

# AGILE WORKING TOOLKIT

A GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICE ON IMPLEMENTING  
AGILE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS



# AGILE WORKING TOOLKIT

Build UK members asked us to help them understand and share best practice on implementing more Agile Working arrangements. There is a need, and strong desire, for employers to attract the next generation of construction workers and to improve staff recruitment and retention.

We have collated the best tips and tools from employers and government, making it easy for businesses of all shapes and sizes to introduce different working arrangements.

By sharing information, learning what works well (and avoiding what doesn't work so well!) the industry has a much better chance of recruiting and retaining the very best people now and in the future.

If you have any useful tips let us know at [info@BuildUK.org](mailto:info@BuildUK.org) as we would love to share your experiences across construction.

## Acknowledgements

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## The business case for Agile Working

Very simply the construction industry needs to recruit, train and retain more people and is in a war for talent with every other UK business sector.

Both men and women are seeking more flexibility in the work place and the benefits for employers are huge.

Clients and employers are looking for a more diverse and productive workforce and, when done properly, implementing Agile Working arrangements can help to achieve this.

## Why do people want Agile Working?



## Why should employers consider Agile Working?





## What is Agile Working?



Agile Working is an **INFORMAL** arrangement that enables a better work-life balance. It tends to be used for short term changes to normal working patterns, sometimes just for a one-off event, and is not the same as Flexible working which is enshrined in legislation.

Agile Working does not require changes to an individual's terms and conditions and is likely to vary across different teams, roles and projects.

Introducing Agile Working is optional and at the employer's discretion taking commitments to programmes, budgets and health & safety into consideration.

**Find out if you should consider introducing Agile Working >**

**Read case studies of Agile Working in practice >**

**View a sample Agile Working policy of how to run a team discussion on Agile Working >**

**Flexible working** is enshrined in legislation and covers a range of **FORMAL PERMANENT** arrangements, such as part time working, job-sharing, split shifts or compressed hours which are set out in an individual's terms and conditions of employment. The construction industry would benefit from considering and adopting more flexible ways of working.

Employees can make a statutory request to work flexibly if they meet certain criteria.

Employers may wish to consider allowing those who don't have the statutory right to request flexible working.

**View examples of flexible working along with its benefits and some helpful tips >**

**Visit ACAS for the latest information on rights and responsibilities in respect of flexible working >**

## Should you introduce Agile Working?

### Ask yourself the following questions

- ▶ Do you struggle to recruit and retain staff?
- ▶ Do you know why people leave your business?
- ▶ What working arrangements would existing staff like to see?
- ▶ How do you currently deal with flexible working requests? And how does that work across the business?
- ▶ Do you currently offer Agile Working on an ad hoc basis? What has worked well and what hasn't?
- ▶ Would it benefit you and your staff to introduce an Agile Working policy?

### If you think Agile Working would work within your business, this toolkit is for you

- ▶ Read the toolkit
- ▶ Set out your policy
- ▶ Discuss with your team
- ▶ Trial Agile Working
- ▶ Review what works and what doesn't
- ▶ Implement your policy
- ▶ Keep it under review

## Case Studies

1

### Kents Hill Campus – Special Educational Needs School, Milton Keynes

#### **A Construction Manager from Willmott Dixon, told us about working life at Kents Hill:**

“Regarding the management of working hours on site, we try to remain as flexible as possible to ensure that we can create a positive work life balance. On the first day induction on site, the team discussed together what Agile Working provisions would be helpful. We then agreed the following arrangements on site which enable all team members to fit some of their individual circumstances around site hours without having a negative effect on the site progress.

- ▶ Arriving up until 9am to allow for the drop off of children.
- ▶ Leaving early to allow for the collection of children.
- ▶ Leaving early to allow for children’s classes and hobbies.
- ▶ Working from the office on Fridays for those who travel excessive distances.
- ▶ Opening and closing the site is operated by the most local manager, to allow long travellers to leave a bit earlier to miss the traffic/we sometimes operate a schedule if we all travel.
- ▶ Managers who work on the weekend will get a day off (of their choice) in lieu the following week.
- ▶ Gym sessions every Friday for all and we have negotiated reduced rates at a local gym located next to the site.

The arrangements have now been in place since April 2016 and are working well”.

## Case Studies

### 2

### Birkett House – Special Educational Needs School, Wigston, Leicestershire

**A Build Manager from Willmott Dixon said that:**

“The decision to implement Agile Working was taken by the build team as a collective. This was only possible once discussions were had with our customer and on site neighbours. The site location was away from the immediate vicinity of houses and there were no local planning restrictions regarding weekday working hours.

Due to the location of the project and the congestion getting to and from the motorway network we moved the whole working day from 7am to 4pm as we had no restrictions on site start time. This allowed the team and our supply chain partners to get to site around 6.45am and start working at 7am, and for the team to work around when children needed to be dropped off and collected from school.

All team members who have children were allowed to go to their children’s sports day, and, in the spirit of give and take, this was re-paid with working a late night. When we were required to work late the team split the late nights up and the person working late was allowed to come in at 10am. Any weekend working was rewarded with a day in lieu.

An example of a one-off arrangement was when Leicester City won the Premier League. Two team members, who were fans, left early to join the parade around Leicester in exchange for working the weekend.

This project was completed three weeks ahead of schedule and defect free at handover, thus supporting the case for agile, collaborative working.”



# SAMPLE - Agile Working policy

An Agile Working policy is not essential but it may be helpful to provide clarity and consistency for everyone.

## Introduction

<<Insert Employer>> has made available a range of informal Agile Working options to help employees maintain a good work-life balance and work flexibly to get their job done. Agile Working options are made available to all employees on the understanding that they work around our business needs.

An employee wishing to vary their hours, pattern or place of work on an ongoing basis should make a request under <<Insert Employer>> Flexible Working Policy. It should be noted that not every role will be suitable for all types of Agile Working and approval of informal Agile Working requests are subject to operational requirements.

## Agile Working options

Informal Agile Working options can include, but are not limited to the following:

- ▶ Working away from your usual desk or another office location, for example to coincide with a meeting/s elsewhere
- ▶ Working from home either side of a medical appointment, child's school play/sports day (thereby avoiding having to take leave)
- ▶ Flexible start/finish times (earlier/later) to enable:
  - ▶ School drop offs/pick-ups/activities
  - ▶ Medical appointment attendance without taking leave
  - ▶ Receipt of home deliveries
- ▶ Lunchbreaks being taken flexibly to enable an employee to accommodate a personal commitment

- ▶ Working at home on an ad hoc basis for report writing/report reading etc. in order to increase productivity and efficiency
- ▶ Working from home in response to public transport strikes and extreme weather conditions

## Principles of operation

Employees must ensure that any Agile Working is agreed in advance with their manager. The following principles will apply:

- ▶ **Health and safety** must not be compromised
- ▶ **Performance levels** must be maintained
- ▶ The arrangements should be **cost neutral**
- ▶ **Effective communication** arrangements must be in place
- ▶ **Appropriate staffing levels** must be maintained
- ▶ Other **team members** should not be adversely affected

# Running a team discussion

Individual requests for Agile Working may impact upon others in the team, so do make sure that you involve everyone that may be affected. This should help everyone understand what you are doing and why.

### Key objectives

To discuss and raise awareness of Agile Working and how it can be supported in the team.

To agree an action plan to trial Agile Working ahead of implementing it in the long term.

### Time/resource needed

- ▶ Up to two hours
- ▶ Flip chart to capture key points
- ▶ A handout with the questions to consider

### Summary of activity

A group discussion with your team about what agile working is already accommodated and consider ways it could be extended.

Divide the participants into smaller groups as required:

- ▶ Explain what Agile Working is, and how it differs from flexible working.
- ▶ Set out why you are thinking of introducing it (use the answers you gave under should you introduce Agile Working?)

- ▶ Set out any constraints e.g.:
  - ▶ **Health and safety** must not be compromised
  - ▶ **Performance levels** must be maintained
  - ▶ The arrangements should be **cost neutral**
  - ▶ **Effective communication** arrangements must be in place
  - ▶ **Appropriate staffing** levels must be maintained
  - ▶ Other **team members** should not be adversely affected
  - ▶ Ask the groups to discuss their thoughts on the questions on the next page

## Running a team discussion

### Questions to consider

- ▶ What do individuals want in terms of Agile Working?
- ▶ How Agile is the team already?
- ▶ Do individuals have flexibility to work from different locations? How regular is this?
- ▶ Do individuals have flexibility to work from home? Does it cause any problems?
- ▶ How feasible is it for individuals to vary their start and finish time each day?
- ▶ Can individuals attend reasonable medical appointments when required?
- ▶ Can individuals attend events related to their children and/or dependants, or to attend a religious event or accommodate an interest or hobby outside of work?
- ▶ To what extent do individuals feel they could request some flexibility in their hours – whether on an ad hoc or permanent basis?
- ▶ How can this be accommodated?
- ▶ What is stopping your team/project from having more formal types of flexible working in place? What changes could be made to accommodate this?



### Tips

- ▶ Different people may want different things, so be prepared!
- ▶ Outline what will or will not be considered as Agile Working in different working environments to manage expectations.
- ▶ Consider ‘core’ times, when you need everyone to be present in the team for meetings and/or handovers e.g. everyone to be on site between 10am – 2pm.
- ▶ Focus on outputs, solutions and impacts on the business, individual projects and fellow workers, rather than the actual time spent on site or in the office.
- ▶ Think about how technology and processes could be adapted to aid Agile Working Utilise IT systems to full effect where you can e.g. intranet, Skype etc. to connect people who are off site for meetings.
- ▶ Prepare to challenge the status quo ‘this is the way it’s always been done’, e.g. team briefings are often organised early in the day – is that necessary? Could they be recorded or held at a different time of day?
- ▶ Prepare for people’s perceptions that working from home is “skiving” or “not fair” and others have to work harder to cover/maintain performance levels.
- ▶ Consider how any changes in working practices can be communicated.
- ▶ Start with some ‘quick wins’ or small changes and trial them.
- ▶ Be prepared to incorporate feedback and tweak things along the way.

### Conclusion

- ▶ Ask each group to feedback to the rest of the team
- ▶ Discuss and agree what actions could be taken to introduce Agile Working in the team
- ▶ Agree a plan to extend which may be on a trial basis
- ▶ Confirm how the plan will be implemented and reviewed

### Review

After an agreed trial period ensure that you meet again to review what worked, what did not go so well and what could be improved upon.

The agreed outcome should then be shared to help with the implementation of consistent Agile Working arrangements across the organisation.

## Typical Flexible Working Practices

The table below sets out different types of formal flexible working and the potential benefits to both businesses and individuals. It also includes some points you may wish to consider and some helpful solutions and tips.

Flexible Working Type	Potential Benefits	Considerations	Solutions and Tips
<p><b>Part time working</b> Where an individual is contracted to work less than typical full-time hours</p>	<p>May suit working parents or carers, or those approaching retirement who want to 'scale down' – aiding retention of skills and experience</p>	<p>Where there is a reduction in hours, consider how there can be continuity of service over the remainder of the week and where the shortfall in hours/duties will be picked up</p>	<p>A job share arrangement can be an effective way of combining part time work</p> <p>Other duties/hours may be incorporated into the job roles of others enabling opportunities for cross and/or upskilling</p> <p>Include on email signatures the hours that an individual works and who to contact in their absence to help ensure a seamless service to clients</p>
<p><b>Job share/job split</b> Where two or more people share or split the duties of a full-time job</p> <p>Whilst rarely used in the construction industry at the moment, this is popular in other industries</p>	<p>Useful as a way of combining part time working</p> <p>If one job sharer is absent, the other can carry on with at least half the work, and sometimes job sharers provide cover for each other's holiday</p> <p>Job share can be more effective for contractors because it avoids overtime as a default, keeping costs down</p> <p>A wider range of skills, experience, views and ideas can be available</p>	<p>Good communication between job sharers is key to this working successfully</p> <p>Consider how line management will work when job sharers have people management responsibilities</p>	<p>Introduce a checklist for enabling a comprehensive handover, particularly for site-based roles. See Appendix 6</p> <p>Ensure that the contact details of job share partners are detailed in out of office email communications</p>



## AGILE WORKING TOOLKIT

Flexible Working Type	Potential Benefits	Considerations	Solutions and Tips
<p><b>Phased or flexible retirement</b> For those approaching retirement who may want to “scale down” their work</p>	<p>Can aid retention of skills and experience for longer</p>		<p>Offering a part-time arrangement, or a different role, may assist in retaining older people for longer</p>
<p><b>Term-time working</b> Where hours are reduced or time taken off, usually unpaid, during school holidays</p>	<p>Annual leave outside of school holidays is not normally permitted, so can mean it is easier to plan for over the year</p>		<p>The employment of individuals in full time education e.g. university students, who are only able to work during the school holiday periods may complement term-time working</p> <p>Salaries for term-time employees could be paid in 12 equal monthly instalments for administrative ease</p>
<p><b>Condensed/compressed hours</b> Where people work their usual hours in fewer days, by starting early and/or finishing late</p>	<p>Can enable individuals to have a longer weekend/more time away from work in one block</p>	<p>Be mindful of health and safety considerations of longer daily work periods</p>	<p>Consider this arrangement over multiple working weeks rather than one</p>
<p><b>Staggered start times (incl. shift work)</b> Where people start and leave work at different times but have large periods of overlap</p> <p>Shift work is a pattern of work in which one employee replaces another doing the same job within a period of time, e.g. 24-hour period</p>	<p>Can reduce costs by taking advantage of cheaper off-peak electricity</p>		<p>Whilst 24-hour shifts are unlikely to work on a construction site, staggered start times, may work i.e. a shift starting at 8am and then one at 10am</p> <p>Consider whether Team Briefings can be recorded to enable people starting later to watch them, and whether Toolbox talks or other activities can be recorded, repeated, or scheduled for a time of day when everyone is present</p>

## AGILE WORKING TOOLKIT

Flexible Working Type	Potential Benefits	Considerations	Solutions and Tips
<p><b>Homeworking</b> Work is mainly performed at home but could also be on an ad hoc basis</p>	<p>May be an effective way for individuals to undertake work with minimal distraction, aiding productivity</p> <p>Reduction in need for office space</p> <p>Savings in relation to travel time and cost</p> <p>Positive environmental and sustainability impact</p>	<p>If undertaken regularly will require a suitably equipped workspace to ensure appropriate health and safety</p> <p>Consider communication links with others</p>	<p>Utilise IT systems to full effect. Use Skype, Facetime or other video conference calling services to connect with home workers</p>
<p><b>Mobile working and hot desking</b> Mobile working is where people may have a permanent base, but spend some of their time in other locations – home, customer, construction sites or office locations</p> <p>Hot desking refers to permanent workstations that are used by different people as and when required</p>	<p>As for Homeworking</p>	<p>Consider communication with others and team work</p> <p>Need to ensure that workstations are appropriate which may be difficult where no permanent base exists</p>	<p>Implement a hot desking booking system where there are lots of people undertaking these types of arrangements</p>
<p><b>Annualised hours</b> Where the total number of hours to be worked over the year is fixed but there is flexibility over the daily and weekly working patterns.</p> <p>The times worked may be split into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set shifts which cover the majority of the year; and Unallocated shifts which the individual may be asked to work at short notice to cover for colleagues or to cope with a peak in demand</li> </ul>	<p>Can aid in maximising productivity via flexibility to cover peaks in workload</p>	<p>Consider how hours worked will be monitored</p>	<p>Use a spreadsheet to log and track hours worked</p>

## AGILE WORKING TOOLKIT

Flexible Working Type	Potential Benefits	Considerations	Solutions and Tips
<p><b>Flexitime</b> Where there is typically a core period of the day when people are expected to be at work. The rest of the time is 'flexi-time' where they can choose when they work, as long as they meet the daily, weekly or monthly hours</p> <p>Some more formal flexi-time arrangements allow hours to be banked and taken off at a later date</p>	<p>Ensuring that core hours are in place will mean customers' needs can be responded to and meetings more easily scheduled</p>	<p>The administration of more formal schemes can be cumbersome</p> <p>If operating a scheme where hours are banked be mindful of how this is recorded and of lots of hours building up</p>	<p>Schedule meetings during core working hours to ensure optimum attendance</p>
<p><b>Zero hours</b> Where there is a contract in which the employer is not obliged to provide work, and the worker is not obliged to accept any hours of work that are offered to them</p>	<p>Can provide flexibility to meet a temporary or changeable workload</p> <p>May suit some people who want occasional earnings and are able to be entirely flexible about when they work</p>	<p>Zero hours contracts have had some bad press whereby contracts have been misused by employers, or be perceived to be misused due to the lack of any guaranteed working hours</p> <p>Workers do not have the same level of employee rights as employees</p>	
<p><b>Casual Employment</b> As above, but with the obligation to provide and accept work</p>	<p>Can provide flexibility to meet a temporary or changeable workload</p> <p>May suit some people who want occasional earnings and are able to be entirely flexible about when they work</p>	<p>Individuals are employees and so have employment rights (e.g. to maternity/redundancy).</p>	

## Additional resources

### ACAS

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) >

**Advisory booklet – Flexible working  
and work-life balance >**

### CIPD

**Information on flexible working >**

## Agile Working Guidance

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