

Welsh Government Warns Civil Servants Over Underused Office Space

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Staff in the Welsh Government have been warned they may lose access to office spaces unless in-person attendance improves, as ministers push for a return to more traditional working practices.

According to internal correspondence seen by *BBC Wales*, the devolved administration has expressed concern over persistently low office

occupancy rates, particularly in Cardiff. Despite having capacity for around 5,000 civil servants across 11 buildings, the average weekly attendance hovers at just over 1,300. One site, located in Llandudno Junction, is reportedly operating at less than 20% of its intended capacity.

The Welsh Government has stated that hybrid working, where employees split their time between home and the office, remains a key part of its employment model. However, recent communication to staff suggests that access to certain buildings may be re-evaluated if attendance does not rise. Officials warned that “regular office presence” is essential to maintaining team cohesion and maximising the value of government-owned property.

In an email to senior leaders, Gareth Powell, Director of Corporate Services, noted that reduced footfall could result in “certain spaces being reassigned” or closed altogether. While no formal closures have yet been confirmed, the message signals a clear shift in tone from earlier post-pandemic flexibility.

A spokesperson for the Welsh Government said hybrid working enables “a better work-life balance, supports productivity, and helps reduce carbon emissions.” Nonetheless, they acknowledged that “office spaces need to be used efficiently” and confirmed that occupancy levels are regularly reviewed.

The situation reflects a broader trend across the UK’s public sector, where questions continue to be raised about the cost-effectiveness of maintaining underused real estate. Conservative voices in Westminster

have long pushed for a return to physical offices, arguing that remote work risks undermining public service delivery and accountability.

While the Labour-run Welsh Government remains publicly committed to hybrid arrangements, the move to potentially reduce access to offices appears to be a tacit admission that the balance may need to shift. Taxpayers may rightly question the wisdom of funding large-scale government offices that sit mostly empty during the week.

The Welsh Government has stated that it will continue to monitor attendance patterns and consult with staff on any proposed changes to office usage.