

Our Group Inclusion Commitments

Hybrid working principles and manager toolkit

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Our Group Inclusion Commitments are minimum standards for Spirax Group. Where current practice or local law go further than these standards, the greater benefit should always continue to apply.





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Introduction

The world has changed and how we work has changed too. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many of us (but not all of us) to work away from the office. In some respects, that had advantages in terms of flexibility and better balancing life at home and work, but sometimes it created a challenge in communicating and collaborating with colleagues and managing different aspects of work and home life in the same space.

We have learnt a huge amount from the forced adaptations to our working patterns, but this is no longer about mitigating the risk of COVID. Instead, this represents a desired and permanent shift in the way we will work now and in the future and is a change that we, as a Group Executive Committee, fully support.

We have deliberately not set 'rules' on what hybrid looks like because we respect that personal situations are unique. However, to protect the culture and the impact on our organisation, there are elements of a hybrid working arrangement that require our collective consideration.

This document sets out to give managers some helpful guidance on how to navigate discussions about hybrid working and offers tips for managing hybrid teams in a way that is fully inclusive and allows everyone to do their best work.



Jim Devine
Group HR Director
Spirax Group



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Our Group Inclusion Commitment – hybrid principles

We're enabling our hybrid workforce to be at their best wherever and whenever they are working – so we dress for our day, we work where we are at our best and most productive for the task in hand, and we keep in touch and actively include each other.

What we believe

We believe that hybrid working benefits our colleagues and our business. We recognise that it will not be possible for all roles to work in this way, but we will seek to enable hybrid working wherever possible.

We trust our teams to do the right thing

We trust our teams to do the right thing for our business and our colleagues. We will not set a pattern for hybrid working; instead, it will be agreed on an individual basis, recognising and respecting the uniqueness of personal situations, balanced with business needs.

When agreeing hybrid working arrangements with our colleagues (and assessing the effectiveness of these), we will be outcomes-focussed. We will ensure any arrangements maintain or improve performance and customer service. We will recognise that some time together remains important for team cohesion, collaboration and belonging.

The role of our leaders

Our leaders will ensure that all hybrid working arrangements are safe, fair and inclusive, so we can attract, retain and develop talent from all walks of life. They will consciously include everyone in their team – wherever and how ever they work – and agree ways of working and communicating with their teams that avoid bias (when recruiting, assessing performance, distributing work or considering promotion, for example).

Our leaders will consider how the wellbeing needs of their team might change as a result of hybrid working and proactively support these needs. This may include focus on healthy working hours, positive digital balance, avoiding loneliness or isolation, and open discussion about (and signposting support on) positive mental health.

When making local decisions about hybrid working arrangements, we will assess and comply with any legal obligations (such as Health and Safety considerations) and ensure our colleagues have the tools they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.



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Discussing hybrid working with your team

We are all unique. For some, the opportunity to work in a hybrid way will be very welcome. For others it may offer personal and professional challenge. Understanding individual and team perspectives is key to successfully transitioning to hybrid working.

The best advice is to talk to individual team members in order to understand their situation and personal preferences. Make it clear that the objective of the conversation is to find a fair solution for the team as a whole, so some compromise might be necessary. However, we do want to find the best way to make hybrid work and to accommodate reasonable requests.

Ideally, conversations should be face-to-face and colleagues should feel comfortable to be open and honest. The manager should seek to understand what may best suit the individual and why. We should also seek to establish whether the individual has the necessary situation or equipment to perform their role safely and effectively in their preferred way.





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Discussing hybrid working with your team continued

Once you have understood the preferences of each individual, speak to your team as a group. Facilitate a discussion around the following questions:

- What worked well for our team whilst working remotely during the pandemic – what can we learn from this?
- What would hybrid working mean for our team? What would need to be in place for us to work effectively in this way?
- What are the potential risks or challenges for our team about hybrid working? How can we overcome them?

- How often does our team need to be in the office and how often can we work remotely?
- What would be an appropriate balance to ensure that we meet the needs of our stakeholders?
- If we work in a hybrid way, how can we ensure that we are inclusive, fair and work with in a healthy way?

Together, decide on the best approach for your team and the individuals. Agree how you will collaborate, communicate and when you will come together.

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Discussing hybrid working with your team continued

Working in a hybrid way means there is no set pattern of work. It is much more fluid than a set work arrangement. By its nature, hybrid doesn't have specific rules.

We want all of our colleagues to 'be where they are at their best and most productive' and that will vary depending on the work they are doing on any given day. It will also vary over the long-term.

Our hybrid future is here to stay and therefore we encourage you not to set patterns of work with your team where, for example, one member always works from home on a Tuesday. It is not possible to say that a person will be at their best and most productive at home every Tuesday throughout their employment – we just don't know what may arise for them or their team every Tuesday!

It is important to explain the 'deal' to your teams, that we as an organisation are willing to be flexible and we expect the same in return from all of our colleagues.

We trust our teams to do the right thing for our business and our colleagues.

We will not set a pattern for hybrid working; instead, it will be agreed on an individual and situational basis, recognising and respecting the uniqueness of personal situations, balanced with business needs.



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Establishing new ways of working

When it is agreed that hybrid working is possible and individual working patterns are identified, engage your team to establish new ways of working.

A move to hybrid working is a big change – it's likely that colleagues will experience this in different ways. Some will be excited, others may be anxious or concerned and you will need to show empathy, concern and consideration for all points of view.

- Are there any opportunities to do work in a different way? It is entirely possible to continue to work at home the same way as you do in the office aside from the location?

- Is there some value in rethinking processes or workflows? What work is done best where? How can work best be organised so that individuals get the most out of their remote time (focus and deep work) and office time (collaboration and relationships)?
- Think about task allocation. Workload and opportunities need to be fairly distributed across your team. It's important to ensure that additional workload does not fall onto those who spend more time in the office, as well as making sure that opportunities are not disproportionately weighted towards this group too.

- When considering work organisation, consider how technology can help. Technology can support effective communication and knowledge sharing, connect people and provide innovative ways to create and collaborate. Support people in using technology where necessary.

Hybrid working is new for many of us. Be prepared to engage in ongoing conversations with your team and adapt your approach as you learn what works and what does not.



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Communication

Effective hybrid working is facilitated by strong communication. Communication needs to be more intentional and planned in a hybrid environment, as there might be fewer casual or ad-hoc conversations – like the ones you might have previously had around the office coffee machine.

Our colleagues need to have the information that they need, in a timely and accessible way, using multiple channels, to allow them to successfully undertake their work. Good communication is a shared responsibility across the team; engage the team in a discussion about the best ways to communicate. So:

- **Discuss and agree arrangements for meetings:** How often does the team need to meet and for what purpose? When should

meetings be online and when should they be face-to-face? What other ways are there to communicate other than meetings?

- **Decide upon key communication channels:** There are many different ways to communicate – but too many can be overwhelming. It can be helpful to agree primary channels for particular purposes. For example, emails for longer requests/important information and MS Teams chat for informal questions.
- **Agree processes for sharing working arrangements and locations:** Agree a way to share who is working where and when. For example, status updates or a ‘people on a page’ plan in MS Teams where colleagues share working days, locations and hours.

- **Consider flexibility in communications:** What communication should take place synchronously (at the same time) and what could be done asynchronously (at different times) such as via an online update that colleagues can access at their convenience?

One of the most important factors in communicating with a hybrid team is ensuring that information reaches everyone, wherever and whenever they are working. Equal access to information and knowledge is key to preventing any feelings of unfairness.



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Inclusion

Hybrid working can support inclusion. Greater flexibility (in where, when and how colleagues work) can open up opportunities to people who cannot work a traditional working day, including those who have disabilities or caring responsibilities.

However, if not managed properly it can lead to challenges too – including colleagues who work remotely not being included in decisions or not being recognised for their work.

Consider the format of individual meetings carefully. When some team members are working in the office and some are working remotely, it's essential to ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to meaningfully contribute and be heard. The 'ideal' meeting format will change from meeting to meeting depending on the unique situation of your team, and individuals in the team, at any particular point in time. Good planning and good meeting etiquette will help ensure everyone is included and mean a more effective and enjoyable time for all!

Ensure everyone has an equal voice, wherever or whenever they are working. Be aware that we can tend to default to people that we can see or are in close proximity to – don't forget about homeworkers or those working in field-based roles.

Address conflict quickly. It is possible that issues will arise in relation to hybrid work. This could be as a result of miscommunication or perhaps because, as a result of different roles, some colleagues can work remotely and some cannot. If conflict does arise, address it early, effectively and in an impartial and fair manner.



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Inclusion continued

Be open and consistent when determining who can work in a hybrid way. In our organisation there are some roles that cannot work remotely at all. There are also some roles that can have a great deal of location flexibility and some that can only have a small amount. When deciding who can or cannot work remotely, listen to the colleague perspective, then be clear about your decision, act consistently and equitably, and communicate these in an open way.

Proximity to managers has been shown to increase promotion rates. This may be caused by a perceived relationship between productivity and visibility, even though no such relationship has ever been established. In the end, it's the beliefs about productivity and performance that determine pay, promotions, and opportunities. In a post-pandemic world, we may well see unexplained gaps between those who work remotely and those who get onsite face time with the boss.

Harvard Business Review



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Supporting colleague wellbeing

Talking about our personal wellbeing or our mental health is not always easy, but it's OK not to be OK and a simple conversation can change a life for the better.

Hybrid working might mean you see colleagues less, so it's harder to tell how they're feeling or some of their challenges may go unnoticed for longer. That means that having regular wellbeing conversations is more important than ever.

When we start a wellbeing conversation, it helps us to better understand each other, to share experiences and to identify support – like our global Employee Assistance Programme. It can also help to remove any misconceptions or stigma we may have about mental health.

As a manager, you play a vital role in determining the health, wellbeing and engagement of your team. You can most effectively do this successfully by:

- Being open, fair and consistent
- Handling conflict and people management issues

- Providing knowledge, clarity and guidance
- Building and sustaining relationships and
- Supporting individual development

Remember to also check out our **Wellbeing Toolkit** which is available on the Academy in 17 languages. It will give you ideas and tips on how to have wellbeing conversations with your team, how to maintain positive mental health, and how to tackle common challenges from hybrid working – like loneliness, healthy digital balance, and managing work and home life in the same space.



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Compliance with COVID-19 group minimum standards

Our COVID-19 minimum standards are in place across all of our workplaces. To understand these and what they mean for how you and your team work together (such as current social distancing guidance), you should always check the latest version of these standards directly on One Place.

In order to comply with the minimum standards, it is important to plan workplace seating arrangements.

Ensure that you have a shared group, for example on MS Teams, where colleagues are able to note down when they plan to be in office and which desk they plan to sit at. Where possible, list additional spaces where colleagues can choose to work that are not within your usual desk space. This will allow us to accommodate more people, as well as those who decide to come in at short notice.

Work with nearby teams to coordinate use of space, perhaps rotating the use of space with that other team.

Be clear that whilst we will not compromise on the minimum standards, we will always endeavour to accommodate anyone wishing to work in our workplaces.

Create a shared space to communicate your own movements and your teams movements with each other.



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Top tips for managing hybrid teams

Managing a hybrid team is quite different from managing a team that is either mostly office-based or mostly remote. It will require a range of new skills and approaches. Here are a few tips to help you to manage in a hybrid environment.

Engage your team in establishing your new ways of working. Agreeing these together will help colleagues feel included and that they have an active voice.

Ensure that you have regular 1-2-1 time with your team. This is good practice at any time, but when you may not be working in the same place or at the same time as your team, scheduling regular time to keep in touch becomes even more important.

Talk about wellbeing with everyone. When colleagues work from home, they may find it difficult to manage the boundaries between work and home, and some people have a tendency to work longer hours. Act as a good role model with your own working practices.

Be clear on objectives. When colleagues work remotely their performance may be harder to observe. You will need to be clear with your team how you will assess their performance, and focus on desired results and outcomes.

Build in time for social connection. Although many colleagues do want to retain some element of working from home, most want to return to their offices for some of the time too and have missed social connection with colleagues.

If you are working in a hybrid way yourself, don't forget to be clear with your team about when you are in the office, or when you are working so that your team know how to get in touch with you.



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Further guidance

For further resources, please see the following training modules which are available on the Academy:

For Spirax Group, Steam Thermal Solutions and Watson-Marlow Fluid Technology Solutions colleagues:

- [Virtual Teams](#)
- [Top Tips for Leading Remote Teams](#)
- [Leading in the Post-pandemic Workplace](#)
- [Managing Virtual Teams](#)

For Electric Thermal Solutions colleagues:

- [Top Tips for Leading Remote Teams](#)
- [Leading in the Post-pandemic Workplace](#)
- [Managing Virtual Teams](#)





Our global Employee Assistance Programme

Getting support

It's OK not to be OK, and it's a strength to seek support. That's why we have a global Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). It's free, completely confidential, available 24/7 and in your local language – for everyday life and for more challenging times. See how to access the service below. You can find more information on One Place locally as well.

What does our EAP help with?

Our EAP provides advice and support on a wide range of matters. It offers advice on everyday aspects of life as well as support in times of crisis. This includes topics such as:

- Stress and anxiety
- Work advice
- Relationship advice
- Gambling issues
- Counselling
- Bereavement and loss
- Financial wellbeing
- Legal advice
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Family issues
- Childcare matters
- Medical information
- Consumer issues
- ...and more.

To get support in the UK

Web: [REDACTED]

Call: [REDACTED]

You can use the app (or website) to contact a wellbeing counsellor by live chat, video call and phone or request a call back. You can also use the AI feature if you do not yet feel comfortable talking to a counsellor. The app also includes resources, information and tools to help with all aspects of life.



To get support around the world

Web: [REDACTED]

Register via the website, then select a username and password.

Click the flag icon (top right of the page) to select your country and language for local resources and contact details. You'll find resources covering a wide range of topics and details of how to contact a counsellor there.

You can also download the app (provided by ComPsych) by searching for **GuidanceResources** (one word) in your App Store.



The world has changed and so has the way we work. Hybrid working presents opportunities and challenges, so we will empower our colleagues to find the best way to make it work wherever that is possible.