

Home/Office Working

Guiding Principles – Across North Star

Context

These have been developed based on the feedback of staff. The feedback has been extensive and detailed, both quantitative (survey in-house and external by “Peachy Mondays”) and through extensive dialogue with everyone (qualitative). The guiding principles have been drawn up with staff, and the process has been iterative and will be constantly reviewed. This co-produced process ensures no-one feels “done to” and that everyone’s voice has been heard. There is a recognition that views may change as time goes on and therefore our approach needs to have maximum flexibility built in, so that we can deal with the emergent. The key overall purpose is to keep North Star strong in every sense, considering all the needs of people and business requirements. There are inevitably diverse needs across the business, and these will be considered on a one to one basis if they fall outside of these principles, but generally the jointly agreed guiding principles will apply to all office based staff. Those who work on schemes and need to be present for various reasons will have a scheme by scheme approach outside of these principles.

As stated, these guiding principles will be kept under regular review and arrangements will need to change if we experience local or national lockdowns. The application of them is subject to all restrictions being lifted with no Government requirements to work from home – at the moment this applies from 21st June. Some of the key themes that emerged from our discussions are:

- All staff want opportunities to be together and have personal contact.
- Our strong relational culture helped us to remain effective and connected during lockdown and this needs to continue.
- Zoom/TEAMS/Virtual spaces can bring real benefits and have their place. However, there are occasions when face to face contact is clearly better if not essential.
- Keeping relationships strong on a personal, team, intra team and an organisational level keeps North Star strong.

Principles

- **Flexibility:** There is enormous flexibility in terms of how and where meetings are held, it is the purpose of the meeting which will be the deciding factor.
- **Relationship:** Regardless of how meetings are undertaken, creating and ensuring a depth and quality of relationship is critical.
- **Consistency:**
 - Everyone will base themselves at their office base (usual place of work) for at least two days a week.
 - All continuous conversations (one to one meeting with line Managers) are to be face to face and at least once a month, venues to be agreed on an individual basis.

- Team meetings are an opportunity for the team to come together in person, so face to face meetings should be held.
- Anyone can call a face to face meeting at any time.
- Development, training, challenging conversations will all be held in person.
- **New Starters**
 - Developing relationships take time.
 - Understanding the culture takes time.
 - There are key opportunities for the development of relationships at the start of someone's employment and as far as possible we need to maximise personal contact. As a starting point these should take place in person:
 - Introduction meetings.
 - Corporate Induction sessions.
 - Office introduction/induction/ICT navigating.
 - New Staff must get an opportunity to meet in person with every team from across the business.
 - New staff will be office based for the first three months or longer if necessary.
 - During the first three months, in order to develop relationships and to aid team development, managers and staff will need to increase their presence at their office. Managers and their teams will work together to agree what is needed in this regard.

Apprenticeships and Trainees and Work Placements

- We intend to continue to offer apprenticeships.
- We have a proven track record in delivering a good training opportunity.
- This has helped the majority of apprentices to secure paid work at the end of their programme.
- Offering a successful apprenticeship needs consistent time, focus, mentoring, training and managing.
- This is resource intensive and cannot be delivered virtually.
- The roles and responsibilities of People Services Staff and the Manager have been agreed (following a review in 2019) in this regard.
- Apprentices will always be office based (or scheme based for those working in supported housing). This is usually for a 12 month period.
- During the apprenticeship, and in order to deliver the above, supervising staff will need to increase their presence at their office. Managers and their teams will work together to agree what is needed in this regard.

Flexible Working

The previous flexi-time system has been suspended as a result of the changes in the way we operate. This suspension will continue indefinitely as there is inherent built in flexibility in the way we can all work.