

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Finance and Resources Committee

Does this report require to be approved?  Yes  No

Ref FW/LC

Date 28/02/24

## Refreshed Hybrid Working Scheme

**From** Fiona Whittaker, Chief Officer (People Resources)

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### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Finance and Resources Committee with an overview of the refreshed Hybrid Working Scheme that is proposed to come into force on 1 April 2024. Whilst the scheme will remain under constant review, this version of the scheme is considered to be the Council's final position for ensuring that we strike the right balance between enabling eligible staff to retain a proportion of hybrid working, whilst ensuring that the Council meets its desired performance and productivity expectations and progresses its strategic aims and objectives.

Proposed changes to the current operation of the scheme, which are detailed within the report, have been determined by the necessity to ensure that the productivity, motivation and development of our employees remains key to our success whilst allowing us to support and serve our community in a way that is representative of a modern and evolving Local Authority. We must also consider how we positively respond to these changes and the expectations around flexibility whilst also taking a balanced approach as a fair employer.

The refreshed Hybrid Working Scheme has been carefully considered by senior management of the Council and the trade unions have been afforded the opportunity to comment. It has been accepted by all relevant parties, that Hybrid Working although no longer a new concept, is still in its infancy and will need to evolve as organisations grow, change and develop. Accordingly, the decision has been taken to retain a scheme that will allow for consideration of posts that are appropriate for hybrid working whilst providing sound parameters around the ways in which hybrid working will operate.

It should also be noted that there is no legal entitlement to work from home and therefore employees will be invited to join the scheme only if their post is deemed suitable for hybrid working. They will also retain the right to come out of the scheme at any time should working in this way no longer suit their individual circumstances. Equally, the Council will retain the right to amend or withdraw the scheme from individuals, services or in its entirety if deemed necessary for the furtherance of the organisation.

It should be noted that the scheme is not applicable to Chief Officer, frontline or direct customer facing posts. However, these groups of staff do retain the right to apply through the Smarter Working Policy to change their working hours or pattern if they require flexibility for a specific purpose.

The remainder of this report provides details on the refreshed scheme and the changes that are being made to the current position.

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### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Finance and Resources Committee:

- (1) Recognise the requirement to update and agree a final version of the Hybrid Working Scheme and arrangements currently in place.
- (2) Acknowledge that the Council continues to support Hybrid Working where appropriate in recognition that it provides benefits for both the Council and employees including team flexibility, resilience and of an improved work life.
- (3) Approve the implementation of the refreshed Hybrid Working Scheme that will come into force on 1 April 2024 and will thereafter remain in place until any required review.

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### The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Improve North Lanarkshire's resource base
Ambition statement	(23) Build a workforce for the future capable of delivering on our priorities and shared ambition
Programme of Work	All Programmes of Work

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#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Hybrid working is no longer a new concept within North Lanarkshire Council and for a few years now, employees have had the ability to divide their working time between office and home allowing for much more flexibility in their working week and providing an improved work life balance.
- 1.2 It has become apparent in recent times that the current scheme which mainly supported the restrictions imposed on organisations due to the pandemic, needs to evolve to align with the return to normal life both socially and workwise. There also needs to be a rethink about the appropriate balance of working from home and in the office, particularly as a Local Authority whose purpose is to serve the community and those who need our help and assistance.
- 1.3 Whilst a recent employee survey made it clear that a significant number of our existing hybrid workers enjoy the current requirement to attend the office a minimum of six days out of 20 and have indicated their preference for this position to remain, a similar survey of managers recognised that the arrangement limits team collaboration, communication, development, and individual employee growth opportunities. As more organisations are moving towards at least two days a week in the office, a more stable, sustainable, and realistic scheme must be considered.
- 1.4 A recent benchmarking exercise of other Scottish Local Authorities evidenced that hybrid working will remain a feature within Local Authorities with a high number operating up to 50% of time in the office, and most suggesting that this was sufficient to meet their business and employee needs. Of those who responded, none are considering a return to full time office occupancy, and none had a set pattern in place for attendance within the office.

- 1.5 Taking all of this into consideration, a balanced approach to hybrid working has been taken, considering the needs of our business, communities, stakeholders, and employees. The decision to allow for the continuation of hybrid working has been made on the basis that changes were necessary to the scheme for it to remain sustainable in the longer term.
- 1.6 The refreshed Hybrid Working Scheme continues to provide a generous percentage of time that employees can work from home whilst increasing the time spent in the office to ensure that productivity, motivation, collaboration, innovation, communication and team relationships are at their optimum.
- 1.7 The review of the scheme has also highlighted the need to consider the flexibility that is afforded to all Council employees and therefore a review of our current flexi-leave will be undertaken along with consideration of any other local agreements that are in place and provide employees with a level of flexible working outwith that which is determined by policy.
- 1.8 As detailed earlier in the report, the Hybrid Working Scheme will not be available to Chief Officer roles, but a level of flexibility will be afforded to these roles in agreement with the Chief Executive or the Depute Chief Executive. It should also be noted that, where appropriate, third and fourth tier managers can participate in the scheme, however additional attendance in the office outwith the requirements of the scheme will be expected as and when required.
- 1.9 Finally, it may be beneficial to consider this report in conjunction with the 'One Workforce - Delivering the Programme of Work to 2028' report that was presented to the Policy and Strategy Committee on 7 December 2023.

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## **2. Report**

### **Hybrid Working Scheme**

- 2.1 Currently, there are 1278 employees participating in the Hybrid Working Scheme with the majority of these holding posts that are traditionally office based. This number will be reviewed in line with the future service workplace requirement mapping exercise that is underway to support hub planning.
- 2.2 Until now, the Hybrid Working Scheme has been in place on a temporary basis whilst the Council considered its future workplace model, taking into account recovery from the pandemic, the flexibility available to the wider workforce, the needs of service users and stakeholders, the workplan for the future and the aspiration to be an employer of choice.
- 2.3 In recognition that hybrid working is an accepted and expected way of working amongst large groups of the working population, and particularly in the sectors that we are trying to attract applicants from, the next phase of our workplace model confirms our commitment to hybrid working but remains in the form of a scheme. By continuing with this arrangement as a scheme, it allows the Council to have an ongoing review of hybrid working to ensure that arrangements remain fit for purpose as we integrate this way of working into our normal operations.
- 2.4 The refreshed Hybrid Working Scheme has been developed in the context of a much wider approach to building a vibrant, mixed use, office and community-based workplace

environment that accommodates the needs of all staff. This includes work undertaken over the last three years to establish staff hubs in a range of accessible community-based locations across North Lanarkshire Council with our most recent hubs having been established in Broadwood and Cumbernauld.

### **Changes to the current Hybrid Working Scheme**

- 2.5 In refreshing the scheme, the Council fully recognises that there has been a shift in employee expectations around hybrid working and has taken into consideration staff views around retaining flexibility and other material factors including the desire to maintain a vibrant workplace environment and culture.
- 2.6 Accordingly, the refreshed scheme is based on a balanced 50:50 approach to hybrid working, allowing for the flexibility that homeworking accommodates along with the benefits that working regularly within an office environment provides. In summary the main changes to the scheme include:
- Removal of any reference to Covid, in recognition that the requirement to protect staff from the disease is no longer the reason for the Council's decision to maintain a hybrid working model.
  - The main base for employees participating in the scheme will now be detailed as the office and their home address from time to time.
  - An increase in the number of days that those participating in the scheme are expected to be in the office in a four-week period from a minimum of 6 days to a minimum of 10 days.
  - The introduction of a clear fixed five-day rotational weekly working pattern for hybrid employees, which ensures that staff numbers in our office locations are spread evenly throughout the week. One group of staff will work Wednesday, Thursday, Friday then Monday and Tuesday from the office, whilst the other group will work the same pattern from home. It will then swap to the opposite way the following week ensuring teams are staffed within service office areas at all times.
  - Where staff or services are required to deviate from the above pattern for business reasons, including any increase in office attendance this will be discussed with the relevant line manager and approved by the Chief Officer.
  - Removal of the allowance of £100 to buy equipment for the home, but any equipment required will be discussed and agreed with the line manager.
  - Introduction of a 'Hybrid Working Agreement' to ensure those participating in the scheme fully understand the operational and health and safety aspects, including stress and mental health, contact, equipment, electricity at work and the need to periodically complete an appropriate DSE assessment both for home and in the office.
  - The right to vary or withdraw the scheme should this be required either on an individual, service or Council wide level.
- 2.7 Longer term, the aim is to encourage those participating in the hybrid scheme to use the increasing number of community-based workplace hubs as alternative work locations to the home.
- 2.8 The refreshed scheme will not impact on the current Smarter Working Policy and whilst homeworking remains a feature of the policy, it is unlikely that those participating in the

Hybrid Working Scheme will be granted permanent home working for business reasons unless there are exceptional circumstances or medical reasons to be considered.

### **Next Steps**

- 2.9 Following approval of the refreshed scheme by Committee, communications will commence to all employees in early March to ensure that they fully understand the final scheme and how it impacts on them. Light communications have already been issued to ensure that staff are aware of the proposed changes to the scheme.
- 2.10 Managers will be asked to ensure that a rota is in place with appropriate accommodation and equipment identified and made available for the increased volume of staff returning to the office on 1 April 2024. Managers will also be asked to communicate the changes to staff and outline plans at the earliest possible point.
- 2.11 A Frequently Asked Questions has been developed and will be uploaded onto MyNL for access for all staff at the appropriate time along with the refreshed version of the Hybrid Working Scheme, Hybrid Working Scheme Agreement and the relevant Health and Safety assessments.
- 2.12 Finally, all eligible staff will be issued with a contract variation, effective from 1 April 2024, advising that their normal place of work is the office and their home address from time to time with their pattern of work at these locations subject to confirmation by their line manager. This may vary to accommodate the needs of the Service and if it is considered that the hybrid arrangements are unsatisfactory or the requirements change such that hybrid working is no longer suitable, appropriate notice will be given of change.

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### **3. Measures of success**

- 3.1 The Council continues to meet its ambitions and objectives through a highly skilled, motivated and productive workforce.
- 3.2 North Lanarkshire Council remains and is viewed as an employer of choice, with a level of flexibility in the working week that isn't afforded in other organisations.
- 3.3 Employees enjoy coming to their work and the return to a definitive routine of work at home and office improves their health and wellbeing.
- 3.4 Employees continue to seek promotion opportunities within the Council having had access to the correct level of experience, support and interactions with their colleagues and peers.

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### **4. Supporting documentation**

Appendix 1 – Hybrid Working Scheme

Appendix 2 – Hybrid Working Scheme FAQ's



**Fiona Whittaker**  
**Chief Officer (People Resources)**

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## 5. Impacts

<p><b>5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty</b> Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? <a href="https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments">https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments</a> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>5.2 Financial impact</b> Does the report contain any financial impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p><b>5.3 HR policy impact</b> Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>The introduction of the refreshed Hybrid Working Scheme will be undertaken in line with normal process and procedures.</p>
<p><b>5.4 Legal impact</b> Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>The introduction of a Hybrid Working Scheme requires confirmation of a change to terms and conditions of employment.</p>
<p><b>5.5 Data protection impact</b> Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to <a href="mailto:dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk">dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk</a> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

<p><b>5.6</b></p>	<p><b>Technology / Digital impact</b>  Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>5.7</b></p>	<p><b>Environmental / Carbon impact</b>  Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?  Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>Due to the increase in the number of days employees are attending the office, there will be a slight increase in the carbon footprint for those who are required to commute by public transport or private car.</p>
<p><b>5.8</b></p>	<p><b>Communications impact</b>  Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p><b>5.9</b></p>	<p><b>Risk impact</b>  Is there a risk impact?  Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?</p> <p>Workforce risks have been fully captured in the Corporate HR risk register and are also reflected in service risk registers.</p>
<p><b>5.10</b></p>	<p><b>Armed Forces Covenant Duty</b>  Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.</p>

**5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact**

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes  No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes  No

# Hybrid Working Scheme

Version 4.0, 8 January 2024

# Document control

<b>Title</b>	Hybrid Working Scheme		
<b>Governance group</b>	Corporate Management Team		
<b>Owner</b>	Fiona Whittaker, Chief Officer of People Resources	<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:whittakerf@northlan.gov.uk">whittakerf@northlan.gov.uk</a>
<b>Author</b>	Linda Cullen, Employment and Policy Manager	<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:CullenLi@northlan.gov.uk">CullenLi@northlan.gov.uk</a>

## Revision history

Version	Originator	Review start date	Revision description and record of change
3.0	Linda Cullen	1 April 2023	Scheme has been revised to reflect Council position
4.0	Linda Cullen	8 January 2024	Scheme has been revised to reflect Council position

## Document approvals

Version	Governance group	Date approved	Date approval to be requested (if document still in draft)
4.0	Corporate CMT	19 January 2024	
4.0	Finance and Resources Committee	28 February 2024	

## Consultation record (for most recent update)

<b>Consultation status</b>	Stakeholders consulted		
<b>Stakeholders consulted and dates</b>	People Resources Team		
	Single Status Trade Unions		
	Teaching Trade Unions		

## Strategic alignment

### Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority - Improve North Lanarkshire's resource base.

Ambition statement - Build a workforce for the future capable of delivering on our priorities and shared ambition.

### Programme of Work

Statutory / corporate / service requirement

## Next review date

<b>Review Date</b>	Annually from date of approval or before this date if any legislative or organisational changes have an impact on the scheme.
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# 1. Introduction

Hybrid working has become an integral part of working life over the last few years, offering employees flexibility whilst supporting work-life balance, supporting positive health and wellbeing, and helping to achieve better outcomes. Hybrid working is a working arrangement which allows employees to split their working time between the workplace and an agreed remote working location, such as an employee's home. However, whilst hybrid working offers many benefits for employees, it should not have an impact on productivity or performance and consistency in quality and standards are fundamental to its success.

This scheme sets out the Council's approach to hybrid working, allowing employees to continue to work flexibly whilst looking at how our office space can support employees to stay connected and work in their best way.

## 2. Scope

- The scheme will apply to all posts that are suitable for hybrid working, based on job role and team requirements, which will be determined by the relevant Chief Officer.
- The scheme does not apply to Chief Officer, frontline or direct customer facing posts.
- Third and fourth tier managers are eligible for the scheme, if their role allows for hybrid working, which will be determined by the relevant Chief Officer. However, it should be noted that due to the nature and seniority of the role, additional days are likely to be required within the office out with that described within the scheme.
- There are several factors that will be considered when determining the suitability of a post for hybrid working including: whether the work is capable of being undertaken effectively from home; the impact on the level of service provided to our community and customers; any costs incurred; suitability of the home environment; any potential negative impact on employees working from home and any negative impact on teams or colleagues.
- Not all roles and not all jobs are suitable for hybrid working and this will not be applicable where:
  - an employee needs to be present in the workplace to perform their job (for example, because it involves a high degree of personal interaction with colleagues or third parties or involves equipment that is only available in the workplace).
  - an employee's most recent appraisal identifies any aspect of their performance as unsatisfactory.
  - an employee's line manager has deemed that their current standard of work or work production is unsatisfactory.
  - an employee has an unexpired warning, whether relating to conduct or performance; and
  - an employee needs training or supervision to deliver an acceptable quality or quantity of work.

- Employees will not automatically be entitled to participate in the hybrid working scheme and posts will be determined solely on their suitability, not on individual circumstances. It may also be necessary to review hybrid working arrangements for business or individual needs and appropriate discussions will take place should this be required.
- The Council's standard hybrid working arrangements are a minimum 50/50 contractual time split between the home and the office/site base. Office/site base days must run consecutively on a pattern of Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Monday, and Tuesday.
- Employees who feel that their post is suitable for inclusion in the hybrid working scheme but has not been identified as such should discuss this with their line manager in the first instance.
- Although home working is a feature of the Smarter Working Policy, the hybrid working scheme is about where you work not when you work. The right to apply for smarter working (which mainly concentrates on when you work) remains open to employees and further information can be accessed [here](#).
- The Council will only support full home working arrangements in exceptional circumstances.

### 3. Our Approach to Hybrid Working

Full-time employees, working a normal working week, are required to attend their service office/site-base for a minimum of 10 days, split over a four-week period. Employees will be required to work Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of week one and Monday, Tuesday of week two either from their home or the office/site base, ensuring that the five days are worked consecutively from the office/site base or home on a rotational basis. Where this is not possible due to operational reasons, an alternative work pattern can be considered by the relevant service manager but must ensure that staff continue to undertake the full 50/50 split.

Employees who are part-time or have an alternative work pattern, should ensure that a minimum of half their working days/hours within a four-week period are based in an office/site base and the work pattern followed is as described above, ensuring attendance in the office/site base on consecutive days and in agreement with their line manager.

The remaining days within the four-week period, can be worked from home or in another community-based hub/location as community workplace capacity is increased.

Employees, who are participating in the hybrid working scheme, are expected to attend the office/site base as described above and less days in the office/site-base will only be approved in exceptional circumstances and through a formal Smarter Working request.

Employees can attend the office/site base more than 10 days in every four-week period subject to availability of space and in agreement with their line manager. Employees are also encouraged to use hubs out with the 10 days in the office/site-base.

For those participating in the hybrid working scheme, their main base will be their office/site location, and this will act as their administrative base.

Those participating in the hybrid working scheme are not permitted to work from abroad or from a holiday home or location. Employees' primary remote working location must be within commuting distance of their workplace and must be available to attend an office or site base, if required, at short notice.

## 4. Flexibility of Workforce

Given the degree of flexibility that the hybrid working scheme provides, there is an expectation that the workforce will be flexible. This means that employees will be required to attend an office/site base on particular days (occasionally above the minimum requirement) at the request of their line manager, for example, for in-person training or meetings where it is determined they are best conducted in person.

Similarly, there will be circumstances in which employees are asked to work remotely, at home or from another location for specific purposes and service delivery requirements, for instance:

- for operational needs, if there are too many members of a particular team in the office/site base on specific days.
- to deliver a particular element of their role or service.
- if adverse weather prevents attendance at the office/site base and the line manager agrees that it is a health and safety risk to travel.

## 5. Operating Principles

### 5.1 Office Working Hours

For days on which employees are attending the office/site base, their normal hours of work as set out in their contract of employment will apply and start and finish times should only be adjusted on any day following the approval of their line manager. Where a level of flexibility is required to facilitate attendance at the office/site base, employees should discuss this with their line manager and an agreement reached.

Employees who have access to flexible working hours (including coreless flexi) must continue to record all hours worked on Myself. Employees should work their normal working hours when in the office/site base. However, where there is a requirement to work additional time, flexitime can be accrued if agreed by the line manager.

Employees who are participating in the hybrid working scheme and are currently on a temporary Smarter Working arrangement will have these reviewed in light of the new hybrid working arrangements. Employees will be encouraged to attend the office/site base for a minimum period every four weeks and only in exceptional circumstances will alternative arrangements be approved on a permanent basis.

## 5.2 Office Space

During your time in the office/site base, you will attend your office/site base where you will be required to hot-desk. Your line manager will discuss arrangements with you for desk allocation. Personal belongings and moveable work equipment are not allowed on desks overnight and desks should be left clean for use the next day.

Employees participating in the hybrid working scheme are responsible for ensuring that their laptop and other equipment is either taken home or secured away at the end of the working day.

Where employees require specialist equipment to allow them to fulfil their role, permanent desks and equipment may be allocated to them.

## 5.3 Office Safe-Working Measures

Employee safety is our priority, and all standard workplace health and safety measures will continue to operate. However, due to the use of flexible working arrangements and hot desking, employees need to pay particular attention to the following aspects of health and safety:

- Ensure you have complied with any sign-in procedures, which are necessary to identify building occupancy in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that you know how to evacuate the building in an emergency and where to assemble. Your line manager will advise if you are not sure.
- Ensure that you know about local first aid arrangements (and how to summon help if needed).
- Ensure that your workstation is kept tidy during the day and that bags and trailing cables do not present trip hazards (this is especially important where hot desks are being used).
- Ensure that your workstation and chair are adjusted properly and set up correctly. Employees should have completed the DSE awareness e-learning course available on LearnNL and completed a DSE self-assessment.

Employees must advise their line manager immediately if they have any concerns, have identified any potential risks, or have any suggestions for further adaptations that are required.

## 5.4 Working hours from home or Remote Working

When working in a hybrid way, employees must be available and working during their normal working hours, as set out in their contract of employment. An employee's working hours at home or from a remote location should mirror those normally undertaken in the office/site base, unless otherwise agreed by the line manager.

Employees should limit interruptions during the working day, unless otherwise agreed by the line manager. Under no circumstances should an employee undertake any other

responsibility e.g., childcare, or other caring responsibilities during the hours they are contracted to work. Employees are required to make arrangements for the care of any children or other dependants who rely on them for support or care when the employee is working from home.

Employees should also ensure that their working day at home complies with the Working Time Regulations by ensuring that they:

- Take a lunch break each day of at least 30 minutes.
- Ensure that the time between stopping work one day and beginning the next is not less than 11 hours.

(Further information relating to the Working Time Regulations can be found at:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/working-time-rules>)

Line managers must be able to contact their employees throughout the working day and therefore it is important that employees ensure that their outlook calendar is up to date with details of any appointments, meetings or scheduled visits to other locations. It is also important that staff use the out of office facility when not available. Teams should also consider the use of tools such as shared calendars which can also help colleagues understand each other's availability on any working day.

## 5.5 Working Space at Home or in Remote Location

Employees participating in the hybrid working scheme must be able to work safely from home or any other location and therefore the appropriate DSE Assessment must be carried out and reviewed by the line manager. Where an employee is unable to work safely from home, they will be required to attend the office/site base and will be withdrawn from the hybrid working scheme.

Where employees have reasonable adjustments in place these should be reviewed to ensure they are suitable and appropriate for their working environment. This review should be undertaken by the employee and their line manager using the Reasonable Adjustments Protocol. The same protocol should be used for any employee who in the future acquires a disability or long-term health condition and requires reasonable adjustments to be made. For more information, please contact your line manager or a member of the Employment and Policy team.

## 5.6 Conduct whilst working from Home or Remotely

Whilst working from home or remotely, employees must continue to follow the Employee Code of Conduct including ensuring that they are dressed appropriately if participating in virtual meetings. Confidentiality and privacy should also be maintained at all times.

## 5.7 Sickness whilst working from Home or Remotely

If an employee is sick and unable to work, they must follow the Council's Supporting Attendance Policy reporting procedures and notify their line manager by telephone as early as possible on the first day of absence to explain the reason for their absence and to give an estimate of its probable duration.

Where an employee's agreed working day commences before the normal 8.45 am start time, employees will be required to contact their line manager to advise them of their absence by no later than 9.30 am.

Where an employee's agreed working day commences after the normal 8.45 am start time; employees will be required to contact their line manager within an hour of their scheduled start time or within such other timescales as may be specified by individual Services.

Should telephone contact with their line manager not be possible then notification of the absence should be advised to the line manager or nominated officer by e-mail at their earliest convenience, and the line manager will then require to contact the employee at the first available opportunity.

## 6. Technology and Equipment

To enable people to work in a hybrid way, the Council will supply, within reason, the IT and associated equipment necessary. As a minimum, employees participating in the hybrid working scheme will receive:

- a laptop computer and software (to be used both remotely and in office/onsite)
- a keyboard and mouse
- a set of headphones
- a monitor
- mobile phone where necessary.

It is an employee's responsibility to ensure that they have all sufficient and appropriate equipment for working from their remote location. The Council is not responsible for the provision, maintenance, replacement or repair of any personal equipment used by an employee. It is also an employee's responsibility to ensure that they have a suitable workspace at their remote working location with adequate lighting for work. If an employee has a disability, an employee should discuss with their line manager any equipment required to work from their remote working location comfortably.

All equipment provided remains the property of the Council and must be returned upon request. Access to the employee's home may be required for this purpose and arrangements will be discussed in advance to agree a mutually agreeable time.

A record of what equipment an employee has at home should be kept on myTeam. It will be the employee's responsibility to ensure that there is broadband facility and that this is maintained by the employee and is sufficient to support all necessary IT connections and equipment essential for connection to the relevant Council platforms and databases. Where there is any break in this service liable to last longer than two hours, the employee should arrange to attend work at a local office or site base. If broadband is not sufficient or they do not have this within their household, this should

be discussed with their line manager and alternative arrangements will be made for them to work from an office or site.

Only Council approved devices and software should be used for work related activities. Employees should be provided with the appropriate packages to allow them to conduct meetings from home if required. These meetings should be conducted confidentially and away from other household members.

Relevant ICT policies and guidance must be referred to as appropriate. Please see further guidance [here](#).

Permission to use laptops out with the normal working environment must be sought from the line manager and should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

## 7. Expenses

### 7.1 Financial Assistance

The Council will not provide any additional financial assistance for any employee wishing to work from home or remotely. Any costs for Wi-Fi, heating, lighting, electricity, and commuting costs to your office/site base will always be a personal expense in line with HMRC guidelines.

### 7.2 Business Mileage

Where an employee is required to attend a specific meeting or site visit, they can claim the appropriate business mileage. Any business mileage will be calculated from either the employee's home or administrative base, whichever provides for the lowest mileage.

If an employee commences work at home and they are then required to visit sites throughout the day as part of their role, they can claim business mileage from their home or administrative base, whichever provides the lowest mileage.

On the days when employees commence work from a Council or site base, the journey from home to office/site base will be classed as a commute and business mileage cannot be claimed. The days employees are required to attend the office/site base will be classed as a commute.

Expense claims should be submitted via mySelf and authorised via myTeam. Line managers should ensure employees have appropriate business insurance for work related journeys when travelling in personal vehicles.

### 7.3 Home Insurance/Mortgage/Landlord

Employees are responsible for ensuring that their home insurance provider is aware that they are working from home for a percentage of their working week and for

considering any impact this may have on their cover. The Council will not reimburse any expenses incurred.

Employees are also responsible for ensuring that they are not in breach of any covenant or agreement by working from home. Employees should check the terms of any mortgage, lease, or rental agreement and if necessary, obtain the permissions required to work from home. The Council will not reimburse any expenses incurred.

## 8. Health and Safety

Employees should liaise with their line manager and/or Safety and Wellbeing Advisor to ensure that their remote working set-up is appropriate and that they are working in a safe manner. When working from their remote working location, employees have the same health and safety duties as other staff. Employees must also take responsibility for their own health and safety and that of anyone else who is affected by their actions or omissions (for example others in their household when working from home). Employees must keep the work area clean and tidy, avoiding trip/slip hazards. A Risk Assessment must be undertaken for each home workspace at the beginning of the home working arrangement and reviewed periodically thereafter. Guidance will be provided for how these risk assessments should be undertaken and outcomes fed into the line manager for appropriate action.

Employees must notify their line manager if:

- they feel any discomfort due to working remotely (such as back pain) or
- they believe that there are any work-related health and safety hazards
- any work-related accidents occur in their home

Line managers must escalate these matters to a Safety and Wellbeing Advisor who will provide support and look into what action can be taken.

The employee should undertake the relevant online learning to ensure they are clear on the need for good DSE and workstation layout and posture.

The employee has a responsibility to always maintain safe systems of work and a safe working environment. If an employee proposes to make any changes to their home workplace that would impact on any risk assessment, they should notify their line manager. Advice on these matters is available from the Council's Safety and Wellbeing team.

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure all employees are aware of requirements in relation to the safe installation and use of equipment within the home working environment and any necessary training will be provided.

### Lone Working

Employees who live at home on their own, should make their manager aware in order that the appropriate arrangements can be put in place to ensure their safety and wellbeing during the times they are working from home.

## Wellbeing

Emergency contact details must be completed on itrent for all employees participating in the hybrid working scheme and line managers should maintain regular contact with their teams both individually and in a group and look out for signs that their mental health may be deteriorating. Managers should react quickly to concerns and ensure that employees are listened to and are pointed to relevant support mechanisms.

Regular contact including 1-1's and team meetings must be in place to ensure ongoing support.

Employees must also look after their own health and wellbeing and alert their line manager to any concerns at the earliest possible point. Supports and advice can be accessed through [workwellNL](#).

## 9. Data Protection/GDPR

Employees who are participating in the hybrid working scheme are responsible for keeping information associated with our organisation secure at all times. Specifically, those participating in the hybrid working scheme are under a duty to:

- a. practise good computer security, including using a unique password for work laptops and any other devices used for work.
- b. keep theirs, and others', data secure and make sure personal data is stored, shared, and used lawfully and appropriately.
- c. keep all hard copies of work-related documentation secure, including keeping documents locked away at all times except when in use and
- d. ensure that work-related information is safeguarded when working in public spaces, for example by:
  - positioning your laptop so that others cannot see the screen.
  - not leaving your laptop unattended and
  - not having confidential/business-sensitive conversations in public spaces

Laptops and other equipment provided by the Council must be used for work-related purposes only and must not be used by any other member of the employee's household or a third party at any time or for any purpose.

All information held should be treated in confidence, should not be inappropriately disclosed, and should be in accordance with the Council's Acceptable Use of ICT Policy, the Council's Policy on Data Protection, and the Council's Policy on Information Security. Advice is available from the employee's line manager and on myNL.

Employees should be reminded of their need to complete the mandatory online learning courses on Data Protection Essentials and Information Security Awareness.

Employees must ensure that they do not share sensitive or personal information under any circumstances outside of the secure Council systems. WhatsApp, Zoom or other similar messaging tools or personal email should not be used.

It is not recommended that employees retain paper records at home and should consider scanning materials to save digitally. Retention arrangements for these records should also be considered. Confidential waste should be returned to the Council as soon as practically possible for destruction and not disposed of within household rubbish or in other locations i.e., cafes.

Where employees require to discuss confidential matters, they should ensure their environment allows for this and/or they have appropriate equipment such as headsets to reduce the risk of conversations being overheard. It is recommended that virtual calls that are known to be confidential in nature are arranged out with an open office environment i.e., at home if privacy can be assured or within a designated meeting room. Where these measures cannot be met, employees should discuss this with their manager at the earliest opportunity.

## 10. Working outside the UK

The Council will not support employees working from outside the UK, for either short- or long-term arrangements. This is due to different compliance and legislative requirements, associated potential risk and costs that this could present to the Council.

## 11. Terms and Conditions

Hybrid working is a facility not a contractual obligation on the employer. Employees will receive a variation to contract confirming that their normal place of work is the office and their home address. Employees will also be asked to sign that they agree to the conditions and their responsibilities associated with the hybrid working scheme.

The working hours of an employee's post should not alter, although there may be flexibility around the times worked, when working from home or remotely to accommodate particular circumstances. This should be following agreement with the line manager. If an employee chooses to work beyond their contractual hours or during unsocial hours, no enhancements will be payable as this is personal choice.

The Council reserves the right to terminate any hybrid working arrangement, if for example, there is a change in business needs, performance concerns or if an employee's role changes to such an extent that hybrid working is no longer suitable, subject to giving appropriate notice. Employees are also able to terminate their hybrid working arrangements by providing notice to that effect to their manager in writing.

## 12. Review

This scheme will be reviewed annually, however the Council's hybrid working arrangements will be reviewed regularly to ensure that there are no issues that need to

be addressed. Arrangements are also subject to change, with appropriate notice, to meet service delivery requirements, employee wellbeing and the needs of our community, which will always take priority.

# North Lanarkshire Council

## Hybrid Working Agreement

Detailed below are the general principles and requirements of the Council's Hybrid Working arrangements which you are required to read and consider in conjunction with the Hybrid Working Scheme.

You are required to sign and date this form to confirm your agreement to comply with the Hybrid Working Scheme and the following:

1. You must complete a DSE Assessment for both the home and workplace location and ensure that their workstation set up is satisfactory and not in breach of health and safety.
2. You have a suitable working environment at your remote working location that enables you to carry your role effectively.
3. It is your responsibility to advise your line manager if you do not have suitable accommodation or equipment or of any change to your working environment which would allow you to work from home.
4. You continue to work the hours required by your terms and conditions of employment.
5. You work independently, motivate yourself and use your own initiative.
6. You manage your workload effectively and complete work to set deadlines.
7. You identify and resolve any new pressures created by working from a remote working location.
8. You adapt to new working practices, including maintain contact with your line manager and colleagues at work.
9. You must make your line manager aware immediately if there are any medical conditions that could impact on your ability to work from home or in a hybrid way.
10. If necessary, you will agree to attend occupational health or physiotherapy for support with any identified condition that could possibly impact on hybrid working arrangements.
11. You exercise flexibility to make changes on reasonable request to the hybrid working arrangement, including to the days, times and locations from which you work (as between your workplace and your agreed remote working location) to meet the needs of the Service and Council.
12. When working from home, you will ensure that their appearance is suitable for working.
13. When attending a meeting on Teams, your camera should be always on, and a background used.
14. When working from home, you must be within commuting distance of, within the same country as your workplace and should be able to return to the office at short notice if required.
15. You are required to determine any resulting tax implications for yourself.
16. You should make arrangements for the care of any children or other dependants who rely on you for support or care when you are working from your remote working location.
17. You are required to finance any travel and/or related expenses incurred when commuting to and from your remote working location and your workplace,

I have read and fully understood the terms and conditions associated with the Hybrid Working Scheme in North Lanarkshire Council and agree to comply with them.

Name (Please Print)	
Employee Number	
Job Title	
Signature	
Date	

Please return this part of the form along with the acceptance of your contract variation to the [ESCPeopleOperations@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:ESCPeopleOperations@northlan.gov.uk)

## Hybrid Working Scheme FAQ's

Here you will find the answers to the most commonly asked questions asked about the Hybrid Working Scheme

### 1. Why is it called a scheme?

In recognition of the benefits of working in a hybrid way, the Council has introduced a scheme which clearly details the requirements and expectations around working in this way.

### 2. Why have we changed the current scheme?

The scheme must be kept under review to ensure that it is fit for purpose particularly when the Council is continually evolving and to ensure that staff remain focused and motivated and have the correct levels of interaction with managers, colleagues and other stakeholders to allow for their development.

### 3. When does the refreshed scheme commence?

The refreshed scheme will commence on Monday 1 April 2024. There is likely to be a lead in time in some services and your line manager will advise if this is the case.

### 4. What are the key changes to the refreshed scheme?

The key changes are:

- Reference to Covid has been removed.
- Your main base will be your office base and not your home.
- Participants of the scheme will be required to work 10 days from home and 10 days in the office in every 20 working days (pro-rata for those who work less than 35 hours per week). The days must be worked consecutively in a rota of Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and then Monday, Tuesday of the following week.
- The entitlement to £100 to buy equipment for the home has been removed.
- A Hybrid Working Agreement must be signed by all participants of the scheme agreeing to the regulations and requirements that are necessary to allow employees to work from home safely.

### 5. Who is able to participate in the scheme?

The hybrid working scheme is available only to those employees, whose posts are deemed suitable for working in this way. This will be determined by the appropriate Chief Officer.

### 6. What if my Chief Officer says my post is not suitable for Hybrid Working?

There is no contractual right to work from home or right of appeal against the decision not to include your post in the hybrid working scheme, however you should ask to speak to your manager so that you can fully understand the reasons for this and discuss if there is any other flexibility around your role that could be considered.

**7. I am currently on a temporary smarter working arrangement, what will happen to this?**

All temporary smarter working arrangements will be reviewed with a view to making more permanent arrangements. However, it is anticipated that requests to reduce the number of the days in the office will be rejected unless there are medical or exceptional circumstances that require to be considered.

**8. Why do the days have to be consecutive?**

This is to ensure teams have a period of time together that allows for natural collaboration, communication and development. It will also ensure that service areas are continually staffed in the office environment allowing for personal contact where required and for those who wish to return to the office full time, to feel comfortable in doing so.

**9. Does visiting sites or other Council buildings count as an office day?**

No, if you are required to visit another Council building or site as part of your normal duties during one of your days in the office, you should return to your office base after your visit has finished. You should treat your days in the office similar to that which was in place prior to the pandemic.

**10. I am often on site for full days and am able to work from there as opposed to travelling back and forward to an office, how will this now work?**

You should discuss this with your line manager, but there should be no change to the way you work to provide the service, however you should only be working from your home when the work pattern permits. In the majority of cases this will mean that you are working from home for 10 days out of 20.

**11. Is there any scope to change the requirement to work five days consecutively?**

No, however the scheme will remain under review and changes made where deemed necessary.

**12. I cannot attend the office for more than six days due to childcare, what can I do about this?**

Working from home is not a contractual entitlement and it is your responsibility to ensure that you are able to attend work for the hours outlined within your contract of employment. However, you have the right to request a change to your working hours or pattern through the Council's Smarter Working Policy. It should be noted however, that it is unlikely that a request to reduce the number of days worked in the office will be approved unless there are medical or exceptional circumstances to be considered. In addition, when working from home, you are required to make arrangements for the care of any children or other dependants who rely on you for support or care when you are working from home.

**13. I am 3rd/4<sup>th</sup> Tier Manager, is my post in the Hybrid Working Scheme?**

All 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tier Manager posts will be considered to participate in the scheme in the same way that other posts will be considered. Your Chief Officer will advise you if your post is eligible or not, however there may also be a requirement for you to work more time in the office than the required 10 days due to the nature and seniority of your position within your team.

**14. How do I request to work from home permanently?**

You can apply to work permanently from home through the Council's Smarter Working Policy, however it is unlikely that this request would be approved for business reasons and would only be considered if there are medical or exceptional circumstances that need to be taken into account.

**15. What medical conditions allow you to work from home on a permanent basis?**

It is unlikely that a specific medical condition would justify a permanent home working arrangement, it is more about how your current health impacts on your ability to attend work.

**16. I don't want to be part of the Hybrid Working Scheme, but my post is eligible.**

You do not have to participate in the Hybrid Working Scheme and will be required to return to your office base full time. You should discuss this with your line manager who will put the appropriate arrangements in place to allow this to happen.

**17. Regarding the minimum of 10 days per 4-week period in the office, will this be pro-rated based on contractual hours for part-time employees?**

Yes, it will be pro-rata depending on the days/ hours you are contracted to work. So, if you work 17.5 hours per week over five mornings, you would be required to work the same rota as a full-time employee. However, if you work 17.5 hours over 2 or 3 days, you divide those hours by 5 (days) and multiply by 10 (days) you are required to attend the office. In this example you would be required to work 35 hours in the office (5 days) in every 20, but again these must be consecutively worked in agreement with your line manager.

**18. I work a condensed working week; how often will I be required to attend the office?**

This should be agreed with your line manager, however the general rule of thumb is that you should work half of your working days in any 20 working days in the office in a consecutive pattern covering Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and the following Monday, Tuesday. There may be slight variations to this to suit the needs of the service area in which you work.

**19. How will the 10 days in the office be monitored and what happens if I don't attend for 10 days?**

This will be monitored by your line manager. Anyone who is not attending the office on the required days and who does not have an alternative arrangement in place agreed by their line manager, will be removed from the Hybrid Working Scheme and required to work in the office full time.

**20. My manager is concerned about me working beyond my working hours when working from home, is this an issue?**

Whilst there is an understanding that on occasion you may be asked or wish to work later than your working hours to undertake a specific task this should not be the norm. Employees are encouraged to work their normal working hours, to ensure that they have a good work life balance and are looking after their own health and wellbeing.

**21. My manager is concerned about my performance at work at home and wants me to attend the office more often, do I have to?**

Yes, if your manager has advised you that they are concerned about your performance whilst working from home, then they have the right to request that you attend the office as deemed necessary.

**22. My manager is against home working and is making it difficult for us to work from home?**

If your post has been identified as being suitable for inclusion in the Hybrid Working Scheme, then you will be able to work in this way unless there is a valid business reason as to why you cannot. You should contact a member of the Employment and Policy Team to discuss this matter further.

**23. Will coreless flexi still be available to those participating in the Hybrid Working scheme?**

Yes, the coreless flexi process will continue as normal and will continue to be approved by your line manager at the exigencies of the service. Please note, you cannot use a period of flexi-leave and coreless flexi on the same day.

**24. Is the four-week period the same as the current flexi period?**

Where possible, as this will allow for easy management of time by both managers and employees.

**25. Are we still using Myself to clock in and out of work?**

Yes.

**26. What if someone is on annual leave, sickness absence or special leave, do they need to complete their 10 days at another time?**

There would be no requirement to meet the minimum requirement of 10 days in the office in these circumstances unless there was a business requirement to attend the office outwith your normal office days.

**27. If a manager asks an employee to go into the office outwith an agreed pattern to undertake a specific task or attend a meeting, how much notice is the manager required to give?**

If it is not one of the agreed 10 days, then it would be reasonable to provide a day's notice, however managers would be asked to provide as much notice as possible. There may also be occasions when little notice will be given but this should be in exceptional circumstances.

**28. Has the refreshed scheme been approved by the trade unions?**

The trade unions have been consulted on the scheme.

**29. Should new employees be asked to attend more than 10 days in the office as this might help them?**

This is something that should be considered and implemented by the line manager.

**30. How long will this scheme be in place?**

The Council considers that this scheme will be in place permanently, however it will always remain under review during its lifespan to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and meets the requirements of the business.

**31. I am on a smarter working pattern; will this change when working in a hybrid way?**

No, any smarter working arrangements that have been **permanently** agreed and are in place will remain.

**32. Will I receive an allowance when working from home to cover my broadband and utility bills?**

No. If you are struggling financially, you should speak to your line manager who can also arrange for you to work in the office more often or permanently.

**33. Will there be enough space in the offices to allow employees to return for 10 days?**

Yes. Employees will be required to hot desk within their designated service area and how this will operate will be determined by your line manager. There may be some employees who require a specific seat on a permanent basis and again this will be determined by the line manager based on individual circumstances.

**34. Will pool cars be available to use when in the office?**

Pool cars may be available for use and your line manager will advise if you are able to access these. There is no corporate pool car system with all previous pool cars being allocated to individual Services to use. The number of vehicles is the same as before the pandemic and we have less people in the office on any one day so there should be more than enough vehicles for people to use. If there are any issues with accessing vehicles then this should be raised through your line manager.

**35. I have a chair at home or in the office that was purchased for me to support my back, will another one be supplied for either home or office?**

The requirement for specific equipment should be discussed with your line manager and the Reasonable Adjustments Protocol followed with a Tailored Adjustment Agreement Form completed, retained on file and reviewed on a regular basis. Any equipment purchased by the Council for your use at home, remains the property of the Council.

**36. I am aware that my colleague lives on their own, how do we ensure their safety on the days they are working from home?**

If you are living on your own and working from home on a regular basis, you should advise your manager and agree arrangements for keeping in touch on a regular basis. You should also ensure that your emergency contact details are updated on Itrent and provided to your line manager. Other supports, as required, can be agreed between you and your manager.

**37. What are the implications for individuals with specific equipment to support their health issues, will equipment be made available both in the office and home?**

Where there is a requirement for specific equipment, your line manager will follow the Reasonable Adjustments Protocol and determine what additional equipment is required, if any, to allow you to safely carry out your work from both the office and home. Where the

cost of the equipment is considered unreasonable and impractical, you will be required to work from the office on a permanent basis. In some instances, you will be asked to contact Access to Work (<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply>) who can assist with providing equipment and support to allow you to attend work.

**38. Why do I need to complete the DSE Assessment and where do I find one?**

Under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 we need to make sure that your working environment is suitable and safe for use of display screen equipment. We need employees to carry out a self-assessment to meet this requirement. You can find a DSE self-assessment form (HSWF65) on My NL [Display Screen Equipment – My NL](#)

**39. What happens once I have completed the DSE Assessment?**

Once you have completed your self-assessment it will be returned to your manager to read and take any appropriate action. If there is anything within your self-assessment that requires further action, the safety and wellbeing team can provide assistance for this.

**40. I've heard that the offices aren't going to be ready for the new work pattern on 1 April, how will this affect me?**

Plans are underway to ensure that the offices are ready for staff returning to more days in the office and these include the provision of adequate seating, meeting and breakout spaces. However, as it is unlikely that all office spaces will be ready for the 1 April a lead in time of approximately 3 months is anticipated. Your line manager will discuss any interim plans with you if your office area is not ready on 1 April 2024.

**41. What if I don't like working from home or the office as it is affecting my health or ability to do my job?**

You should discuss any concerns you have with your line manager in the first instance.

**42. I've heard Covid cases are on the rise, how will this affect the refreshed scheme?**

A rise in covid cases will not impact on the scheme unless the government or public health deem it necessary to impose certain restrictions again.

**43. My question is not on this list?**

If you cannot see the answer to your question, you should contact your line manager in the first instance, and if they are unable to answer, then send your question to [EmploymentPolicyTeam@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:EmploymentPolicyTeam@northlan.gov.uk) and someone will get back to you.