

Equality Impact Assessment - Full Assessment Form

<i>Title of the strategy, policy, procedure, or project:</i>		Flexible Working Policy
<i>Service Area:</i>	Organisational Development and Performance	
<i>Lead Officer:</i>	Fiona Pittam, Head of Organisational Development and Performance and David Clamp, Human Resources Manager	
<i>Date of assessment:</i>	25/02/2022	
<i>Is the strategy, policy, procedure, or project?</i>		
<i>Changed</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>New</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Section 1 – Clear aims and objectives

1. What is the aim of the strategy, policy, procedure or project?

The Flexible Working policy has been developed to provide a corporate framework for when staff can work and from any location, for example at the Council Offices, Depot or partners premises, at home or out on site or in any combination of these. This Policy will enable managers and staff to gain a better understanding of flexible working and understand the basic principles that should be applied.

Flexible working includes all forms of work outside the contracted base of employment including non-traditional environments such as touchdown space, remote work and virtual work.

Having a sustainable and resilient workforce is a priority for the Council, and the flexible working policy will have a positive impact on services for customers and residents and offer different employment options for the current and future workforce that improve levels of performance, attendance and health and wellbeing.

It is anticipated, as the impact of COVID-19 reduces, that this will be particularly positive in terms of building on the achievements and success of the Council in providing services for the community of South Derbyshire.

As part of the Flexible Working offer, it is important that consideration is given to the benefits of the individual and the organisation to ensure they are inclusive of our entire workforce.

The Flexible Working policy will replace the Council's Flexible Working Hours Scheme.

2. Who is intended to benefit from the strategy, policy, procedure or project and how?

Customers, residents, Elected Members and the current and future workforce.

This will be through the accessibility and availability of services for customers, residents and Elected Members and to provide a different employment model for the current and future workforce to support the recruitment and retention of staff, positive impact on levels of attendance and promote the health and wellbeing of the workforce.

3. What outcomes do you want to achieve?

The stated benefits of the policy include:

- Improved and extended customer access to services
- Services are designed around the needs of customers
- Delivers on environment commitments through reduced carbon emissions with less personal and business travel, lower energy consumption in offices and less waste.
- Realises commercial opportunities for the use of existing office space
- Maximizes the investment in and acceleration of digital and technological solutions
- Builds employer reputation leading to enhanced levels of employee retention and attracting new talent and skills
- Positive impact on levels of attendance and engagement
- Promotes fairness and equality through removing physical and other barriers to employment and access to services

4. What barriers exist for both the Council and the groups/people with protected characteristics to enable these outcomes to be achieved?

The implementation of the policy may have a differential impact on groups. The impact and actions to address any potential barriers are identified in the following sections.



5. Any other relevant background information

The Flexible Working Policy will support the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 and deliver highly efficient, affordable and cost effective services that meets the needs and supports the communities we serve and to support staff to work in a modern and flexible way.

Section 2 – Collecting your information

6. What existing data sources do you have to assess the impact of the *strategy, policy, procedure or project?*

South Derbyshire equality data can be found [here](#)

The data used to assess the impact of the Policy includes the following:

South Derbyshire District Council's workforce profile

Local Government Association - [Flexible working and work-life balance | Local Government Association](#)

GOV.UK - Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

CIPD - [Information on Flexible Working | CIPD](#)

ONS data

Gender Pay Gap Report 2020-2021

Staff Briefing sessions completed on the Flexible Working Policy

Consultation and engagement with Employee Forum

Operational analysis of data gathering in relation to flexible working patterns and practice

ICT and equipment requirements

Consultation with Trade Unions



Section 3 – Additional engagement activities

7. Please list any additional engagement activities undertaken when developing the proposal and completing this assessment. Have those who are anticipated to be affected by the strategy, policy, procedure or project been consulted with?		
Date	Activity	Main findings
22 July 2021	Future Service Delivery and Employment Model Paper - Finance and Management Committee	<p>The Committee report considers the lessons learnt in the delivery of Council services since March 2020 as the basis to shape future service provision. The report gives insight into the opportunity to build on what has been achieved through the development and progression of new flexible working arrangements for the current and future workforce of the Council, the benefits and risks, and how new service delivery models, supported by aligned new flexible working arrangements, will continue to make South Derbyshire a great place to live, visit and invest.</p> <p>Elected Members agreed for further work to be carried out to identify a proposal for the Committee to consider future employment and service delivery models that will enable the Council to meet its Corporate objectives as well as meet wider national and local government priorities.</p>
2-23 September 2021	All Staff Briefing	<p>17 briefing sessions were held with employees, including sessions for Refuse, Grounds Maintenance, Cleansing and Housing DLO teams at the Depot and for Caretaking and Cleaning staff at the Civic Offices. In total 254 staff attended a briefing session.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and/or representatives from Leadership Team presented an update on future service delivery and employment models for the Council that included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of office accommodation/new premises • Continued investment in technology • Continued investment in other resources to enable staff to work safely from different locations, including their home • Providing appropriate health and wellbeing support for the workforce • Arrangements to train, develop and support all staff with the new arrangements



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring continued engagement and communication channels are in place with all staff, Trade Unions, residents, customers and Elected Members Changing employment procedures The completion of a full Equality Impact assessment (EIA) to ensure that any negative or positive impacts on staff, residents and customers are duly considered <p>The key themes raised by employees to be addressed were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work/life balance Opportunities to use technology to improve customer and employee experience Office accommodation Different approaches to meet customers' needs and opportunities for the public to participate in Council activity (committee meetings) Opportunities for employees to interact/network and cross functional working <p>Employees were also informed of a further engagement intervention for customers with an altered face-to-face services provision at the Civic Offices.</p>
21 October 2021	Future Service Delivery and Employment Model Paper - Finance and Management Committee	<p>This report provided a high-level overview of the briefing sessions held with employees, Heads of Service and the consultation completed with the Trade Unions.</p> <p>Elected Members considered the evidence gathered from consultations with Leadership Team, Heads of Service, Trades Unions, and employees and for this to be used to develop the future service delivery and employment models. Elected Members also approved the Fixed Location and Flexible Working operating models as the framework for Leadership Team to use in the development of the Flexible Working Policy.</p> <p>A Future Service Delivery project has been established as part of the Corporate Transformation programme and is made up of four core workstreams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment, policy, health, and wellbeing Residents and customers



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT and Digital • Accommodation.
25 November 2021	Future Service Delivery and Employment Model Paper- Finance and Management Committee	<p>This report gave Elected Members an update on the feedback received from the Staff Briefing sessions held in September 2021 and to advise on the introduction of corporate customer services standards, supported and underpinned by an engagement and communication strategy to promote and inform residents, stakeholders, partners, and customers.</p> <p>A common theme raised by Elected Members arising during the progress of this work has related to the importance of communications and standard of customer services being provided to residents, customers, Elected Members and visitors.</p> <p>Existing Transformation work relating to communications and customer standards have been accelerated to refresh all employees on the existence of customer standards and the importance of following these standards to improve the customer experience.</p>
13 January 2022	Future Service Delivery and Employment Model Paper- Finance and Management Committee	<p>This report provided an update to Elected Members on the progress on the workstreams regarding the future service delivery and employment models proposals. The report also included a proposed Flexible Working Policy for the Committee to agree for wider consultation with staff, Trade Unions, Elected Members and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The following activities were undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff briefing sessions • Employee Forum engagement • Trade Union engagement • Service needs analysis for supporting changes outlined in the policy • Review of supporting and related Council policies and procedures • Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Steering Group engagement on the Equality Impact Assessment <p>All employee feedback from the consultation on the Draft Flexible Working Policy will be presented to the Finance and Management Committee meeting on 17 March 2022.</p>



14 Jan -28 Feb 2022	Consultation on proposed Flexible Working Policy	<p>The purpose of the consultation was to gain feedback from employees and Trade Unions on the proposed Flexible Working Policy.</p> <p>An on-line form and QR code poster was made available for employees to provide any feedback or comments on the Draft Flexible Working policy along with other communications channels such as email and feedback to line managers or Trade Union representatives.</p> <p>17 briefing sessions for staff, including sessions for Refuse, Grounds Maintenance, Cleansing and Housing DLO teams at the Depot and for Caretaking and Cleaning staff at the Civic Offices. In total 232 staff attended a briefing session.</p> <p>The general feedback is that staff were supportive of the Draft Flexible Working policy. Other common themes included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment, policy, health and wellbeing <p>Overall, staff positively supported the opportunity to work flexibly both in terms of location and their working hours than currently provided in the existing Flexi-time schemes.</p> <p>Shared concerns centred on the additional costs of working from home in terms of increased utility bills, maintaining relationship with colleagues and teams and along with the request for clarity on how business mileage can be claimed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation/property <p>Staff were supportive of the accommodation review taking place at the Civic Offices and the Depot and made positive comments on the opportunity to redesign existing workspaces.</p>
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		<p>Common issues were raised about the need for separate areas for teams to work together, the availability of meeting areas and for additional equipment such as lockable cabinets and storage facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT/digital Staff recognised the investment made by the Council in providing secure and reliable applications and equipment that enabled staff to work from home and other locations. <p>A common request was for the increased provision of the Helpdesk service to support employees with IT issues outside of the proposed business hours in the Flexible Working Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents and customers Employees recognised and commented on the different ways that services had been delivered to their customers and the positive impact this had, in particular on those most vulnerable in the community. <p>Concerns were raised on the availability of staff at different sites to respond to face to face enquiries and being contacted during business hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Staff welcomed the introduction of different communication channels such as TEAMS and the availability of other equipment such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones that enabled them to keep in regular contact with customers and colleagues. <p>Issues were raised about having points of contact for different services during business hours and consistency around responses to requests for information and support.</p>
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26 January 2022	Employee Forum	The Draft Flexible Working policy was discussed at the Employee Forum. Overall, the group felt the Policy was a positive step towards transforming the Council as well as meeting the changing needs of our customers.
20 January 2022	Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group	An overview of the Draft Flexible Working Policy was presented at this meeting. The EDI Steering group have been asked by the Chair to review the EIA of the Flexible Working Policy when approved by the Council and provide any feedback and actions for consideration.
9 February 2022	Special Joint Negotiating Group	A Special JNG meeting took place on 9 February 2022. The common themes raised were as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional costs associated with working from home on occasion e.g., heating costs, lighting, electricity • Mileage costs e.g., claiming for travel to the offices/working on site • Accommodation e.g., DSE Assessment set for hotdesking • Reviewing policies linked to the Flexible Working Policy • Impact on lower paid staff • Impact on the health and wellbeing of staff and excessive hours working
14 -28 February 2022	Head of Service briefings	Meetings were held with Heads of Service and HR . The outcome of this research will allow common themes to be identified, grouped, and then outlined into project work that will can be developed into a business case for investment in new ways of working and then a delivery plan put into action. Any large-scale areas of work that may require a system, will be highlighted as potential standalone projects within the overall Transformation Programme.



Section 4 – What is the impact?

8. Summary of anticipated impacts. Please tick at least one option per protected characteristic. Think about barriers people may experience in accessing services, how the policy is likely to affect the promotion of equality, knowledge of customer experiences to date. You may need to think about sub-groups within categories e.g., older people, younger people, people with hearing impairment etc. [Hyperlinks to supporting information about the protected characteristics listed below can be found here.](#)

	Positive impact	Negative impact	No disproportionate impact
Age	X	X	
Disability	X		
Gender reassignment			X
Marriage or civil partnership			X
Pregnant women and people on parental leave	X		
Sexual orientation			X
Race			X
Religion or belief	X		
Sex (Gender)			X

Further details in the section below



Impact and Evidence – Age

The following table illustrates the age profile of South Derbyshire District Council

Age Groups	Employees 2021	Workforce % 2021
16 - 25	26	7.92%
26 - 35	47	14.32%
36 - 45	80	24.39%
46 - 55	87	26.52%
56 - 65	81	24.69%
66 +	7	2.13%

The move to flexible working will enable greater flexibility and autonomy for staff to work in a way that better fits their needs and improves their work/life balance, which would include staff with parental and/or caring responsibilities.

Increased flexibility may offer opportunities for individuals who may not have been able to work previously due to other commitments such as caring responsibilities. This is a positive impact especially for those who would otherwise have had to take a career break or work fewer hours.

For a significant proportion of staff, the move to flexible working removes the requirement to work at a dedicated base for the vast majority of their time. This change will require staff and managers to work in an unfamiliar way which has potential to cause confusion, uncertainty and a sense of loss; the change may not be welcomed by all staff .

Flexible working will attract a wider age pool of applicants to South Derbyshire. However there is the potential for a negative impact of flexible working for the younger workforce and those that are on school work-experience, college students and graduates as well as other initiatives such as Apprenticeship or government programmes such as Kickstart. This is through the reduced provision of face to face training and supervision.

There is the potential for young and older employees to feel isolated and miss out on social connections, experiential learning, and networking opportunities in a work setting

To mitigate the above risks, there will be regular face to face contact between line managers, direct reports, and teams. Training to be continued with a blended approach of face to face, E-learning, virtual training and support from third party academic centres.



Impact and Evidence – Disability

The following table illustrates the age profile of South Derbyshire District Council

Disability

	Yes	No	Not declared	Total
Total staff profile	23 (7%)	143 (44%)	162 (49%)	328

Introducing flexible working may offer opportunities for individuals with disabilities to work at home which may better suit their needs.

Potentially a reduced requirement to travel to and from a work location will enable more disabled people to access employment opportunities.

The introduction of hot desk and home working may negatively impact some employees with disabilities if they require specialist equipment to fulfil their role.

Engagement with the Employee Forum is in progress to ensure that there is consideration for DDA compliance, accessibility and support is available for employees with specific needs.

A DDA compliance check will be undertaken. This will include looking at access, use of materials (such as flooring), use of colour for those with visual impairments and facilities engagement with employees with a disability and/ or key services once detailed design is being developed to review proposals and ways of working to ensure successful deployment when design completed.

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments will continue to understand and address the needs of staff. Staff who have been provided with adapted office chairs, desks, equipment have always been engaged to understand their needs and meet their specific needs. Regular communications continue to encourage staff to report and request support and equipment to work safely.

Staff are also informed that if they have or had any condition that may need additional support, they should discuss this with their line manager so that any risk assessments could be undertaken to ensure they have the right support (equipment, work location, working hours etc).

For staff with a health condition, which requires access to a desk or chair modified to suit their individual needs, it is recognised that working from some locations may not be possible. The accommodation review will consider individual needs and will make an informed decision about workstations and/or their place of work. The processes and discussions with line managers, and through application of the new flexible working policy, will help facilitate both the discussions and outputs required to ensure that any staff with equipment needs can work from a location which is conducive to them.



The Draft Flexible Working Policy may have an impact on mental health and wellbeing of employees. For some staff this could include:

- Staff feeling isolated from their teams
- Less opportunities to engage in daily wellbeing activities within teams such as going for a walk at lunch time, exercise sessions, mindfulness sessions – all of which have tended to take place at fixed times and locations
- Less opportunity to have informal conversations with peers and line managers about daily work issues which can build up and saved for formal one to one session
- Less opportunity for line managers to ‘pick-up’ the signs of stress or mental health concerns in their staff

A programme of Council-wide activities will be available to support with health and wellbeing for employees

A Well Being Strategy and Workplace wellness plan will also be developed. Managers will develop individuals wellness plans.

Mental Health First Aiders are also available to provide support



Impact and Evidence – Gender Reassignment including Transgender

The Council does not currently have access to this data and the existing corporate equalities categories is being developed to support the collection and reporting of this data. It would be expected that flexible working would be positive for a staff member who was transitioning and need to attend appointments as the policy would allow increased flexibility over workings hours and location.

There are no known adverse impacts for gender reassignment, for staff in relation to this policy.

Impact and Evidence – Marriage and Civil Partnerships

It would be expected that flexible working would have no impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership.

Impact and Evidence - Pregnant women and people on parental leave

Six employees had a period of maternity or parental leave over the past 12 months. It is expected that flexible working would be positive for a staff member who was pregnant or on parental and want to attend appointments outside of those enabled under the Council's existing employment procedures as the policy would allow increased flexibility over workings hours and location.

The Council has in place both a maternity and parental leave scheme which identify opportunities for changes to be made to in terms of working arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

No specific concerns were expressed during staff engagement sessions on the flexible working policy in connection with pregnancy and parental leave.

It is considered to have a positive impact as this would provide employees increased flexibility to attend medical appointments and undertake caring for dependants.

Impact and Evidence – Sexual Orientation

The Council collects data in relation to sexual orientation.

• Heterosexual / straight	196 (60%)
• Gay or Lesbian	2 (0.6%)
• Bisexual	2 (0.6%)
• Other	0
• Prefer not to say	128 (38.8%)

The Council has engaged with a representative from the LGBTQ+ community and has advised that the draft flexible working policy will not have an adverse impact.



Impact and Evidence – Race

The Council collects data in relation to race.

Ethnic Origin
White = 295 (89.92) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British (86.89)• Irish (0.91)• Gypsy or Irish Traveller (0)• Any other White background, please describe (2.12)
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups = 3 (0.9%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• White and Black Caribbean (0.3%)• White and Black African 0• White and Asian (0.3%)• Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe (0.3%)
Asian/Asian British = 4 (1.2%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indian (0.9%)• Pakistani (0.3%)• Bangladeshi 0• Chinese 0• Any other Asian background, please describe
Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British) 1 (0.3%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• African 0• Caribbean (0.3%)• Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe 0
Other ethnic group 0 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any other ethnic group, please describe 0
Not declared 25 (7.62%)



During engagement with staff no impact regarding this policy in relation to race were identified.

Impact and Evidence – Religion and Belief

The following table illustrates the religious profile of the workforce: (note: where staff numbers are below 10, an X has been used to ensure that staff are not identifiable)

The policy has a positive impact as this will enable staff to have different options to when and where they work that enables them to observe religious and other observances.

	Christian*	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	No religion	Any other religion or belief	Not provided
Total staff profile	131	1	0		1	4	105	2	84

(*including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)



Impact and Evidence - Gender

It would be expected that flexible working would have no impact in relation to sex. No employee has declared their gender as

- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer to self-describe
- Prefer not to say

	Male	Female	Total
Total staff profile	158 (48%)	170 (52%)	328



Summary of Impacts

AGE - Details of anticipated impacts.			
a)	<i>Positive impact:</i>		<p>Potential to attract a wider age pool of applicants to South Derbyshire which include a younger workforce including those that are on work-experience, college students and graduates and Apprenticeships as well as recruiting and retaining an older workforce.</p> <p>Increased flexibility may offer opportunities for individuals who may not have been able to work for the District due to travel or other commitments such as caring responsibilities.</p>
b)	<i>Negative impact:</i>		<p>Potential for young and older employees to feel isolated and miss out on social connections, experiential learning, and networking opportunities in a work setting.</p>
	<i>Mitigating action:</i>		<p>Regular face to face contact between line managers, direct reports, and teams</p> <p>Training to be resumed to be a mix of face to face and using technology such as Teams.</p> <p>Internal service meetings to be a mixture of face to face and using technology such as Teams</p>



DISABILITY - Details of anticipated impacts.			
c)	<i>Positive impact:</i>		Potential positive impact for current and future staff with disabilities where adjusting their working arrangements will enable them to secure ongoing employment opportunities.
d)	<i>Negative impact:</i>		<p>The introduction of hot desk and home working may negatively impact some employees with disabilities if they require specialist equipment to fulfil their role.</p> <p>Employees with a disability may feel isolated at the loss of social interaction and this may lead to stress and depression and ultimately a reduction in their quality of life.</p> <p>Employees with a disability may need accessible equipment to be maintained differently, which may cause problems for their ability to work at home if not properly addressed. As a result, staff with a disability may be less productive, resulting in more potential capability concerns or lack of ability to meet objectives.</p> <p>Less opportunities to engage in daily wellbeing activities within teams such as going for a walk at lunch time, exercise sessions, mindfulness sessions – all of which have tended to take place at Council Offices.</p> <p>Less opportunity for line managers to 'pick-up' the signs of stress or mental health concerns in their staff</p>
	<i>Mitigating action:</i>		<p>Workplace and DSE assessment will continue and the Council has engaged a third party specialist provider to support the Council with assessments, equipment, setting up of work stations and reviews</p> <p>Engagement with staff with a disability once detailed design is being developed to review proposals and ways of working to ensure successful deployment when design completed.</p> <p>Ensure buildings are DDA compliant - including access, use of materials (such as flooring), use of colour for those with visual impairments and facilities</p> <p>A programme of Council-wide activities available to support with health and wellbeing for employees</p>



GENDER REASSIGNMENT - Details of anticipated impacts.			
e)	<i>Positive impact:</i>		It would be expected that flexible working would have a positive impact for employees transitioning and need to attend appointments as the policy would allow for increased flexible working approach.
f)	<i>Negative impact:</i>		There are no known adverse impacts for gender reassignment, for staff in relation to this policy.
	<i>Mitigating action:</i>		n/a
PREGNANCY AND PEOPLE ON PARENTAL LEAVE - Details of anticipated impacts.			
g)	<i>Positive impact:</i>		It would be expected that flexible working would have a positive impact for pregnant staff and/or on parental leave and need to attend appointments outside of those already provided for in existing employment procedures as the policy would allow for increased flexible working approach.
h)	<i>Negative impact:</i>		None
	<i>Mitigating action:</i>		n/a



RELIGION AND BELIEF - Details of anticipated impacts.			
i)	<i>Positive impact:</i>		The policy may provide greater flexibility and autonomy for staff who wish to have access to prayer/quiet contemplation as part of their religion or belief. This policy may also offer greater scope for individuals to structure work around religious events such as Eid or Ramadan.
j)	<i>Negative impact:</i>		None
	<i>Mitigating action:</i>		n/a

Other impacts

The financial and social impact on the Flexible Working Policy is outside the scope of the Council's Equality Impact Assessment.

Each employee's financial circumstances is different, and it would be difficult to determine the level of impact financially without having a full understanding of an employee financial situation. We cannot assume that those on a lower or higher pay will be the most impacted without having a full understanding of individuals financial situation.

However, Managers will meet with individuals in their teams to assess their ability to work flexibly. If there are any specific issues identified this will be discussed and appropriate arrangements will be put in place, wherever feasible.



9. Have all negative impacts identified in the table above been mitigated against with appropriate action? Yes*If no, please explain why:***Section 5 – Recommendations and monitoring****10. How has the EIA helped to shape the strategy, policy, procedure, project or affected the recommendation or decision?**

The EIA has identified the impact of the Flexible Working Policy in relation to the nine protected characteristics and identified actions to be taken and additional monitoring to assess the impact on any member of the current and future workforce.

The Flexible Working Policy will be formally reviewed every 3 years and will involve consultation with EDI Steering group (which consist of Elected Members representation, external organisations, employees, managers, and trade union representatives).

Section 6 Approval

Please note the assessment should be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Head of Service/Leadership Team **before** the Committee report (if required) is produced.

Reviewed by Head of Service/Leadership Team	Name:	Leadership Team
	Date:	04 March 2022

If further information regarding this assessment is required, please contact the Lead Officer who completed the assessment.

