



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Homeworking - Guidance for Managers and Staff

*09 November 2021*



# Introduction

The following guidance has been developed to supplement the SPCB's Home Working Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It sets out some of the key considerations which should be taken into account in relation to home working and answers some of the most frequently asked questions. It is not intended, however, to cover all eventualities which may arise and professional advice on individual circumstances should be sought via the [HR Enquiry Service](#) on Extension 86500.

Specific guidance on the health and safety issues associated with home working is available from the Health and Safety Executive. Guidance on data protection can be found on the intranet and guidance on Security issues may be obtained from the Security Office. You are strongly encouraged to complete the on-line course "Use it, Don't Lose It" which covers information security and confidentiality.

## What are the potential benefits of home working?

For a member of staff, the potential benefits are:

- Whilst home working is not an alternative to a caring arrangement, it can provide increased flexibility to work at times which are compatible with personal commitments (for example, childcare and/or eldercare)
- Ability to focus on tasks without interruptions; and
- Reduced travelling time and costs

Home Working may also be an appropriate reasonable adjustment for staff experiencing a physical or mental disability, on the advice of Occupational Health.

For the organisation, the potential benefits are:

- Increased staff productivity, efficiency, flexibility and morale;
- Retention of key skills and talent;
- Savings in office space, facilitating opportunities for "hot desking" and office sharing where appropriate;
- Reduction in the impact of issues associated with travel difficulties including punctuality, missed meetings and additional pressure on the member of staff;
- Reduction in absence levels;
- Contribution to environmental objectives (and wider societal environmental gains through reduction in use of transport etc); and
- Support staff in managing issues relating to physical and mental health and wellbeing.



## **Are there any potential disadvantages?**

Yes, and it is important to be aware of these as the way in which these issues are managed can determine the success or otherwise of a home working arrangement. For a member of staff, the potential disadvantages are:

- Home working inevitably means reduced face-to-face contact with colleagues which can result in feelings of isolation and disconnect from the organisation;
- Despite best efforts on both parts, you may "miss" communication or not receive key messages in the same way or at the same time as colleagues;
- Using your home as workplace means there is less of a clear divide between your personal life and your work responsibilities;
- Problems may be encountered with IT connectivity and access to technical support; and
- Some colleagues may have negative attitudes towards home working and not see it as a legitimate form of work which improves productivity.

For the organisation, the potential disadvantages are:

- Up-front costs of supporting the establishment of a home office in the case of contractual home working;
- It can be more difficult for the line manager to co-ordinate tasks and monitor outputs;
- Difficulties in arranging meetings and training to tie in with the home workers' office based time and ensuring appropriate office cover; and
- The member of staff's contribution to team activities can be affected.

The challenges of home working will vary according to the form of home working undertaken; the balance between home and office based work, the role, the individual and support from management and colleagues. There will therefore be different issues for each home worker and manager to deal with. Managers should pay particular attention to scheduling and planning work appropriately, setting clear objectives and timescales, monitoring the quality and volume of work and providing appropriate and regular feedback. Professional advice and guidance tailored to individual circumstances is available from your HR Adviser.

## **Which posts are suitable for home working?**

Posts which may be suitable for home working include those where:

- The physical location is incidental;
- All or part of the role can be performed autonomously, without close supervision;
- All or some of the key activities of the role require little or no face-to-face interaction with other staff or customers; and
- All or some of the key activities of the role require dedicated focus and concentration.



## **What types of activity are suitable for Home Working?**

The types of activity which may be appropriate to Home Working include, for example:

- Strategy and development
- Report writing
- Management planning
- Short-listing
- Preparing for meetings and follow-up activity
- Data input
- Research
- Word processing

Successful Home Working requires particular skills including the ability to effectively organise and prioritise work, manage your time and communicate with others. Training may be provided as appropriate to support development in relevant areas.

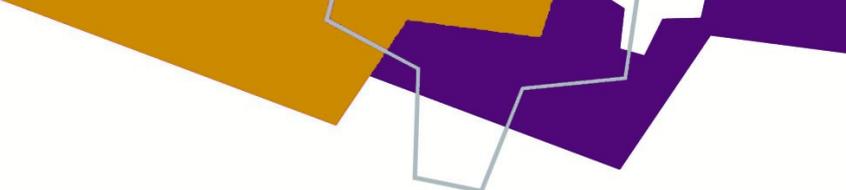
## **I am considering applying for Home Working but I am not sure such an arrangement will suit me. What should I consider in assessing my own suitability for this mode of working?**

Working from home places a different set of demands on an individual. You should take into account your:

- Ability to work independently with reduced face to face contact;
- Ability to motivate yourself and the discipline to manage your work from home;
- Ability to organise work effectively and not allow work to disrupt your personal life outside your normal working hours;
- Preferred working style; and
- Ability to manage the challenges home working can bring as set out above.

You should also consider if you have a suitable working space and privacy at home and if you are prepared to regularly check that your home environment meets health and safety requirements.

If you consider that training in areas such as communication skills and effective time management would assist you in managing the challenges associated with home working, you should discuss this with your line manager.



## **As a manager, what do I need to take account of in considering whether or not to grant a request for contractual home working?**

Balanced consideration needs to be given to the potential advantages and disadvantages of the arrangement and the ways in which any adverse impact can be managed and overcome. There must be a clearly focussed business case for home working, for example, relating to productivity.

Factors to take account of, in consultation with your HR Adviser include:

- The suitability of the job to home working and the portion of the job which can be carried out independently;
- The suitability of the member of staff to home working including reference to attendance, performance and conduct records. Home working requires a high degree of trust in the professionalism and integrity of the member of staff concerned;
- The suitability of the home (based on the risk assessment);
- The benefits to the member of staff and the organisation;
- The potential impact on service delivery and the wider team, for example, how any line management responsibilities the member of staff has might be carried out as part of a home working arrangement.;
- Any additional expenditure likely to be incurred by the Group through this arrangement such as specific equipment and materials and whether sufficient funds exist to support these upfront costs;
- How the individual is going to manage the joint responsibilities of work and caring (where applicable); and
- The potential impact on the member of staff's health and wellbeing.

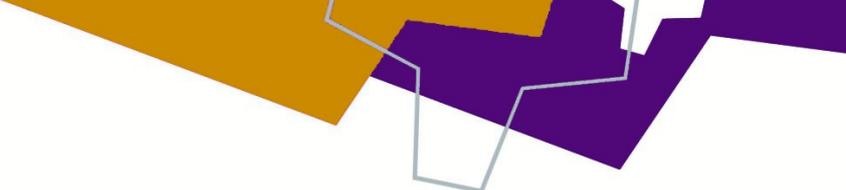
## **What does the health and safety risk assessment process entail?**

The risk assessment process involves 5 steps:

- Identifying any hazards;
- Identifying whether anyone might be harmed; and, if so, how;
- Assessing any identified risks and appropriate action to remove them as far as possible;
- Recording the findings; and
- Checking the risks from time to time and if necessary, taking further steps as required.

## **Are there any particular considerations in relation to the use of display screen equipment at home?**

The SPCB is committed to ensuring that the display screen equipment (VDU) which you use is safe and does not affect your health. Equally you must ensure that your work station is adjusted to a comfortable position and that you take regular breaks away from your display screen.



**I note that one of the potential disadvantages of home working is a feeling of isolation from the workplace. What proactive steps can be taken to counteract this?**

Regular communication is the key to combating the sense of isolation which can accompany home working. It is important that a home worker is afforded the same opportunities to discuss and develop ideas and consider solutions to problems as office-based staff. This can be achieved through:

- Regular briefings through telephone and email;
- Regular review of and feedback on work;
- Taking the opportunity to catch up with the home worker on a face to face basis on days when they are based in the office;
- Scheduling team meetings and training on days where home workers are office based, as far as reasonably practicable; and
- Ensuring home workers are invited to social events.

The home worker also has responsibilities in relation to communication. If, as a home worker, reduced social contact and isolation are proving problematic to you, you should inform your line manager at the earliest opportunity. He or she will discuss and agree with you an appropriate course of action for combating this.

It is important to note that members of staff have a right to privacy in their personal time and should be able to separate their working and personal lives. Excepting an emergency situation, staff should not be contacted outwith their designated working hours.

**As a manager, what issues do I need to address in managing the impact of home working on the rest of the team and customers?**

No role exists completely in isolation. It is inevitable, therefore that a home working arrangement will have some impact on colleagues. For a home working arrangement to work effectively, these issues need to be considered and carefully managed to ensure there is no detriment from the arrangements to colleagues and customers. Issues to be considered include:

- Changes that may be required to current work processes;
- Means of communication between colleagues;
- Processes for assigning tasks to the member of staff;
- Processes for submitting completed work; and
- Ensuring agreed arrangements are clearly communicated to colleagues.



**As a home worker, what action can I take to ensure there is an appropriate separation between my work and home life?**

The following actions may assist you to achieve an appropriate separation between your work and your home life:

- Discussing the matter with your partner and/or other household members to ensure domestic distractions do not impact on your work;
- Working regular hours and clearly separating "work" and "home" time;
- Having a self-contained work area within your home;
- Turning off work equipment when not in use to avoid the temptation to check email messages, for example;
- Clearing work equipment out of sight when not working;
- Leaving the home environment for a short period, for example, going for a walk between "work" and "home" time.

**If I move home, are there any implications for my home working arrangements?**

Yes, you should inform your Head of Group/Office and line manager as early as possible. A new health and safety risk assessment will require to be carried out and arrangements made in terms of reinstallation of equipment. In such circumstances, your home working arrangements may have to be suspended temporarily to allow appropriate time for these actions to be taken.

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***For further information contact:***

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