

HYBRID WORKING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the terms of Comic Relief's Hybrid Working model and the different implications for staff with hybrid or fully remote working arrangements.

SCOPE

This policy sets out what our policy is, how it can be applied and what this means for staff based in different locations.

This policy applies to all Comic Relief staff

APPROVALS & VERSION

Approved by:	Executive Leadership Team
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Owner:	Head of People & Culture
Executive Director sponsor:	Chief Operating Officer

RELATED POLICIES

Flexible Working Policy

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CONTENTS

1. THE POLICY OBJECTIVES	1
2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	2
3. FULLY REMOTE STAFF.....	3
4. INCLUDING EVERYONE	4
5. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	5

HYBRID WORKING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

1. THE POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. In developing this policy, we have worked hard to gather views from as many people as possible, to deliver something that retains the things we all value the most about working from home, gives us more of the things we miss and balances the flexibility of personal choice with operational imperatives.
- 1.2. We believe the proposed hybrid arrangement outlined in this policy gives staff flexibility. We can split and organise our time so we can continue to benefit from the things we love, while getting more of the things we miss. Also, the things we miss about being in the office are not going to be realised just by being in the office. They are about being in the office TOGETHER and we believe our proposed approach will enable this.
 - 1.2.a. We love that not having a daily commute gives us time for family, pets and cooking healthy lunches, gym classes, lunchtime walks with friends and partners, volunteer work etc. We love that we can concentrate without distractions at home and that for many of us, productivity has rocketed. We love being able to optimise our environment when working from home - such as noise or temperature - to maximise efficiency and performance.
 - 1.2.b. We miss the human interactions, superficial chats and banter, and the ability to feed off the energy of our colleagues. The impromptu conversations, fresh perspectives and the unexpected 'idea showers', and rapid decision making. The ability to learn from each other by osmosis, especially for newer or more junior staff, and how we could support each other when things were rough. The richness, spontaneity, energy, and creativity of in-person meetings. Collaboration, particularly cross-team collaboration as well as the connection and unity that characterises our culture. The socialising, laughter, the silliness, and the snacks!
- 1.3. This arrangement retains the flexibility that allows staff to control how we work, when we work and arrange our working days in a way that suits us. It means we all still operate in a high trust environment and keep the flexibility that accommodates diverse staff needs in an inclusive way.
 - 1.3.a. We love the flexibility to arrange the working day in a way that suits us. Whether an early bird, or someone who does their best thinking after a leisurely lunchtime walk, we can set our hours to reflect when we are most productive. We also love that the switch to remote working has led to higher levels of trust within our teams and from our managers. The flexibility also opens us up to other demographics who may have struggled with the



traditional work pattern, such as parents of young families or those with caring responsibilities.

- 1.4. The approach also empowers managers and the SMT to manage their teams in a way that is in the best interests of the team, while still having discretion to respond to individual needs.
 - 1.4.a. Some managers miss **being empowered to manage their teams in a way that is in the best interests of the collective** rather than the individual. These managers feel disempowered by the trial period of complete flexibility. Some of the benefits of asking staff to be in the office cannot be easily expressed as an 'operational reason'. Having clarity on expectations will enable managers to manage their teams in the most effective way for the whole team.
- 1.5. We can continue to benefit from the national talent pool and recruit staff from all over the country
 - 1.5.a. We love that we have been able to **recruit the best talent from all over the UK** - not just within the M25. It feels healthier to have a less London-centric workforce, with a greater diversity of voices, thought and experience.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1. Effective **4 April 2022**, we will implement a hybrid working model in which staff are typically in the office for a **minimum of 2 days per week**. As detailed above, we believe that this arrangement will allow staff to retain the high levels of flexibility they value, while ensuring that we can maximise the benefits of being in the office, rise to our culture challenges and come together around a new strategy with new ways of working.
- 2.2. This arrangement is built on trust and regular communication with managers. We completely appreciate that some weeks you might be in less because of circumstances, and managers can exercise some discretion and flexibility to accommodate your needs. But we expect most staff to roughly average 2 days per week, and to work with your manager around exceptions. The 2 days are a minimum and staff are free to come into the office more than this.
- 2.3. Managers are expected to be sensitive to individual needs and be inclusive, but they are authorised and empowered to fix at least one day per week as a team day. As so many of you fed back, the true value of being in the office materialises when we are there together, so we maximise the networking, learning and collaborative benefits of being in the office.
- 2.4. We won't be prescriptive about your exact hours, and you can break your 2 days across multiple half days, etc. You can fix your days for stability or flex some of your days as needed, or agree shorter office days offset by longer off-site days with your



manager. There also remains a myriad of other flexible working options that are available to you, such as compressed hours that you can consider.

- 2.5. There are some roles in the organisation that will require the postholder to be in the office more frequently, and these exceptions will be communicated directly to current staff affected and will be clear on the adverts for all applicable roles in the future.

3. FULLY REMOTE STAFF

- 3.1. We are keen to continue to benefit from talent across the UK and therefore will continue to recruit staff from around the country on fully remote arrangements. Not all roles are suitable for fully remote working, and this will be made clear at the point of advertising. Most roles will be advertised as being suitable for fully remote or hybrid working.

3.2. Current staff

- 3.2.a. All current staff will be subject to the hybrid working rules outlined above UNLESS they have signed a **Remote Working Agreement**. The Remote Working Agreement limits the need to come into the office at a staff member's own cost to 12 days per year. These days must be agreed in advance with the manager. If we require you to come in more than this, we will cover the cost. Where appropriate, accommodation will also be covered. Salaries of existing staff will be unaffected.
- 3.2.b. Staff that were based a significant distance outside of London at point of hire are automatically eligible for a **Remote Working Agreement**. Eligible staff that do not have this agreement already must contact their HR Business Partner (HRBP) who will issue this agreement.
- 3.2.c. Staff that moved away during the pandemic, and no longer live within a reasonable commuting distance of London, will need to submit a [Flexible Working Request](#) to their manager. Approval is not guaranteed, and the operational imperative comes first, but we are committed to flexibility and will endeavor to accommodate our existing staff who have or are considering relocation out of London wherever possible.
- 3.2.d. There is no fixed threshold by which we can define what a 'reasonable commuting distance' or 'significant distance' means in practice. When making the decision the manager, the HRBP and the staff member will have a discussion about the following:
 - The nature of the role
 - The length and cost of the commute
 - The personal circumstances of the individual
 - Previous performance (if applicable).



3.3. **New staff**

- 3.3.a. From 4 April onwards, newly appointed staff will either be issued a standard contract or offered a **Remote Working Contract**. Some may be offered a choice but whether this is the case will be determined by location at the point of hire - we anticipate that most will naturally fall into one group or the other.
- 3.3.b. If you are contracted under a **Remote Working Contract** you will be exempt for the need to come into the office and your contractual work location will be 'home-based'. We will cover any travel (and hotels if required) if we require you to attend the office at all. Your salary will be benchmarked to your locations (not London).
- 3.3.c. All staff retain the right to submit Flexible Working Requests.

4. INCLUDING EVERYONE

- 4.1. A key area of concern was that much of the infrastructure and knowledge needed to be truly inclusive to a hybrid work force is not yet in place. We are committed to rolling out the right technology designed for hybrid working and all staff will be trained on how to use this, to ensure staff can contribute and engage wherever they are based or working from on any given day. Wherever possible, a member of the Internal Systems Team will be onsite every day to ensure assistance is on hand if urgently needed.
- 4.2. All meeting rooms that accommodate more than 4 people will be set up with the full audio-visual set up required for Zoom meetings by 4 April 2022, and we will have purchased an online whiteboard to enable easier virtual collaboration in a consistent way across the organisation.
- 4.3. The tentative training timeline is below - much of this will be incorporated in the induction for new joiners.

TRAINING	TIMELINE	DESCRIPTION
Zoom 101	April	Mandatory 20-minute training for all staff, to understand the basics of running or attending a Zoom meeting. This will include things like managing your backdrop, playing music, recording video and transcripts, using breakout rooms and running polls. Developed and delivered by Zoom.
Virtual Tools	May	Mandatory 20-minute training for all staff on how to collaborate using virtual tools. This will include the online whiteboard using Microsoft office online.
Office Kit	April	Two 10-minute briefings on how to use the audio visual equipment in the meeting rooms - using them for hybrid meetings, plugging in kit, delivering



TRAINING	TIMELINE	DESCRIPTION
		presentations - will take place each week throughout April and all staff must attend at least one session.
Webinar Training - How to deliver an online presentation or training	April - August	This optional training is delivered by Zoom and one session a month will be scheduled until August. It is highly recommended for any staff member whose role requires them to deliver presentations and will be a great learning opportunity for staff who feel less confident in this area.
How to run an effective Zoom Meeting	May - June	Mandatory E-learning, to be hosted on our learning management system (Skillcast)
Box 101	July - August	Mandatory 20-minute training for all staff on how to get the most out of Box - naming and filing protocols, where to find info on Staff Room, online collaboration, changing permissions.
Expert Facilitation		External training -to be sourced in due course An in-depth training for a group of individuals who will be the organisations' expert facilitators, that others in the organisation can call upon for complex, sensitive, or large meetings.

4.4. In addition, there is a [Hybrid toolkit](#) in Box filled with useful resources on how to run an effective hybrid meeting, managing hybrid teams and more. There are also many [helpful websites](#) and open resources available on this subject. All staff and managers are expected to take responsibility for making hybrid working successful, and equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to do so.

5. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

5.1. **Will there be fixed team days or days where all staff are expected to be in the office?**

Managers, in discussion with the Heads of Department where appropriate, have the discretion to set weekly or monthly Team Days when the entire team will be expected to be in the office.

Executive Directors will also have regular (monthly/every 6 weeks) Directorate Days - we will endeavour to set the dates for these at least 3 months in advance so staff can plan. These will not necessarily relate to a collaborative project or activity but are aimed at team building and being in the office together.



We will also have quarterly 'All-staff Days' when all staff will be in the office. The dates for these will normally be shared at the start of the financial year, and the cost for those staff on **Remote Working Contracts** will be compensated for travel costs. Staff on **standard contracts with a Remote Working Agreement** can use some of their 12 days for this.

5.2. **What are the different pay arrangements for staff on different contracts?**

All staff (current and new) who are based within a commutable distance of London are paid a salary benchmarked to London, and expected to come in twice a week on average.

Current staff (hired before 4 April 2022) and who are located outside of a commutable distance from London (either at point of hire or as a result of moving away) require a **Remote Working Agreement**. They will continue to receive the London-benchmarked salary and will be expected to come into the office at least 12 times per year at their own cost, on dates agreed in advance with their manager.

New staff (hired after 4 April 2022) who are located outside of a commutable distance from London at the point of hire will receive a **Remote Working Contract** and any travel into the office will be paid for by us. They will receive a salary benchmarked to their local area.

5.3. **How can we ensure we make the most of time together in the office?**

No one wants to come into the office to sit on Zoom calls all day - how we use the office matters and we must optimise our in person working hours by thinking hard about how we want to use our time when we are there. There are no hard and fast rules, and we will all learn together what works best and develop best practice off the back of our growing experience.

There will inevitably be times when you are required to spend more time than you like on Zoom calls, but staff and managers should think strategically about team and/or cross-team innovation, strategy or other activities that work better in person, and schedule these to coincide with days in the office. Some things we have already learned include:

- Team Days are naturally the time for team meetings, and it may be worth coinciding your team's day with that of a team you work closely with.
- Activities which require creative thinking, and idea showers, are better in person, whereas information sharing can be done just as effectively on Zoom.



- Larger non-routine meetings often work better in person, and new joiners benefit from face-to-face time in their early weeks, and the office provides opportunities to support and mentor newer members of staff. On the job learning happens more effectively in person.

However, it is also worth remembering that much of the value of being in the office is the joy of unplanned interactions, the impromptu conversations, the unexpected idea showers, and rapid decision making. There is value in just being with colleagues, building relationships and trust, having fun and feeding off each other's energy - a day in the office without any specific activity planned is not necessarily a day wasted!

5.4. **Hybrid Etiquette**

All staff must ensure there is a photograph on their Workplace profile, Slack profile and Zoom profile so that everyone, remote or in the office, can put a face to a name. There is an expectation that cameras will be on for Zoom calls. If your Wi-Fi is not up to it, you are expected to upgrade it or come into the office. The exceptions to this are large meetings where the majority of staff are passive recipients of information (such as the All Staff). Meeting organisers will be able to specify if a meeting can be without cameras, but the default expectation is cameras on.

All staff must state on their Outlook calendar which days they will be in the office so colleagues know. This can be done easily through an all-day appointment, marked as '[Name] - Office', but please ensure you book this as "free" in outlook so that it doesn't block out your diary and prevent anyone from scheduling meetings.

All meeting invitations - in person, hybrid or virtual - must include a description of the meeting and an agenda. Ideally, notes and action points following the meeting should be shared with everyone, but at the very least with those unable to attend. Guides and templates are being developed and will be rolled out prior to 4 April 2022. As more staff work flexibly, we all need to be able to make informed decisions about which meetings we attend and be able to receive the relevant information from the ones we do not.

While we hope to prioritise time on the office, it is inevitable that we will have to attend some Zoom meetings while in the office. In order to minimise the disturbance to our colleagues:

- If other meeting attendees are in the office on the same day, the expectation is that a meeting room will be booked.
- If possible, find a table in the social space or one of the collaboration spaces to avoid disturbing your colleagues.



- Headphones must always be worn when on Zoom on your laptops - these are available from Facilities.

5.5. Will we still be using Robin to book desks?

You are no longer be required to book desks through Robin. The Directorate neighbourhoods remain in place for Team Days etc. but staff are free to sit wherever they wish.

If you require special equipment or have specific requirements which make hot-desking unsuitable please contact [Facilities](#) who will allocate you a fixed desk if appropriate. We may require you to attend an Occupational Health assessment to ensure we are meeting your needs in the best way.

5.6. Will any COVID restrictions remain in place?

You are no longer be required to complete lateral flow tests in advance of coming to the office. You will also no longer be required to wear masks in communal areas, but the building still requires us to wear masks in reception, toilets and the lifts. You are expected to be sensible, respectful of different comfort levels and to accommodate your colleagues' requests where possible. Hand sanitiser and surface wipes will remain available throughout the office. We will continue to monitor and comply with Government guidance.

We recommend that you do not come into the office if unwell, with COVID related symptoms or a virus of any kind, or if you test positive for COVID but do not have any symptoms. You should notify Facilities if you test positive for COVID within 10 days of being in the office. Facilities will endeavour to notify anyone who was in the office on the same days (using the building's security data).

5.7. Will we still receive the working from home allowance?

No, as the office is now open and staff can come in whenever they like, we will no longer be paying this allowance, which was in place to compensate staff for unexpected costs arising from enforced home working.

5.8. When will these arrangements be reviewed?

We will continually review attendance data (at a team and individual level) and collect staff feedback through pulse surveys. We asked a number of questions in the survey at the start of this process so we have an indication of what staff and



Hybrid Working policy

leadership are hoping that hybrid working will deliver and we will develop indicators based on this.

If the desired benefits of this approach are not materialising as envisaged, we may change our approach.