**THE FUTURE OF WORK**

**MYTHBUSTING FAQS**

* **Will we be able to use the flexi-time scheme in the future?**

The flexi-time scheme will remain suspended until September and then reviewed.

The long-term plan for the flexi-time scheme will be considered during the development of the council’s strategy on what work will look like in the future.

* **What happens if I have been working more than my contracted hours at home and I am accruing time and am unable to take it as flexi-time?**

Employees who work overtime or additional hours will be compensated in line with overtime/TOIL arrangements but, such arrangements must be authorised as appropriate by the line manager.

For example, there might be times where the service is facing significant pressures and the manager requires employees to work additional hours to meet such demands.

It is the manager who determines whether the employee should be compensated with overtime or TOIL, as appropriate.

The ‘[Homeworking Guidance during Covid-19’](https://www.npt.gov.uk/24395) document explains the above.

* **I have built up flexi credit before the pandemic. Am I able to use this now?**

As you have accrued this time before the flexi-time scheme was suspended, you are able to use this time subject to your manager agreeing when the time off is taken.

* **I don’t have a suitable chair at home. What can I do?**

You will need to carry out an assessment of your work area by completing the new online Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessment Application which is available on the Intranet or via this link:

<http://apexlive.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk/ords/live6/f?p=DSE_LIVE>

The Application will generate a report which will be sent to your Manager, who should liaise with you in order to address any feedback.

The DSE Assessment Application also includes a short home working video and useful guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which employees are advised to look at in order to assist with their home working arrangements.

Accidents/Incidents that occur within your ‘home workspace’ when working at home should be reported via our Online Accident Reporting System (OARS) which can be accessed via the Intranet.

**Outcome of the DSE Assessment**

Following completion of the DSE assessment, if it is identified that you need equipment (for example furniture including a desk or an adjustable chair, or ICT equipment, etc.) to work from home safely, you should discuss the options with your manager. The accountable manager can then choose to authorise the loan of equipment from the workplace, including desks, chairs, etc.

Where items may be too large and impracticable to move, such as height adjustable desks, your accountable manager may need to consider whether you can only be safely accommodated by working in the office – this would need to be considered via a risk assessment.

**You must not remove any equipment from the office without prior authorisation by your accountable manager and you must also sign a ‘loan agreement’ if authorisation is given.**

You will be the responsible for arranging collection and return of the equipment (unless there is a reason for not being able to do). If you are unable to do this as for example, you have a disability or other medical concerns, you should contact your accountable manager who will make alternative arrangements.

You must also ensure that your accountable manager has made prior arrangements with the Facilities Section if equipment is being removed from the Civic Centres (i.e. Port Talbot, Neath and The Quays).

In all circumstances, the accountable manager must agree with you what equipment and technology is needed and provision will always be subject to management agreement.

Further information can be found in the document ‘[Homeworking Guidance during Covid-19](https://www.npt.gov.uk/24395)’.

* **I don’t want to take a chair from the office as it’s not suitable for my home?**

We have an exclusive ALL STAFF offer from the Ministry of Furniture that NPT employees can purchase furniture at a discounted price.

Ministry of Furniture are experts in supplying workplace furniture and are based on Baglan Energy Park and offer a with wide range office equipment to choose from.

They are providing Neath Port Talbot staff a discount of **20% off** the total order.

Please use this link ONLY <https://www.ministryoffurniture.com/workplace/category/150825/working-from-home> as it differs from their main website.

Once you have selected your product(s), place them in your basket and apply the discount code **NPT20** at check out.

* **I feel it is detrimental to my mental health working from home. Can I return to the office?**

In line with advice from the Welsh Government, the majority of employees who are homeworking should continue to work from home for a further period. This position will be reviewed in September.

You would need approval from your line manager to return. So firstly, you would need to discuss your personal reasons and circumstance for wanting to return to the office.

If your line manager agrees that you can work from the office, they would need to follow the guidance in the ‘[Return to Workplaces Process following Covid-19’](https://www.npt.gov.uk/23777) document. Arrangements will be subject to a business case, a written individual risk assessment which would be shared with yourself and relevant trade union, and regular and on-going check-ins with your line manager.

* **Is there anything I can do to ensure I look after my mental health and well-being whilst continuing to work from home?**

There are lots of well-being guides and tools available on the HR intranet pages.

The[**Staff Health and Well-Being**](https://www.npt.gov.uk/22793)pages have guidance and links on how to support your mental health and how to actively manage your well-being whilst working from home.

These include tips such as going for a walk before you start work or during the lunch hour, links to partake in online home exercise classes, ways to boost your immune system and to build mindfulness into your day.

You can also find guidance on these pages called ‘Virtual Working Guidance’ which can be used to help you to make improvements in how you arrange your working day and working practices.

You should also discuss any concerns with your line manager. It would be helpful to ensure you have regular check-ins with your manager for example, on a weekly basis.

Similarly, we would encourage you to ‘stay connected’ and keep in regular contact with your team in a formal and informal setting for example ensure you attend regular team meetings and arrange informal chats with your work colleagues in your own time. (A chat messaging platform must not be used to do this as data protection reasons restrict this. Calls must be made via telephone or video.) As a team, you could take part in a weekly virtual lunch or a lunchtime quiz or even take part in any training sessions or workshops delivered virtually.

Further information can be found in the document ‘[Homeworking Guidance during Covid-19](https://www.npt.gov.uk/24395)’.

* **Can I claim mileage from my home?**

No, your fixed work location (fixed centre) remains the same as that stated on your employment contract. This location will apply when any travel and/or subsistence payments are claimed.

Expenses will continue to be paid in accordance with the Council’s Travel and Subsistence Policy’.

When claiming mileage incurred, the normal home to work and work to home (commuting mileage) must be deducted ONCE from the total mileage travelled on that day. Only **excess** mileage can be claimed.

In other words, the employee claims the total mileage travelled during the day **minus** the normal daily commuting mileage. The commuting mileage must only be deducted once from each day’s total mileage. Any mileage travelled in excess of the normal travel to and from work mileage can be claimed.

As employees would normally need to travel to and from their work location each day, they are not in any detriment when deducting the commuting mileage from their claim.

Shortest route, shortest time rules must be applied therefore, the employee must efficiently plan their day accordingly to minimise distance travelled and costs incurred.

The ‘[Homeworking Guidance during Covid-19](https://www.npt.gov.uk/24395)’ document references the above.

* **Can I claim expenses for working from home?**

Any additional costs incurred by employees who are homeworking will not be reimbursed, including any utilities costs, the cost of any telephone land line or internet access. Employees can claim tax relief from Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs.

Guidance on how to make a claim for homeworking expenses is included at **Appendix 3** of the document ‘[Homeworking Guidance during Covid-19](https://www.npt.gov.uk/24395)’.

The employee might wish to check with the mortgage provider, landlord and home insurer that there is nothing preventing them from working from home.

* **Do I need to pay for parking when I visit the office?**

Car parking fees for employees have been suspended until further notice.

If you have previously purchased a car parking permit, you can continue to enjoy the benefits of free parking if working from Port Talbot Civic Centre, Neath Civic Centre and The Quays.

If you have not purchased a parking permit, you would need to pay the fee at the ‘Pay and Display’ machine and claim the money back.

Similarly, if you have purchased a car parking permit previously, you can continue to use designated Council car parks free of charge for both work and personal purposes as stated in the ‘[Staff and Member Car Parking Scheme’](http://umbraco.npt.gov.uk:700/1363).

One change has been made regarding parking at Station Road. As the markets are no longer held at Station Road on a Tuesday and Saturday, free parking is now also available here on these days.

Should you have any queries, please telephone the Parking Section on 01639 763939 or alternatively, you can email [parkingpermits@npt.gov.uk](mailto:parkingpermits@npt.gov.uk)

* **I am having difficulties with the Fusion phone system. Who do I need to contact for help?**

You would need to contact the Service Helpdesk, Digital Services Team

Telephone Extension: 6767

E Mail: [sdesk@neath-porttalbot.gov.uk](mailto:sdesk@neath-porttalbot.gov.uk)

* **Does the council have an Agile Working policy?**

A draft Agile Working Policy was developed following the 2019 Agile Working Pilot in Environmental Health and Trading Standards.  This policy will be reviewed in line with lessons learnt from home working in 2020 / 21.

In the meantime, the ‘[Homeworking Guidance during Covid-19](https://www.npt.gov.uk/24395) ’ is currently available which includes specific policy guidance and principles to support homeworking.