to improve sustainability and reduce carbon footprint
- safeguarding against any future challenges in the way we need to work – flexibility has already been established
- enable our workspaces to support different groups/teams

## Key Considerations

You might want to consider and discuss the following in your teams:

### Working Hours and Keeping in Touch

Where your workstyle allows, we want to empower you to flex the times you work so you can balance your home life around the needs of your role. We trust you to manage your own time and make sure you do the hours you are contracted to do. However, there are some important things we would like you to be aware of:

- You should make yourself available to others during reasonable working hours when you are needed by your team.
- We may ask you (with enough notice) to be available at certain times to meet the needs of the business, to physically be in the office to collaborate, or attend training or provide support and training for new colleagues including apprentices.
- There may be times when we might ask you to come in at short notice. We'll let you know the circumstances and provide as much notice as possible. An example is to cover for a colleague who is sick in a customer facing role.

- You must complete the time recording sheet provided. Other arrangements may be in place for roles exempt from the Flexitime Scheme or agreed with the HR Team.
- Flexing your working times should not result in extra work for other members of the team or compromise the objectives of your team.
- If you choose to work late during unsociable hours, please be courteous and respectful to your colleagues. Your colleagues are not expected to respond during unsociable hours.
- You are not expected to work long or unsocial hours (unless those working times suit you) – if you have concerns about your working hours you should discuss this with your line manager.
- Just so you know you won't be entitled to any reimbursement or overtime if you choose to work unsociable hours or more hours than you are contracted to do, that have not been agreed with your manager in line with the **Leave and Time Off Policy**.
- You should be prepared to work at an alternative location in the event of equipment or related service failure.
- We know that modern life is complicated, and that working in this way can help you balance your home and work life. However, hybrid working is not suited as a way of managing emergency leave or for making care arrangements if it has a significant impact on your ability to carry out your day-to-day role. Please refer to the **Leave and Time Off Policy**.

## The ability to organise work among team members

Any routine work still needs to be completed on time and to the required standard. Managers will also need to take account of holidays and other absences that may impact service delivery.

The approach to the introduction of new work, processes or projects will be different when undertaking hybrid working. Teams can discuss and agree how this is achieved. The best approach is likely to vary dependent on the nature of work, the time needed to complete it, and the number of people needed in achieve it.

## Personal safety

Your safety and wellbeing are important, and your manager will check in with you regularly. This is particularly important if you spend long periods of your working time alone.

If you spend time working alone whether at home or elsewhere, you should read and implement the guidance in the **Lone Working Policy** and Health and Safety Manual Section 23. Let your manager know if you have any concerns now or in the future.

Wherever you are working from you should ensure that you have, completed the council's e learning module covering DSE and Workstation Safety (available on the Learning Pool) and **DSE/Homeworking self-assessment**.

## Organising rotas for essential services

Arrangements will need to be made for appropriate cover. Core contact time and cover arrangements should be agreed between the team and the line manager wherever possible. However, where an agreement cannot be reached, the line manager will decide on the level of cover and who carries out the work. The decision may need to take account of individuals experience, knowledge, and skills.

## Work performance

Work performance can often improve when individuals work in a more flexible way. However, if performance issues develop when you are utilising hybrid working, your manager will discuss this with you.

Because good communication is key to the success of hybrid working, you should ensure that you know what is expected of you in your role via your job description, 1:1 meeting, day-to-day discussion, and your appraisal. You may find it helpful to read the **One to One Policy** and **The My Work Performance – Employee Guide**.

Whilst working more flexibly is based on trust, it's still important that work performance is monitored to ensure productivity and output.

Your manager will discuss with you any need to manage your work performance under the **Capability Policy** and/or the withdrawal of hybrid working. Advice and guidance can be sought from the HR Team.

You may also find it helpful to refer to the **Staff Privacy Notice** and **Acceptable Usage Policy**.

## Personal Costs and Expenses

Here are a few things to consider about personal costs and expenses when utilising hybrid working:

In line with our vision (open, fairer, greener), we should minimise the need to print anything. If printing is needed it is expected that we will use council facilities. This is particularly relevant for bulk printing or postage to help to minimise costs.

When working from home you will need to use your own broadband facilities and meet any increased energy costs – you won't be reimbursed for doing so.



If your work equipment fails in some way, you will be expected to attend work at your base location or other remote location to maintain productivity. When this is not possible, and you are unable to work, the time may be agreed as annual or other leave subject to entitlements and agreement with your line manager.

## Contractual Work Location

All employees have a designated base location. This base will be unchanged by hybrid working and is used for mileage claims.

It is important that all employees manage their travel and limit this where possible, to achieve the environmental benefits of hybrid working.

Video conferencing via Teams may be used to keep in touch and to minimise travelling to meetings.

Mileage claims will be reimbursed under the usual terms and conditions of claiming expenses and subsistence allowance detailed in the **Travel and Subsistence Policy**.

**For clarity:** travelling between the designated base location and home isn't refundable. The Travel and Subsistence Policy provides worked examples of mileage claims.

## Fairness and Consistency

Each area of service has different needs due to the nature of the work and their customer group(s). A 'one size fits all' approach can't be applied to all employees.

All job roles are allocated a workstyle group, which must be fairly and consistently applied. Where changes are needed, Managers must consider:

- service impact
- fairness and consistency with other team members and other teams
- wellbeing and safety of individuals and the team
- ensure any changes make for equitable outcomes where possible

The HR Team can provide guidance if needed.

## Review

Not all hybrid working arrangements will be successful either from the service point of view or the individual's point of view, so they are open to review at any point.

Managers will only stop hybrid working arrangements for sound business or performance reasons and after consulting with the employee.

## Home Working

If you are working from home, you should read the **Homeworking Policy** and complete the e-learning module/DSE assessment.

You may want to contact anyone with an interest in your property (e.g. mortgage lenders, landlords, leaseholders, building and contents insurer) to make sure there isn't anything they need to consider when you are home working.

## Health and Safety

A Health and Safety Risk Assessment will need to be carried out at least annually, or when any changes are made to the workspace. This must be agreed by the manager before employees will be allowed to work from home.

**A risk assessment form** is available from the intranet.

When working remotely, even if it is only on an ad-hoc basis, you must ensure you have suitable workspace with adequate security, storage, seating, space, and screening from noise. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting.

If you identify as a disabled person or have an impairment and use accessible equipment or software, you should also consider the availability of this when deciding where to work.

Wherever you are working from, please make sure that you know how to evacuate the building in the case of an emergency, and that you have completed the Fire Safety training module.

## Display Screen Equipment

If you are setting yourself up to work remotely, you will need to complete the Display Screen Equipment training module, available via the Learning Pool. The module will take you through a workstation self-assessment to help you make sure that your place of work is safe, supportive, free from risk and that any access to confidential information or data is treated with care.

You must ensure you have a reliable and secure internet connection. You will be responsible for providing your own broadband connection and related equipment to work from home.

You will be able to use your laptop in a council building or any other remote location where public access Wi-Fi connectivity is available.

If you are working from a public place, please be mindful of any potential confidentiality or IT security risks. You may need to have extra security on your laptop in the form of a key fob if you work remotely, particularly if you deal with especially sensitive information. This can be arranged via the ICT helpdesk.

You may find it helpful to read the **Information Security Policy** available from the intranet.

Mobile phones will only be issued for job needs purposes. Laptop phones must otherwise be used for making and receiving telephone calls.

If you have a disability and need any reasonable adjustments to be made to your workstation whether in the office or in another location, please let your manager know. Further help and guidance can be sought via the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

If you identify as a disabled person and use accessible software, you can register for the ICT Equality Support Service. Please contact the **Inclusion and Corporate Development Team** for more information.

If you have a newly acquired disability or your disability has changed, you may find it helpful to review the support that may be available via **Access to Work**. Individuals can apply for **Access to Work** support. You should discuss any application with your manager.

You can find out more about the **support available for disabled staff** via the Source.

## Other equipment

All employees who work remotely will have been provided with council owned equipment. You may find it helpful to read the **Homeworking Policy** which includes details for the provision of desks and chairs.

If you have been allocated personally adapted equipment (e.g. an ergonomic keyboard and mouse) you will be able to keep this for your personal use and move it with you to where you are working (home, any offices or remote sites).

Your health and safety are important, so if you usually work with specially adapted equipment you should ensure that it is available at your work location. If it's critical that you have adapted equipment at more than one site, you should contact **Access to Work** for support. You should also

discuss any concerns with your line manager at the earliest opportunity. Working remotely is subject to the availability of the correct equipment.

You may wish to contact **Access to Work** who will complete an assessment and provide equipment across both sites.

If you need any extra, technical, or supportive equipment to help you do your job, please discuss this with your line manager before ordering.

## Safety issues

Employees who need to carry equipment and documents must ensure they use suitable trolleys and carriers.

In person meetings with customers, contractors or officers from other agencies must not take place in your home. You should also keep your home address and telephone number private.

If you are working from home, you should ensure that the appropriate safety measures to prevent accidents are in place. You should read the **Homeworking Policy** for more details and act on any instructions or appropriate guidance provided.

Accidents must be reported using the normal North Somerset Council procedures. This includes accidents that occur whilst you are working from home. Please note that in some circumstances it may be necessary for employees of the council (e.g. Corporate Health and Safety Employees) to visit you at your home and assess your work area(s).

## Care of Equipment

If any equipment gets lost, damaged or stolen, you need to let your line manager know as soon as possible.

If you no longer need a piece of equipment, or are leaving your employment, please ensure that all council owned property is returned.

## Property and Insurance

Computers, laptops, phones, and other items of equipment provided by the council are automatically covered by the council's property insurance policy. You will still need to make sure the equipment and any information on it, is safe and secure.

Equipment for the purposes of working at home (such as office equipment or broadband) not provided by North Somerset Council will have no entitlement to IT support or insurance cover. It's therefore recommended that you advise your home insurers that you are working from home.

## Information Security

The Data Protection Act 1998 must be complied with in relation to the security of information.

**The A-Z of Information Governance** contains essential guidance to protect information security. You should ensure that you have read and work within the following documents:

- **Information Security Policy**
- **Acceptable Usage Policy**
- **Data Protection Guidance**

It's important that when dealing with personal information the same measures must apply to remote working as working on council premises. All council paperwork should be securely locked away and only be accessible to you – or better still it should be in electronic format.

Your screens and documents should not be vulnerable to being overlooked by other people when you are working remotely on laptops.

You must take care of equipment, software, files, and any other information to make sure it isn't lost. It is particularly important to ensure that other people (in the home or whilst working off site) can't access confidential or personal information.

## Communication and Contact

Effective communication and engagement with employees, including front line workers, is essential to developing our culture, new behaviours, and ways of working.

For safety reasons, you must be contactable whilst working remotely. You may need to log into your phone and make any diverts to a mobile phone.

Arrangements should be made for effective communication to be maintained between employees, line managers and between colleagues.

It is essential for regular team meetings to be held to develop and maintain professional working relationships. 1:1's, work-based meetings, training and development, access to People Services, and well-being support will all be accessible when you are working remotely.

Electronic diaries must be used, regularly updated and be open for others to view. You should use the privacy settings to ensure that sensitive information about who and why you are meeting is not publicly available.

Electronic diaries should reflect working routines as well as meetings to ensure effective time management and facilitate diary booking.

You must ensure that your contact details are up to date, including the publication of work-allocated mobile phone numbers.

You should not give out your personal telephone number for work purposes, unless you are using your own phone instead of a work phone by your own agreement.

Any employee undertaking client visits or attending meetings must follow the same “lone working principles” that they would if leaving from the office.

## Working Outside the UK

Due to the potential complex legal and tax implications, alongside the insurance implications we are unable to support arrangements or requests for permanent relocations outside the UK.

Employees must be able to attend an North Somerset Council site when requested, within a reasonable timeframe.

## Working Hours

We know that for many of you, hybrid working can boost your productivity and wellbeing. However, there are still some important things for you to be aware of:

- It can be easy to lose track of time and work more hours than you usually would when working remotely. It is important that to remember to take regular rest breaks; at least 30 consecutive minutes if working for 6 hours or more and make time to switch off. Working in this way should not significantly change how many hours you usually work.
- Hybrid working and specifically working from home, should not be used as a way of carrying on working when you are sick. If you are ill, then you would need to take time off until you have recovered. You should follow the sickness absence reporting process detailed in the **Health and Disability Absence Management Policy**.
- Where working for long spells at a screen make sure you take regular breaks

## Employee Welfare

We know that collaboration, connection and having a sense of belonging can help you stay well. We encourage you to think about what this means for you, and to actively make time to connect with your colleagues. To find out the support available to you visit our **wellbeing pages** on the Source.

We know that hybrid working has its benefits. We also know that working remotely may bring its own challenges, so we want to ensure that you have access to support if and when you need it.

If you are experiencing a physical or mental health problem, we encourage you to talk to your GP about it as soon as you can, so you can start accessing support.

You may wish to advise your line manager or the HR Team about any health concerns. We want to support you to continue to work, and there may be some help we can provide such as reasonable adjustments.

You may need additional support, so remember we have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) who can help. You can contact the EAP on 0800 030 5182 or via the website: <http://www.healthassuredeap.co.uk/>

It's independent and totally confidential.

## Other sources of wellbeing support

Our Employee Assistance Provider, Health Assured have an App called 'My Healthy Advantage' which is available to all employees and their immediate family.

The app has been designed with users – and their wellbeing – in mind. To access the My Healthy Advantage app, please download it from the App Store or Google Play and enter the following employer code when prompted: **MHA001516**

You can find more details from:

- **My Healthy Advantage app | Health Assured**
- **MIND** [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) 0300 123 3393 – For information and support on Mental Health issues
- **Domestic Abuse** – Next Link North Somerset provide support services for anyone (women, men, children) who have suffered domestic abuse. Services include telephone help and advice, safe houses, community outreach services and group programmes. The helpline service is available Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm on 0800 4700 280. An out-of-hours service is available via the National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247. The **Domestic Abuse Policy** contains more details of the support available.
- **Samaritans** – Offer emotional support 24 hours a day, in full confidence. [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) Call 116 123 – it's free.

## Sources of advice and guidance

If you need advice or guidance, you can contact the following council teams:

**Ways of Working:** [waysofworking@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:waysofworking@n-somerset.gov.uk)

**HR:** [human.resources@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:human.resources@n-somerset.gov.uk) or 01275 888 7888

**Corporate Health and Safety:** [HealthSafetyCorporate@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:HealthSafetyCorporate@n-somerset.gov.uk)

**Inclusion and Development:** [IC.Development@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:IC.Development@n-somerset.gov.uk)

**ICT Helpdesk:** <https://agilisys.service-now.com/agcsm>

**Facilities:** [FACILITIES.HELPDESK@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:FACILITIES.HELPDESK@n-somerset.gov.uk)

## Things to think about

When considering hybrid working arrangements everyone needs to take account of the following:

- A suitable working environment must be available. This includes the provision of a suitable workstation and means of communication.
- You must keep equipment and council information safe.
- Appropriate communication and support channels must be made available e.g. weekly team meetings to monitor work programmes and co-ordinate office cover.
- Managers must be able to monitor office cover i.e. who is working from home, working in the community, attending meetings etc.
- The default is for electronic file storage. Other files must not be stored at a workstation.
- It is essential to plan and agree a work programme between line manager and colleagues to ensure suitable office cover is provided and equipment is available when needed.
- All employees will adhere to a clear desk policy as they will be sharing facilities with other employees. Lockable pedestals /cabinets are available for your personal effects and work-related items.

## Policy Implementation and Review

You may find it helpful to read the supporting information which accompanies this policy.

You can feedback on the application of the policy directly to your line manager, the HR Team or via the employee survey.

This policy will be reviewed within six months of launch.

Is there anything missing from these pages? Please contact the HR Team.



## Appendix – Workstyles

You can find more details about **Workstyles** on the Source.

### Flexible Worker

- 2-3 days in the office
- Spends a mix of time in office and at home. Decision on where to work is derived by the activity being performed
- Training around work life balance and time keeping, including how to balance travel time into schedules
- Good communication with team to ensure touchpoints can be held when needed – organising team days in the office for face to face conversations

### Mobile Worker

- 0-1 day in the office
- Spends minimal time in the office – coming in mainly for meetings with colleagues, team touchpoints and/or focus working
- Virtual connections with team are important to keep connected with colleagues
- Technology is portable
- Training around DSE assessments, best practice for physical and mental health and maintaining work-life balance

### Fixed Worker

- 4+ days in the office
- Spends most or all of time in the office
- May be circumstantial rather than role-based such as sub optimal working at home, can't be DSE compliant, feeling isolated, unable to maintain work-home life balance etc.
- Cultural encouragement to still treat the office as shared space; clear desk policies etc.

### Field Worker

- 0 planned days in the office
- Supported by touchdown space
- Other details as per Mobile Worker

This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

For all enquiries please contact  
[human.resources@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:human.resources@n-somerset.gov.uk)