Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Executive Advisory Body	
Date of Meeting	Tuesday 28 June 2022
Subject	Our Ways of Working
Agenda No.	30
Paper No.	30.1
Prepared By	Our Ways of Working Project
Purpose	Discuss

1.   Background

1.1.   The Our Ways of Working project launched on 30th June 2021 to design our hybrid working models for the future that supports the Agency and preserves a high standard of service for our clients, whilst offering more flexibility for our colleagues.

1.2.   We have committed to having hybrid working – listening to feedback from our colleagues and choosing not to further expand our estate . Two of the key drivers for this project are projected headcount and estate constraints which means that the office space we have available cannot accommodate the number of colleagues we intend to employ by the end of next year. We have also established offices in Dundee and Glasgow and in doing that made an investment and commitment to those cities and as a public service we need to make sure that we are using public funds wisely.

1.3.   Executive Team provided a steer from an early stage that they see hybrid working as an achievable outcome and to actively investigate how flexible that can be in practice and this would mean colleagues will work in an office on average two days per week. We know a one size fits all approach cannot be made to work across the organisation and so the purpose of the trials will be to test different working models to see what fits best with our business requirements. This will develop a clearer understanding of divisional, team and individual needs - final decisions will be made by senior management to balance how flexible working will work to meet our commitments within our charter.

1.4.   Hybrid working means that most colleagues will split their working week by spending some time working in an office and some time from home. Our offices are central to our work, our identity and how we will function going forward. Some office based working will always have a place for us, but we will undoubtedly use our offices differently. This is important to help build culture, drive continuous improvement, and foster collaboration and innovation.

2. Key points

2.1. Trials update

The soft launch of the hybrid working trials started on 7th March where managers were invited to come into the office to prepare for the official trial launch on 4th April. The soft launch was a resounding success with our offices seeing the highest attendance of colleagues since Covid- 19 with on average 20%-40% occupancy (with reduced capacity) in Glasgow, 10%-15% in Agnes Husband House and 10-20% in Dundee House.

The main trials commenced on Monday 4th April and we are seeing a steady stream of colleagues attending our offices for inductions and on a regular basis, with on average 40% occupancy per week in Glasgow, 20% in Agnes Husband House and 15% occupancy in Dundee House (see table below).
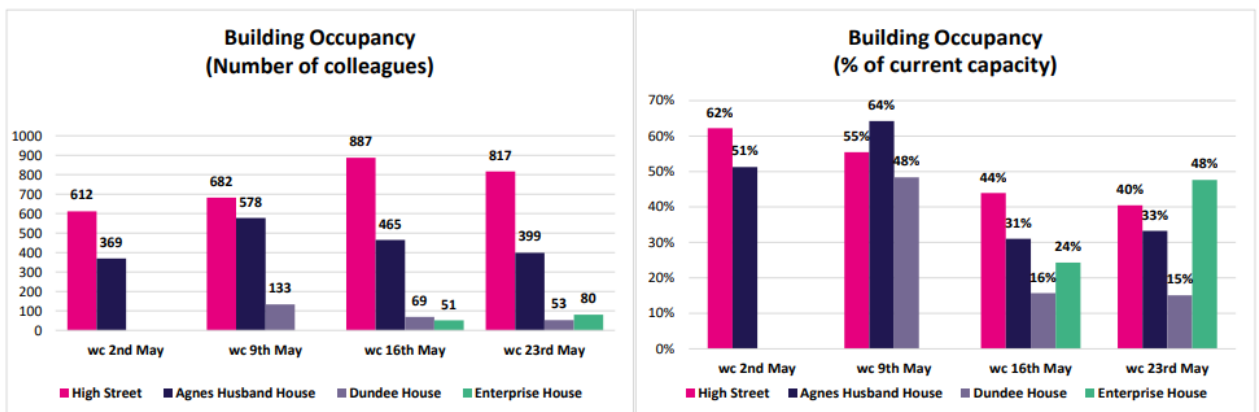
Two Graphs are shown.

Graph one: building occupancy (Number of Colleagues)

Week Commencing 2 May: High Street - 612. Agnes Husband House - 369.

Week commencing 9 May: High Street - 682. Agnes Husband House - 578. Dundee House: 133

Week commencing 16 May: High Street - 887. Agnes Husband House - 465. Dundee House: 69. Enterprise House - 51.

Week commencing 23 May: High Street - 817. Agnes Husband House - 399. Dundee House: 53. Enterprise House - 80.

Graph two: Building Occupancy (% of Current Capacity)

Week Commencing 2 May: High Street - 62%. Agnes Husband House - 51%.

Week commencing 9 May: High Street - 55%. Agnes Husband House - 64%. Dundee House: 48%

Week commencing 16 May: High Street - 44%. Agnes Husband House - 31%. Dundee House: 16%. Enterprise House - 24%.

Week commencing 23 May: High Street - 40%. Agnes Husband House - 33%. Dundee House: 15%. Enterprise House - 48%.

Office occupancy figures for May- these are calculated as a % total of the available desks. On 16th May desk capacity increased from 30% to 50% which accounts for the perceived dip.

The project team are collating statistics monthly on building occupancy which is being published by the communications team in the leadership brief which will contain the % building occupancy data and data on building occupancy on individual divisions per building. Importantly, this will enable us to undertake direct comparison with Scottish Government, who are taking a similar approach.

The team will also publish a monthly evaluation report based on the key themes and trends that are emerging from through our engagement strategy.

2.2. **Easing of restrictions**

Similar to wider Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland agreed to adopt a phased easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

Phase 1 commenced on Tuesday 19th April, This phase allows staff to move more freely around the offices and will also maximise the experience in our meeting rooms, collaborative spaces and communal areas. Awareness of the 'distance aware' scheme was highlighted to colleagues and face covering remain strong guidance.

Phase 2 commenced on Monday 16th May, desk capacity increased to 50% with some distancing still in place between desks and all one way systems were removed within the office. This allowed for a gentle introduction to increased desk spaces in our offices for colleagues while our most vulnerable and nervous colleagues feel protected.

Phase 3 could be implemented from mid/late June and will see all restrictions being lifted with a recommendation that each division put aside a couple of socially distanced desks for staff who would like this option to be made available.

2.3. **Engagement update**

In late February/Early March the project team ran Hybrid Working Roadshows with the purpose of informing colleagues of what hybrid working would mean in practice, to learn from experiences of colleagues who were already in offices and to ask any questions. The sessions were extremely well received with over 1000 colleagues across the organisation attending and engaging with the project team through SLIDO and questions asked directly. These sessions were supported by trade union colleagues. The team collected data which will be used to update our Saltire page and Frequently Asked Questions document.

A pre-trial survey was conducted to enable colleagues to provide insights and feedback on their experiences. The survey trialled a new approach for Social Security Scotland where colleagues were personally invited to complete a questionnaire. It was the first time this approach has been used for an All Colleague campaign. There was exceptional uptake with 1,465 colleagues sharing their thoughts. The project analysis team have been looking at the free text responses provided by colleagues and The Social Research team are analysing the quantitative data and trend analysis. Quantitative findings will be provided in due course.

An Microsoft Teams feedback form was also launched to capture people's lived experience of hybrid working. It gives teams and individuals the opportunity to share their experience and improvement ideas with the project team at any point during the trials. To date we've had over 500 submissions and continue to promote this means of feedback, we are collecting feedback received and tracking actions on key themes through an action tracker.

Further colleague engagement sessions are planned for the next few weeks, these will give us an opportunity to provide an update on progress, share feedback received, 'test' some of that feedback with a wider group, give us nuance around earlier feedback and allow colleagues to provide us with additional feedback.

In addition to this, we are also running business retrospective to further evaluate the value of hybrid working from a business perspective and create an improvement plan where necessary.

We will also run a Post-trial survey which will cover some of the topics within the pre-trial survey but will also ask colleagues about their experiences of the trials too.

2.4. Evaluation and Insights

As part of our evaluation process of our goals for the project. We will continue to analyse the data from the engagement activities outlined above which will ultimately contribute to the recommendation paper.

Some of the key findings from the pre-trial survey were;

Expected Benefits of hybrid working

- **Interaction,** This was the most mentioned topic in the free text benefit responses. It is important for people to be able to work with others in a collaborative or creative way. To have support from their peers when they need help with work queries and knowledge sharing. Also a connection and a sense of belonging.

- **Mental and physical health,** Some colleagues said they expect their mental and physical health to improve with the introduction of hybrid working. Some people are looking forward to splitting their time between the home and office as it offers the 'best of both worlds. For some it's the routine and social aspect that will break a monotony of home working.

- **Caring responsibilities**, Some colleagues told us how home working has improved their ability to manage caring responsibilities more

effectively and gives them a better personal balance. Their hope is hybrid working will still allow them to provide that level of flexible care.

- **Learning and development**, Some colleagues have said learning a new job remotely was difficult. They're looking forward to having a balance when hybrid working to share knowledge and develop their skills.

Hybrid working concerns

- **Commuting,** Commuting was the most mentioned concern for colleagues. People see it as a poor use of time with many people spending 2 hours a day travelling to and from work. The cost of travel is also a concern for some, people have made a significant saving by home working, this 'additional' cost and the rising cost of living being a worrying time. Some colleagues mentioned the unreliability of public transport and their Covid safety. The negative impact it will have on their work life balance and the environmental footprint as we start to travel more.

- **Caring responsibilities,** Some concerns were raised over availability of non-standard care arrangements to accommodate different days in the office per week. Care included after school care, child care, care for elderly/vulnerable relatives and pets.

- **Financial**, Financial impact of hybrid working was mentioned, cost for travel, parking and caring provisions.

- **Lack of autonomy**, Comments reflected a perceived lack of choice around coming into the office. Being 'forced' to come in for the sake of it, for presentism or leadership preference. Colleagues have raised concerns over the lack of value of attending an office to sit on Teams calls all day.

- **Storage**, People raised concern about transporting equipment and personal belongings as there isn't storage in the office. Concern focused on the weight and bulk, those with mobility needs and worries over personal safety.

- **Teams working over multiple locations**, Some colleagues said their team is split over multiple locations. Therefore, when they're in the office they'll be on MS Teams calls to their team mates, which can be done from home.

- **Health benefits**, Concerns were raised that hybrid working will have a detrimental impact on mental and physical wellbeing, as work/life balance people have established will be compromised.

A full report will be published soon on the survey findings.

From the office occupancy statistics and observational analysis we are conducting, there are some key trends emerging.

These are;

- Occupancy figures are steadily increasing

- There is an increased demand for meeting rooms

- Alternative work/collaboration spaces are not being utilised to their full potential

- The preferred model by non-operational divisions (Strategy, Change Data and Engagement, Financial and Corporate Services, Chief Digital Office and Health and Social care) is the "as and when" model. For each division undergoing the 'as and when' model, there are teams within these division which, due to business needs, are adopting a more specific approach to the trials.

- The preferred model for the operation division, Client Services Delivery, is a more structured days on rotation model being used to facilitate consolidation training.

- What we are hearing as a Project Team is that people are discussing their experience within their teams. Sharing the good and the bad and encouraging others to participate in hybrid working. The general message is 'try it' as the benefits are often personal and different for each person. Overall there is generally a positive attitude to hybrid working.

From the feedback we are receiving directly from colleagues using the MS teams feedback form the key themes that we are starting to see are around;

Emerging Themes

1. **Wellbeing**
   Physical and mental health
   Caring responsibilities
   Workplace adjustments
   Work/life balance
   Autonomy

2. **Finances**
   Cost of commute
   Cost of Petrol
   Cost of Parking
   Cost of caring responsibilities
   Cost of food/drink

3. **Office Environment / Layout**
   Lack of privacy
   Storage / Lockers
   Equipment in the office

4. **Making commuting worthwhile**
   Having a reason to be in the office

5. **Communication**
   Mixed messages being received and interpreted by colleagues on the trials and hybrid working

Graphic showing Emerging Themes.

1. Wellbeing
   a. Physical and mental health.
   b. Caring responsibilities.
   c. Workplace adjustments.
   d. Work/life balance.
   e. Autonomy.
2. Finances
   a. Cost of commute.
   b. Cost of petrol.
   c. Cost of parking.
   d. Cost of caring responsibilities.

e. Cost of food/drink.
3. Office Environment/Layout
    a. Lack of privacy.
    b. Storage/Lockers.
    c. Equipment in the office.
4. Making commuting worthwhile
    a. Having a reason to be in the office.
5. Communication
    a. Mixed messages being received and interpreted by colleagues on the trials and hybrid working.

2.5. **Summary**

Overall the response to Hybrid Working has been broadly positive, with colleagues understanding and appreciating the benefits which can be gained. We know that a 'one size fits all' approach is not realistic and there are some consistent key trends and themes that are emerging as the trials mature. Understanding these trends and themes will be essential in the development and formulation of the hybrid working model the organisation will adopt moving forward, and as a project team we will continue to analyse these findings and use them to shape progress conversations and suggest improvements and also include our findings within the recommendation paper we will be producing.

3.   Conclusions

3.1.   As mentioned, We have committed to having hybrid working and choosing not to further expand our estate . The office space we have available cannot accommodate the number of colleagues we intend to employ by the end of next year. Executive Team see hybrid working as an achievable outcome and to actively investigate how flexible that can be in practice. We know a one size fits all approach cannot be made to work across the organisation and so the purpose of the trials will be to see what fits best with our business requirements. Final decisions will be made by senior management to balance how flexible working will work to meet our commitments within our charter.

3.2.   The project team will continue to evaluate the trials using the evaluation goals set. We will use the findings and data collated from the evaluation process before, during and after the trials to shape the recommendations within the recommendation paper that will be produced by the end of the project which will aide senior management with their decision making.

3.3.   The recommendation paper will not focus solely on one single hybrid working model and will instead provide several suggestions, considerations and models for the organisation to explore and discount/implement as they see fit.

3.4. Questions for Executive Advisory Body

What are the expectations of the Executive Advisory Body from the project evaluations?

What evaluations are other organisations undertaking and are we comparable?

Do the Executive Advisory body have any feedback or suggestions on our evaluation strategy?

4. GOVERNANCE CHECKLIST

> **Please ensure that you detail which Corporate Plan Strategic Objective the paper contributes to. These strategic considerations should be used to assist you with the content of your paper.**

Strategic Objective	Contribution
Helping to deliver a social security system with dignity, fairness and respect.	Not Applicable – Please delete if Corporate Plan Strategic Objectives Apply and type considerations here.
Supporting people in Scotland to access devolved benefits that they are entitled to.	Not Applicable – Please delete if Corporate Plan Strategic Objectives Apply and type considerations here.
Running our service in a responsible way.	Not Applicable – Please delete if Corporate Plan Strategic Objectives Apply and type considerations here.

> **State here how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency. Only complete the section(s) relevant to your paper.**

Strategic consideration	Impact
Environment	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.
Governance	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.
Data	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.
Finance	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.
Staff	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.
Equalities	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.
Estates	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.

Strategic consideration	Impact
Communications and Presentation	Not Applicable – Please delete if applicable and state how the paper considers these areas and any consultation undertaken in the agency.

An Impact Assessment must be carried out during the development of all new Agency policies and services and when making significant changes to policies and services. The Corporate Assurance team should be involved form an early stage to provide guidance and advice relating to completing impact assessments.

Impact Assessment Saltire Page

General Impact Assessment Queries: Corporateassuranceteam@socialsecurity.gov.scot

Equality Impact Assessment Queries: Corporateassuranceteam@socialsecurity.gov.scot

Please complete the below table.

Type of Impact Assessment	Required (Y/N)	If No - briefly state reason e.g. Not relevant/Not eligible – agreed with Deputy Director	If yes – briefly state progress to date, highlight any significant issues.
Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA)			
Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)			
Data Protection Impact Assessment			
Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)			
Fairer Scotland Duty assessment			
Future proofing legislation			
Human rights in policy making			
Islands Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)			
Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)			