Policy C32 – Remote working

1. Introduction

1.1 In March 2020, workers in the UK, and across the world, were asked to work from home, where possible, due to the global pandemic. This event has created a seismic shift in the way that businesses are continuing to work and has created opportunities for all employers to adapt expectations and working practices as the country emerges from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

1.2 The aim of this policy is to set out how the University of Brighton Academies Trust has agreed to consider changes to working conditions and practices to ensure that the organisation and individual employees can benefit from new ways of working.

1.3 This policy sets out the approach of the Trust in agreeing and supporting employees to work remotely by ensuring that:

- a defined procedure is in place for the initial agreement for remote working;

- staff who work remotely for any period of time are adequately supported by their line manager;

- the expectations for the conduct of employees who are working remotely are clearly defined;

- procedures are in place for ending a remote working agreement if required.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

2.1 Remote working is categorised as a type of flexible working. However, employees should not assume that other aspects of flexible working, such as amended hours, are automatically part of a remote working arrangement. Please refer to Policy C16 – Flexible Working for more information

2.2 As the employer, the Trust has a duty of care for the health and safety of its employees and all aspects of this duty will be considered when agreeing a remote working arrangement.

3. Definitions of remote working

3.1 The operational needs of each of the professional service teams, and each academy, are different so it is necessary to have a range of options available. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Ad-hoc** – The office is the main place of work with working from home occasionally. For example, to work on a large project which would benefit from uninterrupted time to complete the task;

- **Hybrid** – the role is assessed as suitable for remote working and a staff member works an agreed number of days per week in the office, or on site, and an agreed number of days remotely. Staff required at multiple sites throughout the week will travel from their home base

- **Full-time remote working** - The role supports remote working full time although there would still be expectations for the staff member to attend key meetings, 1-2-1 and any other event identified by the line manager;

3.2 For the purposes of this policy, remote working will take place from a permanent workspace at an employee's home address.

4. Responsibilities – proposing remote working arrangements; identifying suitable roles

4.1 Professional Service Departments

4.1.1 The decision to agree a request that a role is suitable for remote working lies with the relevant member of the Trust Executive Team as the line manager of the Head of Professional Service.

4.1.2 The Head of Professional Service is responsible for identifying roles that may be suitable for remote working and presenting the case for agreement to the relevant member of the Executive Team. The rationale for identifying the role must be clearly defined and include details of the benefits to the organisation and the role holder – the form for proposing the arrangement is available as **Appendix 1**.

4.2   Heads of Professional Service and Executive Team Members

4.2.1 For remote working requests **other than ad-hoc arrangements**, the decision to agree a request that a role is suitable for remote working will be agreed in accordance with the table below:

Role	Responsible for identifying role	Responsible for agreeing remote working
Head of Professional Service	Executive Team Member	Chief Executive
Executive Team	Chief Executive	Chair of Trustees
Chief Executive	Chair of Trustees	Board of Trustees

4.2.2 Ad-hoc arrangements must always be made with the relevant line manager.

4.3   Academy staff

4.3.1 For remote working requests **other than ad-hoc arrangements**, the decision to agree a request that a role is suitable for remote working will be agreed in accordance with the table below:

Role	Responsible for identifying role	Responsible for agreeing remote working
Principal	Executive Director of School Improvement	Chief Executive
Senior Leadership Team	Principal	Executive Director of School Improvement
Academy Staff	Line Manager	Principal

4.3.2 Ad-hoc arrangements must always be made with the relevant line manager.

4.4   Staff requests

4.4.1 Occasionally an employee may wish to propose that a role is identified as suitable for remote working and the first step for this would be to discuss the suitability with their line manager.

4.4.2 If agreed, the line manager would then follow the process outlined in paragraph 5. If, however, the request is not agreed then the employee can apply for flexible working as defined in the Trust Flexible Working policy.

5.   Responsibilities – proposing remote working responsibilities; identifying suitable staff

5.1 Following the agreement that a role is suitable for remote working, the line manager is then responsible for agreeing the remote working arrangement with the relevant employee, according to the expectations defined in **section 6** of this policy. The agreement will then be formalised according to the Trust Flexible Working policy.

5.1 As part of the process for agreeing remote working, the line manager will take into account the characteristics and relevant circumstances of an individual together with wishes of the employee themselves.

6. Responsibilities – working remotely

6.1 Trust responsibilities

6.1.1 An employee who is working remotely will be provided with IT hardware so that they can work effectively at home This will consist of:
- laptop
- monitor
- keyboard
- mouse
- headset

6.1.2 For employees who carry out less than full-time remote working, desk space, such as a "hot desk" arrangement in an office location will also be provided with the following equipment:
- monitor
- keyboard
- mouse
- docking station

6.1.3 The Trust will provide information to the employee regarding the following:
- confirmation of any allowances that will be payable for using their home as a workspace;
- the implications of homeworking on tax;
- that it is an employee's responsibility to tell their mortgage provider or landlord and home insurer of their intention to work from home.

6.2 Line Manager responsibilities

6.2.1 The line manager will ensure that:
- the appropriate health and safety risk assessment and Display Screen Equipment assessment has been carried out to confirm that the employee can work safely and comfortably;
- There is a process in place for regular check-in meetings to discuss the remote working arrangement;
- The employee understands priorities, expectations, tasks and responsibilities expected of them;
- There are clear lines of communication agreed with management, co-workers and service users;
- The employee is managed consistently in line with staff who do not work remotely and ensure the staff member is given the same opportunities for training, development and promotion;
- As an employer they can demonstrate trustworthiness by being predictable, reliable, and follow through on commitments.
- The employee can provide:

  ➢ a workspace that provides for efficiency, with all the documents and materials they need;
  ➢ access to a safe and healthy workspace – good light, comfortable temperature, ergonomic adjustable chair and suitable desk space.
  ➢ a workspace that allows for privacy and confidentiality of information and discussion and without interruption.

- The employee understands the expectations that:

  ➢ During virtual/online communication, either internally or externally the remote worker must present a professional appearance and background;
  ➢ Employees set boundaries with the household/ family members so that work activities are not subject to interruption, distraction, or noise during working hours;
  ➢ Family members understand that although they are home, they are working;
  ➢ They establish ground rules for work hours, interruptions, noise, etc.

6.3   Employee responsibilities

6.3.1   The employee will ensure that:

- They have access to a safe and healthy workspace that allows for privacy and confidentiality of information and discussion without interruption;
- During virtual/online communication, either internally or externally, they must present a professional appearance and be dressed in usual office attire;
- they set boundaries with the household/ family members so that work activities are not subject to interruption, distraction, or noise during working hours;
- Family members understand that although they are home, they are working;
- They establish ground rules for work hours, interruptions, noise, etc;
- They are available during normal office hours and their attendance is visible to others, unless otherwise agreed with their line manager;
- They utilise appropriate communication methods so that they can stay connected with managers, co-workers, and service users;
- They have a broadband connection of at least 25mbps as this will be required for the use of all Trust ICT services including conferencing. However, employees must carefully consider other members of the household and their internet usage. If someone else is working online from home, it is recommended that the required internet speed is 50mpbs to avoid connection issues. If online entertainment services including the streaming of tv/films or playing online games is taking place during the working day this will require a larger 75mpbs+ internet connection. When setting up a home office environment it is important to think about the distance from the wireless router as this can have a serious impact on the performance or internet access.
- They have a back-up method to work in the event of an internet outage. This for example may be a 4G mobile tether that has been setup ready or an arrangement to work from a local academy;
- They update their email, voicemail, staff calendar, Microsoft Teams status etc. on a regular basis with a schedule, availability (or not) and contact information;
- They answer Teams calls with webcam enabled to reassure the end user they are in a suitable work setting to talk;
- They use an appropriate professional standard background or blur functionality to filter out personal items from the background of the video;
- They check all communications platforms and voicemail frequently;
- As an employee they can demonstrate trustworthiness by being predictable, reliable, and following through on commitments.

7.   Managing work

7.1   The health and wellbeing of employees is important and home working can make the separation between home and work less clear. There is no expectation that an employee will always be available and, to ensure the efficient working of support to academies and other departments, line managers and employees should agree core working hours for the role. To assist employees becoming disciplined in this regard:

- Remote workers should find ways to "disengage" from work and have quality personal time when traditional boundaries between work and home life are no longer clear;
- They should set reasonable limits to work hours and determine how to meet work requirements and still preserve personal time;
- They should build in short breaks to energise themselves and also take scheduled lunch breaks.

8.   Remote induction process and communication with remote workers

8.1   Induction process

8.1.1   For roles that are identified as suitable for remote working, it is important that a robust induction process is in place to ensure that a new worker feels part of a team, and part of the wider Trust, as quickly as possible.

8.1.2 Line managers should give particular consideration to how they will ensure that a new member of staff who is remote working has all of the information needed to perform their role effectively. This could include:
- An initial period of office working;
- Frequent "keep in touch" meetings to check on workload, task completion and understanding;
- Introductions to fellow team members with particular clarity on roles and responsibilities to ensure that support is available for times when a new employee is tackling new or unfamiliar tasks;
- Inclusion in regular team meetings;
- Introductions to other Professional Service team members and relevant academy staff so that effective two-way communication is established as soon as possible.

8.1.3 For roles, or individuals, that will not be remote working, it is important that line managers consider how the new worker will build relationships with fellow workers who are remote working. This could include:
- A period of office working for remote workers with the new individual;
- Frequent "keep in touch" meetings to check on workload, task completion and understanding;
- Introductions to fellow team members with particular clarity on roles and responsibilities to ensure that support is available for times when a new employee is tackling new or unfamiliar tasks;
- Inclusion in regular team meetings;
- Introductions to other Professional Service team members and relevant academy staff so that effective two-way communication is established as soon as possible.

8.2 Communication with remote workers

8.2.1 Line managers, who may be remote working themselves, must always consider the most appropriate method of communicating with each and every team member, and the team as a whole, to ensure the longer-term success of the team.

8.2.2 Line managers should schedule regular, dedicated, time for meeting with individuals to ensure that workloads and tasks are monitored, and that regular feedback is given. There should also be regular meetings which involve the whole team which can be virtual or face to face.

8.2.3 All staff should be encouraged to use all Office 365 functionality to effectively collaborate on projects and pieces of work.

9. Ceasing an arrangement for remote working

9.1 Line managers will keep the effectiveness of remote working under review and they can consider ending the arrangement at any point with a return to the office required under the following circumstances:
- There are concerns regarding an employee's effectiveness;
- There are concerns regarding an employee's mental-health;
- Following a request from an employee to end the arrangement.

10. Links to other policies

- ICT Acceptable Use
- Trust Retention Schedule
- Health and Safety
- Flexible Working

- Data Protection
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Professional Review Scheme
- Induction policy

11.   Policy status and review

Written by:	Head of Governance and Admissions
Owners:	Head of People
Status:	Approved
Approval date:	V1 = 17-06-2021 Executive Team
Review Date:	June 2024

Appendix 1

Proposal to agree a role/roles as suitable for remote working:

Role name	Benefit to the organisation	Benefit for the role	Type of remote working proposed	Office working arrangement	Agreed?

Prepared by (name/job title)		
Date		
Agreed by (name/job title)		
Date		