Cardiff and Vale UHB

GIG CYMRU NHS WALES | Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Caerdydd a'r Fro **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**

Agile Working Framework

Please note: there is not a 'one size fits all' solution to agile working.   Managers should ensure that they know their staff and talk to them about how agile working will impact on them and the service they deliver.   This framework does not describe what agile working will look like in your area – it allows managers and staff the freedom, within certain parameters, to agree suitable service, team and individual arrangements and highlights some of the benefits and risks to take into consideration when putting these arrangements in place.

This document does not replace the Occasional Home/Remote Working Guidelines or Flexible Working Procedure and should be read alongside them.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic required our staff to be adaptable, flexible and resourceful to an unprecedented extent. For their own safety and the safety of colleagues and clients, there was an increase in the number of staff who worked from home, some or all of the time. This reinforced the UHB's vision that many staff, including some in clinical roles, can successfully carry out a range of their normal duties remotely.

Our response to the pandemic has put the UHB in a position to "mainstream" agile working, which has the potential to benefit both the organisation and individual staff members, as long as the right safeguards are in place, and the IT infrastructure is available to support it.

There are a number of benefits and potential risks to agile working, which are outlined in this Framework. However, a significant risk is developing a culture of long hours and presenteeism in the NHS. Staff do not always feel trusted and some managers may feel hybrid/remote working makes managing performance more difficult. Embedding a culture of trust and mutual respect is essential to realise the benefits of hybrid/remote working and is entirely consistent with the Values of Cardiff & Vale UHB and the Core Principles of NHS Wales.

This Framework provides advice on how to create a good agile working environment that supports staff health and wellbeing and ensures excellent service provision for our patients.

2. CARDIFF AND VALE UHB FRAMEWORK FOR AGILE WORKING

In order to create the diverse and agile workforce we need for the future, in line with our strategy Shaping Our Future Wellbeing, we will need a range of working arrangements, for example:

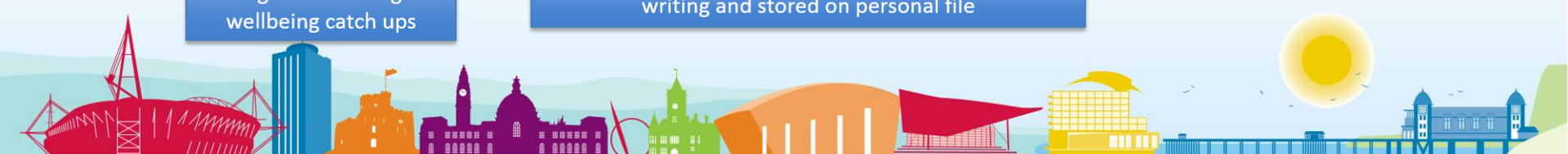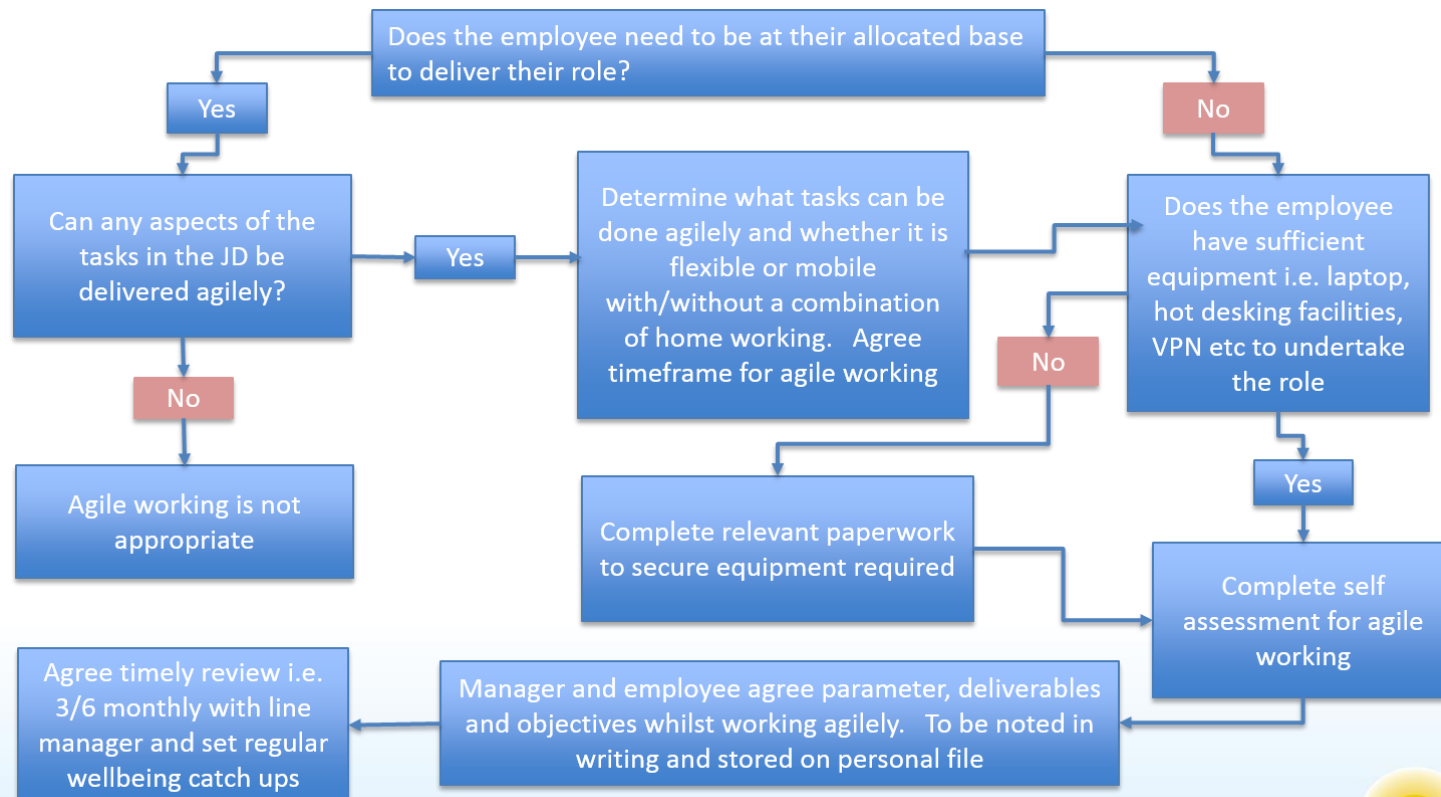| Site Based Working	Flexible within the estate working	Hybrid working	Peripatetic working (community based)	Remote working
Job or technology means these staff have to be physically on site e.g. some clinical staff, ward receptionist ward clerk	Works across a number of CAV locations, including different places within a building e.g. some clinical staff, porters, IT engineers	One or several days of the week / fortnight are spent on site, the rest of the time is spent working remotely or on a mobile basis e.g. admin staff, diagnostic staff, managerial staff	May start/ end their day at home or work base. Works across multi-agency settings and locations in the CAV geography including patient's homes e.g. district nurses, health visitors, CMHT teams	Attends their official base once/ twice a month for team cohesion and teamwork, the rest of the time is mainly worked from a remote location such as their home e.g. admin staff, IT helpdesk

3. WHO CAN WORK MORE AGILE?

Whilst agile working can be considered for all employees, not everyone works in the kind of role that can be done in a hybrid or remote way. Managers should consider if parts of the role could be undertaken from home, from another site or by varying working hours. For example, some staff may be able to work from home on an occasional basis to undertake a short piece of project work or as an opportunity to catch up on their learning requirements; others may be able to complete their work from a different site which is closer to their home etc.

Managers should also consider which working arrangement is appropriate for the situation. For example, staff who are joining the workforce for the first time may find hybrid / remote working more difficult during their first few weeks/months.

Agile working will not look the same throughout Cardiff and Vale UHB. It will vary based on service needs and there may be variation within a department depending on individual needs / preferences. This flow chart has been produced to help managers when considering agile working.

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                    Does the employee need to be at their allocated base
                    to deliver their role?

        Yes                                                                No

  Can any aspects of the       Determine what tasks can be        Does the employee
  tasks in the JD be     Yes   done agilely and whether it is     have sufficient
  delivered agilely?           flexible or mobile                 equipment i.e. laptop,
                               with/without a combination         hot desking facilities,
         No                    of home working.  Agree      No   VPN etc to undertake
                               timeframe for agile working        the role

  Agile working is not                                                          Yes
  appropriate
                               Complete relevant paperwork
                               to secure equipment required      Complete self
                                                                 assessment for agile
                                                                 working
  Agree timely review i.e.     Manager and employee agree parameter, deliverables
  3/6 monthly with line        and objectives whilst working agilely.  To be noted in
  manager and set regular      writing and stored on personal file
  wellbeing catch ups
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4. KEY BENEFITS AND RISKS

Benefits to the UHB:
- Enhance staff morale, increase employee satisfaction and improve retention
- Efficiency and effectiveness of the estate
- Improved emphasis on responding to patient and service needs outside of the traditional setting
- Ability to adapt for future change – helping us meet the ambition described in our strategy *Shaping Our Future Wellbeing*
- Better use of technology, driving innovation and creativity
- Reducing our carbon footprint

Benefits for Managers:
- Positions available to those often prohibited from standard office hours e.g. carers, those with disabilities
- Focus on outputs, so increases productivity
- Enables an active discussion with staff to ensure options for staff, department and organisation – able to consider individual circumstances of staff (e.g. vulnerable home life / safeguarding, wellbeing)

For Staff:
- Improved control over work-life balance
- Trust and autonomy - control over work and the ability to make decisions / use discretion (within limits)
- Reduction in travel for commuting, events and meetings – this reduces carbon emissions, saves money and time

Numerous studies have found that flexible working arrangements can have a significant positive impact on people's mental health with better sleep and lower stress levels as common outcomes. Equally, someone's mental health can have a significant impact on their ability to perform well in their job.

However, we do need to be mindful of and consider potential risks of hybrid and remote working, including:

- How trainees, entry level staff and new starters are supported to feel part of the work family and become effective members of the team
- Security of technology, files and other information
- Managing perception – there is the potential for friction between managers and staff where hybrid and remote working is not supported or is perceived as a less productive option, or between staff as it is not appropriate for all roles
- Changing the way we work to become more outcome focussed. Avoid micromanagement – managers need to trust staff to deliver on objectives
- Loss of team spirit / team effectiveness and feelings of isolation
- Dealing with technology and access to the right support when working remotely
- Ability to manage performance / output
- Supporting staff whose circumstances means hybrid or remote working isn't an option or is less easy
- Working longer days/ hours and in some cases blurring boundaries between work and home life
- Some staff may struggle with the lack of a static office environment and individual work space
- The need for an appropriate home working environment and set up
- Some staff may see a deterioration in their health and wellbeing as a result of some of the above risks

Our objective is to make sure no-one is discriminated against at Cardiff and Vale.   In developing agile working arrangements consideration must be given to the particular needs of different groups of staff or individuals.

Managers need to:

- **Understand** and take into account the particular circumstances of all the individuals in their team
- **Involve and communicate** appropriately with all members of the team and consider any challenges (e.g. physical, domestic circumstances) and consider whether any particular measures or reasonable adjustments are required.
- **Make sure** that the steps taken do not unfairly disadvantage others in the team

Agile work-styles may not be appropriate for all staff and managers should look out for early warning signs that a team member is not working well. Managers should monitor the on-going wellbeing of staff through **regular review** of agile work-style arrangements. This should be done on at least an annual basis, for example, during an appraisal.   If it isn't working well then a return to the office or alternative arrangements should be discussed.

5.   CREATING A SUCCESSFUL AGILE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

It is important that managers and staff work together to ensure that agile working is successfully implemented.

- Use the lessons you have learned during the lockdown as a starting place.   What good things happened that you can keep?   What didn't work so well and needs to be improved
- Work on maintaining a culture of respect and trust
- Know your team.   How often should you keep in touch with them? What motivates them?
- Share goals and expectations with your team and discuss how performance will be measured
- Support your team members' wellbeing and signpost them to services if needed
- Take part in regular team updates to keep everyone in the loop
- Ask for assistance if you are unsure
- Respect that not everyone in the team will have the same levels of confidence with technology
- Review the agile working arrangement regularly (at least annually, for example, during appraisal)
- Talk to the team about sharing desks and workspaces safely, if appropriate
- Ensure that staff understand they need to fulfil the requirements of their role and make alternative arrangements for childcare, caring for dependants etc.
- Make it clear that all UHB Policies and Procedures apply in the same way whether working on site or elsewhere

6. Top Tips for Agile Working

For Managers:
- ✓ Agree ways of working – make sure the whole team is clear about how you will work together, how you will keep each other updated and how frequently
- ✓ Set expectations and trust your staff – focus on results rather an activity
- ✓ Make sure staff have the support and equipment they need – maintain a virtual open door
- ✓ Connect regularly as a team and with individual staff through virtual meetings and calls
- ✓ Share information and encourage your team to do the same – opportunities to pass on information informally are more limited
- ✓ Tailor your feedback and communications – remote conversations can be misinterpreted as it's harder to read body language, tone of voice and other cues. Be mindful of this, especially when delivering difficult messages or feedback and have these types of conversations face to face whenever possible
- ✓ Listen closely and read between the lines
- ✓ Help foster relationships and wellbeing – make time for social conversations to increase rapport and reduce feelings of isolation
- ✓ Discourage presenteeism – if staff are unwell encourage them to take time off and model this behaviour yourself
- ✓ Encourage your staff to put safety first – a health and safety risk self-assessment needs to be conducted to ensure the home/remote workplace is suitable

For staff:
- ✓ Be clear about when your working day begins and ends and take breaks to refresh. Make sure you switch off when work is over to avoid burnout.
- ✓ Cultivate habits such as taking exercise and fresh air every day
- ✓ Set up a designated workspace, if possible. Make sure you have all the technology you need including a reliable and secure internet connection, any necessary files, hardware and software and knowledge of how to get IT support
- ✓ Stay in conversation – contribute regularly to team chats / group emails so you don't drop off the radar. Ask what people are working on and share what is on your plate.
- ✓ Foster relationships. Make time for non-work chats as you would in the workplace and use video calling to maintain face-to-face contact
- ✓ Understand that you will be expected to attend the workplace regularly, either as part of hybrid working or remote working (though the frequency will be different)
- ✓ Be clear in your communication. Conversing remotely removes a lot of the cues we get in face to face communication
- ✓ Ask for support when needed
- ✓ Make remote/hybrid working work for you. Change where you sit, put on music, whatever helps you work. Enjoy the perks – no commute or uncomfortable shoes, and all your home comforts!