

HOME WORKING POLICY

1.0 Policy

1.1 Home working is understood to mean working from home on an occasional, temporary or permanent basis. It simply means that employees conduct their job from home with the same contractual obligations as if they were office-based.

1.2 This policy describes the working arrangements and expectations that will apply to employees who work from home.

2.0 Scope of this policy

2.1 It applies to all staff who are home-based whether full time, part time or fixed term.

2.2 There are two main categories of home working:

a) Occasional/ad hoc home working

This arises in relation to specific pieces of work or for specific periods. It does not follow a regular pattern, is combined with working from the employee's normal Council workplace and is subject to the prior approval of the Council. It may be granted as part of a phased return to work after maternity or sickness absence, or be a temporary arrangement due to family commitments or domestic circumstances

b) Regular home working

This is an agreement between the Council and the employee to work permanently from home, or a combination of home working and attendance at a Council workplace, on a regular or ad hoc basis.

3.0 Safe working environment

3.1 Health and safety for home-based staff applies in the same way as office-based staff in that employees must work in a safe manner and follow all health and safety instructions issued by the Council.

3.2 The Council is responsible for ensuring that a home-worker's risk assessment is completed to identify any possible hazards in the 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 an employee's working arrangements, such as new equipment or changes to the home-office space.

3.3 Some of the most important considerations include:

- If possible, an area should be set aside from the rest of the living space to ensure the employee is able to work from home without distractions
- The home office should have adequate space for the employee to work safely and comfortably,
- The desk should be large enough to accommodate equipment and paperwork,
- The employee should have sufficient storage and the workspace should be organised so equipment is close to hand,
- The work area should be well lit, with natural lighting, if possible,
- Equipment and sockets should be situated to avoid potential trip hazards, and,
- Regular checks should be carried out to ensure the cables of any electronic equipment supplied are in good condition. Any defects should be reported to the Council.

3.4 A specific risk assessment shall be carried out where an employee informs the Council that they are pregnant. In order for this to take place, home working employees who become pregnant should notify the Council of their pregnancy as quickly as possible.

3.5 The Council reserves 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).

3.6 If an employee moves home, the Council must ensure that a new risk assessment is carried out.

3.7 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.

4.0 Facilities and equipment

4.1 The Council will provide the employee with the necessary equipment to carry out their role. The Council will maintain and replace these items when necessary. Equipment to be provided could include:

- Desk
- Office chair
- Lockable and fire-proof filing cabinet
- Printer/scanner/photocopier
- Mobile telephone
- Computer

4.2 All equipment provided by the Council is for the employee to work safely and effectively at home and cannot be used for personal use by the employee or any member of their family.

4.3 All equipment will remain the property of the Council and the employee will be required to return it on their last day of employment. If the Council is unable to make suitable arrangements, it may have to collect the equipment, and any documents held by the employee, before their last day of employment.

5.0 Hours of work

5.1 Employees are responsible for ensuring they complete their working hours as defined in their contracts of employment.

5.2 Employees are responsible for ensuring they take any rest breaks they are entitled to by virtue of their terms and conditions of employment. This might include:

- 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.

6.0 First aid

6.1 First aid equipment will be provided by the Council for the homeworker. Employees are covered under the Council's accident insurance policy whilst working in their home. Accidents must be reported immediately to the Clerk.

7.0 Data protection

7.1 A home-worker employee is responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with the Council secure at all times. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to:

- Keep filing cabinets and drawers locked when they are not being used,
- Keep all documentation belonging to the Council 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.

7.2 If an employee has a telephone conversation in which confidential matters relating to the Council are discussed, the employee must ensure that such calls take place in privacy to avoid inadvertent breach of confidentiality.

8.0 Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements

8.1 Whilst the Council's Employer's Liability Insurance extends to home-based staff and any Council equipment installed in the home will also be covered. The employee should ensure that any agreement with their landlord or mortgage lender allows them to work from home, and that their house buildings and contents insurance will not be invalidated by working from home.