Field Worker Policy

1. Scope

This policy applies to all council workers other than those in schools, who have local arrangements.

The policy is part of a suite of policies and guidance that support mobile and flexible working in Merton

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2. Definition

For the purposes of this policy the term ‘field worker’ applies to workers who spend the majority of their time out of the office, working out in the borough; for instance: social workers visiting clients, building inspectors and planners visiting sites and buildings etc. Field working is established practice in some areas, in others it can be a substantial change for both the employee and the organisation. This policy clarifies how this will work alongside wider policies relating to flexible working, in particular use of accommodation and home working.

When not out and about, field workers may either hot-desk in the Civic Centre or other council buildings or work from home, and should therefore also refer to the Accommodation and Hot-desking and Home working policies.

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3. Procedure and expectations

3.1 Expectations of Field Workers:

Field workers should be able to demonstrate they can:

- Work independently and on their own initiative
- Work in accordance with the core hours agreed with their manager
- Motivate themselves and manage their workload effectively
- Complete projects within set deadlines
- Manage workload effectively
- Adjust to new work practices

They must also:

- Agree arrangements with their line manager so that the line manager is informed of their whereabouts and can monitor performance.
- Keep in regular contact with the office and ensure that Outlook calendars are kept up to date so that whereabouts are always known, including when working from home.
- Comply with the council’s reporting guidelines for reporting sickness and other absence and requesting annual leave.
- Attend 1 to 1s, team meetings and other meetings and training as required.

There may be additional local requirements in each department for workers carrying out their duties remotely, depending upon the nature of the work. These should be discussed and agreed in advance with the manager.

### 3.2 Expectations of managers for field working arrangements:

Managers must:

- Determine how work will be monitored, produced and delivered.
- Ensure that field workers who are employees have comparable induction, appraisal communications, access to learning and development and career development opportunities and team events as other Council employees.
- Establish and document clear work objectives with measurable outputs in advance of the arrangement commencing. These objectives will be reviewed through 1 to 1s. The line manager will need to establish how the employee will be kept informed of matters that affect them or their work when they are not in the office.
- Make clear, in writing, how productivity and performance management issues will be assessed.
- Maintain good communication with the employee at all times, planning and agreeing how they will communicate effectively with each other. These arrangements should be agreed and regularly reviewed in light of operational experience.
- Inform the employee of meetings; training sessions and other events they would expect them to attend and will also ensure that the employee is kept up-to-date with information relevant to their work.
- Ensure that field workers maintain contact with the wider team and hold regular team meetings that all team members attend, whatever their working arrangements.
- Ensure that field working arrangements do not have an adverse effect on any particular group of workers neither should a refusal to agree home working disadvantage workers from any particular equalities group.
3.3 Other issues to be considered

Performance Management – employees who are field workers will be subject to the same performance appraisal measures, processes, and objectives that apply to all other employees.

Work Patterns - working hours and patterns, contact times and availability should be agreed in advance. Other conditions of employment as set out in the contract apply.

If any employee has any concerns with their working arrangements, they must bring the matter to the attention of their manager immediately.

Contractual Changes- Where there is a requirement for a substantive change in current working arrangement the manager must ensure that revised contract documentation is issued as necessary from Human Resources.

Pay & Benefits- Pay and benefits are not affected on the basis that the full-time hours for the post are worked. Part-time employees will be entitled to salary and other benefits on a pro-rata basis.

3.4 Travelling & Vehicle Allowances Expenses
In some cases field workers may be entitled to an essential car user allowance. Where this is not paid an occasional casual car user allowance is available for staff where they are required to travel around the borough for the purposes of business.

The council will not pay for field working employees to travel from their home to the borough, or other place as work as determined by the contract of employment, or equivalent journey.

Where an employee travels direct from home to a location outside of the borough for business reasons the Council will reimburse any reasonable additional travel costs in excess of the cost of travelling to the team location, either mileage (using the appropriate mileage rate) or public transport.

The allocation of this allowance may be reviewed in the event of a change in the nature of your duties and location of work.

A subsistence allowance for food and drink is not payable to staff who are working in the field as part of their day to day role.

3.6 Council Equipment
Equipment required to enable the employee to work effectively in the field will be provided by the council and will remain the property of the council. The equipment required will vary from case to case but may include a laptop, tablet, mobile/smart phone or a combination of these. The line manager in conjunction with IT service delivery will make final decisions on what is needed. Where equipment is provided the employee must:
- Take reasonable care of it and ensure its security
- Use it only for official purposes during working time
- Use it only in accordance with any operating instructions
- Return it to the council when requested
- Use it in accordance with any existing council policies
- Log it on to the network regularly to receive security and AV (anti virus) updates

Before an employee commences field working with a mobile device they should be briefed by a member of the IT department to ensure they are familiar with the operational functions as part of the hand over.

### 3.7 Use of Personal Equipment for Work Purposes

The council is not responsible for the maintenance, replacement, or repair of any personal equipment that is used including broadband lines. When using a personal telephone for official work purposes a detailed record of official calls should be kept for reimbursement purposes.

### 3.8 Health and Safety Policy

It remains the joint responsibility of the line manager and the individual employee, irrespective of where staff work, to ensure that appropriate and proportionate measures are taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and others working in their teams. These measures include information, instruction, supervision and training. Managers and staff have a duty to comply with these standards.

**Induction** - As a minimum field workers must have undertaken Health and Safety training, including the use of display screen equipment. More guidance is available on the Intranet.


**Risk Assessment** - A risk assessment needs to be undertaken and recorded. It should be reviewed on a regular basis, usually annually, depending on the resultant risk.

**Reporting** - Accident / Near Miss reporting procedures apply equally to incidents arising whilst an employee is working out in the field.

**Meetings** - Meetings with service users, employees of other agencies or colleagues must not be held at home.

**Working Time** - Where the agreed working pattern allows for flexibility, both manager and employee should monitor to ensure excessive hours are not being worked. It is important that working patterns and hours are not detrimental to the employee’s health, and comply with the Working Time Directive.
Lone Working – Workers operating in the field should also refer to the Lone Worker Policy that can be found on the intranet. 
http://intranet/corporate_policy_documents

For information on Health and Safety please refer to the following HSE leaflets:
www.hse.gov.uk/pnbns/indg143.pdf (manual handling)  
www.hse.gov.uk/pnbns/indg36.pdf (display screen equipment)

3.9 Secure use of the Council’s Systems and Information
The employee must ensure that information and equipment are kept securely. In particular private and confidential material must be kept in lockable secure storage at all times. Line managers must be satisfied that all reasonable precautions are taken to maintain confidentiality of material in accordance with the Council’s ICT policy http://intranet/it-policy and Information Security Policy http://intranet/is-policy A lockable hot box will be provided.

4. Review
This policy will be reviewed from time to time as appropriate.

5. Further advice and support
Further information, including comprehensive guidance for staff and managers and useful contact details are available on the Council’s Flexible Working Intranet Pages.