

Equality Impact Assessment template

Date of the assessment

9 November 2022

Name of policy or procedure

Hybrid Working Policy

What does this policy or procedure aim to achieve?

The policy sets out Audit Scotland's approach to hybrid working to ensure there is a balance between needs and aspirations of the organisation, colleagues, clients and stakeholders.

Evidence considered and potential impact identified

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
Age	<p>Feedback from various groups including all Business Groups, our PCS union and our internal equality network groups.</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p> <p>Hybrid working employee survey comments and feedback</p> <p>Breakdown of age at Audit Scotland:</p> <p>16 - 24: 5.8%</p> <p>25 – 49: 64%</p> <p>50 – 64: 29%</p> <p>65 +: 1.2%</p> <p>Source - Annual diversity report 2020/21 (audit-scotland.gov.uk)</p>	<p><i>Younger colleagues:</i></p> <p><u>Positive:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced costs due to lower levels of commuting to offices. • Reduced costs incurred for the purchase of workwear. • Flexibility to choose a way of working which is best for them and offers the opportunity to establish an appropriate work/life balance. <p><u>Negative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in levels of face-to-face interaction with colleagues which will result in less opportunities to develop communication skills. • Colleagues may not be familiar with office and/or Audit Scotland etiquette if they are not regularly in attendance at offices/client sites. • Learning opportunities may be reduced as colleagues will not be in the presence of more experienced colleagues/clients. • Colleagues will have reduced opportunities to engage with individuals across the organisation, as Teams meetings will often be organised with specific people this reduced the opportunity to have <i>ad hoc</i> conversations.

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for younger/less experienced colleagues to be at a disadvantage as may be less confident in applying a flexible approach if it is not being supported consistently by managers. • Where younger trainees are being encouraged to come into the office to ‘enhance’ their experience, they would incur travel costs which may be an added pressure particularly in the cost of living crisis. <p><i>Older colleagues:</i></p> <p><u><i>Positives:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced levels of travel for colleagues who may be approaching retirement or looking to reduce working hours. • More flexibility to choose location/hours of working, which could assist in caring responsibilities. • Colleagues may find it more comfortable to work in their own home due the ability to regulate conditions (i.e. lighting, heating etc) - particularly individuals experiencing symptoms relating to menopause. <p><u><i>Negatives:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues may experience challenges due to the requirement to adopt new technologies as part of hybrid working. • Colleagues may experience additional challenges in adopting new ways of working because of hybrid working.

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
Disability	<p>Feedback from various groups as above, including Disability & Confident Working group.</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p> <p>All aspects of disability were considered, ie physical, mental, hidden.</p> <p>4.9% of Audit Scotland employees have declared a disability.</p> <p>Source: Annual diversity report 2020/21 (audit-scotland.gov.uk)</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues will experience increased flexibility as they can choose a location to work from which suits them. Including the ability to combine office/home working on the same day to accommodate caring responsibilities. • Colleagues who have occupational health requirements (including workstations) can have this set up in their homes which will make working more comfortable. • Reduced requirement for colleagues to transport equipment and documentation back and forth between offices and client sites. • Reduced costs due to lower levels of commuting to offices. • Hybrid meetings can provide additional benefits to some colleagues (including hearing impaired) as technologies make it easier to listen to one individual at a time or implement subtitles on software. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues will require to carry equipment (including laptops) to be able to attend offices for work. • Hot-desking system within offices could require individuals with occupational health requirements to have to adjust their workstations and setup each time they attend the office. • Reduction in the level of face-to-face support could exacerbate existing conditions, or make colleagues feel more isolated.

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
Gender reassignment	<p>Feedback gained from various groups.</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues who have requirements to take regular short breaks away from their desk may feel reluctant to take these due to an expectation to be seen working. • Hybrid meetings can prove difficult in some rooms in terms of acoustics which make it difficult to hear. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility to work from home while going through the gender re-assignment process. • Colleagues having the ability to choose where they work will allow them to find a way of working which is best for them. • Availability of office space is beneficial for those living in an unsupportive environment and can provide a safe space. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced interaction with colleagues has the potential to increase levels of isolation experienced by colleagues. • Potential challenges for colleagues accessing office/client sites after gender re-assignment in relation to acceptance/understanding by colleagues/clients if there has been limited in person engagement.
Marriage and civil partnership	Feedback gained from various groups.	<u>Positives:</u>

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
	<p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p> <p>Breakdown of Marital Status at AS:</p> <p>Married – 51%</p> <p>Single – 35%</p> <p>Other – 14%</p> <p>Source: Annual diversity report 2020/21 (audit-scotland.gov.uk)</p>	<p>What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase flexibility to choose where to work which will help to accommodate home commitments. • Increased flexibility will allow individuals to work in a way which accommodates any additional commitments including caring responsibilities. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in opportunities to attend the office could remove a safe space from individuals dealing with issues at home (including domestic violence).
<p>Pregnancy and maternity/paternity</p>	<p>Feedback gained from various groups</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues who are pregnant and suffering from short term pregnancy related illness will benefit from being able to choose where to work from. • Colleagues will be able to reduce the level of time spent commuting to/from offices or client sites which will provide more time to spend with children/family. • Increased flexibility in choosing where to work will allow individuals to accommodate childcare and other needs. • Reduced risk experienced as colleagues will not be required to carry equipment (including laptop) to the office or client sites. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p>

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues will require to carry equipment (including laptops) to be able to attend offices for work. • Colleagues returning to work after a long-term absence (including maternity leave) may find it harder to adjust to technologies or ways of working, particularly the reduction in face-to-face contact.
Race	<p>Feedback sought from various groups including our internal Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage group.</p> <p>Breakdown of ethnicities at AS:</p> <p>Minority ethnicity – 7%</p> <p>Source - Annual diversity report 2020/21 (audit-scotland.gov.uk)</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased flexibility in respect of where to work will allow colleagues to find a way of working and work environment which suits them.
Religion or belief	<p>Feedback gained from various groups including our internal Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage group.</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p> <p>Breakdown of Religion/belief at AS:</p> <p>No Religion – 45%</p> <p>Church of Scotland – 13.8%</p> <p>Roman Catholic – 13.1%</p> <p>Muslim – 3.1%</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased levels of flexibility as to where to work will allow colleagues to build their working day around times of prayer/worship. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to prayer/worship may be compromised if work location doesn't have this dedicated facility.

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
	Other – 25%	
Sex	<p>Feedback gained from various groups</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p> <p>Breakdown of Sex at AS:</p> <p>Women – 56.9%</p> <p>Men – 43.1%</p> <p>Source - Annual diversity report 2020/21 (audit-scotland.gov.uk)</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women, who are more likely based on social norms to maintain caring or domestic responsibilities, will experience a greater level of flexibility to determine where they work. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women, who are more likely based on social norms to maintain caring or domestic responsibilities, could compensate for not attending offices or client sites by working longer hours to avoid a perception that they are ‘slacking off’.
Sexual orientation	<p>Feedback gained from various groups including our internal LGBTQ network group</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p> <p>Breakdown of sexual orientation at AS:</p> <p>Heterosexual – 84.1%</p> <p>LGBO – 3.7%</p> <p>Prefer not to say – 12.2%</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased flexibility in respect of where to work will allow LGBTQ+ colleagues to find a way of working and work environment which suits them. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in opportunities to attend the office could remove a safe space for LGBTQ+ colleagues, particularly those who may not have a supportive environment at home.

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
<p>*Socio-economic disadvantage</p> <p><i>*(although this is not a protected characteristic, we have still considered the potential impact on this group)</i></p>	<p>Feedback gained from various groups</p> <p>This feedback was used to review and update the Understanding Different Needs Form.</p>	<p><u>Positives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues will experience a reduction in travel costs because of the reduced requirement to attend offices/client sites which would be an advantage, particularly with the cost of living crisis. • Colleagues can choose the location that suits them best to work around other commitments and costs they might have. • Opportunities will be available to work with a broader range of clients due to hybrid working reducing the significance placed on geographical location. <p><u>Negatives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues within lower pay grades could be disproportionately disadvantaged due to the increased utility costs incurred because of increased levels of home working. Particularly, those who have not benefited from reduced travel costs. • Colleagues experiencing socio-economic barriers may not have (or be able to acquire) appropriate broadband connectivity to allow them to carry out their duties effectively from home. • Individuals may not have a suitable space available to allow them to work from home comfortably. In particular, those who are at socio-economic disadvantage, those living with family, or those sharing accommodation. • Colleagues experiencing socio-economic barriers may find it difficult to establish an appropriate work environment at home, especially where there is an inability to establish privacy for meetings and other duties.

Protected characteristic	Please summarise the evidence you considered	What is the potential impact (positive, neutral and negative) on people who share the characteristic?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The cost of living crisis may have a further impact on those already experiencing socio-economic barriers.

Did you need to obtain further information? If yes, how did you do that?

Yes. We asked all business group leads a set of questions which provided us with further information on what groups may be disadvantaged (or may positively benefit) and why.

We also asked the same questions to existing AS working groups, such as our Carers Support Group, Disability Confident Group, LGBTQ+ group and our REACH group.

Action plan

What recommended steps should we take to improve the policy or procedure and monitor its equality impact?

Capture any action we plan to take to reduce negative impacts and maximise positive impacts. The policy owner should prioritise actions based on their expected impact on helping us deliver the general equality duty and their contribution to our equality outcomes. The EHRSG and People Focus Group can advise on this.

When developing the action plan, policy owners should consider how to maximise the positive impact of the policy or procedure on all people who share the protected characteristics, with the requirement to maximise the core outcomes of the policy or procedure. Actions should be strategic and proportionate.

The action plan should also include ways of monitoring the ongoing impact of the policy or procedure.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline
Finalise Hybrid Working Policy taking this EIA into account	HR/Exec Team/DHW Group	Ongoing
Survey colleagues and regular discussions with PCS through Partnership Forum when new hybrid working policy is in place to determine any other impacts	HR/Exec Team	Ongoing
Ensure working time of all colleagues when working remotely is a focus for discussion around wellbeing due to the risks of working more for perception / presenteeism	All line managers	Ongoing through 121s
Removing barriers for those with a disability when working from the office –	BSS / HR /Individuals	Ongoing
Annual workstation assessments.	All colleagues	Annually

Approval

Date of approval by Executive Team

21/02/2023
