

**NORTHERN IRELAND
SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL**

BUSINESS TRANSITION PLAN –

**Arrangements for Managing
Business Following a Pandemic**

Revised Draft 2.0

16 May 2022

BUSINESS TRANSITION PLAN, MAY 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) activated its Command and Control business continuity arrangements on 10 March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Command and Control is led by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who made the decision on 19 March that all staff should work from home from that date for the foreseeable future, to comply with safe working practices and social distancing guidance. Command and Control were subsequently re-named 'Coronavirus Business Leadership Team' (CBLT) in 2021 in response to the focus of managing and normalising the business after operating in the pandemic twelve months on.
- 1.2 By April 2020, all staff had access to remote devices to support remote working and were provided with guidance and resources to ensure they had the skills to utilise the devices and remote working software. In June 2020, all remaining staff had access to remote working devices. All new staff appointed are also provided with remote working devices (and are trained in same). CBLT met weekly to discuss –
 - Priorities for the week ahead discussed across each function;
 - Discussion on matters arising through the week, taking a stock check and picking up on any staff health and wellbeing issues;
 - And a review of the COVID risk.
- 1.3 These arrangements will be kept under regular review and adjusted according to the impact of the pandemic.
- 1.4 A Risk Register for COVID-19 has been created including the controls and actions to manage the risk, which is updated weekly by CBLT.
- 1.5 CBLT will determine at which point it will move between the phases in the Transition Plan which are explained below. In doing so, CBLT will only do so when Government advice indicates it is safe. CBLT will engage staff at every opportunity regarding these decisions. This Plan does not specify when the organisation will transition through each phase as that will be determined by CBLT based on the circumstances at that time.
- 1.6 CBLT will also engage advice as necessary from Shared Services BSO, the Department of Health, Public Health Agency, Specialist Health and Safety Advisers, and will work with the Landlord and other tenants in Millennium House.

2. PURPOSE

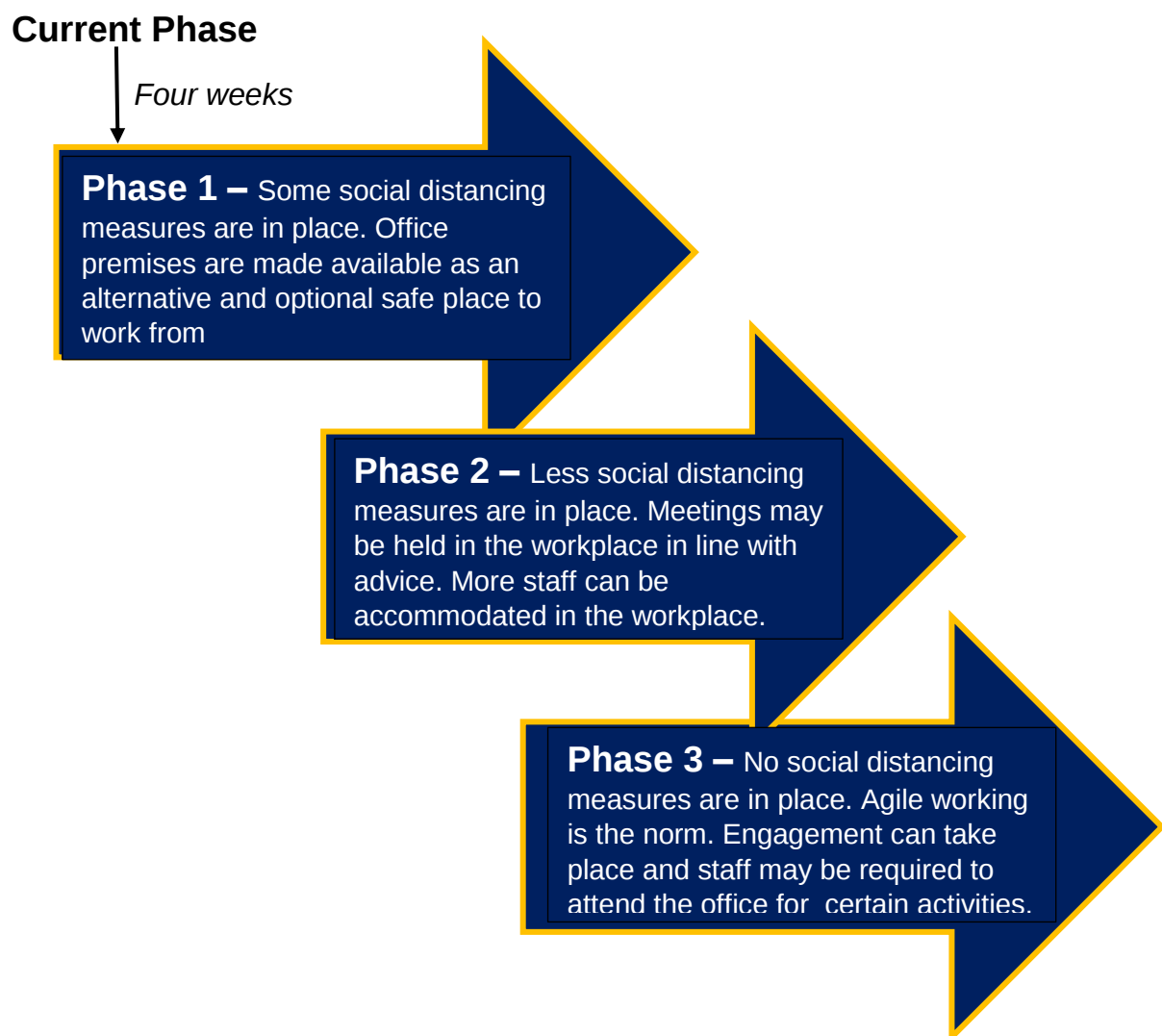
- 2.1 The purpose of this Business Transition Plan (Plan) is to set out how the Social Care Council will manage the transition of its business back to office based working. The Plan will be based on guidance and advice from the Government and the Department of Health. **No decisions will be made to implement this Plan until it is safe to do so and the office environment has been made safe in line with Government advice on providing safe working environments.**
- 2.2 This Plan is based on the following principles –
- Working in an agile way works.
 - The Social Care Council will ensure where you carry out your work is safe.
 - The Social Care Council will provide you with the tools, systems and support you need to do your job well.
 - We will comply with our Terms and Conditions and related policies regardless of where we carry out our work.
 - We will demonstrate our values in the way we work.
 - We will remain connected regardless of where we carry out our work to promote and maintain synergy between all colleagues.
 - We will be responsible for protecting our health and wellbeing, and complying with the guidance and processes of the Social Care Council to protect its workforce.
 - We demonstrate both personal and collaborative responsibility at all times.

3. PHASED RETURN

- 3.1 The current status of operating business is being delivered with all staff working remotely. However arrangements are in place to support staff accessing the office for business critical reasons and wellbeing reasons. Since 2020, the organisation has also enabled pilots for staff/teams to access the office under robust guidance and protocols. Meetings and engagement are being delivered using video conferencing software and a business recovery register was maintained of any work that was deferred, cancelled or delayed in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the pandemic in Northern Ireland.
- 3.2 The organisation has been able to deliver all aspects of its business throughout the pandemic.
- 3.3 The organisation carried out a number of pulse surveys with staff regarding their remote working arrangements and supported them throughout the pandemic including using this evidence to design the May 2022 Agile Working Pilot.

- 3.4 The Social Care Council has outlined a phased approach to transitioning to office based working that takes into account the needs of the organisation, the needs of its workforce and the need to ensure the safety of everyone.
- 3.5 The phased approach set out below does not include a timeline as this will be decided in line with Government advice. However it has been determined that it will take up to four weeks to move from the Current Phase to Phase 1. **However it is also recognised that these phases may merge dependant upon the advice and current level of pandemic transmission.**

Diagram 1.



- 3.6 In preparation for moving into Phase 1 – all appropriate health and safety measures will be put in place; a range of protocols and guidance will be developed and shared with staff; and a risk assessment will be carried out of

the premises. Collaboration between teams and adherence to the protocols and guidance are essential.

- 3.7 We will continue to use short pulse surveys with staff to ensure your views and experiences continue to influence how we move forward – and before we enter a new phase of the Transition Plan.
- 3.8 Agile working pilots will have taken place before this Transition Plan is activated.

4. PHASE 1

- 4.1 When the time is right and Government advice supports it the Social Care Council will enable staff to work from the office as an alternative, optional and safe place to work from. Staff may also choose to continue to work in an agile way. However staff remain headquartered from the office (the office premises remain all staff's work base from which staff are offered agile working).
- 4.2 To ensure business can be carried out safely with the office being made available, the following actions will be taken –
 - Staff will use Cisco Jabber and use their devices to receive and make calls on their tablet or laptop device to make and receive calls as this software operates exactly the same as a desk phone. Additional work mobile phones have also been issued to staff;
 - No visitors will be permitted on the premises¹¹ – engagement will continue as in the Current Status with the use of video conferencing software, email and telephone calls;
 - Additional and enhanced cleaning regimes for the office will be put in place, including the provision of hand sanitiser/wipes.
 - A range of protocols will be in place with which staff must comply – these include the use of desks, the kitchen facility, cleaning of surfaces and other touch points, and ensuring social distancing at all times. All staff are reminded of the importance of continuing to wash their hands thoroughly on a regular basis and to comply with the office procedures as they apply at that time;
 - Meetings and engagement will continue to be delivered using video conferencing software;

¹¹ This excludes contractors and others who need to access the office for maintenance, development or other work key to the delivery of business.

- Learning webinars will be provided to staff to improve their skills and confidence in using remote working software.
- 4.3 There is a detailed plan underpinning all of the above and what action needs to be taken to ensure all arrangements are in place before Phase 1 is activated.
- 4.4 The organisation has gained benefits from its current working arrangements, demonstrating that agile working works, and the Social Care Council will wish to harness these benefits, including –
- Trust;
 - Leadership;
 - Collaboration; and
 - Improved technical skills.

5. PHASE 2

- 5.1 Transition into Phase 2 will be based on Government advice and learning from Phase 1. Phase 2 will enable more staff to avail of the office working environment and the social interaction and connectivity that provides. Larger groups may be able to congregate in the one space (numbers and measures will be determined based on Government advice and risk assessment).
- 5.2 Subject to advice, some meetings may be offered face to face – this includes small, safe and limited face to face engagement.
- 5.3 The following will also apply –
- *Pre-arranged visitors* may be permitted access to the premises under any remaining social distancing guidance [the Reception area will be screened for everyone's protection and this will be actioned during Phase 1];
 - Some face to face training may be available subject to social distancing restrictions;
 - Video conferencing for meetings (internally and externally) will continue and hybrid events trialled;
 - Partnerships, Board and other HSC family organisations/meetings may be offered a face to face, socially distanced meeting;
 - Face to face interviews may be considered;

- Fitness to Practise will commence engagement with Panel Members and others with a view to offering face to face hearings in the future;
- Staff will be encouraged wherever possible to walk or cycle to work and the Cycle to Work scheme will be promoted to all staff.

6. PHASE 3

6.1 Phase 3 was a longer term phase in and may be taken in stages (taking into account safety, the transmission rate of the pandemic, and government advice)

- Meetings and engagement face to face can take place in the office (or other venues);
- Agile working has been fully piloted and is now in place as part of being a member of the Social Care Council;
- Social distancing will be dependant on government advice at that time;
- Meetings are organised in advance – as fully face to face, hybrid or fully online;
- Staff will be required to attend the office (or other venues) as per the Agile Working Policy;
- Fitness to Practise hearings will start to re-commence (subject to the outcome of the engagement carried out in Phase 2 of this Plan).

7. TRANSITION

7.1 The transition through the phases will not be static one, and it may be necessary to escalate an action or stand another action down e.g. face to face training could be available sooner rather than later, whereas the other actions in Phase 2 may not yet be deliverable.

7.2 CBLT will ensure there is a clear lessons learnt process in place throughout the transition to ensure that any benefits are not lost, and to inform the timing of the transition between phases.

7.3 The out-workings of the Agile Working Pilot will be taken into account.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Social Care Council must also be prepared for an escalation in transmission and changes to Government advice. Where this occurs Government advice will be followed and business may return to Current Status mode. The Social Care Council will reactive its Surge Plan and restore current practices. The organisation will be in a stronger position to manage a spike due to the learning from the current phase.
- 8.2 ICT has been an essential asset in managing agile working and an increased focus across the organisation and the HSC will need to be on ensuring ICT provision (hardware and software) is modern, reliable and accessible for all.
- 8.3 Good and clear communications and communication methods are assumed as part of this Plan and that is a requirement of every person. Accurate, timely and accessible communications internally and externally are essential to the delivery of a clear transition.
- 8.4 This Transition Plan has been equality screened and it is identified that there may be impacts on those with caring responsibilities and persons with a disability. However this has been reflected in the detailed plan to ensure those individuals are supported throughout the transition.

This Plan reflects the status, impact and the outcome of managing the COVID pandemic risk as at May 2022 – and may therefore be subject to change if that position changes for any reason.

Revised – May 2022