



HOMEWORKING POLICY

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Policy

The Council recognises the advantages of home-based working although it doesn't suit everyone, and some job roles may not be appropriate to undertake at home.

This policy describes the working arrangements and expectations that will apply if you work from home.

Scope of this policy

It applies to all staff who are home-based whether full time, part time or fixed term. It does not apply to office-based staff who work from home on an ad-hoc basis. If you are considering whether to request home-based working, please refer to the Flexible Working Policy.

Safe working environment

Health and safety for home-based staff applies in the same way as office-based staff, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that you work in a safe manner and that you follow all health and safety instructions issued by us.

You must complete and submit a 'Home Based Workers Risk Assessment' to the Clerk. This is a checklist for you to identify any possible hazards in your home working area. Following completion of the checklist, measures may need to be taken to control any risks identified. This checklist should be completed annually, or more frequently if there are any changes to your arrangements such as new equipment or changes to your home-office space.

You must complete and submit a workstation risk assessment and ensure that this remains up-to-date. If you have any questions about the risk assessment, or if you identify any potential risks when carrying out the assessment, you should refer these to the Clerk in the first instance.

Some of the most important considerations include: -

- If possible, an area should be set aside from the rest of your living space to ensure that you are able to work from home without distractions,
- Your home office should have adequate space for you to work safely and comfortably,
- Your desk should be large enough to accommodate your equipment and paperwork,
- You should have sufficient storage and your workspace should be organised so equipment is close to hand,
- Your work area should be well lit, with natural lighting if possible,
- Equipment and sockets should be situated to avoid potential trip hazards, and,
- You must also ensure that you visually check the cables of any electronic equipment supplied to you regularly (and at least every 6 months) and report any defects.

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We reserve the right to visit you at home at agreed times for work-related purposes, including health and safety matters and to inspect, service or repair equipment (e.g. for PAT testing).

Facilities and equipment

The council may provide you with equipment for you to work from home and we will maintain and replace these items when necessary.

It is your duty to ensure that proper care is taken of the equipment provided to you and to let the Clerk know of any need to maintain or replace the equipment. Should the risk assessment identify any further equipment that is necessary, please discuss this with the Clerk.

All equipment provided by the council is for you to work safely and effectively at home and cannot be used for personal use by you or your family.

All equipment will belong to the council and you will be required to return it to us promptly should you leave our employment. If we are unable to make suitable arrangements, we may collect the equipment and any documents before your last day.

Hours of work

As a home-based worker, your contract of employment will specify the hours when we expect you to be at work and contactable by telephone or email. There may be times during the working day when you are not available in which case these should be flagged to the Clerk (or the Chair of the Council) with prior authorisation.

You must be mindful to take adequate rest breaks which should be, as a minimum:

- A break of at least 20 minutes during each working day over 6 hours,
- A daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, i.e. the time between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day, and,
- At least one complete day each week when no work is done.

Potential conflicts of interest

During your hours of work, the council expects that your work environment enables you to work effectively and that you are not distracted by domestic matters. It is not appropriate to combine homeworking with caring for a dependant.

If there is an emergency and you need to attend to a non-work matter, then you should notify the Clerk (see the Dependant Leave Policy).

Data protection

As a home-worker you are responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with the council secure at all times. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to:

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- Keep filing cabinets and drawers locked when they are not being used,
- Keep all documentation belonging to us in the locked filing cabinet at all times except when in use,
- Set up and use a unique password for the laptop computer, and,
- Ensure that documents are saved to the server rather than the laptop computer's hard drive.

Furthermore, the laptop computer and other equipment provided by us must be used only for work-related purposes and must not be used by any other member of the family at any time or for any purpose.

If you have a telephone conversation where you are discussing confidential work matters, you should ensure that such calls take place in privacy to avoid inadvertent breach of confidentiality.

Visits to work premises

On occasions you may need to attend council offices for training, performance assessment meetings, team briefings etc. This will normally not be frequent, and the dates and times of such visits will be agreed in advance.

Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements

Whilst our Employer's Liability Insurance extends to home based staff, and any council equipment installed in your home will also be covered, you should ensure that any agreement with your landlord or mortgage lender allows you to work from home, and that your house buildings and contents insurance will not be invalidated by you working from home.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

Date of policy: March 2020

Approving committee: Full Council

Date of committee meeting: 13th March 2020

Policy version reference: v.1.0

Policy effective from: 13th March 2020

— policy ends here —

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Notes

The Good Councillor's guide to being a good employer provides advice and guidance around how to manage a homeworker.

Guidance

Where there is text in [square brackets] this part may be updated or be deleted if not relevant. An alternative option may have been provided.

Important notice

This is an example of an employment policy designed for a small council adhering to statutory minimum requirements and does not constitute legal advice. As with all policies it should be consistent with your terms and conditions of employment.

This document was commissioned by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in 2019 for the purpose of its member councils and county associations. Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this document are correct at time of publication. NALC cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions and changes to information subsequent to publication.

This document has been written by the HR Services Partnership – a company that provides HR advice and guidance to town and parish councils. Please contact them on 01403 240 205 for information about their services.

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Home Working Risk Assessment Template

Use the following simple risk assessment to find out how safe your home working space is. Take a look at the risks in the first column and answer 'yes' or 'no' as applicable and then make a note of what needs to be done to reduce or remove risk if necessary.

Date: _____ Assessor: _____

Location of Assessment: _____

Risk	Yes / No	Action Required
Desk Area		
Do you have adequate space to work comfortably?		
Is there enough space underneath your desk to stretch your legs?		
Are there trailing electrical cables around your working area that need to be tied up?		
Is your working area warm, well-lit and well-ventilated?		
Do you need to a desk lamp to improve lighting?		
Is your working area clutter free so that you can focus easily on the task?		
Display Screen Set-Up		
Is your desk chair set up correctly? Is your lower back supported, are there armrests and are you feet flat on the floor?		
Do you have enough surface space on your desk to work comfortably?		
Are your keyboard and mouse clean and within easy reach, without having to stretch?		
Is your display screen clean and positioned so there is no glare from a window or light?		
Is your display screen level with your eyes so it doesn't cause discomfort to your neck or head?		
Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?		
Fire and Electrical Safety		
Are smoke detectors working and checked regularly e.g. every month?		
Do you regularly dispose of waste, including papers, to prevent a build-up of fire 'fuel'?		
Does any electrical equipment spark or show signs of burns and so needs removing from use?		
Do any wires look damaged or frayed and so need removing from use?		
Do you regularly inspect your electrical equipment to check for signs of wear and tear?		

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Do you switch off equipment when not in use?		
Do you have emergency arrangements in place in case of fire?		
Stress and Welfare		
Do you take regular breaks away from your workstation?		
Do you carry out regular stretches at your desk to avoid stiff or sore muscles?		
Do you sit with good posture or are you hunched over the desk?		
Do you have easy access to first aid equipment if required?		
If you regularly use a computer, do you have your eyes tested every year?		
Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?		
Manual Handling		
Are all items that you need for work within easy reach?		
Are heavy items stored on lower shelves to avoid the need for lowering them?		
Do you know how to correctly pick up, carry and lower heavy items?		
Slips, Trips and Falls		
Are floor coverings, such as carpets and rugs, secure?		
Do you frequently carry hot drinks and food upstairs/downstairs and risk tripping?		
Are stairways and corridors clear of trip hazards?		
Is the floor area around your desk clear of boxes, papers and wires?		
Lone Working		
Are you familiar with your employer's lone working health and safety policy?		
Do you know the name and number of a manager or supervisor who you can get in touch with easily?		
Do you have a system for regularly 'checking in' with your employer if you are not visibly online each day?		
Is your home kept secure whilst you're working there?		
Are important files and laptops kept locked away securely when not in use?		

Number of Actions Required: _____

Date Actions Completed: _____