

## Strategic HR Forum – Discussion paper JSCC – 16th March 2011

### **Topic: Home and Mobile Working, what impact is this having on Customers and Members?**

#### **Background**

The full roll out of home and mobile working has been completed to support the office moves to the DCO as the main Council office.

Heads of Service were asked to identify roles that were deemed suitable for the individual to work partially at home in addition to the limited number who do so on a full-time basis. Typically this has suited roles where the officer goes out and about visiting something or someone or it is a job that can be performed either in the office or at home. There were questionnaires to help them assess the job suitability and the individuals personal or domestic suitability to work remotely.

#### **Current Position**

Now that the actual processes to get everyone set up are complete we have turned our attention to making it work smoothly.

The area we have been focussing on is telephones and use of Outlook calendar with the aim that we will move towards a consistent set of protocols that meet our putting people first standards.

Staff working out and about in the field or from home can transfer their normal extension to a mobile phone or land line, clear instructions on how to do this have been developed and communicated.

People are asked to clearly show their whereabouts on their Outlook Calendar showing if they are out or working from home and how they should be contacted.

Here is an example of part of a message that went out to all staff in February.

*Everyone must note and take heed of the following guidance:*

- *Remember that working at home does not mean that you are unavailable to take calls. You must remain as contactable as you would be if you were in the office*
- *Familiarise yourself with the telephony instructions so you can pick up your calls at home and divert calls back to the office when you are not available. See the Telephony Guidance and Telephony FAQ's  
[http://srvinternet01.north-herts.gov.uk/intracontent/index/customer\\_services\\_directorate/hr/personnel/when\\_youare\\_here/home-working.htm](http://srvinternet01.north-herts.gov.uk/intracontent/index/customer_services_directorate/hr/personnel/when_youare_here/home-working.htm)*
- *If you need further advice contact Amanda Phillips or Shirley Bellamy as soon as possible.*
- *Teams should be deciding between themselves how to arrange cover such as lunch breaks so home-workers can take calls for staff in the office and vice versa.*
- *If you are answering a call in the office for a colleague who is home working you must not tell the caller that they are working from home. You should do exactly the same as you would if the person was in the office, i.e. put the call through to the home worker or explain that they are not available, take a message and get the person working at home to call the customer back. Remember that we are here to provide a high level of customer service and*

*simply telling a customer, either external or internal, that a member of staff is not available because they are working at home, does not achieve this objective. As far as the customer is concerned, it is irrelevant from where the officer is working.*

- *Please remember that when working at home, you should not be relying on other teams to take your calls such as the CSC, Switchboard or the MSU*
- *Outlook should be kept updated, show how you should be contacted and show any periods that you may be unavailable*

**Voicemail - Our Policy**

- *Our aim is to answer telephone calls in person wherever possible.*
- *If you are unable to answer calls personally you should arrange to divert your calls to someone who will cover you for the period you are not able to.*
- *You should only use voicemail when it is not practical or possible to take calls in person.*

**Early Lessons**

- Informal meetings: some Members have commented that it is now more difficult to speak to face to face with officers when they call in to DCO for this reason Members may like to arrange in advance to see officers, since there will be less probability of finding people on the off chance due to home and mobile working.
- Call handling quality – some difficulties because of unfamiliarity with some telephone functions and inconsistency in use of voicemail, use of Outlook and cover arrangements.
- Changing roles and organisational needs – posts initially identified as suitable for partial home working are now not.

<b>Total Workforce</b>	<b>391</b>
<b>No Partial Home-workers</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>No Full home-workers</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>No Adhoc Workers (other staff are set up to work from home on an occasional basis )</b>	<b>53</b>

**Impact on customers following increase in rollout of home and mobile working**

Anecdotal evidence and factual information shows us that, on the whole, there has been very little detrimental impact on customer service performance levels as the number of staff working at home and/or on a mobile basis increases.

- One formal complaint has been received (1 Nov - 28 Feb)
- No adverse feedback received via GovMetric channels (web, telephone and face to face)

(In respect of calls not being answered and/or a delay in answering)

Staff have been required to get to grips with the technical requirements of the new telephone systems and services whilst at the same time ensuring that the way in which they answer the calls has not suffered.

The following assistance has been and will continue to be provided to managers to ensure that staff are able to use the telephone systems available to them:

- Team training sessions
- 1:1 training sessions for those with specific needs

- Supporting information on the intranet

In addition service managers are now more aware of the capabilities of the telephone system and many are now looking at call routing options that ensure that calls are answered when staff are absent from the office and cannot take calls. The Customer Services Manager and her team are taking a proactive approach in this respect and contacting managers to suggest solutions as and when problems are identified.