

Integrated Impact Assessment

The purpose of Aberdeen City Council is to protect the people and the place of Aberdeen from harm, enabling them to prosper and supporting them in the event of harm happening.

The purpose of an Integrated Impact Assessment is to evidence that Aberdeen City Council are making decisions in an informed way, and that the impact of decisions made is understood and accepted. The legislation that is considered within this assessment are:

- Section 2 [Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics](#)
- Section 3 [Socio-Economic](#)
- Section 4 [Human Rights](#)
- Section 5 [Children and Young People’s Rights](#)

The term ‘policy’ is used throughout this document and applies to policies, proposals, strategies, provision, criteria, functions, practice, budget savings and activities that includes delivery of our services.

1. About the Policy

| |
|---|
| 1.1 Title |
| Flexible Working Policy and Guidance |
| 1.2 What does this policy seek to achieve? |
| Prior to the covid-19 pandemic, flexible working options were available to Aberdeen City Council employees depending on their roles. Since the pandemic, there has been a significant shift in the culture of the organisation and digital developments which allows for a more progressive approach to flexible working. This guidance refresh and new policy aims to provide additional provisions and guidance for employees and managers to provide clarity on what is, and what is not possible when it comes to how, when and where employees work. |
| 1.3 Is this a new or existing policy? |
| New |
| 1.4 Is this report going to a committee? |
| Yes |
| 1.5 Committee name and date: |
| Staff Governance Committee, 27 th January 2025 |
| 1.6 Report no and / or Budget proposal number and / or Business Case reference number: |
| POL-C-0018 |

Impacts

This section demonstrates the considerations that have been made in relation to the policy - and that the impact of proposals made is understood and accepted.

2: Equality Act 2010 - Protected Characteristics

Aberdeen City Council wants to ensure everyone is treated fairly. This section identifies the [protected characteristics](#) that the policy potentially affects and records the impact and mitigating steps.

2.1 What impact could this policy have on any of the below groups?

| Protected Characteristic | What is the impact? | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------|-----|---------|----------|
| | Negative | | | Neutral | Positive |
| | High | Medium | Low | | |
| Age | | | | | X |
| Disability | | | | | X |
| Gender Reassignment | | | | X | |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | | | | X | |
| Pregnancy and Maternity | | | | | X |
| Race | | | | X | |
| Religion or Belief | | | | | X |
| Sex | | | | | X |
| Sexual Orientation | | | | X | |

2.2 In what way will the policy impact people with these protected characteristics?

Flexible working is a way of working that allows employees to choose when, where and how they work depending on the business requirement, it can have positive impacts on people enabling them to balance their work and personal lives.

Employees have a statutory right to formally request flexible working and can appeal if this is rejected. Any decision to reject or end a flexible working arrangement must be fair, transparent and justifiable and be within the statutory reasons for rejecting requests. It is acknowledged that this would therefore remove the benefits of flexible working for some employees, but this would be a requirement to ensure effective employee management, service delivery and to provide the best citizen experience.

Flexible working can allow employees to work from home or another location that suits their preferences and needs. This can help reduce commuting, reduce travel costs and carbon emissions, and create a comfortable and safe work environment.

Flexible working can also enable employees to adjust their working hours or patterns to fit their personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities, health issues/disability, education, volunteering, or social activities. This can improve their well-being, productivity, and satisfaction at work, and prevent them from feeling isolated or excluded.

Flexible working can foster a culture of trust, respect and inclusion in the organisation, as it demonstrates that employees are valued. This can enhance the diversity and creativity of the workforce. Flexible working can also attract and retain talent, as it shows that the organisation is responsive and adaptable to the changing needs and expectations of the employees and society. This can increase the reputation and competitiveness of the organisation, being seen as an employer of choice. and encourage employees to apply for jobs or stay in the organisation.

Flexible working can also benefit employees with disabilities, as it offers them ways to work in that suit their individual needs and preferences. This can improve their productivity, well-being and job satisfaction. Flexible working can also reduce the barriers and challenges that disabled employees may face in accessing the workplace, such as transport difficulties, accessibility issues or discrimination.

Therefore a flexible working policy supports the principle of equality and diversity, and aims to create a positive and inclusive work environment for all employees, regardless of their disability status.

Another advantage of flexible working is that it enables employees with disabilities to work more effectively and comfortably, according to their own abilities and circumstances and in a location which best suits their needs – whether that be in the workplace or home location. Flexible working can help disabled employees to manage their health conditions, accommodate their assistive devices, and balance their work and personal commitments. Flexible working can also enhance the inclusion and participation of disabled employees in the organisation, as it shows that they are valued and respected. Technology can also ensure that teams stay connected and supports those with sensory disability through introduction of transcription and live captions. This ensures relations are maintained along with the introduction of Anchor Days to ensure that teams are brought together to maintain cohesion and allow for social interaction in person.

Flexible working can also benefit employees who are women, as it allows them to work in ways that suit their personal and professional goals. This can improve their career development and work-life balance. Flexible working can also reduce the gender gap and stereotypes that women may face in the workplace, such as pay inequality, glass ceiling or caring responsibilities.

2.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

A report by the CIPD (2020) on flexible working and inclusion, found that flexible working can help to improve the representation and progression of people with protected characteristics in the workplace, such as women, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older workers and carers. The report also highlighted the benefits of flexible working for employee well-being, engagement and productivity. The report recommended that employers adopt a flexible-by-default approach, where all jobs are advertised as flexible unless there is a clear business reason not to, and that they provide training and support for managers and employees on how to work flexibly effectively.

Data and research show that flexible working can support people with protected characteristics by enabling them to access and retain employment, progress in their careers, balance work and personal commitments, and avoid discrimination and disadvantage. Flexible working can also benefit employers by enhancing their diversity, inclusion, performance and reputation. Therefore, a flexible working policy seeks to create a fair and supportive work environment for all employees.

The Council's workforce data has been reviewed and analysed. It is readily available here: [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report | Aberdeen City Council](#)

This data gives a full understanding of the profile of the workforce. Additional occupational segregation data was used in the development of the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#).

In late 2020, the Council undertook a Future of Work Survey and included a number of questions on how staff worked prior to Covid and how they wished to work in the future. Over 1800 employees took part from across the organisation and provided an insight into the shared experience of working through the pandemic as well as contributing ideas about what the workplace and workspaces could look like in the future. The Future of Work Survey results highlighted that many employees would prefer to work differently, with a mix of home and office working where this aligned with the outcomes and client group for their service. In December 2024 – January 2025 an Employee Opinion Survey is

being undertaken which includes similar questions to the Future of Work Survey in relation to how employees are working. Results have not been analysed to date, however, an initial indication of the results is showing a continued preference for hybrid working and highlighting benefits of hybrid and flexible working.

Benchmarking was undertaken with other organisations and Local Authorities.

The policy and guidance ensures compliance with legislation around flexible working and caring responsibilities. This ensures that those who are entitled to request flexible working, continue to be able to do so. The policy and guidance, however, builds on this and provides this right to all employees regardless of situation or tenure.

It is noted that flexible working options will not be possible for every employee in the organisation as it is dependent on role. For example, our front line service roles in areas like Education, Customer Services, Social Work, Building Services or Waste and Recycling (as examples) may not be able to accommodate working from alternative locations or on a flexible working basis. It is acknowledged that some of these areas (e.g. catering and cleaning or trades), have high levels of occupational segregation when it comes to 'sex' as a protected characteristic. Therefore, it could suggest that some protected groups may not have access to the same opportunity for flexible working as others. This is an occupational segregation issue and will be addressed through workforce planning, recruitment and selection and the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. Occupational segregation is monitored as part of the Council's Equality Outcomes Mainstream Reporting.

For those roles which are able to benefit from Flexible Working, there are potentially a number of benefits for protected groups such as:

- Disabled employees can work more flexibly and from home or alternative locations which better suits their needs e.g. (equipment, accessibility, lighting etc.). This can support e.g. attendance at medical appointments or to adjust their working times to align with what is most productive for them – e.g. some of those who are neurodivergent may find certain times of the day better or worse for working and if their role permits, they can adjust their work pattern to accommodate this.
 - For mental health and wellbeing, having flexibility can be a benefit employees who either need their own space and would prefer to be at home, or for those who benefit from having colleagues around them for support. Managers are able to support individual and team requirements.
 - Those with caring responsibilities are able to work their hours flexibly and potentially also work from more convenient locations, which means they are able to for example take children to and from school, visit or care for relatives or dependents more easily.
 - Having a culture where flexible working is the norm, is important to encourage more of those who need to work alternative hours or from different locations, into leadership positions – which we know is an area where there is under-representation at Aberdeen City Council, particularly from women, young people, disabled people and people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
 - Flexible working supports those who may require to express milk, pray, attend appointments or eat / rest / take medication at certain times, (this supports those with protected characteristics such as age, sex, gender reassignment, religion, disability).
-

It is worth noting that there could be additional costs for employees choosing to work from home including:

- Cost of additional equipment (though endeavours would be made to cover the cost any equipment which would be a reasonable adjustment – either through Access to Work or Council budgets).
- Cost of gas and electricity.
- Cost of insurance.

However, no employee will be forced to work from home and a space in a Council location will always be available. Costs associated with travel and commuting may be reduced so employees have a choice about what works best for them (in the context of service delivery and management requirements) and can factor in costs when deciding if they wish to use flexible working or not.

Anchor Days are set days where hybrid teams come together to meet in a set location, with a focus on team building, they provide a set time for teams to be working together, in person, at the same time. These are proven to be beneficial for team morale, mental health & wellbeing and performance. Managers can insist on having these anchor days but will work with teams on determining the best and most appropriate timing for these.

Employees have a statutory right to formally request flexible working and can appeal if this is rejected. Any decision to reject or end a flexible working arrangement must be fair, transparent and justifiable and be within the statutory reasons for rejecting requests. It is acknowledged that this would therefore remove the benefits of flexible working for some employees, but this would be a requirement to ensure effective employee management, service delivery and to provide the best citizen experience.

What consultation and engagement and has been undertaken with officers and partner organisations?

- Trade Unions
- External Equality Groups
- Internal Equality Working Groups
- Legal
- P&OD colleagues
- Young Employee's Network
- Selected Managers throughout all Clusters who have been involved in Feedback / Focus Group Sessions.
- Senior Management Teams across the organisation
- AskHR colleagues dealing with CoreHR
- Leadership Forum

What consultation and engagement and has been undertaken with people who may be impacted by this policy (e.g. citizens, community groups, or other people/groups)?

As above.

2.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

| What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)? | |
|---|-------------------------|
| N/A | |
| With mitigations in place, what is the new overall rating of the negative impact(s)? | High |
| | Medium |
| | Low |
| | Negative Impact Removed |

3: Socio-Economic Impacts

This section is used to consider the impact of the policy on people who might be **unemployed, single parents**, people with lower **education** or **literacy**, **looked after children**, those with **protected characteristics** as examples.

Use this guide to understand more on socio-economic inequalities: [The Fairer Scotland Duty: Guidance for Public Bodies \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

3.1 What impact could this policy have on any of the below groups?

| Group | Negative | | | Neutral | Positive |
|---|----------|--------|-----|---------|----------|
| | High | Medium | Low | | |
| Low income / income poverty – those who cannot afford regular bills, food, clothing payments. | | | X | | X |
| Low and/or no wealth – those who can meet basic living costs but have no savings for unexpected spend or provision for the future | | | X | | X |
| Material deprivation – those who cannot access basic goods and services, unable to repair/replace broken electrical goods, heat their homes or access to leisure or hobbies | | | X | | X |
| Area deprivation – consider where people live and where they work (accessibility and cost of transport) | | | X | | X |
| Socio-economic background – social class, parents' education, employment, income. | | | X | | X |

3.2 In what way will the policy impact people in these groups?

For the most part, there will be positive financial implications. Employees might be able to reduce costs spent on travel, commuting and other expenses associated with working in a city centre (e.g. parking, lunches etc.)

However, on the contrary, extended periods of working at home may increase costs associated with household bills and insurance.

3.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

A study by ACAS (2019) on Flexible Working for Parents Returning to Work, which highlighted the benefits of flexible and home working for parents, especially mothers, who often face challenges in balancing their work and family commitments. The study found that flexible and home working can enhance job satisfaction, productivity, and retention, as well as reduce stress, absenteeism, and turnover. The study also suggested that flexible and home working can help address the gender pay gap and improve gender equality in the workplace.

A survey by CIPD (2018) on Megatrends: Flexible Working, which examined the trends and impacts of flexible and home working in the UK. The survey showed that flexible and home working have increased significantly over the last decade, especially among low-paid and part-time workers. The survey also indicated that flexible and home working can benefit both employers and employees by improving performance, motivation, engagement, and well-being. The survey recommended that employers should promote a culture of flexibility and trust, and provide adequate support and guidance for flexible and home workers.

The Council workforce data shows us that it is predominantly female employees who currently work part time across the Council, which shows the flexibility which is already in place, and indicates part time working is more likely due to caring responsibilities.

This mirrors the national data from the data from the Carers Census, Scotland 2022-23 - ONS data (office for national statistics) [Information on Unpaid Carers - Carers Census, Scotland, 2022-23 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot) which shows that around three-quarters of carers in the 2022-23 Carers Census (74%) were female. Females of working age are more likely to provide unpaid care than working age males.

Our age profile data shows employees show we have a large age range of who, at different stages of their life have different responsibilities at each part of their employee life cycle and may be able to benefit from more flexibility to support their caring responsibilities.

What consultation and engagement and has been undertaken with officers and partner organisations?

- Trade Unions
- External Equality Groups
- Internal Equality Working Groups
- Legal
- P&OD colleagues
- Young Employee’s Network
- Selected Managers throughout all Clusters who have been involved in Feedback / Focus Group Sessions.
- Senior Management Teams across the organisation
- AskHR colleagues dealing with CoreHR
- Leadership Forum

What consultation and engagement and has been undertaken with people who may be impacted by this policy? citizens, community groups, or other people/groups impacted by this policy?

As above

3.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)?

No one will be forced to work from home so if this is not suitable for them, a place within Aberdeen City Council properties will be available.

With mitigations in place, what is the new overall rating of the negative impact(s)?

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| High | |
| Medium | |
| Low | |
| Negative Impact Removed | x |

4: Consumer Impacts

The Consumer Scotland Act 2020 places a Consumer Duty on the public sector to put consumer interests at the heart of strategic decision-making, emphasising the need for accessible and affordable public services, especially during times of financial pressure. This person-centred approach is intended to result in better quality services and outcomes for the public as consumers of public services across Scotland.

This section of the IIA is used to consider the impact of the policy on consumers of any services that the policy is intended to change.

Use this guide to understand more on the consumer duty: [How to meet the consumer duty: guidance for public authorities](#)

4.1 What impact could this policy have on any of the below consumer groups?

| | Negative | Neutral | Positive |
|-------------------------|----------|---------|----------|
| Individuals | | | x |
| Small businesses | | x | |

4.2 In what way will the policy impact people in these consumer groups?

Flexible Working could have a positive impact on an employee's role the employee life cycle which could have a positive impact on consumers and the service they receive.

4.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

| What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)? | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| N/A | |
| If mitigations are in place, does this remove or reduce the negative impact? | No – negative impact remains |
| | Yes – negative impact reduced |
| | Yes - negative impact removed |

5: Human Rights Impacts

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000

The Act sets out our human rights in a series of 'Articles'. Each Article deals with a different right.

Use this guide to understand more about [Human Rights](#).

5.1 What impact could this policy have on Human Rights?

| Human Rights Article | Negative | Neutral | Positive |
|---|----------|---------|----------|
| Article 6: Right to a fair trial | | x | |
| Article 7: No punishment without law | | x | |
| Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence | | x | |
| Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief and religion | | x | |
| Article 10: Freedom of expression | | x | |
| Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association | | x | |
| Article 12: Right to marry and start a family | | x | |
| Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms | | x | |
| Article 1 of Protocol 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property | | x | |
| Article 2 of Protocol 1: Right to education | | x | |
| Article 3 of Protocol 1: Right to participate in free elections | | x | |

5.2 In what way will the policy impact Human Rights?

N/A

5.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)?

N/A

If mitigations are in place, does this remove the negative impact?

No – negative impact remains

Yes – negative impact reduced

Yes - negative impact removed

6: Children and Young People’s Rights Impacts

The United Nations Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child’s life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

Children’s rights apply to every child/young person under the age of 18 and to adults still eligible to receive a “children’s service” (e.g. care leavers aged 18 – 25 years old).

The Conventions are also known as the “General Principles” and they help to interpret all the other articles and play a fundamental role in realising all the rights in the Convention for all children. They are:

1. Non-discrimination (Article 2)
2. Best interest of the child (Article 3)
3. Right to life survival and development (Article 6)
4. Right to be heard (Article 12)

You can [read the full UN Convention \(pdf\)](#), or [just a summary \(pdf\)](#), to find out more about the rights that are included.

6.1 What impact could this policy have on the rights of Children and Young People?

| UNCRC and Optional Protocols | Negative | Neutral | Positive |
|---|----------|---------|----------|
| Article 1: definition of the child | | X | |
| Article 2: non-discrimination | | X | |
| Article 3: best interests of the child | | X | |
| Article 4: implementation of the convention | | X | |
| Article 5: parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities | | X | |
| Article 6: life, survival and development | | | X |
| Article 7: birth registration, name, nationality, care | | X | |
| Article 8: protection and preservation of identity | | X | |
| Article 9: separation from parents | | X | |
| Article 10: family reunification | | X | |
| Article 11: abduction and non-return of children | | X | |
| Article 12: respect for the views of the child | | X | |
| Article 13: freedom of expression | | X | |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Article 14: freedom of thought, belief and religion | | X | |
| Article 15: freedom of association | | X | |
| Article 16: right to privacy | | X | |
| Article 17: access to information from the media | | X | |
| Article 18: parental responsibilities and state assistance | | X | |
| Article 19: protection from violence, abuse and neglect | | X | |
| Article 20: children unable to live with their family | | X | |
| Article 21: adoption | | X | |
| Article 22: refugee children | | X | |
| Article 23: children with a disability | | X | |
| Article 24: health and health services | | X | |
| Article 25: review of treatment in care | | X | |
| Article 26: social security | | X | |
| Article 27: adequate standard of living | | X | |
| Article 28: right to education | | X | |
| Article 29: goals of education | | X | |
| Article 30: children from minority or indigenous groups | | X | |
| Article 31: leisure, play and culture | | X | |
| Article 32: child labour | | X | |
| Article 33: drug abuse | | X | |
| Article 34: sexual exploitation | | X | |
| Article 35: abduction, sale and trafficking | | X | |
| Article 36: other forms of exploitation | | X | |
| Article 37: inhumane treatment and detention | | X | |
| Article 38: war and armed conflicts | | X | |
| Article 39: recovery from trauma and reintegration | | X | |
| Article 40: juvenile justice | | X | |
| Article 41: respect for higher national standards | | X | |
| Article 42: knowledge of rights | | X | |
| Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure | | X | |

6.2 In what way will the policy impact the rights of Children and Young People?

N/A

6.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)?

N/A

If mitigations are in place, does this remove the negative impact?

No – negative impact remains

Yes – negative impact reduced

Yes - negative impact removed

7: Environmental Impacts

Aberdeen City Council has a duty to meet its legal environmental responsibilities by working towards Net Zero emissions, adapting to climate change, and acting in a way it considers most sustainable. We must also fulfil the [biodiversity duty](#) and [sustainable procurement duty](#).

This section in the Integrated Impact Assessment demonstrates that these considerations that have been made in the policy, that the impact of proposals made is understood and accepted, and what mitigating steps can be taken to reduce any negative impact of the policy.

Use this guide to understand more on the legal climate change duty: [Climate change - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) and find out more about how Aberdeen is adapting to Climate Change: [Aberdeen Adapts | Aberdeen City Council](#)

7.1 What is the impact of this policy on any of the below climate, environmental and waste considerations?

| | Negative | Neutral | Positive |
|--|----------|---------|----------|
| Council or City-wide carbon emissions | x | | x |
| Active and sustainable travel | x | | x |
| Facilities for local living | x | | x |
| Resilience and adaptability to flooding and weather events | | | x |
| Biodiversity improvement and wildlife/habitat connectivity | | x | |
| Water consumption and drainage | | x | |
| Pollution (air, water, noise, light and land contamination) | x | | x |
| Impact on resource use and waste | | x | |
| Sustainable procurement of goods and services | | x | |

7.2 In what way will the policy impact the environment?

There may be positive and negative environment impacts arising from this policy. Employees working on a hybrid basis reduces emissions from employees commuting to work. Alongside this homeworking may result in increased emissions from energy usage at home (e.g. heating) whilst continuing to consume energy in offices/ fixed work locations.

7.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken with local groups, partner organisations, experts etc? Where required, identify any other environmental assessments that have been completed.

The proposals within this report impact on the Prosperous Place section of the LOIP under the following Stretch outcomes.

13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. 14. Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026.

7.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

| What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)? | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| <p>The provisions in this policy allow greater flexibility for employees in where and when they work, through the introduction of hybrid working which will contribute to reducing emissions across the City through less people commuting to work, thereby assisting to reduce carbon emissions.</p> <p>However, due to the nature of Hybrid working there may be increased emissions from energy usage at home (e.g. heating particularly in winter months) whilst continuing to consume energy in offices/ fixed work locations.</p> | | |
| If mitigations are in place, does this remove or reduce the negative impact? | No – negative impact remains | X |
| | Yes – negative impact reduced | |
| | Yes - negative impact removed | X |

8: Sign Off

| Any further positive or negative impacts on individuals or groups that have been considered? |
|--|
| This policy and guidance is of benefit to most Aberdeen City Council employees. |
| Overall summary of changes made as a result of impact assessment. |
| No changes have been made but input during engagement phases has been included into the policy and guidance. |
| Outline of how impact of policy will be monitored. |
| Usage of flexible working provisions. |
| If there are any remaining negative impacts after mitigation, what is the justification for why this policy should proceed. |
| N/A |

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Assessment Author | Sheila Baird and Alison Paterson |
| Date | 22/01/25 |
| Chief Officer | Isla Newcombe |
| Date | 22/01/25 |