

Agile Working Policy

1. Policy Vision

- 1.1 As we emerge from a global pandemic and the almost immediate need to change how we have worked, we now have a once in a generation opportunity to improve our services to children, young people and their families by changing the way we work and improving the facilities where we work. This ultimately means the change is about people and culture. It is about encouraging and supporting changes in the way people work and empowering them to work differently.
- 1.2 We recognise that agile and smarter working will be a journey and this policy should be seen as a 'foundation' policy that we build upon as we learn about how this approach works for us. We will implement this gradually and aim to make continuous progress towards modernising the way we work, moving away from traditional line of sight management, investing in our estate, less use of outreach hearings spaces that don't work for us, maximising our use of the technology available to us and delivering our roles from where they make the most positive impact. This policy provides a framework for us to start that journey.
- 1.3 Agile working isn't just about doing things in the old way with some new technology and redesigned offices. It is about new ways of working and new approaches to management and teamwork. Teamwork will always be a huge focus in how we implement different ways of working – we absolutely do not want to lose that 'sense of team' and the relationships with colleagues that are so important to us in our working lives, we learn from each other and we develop in the company of others. More collaborative working by continuing face to face meetings, using virtual technology to improve our team working and developing new working relationships across the organisation will hopefully be a key outcome of the implementation of agile working.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 SCRA recognises the need to develop modern working practices that enable employees to maximise their performance whilst maintaining a good work life balance and improving their own health and wellbeing. Our experience of responding to, and continuing to deliver services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period, and the feedback from staff as part of our staff surveys has indicated that it is important that we change the way we work to one that brings positive benefits to both SCRA and to individual employees.
- 2.2 Agile working is the term used to describe how employees can work flexibly from a variety of locations, whether it is an SCRA office, Court or Local Authority building, from home or any combination of these. The expectation from the new flexible way of working is that productivity will be at least maintained but could be expected to increase.

- 2.3 This change in the way we work will offer different opportunities for staff to deliver their roles, modernise the way we use our offices and hearing suites and support staff to balance their personal and working lives.
- 2.4 This policy sets out
- the approach where both managers and employees can explore ways to work differently which can positively benefit SCRA and employees.
 - the expectations on the use of our office spaces
 - the ways employees can work flexibly
 - roles and responsibilities
 - the expectations that any different ways of working should enhance our services to children, young people and their families
 - the opportunity to improve wellbeing for staff.
- 2.5 The policy applies to all SCRA employees regardless of any protected characteristic and provides a framework for consistent and fair practice on the issues to be taken into account when considering agile working arrangements. The nature of agile working will depend on the individual employee's role and the considerations of the impact on our services.
- 2.6 The policy covers all agile working arrangements which means that staff will give up ownership of 'their' desk. All staff and managers will have access to a work space and appropriate equipment when working in an office space and they will share access to that workspace with SCRA colleagues. This approach means that staff will be able to use office spaces in more collaborative ways that promote better team working, improves health and wellbeing in the workplace and over time will help to reduce our overall office footprint to release space for hearing facilities or deliver cost savings.

3. Policy Development

- 3.1 This approach will go hand in hand with the roll out of our office upgrades to create more collaborative and welcoming spaces, which will take some time to complete in all our core properties. The Property Team will be considering how the Property Strategy needs to change to meet the challenges of the next 5 – 10 years. This phased approach means that we will be able to further develop our Agile Working Policy as we learn how it works for us in practice.
- 3.2 At this stage of development, the aims of the policy are to:
- test the principles of agile working
 - maximise the opportunities agile working affords us
 - avoid a drift back to full office working and the way we worked prior to COVID-19
 - engage staff in the discussion as it affects them and help us to determine the end point vision
 - maximise the use of and investment in our technology to enable continued innovation and the opportunity to consider much less use of Outreach

Hearing Centres, which would mean less travel, more agile working and better work life balance.

4. Benefits of Agile and Smarter Working

4.1 The benefits of agile working can include:-

- staff retention
- improved health and wellbeing
- increased productivity
- work life balance opportunities
- ability to better plan for caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- improved working environments
- minimise travel
- greater collaboration
- potential to reduce costs of accommodation and other overheads

4.2 Smarter working really just means being thoughtful about the tasks we have to achieve each day and choosing the most appropriate location from which to accomplish them. In terms of location, this can mean either office, hearings suite or homeworking but it can also mean using the spaces within our offices differently dependent on the task at hand. For example,

- if you need to collaborate with someone else on a task - work beside them in the office that day
- if you are having a team meeting, hold the team meeting away from the main working area so that the noise of the meeting doesn't impact on those working at desks.
- If you need to hold a private meeting, use a private space
- If you need to concentrate on a piece of work, work in a quieter area.
- If using technology can aide in accomplishing a task, this might be a more efficient way of achieving it.

The intention is that employees are able to have control over where they can best deliver their role and others are respectful of that. The line manager and the employee will agree the best pattern of flexibility to ensure that service delivery is maintained or improved and team development/support is positively impacted. This will mean that in most cases staff will have a physical presence in the office every week to deliver face to face tasks, provide cover for each other and to maintain a team ethos.

5. Agile Working Arrangements

5.1 There will be two different types of working arrangement in SCRA – a Flexible Worker and a Fixed Worker.

5.2 *Flexible Worker*

A Flexible Worker is an employee who is able to deliver their role flexibly from either an SCRA office or from home. The level of flexibility the employee will have is dependent on the need to be in an office/hearing suite to deliver that role, work pattern, team structure etc.. It is anticipated that the majority of SCRA staff will be Flexible Workers and the assumption is that a Flexible Worker will spend part of a working week working in the office and part of the week working away from the office. However, a Flexible Worker can choose to work in the office for their full contractual hours, if that is what works for them in terms of their own health and wellbeing.

- 5.3 A Flexible Worker will not have a fixed desk location. As a result there will be fewer desks than there are staff in that office which means that staff will need to share desks and other equipment to carry out their work. The reduction in desks will be phased in over time as we develop our offices spaces in line with a programme of office developments but it could be anticipated that we reduce our desks by around 30%.
- 5.4 To support this, SCRA will adopt a 'clear desk' policy. This means no work or personal items are to be left on desks at the end of use/the working day.
- 5.5 SCRA may adopt a booking process or manage desks on a first come basis depending on each office's needs. In the very unlikely event that there is no available desk space, then staff will be able to work from other collaborative spaces, meeting rooms, wifi enabled areas until a desk becomes available.
- 5.6 In offices where there are multiple teams, such as Head Office, groups of desks may be allocated for specific teams where they require to work together and they will normally use these areas. The desk allocation system adopted will take this into account. However, there will be flexibility to use other areas where there are no available desks within an allocated area, or when an employee wishes to collaborate with another team. All staff must respect the confidential and sensitive nature of our work, particularly when working within other team 'areas'.
- 5.7 Dependent on the need to be in the office, there may be opportunities for staff to work from an office location closer to their home to undertake administrative or other office based functions. This would reduce unnecessary travel and provide a better balance for staff. Where this is a possibility, this should be agreed with the line manager in advance.
- 5.8 Desks will not have pedestals for storage purposes. Flexible workers will be provided with a locker to store personal and work items.
- 5.9 A flexible worker will retain their designated office as the contractual base and must be used in relation to any travel claims. No home to office base travel can be claimed.

5.10 **Fixed Worker (Exceptions)**

A Fixed Worker is an employee whose role requires them to spend the majority of their time in an office. In these circumstances it may not be possible for these employees to share a desk and as such, a fixed desk may be allocated as an exception. In discussion with staff, Line Managers will consider whether the role requires the employee to be a Fixed Worker.

5.11 Fixed Workers must adhere to the clear desk policy which includes keeping the desk clean and free from personal belongings when they vacate the desk. Any fixed desk may be used by any member of staff if not in use by the Fixed Worker.

6. **Principles of the Policy**

6.1 No employee will have a fixed desk unless they meet Section 5.10 of this policy. SCRA's current strategy aim is to provide desks for 70% of the FTEs based within the office.

6.2 The nature of an employee's agile working arrangement will depend on the job being delivered and considerations should take into account the services we provide to children, young people and their families balanced against employee health and wellbeing. The working arrangement must be compatible with the amount of face to face service delivery, team development and supervision required.

6.3 There should be no adverse effect on the quality and level of service we provide to children, young people and their families and key partners, as a result of the implementation of this policy.

6.4 This new way of working supports greater levels of empowerment and autonomy and provides opportunities for employees to demonstrate added value to our service users, SCRA, our staff and the environment.

6.5 Regular supervision, team meetings and good staff communications must be a feature of this policy. Clear objectives and levels of work expectations must be set and regularly reviewed in supervision.

6.6 There should be no increase in workload for either the individual or their colleagues as a result of an employee working from flexible locations and there should be a positive impact on the employee's health, safety and wellbeing.

6.7 Arrangements must be put in place to protect confidential and personal information including that held on laptops and other mobile technology, whilst working at home. For example, you should not leave your laptop unattended and unlocked whilst working from home, where others may have access to it.

- 6.8 Employees with caring responsibilities should ensure that appropriate caring arrangements are in place during agreed working times.
- 6.9 Effective and secure communication arrangements with flexible workers must be maintained.
- 6.10 All of SCRA's remaining terms and conditions of employment are unchanged and will still apply to all staff covered by this policy, including sickness reporting, booking leave etc.. This includes your office base as your contractual employment base. This policy does not negate or supersede the Flexible Working or Flexible Working Hours Scheme policies that already exist for use by employees.

7. **Responsibilities**

7.1 ***EMT***

EMT are responsible for sponsoring and promoting this new way of working and demonstrable support will be given to the implementation and maintenance of supporting flexible working.

7.2 ***Line Managers***

Managers are responsible for determining the working arrangements and supporting agile working as the norm. They will give careful consideration to the needs of the service when agreeing to various working arrangements in the team and make sure they have considered all of the necessary information in order to support agile working. Where there is any consideration for a Fixed Worker, the business needs will need to be clear for this.

- 7.3 It is the responsibility of managers to support agile working and managers must act sensitively and treat all employees fairly. The way in which line managers manage their teams will change over time, from the more traditional line of sight management to flexible/remote management that still retains productivity and staff wellbeing as a focus. Managers will be expected to engage in learning opportunities to support a different management approach.
- 7.4 The manager will ensure that regular team and 1:1 meetings, including regular supervision will take place, providing support for staff and regularly reviewing agile working with the employee.
- 7.5 Managers must discuss, agree and review, in regular supervision, working arrangements that fit with hearings/court/office service delivery vs home working. This should include consideration that staff will provide cover for office based work on an emergency basis e.g. hearing cover and how this will be arranged when necessary. This is to ensure that productivity, quality of work, service delivery and timescales are not impeded by agile working.

7.6 Line managers should continue to discuss career development and training opportunities and how they can fit with agile working approaches. This is to ensure that there is no adverse effect on staff opportunities to progress within SCRA as direct result of different working arrangements.

7.7 In terms of health and safety, managers must ensure:-

- that they are aware of SCRA's health, safety and wellbeing policies and that these will apply regardless of agile working arrangements
- that their employees complete the mandatory health and safety e-learning modules and complete the working from home risk assessment.
- ensure that health, safety and wellbeing is not compromised as a result of any new working arrangements
- that they ensure that any necessary reasonable adjustments are considered both for office and home working in line with OH advice as required
- if agile working is having an adverse impact on the employee's health, safety and wellbeing then the manager will seek OH advice from the HR Team and may withdraw agile working for a period in support of the member of staff.

7.8 **Employees**

It is essential that staff plan and agree a working arrangement with their line manager to ensure that the team structure and availability can be maintained and that service delivery expectations can be managed. Where possible, the working arrangement should be agreed with the manager in advance, allowing the employees who are using their homes to work in to have the right of privacy out of hours and to be able to separate their working and home lives. Any variation of this should be agreed with the manager in advance.

7.9 Any formal requests to change hours of work e.g. to part-time or job share will be managed in the usual way through the Flexible Working Policy.

7.10 Employees must be willing to engage in problem solving to ensure that the agile working arrangement works effectively for both SCRA and the member of staff. Both managers and employees are responsible for maintaining good working relationships and are responsible for ensuring that once established, the arrangements continue to work effectively and are reviewed on a regular basis.

7.11 Normally, supervision sessions will take place at the office. However, with agreement these can also be held virtually. The employee is obliged to attend these meetings as part of the supervision framework.

7.12 SCRA's Maximising Attendance Policy will continue to apply and the employee must ensure that they comply with the policy.

7.13 Whilst working at home (and in the office), the employee must take the appropriate breaks from work as outlined in SCRA's flexi scheme policy e.g. a minimum of 30 minutes over the lunchtime period. Employees should take these breaks away from their workstation.

7.14 If there is disruption to the network connection to an employee's home which extends beyond the ability to deliver their role, then the employee will be required to come into the office to work, or work their hours differently that week/day to accommodate the exceptional circumstances. The line manager should be advised of the availability of the employee.

7.15 Employees must:-

- When working in the office, clear the desk at the end of the working day and leave them clean and tidy for other people to use
- Be considerate of other people working in the office, particularly where staff are working alongside new or other teams.
- Where flexible workers are attending lengthy meetings whilst in the office, they should not occupy a desk until such time as they require to use it.
- Attend the office as required to deliver their role and as agreed with their line manager, including on unplanned occasions with little notice to cover absence for hearings/court etc.. It is expected that all reasonable steps are taken to support the team during unplanned periods of absence.
- Be available for any agreed face to face service delivery such as operational services, team meetings, training or supervision sessions.
- Ensure that all SCRA equipment and data is kept safe and secure whilst in offices or working from home and take all reasonable steps to safeguard equipment from loss or damage e.g. do not leave laptops unattended in vehicles. Failure to keep equipment or information secure will be considered a very serious matter and could result in disciplinary action being taken.
- Employees must comply with SCRA's GDPR requirements
- Employees must comply with SCRA's Staff Code of Conduct at all times
- Ensure outlook calendars are maintained and kept up to date
- Remain contactable and ensure contact numbers are available to colleagues so that they can make contact or leave messages.
- Employees must ensure that they do not give out their personal contact details e.g. telephone number, e-mail address to children, young people and their families and should always use work contact details
- Understand that they are accountable for complying with policy, procedure, legislation and all requirements laid down by SCRA
- Complete the working from home risk assessment and follow all health and safety advice
- Complete all mandatory health and safety e-learning
- Record all working time on their flexi sheet
- Record any accidents or incidents that occur during their working hours, whether this happens within the office or at home/alternative premises.

8. Property Development

- 8.1 The Property Team will work with Localities and Head Office Teams in the phased development and improvement of SCRA's working environments. Planned developments will commence with a feasibility study on the potential use and design capacity and capability of each property, in line with the Property Strategy timelines. The Property Team will apply the principles of this policy e.g. reduced desks, provision of lockers and better, more efficient and collaborative use of the property space available to teams to ensure that SCRA staff and its service users have a modern, welcoming and functional space to accommodate different opportunities to deliver roles. This work will be planned over a number of years.
- 8.2 Managers and staff should still adopt the principles of the Agile Working Policy in advance of any required physical upgrading of properties.

9. Inclusion and Diversity

- 9.1 This policy applies to all staff irrespective of protected characteristics and socio-economic background as laid down in the Equality Act 2010.
- 9.2 It is essential that managers and employees enter into the spirit of agile working within the constraints of our service provision to children, young people and their families. Each Locality will have their own dependencies to consider for agile working and as such, a one size fits all approach cannot be applied. This must be considered at Locality and individual level.
- 9.3 The final decision on working arrangements will be based on the impact it has on SCRA's ability to provide an inclusive and accessible service, so although the majority of staff will have access to agile working not all agreements will be the same nor will all roles be suitable for agile working.

10. Complaints

- 10.1 If an employee is dissatisfied with the arrangements made for agile working, including hours or times of attendance at the office, then they should discuss this initially with their line manager in supervision (or earlier if required).
- 10.2 Any failure to agree working arrangements should be raised with the line manager's manager (e.g. LRM, SOM, Head of Service), who will consider the situation and whose decision is final.