

**HOMEWORKING POLICY****Definition of Homeworking**

Homeworking is defined as when an employee has entered into an agreement with the council to undertake work at home, as an agreed Agile Working workstyle or following approval of a flexible working request for all or part of the normal working week.

Requests from employees to undertake homeworking may be made using the Flexible Working Application Form. Approval or refusal will be dependent on a number of factors including the suitability of the home environment, as well as the nature of the work, impact on service delivery, cost to the council etc. The manager will undertake an assessment covering all areas listed below and will arrange to meet the employee to discuss their request. If the request is refused, the employee will be advised, in writing, of the reasons (following the procedure and based on the grounds detailed in the Flexible Working Policy).

If the agreed Workstyle includes home working or if an application is approved, an agreement will be drawn up and signed by both parties. Where homeworking will be on an ad hoc basis, the agreement may be completed in a less detailed manner. Managers should also ensure that a homeworking agreement is completed as soon as possible for any pre existing homeworking arrangements.

In the case of home workers falling into Workstyles 3, 4 and 5, or where a request has been approved to undertake significant amounts of work at home, the use of technology and/or equipment supplied by the council is likely to be involved and the arrangements regarding this will form part of the agreement.

Others, who work from home only on an ad hoc basis, may not require equipment supplied specifically for the work undertaken at home.

**Arrangements for Home working**

A written agreement (link) will be drawn up and signed by the employee and manager covering all aspects of the home working arrangement. While some aspects of homeworking will vary from job to job, the following should be considered in every case where homeworking is being undertaken.

**Review Period**

All arrangements to undertake homeworking will be subject to regular review. The initial review should take place after no more than 6 months, and reviews should be repeated at intervals of not longer than 12 months.

**Times of Work**

Managers will assess whether the requested hours of work allow sufficient opportunity to make any necessary work related contact with the employee and will approve

work patterns only if the principles of the Working Time Regulations 1998 are being followed.

Where there is an operational requirement to do so, employees who are working from home will agree set hours of work or time they must be contactable with their line manager.

In some cases it may not be necessary to agree specific hours of work as long as the required outcomes are discussed, agreed and achieved within the required timescales. If any homeworking arrangement includes working unsocial hours, either whole or in part at the request of the employee, he/she will not be entitled to receive 'unsocial hours' enhancements or allowances in respect of these hours.

Employees have the responsibility for their time and attendance management. However, there is a requirement under the Working Time Regulations that working time is accounted for and therefore records are still required. Managers and employees must ensure that records of working time are completed by the employee and that these are monitored by the manager to ensure compliance with council policy and legislation.

Employees in the flexi-time scheme should record their working hours and make the appropriate homeworking adjustment. For those not in or opting out of the flexi-time scheme, the most appropriate way of recording and monitoring working time should be discussed and agreed.

### **Health and Safety Risk Assessment**

An assessment of health and safety risks in the employee's home will require to be undertaken by an employee competent to do so. In most cases, and provided adequate training has been undertaken, this will be carried out by the employee themselves. There are no specific Health and Safety Regulations for homeworking but all the provisions that apply in the workplace regarding the employer's responsibilities in relation to health and safety apply wherever the employee is working.

Particular areas to consider include:

- Display Screen
- Heating, lighting and ventilation
- Workplace ergonomics
- Electrics, cabling and tripping hazards
- Working Time
- Lifting and carrying equipment
- Security - including data security
- Safety of third parties - including family members.
- Lone Working
- Reporting Accidents

The competent employee should be trained in the requirements of the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) regulations and should be satisfied that the employee's chair and workstation are set up correctly.

## **Expenses**

All employees, regardless of their workstyle, will have an agreed work base for travel claims and HMRC purposes; this will normally be the location of their team zone. Homeworkers should not use their home as their work base for the purposes of claiming expenses but should have an identified administrative base. However, services may wish to identify a more operationally appropriate base taking into account local circumstances and service need. Mileage between home and agreed council work / administration base will not be paid. For further information Please refer to Personnel Advisory Bulletin No 6 – Business Mileage Allowances and Claims.

The cost of any telephone calls made on employee's personal telephone will not be reimbursed. The employee should therefore ensure that a work mobile is used or that that arrangements are made to receive incoming calls only.

No allowance will be paid for heating, lighting, internet or other costs incurred. Homeworkers may incur additional internet charges for business use and should clarify this with their provider. Any additional internet charges will not be reimbursed to the employee.

## **Insurance, Mortgage and Lease Agreements**

Being based in your own home has different implications to occasionally working from home. For example, it can have unexpected consequences on home insurance, mortgage and / or lease agreements. It is recommended that employees check whether permission from their lender or landlord is required and whether contents insurance is affected. Any costs incurred will be the responsibility of the employee. The council will ensure that any equipment supplied by the council is insured but the employee is responsible for ensuring it is kept securely and safely.

## **Role and responsibility of Manager**

It will be the responsibility of the Manager to approve or refuse a flexible working request for homeworking within the timescales detailed in the council's Flexible Working Policy. Any refusal of a request will be based on the grounds listed in the Flexible Working Policy.

For Flexible Working requests for home working OR if determining workstyles for those in the scope of the agile working programme, the suitability of homeworking should be assessed giving consideration to the following:

- Can the service the employee provides be maintained or improved if the employee is based at home?
- What are the implications for other members of the team or the service being provided?
- How will work be allocated, measured and/or supervised?
- What arrangements will require to be made for communication between the employee and the manager / team / other colleagues?
- What arrangements will need to be made for reviews, on-the-job training and off-the-job training?

- How regularly will the employee be required to attend the work place for meetings etc?
- What equipment, software, furniture etc will require to be provided by the council? Is the cost prohibitive? The manager will need to liaise with IT if IT equipment is required.
- How will working time records be maintained and monitored to ensure compliance with council policy and legislation?

#### The Employee's Home

- Is there enough space in the employee's home for an office/workstation?
- What arrangements will be required to ensure the security of council owned equipment?
- What arrangements will be required to ensure the security of confidential information/documents?
- Is the employee prepared to meet the cost of any adjustment/alteration to the property, which may be required?
- Have arrangements been made for the care of the employee's dependants during working hours?
- Has a competent person been identified to undertake health and safety risk assessments in the employee's home?

#### The Employee

- Is the employee able to work without direct supervision?
- Is the employee motivated and disciplined enough to undertake workload and meet deadlines?
- Is he/she able to cope with the social isolation of working alone?

#### **Role of IT Section**

The IT Section will advise managers regarding the feasibility of meeting the IT requirements in the employee's home, and in particular on financial and security implications.

#### **The Homeworking Agreement**

If, following assessment, the homeworking is agreed / approved an agreement will be drafted and signed by both parties, covering all aspects of the homeworking arrangement. In the case of those employees working from home on an occasional basis, this agreement may be less detailed. The agreement may be worded in such a way that it will also apply for future occasions when the individual may request to work from home. However, there will be a requirement for it to be reviewed regularly.

The agreement will contain details of the following areas, together with any aspects particular to the individual case:-

**Hours of Work** - specify the actual hours the employee will work. If a new work pattern has been requested and agreed this should be included here.

**Output** – where the agreement is based on a specific output details should be included.

**Communication** - specify how, and how often, communication between the manager and the employee will take place. Meetings with line managers can take place at the employee's home if this is agreed.

**Review Period** - initial agreement to undertake homeworking will be for a period of 6 months, and thereafter will be reviewed at intervals of not more than 12 months.

**Equipment** – specify what equipment will be provided and maintained by the council, and the employee's responsibility to report any faults or problems with equipment immediately. The employee should also confirm that they will allow access to their home to undertake maintenance and repair of equipment if required. It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that their home insurance covers Council equipment being used within their home

**Health and Safety** – attach copy of risk assesment.

The employee has a duty to ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that he/she works in a safe manner and follows all health and safety instructions issued by the council.

If the employee proposes to make any changes at home which will affect any of the above, the manager must be informed and further health and safety risk assessments may be undertaken.

**Security/Confidentiality** - note that the employee must comply with any arrangements made to maintain the confidentiality and security of information.

**Expenses** – note that no allowance will be paid for heating, lighting, internet, use of personal phones or other costs incurred from working at home.

The employees agreed work / administration base should be noted and the employee should note that mileage between home and agreed council work / administration base will not be paid.

A statement may also be included advising that certain costs incurred by the council will be reclaimed should the employee resign, or request to return to office-based work, within a set timescale.

**Reporting Absence** - advise of arrangements for reporting absence if these differ from the council's Reporting Procedure.

**Insurance** - a statement that any increase in insurance premiums must be met by the employee

**Income Tax** - a statement that the employee may be eligible for Income Tax relief, and advising that queries in this regard should be addressed to the local Income Tax office.

**Moving home** – note that if the individual moves home, the agreement will be reviewed and may be terminated

**Job Specific** – a statement to the effect that approval to undertake homeworking is specific to the employee's current job. If the employee moves to another job a new application to undertake homeworking (or assessment of workstyle) would require to be made and the employee should be made aware that the homeworking agreement may be terminated.