

<b>Title of report</b>	Agile Working Policy Update
<b>Public/Confidential</b>	Public
<b>Summary/purpose of report</b>	This report provides learning from the past year of agile working at the SSSC, proposed updates to the Agile Working Policy based on this learning and sets out further recommendations regarding training and support to make sure that the Agile Working Policy is implemented and managed effectively to support both business and employee needs effectively.
<b>Recommendations</b>	The Council is asked to approve <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the updated policy and</li> <li>2. endorse the further recommendations to support implementation as outlined in this report.</li> </ol>
<b>Author</b>	Lucy Finn, Head of Human Resources
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Laura Lamb, Acting Director, Workforce, Education and Standards
<b>Link to Strategic Plan</b>	The information in this report links to: Outcome 1: <b>Trusted</b> People who use services are protected by a workforce that is fit to practise. Outcome 2: <b>Skilled</b> Our work supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice. Outcome 3: <b>Confident</b> Our work enhances the confidence, competence and wellbeing of the workforce. Outcome 4: <b>Valued</b> The social work, social care and children and young people workforce is valued for the difference it makes to people’s lives.
<b>Link to Risk Register</b>	Risk 5: We fail to develop and support SSSC staff appropriately to ensure we have a motivated and skilled workforce or have insufficient staff resources to achieve our strategic outcomes.

<p><b>Impact assessments</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was not required.</li> <li>2. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) was not required.</li> <li>3. A Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) was not required.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Documents attached</b></p>	<p>Appendix 1: Staff Survey Feedback  Appendix 2: Staff Conference Feedback  Appendix 3: Agile Working Policy</p>

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The Agile Working Policy was approved by Council in August 2022 with an early review date set for August 2023.
2. Agile working is a new way of working for the organisation and different to the homeworking implemented during the COVID 19 pandemic. The early review is in recognition of this, allowing Council Members to appraise how the policy is working in practice and any recommended changes to the policy based on this.
3. This report contains the following:
4. Learning from the past year of agile working at the SSSC using the following information:
  - feedback from the staff survey
  - output from the staff conference
  - feedback from discussions with managers regarding managing teams in an agile working environment
  - review of organisation performance indicators
  - recruitment and retention data.
5. Updates to the Agile Working Policy based on this learning.
6. Further recommendations regarding training and support to make sure that the Agile Working Policy is implemented and managed effectively to support both business and employee needs effectively.

## **LEARNING FROM THE PAST YEAR**

7. As noted, the Agile Working Policy has been in operation since August 2022. We have sought feedback on how the policy works in practice for both staff and managers over that time in various ways and have monitored any impact on the organisational performance and profile of the workforce.

### **Feedback from the staff survey**

8. There were six questions in the staff survey that related to agile working. The responses for these are attached at Appendix 1.
9. Feedback on staff experience of agile working is positive. Staff responses ranged from 62% to 93% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each of the statements posed and less than 10% of staff disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with any of the statements.
10. The highest scoring statement was 'I have good access to my manager while agile working' with the lowest being 'agile working allows me to understand the organisation's culture'.

### **Output from the staff conference**

11. The purpose of the conference was to:
  - create space for colleagues to reconnect and form a sense of belonging
  - help cement SSSC's culture against a backdrop of the new agile way of working
  - encourage colleagues to consider how each of them have a vital role to play in maintaining a strong culture, connection and a sense of team and belonging when working in an agile way
  - explore new ideas to be a top performing agile organisation where everyone thrives.
12. As part of the discussion on the day, staff were encouraged to consider: 'one thing they would commit to doing in the next three months, which will help us all maintain a sense of community and connection in our new working agile environment?'
13. The suggestions are captured in Appendix 2.

### **Feedback from discussions with managers**

14. HR has been supporting managers with any issues they have encountered managing staff in an agile way. In addition, we delivered 'having difficult conversations' training for managers which included significant discussion and input regarding managing staff in an agile environment.
15. Some of the issues addressed were:
  - team members not turning their camera on in meetings
  - difficulties in setting expectations regarding office attendance
  - understanding of whether managers could insist on office attendance.

### **Review of organisation performance indicators**

16. Our absence rates have remained relatively stable and we have not experienced an increase in absences which are work related or linked to agile ways of working. Our short-term absence remains low as staff are more able to manage symptoms effectively at home and we have positive examples of being able to support staff to return to work more flexibly due to our agile approach.
17. Turnover has increased as is the case for all employers post COVID. We have benchmarked and are performing within the comparisons for public sector employers. We have a particular challenge in the Fitness to Practise department, but this is not related to agile working. Agile working has been a mitigating factor allowing us to widen our pool of candidates and we are addressing the staff turnover in this area through different measures.
18. The overall performance of the organisation, and our key performance indicators, have been monitored and considered at each Audit and Assurance Committee. Performance has been good and for the majority of

indicators there has been an improvement and a year-end position within target range. No negative impacts associated with agile working have been identified.

#### **Recruitment and retention data**

19. Our agile offer has proved a positive benefit when competing in a difficult job market and has made it easier for us to fill some hard to fill vacancies – such as digital, solicitor and analyst roles. Since July 2022 we have recruited 27 new employees from outside the Dundee/Angus area, a higher number than we would have been able to attract prior to offering agile working. Approximately 35% of our current workforce is from out with the local postcode area.

### **UPDATES TO THE AGILE WORKING POLICY**

20. We have taken the learning from the past year and made the following changes to the policy based on these:
  - Procedure – 6.1 working hours and keeping in touch  
Additional bullet added to give clarity on what will be considered fair notice for office attendance. This also outlines that it is an employee's responsibility to make any necessary arrangements to allow them to attend an office.
  - Procedure - 6.8 meetings  
Additional requirement for employees to have their camera and audio turned on during Teams meetings.
21. The changes are minimal and are mainly concerned with tightening up areas of the policy to give clarity rather than adding anything new.

### **FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

22. As well as updating the policy for clarity we recommend the following is implemented to make sure that agile working continues to work effectively for employees and the organisation:

#### **Staff survey**

23. We ask the same questions in future staff surveys regarding agile working to make sure that we capture any trends or issues arising and take action as appropriate.

#### **Staff conference**

24. Managers are encouraged to speak to their teams regarding the commitments made at the conference and how they can support them to put them into practice. As well as being actively encouraged to take forward these commitments organisational support will be provided to help staff feel connected and understand the organisational culture. For

example, our Organisational Development and Strategic Communication departments have committed within the people strategy delivery plan to support staff to create virtual and professional networks and communities of practice.

#### **Management support**

25. We will build in additional training and support on agile working as appropriate – for example in our 'Managing the SSSC Way' managers training, induction for both managers and staff and during HR team inputs – such as targeted training on managing performance. Specific support for managers has been included within the people strategy delivery plan.

### **CONSULTATION**

26. We have conducted internal consultation with the Operational Management Team, Executive Management Team and Partnership Forum. The Short Life Working Group has also reviewed the changes and provided feedback.

### **RISKS**

27. The Agile Working Policy improves our recruitment offer in terms of offering good flexibility and giving us the ability to attract candidates from a wider geographical location.
28. The Agile Working Policy informs managers and employees of their rights and obligations. By having clear policies in place we minimise the risks associated with operating in an agile working environment.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Resourcing**

29. The Agile Working Policy considers the employment, health and safety and legal implications regarding agile working. This policy does not amend the contractual terms and conditions of employees.

#### **Compliance**

30. The provision of advice, support and guidance to implement this policy will not materially change and can be met from within existing resource. The Agile Working Policy complies with our legal obligations. The revised policy will come into effect on the date of approval by Council. There are no significant or immediate implications for staff that need to be considered at implementation.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

### **Equalities**

31. We developed an EIA for the Agile Working Policy when it was first written in August 2022. The changes recommended to the policy do not require an additional EIA to be undertaken.

## **CONCLUSION**

32. The Council is asked to approve the changes to the Agile Working Policy and endorse the further recommendations to support implementation as outlined in this report.