

# How we work at Warrington Housing Association



**Our People**

Warrington Housing Association

Welcome to your guide to the way we work at Warrington Housing Association, why we have adopted hybrid working and an open plan office environment and how it translates to our day-to-day work. This guide will help you, be the best that you can be at work.

### OUR VISION AND VALUES

Warrington Housing Association’s aim is to help make Warrington a great place to live, in which the potential of individuals and communities can be realised. To help us deliver on this vision we have developed a People Strategy which help us support a culture which empowers colleagues to realise their potential. This is framed via four inter-related objectives:

- o Relationships – We will use a coaching approach to support a culture which builds on successful relationships with colleagues based on values and behaviours and, crucially built on trust.
- o Reward and recognition – Our organisation will recognise and reward high performance to help us reinforce the most important outcomes that our people create for our business.
- o Tools to deliver – We will ensure that WHA provides colleagues with a 21<sup>st</sup> century working environment and the right tools to do their job effectively, supporting the creation of one team and maximising the benefits of technology to support agile working;
- o Safety first – We will continue to think beyond compliance in embedding a safety-first culture in all that we do.

We celebrate high performance amongst our colleagues where it helps us achieve our business outcomes. We demonstrate this through a clear set of Values, a Competency Framework, and demonstrable behaviours we expect of each other.



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## HOW WE WORK AROUND HERE

At WHA, we try to retain what's good and what works well, but we will also promote better ways of doing things where this can improve customer and colleague experience. This is about thinking and working differently, using new tools, new processes, and new approaches to leadership, management and teamwork, which aligns perfectly with our behaviours.

Here are some examples of how our new ways of working look and feel.

- We are one organisation and we promote joined up working – between individuals, teams and customers.
- We work together to design new services for colleagues and customers, based on active listening and deciding together how to improve things.
- We have a culture of learning that helps colleagues develop their skills and capabilities and progress their careers.
- Our managers coach, develop, support and challenge their team.
- We manage based on outcomes against our shared objectives, rather than management based on control.
- We put safety of our colleagues and customers first.
- Colleagues at WHA take individual responsibility for customers' needs and work with others to achieve the right outcome.

## OUR HYBRID CULTURE

Hybrid working is not 'flexible' working, which is a contractually agreed work pattern, or 'flexitime' which is based on core hours of work. It is not just about new offices and new technology it's about people and culture. It's about changing the way we work, and empowering colleagues to work in more flexible ways to deliver better services.

Our hybrid working principles:

- Colleagues have the flexibility, to work from a variety of places without the need to have a fixed base to return to.
- Our IT systems will make it easy to access information from anywhere so that we can provide services to customers in the right place, at the right time.
- Our colleagues agree with their manager their own hybrid way, based on the demands and requirements of their role and their individual style and preference. WHA provide the tools to enable this to happen.
- Colleagues work their contractual hours but have the flexibility to manage their working pattern within the context of the needs of the business and in

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cooperation with others.

- Colleagues with an agreed work pattern are still able to work in a hybrid way.
- We recognise that even in an hybrid world, there will be times when colleagues will be expected to make themselves available for work such as one to one's, training and team meetings.
- Our hybrid way incorporates good practice,
  - We encourage colleagues to take regular breaks from work.
  - Individuals take their own responsibility to take rest breaks and not to work continuous days or late nights without taking statutory breaks. (for more information see our guidance on Working Time Regulations).
  - Laptops should not be used for extended periods and should be safely stored when not in use.
  - When working remotely, colleagues are expected to consider their own health and safety.
  - Managers and officers work together to agree clear, robust protocols for lone working to make sure colleagues are not at risk and are aware of their own responsibilities.

Our hybrid environment allows for us to make reasonable adjustments for colleagues with disabilities, or a specialist function that requires a specific location.

### MANAGING A HYBRID TEAM

We recognise that key to successfully managing a hybrid team is to lead by example and celebrate success wherever and whenever we see it! The best hybrid environments are built on trust and mutual respect. The best hybrid environments measure success based on outcome not presentism! The best hybrid environments allow for flexibility, and effectively manage the needs of the business, the needs of the team and the needs of the individual.

We also recognise that good communication is key but when and how that communication takes place will depend on several factors, including the type of work being carried out and the work patterns of the colleagues / team. Managers therefore need to re-think 'meetings' and use a variety of ways to keep in touch with their teams, for example:

- Daily phone check-ins;
- Weekly face-to-face updates;
- Quarterly 121 meetings;

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- Use of telephone conferencing;
- Use of Teams Chat functionality: and
- Regular Team Meetings.

For hybrid working to become embedded, colleagues need to be given more autonomy, and be trusted to organise their work responsibilities. A colleague who is not in the office at the same time as their manager is not out of touch or out of control, we just need to use management techniques, communication and IT effectively. In fact, with our new ways of working our managers can be more in touch with their teams than ever before.

### THE TOOLS TO DO YOUR JOB

All Colleagues will be provided with the appropriate IT equipment to do your job in a hybrid way. This will include mobile devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones.

### OUR WORKSPACES

We have over 100 seating areas within our WHA office and have a number of remote sites including the wider Gateway and retirement living schemes that colleagues can use each day. Most jobs can increasingly be carried out from anywhere and the need to be sat at the same desk in the same place from 9:00am to 5:00pm is becoming less common or necessary.

We have multi-use meeting rooms, a large flexible meeting room, “The Deck” and two smaller meeting rooms, which can all be booked via our office calendar. Equally, we have a range of workstations, booths & informal meeting spaces and break out areas that may be more productive than traditional “offices.” It can be more productive to meet around a table in a more relaxed space, standing up around a bench in front of the multimedia screen or colleagues can even move the lockers to use the chalk board!

There are no allocated ‘team’ areas at any of our workspaces. Sharing workspaces and working alongside colleagues from across the organisation helps to break down barriers & silo thinking between teams, it will support our One WHA approach and will help us work better together.

For our collaborative workspaces to work for everyone, we have developed ‘clear desk’ principles:

- We use the appropriate space for the activity.
- If our plans change, we rethink our workspace requirements and move to a

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- more appropriate space.
- Confidential calls or discussions are held in an appropriate and private workspace.
- Work-in-progress is not to be left out on a work area. Lockers are available for storage. When we leave a work area, we are considerate of others and leave it clean.
- We take individual responsibility for choosing seating and using chair adjustment mechanisms to create our own individual, ergonomically correct seating position.

### WORKING AT HOME

In certain circumstances / roles, colleagues will be able to work from home and will have technology and tools to enable them to do this. This can provide a quiet space to focus on a task, help colleagues juggle home and work life, and help us to reduce our impact on the environment.

If you choose to work from home, you are responsible for ensuring that you have an appropriate broadband connection to work effectively. As working from home is a choice, we don't reimburse colleagues for the cost of their broadband connection or other household bills such as landline connection, heating, lighting etc.

### TRAVEL

All colleagues will have a designated base for travel claim purposes, for most that is The Gateway, and you are responsible for the costs of your normal commute to and from work for the number of days you are contracted to work.

We want to make it easier for you to plan your journey to and from our offices in Warrington. Through our transport plan we are also looking at ways to reduce our environmental impact. Warrington is well served by public transport, with 2 train stations – Bank Quay and Central and a central Interchange bus station. It is also relatively flat and compact which make cycling and walking easy. We offer the cycle to work scheme as part of our employee benefits and there is a bike rack, changing and showering facilities in the Gateway.

### DATA SECURITY

The security and confidentiality of our data and information is a top priority for us and this is managed via our General Data Protection Regulations Policy. Complying with this policy is the responsibility of all colleagues and volunteers. We ask all colleagues to comply with our rules on data security and we provide

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training to everyone to ensure that this happens.

### YOUR HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Your health and safety is important and should be at the center of hybrid working. Applied in the right way hybrid working provides the opportunity for a better work / life balance and improved health and wellbeing.

Please make yourself aware of our Health and Safety Policy and procedures. These apply whenever you are working – at our offices, at home or another location such as a coffee shop.

### Learning and growing together

Hybrid working is not prescriptive and so this guide is not a rule book– that is not the hybrid way. We trust you and want to empower you to take responsibility and adopt these new ways of working.

If you have any questions or suggestions for how we continue to improve the way we work together so that we can all be our best selves, please speak to your manager, the Head of Corporate Services or make use of our suggestions Board on the wall between in the main office by the entrance to the large meeting room!

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