



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Home working policy



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Additional Comments to note

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Home working is where the employee uses their home as a base of work instead of coming into the office/their usual workplace.

1.2 This policy presents practical advice to managers when considering introducing an element of home working in their team. It sets out the key considerations to take into account and answers some of the most common questions for managers and employees.

2.0 Scope

2.1 Applies to all employees except those that work from home on a permanent basis where separate arrangements will apply.

3.0 Policy outcomes

3.1 The outcomes to be delivered by this policy are:

Homeworking Policy outcomes	Links to corporate outcomes (delete as appropriate)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fairness and consistency in dealing with home working requests and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Effective management

4.0 Homeworking options

4.1 There are two ways that home working may operate; occasional home working and regular home working.

4.2 Taking work home occasionally, on an ad hoc basis, to concentrate on a particular project or task may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where a specific task needs dedicated and focussed input and/or could be dealt with more efficiently at home because of a lack of interruptions.
- Where it is difficult for staff to get in to work e.g. adverse weather, a short but unavoidable commitment at home, or field work is being undertaken out of the office and near to home.

4.3 Working from home for a percentage of the time on a regular basis may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where office space is limited. This may be as a result to a temporary office move or incident that makes the normal office unavailable (i.e. where the business continuity plan has been brought into effect).
- To facilitate a more flexible work pattern, perhaps to achieve a better work life balance.
- The job involves frequent/regular outside visits which are closer to home than the office.

5.0 What makes home working successful?

5.1 Many jobs may be considered for home working. Generally speaking any job that does not require time spent in one location or high visibility (e.g. to operate machinery, to deliver face to face customer care), may be adapted for home working. Jobs that involve project work or identifiable output, or those which provide services within the community, may in particular lend themselves to homeworking.

5.2 The following tasks particularly lend themselves to home working:

- Writing policies and reports
- Research and statistical analysis
- Preparing presentations and training
- Self directed learning such as reading or online training

5.3 The practicality of home working for the individual needs to be considered.

5.4 Home working does not suit everyone. Office dynamics and informal information flows may have a significant impact on the employee's performance. Some employees may develop better in a traditional office environment, and those without very much experience in their role are likely to need closer supervision which would not be possible if they were working from home.

5.5 Individuals may also have a distorted view of home working, often "rose tinted", with little recognition or understanding of the potential drawbacks and it is important that both the advantages and the disadvantages are considered.

5.6 A trial period is recommended in order to gauge suitability before any regular arrangements are put in place.

5.7 Helpful personal qualities are likely to include:

- Self-motivated
- Self-disciplined
- Enjoy the challenge of working on their own
- A flexible approach
- Able to organise working time effectively
- Able to work without direct supervision
- Confident to work away from the office environment
- Able to work on their own without day to day social interaction with colleagues
- Able to travel to meetings and site visits
- Able to 'switch off' from work and maintain a proper balance between working and non-working hours

5.8 There is a greater emphasis on personal responsibility to achieve outputs and work effectively at home. Managers should discuss the pros and cons of home working in depth with employees to identify areas of strength and weakness and to prepare for the latter.

5.9 Ensure employees consider the characteristics above in advance, alongside the following issues:

- Preferred working style
- Ability to travel to meetings
- Suitability of home for home working: space, environment, distractions
- Home and family commitments
- Technical competence to manage technology required and deal with minor problems (training provision notwithstanding)

6.0 Setting up a home working arrangement

6.1 Home working arrangements can be suggested by either employees or managers.

6.2 Occasional home working can be agreed between the line manager and employee.

6.3 When considering setting up a home working arrangement it is important to consider whether there will be any "knock on effects" of the arrangement on other staff and how these might be managed/accommodated. This is especially important if the potential home worker managers or supervises other staff or if several members of a team may wish to work from home.

6.4 If an employee wishes to request a more regular home working arrangement then they should use the flexible working policy and procedure. This policy will then be taken into consideration when considering the request.

6.5 If a manager wishes to set up a more regular home working arrangement with an employee or team then they should contact Organisational Development for advice.

7.0 The home environment

7.1 The employee needs to take personal responsibility for the health and safety aspect of home working. An employee needs an environment at home which offers the following:

- Suitable "office" space, ideally a separate room but at least a dedicated space
- Freedom from interruptions and distractions
- Security and confidentiality
- Ability to meet health and safety requirements
- Suitable IT, Internet connections etc if needed.

7.2 It is not appropriate to combine home working with dependant care. As such home working will not be viewed as an alternative to paid dependant care. Employees will be required to demonstrate that they do not have dependant care responsibilities within the hours that they record as working. However in an emergency, or one off situation, managers can agree that an employee can work from home and take appropriate breaks to care for a temporarily ill child or relative.

7.3 Employees need to be aware that the council reserves the right to ask them to attend council premises at short notice.

8.0 Managing regular home working

8.1 The level of management required depends on the amount of home working undertaken. Where home working is a regular occurrence it will be necessary to ensure that a clear management process is agreed and defined.

8.2 To ensure that your home worker is managing home working successfully you may need to change your style of management from the conventional one based on day-to-day contact management to “management of output”.

8.3 It is useful to define and agree the nature of the work to be done at home including the outputs expected.

8.4 Where home working is undertaken regularly the following actions need to be undertaken:

- Creating a monitoring and review system
- Applying standards and procedures to maintain quality
- Ensuring the arrangements are discussed with the employee and are clearly agreed and documented
- Agreement on hours to be worked including how flexitime, toil and overtime will operate
- Identify any peaks and troughs in work, and how these will be accommodated
- Agree regularity of reporting

9.0 Training and support needs

9.1 Loss of contact with colleagues and isolation, especially if working at home a lot, may be experienced by homeworkers.

9.2 As with all jobs, training and support needs should be identified to meet the job’s requirements. It is also important to ensure that regular home workers do not feel cut off from the usual development and promotion opportunities.

9.3 Training that might be useful for the home worker includes:

- Skills training e.g. to operate equipment
- Self-management – e.g. time management, communications, career management
- Allocation of a “mentor” or “buddy” i.e. someone who has experience of homeworking and who provides an additional point of informal contact

9.4 Training that might be useful for someone managing a regular home worker includes:

- Performance management for homeworkers: management by objectives, setting performance standards, performance feedback etc.
- Managing communication networks
- Career management

9.5 It is important to establish an agreed communication plan when someone is working at home. It may be that the home worker is not to be contacted unless there is an emergency (to allow them to focus on a piece of work). Or it may be that contact

should be as normal (i.e. phone calls and emails), in which case which phone numbers should be shared, or perhaps an office mobile be taken for the day.

9.6 The manager needs to agree the circumstances in which a visit to the homeworker might be necessary or desirable and gain agreement from the homeworker to permit such access.

10.0 Equipment and Information Technology

10.1 Employees and managers should refer to the appropriate ICT guidance and policies on remote working in regard to equipment and support. If someone is regularly working from home it may be appropriate to consider whether they should be allocated a council laptop.

11.0 Insurance

11.1 Home workers should:

- Immediately advise their manager of any loss or damage to council property. All losses involving theft or malicious damage should also be reported to the police and the police reference taken.
- Advise their manager of any injuries to themselves or to a third party, which occur whilst carrying out their official duties. Do not admit liability under any circumstances.
- Ensure that any vehicle used is insured in respect of business use. Anyone in doubt about the adequacy of their insurance should contact their insurance adviser. In some cases an additional premium may be charged. The law makes the driver responsible for ensuring that proper insurance is in force. The council does not hold any insurance for the benefit of employees driving privately owned cars.
- Check whether or not their own personal buildings or contents insurances are affected by using part of their home for a business purpose. If in any doubt they should contact their insurance adviser. Home workers should also ensure that any lease, mortgage arrangements or tenancy agreements are not affected.

12.0 Health and safety

12.1 The council has a general duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and this applies whether employees are working in a conventional office, at home or remotely. This general duty is qualified by the principle of “so far as is reasonably practicable”.

12.2 The degree of risk in a particular job or workplace needs to be balanced against the time, trouble, cost and physical difficulty of taking measures to avoid or reduce the risk. Appendix 1, Health And Safety Requirements provides guidance on the Risk Assessment completion and processes that should be followed.

13.0 Security

- 13.1 Home working staff will be responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure the security of council equipment in their home.
- 13.2 Home working staff are responsible for ensuring that only they have access to council information and services (including internet access).
- 13.3 When working at home, staff will be responsible for making sure they comply with the Data Protection Act and meet data protection and corporate confidentiality requirements. No other person must use the council's equipment and server provided.

14.0 Travel

- 14.1 When an employee is working at or from home, journeys made to the "normal" working base will not normally be reimbursed.
- 14.2 For other journeys, where the starting or finishing point is the employee's home, the normal arrangements apply i.e. the normal home to work mileage will be deducted from any journey.

Appendix 1: Health and Safety Requirements - Guidance for Managers and Employees

Homeworking places joint responsibilities under Health and Safety Legislation on the Homeworker and the Authority. Prior to agreeing home based working, the following requirements must be met: What the law requires	Homeworker's responsibilities	Manager's responsibilities
Health, Safety & Welfare Employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of homeworkers	Ensure the home work-area remains safe, and report any concerns or risks to line manager immediately	With the member of staff, complete a risk assessment of the work activities and work area involved.
Electrical Equipment Employers are responsible for the maintenance of electrical equipment provided by the employer for use by a homeworker	To report any concerns about the safety or condition of electrical equipment provided for work use at home(e.g a laptop), so that maintenance can be carried out. Employees are responsible for their domestic electrical system, and for ensuring any personal equipment used for work is kept in good repair by a competent person	Ensure electrical equipment provided by for work use at home is checked annually for safety and maintenance.
Display Screen Equipment / VDU Employers have a duty to ensure display screen equipment used by homeworkers is safe and does not adversely affect the users health	Complete a DSE/workstation assessment to identify any adjustments or equipment required.	Provide equipment if required
First Aid Employers are responsible for the provision of a basic First Aid kit	Take steps to prevent accidents by ensuring the home work-area remains safe, and report any concerns or risks to line manager	Provide a basic first aid kit where there is regular home working.
Accidents Employers have a duty to ensure they are informed of work-related accidents, injuries, and dangerous occurrences	Take steps to prevent accidents by ensuring the work area at home remains safe. In the event of an accident associated with homeworking activity, this must be reported to line manager	Keep a record of work-related incidents using the appropriate accident report form.