Hybrid Working

Resources

Supporting the wellbeing of hybrid workers

Hybrid working involves staff spending some of their working week on campus and other time remotely, usually from home. This can result in some specific wellbeing challenges for staff – these tips can help to ensure that hybrid working can be undertaken in a way that also enables wellbeing.

- When working from home without the structure of a typical working day and commute, it can be easy to work longer hours and not take any breaks. Encourage staff working remotely to take regular breaks, including screen breaks. Also encourage staff to work reasonable hours and address any signs of overwork.

- Working from home can lead to the blurring of boundaries between work and home. Having work related technology in the home can encourage staff to check messages when they are not working – talk to your team about the importance of switching off and having boundaries.

- When your team are remote (or even working at different times to you), the signs and symptoms that When your team are remote (or even working at different times to you), the signs and symptoms that someone is not ok may be harder to spot. Aim to check in on a regular basis with your team and raise any concerns that you may have. This video 'How to have a conversation about mental health' provides more information on having a wellbeing conversation.

- Promote wellbeing activities and opportunities to your team – whether people work remotely or not. This can help to give staff permission to take time for their wellbeing and create a team in which it is acceptable to talk about wellbeing and health.

- Consider the amount of and length of online meetings. When staff work in a hybrid way it is usually most effective to meet online by default. This can result in excess screen time. Consider whether it is necessary to always hold a meeting – could it be replaced by an asynchronous activity instead such as a chat in MS Teams, allowing people to respond when it works for them? Look to make meetings as short as possible and avoid situations where there are online meetings back-to-back with no time away from the screen.

- Be a good role model. If you have healthy habits, then your team will take the lead from you. Equally if you email them late at night or at weekends this may send a signal that this is expected of them too. If you are working flexibly make sure your team are aware of that and tell them that they do not have to respond.

- Consider workloads. Excess workload is one of the main reasons that people take time off work due to stress, anxiety and depression. All staff should have a reasonable workload and clear objectives. Make sure everyone knows what is expected of them and discuss objectives regularly.

More information on supporting wellbeing is available on [Managers' Essentials](#).

Tips for leading hybrid teams

Leading a hybrid team is significantly different from leading a team that is mostly office based or mostly remote. It requires a range of new skills and approaches. These tips can help you to set a hybrid team up for success:

- **Agree your team 'rules' for successful hybrid working**. Consider setting some principles that everyone will work to. This could include sharing calendars, using status updates to share location and how to keep everyone up to date with important information. Hybrid teams work best when the team decides best what will work for them. These rules or principles should be reviewed from time to time and adapted where required. This is especially important for newly hybrid teams – learn from your own experiences.

- **Agree communication methods**. When team members are in different places generally meetings should all be held online to ensure that everyone has the same experience of the meeting and can contribute equally. It's also a good idea to agree other communication methods. This might include a weekly catch up meeting or an online channel for general updates. This will help to avoid too many channels and notifications and ensure team members know where to get necessary information. Harness technology to ensure everyone has the information that they need to do their jobs effectively.

- **Share working arrangements**. Help people to understand where everyone is working and when. This could include using status updates or a matrix on a page showing which days people are in the office or remote.

- **Talk to people about their working preferences**. Not everyone will want to work remotely or in a hybrid way, but they may benefit from other forms of flexibility such as time flexibility. Where employees want to work in the office on a full-time basis they should be accommodated – not everyone can or wants to work remotely.

- **Schedule face to face time for everyone**. This might be a monthly meeting or a quarterly away-day – different teams will need different amounts of face time. A regular in person get-together will help to build effective team relationships and will especially benefit new starters.

- **Build in social connections and a sense of community**. This can help to support effective team relationships and keep people feeling connected and included. Social connections can be developed in both face to face and in online spaces. Consider a separate online channel for informal chat, coffee roulette or including some space for checking in with each other in team meetings.

- **Ensure that the team has the technology and equipment** necessary to enable successful hybrid working – and they know how to use it effectively. This will support all team members in fully participating in communication, collaboration, and team meetings. Talk to your team to check they have what they need.

- **Support staff in meaningfully disconnecting**. When teams undertake some of their work from home, or team members work a variety of different hours it can be difficult for some people to manage boundaries. Make it clear to your team that they do not have to respond to all messages immediately and support them in managing their work life balance. Managers can be a powerful role model in good digital practice.

- **Review and update objectives regularly and build in time for feedback**. When people work remotely performance is harder to observe, making clear, measurable and time bound objectives even more important. When teams work in a hybrid way performance needs to be assessed by outcomes and contribution rather than time in the office.

- **Think carefully about inclusion and fairness**. Managers should ensure that work, information, and opportunities are distributed equally throughout the team; these decisions should not be made based on who is working in the office or at home.

Finally, be clear on your own availability and working arrangements. If you work in a hybrid way, make sure that your team know when you will be in the office and how to contact you when you are working remotely. Make sure to schedule regular 121 meetings with your team as well as regular 'all team' meetings.

9 tips for successful hybrid working

If you work in a hybrid way, the following tips can help you to make it a success, as well as effectively manage your work life balance.

1. Make sure that you are aware of any local rules or team principles relating to hybrid working, and work to these principles. Also ensure that you are aware of the University roles and responsibilities for hybrid workers.

2. Clearly communicate your working pattern to colleagues and customers. Block the time out in your calendar and use an auto signature, MS Teams presence indicators or out of office message to communicate when you are available. If your working pattern includes hours outside of those often-considered typical office hours, consider including a note to this effect in your auto-signature with a reminder that a reply is not expected until the recipient's working times.

3. When working from home it is important to establish effective boundaries to avoid work overspill into home life. Create a separate space for work if you can and aim to have a defined start and finish time. Ensure a break is taken during the working day, including regular screen breaks. Look at some of our resources for managing work life balance.

4. Take responsibility for communication – it is fundamental to the success of hybrid working and requires a team effort. What do you need to share, and with whom? Should you be undertaking a work at a different schedule or from a different location to your colleagues, be proactive and talk to them about the best ways to keep in touch

and stay connected. Let people know how best to contact you when you are not in the office.

5. Ensure that you have all of the relevant technology available to you in order for you to undertake your role effectively - seek additional training if required. When communicating with others use the right tool for the specific job and try and use a mix of different appropriate technologies.

6. Hybrid working benefits from strong team relationships with high trust. Take the time to get to know colleagues, embrace opportunities to connect informally and make the most of time in the office and on campus to learn and share.

7. Establish an effective homeworking set up. This may include thinking about ergonomics, managing distractions or noise, and having enough light or storage. Also undertake a [DSE assessment](#).

8. Ensure inclusion. Take responsibility for bringing everyone into the conversation whether they are in the office or at home. Make sure that your meetings are inclusive by holding them online as default so that everyone can contribute equally.

9. Plan for effectiveness and productivity. Some forms of work will lend themselves better to being at home or being in the office. Consider where and when you are most effective and productive – you may need to experiment to determine this. Discuss this with your manager too.

Guidance on supporting disabled staff

The Equality Act 2010 places a legal obligation on employers to provide reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged in employment. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial or long-term negative effect on someone's ability to be able to do normal daily activities.

A reasonable adjustment is specific to an individual person and is a change or adaptation to the working environment that can remove or reduce the barriers that a disabled person is facing. What amounts to a reasonable adjustment depends on the circumstances (such as the nature of the job) – relevant factors include whether it is practical, is affordable or could harm the health and safety of others.

Hybrid working or working from home for some of the working week, may amount to a reasonable adjustment depending on the circumstances and the nature of the role. For example, if a disabled colleague needs to take regular rest breaks during the day and this can be better managed from home, this may be a reasonable adjustment.

Information and support in identifying and making reasonable adjustments can be obtained from the Disability Advisory Support Service and the Ocupational Health Service.
Where hybrid working or working from home amounts to a reasonable adjustment and disability-related equipment is needed, DASS can support with identifying and funding this.

Managers are encouraged to consider hybrid working opportunities at a team level. If an employee indicates that they have a disbaility-related need for adjustment around hybrid working, they should also:

- Discuss the circumstances privately with the individual and ask them what support or adjustments they feel that they need. Managers should ask staff if they feel comfortable to do this with them directly and if not, refer them to the DASS service for confidential discussion

- Take advice from DASS if they feel they may not be able to accomodate the request for operational reasons. Disability-related requests should not be refused without further input from DASS

- With reference to the University [Hybrid Working Framework](#) consider whether there is a category of hybrid working that is appropriate. This may be different to the category or arrangements that apply to other employees in the team

- Work with the [DASS](#) service to ensure the employee has the necessary equipment to enable hybrid / home working, and work with DASS to confirm support and budget available

- Review the hybrid / homeworking arrangement on a regular basis to ensure that the employee is appropriately supported and able to work effectively

Confidentiality should always be maintained; medical conditions / health information is sensitive personal data and subject to relevant data protection legislation.

How to assess a role for hybrid working

Whether a role is suitable for hybrid working will depend on the nature of the role and work activities. There are different forms of hybrid working – staff should review the University [Hybrid Working Framework](#) for more information as well as eligibility criteria and responsibilities.

Most jobs are made up of a mix several types of activity:

- Work that needs to be undertaken with other people, at the same time (synchronous work) and at the same place (location dependent).

- Work that needs to be undertaken with other people at the same time, but this can be virtual or remote (such as a team meeting).

- Work that can be undertaken at any time (asynchronous) – such as independent tasks.

The balance of these activities will vary from role to role. When considering a role for hybrid potential you may also wish to refer to the relevant job description.

To make hybrid working a success, you have to understand how work gets done. When considering whether a role can be suitable for hybrid working consider the following:

- Which of the categories, detailed within the Hybrid Working Framework, closely resembles the tasks undertaken in the team / role?

- What percentage of the role (and its activities) needs to be done on campus and what percentage can be undertaken remotely?

- Look at the mix of activities list above – which of these are most important for the effectiveness of the role, or the productivity of the individual?

- What percentage of the activities undertaken are time dependent? Are they required in 'real time', at specific start or end times, or can they be undertaken at any time?

- What type of activity, undertaken by the role, is most effective when and where?

- To what extent does the mix of activities change throughout the year (if at all)?

Also consider the preferences and circumstances of the member of staff. Although it may not always be possible to meet everyone's personal preferences, working within a preferred style can help people to be effective and productive, and increase their energy and wellbeing.

The grade and seniority of the member of staff should not determine whether someone can work in a hybrid way. Although a job may have in the past been 100% campus based, this should also not be a factor about whether hybrid working is available to staff or not. Each role and its activities should be considered on their own merits, in accordance with our Hybrid Working Framework.

If the answers to the questions noted above cannot be determined easily, consider asking the job holder (where they are in post) to keep a note of the work they undertake each day, as categorised above, over an appropriate time period to allow analysis. Ask them to note down their tasks and consider the extent to which they are time and location dependent.

- What patterns emerge from your review or data collection?

- What changes could be made or trialled?

- How could work be organised differently to allow for non-time / location dependent work to be undertaken at different times or in different places?

- Where work requires collaboration, does this need to be face-to-face or could other forms of collaboration work just as well?

- Where work requires high concentration, could this be done at different times or in different places?

- Where work is highly transactional, is it also time / location dependent?

- What tasks could be split between different individuals (in a potential job share situation) or across different days or hours of the week?

- Do the different activities change throughout the month or year?

Remember – it is also possible to undertake a trial of hybrid working to assess potential.

Communicating with hybrid teams

Communication in a hybrid team requires a different approach to communicating with an office-based team. Effective hybrid working is facilitated by strong communication. Team members need to know how, when and where to communicate with each other. Consider some of these tips for ensuring successful communication.

Choose an appropriate technology (and ensure everyone can use it)

Pick a platform for your regular meetings. This might be Zoom or MS Teams, but it can help to use a consistent channel. Although some people have been using these tools to meet online for a while now, not everyone is fully skilled in doing so. Always check that your team members know how to use your technology of choice.

Consider asynchronous tools

Effective communication does not have to take place face to face or require a meeting. It can be helpful to agree an additional asynchronous channel (such as MS Teams, Yammer) for other forms of sharing and collaborating. This can reduce online meeting fatigue and allow people to reflect and contribute at a time that suits their work schedule. Organising discussions into channels can help people to manage their attention and notifications effectively. Try and pick a couple of channels and stick to them – communicating across multiple channels can be distracting and confusing. Be clear about what channel is for what

sort of work (e.g. our Yammer group is for social chatting, we will use MS Teams for work discussions).

Ensure effective information sharing

Make sure that information is shared with the entire team rather than just the people who are in the office. This requirement can be supported by many of the tips in this guidance – it is important to ensure that everyone has access to the same information to avoid communication problems and feelings of unfairness.

Schedule regular team meetings

How often do you need to meet and what for? Whether it is a weekly catch up or monthly meeting, involve the team in deciding what is needed and how often. A regular meeting can help to connect people and ensure everyone receives the same information. From time to time you may want to consider scheduling in-person meetings that everyone attends. Remember – not everything needs to be a meeting!

Inducting new hybrid workers

Inducting a new starter to the University is always an important task, in terms of supporting the individual to do their job effectively but also to engage psychologically with our values, vision and culture. When the new starter is going to work at least some of their time remotely or at different times to their team, a more focused effort is required. This guidance can help ensure that an induction is effective and supportive.

Remember: Induction starts before the first day of employment. Managers should keep in touch after a job offer and ensure that the individual knows exactly what to expect when they arrive. The learning process should then continue over the following weeks and months. Induction is not a one-off event.

- Ensure that the new starter has all the equipment that the need to do their job effectively from the start, wherever or whenever they are working. This should include access to all relevant systems, shared areas or online team groups or communication channels. Explain how to access all systems remotely where this differs from being on campus.

- Share the team hybrid working framework and communication principles. If the team has any informal rules or principles about working flexibly, make sure that these are fully communicated. These might include arrangements about shared calendars, updating and checking in or using presence indicators to confirm availability. Having agreed team norms for flexible working benefits everyone – where these don't exist consider setting some up using our guidance to do so.

- Use our online resources and eLearning courses to support the new starter in understanding critical information about the University and Higher Education. More information is available on Staffnet.

- Help them understand the culture. Every organisation has its own culture and ways of working. Even when someone will be working remotely help them to understand and engage with it. Share information on the University vision and values, as well as our strategic aims and plans.

- Facilitate meetings between the new starter and the team, and any key contacts. Meetings can be virtual or face to face – for those critical business relationships try and make those meetings 121 initially. Provide a mentor or buddy too wherever possible to support the individual during their first few critical weeks. This can all help to make someone feel part of the team.

- Build in some social connection. This could be an informal coffee or lunch in week 1 (virtual or face to face), an invitation to any social groups or just a walk around campus.

- Balance time on campus with time at home during the first few weeks and include where possible invitations to both virtual and in person events and meetings.

Effective hybrid meetings

A hybrid meeting is one in which some of the attendees are in the workplace where others are attending remotely, probably from home. In hybrid teams, it is essential to have good meeting arrangements to support effective communication. It is also essential to strive for equal participation.

Meetings where some people are in a meeting room and others attending remotely can be difficult. It can lead to an experience known as 'presence disparity'. This occurs when people who join a meeting remotely have a different experience to those joining in person (usually a reduced experience with less opportunity to contribute). Generally, it is better to avoid meetings where some attendees are all in a meeting room and others are remote unless there is a high-quality video-conferencing system available that everyone can use.

Meetings can generally be thought of as falling into two categories:

- **Convergent meetings**: these meetings generally include information exchanges, general updates or discussing topics for the purposes of making a decision. These meetings should as a default take place online (via Zoom or MS Teams). This allows everyone to take part wherever they are and contribute equally.

- **Divergent meetings**: these meetings are about creating new ideas, collaborating or exploring subjects. These meetings can be held online using a range of tools (such as whiteboards or breakout rooms) but may benefit from being held when all staff are in the office and can take part.

For effective meetings of a hybrid team:

Avoid

- Meetings where someone joins by phone / one laptop where everyone else is in a physical space.

- Scheduling too many convergent or update style meetings. Many meetings can be replaced with collaborative (or asynchronous) online work. Aim to reduce the number of meetings held where possible.

- Meetings without a clear purpose or agenda. Having clear objectives will allow everyone to participate and make the meeting effective – reducing unnecessary time online.

- Sharing documents that might be hard to see on a shared screen. Where appropriate send them in advance so that the attendee can open them on their own machine and adjust size to suit their needs.

Do

- Use asynchronous tools which may avoid the need to meet at all (or reduce the length of meetings) these might include MS Teams channels.

- Consider screen fatigue when scheduling online meetings. Build in breaks and don't hold over-long meetings.

- Set expectations at the beginning of meetings. For example, how do people signal that they want to contribute/speak? How or where should questions be asked?

- Make sure everyone has all relevant documents, agendas or papers for review and discussion.

- Encourage every attendee to have their camera on and remain on mute unless speaking.

- Provide some brief time in the meeting, such as at the beginning, for informal chat.

- Make sure that everyone gets the chance to speak and contribute.

- Allow time for pauses just in case any attendee is experiencing a time lag due to connection issues.

- Watch for signals someone wants to speak and make sure to acknowledge them (using electronic 'hands' functions can avoid the need for this).

For more tips on effective communication within hybrid teams, please see our [Managers' Essentials Toolkit](#).

How to manage flexible or hybrid working requests during recruitment

We are happy to have discussions about flexible or hybrid working opportunities during the recruitment process. If a candidate asks about flexible or hybrid working during the recruitment process, managers should follow the guidance below.

For Hybrid Working:

Share any information about current hybrid working arrangements in the team or any hybrid category that has already been assigned to the role.

Explain any relevant local team rules around hybrid working that anyone appointed to the role would be required to work to.

For Flexible Working:

Where a request if likely to impact upon terms and conditions of employment, such as requesting a job-share, or fewer / different working hours than advertised:

- Review the request in line with the operational requirements of the role.

- Reflect on the potential benefits or challenges of the request. How could any potential difficulties be overcome?

- Ask the candidate how they propose to manage the work within the working pattern suggested.

- Consider the key question – can the role be effectively fulfilled within the working pattern proposed?

- Consider if there will be any detrimental impact on the department or colleagues of the request.

- Provide a full explanation to the candidate if it is decided that flexible working cannot be agreed.

- Take advice from P&OD where appropriate.

- Feel empowered to suggest an alternative approach if the proposal from the candidate isn't possible.
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- Agree how any flexible working arrangement will work in practice, including reviewing them where appropriate.

- Confirm to the P&OD team any agreements made with candidates in order to ensure offer paperwork is accurate.

More information is available in the [Flexible Working Policy](#) and [Hybrid Working Framework](#).

Managing performance in hybrid teams

When staff work remotely for some of their working week or undertake other forms of flexible working, performance can be harder to observe. Effective performance management of hybrid staff therefore requires a shift in approach although many of the fundamentals of good performance management (objectives, feedback and timely conversations) remain the same. These tips can support managers in effectively managing hybrid teams.

Set clear objectives

Everyone should have objectives and should know exactly what is expected of them. Ideally objectives should be set annually but kept under review and discussed regularly. It is always good practice to have objectives that are well written, with deadlines for completion and clear measures of success. Where appropriate, encourage team members to share their objectives to help support effective communication and collaboration across the team.

Focus on outcomes

When staff have clear and up to date objectives it becomes possible to measure people's success based on outcomes, demonstration of values and their individual contribution, rather than whether employees are visible either in the office or in online spaces. Define successful outcomes for team members and include these in objectives.

Have regular 121s

When staff are working in different locations, or even a different time to their manager or the rest of the team, it is important to build in specific time to discuss performance and keep up to date with operational activities. There may be less time for those casual corridor conversations or informal catchups when teams are hybrid. Although this will vary from team to team, good practice suggests meeting at least monthly.

Look out for excellent performance

Remember to look out for and recognise excellent performance when teams are hybrid. This may include celebrating successes, recognizing achievements or qualifications attained and saying a meaningful thank you. This can also be achieved virtually as well as face to face.

Address performance concerns promptly

Poor performance rarely improves without intervention. When there are concerns about performance, don't wait for a formal meeting or the annual performance review but schedule a meeting to discuss the issues as soon as possible. Meetings can be in person or virtual – ensure that notes are taken, and the member of staff is clear on what improvements need to be made.

More information on performance management is available on [Managers' Essentials](#).

Hybrid Working

Working Together Charters

Role and approach

The role of the charters are to:

- Help everyone think very broadly about the new way of working called 'hybrid working'.

- Set team direction

- Build on the experiences, enabling teams and individuals to set up for success

- Provide a common framework and narrative for all teams to be able to share and understand each other

- Support new starters to understand ways of working

- Ensure everyone is clear about how they work together

- Consider what the written and unwritten rules of working together are / might be in your new way of working

- Hold people to account

Considerations and preparation

**When drafting your charters, remember to consider:**

- Who in your team needs to be involved in decisions about ways of working? What levels of leadership need to be involved?

- How can you involve your Hybrid Working Champions?

- How will decisions about your team ways of working influence the student experience, other teams and the wider university?

- How can you make sure any changes don't impact on service delivery?

- When will you review the charter?

In advance of the meeting:

- Each member of the team **reflects on the year** and the learning of what has worked well and perhaps not quite so well.

- This is an opportunity to rethink how we work, jot down some notes on things you consider as **opportunities and challenges** for you as individuals, as part of the team and from manager / leader perspectives.

- For this, you should be **reflecting on your own working environment** and needs

- Bring your thoughts to the meeting **ready to share.**

Stages of reviewing and refreshing
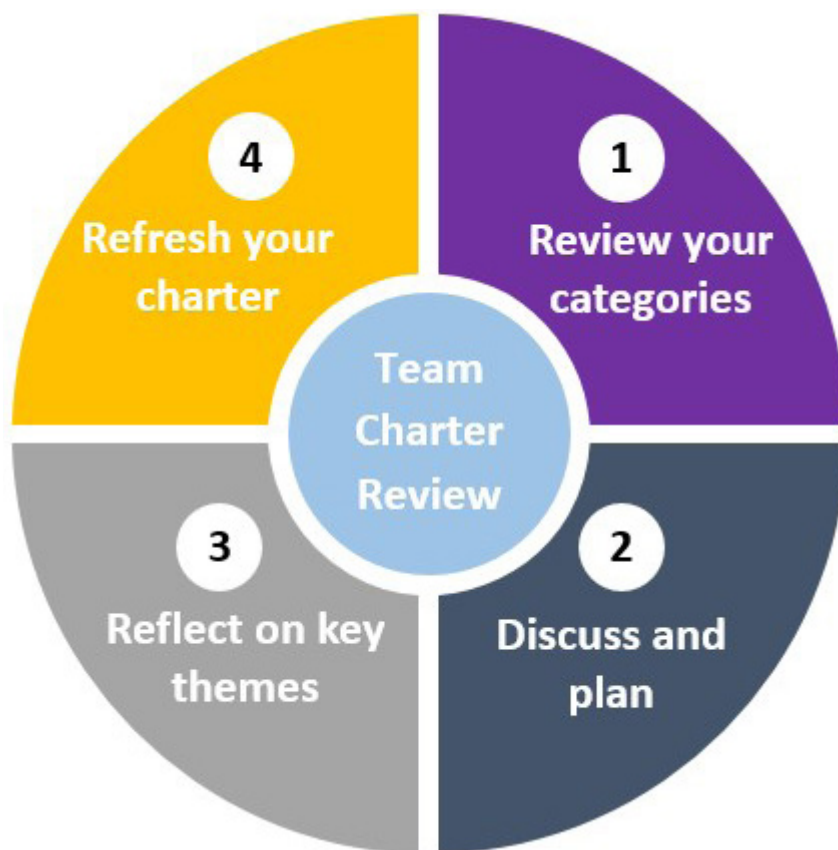
Our categories:

1. Campus-based
2. Predominantly campus-based
3. Hybrid

STAGE 1: Review your categories

- How do the refreshed categories impact your future ways of working?

- What worked well about the categories through the pilot? What has worked less well?

- Did you work in any other category / take a different approach?

- What categories have your team been working in during the pilot?

STAGE 2: Discuss and plan

Use some of these general prompts to support your conversations.

The team can be asked to undertake a personal reflection in advance of group discussions:

- How effective is our balance between working on campus and working remotely?

- How can we make sure we are balancing organisational needs and individual preferences?

- How are we aligning to Our People Our Values?

- What activities have worked well by being undertaken on campus?

- What challenges have we experienced?

- What has made a good day on campus during the pilot so far?

- What type of work has worked effectively, where?

- How do we need to do differently to improve our approach to hybrid way?

STAGE 3: Reflect on key themes

Wellbeing

- How has hybrid working supported our wellbeing?

- How has hybrid working detracted from our wellbeing?

- As a team, how can we ensure we work with wellbeing in mind when working hybrid?

Communication and collaboration (meaningful facetime)

- Whilst working in a hybrid way, how well have we communicated?

- How effectively have we shared information?

- How have we found hybrid meetings?

- What communication and collaboration challenges have we experienced? How can we address these?

- Have there been any situations in which we have not communicated or collaborated well

Ways of working

- How effectively are we using our working spaces?

- Are we achieving meaningful facetime as a team?

- What working practices might we still need to change?

- To what extent are we maintaining effective working relationships and new connections?

Technology

- What technologies have we used and how have they worked for us?

- What skills do we still need to develop?

- How can we use particular technologies to support hybrid work?

- How can we make sure we don't overuse technology?

Inclusion

- How inclusive are our team hybrid working practices? Is hybrid working in the same way for everyone?

- What potential or actual issues have we identified in relation to inclusion?

- To what extent are your meetings inclusive of everyone?

- What groups or members of staff may be experiencing the approach to hybrid differently to the majority?

Productivity

- How is hybrid working supporting our team to work productively?

- How can we continue to be productive as hybrid workers? How (if necessary) can we improve our productivity?

- What gets in the way of our productivity?

STAGE 4: Refresh your charter

You can choose to refresh your Team Chater either digitally or physically, either in a team meeting or asynchronously over a week as team members come into the office. Regardless of format, the exercise can be done either as an entire team exercise or initally in smaller groups initally with the creation of a final charter later.

Download

To complete the Charter exercise digitally, please [download the PowerPoint](). The exercise can then be completed online using screenshare.

To complete the Charter exercise physically, please [download the PDF]() and print onto A3 paper and cut out the cards for the six themes.

Instructions

- Add the names of your team and your teams work categories to the first line of the board.

- As a Team, collectively decide which cards are applicable to the team and which ones are not. You do not need to use all of the cards.

- You can enter your own Charter suggestions on the blank cards.

- If any cards have blank spaces in them, for example [.......to......], collectively decide the descriptors which best suit the team.

- Decide which cards will be placed in rows 2, 3 and 4 on the board until you have created your Team Charter.

- Finally, export the PowerPoint slide as an image or take a picture of your finished physical board to place on Teams and / or frame it for your office.