



Oifig Náisiúnta
um Sheirbhísí
Comhroinnte

National
Shared Services
Office



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

BLENDED WORKING POLICY



August 2022

Table of Contents

1.	Purpose and Scope	2
2.	Remote and Blended Working.....	3
3.	Key Principles	4
4.	Eligibility Criteria.....	5
5.	Application	8
6.	Review Process	10
7.	Trial Period and Continuing Assessment of Suitability	11
8.	Termination of Arrangements	12
9.	Provision of Equipment.....	13
10.	Expenses	14
11.	Health, Safety and Welfare at Work.....	15
12.	Staff Supports.....	16
13.	Legal and HR Obligations	17
14.	Terms and Conditions / Working Arrangements	17
15.	Review of Policy / Arrangements.....	18
16.	Roles and Responsibilities.....	19
Appendices		
Appendix A	Key Steps to Apply for Blended Working	21
Appendix B	Self-Assessment Form	22
Appendix C	Role of the People Manager	25
Appendix D	Roles less suitable for Blended Working in the NSSO	28
Appendix E	Health and Safety Obligations.....	29
Appendix F	Other Legal Obligations.....	32
Appendix G	Glossary of Supports	35

1

Purpose and Scope

The National Shared Services Office (NSSO) is committed to embracing opportunities for blended working that can help to build a more dynamic, agile and responsive civil service organisation, while sustaining strong standards of performance and high levels of productivity.

The National Shared Services Office (NSSO) strives to be an employer of choice. This progressive policy demonstrates the NSSO's commitment to new ways of working while striving to become a high-performing organisation. The NSSO believes that blended working can increase flexibility, improve health and well-being, and enhance work-life balance.

This Blended Working Policy is aligned to the NSSO's core values and it aims to provide opportunities to increase cross-functional team collaboration for effective performance, increased team bonding, and improved

employee well-being and work-life balance for all employees.

This policy provides a procedure for staff employed by the NSSO (irrespective of grade or length of service) to apply for blended working arrangements. The policy has been developed in line with the Blended Working Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations. The policy can be reviewed here: [Gov.ie - Blended Working Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations](#)

This is being introduced on a trial basis for 12 months and will be reviewed at the end of the trial period. During the year feedback will be sought from both employees and management to assess the policy and its implementation. All Civil Service HR Division policy developments and guidance issued during this time will be monitored and this policy will be reviewed accordingly.





Remote and Blended Working

The term remote work refers to the broad concept of an arrangement where an individual works at an alternative worksite to the employer's work premises (in all cases the employer's work premises will be the office). The term blended working refers to working arrangements that involve a combination of working from the work premises and working remotely, based on an agreement between the employee and the manager, and approved through the application process.

The NSSO's offices in Trinity Point, Mount Street, Clonskeagh, Tullamore, Deerpark and New Road Killarney and Galway will continue to be the primary work place of all employees. While many staff may avail of blended working arrangements, full on-site attendance or more regular on-site attendance than the minimum requirement is available to all staff.

Under the NSSO Blended Working Policy staff will have an on-site attendance requirement of:

- a minimum on-site attendance of 20% across a calendar month;
- including specific days during the month agreed with the manager and team; and
- on days as and when required by the manager. For example training intact days, collaboration, meetings, and on-site events.

2.1 Flexibility

Flexibility from both employees and managers will be required for blended working to be successful. The NSSO sees value in team collaboration, on-site connectedness and intact days. For these to be successful it will require flexibility as to the on-site day(s) of attendance.

Employees shall be flexible to ensure they participate when these sessions are arranged by managers. Managers shall ensure, where possible, adequate notice is provided.

The policy sets out blended arrangements for which on-site attendance is a requirement as set out above. Leave applications such as annual or other leave types shall not be used to mask non on-site attendance. However, it is appreciated that on occasion, annual leave or other leave types may fall on the scheduled day(s) of on-site attendance.

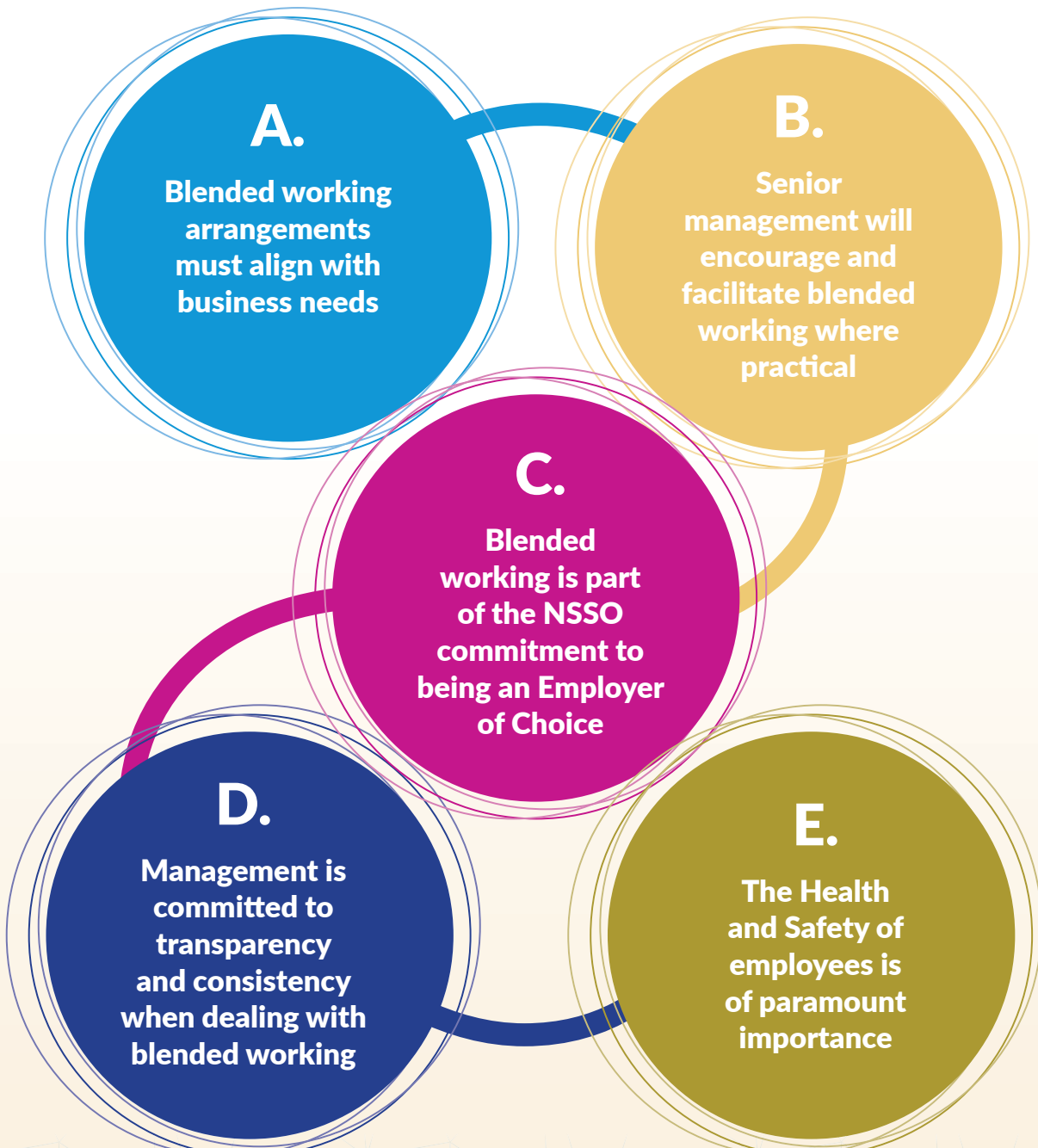
2.2 Place of Work

While it is clear that an employee's location of work remains the same, on occasion, a staff member may apply with adequate notice to work from another NSSO office location. This will only be possible if space is available and agreed with management. The employee's location of work will not change nor shall any expenses be reimbursed. An employee availing of this option is still required to attend their assigned work premises during each month.

3

Key Principles

The following key principles inform this policy and the approach of the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) to blended working



4

Eligibility Criteria

All of the following criteria must be satisfied for any blended working arrangement to be approved, none of which may be excluded from consideration.

4.1 Business Needs and Role Suitability

Supporting business needs in order to deliver efficient, high-quality services is of paramount importance. Productivity standards and performance levels will not be compromised to facilitate blended working. The NSSO aims to strike the balance between striving to be more flexible, efficient and resilient by reimagining roles and facilitating blended working where practicable, while enabling on-site interaction, collaboration and support as required in order to sustain high levels of productivity, performance and development at an individual, team and organisational level. The number of employees, and/or the percentage of time approved to work on a blended basis may be limited based on the assessed impact on business needs.

The NSSO will consider the impact of the application on:

- the ability to meet the business needs of the organisation;
- the ability to maintain the required level of service quality;
- team performance and team collaboration;
- operational issues, or other issues related to the organisation as a whole; and
- organisational costs, and the extent of blended working arrangements available in the organisation.

While the NSSO is committed to facilitating blended working where practicable, some roles may be less suited to blended working and may require more on-site attendance than others. In some instances, this may be for seasonal business periods or while working on specific projects or programmes.

The NSSO has conducted a role suitability identification exercise, taking the following into consideration:

- requirements to access particular technologies, equipment, data accessible only on-site;
- requirements for customer, client-facing service delivery at the employer premises;
- requirements for in-person meetings with stakeholders;
- performance of tasks that have a high degree of manual work;
- performance of support tasks that must be provided on-site;
- performance of tasks that are more efficiently carried out on-site; and
- requirements to have a person present on site for coordinating office business such as meeting attendance, and as a representative for the Office.

In line with the policy requirements and strategic approach to blended working, when assessing applications the Recommender/ Approver shall consider the need to facilitate collaboration, team-building and engagement with colleagues and other stakeholders, and whether it would be more beneficial for this to take place in person at the employer's work premises.

Management has assessed the suitability for blended working of the roles in the NSSO. These roles as set out in Appendix D are deemed to be less suited for blended working arrangements.

4.2 Employee Suitability

Each application shall be considered on its own merits, noting that access to blended working shall, as far as practicable, be an option for all staff and that issues arising for individuals shall be managed as appropriate and on an ongoing basis, whether in the workplace or remotely.

An assessment of individual suitability may include, but is not limited to:

- confirmation that performance standards and delivery of results have been achieved using defined metrics/deliverables;
- satisfactory performance including PMDS/ probation, not subject to an ongoing disciplinary or an ongoing performance improvement process or hold (on file) a live record of disciplinary action; and
- satisfactory compliance with time and attendance policy and procedures, including managed for attendance arrangements.

Probationary employees may be considered for blended working, where blended working is appropriate taking into account the general criteria, and specific further factors relevant in the context of probationers. For example, a manager may require that a probationer attend the office during the probationary period in order to:



- assist with adapting to their new role and work environment;
- facilitate ongoing engagement with managers and with team members;
- facilitate team bonding and collaboration;
- facilitate face-to-face meetings and training where required; and/or
- assist with the assessment of the probationer's performance during the probationary period.

4.3 Designated Workstation Requirements (Home)

All parties must ensure that they comply with all relevant health and safety obligations as set out in more detail in Appendix E.

The employee must:

- complete the application form, declaration and health and safety self-assessment form (see Appendix B);
- identify a single designated remote workstation which is suitable and meets the health and safety requirements as set out in the Blended Working Policy;
- agree to a risk assessment conducted by the employer;
- agree to make no subsequent changes to the workstation without authorisation from the employer;
- confirm that they are able to connect to a work computer via their own reliable broadband connection;
- ensure that the IT and technical equipment provided by the NSSO is only used by the staff member to whom it was provided; and
- confirm that the workstation allows compliance with data security and applicable confidentiality standards.

With the exception of employees who reside in Northern Ireland, remote working outside of the State for blended workers will not be facilitated. All NSSO operational employees are involved in the processing of personal data. Such processing is governed by a Data Processing Agreement, which forms a binding governance arrangement with each Department or Office. The agreement gives assurances on data confidentiality, data security and data transfers. Nowhere in those signed agreements have our clients approved the processing of such data outside of the State.

It shall be noted that in respect of employees residing in Northern Ireland, in some situations taxing rights on their employment income may arise. In this scenario, such employees may be exposed to double taxation where employment duties are also performed in the State. Relief for any double taxation may be available under the Ireland/ UK Double Tax Treaty. This area can be complex with the individual facts and circumstances of each case having different implications. Each Department or Office, or any employee affected, can seek advice from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners as to specific tax treatments, where required.

Blended workers will generally have no automatic right to a dedicated workstation, or single occupancy office, in the offices of the NSSO, but will have a shared work space available to them when required to attend.



Application

The National Shared Services Office (NSSO) will facilitate access to blended working, where practicable. All applications are subject to an evaluation process, based on eligibility criteria, which take into account the specific needs of the NSSO. Blended working is not an automatic entitlement, regardless of any previous remote working arrangement. An employee may submit a blended working application for consideration no more than once every 12 months, unless their role and/or unit changes or there have been significant changes to their proposed home workstation.

Requests for blended working arrangements as a reasonable accommodation are dealt with under the usual process for seeking reasonable accommodation and not through the application process in this policy.

The approval of any blended working arrangement is at the discretion of management, following the process outlined below.

The application form can be completed online via the NSSO portal following a preliminary discussion and agreement with the relevant Manager/Recommender.

The recommender is generally the applicant's HEO and the approver is generally the next level line manager.

5.1 Review documentation

An employee who wishes to apply for blended working arrangements shall familiarise themselves with the policy, the eligibility criteria, Health and Safety Self-Assessment Form, Blended Working Application and Declaration Form.

5.2 Discussions with manager

The employee (applicant) shall discuss the possibility of blended working with the manager (Recommender), to determine the suitability of a blended working arrangement, taking into account the eligibility criteria (business needs and role suitability, employee suitability and remote workstation suitability).

The applicant may be given feedback by the Recommender in relation to any areas where the eligibility criteria have not been met, giving the applicant the opportunity to rectify these areas before submitting their application.

5.3 Application process

- i. The applicant completes the Blended Working Application and Declaration Form to reflect the conversation with the Recommender. The self-assessment form must be uploaded on the system. The forms shall be submitted to the Recommender.
- ii. The Recommender considers the application form and makes a determination on whether to support



or refuse the application, and submits their recommendation to the approving manager (the Approver) for review.

- iii. The Approver considers the application and recommendation and makes a decision whether to provisionally approve, or refuse the application. That decision is confirmed to the applicant and the Recommender in writing. Any approval is provisional, pending review of the Self-Assessment Form, and the outcome of the Workstation Risk Assessment.
- iv. In general, managers shall aim to have applications recommended and approved within four/six weeks of the date of application.
- v. Where provisional approval has been granted, the applicant will schedule an appointment with the competent person who will conduct a risk assessment of the designated workstation, and the applicant will be informed of the outcome of the risk assessment.
- vi. Where risks are identified, the applicant has the opportunity to address these risks (through training, advice, equipment for example).

vii. Where risks cannot be mitigated the blended working arrangement will not be confirmed as approved. The blended working arrangement may commence where requirements set out in the Self-Assessment form are satisfied.

viii. While the remote working arrangement may have commenced prior to this assessment, the arrangement will be rescinded if the assessment confirms that the designated workstation fails to meet the required Health and Safety standards, or if it is changed subsequently so that it fails to meet such standards.

5.4 Refusal

Where an application is refused, the reasons for refusal shall be clearly communicated to the applicant. The confirmation of refusal shall also inform the applicant of the option to review the decision making process.

The request for a formal review must be submitted, in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the decision to refuse the application.



Review Process

In the event that an application is refused, the applicant has a right to request a review. The steps in the review process are set out below.

6.1 Informal discussion

Before seeking a formal review, applicants shall have an informal discussion with their manager to discuss the reasons for refusal and to explore if there is an opportunity to resolve any issues identified. If the issues can be resolved, the manager can re-assess the application and may amend their decision. If the issues cannot be resolved, the applicant can seek a formal review.

6.2 Formal review

The applicant's request for a formal review shall set out the grounds for the review. The review will focus on whether the application process was appropriate and in line with this Blended Working Policy. The review will be undertaken by a Review Officer, who was not involved in the original decision making process. All records relating to the application and original decision shall be made available to the Review Officer. The Review Officer will make a determination on the case under review. They may give due consideration to requests for a meeting in certain circumstances. However the decision will be final.

The Review Officer will be a member of the HR team.

6.3 Outcome of formal review

The decision of the Review Officer shall be communicated in writing to the applicant, Recommender and Approver and Head of HR. In general, this shall occur within 10 working days of receipt of the formal request for a review. The Review Officer may:

- affirm the decision to refuse the application; or
- recommend that the original decision be reconsidered by the Recommender/ Approver, taking into account any issues identified by the Review Officer; or
- make other recommendations related to blended working, where appropriate.

While the main purpose of the review process is to deal with a request for review of the decision to refuse an application, the Review Officer has discretion to consider reviews of other cases where blended working arrangements are deemed inappropriate or unsuitable after a trial period, or as a result of a change of circumstances. For the avoidance of doubt, the decision of the Review Officer is final.

7

Trial Period and Continuing Assessment of Suitability

Blended working is not an entitlement, nor a term of employment. Such arrangements are not guaranteed on a permanent basis. Rotation of blended working opportunities among employees may be required in order to support employee mobility and career development.

A blended working arrangement shall, in the first instance, be granted for a trial period (in general, no less than three months and no more than six months). The trial period is an opportunity for the employee and the manager to keep in regular contact, to evaluate the success, and ongoing suitability, of the arrangement.

After the trial period, the suitability of the arrangement shall continue to be assessed through regular feedback conversations. Where performance issues arise, the manager shall discuss the issues with the employee as soon as practicable, and give the employee the opportunity to rectify the issue. A record shall be kept of such discussions and the agreed outcome.

A formal review of the blended working arrangements shall take place as part of the PMDS process. The manager and the organisation will assess if the blended working arrangement continues to suit the business needs of the organisation. Tips for people managers are included at Appendix C.

Employees must be in a position to carry out all the responsibilities of their role when availing of blended working. Blended working must not be used as a substitute for annual leave or sick leave. While blended working may have benefits for persons with caring responsibilities, any caring responsibilities must take place outside of working time.



8

Termination of Arrangements

Blended working arrangements may be terminated by the employee's Recommender/Approver following review on reasonable notice.

For example, blended working arrangement may be terminated by the Recommender/Approver due to business needs, team mobility, performance management purposes, poor or no broadband connectivity, health and safety risks, or where other eligibility criteria are no longer met. Arrangements may also be terminated due to the employee declaration no longer being honoured. Recommender/Approver shall discuss the reason(s) behind any decision to terminate the

blended working arrangement, and confirm the decision in writing.

Alternatively, an employee's circumstances may change, requiring them to return to working in an office-based environment on a more regular basis. In most cases, reasonable notice will be one month. In exceptional cases, shorter or longer notice may be necessary at the discretion of management.

9

Provision of Equipment

Employees availing of blended working will be equipped with IT equipment and tools, necessary for them to fulfil their duties.

All equipment provided is the property of the NSSO and appropriate care shall be taken when in possession of it. Printers will not be provided. The NSSO reserves the right to perform security tests from the equipment provided to ensure secure connectivity into NSSO systems. Any equipment provided must be returned on termination of the blended working arrangement or when requested by the NSSO. Following the health and safety

assessment and provisional approval for blended working, the NSSO will, where it is reasonable to do so and necessary for the employee's work, provide appropriate furniture and other equipment.

The NSSO reserves the right to audit the workstation to ensure compliance with health and safety standards.





10

Expenses

Expenses will not be paid where an employee makes changes to premises (such as a home office) to allow for blended working.

Employees availing of blended working arrangements may make claims directly from the Revenue Commissioners in respect of tax relief for certain costs when working from home. The application can be made at the end of the relevant tax year, in accordance with the relevant tax laws. Any claim made is solely a matter for the individual concerned.

Further details on eWorking and tax are available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tdm/income-tax-capital-gains-tax/corporation-tax/part-05/05-02-13.pdf>. Travel and Subsistence will not be payable for attending the office during a blended working arrangement.

11

Health, Safety and Welfare at Work

Obligations under the Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act 2005 are of great importance when considering and implementing any blended working arrangement, whether at application stage, or on an ongoing basis.

Employers have an obligation to provide a safe place of work, and safe systems of work. Employees have a personal responsibility to manage their own health, both physical and mental. Guidance on the key obligations of the Act are contained in Appendix F. All staff must comply fully with the obligations contained in the Act.

The application process includes the obligation to complete a health and safety self-assessment form in relation to the physical remote workspace. Supports for psychological health and well-being are available to all employees, including through the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS). The CSEAS has developed a suite of targeted online supports to respond directly to employee health and well-being challenges. These articles, videos and links are available at www.cseas.per.gov.ie.

Please also refer to our information hubs on the One Learning portal <https://onelearning.gov.ie>. Dedicated support, guidance and information is available for all staff of the NSSO, including our Health and Well-being hub and People Manager hub.



12

Staff Supports

The following supports are available to all staff.

HR team – NSSOLHR@nssso.gov.ie or nssohrbusinesspartners@nssso.gov.ie

Competent person contact details: Facilities@nssso.gov.ie and fsutullamore@nssso.gov.ie

IT Unit contact detail: hris@nssso.gov.ie

CSEAS - Tel: 0818 008120 / Email: - cseas@per.gov.ie

OneLearning and online courses – onelearning.gov.ie

Facilities Management - Facilities@nssso.gov.ie and fsutullamore@nssso.gov.ie

Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) – Aoife.Harkin@nssso.gov.ie

Data Protection Officer (DPO) - dpo@nssso.gov.ie



13

Legal and HR Obligations

An employee working on a blended working arrangement must continue to comply with all of their obligations as a civil servant, including all legislative obligations, and remain bound by all relevant organisational policies and procedures (including those referred to in Appendix F of this Blended Working Policy).

14

Terms and Conditions / Working Arrangements

There shall be no change to terms and conditions of employment as part of a blended working arrangement, save that the employee will be allowed to work remotely on specific days.

15

Review of Policy / Arrangements

Regular reviews of this policy and the approach of the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) to blended working arrangements will be conducted to ensure:

- the arrangements are consistently meeting the business needs of the organisation;
- the policy is applied in an equitable and consistent manner across each area, in line with the provisions of the policy;
- there is no discrimination under the Employment Equality Acts, or other employment provisions;
- the NSSO is aware of the impact of arrangements on team productivity and performance and on the organisation in general; and
- appropriate reporting on the number of employees availing of blended working arrangements.



16

Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Managers

Visible support for blended working from senior leadership will be critical to ensuring the success of this new way of working by championing and demonstrating a culture of flexibility, agility, trust and innovation. Where the role permits, leaders shall consider participating in blended working arrangements in order to advocate blended working as the new norm and assist with embedding this cultural change.

People Managers

People managers have a role in ensuring the implementation of a fair and effective system of blended working and play an important role in supporting and developing employees through strong communications and employee inclusivity. In general, staff can expect to have regular in-person meetings with their teams and managers when attending the office as well as ongoing virtual meetings.

The role of the people manager is key in building and maintaining trust. They are responsible for overseeing and ensuring individual accountability and effective performance management.

(See Appendix C for more information on the role of a people manager)

HR Unit

HR plays an integral part in organisational business continuity by aiding the transition from working in an office environment to working remotely. This includes supporting both people managers and officers with health and well-being, performance management, training needs, and providing other supports as necessary. HR also has responsibility for the implementation of this policy, for ensuring compliance with relevant employment law, dealing with issues that may arise when operating the policy, and ensuring it is reviewed when appropriate.

Competent Person

The Competent Person (appointed by the Facilities Unit) will have responsibility for the Risk Assessment of the Home Workstation. They will be, or have the support of, a qualified ergonomics assessor from within the Facilities Unit or supplemented where necessary by qualified external resources.

Appendices

- Appendix A** Key Steps to Apply for Blended Working
- Appendix B** Self-Assessment Form
- Appendix C** Role of the People Manager
- Appendix D** Roles less suitable for Blended Working in the NSSO
- Appendix E** Health and Safety Obligations
- Appendix F** Other Legal Obligations
- Appendix G** Glossary of Supports



Key Steps to Apply for Blended Working

Step 1: Familiarise and prepare

Read and familiarise yourself with all aspects of the Blended Working Policy document.

Complete two self-learning modules on One Learning:

- **Blended Working in the NSSO Overview:** this course focuses on the key features and requirements of the NSSO Blended Working Policy.
- **Home Workstation Ergonomic Training:** this course will assist you in setting up your home workstation according to best practice, legislative requirements and Health and Safety Authority (HSA) guidance including information on good working posture and keeping safe when working from home.

Step 2: Discussion with your manager

Each staff member wishing to apply for blended working must have a discussion with your manager (Recommender) in advance of completing the application form.

Step 3: Application Form

The application will be made via the eForm which will be available through the HRMS self-service portal. This application form is accompanied by a Health and Safety self-assessment form which must be completed and signed by you.

Step 4: Application Process

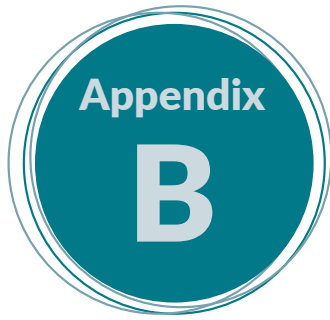
The Recommender considers the application and makes a determination on whether to support or refuse the application, and submits their recommendation to the approving manager (the Approver) for review.

The Approver considers the application and recommendation and makes a decision whether to provisionally approve, or refuse the application.

Any approval is provisional, pending review of the Self-Assessment Form, and the outcome of the Workstation Video Risk Assessment.

Step 5: Work Station Video Risk Assessment

Select a date for Work Station Video Risk Assessment of the designated work station.



Self-Assessment Form

Employee:		Department:	
Employee Remote Working Address:		Division and working location:	
Designated Workstation location for example room:		Recommender:	
Completion Date:		Approver/HR:	
Workstation (See One Learning Training for guidance on setting up a workstation)			Yes / No
Have you completed the One Learning Training on home working?			
Is there a dedicated workspace that can be set up in the home that is safe, suitable and free from distractions?			
Can you make/take business calls including video calls in a private space?			
Does the workstation have adequate space for mouse, keyboard and laptop/pc and monitor?			
Is there enough space to allow you to change position and vary movements?			
Is there enough space underneath the workstation for your knees?			
Is the area you are working in clutter free to allow you to focus easily on a task?			
Do you use reference documents for daily work such as for data entry (1 hour or more a day)?			
Chair (See One Learning Training for guidance on setting up a workstation)			Yes / No
Is the chair you are using stable and allows freedom of movement?			
Is the chair you are using adjustable in height?			
Is the seat back adjustable in height?			

Is the seat back adjustable in tilt?	
Does the chair provide lower back support?	
Is the chair set up so that your forearms are level with the desk?	
Can your feet rest flat on the floor?	
Screen (See One Learning Training for guidance on setting up a workstation)	Yes / No
Is the screen free of reflective glare and swivel and tilt easily so it can be positioned to avoid glare and reflection (for example sit at 90 degrees to a window to avoid glare)?	
Is the screen positioned so that the top of the screen is at eye level or slightly below and avoids sustained bending of the neck?	
Is the screen set up at a comfortable distance (for example arm length away)?	
Is the image on the screen stable with no flickering?	
Are the characters on the display screen well defined, clearly formed, of adequate size and with adequate spacing?	
Communications	Yes / No
Is there a reliable internet connection?	
Does your laptop or PC have a camera to enable video conference calls?	
Do you have a headset/speaker or microphone?	
Are you aware of the requirement to report issues. For example accidents, health related issues including musculoskeletal discomfort and faulty equipment?	
Keyboard/Mouse (See One Learning Training for guidance on setting up a workstation)	Yes / No
Is the laptop/PC connected to an external keyboard and mouse?	
Can you maintain a neutral wrist posture when typing, for example, without bending of the wrist?	
Can the slope angle of the keyboard be adjusted so as to allow you to find a comfortable position?	
Is the mouse and keyboard within easy reach with space provided in front of the keyboard?	

Lighting (See One Learning Training for guidance on setting up a workstation)	Yes / No
Is there an adequate level of lighting (for example natural and task lighting) available for the type of work being carried out and your vision?	
Health	Yes / No
Are you aware that eyesight tests are provided as needed? (An eye test can be requested via the NSSO self-service system)	
Are you required to carry out manual handling tasks associated with your work whilst working at home?	
Heating/ventilation (See One Learning Training for guidance on setting up a workstation)	Yes / No
Is your workspace warm enough and does it have adequate ventilation?	
Electricity (See One Learning Training for guidance on setting up a workstation)	Yes / No
Is the area around the workstation kept clear of trailing cables and trip hazards?	
Do you regularly check the electrical equipment used in conjunction with your workstation for example sockets, lamp, heater?	
Do you regularly check that sockets are not overloaded?	
Do you regularly check all portable electrical equipment provided by the employer? Any unsafe equipment should be taken out of use (check for frayed wires, signs of burns or melting).	
Have you considered exit points and routes from your work station in the event of an emergency?	
Specialised Equipment Requirements	Yes / No
Do you require any specialised equipment as prescribed by a Chartered Physiotherapist or Occupational Health Practitioner?	



Role of the People Manager

(1) Leading and Managing Teams

People Managers at all levels should:

- Promote a positive, open and inclusive working environment where individuals and teams feel valued and supported;
- Examine and reimagine the roles of their teams in order to support blended working where possible and in line with the needs of the business;
- Ensure equal opportunities for team members whether they are working from the employer's work premises or remotely by facilitating a 'digital first' environment for employee communication and training in order to increase flexibility and remove the barriers of location;
- Champion and demonstrate a culture of flexibility, agility, trust and innovation;
- Adapt communication and management techniques to effectively manage blended working teams;
- Embrace the use of new and innovative technologies in order to reimagine roles and provide a seamless delivery of services irrespective of the locations from which team members are working;
- Actively foster innovation by encouraging their teams to share ideas, use their initiative, take informed risks and develop their confidence to make decisions;
- Empower their team members to take responsibility for their work and give them the authority to do so;
- Help their teams to avoid burnout and overworking by encouraging a healthy routine around the hours they work, for example, take tea breaks and a lunch break each day and set their start time and end time;
- Ensure team members are not working excessively long hours and understand their rights under the Organisation of Working Time Act, including their right to uninterrupted rest breaks;
- Promote a culture that supports a healthy work-life balance in line with the Code of Practice on the Right to Disconnect;
- Report and investigate remote working incidents notified by employees in line with local procedures; and
- Read the HSA's Guidance on Working from Home for Employers and Employees.

(2) Maximise Individual and Team Productivity and Performance

People Managers at all levels should:

- Set clear work priorities, objectives and expectations. Focus on what employees should be accomplishing by emphasising objectives and outcomes over processes;
- Consider how they can best support employees in achieving their agreed objectives in the short term while at the same time developing their skills and capability in the longer term;
- Trust teams to get on with their work but provide them with ongoing support and supervision;
- Ensure as far as is practicable that team members have access to the relevant tools, systems and equipment to perform their jobs and help them adjust to new ways of working;
- Review individual and team performance against customer service, output, efficiency and quality metrics;
- Communicate performance to employees and teams and advise individual employees if performance needs to be improved;
- In doing this, proactively manage, motivate and support individual and team performances in line with:
 - » Civil Service Performance Management Development System;
 - » Management of Underperformance Policy
 - » Guidelines on the management of probation in the Civil Service;
- Continue to engage with employees to ensure effective management of performance;
- Continue to use support tools (for example, ePMDS, eProbation, LEADS) recognising that these are in place to support effective people manager/employee engagement and not to replace direct engagement and conversation;
- Provide team members with feedback in relation to productivity and performance on an ongoing basis, as well as having discussions as part of the PMDS and Probation processes;
- Review their own and their team members' individual learning needs in light of blended working and changing job requirements;
- Encourage team development as far as is practicable including exploring innovative development methods;
- Enhance opportunities for recognition to motivate the individual team member and encourage similar behaviour from their team members;
- Allocate time to discuss career development with team members;
- Discuss any issues (performance/connectivity) with the employee as soon as practical in order to give the employee the opportunity to rectify the issue, seeking HR advice as required; and
- Keep a record of performance related discussions and agreements with the employee.

(3) Engaging Employees and Communicating Effectively

People Managers at all levels should:

- Maintain close and regular contact with their team members to maximise engagement at an individual and team level;
- Identify where employees are having difficulty adjusting to blended working in order to offer support as and when required;
- Keep teams informed of ongoing developments by regularly communicating relevant organisational and team information;
- Ensure regular contact with their manager, teams and colleagues for both work and social engagements;
- Ensure a 'digital first' approach for sharing updates, discussing the work programme, agreeing ways of working, and supporting each other;
- Hold frequent one-to-one conversations to discuss outputs, progress and development options;
- Actively instigate contact with their team members to promote involvement and engagement and should encourage people managers within their teams to do likewise;
- Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport, reduces feelings of isolation and eases communication between blended or distributed teams;
- Be alert to the health and wellbeing of the individuals on your team; and
- Remind team members of existing health and wellbeing supports, for example CSEAS, organisational wellbeing programmes.



Roles less suitable for Blended Working in the NSSO

Following a review of all roles, the following roles have been identified as less suitable for blended working arrangements. These roles may still facilitate blended working arrangements but in general the below roles will have a requirement for greater on-site attendance than the minimum of 20% over the calendar month. This may be during seasonal business lead periods, during specific projects or on a fulltime or rota basis.

Facilities Management

The roles within the NSSO Facilities Management team are less suited to blended working arrangements due to the on-site health & safety and office management duties of the team.

Document Management

The roles within the Document Management team are less suited to blended working arrangements due to the physical nature of the intake and outgoing management of postal documentation and document management duties.

Resignations and Retirements

The Resignations and Retirements team in HR Services have responsibility for the processing of retirements for clients. At present the handling and checking of hard copy pension files and signature requirements mean that the team is less suited to blended working arrangements.



Health and Safety Obligations

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 places a number of obligations on employers and employees. The employer has responsibility to ensure a safe place of work “so far as is reasonably practicable.” “Reasonably practicable” is defined in the Act, in relation to the duties of an employer, as meaning: “that an employer has exercised all due care by putting in place the necessary protective and preventive measures, having identified the hazards and assessed the risks to safety and health likely to result in accidents or injury to health at the place of work concerned and where the putting in place of any further measures is grossly disproportionate having regard to the unusual, unforeseeable and exceptional nature of any circumstance or occurrence that may result in an accident at work or injury to health at that place of work”.

An employee has a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by the work they are doing. These obligations apply to employers and employees, regardless of whether business is conducted at the employer’s premises, the employee’s home or another location where the employee is engaging in blended working. The following health and safety obligations must be considered in the development of any Blended Working Policy.

The revised HSA Guidance on Working from Home for Employers and Employees sets out good practice across a range of health and safety issues. This includes guidance on how employers and employees should manage remote working (including blended working), covering issues such as; employer policies, work-related stress, training, communication and health and safety. The HSA Guidance

emphasises the employer’s responsibility in relation to health and safety at work, irrespective of the location in which work is being carried out. The HSA Guidance should be reviewed by managers and applied in practice. The following key obligations apply:

Employers are required to:

- carry out a risk assessment. This assessment must be carried out by a competent person and should include an assessment of equipment and ergonomics;
- consult with employees to ensure they are aware of any specific risks regarding working from home, that the work activity and the workstation are suitable, that equipment is provided to enable the work to be done and there is a pre-arranged means of contact;
- take protective and preventative measures based on the assessment, which may

include training, providing equipment and/or checking any identified risks have been mitigated;

- update the Safety Statement to incorporate remote/blended working arrangements;
- document the procedures in place for incident reporting and investigation, while following the usual protocols in terms of notification, mitigation of risks and investigation;
- ensure that working hours are appropriately recorded in order to comply with the Organisation of Working Time legislation and to be able to assess incidents that occur during the course of employment;
- promote a healthy work-life balance in line with the Code of Practice on the Right to Disconnect; and
- rescind or pause blended working arrangements where it is deemed that health and safety requirements are not being met while working remotely.

Employees working from home are required to:

- co-operate with their employer and follow their instructions;
- comply with health and safety measures and follow procedures set by their employer;
- attend any training or undergo such assessments as may reasonably be required by their employer relating to safety, health and welfare at work;
- take reasonable care for their own safety;
- protect themselves from harm during the course of their work;
- take care of any equipment provided;
- report any defect in the equipment, place of work or systems of work which might endanger their safety, health and welfare; and
- report any injury arising from the work activity to their employer immediately and in accordance with local policy and procedures.

Incident Reporting and Investigation

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act defines “accident” as meaning “an accident arising out of or in the course of employment which, in the case of a person carrying out work, results in personal injury”. The duty to report such accidents should be made known to the employee.

Internal Reporting Requirements

Employers should have documented procedures in place for incident reporting and investigation. Should an incident occur related to blended working, the employer and employee should follow the usual protocols in terms of notification, mitigation of risks and investigation. HR or Risk Managers/H&S section should be consulted where it is unclear if an incident should be reported. Employers are advised to review their current incident reporting and investigation procedures to ensure they are in line with this framework.

External Reporting Requirements

Accidents and dangerous occurrences must be reported to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in line with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Reporting of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 370 of 2016). The HSA has published a guidance document providing further information on the obligation to report certain accidents:

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Safety_and_Health_Management/Accident_and_Dangerous_Occurrences_Reporting.pdf

In general, there is an obligation to report an injury of any employee as a result of an accident while at work where the injury results in the employee being unable to carry out their normal work for more than three consecutive days, excluding the day of the accident.

A Delegated State Authority to the State Claims Agency (SCA) has a statutory duty to report all incidents to the SCA within a reasonable period of time. An incident is an unplanned or uncontrolled occurrence or sequence of occurrences that caused or had the potential to cause injury, ill-health or disease to a person and/or damage/loss to property/service. Incidents should be reported via the National Incident Management System (NIMS) or by forwarding soft/ hard copy of the report to the SCA where NIMS web entry is not available.

State Indemnity

Under the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act 2000 and subsequent orders the management of personal injury and third party claims against Delegated State authorities (DSAs) and of the underlying risks was delegated to the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). When performing these functions, the NTMA is known as the State Claims Agency (SCA).

State indemnity as operated by the State Claims Agency will apply to claims which occur in the home where there is negligence on the part of the employer(s), its servants and/or agents for claims for personal injury and/or third-party property damage as a result of their activities on the part of their organisation. State indemnity will not cover the homeworker for injuries/damage which were not related to their employment.

Home Insurance: The State Claims Agency has advised that where a formalised blended working arrangement has been agreed between employer and employee, and where the employee has home insurance, it is recommended that the employee notify their insurers of their blended working arrangements.

Home Meetings: Employers should advise against holding meetings in the home with employees and/or clients. State indemnity

will apply if there is negligence on the part of the employer, however the home worker will retain responsibility for the physical property. Similarly with home insurance policy, cover is for domestic use of the house, not business use.

Equipment and Furniture: State indemnity will apply in the event that the employer fails to assess and ensure the replacement of unsuitable equipment. No State indemnity cover will be provided for damaged or stolen goods. It is stated in the Public Financial Procedures guidance that the State should self-insure these risks and that position does not change when work is undertaken in the home environment. The requirement to regularly inspect office equipment and ensure they are stored in an appropriate manner should be communicated to employees and employers should put appropriate procedures and processes in place to respond to any reports from employees of defective equipment/furniture. Where employees have home insurance it is unlikely that cover will be provided for office equipment and furniture provided by the employer, as these are unlikely to be considered 'household goods'.



Other Legal Obligations

Terms and Conditions

Whether working in the employers work premises, or on a blended arrangement, the employee's terms and conditions of employment remain the same, save for any changes to the place of work when working remotely. Employees and managers continue to have a responsibility to ensure they operate within the requirements of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 (OWTA) and adhere to the organisation's Right to Disconnect policy. Employees must take adequate breaks, maintain a healthy work-life balance and set boundaries in relation to working hours in order to facilitate disconnection from work outside of these hours.

The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 stipulates that an employer must keep a record of working time for each employee, even where flexibility may be required in respect of working time. This can be recorded in the form of a clock in/out system on the laptop / computer, subject to the usual data protection and employee monitoring regulations. Organisations must make employees aware of any monitoring in place, for example, data usage, activity or internet search history. In particular, any change to the way in which working time is monitored while working remotely should be clearly communicated to the employee in advance of any blended working arrangement, and any employee monitoring should comply with data protection regulations.

All leave entitlements, including sick leave arrangements and thresholds remain the same. Employees who become ill while working remotely should report that they are ill through the normal sick leave procedures (their manager).

No employee has an automatic entitlement to be granted, or to retain, blended working arrangements. If blended working arrangements are granted, they are granted as an arrangement that is subject to ongoing review as to suitability, and not as a term and condition of employment. This means that the employer, or employee, can change the arrangements on reasonable notice.

The employer's work premises will continue to be the primary work place for all civil servants and will be the formal base location for all administrative purposes. Attending the employer's work premises will remain the default arrangement and all employees availing of blended working will be required to attend, either set days per week or as required, for example for meetings, training and key events. This will be agreed between the employee and their manager based on the requirements of the business. With the exception of employees who reside in Northern Ireland and those posted to specific roles or assignments such as a consulate/embassy, remote working outside of the State will not be facilitated. It should be noted that in respect of employees residing in Northern Ireland, in some situations

taxing rights on their employment income may arise. In this scenario, such employees may be exposed to double taxation where employment duties are also performed in the State. Relief for any double taxation may be available under the Ireland/UK Double Tax Treaty. This area can be complex with the individual facts and circumstances of each case having different implications so each Department or Office, or any employee affected, can seek advice from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners as to specific tax treatments, where required.

Security, Confidentiality, Secrecy and Standards of Behaviour

Employers must ensure that employees working on a blended basis understand that the employee is responsible for both the security of any official devices issued to them and the information stored on these devices. The same responsibilities apply to employees enabled to work on a blended basis using their personal device.

The following protocols apply:

- Work related documents must be stored securely;
- Business calls should be conducted in a confidential setting;
- Sensitive or confidential documents must be password-protected and devices must be shut down when not in use;
- Screens must be locked when the employee is away from the device at any time;
- Organisational IT equipment must be used in line with relevant organisational policies;
- Lost or stolen devices must be reported immediately to the employer in line with the relevant organisational procedure;
- Freedom of Information (FOI): all records on computers/laptops, including instant messaging conversations are encompassed under the FOI Acts;

- Standards of Behaviour: employees working remotely are governed by the same standards of behaviour as when in the office environment – respect, dignity, conduct, professionalism; and
- Disclosure of Information: employees remain subject to obligations in respect of confidentiality and the requirement under the Official Secrets Act 1963 to avoid improper disclosure of information gained in the course of their official work.

Data Protection

Employers and employees should be aware that their obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 are not confined to the employer's work premises. They also apply when working remotely in any location.

Organisations should be alive to the risks associated with employees processing personal data while carrying out their duties remotely. Organisations should ensure the arrangements for remote working do not conflict with the organisation's data protection policies and take any additional measures necessary to ensure the security of confidential, personal and sensitive data during blended working. Consideration should be given to the provision of secure storage where an employee's role involves the removal of files or documents from the employer's work premises.

Employers and employees must be mindful of the principles of the GDPR:

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency
- Purpose limitation
- Data minimisation
- Accuracy
- Storage limitation
- Integrity and confidentiality
- Accountability

Employers and employees who are processing personal data must have a legal basis to do so - Article 6 and Article 9 (special category data) of the GDPR refers.

Obligations under Data Sharing and Governance Act 2019 and the National Archives Act 1986 continue to apply.



Glossary of Supports

Health and Safety Authority Supports

- Guidance on Working from Home for Employers and Employees
- Homeworking risk assessment/checklist
- Display Screen Equipment Guidance
- Display Screen Equipment Documents
- Work Related Stress: A Guide for Employers
- Work Related Stress: Information Sheet for Employees
- Further Information on Sensitive Risk Groups
- Fire Extinguisher Safety Checks Information Sheet
- Practical Information on Managing Electricity

OneLearning Online Supports

- Organising and Chairing Effective Virtual Meetings
- Tips for Effective Virtual Meetings
- Remote Working during COVID-19
- Remote Working for Managers during COVID-19
- Wellbeing for Workers Providing Essential Services

NSSO Online Supports

- NSSO People Manager hub
- NSSO Health and Well-Being hub
- NSSO Blended and Remote working hub

NSSO Supports

- HR Team: NSSOLHR@nssso.gov.ie or nsssohrbusinesspartners@nssso.gov.ie
- DLO: Aoife Harkin is the NSSO's Disability Liaison Officer (DLO), her role is to assist and support staff with disabilities and their managers by the provision of necessary information, appropriate contacts, guidance, suggestions and advice. Aoife's email address is Aoife.Harkin@nssso.gov.ie
- Facilities Management Team: Facilities@nssso.gov.ie and fsutullamore@nssso.gov.ie
- Enterprise IT: hriis@nssso.gov.ie
- Data Protection: The Data Protection Officer advises on and monitors compliance with the laws protecting individuals' personal data within an organisation. The designation, position and tasks of a DPO within an organisation are described in Articles 37, 38 and 39 of the GDPR. Email address: dpo@nssso.gov.ie



Oifig Náisiúnta
um Sheirbhísí
Comhroinnte

National
Shared Services
Office

 www.nssso.gov.ie

 @SSCIRL

 #SharedServicesIRL