



HYBRID WORKING POLICY

Hybrid Working Policy

<p>Background</p>	<p>This Hybrid Working Policy is intended to replace the previous Home Working Policy, approved by the 4 Boards’ Joint Services Committee on 20.07.20, as the Home Working Policy was an interim policy due to the external factors of the pandemic.</p> <p>The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework to support flexible working arrangements where practicable, to realise the benefits of enabling staff to work flexibly. The benefits of flexible working were realised during the Covid-19 pandemic from March 2020, when many organisations had to adapt to new ways of working by adapting their working practices quickly. The aim of this Hybrid Working Policy is that we do not lose those benefits, for our 4 organisations and indeed for staff, and that we learn lessons from the changes which the pandemic forced upon our organisations.</p> <p>The 4 Boards are adopting a flexible, agile, hybrid working policy for those employees who can undertake some of their duties away from an office or depot base, with some flexibility to work from home or other location. In the post-pandemic world, hybrid working is an option which many employers are adopting. The perceived benefits of structured hybrid working include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes efficient ways of working for our staff including reduced travel time for commuting, environmental benefits of reduced unnecessary travel, reduced fuel use and costs for the Boards and for individual staff. • Positive impact on productivity and increased job satisfaction. Hybrid working enables employees to control how they work, with an emphasis on what work they can do without interruption and with greater focus, and the need to plan positively where engagement with co-workers/group work and meetings in the workplace are beneficial. • Ability to improve recruitment by offering hybrid working. Some staff will be attracted to positions with the IDBs and may be recruited when otherwise those individuals would not apply for roles in the Boards. For example, regular long-distance commuting may be unattractive, but if staff are able work from alternative locations for some of their working week and commute on fewer occasions, then it widens the geographic recruitment pool. • A workforce retention measure. The ability to work flexibly is valued by staff and many Employers do now offer this. The Boards need to adapt to new ways of working which are becoming the new normal in the industry if we are to recruit and retain staff. • Hybrid working places the emphasis on work outcomes as a measure of performance, not inputs and process. • Promotes improved ICT skills amongst our staff and efficient use of Employer provided ICT equipment [the Boards having invested in additional ICT equipment during the pandemic to enable staff to work from home in order to maintain business continuity]. A good example is the use of Zoom/MS Teams video conferencing for meetings of all
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	<p style="text-align: center;">types, reducing travel and enabling staff to participate more easily in national, emergency planning, Board meetings etc.</p> <p>Whilst there are many benefits to adopting this hybrid way of working, it needs to encompass an element of personal choice in the 4 Boards’ policy. Working remotely (from alternative locations) may not be the most effective form of working for all employees. Although not all employees would benefit from returning to the office for their full-time contracted hours, some may have reservations about the prospect of working from home for part of their working week [e.g., no suitable space to work at home, level of disruption for some people whilst working at home, inability to put in place clear workplace/home boundaries, expense of additional heating costs when working at home etc].</p> <p>A Hybrid working policy aims to offer a good balance between the Boards’ need for maintaining business continuity and the individual staff member’s need for flexibility and efficient personal choice in how they deliver the demands of their role. Witham and Humber Internal Drainage Boards aim to build a strong hybrid working culture, based on employer/employee trust.</p>
<p>Statement</p>	<p>Due to the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 onwards, office-based staff were provided with appropriate ICT equipment to enable home working and to chieve business continuity for the Boards.</p> <p>Employees may now undertake some of their work duties away from the Boards’ workplaces and work on a hybrid basis with some remote working and some office/depot-based working. All staff will have a designated place of work [base] which is not their home. This is usually Witham House office or, in some cases, one of the Boards’ 4 Depots.</p> <p>This policy aims to set out the ways in which hybrid working will be facilitated, supported and managed in the Boards.</p> <p>Our underpinning aims are to ensure business continuity and to meet the business needs of our 4 Boards, to keep our staff safe, to promote efficient working methods, to increase employees’ job satisfaction, to be competitive in the IDB industry and recruit staff with appropriate skills and talent, offer new ways of working that support and retain staff, reduce ill-health and sickness absence where possible, promote a healthy work-life balance and to promote employee well-being.</p> <p>In doing so, this will improve the 4 Boards’ efficiency, productivity and employee engagement.</p>
<p>Responsibilities</p>	<p>The Senior Management Team has supported staff members to allow an individual non-contractual hybrid approach to the working week. In addition to the 76/74 hours 9-day fortnight, the ability to work at a location other than contractual base is being supported. The Boards do require continuous Witham House physical office cover 10am to 2.30pm Monday to Thursday, as well as phone cover during office hours beyond this, and the hybrid approach for individuals and the Boards will need to fully support this. E.g., changes to days worked at alternative locations to cover the Boards during staff absences,</p>

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	<p>leave periods or any time where the Boards reasonably require attendance at the office.</p> <p>Senior Management Team, Line Managers to ensure adherence to the Policy. and that employees have the necessary resources, training, information and their job role needs and are assessed for hybrid working to operate successfully.</p> <p>Senior management team to review application of and revision of the policy.</p>
Training	<p>HR Lead to offer appropriate support, guidance and training.</p> <p>Risk Manager available for support with regards to Display Screen set up.</p>
Equality and Diversity	<p>This policy aims to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that no employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, transgender, civil partnership/marital status, appearance, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion/belief or no religion/belief, disability, age, carer, pregnancy or maternity, social status or trade union membership.</p>
Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA)	<p>Local Policy Witham & Humber Drainage Boards' Policy, developed to compliment the 'ADA Lincolnshire Branch White Book of Wages and Salaries and Conditions of Service' [2022].</p>
Dissemination	<p>Witham & Humber Drainage Boards' Website: www.witham3idb.gov.uk</p>
Version	V4
Approval Date	<i>Joint Services Committee – 12.12.22.</i>
Review Date	<i>1 year or as and when policy guidance changes.</i>

Hybrid Working Policy

1. Introduction

Witham and Humber Drainage Boards believe that their employees and members are the most valuable asset and are committed to attracting, developing and retaining the very best talent and skills in the workforce. The Boards appreciate that the UK workforce is becoming increasingly diverse and includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with parental and other care responsibilities, as well as those with competing priorities, whose interests and aspiration require an appropriate work-life balance.

The Boards appreciate the importance of supporting their employees to balance their work and home lives by offering flexible working arrangements that enable them to balance their work commitments with other priorities. One such flexible working arrangement is hybrid working.

This policy aims to set out the ways in which hybrid working will be managed in the Boards. Our continued aim is meet the requirements of our 4 Boards to increase job satisfaction, the rate of retention of employees, reduce absence, attract new talent and appropriate skills, promote work-life balance, employee well-being. In doing so, this will improve the 4 Boards' efficiency, productivity and employee engagement.

2. What is hybrid working?

Flexible working was first introduced as a statutory right in April 2003. It has gone through a substantial number of changes since then, including an increased scope beyond parents and carers. Currently, employees with 26 weeks' service can ask to change, amongst other things, their working hours or location.

Hybrid working is defined as a flexible working arrangement where employees have the option of working from the office, from home or other public spaces, such as co-working offices, libraries etc. to conduct their duties in their role. While working remotely, employees maintain the same contractual obligations, such as core working hours as if they worked at their base for all of their contracted working hours.

The Boards recognise that remote working can be beneficial for the Boards and individuals and, to this end, will seek to accommodate it wherever practicable. The Boards appreciate the benefits and necessity for a regular on-site working and presence which are difficult to replicate from home, such as specifics of individuals role, building relationships, direct communication and interaction between colleagues, customers, teams and management.

Hybrid working is designed to offer the flexibility of homeworking whilst also maintaining the benefits associated with on-site working for individuals and the Board.

There are two main categories of hybrid working:

- occasional/ad hoc hybrid working. This arises in relation to specific pieces of work or for specific periods. It does not follow a regular pattern and is subject to the prior approval of a line manager. It may be granted as part of a phased return to work after maternity, paternity or sickness absence or be a temporary arrangement due to family commitments or domestic circumstances.
- regular hybrid working. This is an agreement between the Boards and an employee for a permanent combination of homeworking and attendance at the Boards' workplace, on a regular and ongoing basis [however this does not change the employee's base and a regular commitment to home working on preferred days will not be interpreted as an entitlement to work from home on those or any specific day or preferred working pattern].

3. Eligibility

The Boards have adopted hybrid working and maintain discretion to offer remote working to employees, either during their employment or before commencement of a new role.

Overall, employees will be eligible to adopt a form of hybrid working in the following circumstances:

- where the employed role lends itself to hybrid working (not all roles are eligible), the work undertaken by the employee must be capable of being done remotely.
- where the employee's role does not involve consistent supervisory duties that require undertaking this in-person alongside the team members involved.
- where their remote, home or chosen environment is suitable to undertake the necessary requirements of the Boards' duties.
- where agreed continuity of cover arrangements is in place, i.e., sickness, holiday, training, recruitment, vacancy and ad hoc absence.
- where the employee has successfully completed the relevant induction and training attached to their job role and is able to work to a satisfactory standard through remote working.

The Boards will carefully assess the needs and requirements of a role before determining how the hybrid working relationship will meet the needs of the 4 Boards' business.

The Boards also observe government guidance on remote working as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and may implement temporary periods of hybrid working due to associated restrictions and the needs of the 4 Boards' business continuity.

Hybrid working must be financially viable and will be assessed and kept under review to ensure that there is no significant increase in workload on colleagues.

4. Examples of hybrid working

Examples of hybrid working may include:

- project or set of tasks that requires peace and quiet and a lack of interruptions. A backlog of tasks or a major project.
- family commitments such as the long-term illness of a relative or dependent. In this situation, we would also ask that you refer to the 4 Boards' policy on time off for dependents.
- recovery from ill-health, mental or physical illnesses where hybrid working may be conducive to the smooth recovery of the employee.
- Various transport considerations may give rise to a request for hybrid working. Efficiencies of travel and working time for the Boards and employees.

Hybrid working can be structured in numerous ways including:

- Occasionally office based.
- Set number of hours/days in the office.
- Predominantly office-based preferred, with remote working permitted and supported.
- Remote first and foremost, with visits to the office when in-person meetups are needed.

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The Board has not determined a prescriptive approach to hybrid working, as Senior Managers acknowledge that life and work can be fluid. However, the requirements for attendance to the office to ensure cover, and to allow for changes in staffing due to unforeseen circumstances such as sickness absence.

5. Hybrid working agreements

Employee and line manager to hold regular discussions and monitoring to ensure the remote working agreements are as effective as both parties expected.

If there are concerns raised by the employer or employee, either party may propose reasonable amendments to facilitate a smoother working arrangement.

- employees are required to be available for work during the agreed core working hours.
- the homeworking/hybrid arrangements will be subject to regular review by the line manager.
- employees working remotely will be expected to manage their employment commitment and responsibilities, their working diary and attend meetings and other office-based events as and when required by their line manager and the Boards.
- employees working a hybrid pattern of work are required to comply with Boards' policies, including holiday, sickness, absence, etc.
- The Boards reserve the right to review and/or end the hybrid agreement with reasonable notice if the agreement becomes unworkable, no amendments can be implemented or the employee's work output, quality, oversight, customer/colleagues/team relationships etc. suffer to the detriment of the Boards and/or the employee.
- if any issue arises that causes an employee to no longer meet the eligibility criteria at the outset of this policy, the Boards will review the hybrid working arrangement and may end it on reasonable notice

6. Hybrid practical working arrangements.

The 4 Boards supplies homeworkers with the necessary equipment relevant to their job role. The equipment remains the 4 Boards' property and if required will be installed and removed at the Boards' cost. The Boards or their contractors may need to attend the employee's home to update, maintain or repair/replace the equipment and will give the employee reasonable notice of the need for this.

Employees should maintain regular contact with their line manager who will ensure regular 1 to 1's are programmed in, so that the Boards can work towards early resolution of any problems. This applies to problems with Boards' equipment and also in relation to the ongoing suitability of the homeworking arrangement; pressures and stress occur equally to homeworkers as they do to those working at the Boards' offices and the Boards encourage the early reporting of these issues so that practical steps can be considered and implemented to the mutual agreement of both the hybrid worker when working from home and the line manager.

The costs of electricity, water, heating, telephone, broadband and other utilities, or provision of office furniture such as chairs and desks will not be covered by the Boards. These costs will remain the employee's responsibility.

Employees must always keep the 4 Boards' data and materials safe and secure, ensuring reasonable precautions are being taken to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Data Protection policy.

Employees should refrain from revealing to customers/clients that they work from home. Employees must not provide their personal address or personal contact details customers/clients, or third parties associated with the Boards. Meetings between customers/clients and employees at home are prohibited. All communications should be routed through the 4 Boards' workplaces.

7. Training and support

To facilitate the transition to a hybrid working model, training and support may be required. The support and training requirements may be varied from employee, software tools, coaching, external provider etc. This will need to be discussed with your line manager to ensure an individual solution is provided.

8. Technology and equipment

Technology is a critical component within hybrid working. Technology enables teams to communicate, connect and collaborate wherever they are based or work remotely.

The Boards implement security measures to ensure data integrity. Employees should take reasonable care of the 4 Boards' equipment and only use it for the 4 Boards' business. ICT and telephony equipment may only be used in accordance with the Boards' ICT, data protection and monitoring policies.

Personal equipment that an employee uses for work purposes remains their responsibility and the Boards are not liable for any loss, damage, repair or replacement of any personal equipment. If an item of equipment is deemed necessary for work, the employee should contact their line manager.

The Boards have adopted hybrid software i.e., use of Zoom and Microsoft Teams and provide a variety of collaborative spaces to enable staff to meet with other team members and host external and internal meetings. Workplace management tools exist for booking physical meetings rooms.

9. Employee Wellbeing

The long-term impacts of hybrid working should lead to improved employee wellbeing overall, role ownership and responsibility, greater flexibility, more time for health and wellbeing activities, and increased work/life balance. However, hybrid working does present its own work-life-balance-related challenges.

To help managers and employees to adapt to hybrid working, support is available to:

- educate employees to develop healthy relationships with technology.
- educate managers to be aware of any potential signs of poor wellbeing or mental health problems.
- Offer support to employees struggling to manage work-life balance

The Boards recognise equality and inclusion by taking steps to ensure every employee has the same experience and equal opportunities.

10. Performance management

Historically, performance was often correlated with time spent in the office. However, this is not always a true indicator of performance or productivity. It is impossible to visually measure the time and effort hybrid working employees are putting into their work. Employers will develop and agree deliverable outcomes.

Managers and employees require regular one-to-one meetings to discuss all areas of employment and the role i.e., staff recognition, well-being, innovation, performance outcomes, personal development plans.

11. Health and Safety for homeworkers

The 4 Boards' health and safety policy applies to hybrid working, when staff are working at home. Employees should refer to the separate health and safety policy for more details.

Hybrid working requires staff to comply with several health and safety considerations in respect of the space utilised as their workplace in their home environment. Hybrid working requires staff to attend the office/depot to undergo all required health and safety training.

12. Display screen self-assessments

A Display Screen self-assessment will be undertaken to determine any relevant risks and to prevent harm to the hybrid worker when working remotely, or anyone else who may be affected by their work, in respect of the workspace and the working arrangements. Each DSE user will complete their Office workstation DSE self-assessment as usual and complete the Hybrid working DSE self-assessment in addition. It is recognised that working from a location other than the office base, may mean adaptations to ways of working may be needed, but support to ensure the best possible set up will be available upon request and in addition to the DSE self-assessment for hybrid working.

All other specific risk assessments will remain as previous e.g. New and or Expectant Mother assessments. Please refer to the policy for details.

13. Moving home

If employees move home, the hybrid working arrangement will be reassessed.

14. Electrical equipment

Homeworkers are required to use all equipment supplied by the Boards safely and in accordance with best practice and manufacturer guidelines. The Boards will check all Boards' electrical equipment for safety, and employees will be required to provide their Board owned electrical equipment upon request e.g. for PAT. Homeworkers will be responsible for any other electrical equipment used by them in their work activities and will continue to be responsible for the safety of electrical sockets and wiring in their home.

15. Working hours

Employees are responsible for ensuring they complete their working hours as defined in their contracts of employment whilst working some of their contracted hours from home. Each employee in agreement with their line manager will agree the working pattern for meeting their contracted hours.

16. Working time

Employees are responsible for ensuring they take their rest breaks as defined in their contracts of employment. Working time should be monitored and rest breaks of at least 20 minutes for every six hours of working should be taken, however when working at home, it is recognised that you may wish to move round more often as the 'natural breaks' which occur in the office environment will not be so frequent whilst working from an alternative location.

17. First aid

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First aid equipment will be provided by the Boards for the hybrid worker. Employees are covered under the Boards' accident insurance policy in their home. Accidents must be reported immediately to the nominated person set out in the Boards' Health and Safety Policy.

18. Employee conduct

If hybrid working becomes unsuitable due to employee conduct or performance, the homeworking arrangement may be terminated immediately. Further disciplinary action may also be taken in line with the 4 Boards' policy.

Please note that this policy should not be taken as forming an employment contract, and may be updated at any time.

Whatever the circumstances leading to a position where 4 Boards' employees are required or recruited under a hybrid working arrangement, this policy applies. All employees must comply with the requirements as set out in this policy.