coop midcounties

Agile Working Managers Guide

The Society recognises the need to increase agility to support the changing needs of our colleagues and become the forward-thinking employer we wish to be.

We appreciate that some of you, as managers, already encourage agile working informally within your teams, but for others this will be a new way of working. We want to support you in considering and applying greater agility, specifically, introducing agile working practices within your teams.

When you have read this guide take a look at the Agile Working Policy and Procedure and everything will become clear.

Please note any agreement to work in an agile way does not change your contract. Agile working is an informal arrangement between a colleague and their manager to work in a more agile way, it is likely to be short term changes to normal working patterns and sometimes may be just a one-off event to enable a colleague to achieve better work-life balance or improved productivity.

Where a colleague is looking to permanently change their working pattern, it's best to refer the colleague to the Society's [Flexible Working Policy](#) as that will give them the information they need.

We appreciate certain means of agile working may not be suitable in all roles, but as a manager we would really like you to consider any of our Society agile working methods that may be possible to allow our colleagues maximum flexibility in their role.

Your Responsibility as a Manager

You are responsible for the following:

1. Be open minded and encourage agile working wherever possible whilst making sure it doesn't impact the productivity of the colleague or the performance of the Society.

2. When discussing agile working, ensure that decisions you make are fair, consistent, objective and in accordance with the Agile Working Policy and Procedure, basically live by our DOES values!

3. Give full consideration to an agile working request, but if you feel the role is unsuitable for agile working, speak to your line manager for a second opinion. They may be able to think about solutions that you haven't thought of yet.

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	**Date of last review:**	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001

coop midcounties

4. Agree with the colleague the individual agile working arrangements suitable.

5. Arrange regular individual and team communications and make sure that you are both clear on how you will know if it's not working.

6. Keep having regular reviews, which you'll be having anyway through 121's, such as a performance review, day to day management and upon request.

Support and Guidance

Contact your line manager in the first instance for support during the agile working procedure.

You and your colleagues can contact your assigned HR Advisor or call the HR advice line on 01926 516469, if you have further concerns and need any more help.

Agile Working Arrangements

Different types of Agile Working:

Location

1. Working from another agreed Society location
2. Homeworking

Hours

3. Flexible hours – working your contracted hours with varying days and/or start and finish times

Considering an Agile Working Request

Feel free to have a conversation with your colleagues about agile working at any time. Agile working isn't a right and there will be roles which make it very difficult to accommodate. That means that Agile Working will require agreement from both sides to be put in place. An informal discussion is an opportunity for you to understand the request fully and for both parties to explore together how the option might work and how any challenges can be overcome. You should record the discussion with any required actions agreed so that you can refer to your notes later if either or you have any questions.

As a Midcounties Manager we know you will consider the request fairly and consistently in line with the Agile Working Policy.

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	Date of last review:	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001

Here are some things to think about when you are deciding whether or not to accept an agile working request:

- What agile working arrangements are being requested?
- Can the level of the agile working arrangement be agreed without affecting the operational needs of the business?
- Can performance be maintained?
- Are there any short term or immediate deadlines that could be affected?
- Is the majority of the role conducted alone or does it require frequent face to face interaction with colleagues, manager or customers? If so, can we take advantage of online communication applications such as Teams to interact effectively?
- Could the agile working arrangement have a negative impact on the rest of the team e.g. team morale, additional pressures or team efficiency? How can this be avoided?
- Is the role reliant on specific operating hours?
- Can a large proportion of the role be worked from home or another location?
- Does the role have clear targets and measurable outcomes?
- Does the role require access to specialist equipment or software? If so, can we support colleagues in obtaining additional equipment, and is this cost effective?
- Where the role requires colleagues to manage other colleagues, is the manager confident the level of management can be maintained when they are not face to face?
- Is the colleague's health, safety and wellbeing of concern?
- Are there any current issues of discipline, colleague performance or capability, where more support is required?
- Will additional costs be incurred? And are these minimal or cost effective?
- Are there any data protection implications of any agile working arrangement? It is the responsibility of the colleague to comply with the Data Protection Act and the Society's Data Protection Policy, however you should consider any implications and consider any measures than can be put in place to safeguard any data e.g. lock all paperwork securely away and only be accessible to the colleague and screens must not be able to be overseen by others when working remotely.

There are lots of other people that you can seek advice from before making a decision (e.g. your manager, HR Advisor, Health and Safety Manager, Data Protection Manager).

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	Date of last review:	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001

coop midcounties

Managing Agile Workers

To make agile working work seamlessly it is important that your colleague knows:

- What is expected of them;
- how you'll be checking on output;
- how success will be measured;
- performance management process; and
- effective communications.

Sometimes it can be scary managing colleagues in an agile way, as their input may be less obvious to the manager who is not present to observe them. However, colleagues should be valued for their performance outputs and behaviours rather than the way they structure their day and/or their location.

We have amazing colleagues and in the vast majority of cases we can trust them to manage their time and workloads effectively and to deliver results on time**.**

Communication - You and your team should work together to agree a plan to ensure that communications take place at appropriate times. Just as they would in the workplace colleagues should be transparent and open with you on their whereabouts and their level of output. You should schedule regular communication via telephone, email, and through video conferencing. However, it is also very important that you plan to meet face to face on a regular basis with your team, this will help measure the success of the agile working agreement and you can also pick up on any issues or worries early.

For some people, the office environment is a highly social environment, therefore those working in an agile way may miss out in these interactions. Make sure you keep your team connected and engaged by factoring in social activities in your team meetings or encouraging colleagues to arrange quick catch up calls with one another.

Team building - Team interaction is more important in a team of agile workers. It is important you have regular face to face team meetings, using the time to share key messages, news, team objectives and performance measures. Online team group conversations are encouraged where there is less face to face interaction. For example, colleagues are encouraged to utilise the Teams chat facility.

Wellbeing - Colleagues' wellbeing is paramount and changing working conditions can affect colleagues differently. Try to encourage openness and put systems in place to ensure colleagues feel part of the team e.g. frequent conference calls, feedback opportunities, regular scheduled face to face meetings, inclusion in any social events, clear procedure for any help and guidance that your colleague requires.

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	**Date of last review:**	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001

coop midcounties

Take some time to read and adhere to the Society's [Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#). You can also seek support from the HR Advisor for your business group or a Society mental health first aider in managing a colleague's mental health and wellbeing.

Monitoring and Review

An agile working arrangement can be reviewed in day to day management and withdrawn at any time, however a review should be scheduled at least every three months, in addition to regular one to one meetings. This is to ensure that the agile working practices continue to meet the operational needs of the business and the required levels of performance and behaviour are being maintained.

Like any review you should discuss your colleague's performance, what's gone well and any challenges that have arisen for either you or them. The agile working arrangement should be discussed during this review whilst identifying any improvements that are required to ensure the agile working practices remain positive.

If either of you have discovered that the agile working arrangement may not be working, the withdrawal of the arrangement can be discussed.

Where an agreement cannot be reached you can always seek further support from your manager or HR Advisor

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between agile working and flexible working?

Agile working is about working flexibly from different locations and/or at different times when agreed with their manager. However flexible working is the term used to describe a permanent change of a colleagues working pattern, for example permanently reducing their hours, or permanently changing their start and finish times etc. Therefore where a colleague is requested a permanent change to their working pattern, they must follow the [Flexible Working Policy and Procedure](#).

2. Why should I agree to agile working arrangements in my team?

It is important to carefully consider each agile working request with colleagues and working practices must continue to meet the operational needs of the business. However, there are many benefits to adopting a more flexible approach to working practices.

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	Date of last review:	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001

Some of the many possible benefits include:

- Reduced commuting time for colleagues
- Reduced stress and improved work/life balance
- Improved morale
- Improved health and wellbeing
- An outcome focused approach may improve productivity and service levels
- An agile working culture helps attract and retain the right colleagues for the Society
- Many forms of communication methods can be utilised
- Homeworking may bring fewer distractions which will enable colleagues to focus better on a particular task whilst remaining available and contactable

3. Can I refuse an agile working request?

Yes, an agile working request can be refused after careful consideration and this decision will be final. However, where concerns are identified you should consider ways to overcome them and seek further support from your line manager and any other relevant persons before rejecting a request.

4. What if I feel the agile working arrangement is not working?

The agile working arrangement can be reviewed at any point and withdrawn. For example: you may be able to accommodate a working request but, in the future, retract this and ask a colleague to work different hours to deliver the role. The agile working arrangement is not a permanent arrangement it is always subject to meeting the operational needs of the business which will be reviewed in line with the fast pace of change in the Society and the changing needs of the team.

5. What if the colleague cannot be contacted when working agilely?

Colleagues should be contactable at all time during their working hours. If for any reason they become uncontactable they must discuss this with you and confirm any actions agreed.

Any concerns you have should be discussed with the colleague in day to day management and the current agile working arrangement reviewed accordingly.

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	Date of last review:	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001

6. How can I maintain team communication?

It is important when your team or individual colleagues within your team are working in an agile way that there are no communication barriers. Managers and Colleagues should utilise available technology such as Teams, Skype, Email, Telephone to maintain contact and to encourage effective teamwork.

However, the technology is not a substitute for regular face to face interaction, this is still very important and can be used to develop effective team working practices.

It is also important to factor in time for colleagues to catch up and interact socially where colleagues are not in a social office environment.

7. How can I ensure service level agreement are still met when colleagues are requesting to work in an agile way?

Agile working arrangements cannot compromise the colleague's responsibilities as set out in service level agreements and this should be discussed when considering an agile working request.

8. How can I trust my team to perform when they work remotely?

Upon agreeing an agile working arrangement, you should set out your trust in the colleague to work professionally and productively as they would in the office. Colleagues must be transparent and open with you on their whereabouts and agree performance outputs. Where there is a cause for concern, you should discuss this with the colleague and possibly look to remove agile working until they are confident the colleague's performance and conduct whilst working agilely is no longer a cause for concern.

For issues of misconduct, you should speak to your HR Advisor and look to invoke the Society disciplinary policy and procedure.

If there are issues of performance, you can also speak to your HR Advisor who will provide specific support.

9. How do I manage outputs?

This will be no different to managing a colleague's outputs if they are present in the office. You will agree any outputs, set objectives and agree a timeline to achieve them. Colleagues must remain contactable during their working hours and can therefore agree new outputs or continue to review their objectives set.

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	Date of last review:	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001

coop midcounties

10. I am concerned for a colleague's wellbeing whilst working remotely, what should I do?

Where there is a concern for a colleague's health and wellbeing and there are concerns work could be affecting a colleague's health, you should discuss the concern with your HR Advisor. It may be appropriate to follow the welfare process and set up a welfare meeting to discuss the colleague's condition with a view to identifying what support if any can be offered in the first instance.

We have a number of services in place to assist colleagues who may be suffering from stress or poor mental health, which colleagues should be encouraged to access if they ever feel they needs support or assistance. Please refer to the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#) for further details.

Name:	Agile Working Managers Guide	Date of last review:	June 2020
Owner:	PSG	Issue Number:	PSG-CB-001