

Home Working (Flexible Working and Worksmart) Guidance Notes

Introduction

Home working, also known as Flexible Working and Worksmart, is part of the wider modern working agenda and, as such, has many aspects that support and encourage a healthy and safe working environment shown to improve personal wellbeing; these allow:-

- Flexibility of work location that can improve time management and work life balance
- Choice of environment within a location
- People to alternate between home and office or withing offices rather than stay at a fixed workstation

There are a number of factors that will have a bearing on the suitability, or otherwise, of staff to work from home; health & safety being just one. To this end the policies covering modern working and more specifically home working are considered HR policies which will require input from the health, safety & wellbeing team.

Home working as with modern working can create challenges which if not addressed can present an increased risk to the health, safety & wellbeing of those affected. However with a sensible, risk based approach and pragmatic assessment and management of the proposed working environment there should be no health and safety issues that give cause for concern.

For the purposes of this guidance it is considered that there are 3 categories of home worker:

- The occasional home worker who is generally office based but might on occasion take some work home but not on a regular basis,
- The regular home worker is defined as someone who spends upwards of 40% of their working time at home, and
- The permanent home worker who has no office base in Council premises and works from home all the time unless out visiting sites or clients etc.

The significance of the health and safety risks associated with each category of homeworker will vary and therefore the precautions deemed necessary to manage those risks will reflect that variation. The table at Annex A details the requirements for each category. Note that the requirements for occasional home working are limited to providing general guidance on the use of DSE and the PAT testing of any equipment provided by the Council.

Legal Requirements

The two key pieces of health and safety legislation regarding home working are The Health and Safety at Work Act and The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. The former places general duties on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees and the latter requires the assessment of workplace risks. Both duties extend to

employees working remotely and from home. There are also more specific pieces of legislation covering display screen equipment, work equipment, use of hazardous substances, manual handling, fire and electricity; all of which may apply to a greater or lesser extent dependant on the nature of the home working.

Line Managers' Duties

Before considering allowing staff to work from home on a regular or permanent basis line managers must:

- Be aware of the health and safety issues relating to home working
- Ensure that a home working request form and self assessment checklist are completed
- Ensure the employee has a permanent home address from where the home working will take place
- Ensure arrangements are in place to regularly review the arrangements
- Consider the suitability of the individual for home working

Any regular or permanent home working arrangement must not commence until a risk assessment has been undertaken.

Note: Persons under 18 must also have a Young Persons Risk Assessment carried out prior to the commencement of any home working arrangements.

If, as a result of the risk assessment there are sufficient concerns regarding the suitability of the home working location, management will have the right to refuse the home working request.

Employees' Duties

Whilst working from home employees must:

- Take reasonable care of their own, and others, health and safety whilst home working and follow safe working practices
- Provide a suitable location at home
- Provide and maintain in safe condition the necessary equipment including, where appropriate, a legally compliant workstation and chair
- Co-operate with their line manager in carrying out the necessary home working assessment checklist (See Annex B)
- Remain contactable by the office and their manager during agreed 'contact' Times
- Report problems, incidents, accidents or unsafe conditions to their manager promptly, particularly any health and safety or security matters
- Ensure arrangements are in place to regularly review the arrangements

Factors Affecting the Health, Safety & Wellbeing of Home Workers

General Workplace Layout:

The workstation layout should include:

- A suitable place to work, properly lit, heated and ventilated and free from distractions

- A large enough working area to accommodate appropriate home working equipment for example a computer, desk and chair plus associated office equipment if required
- A working area which is used by the home worker only during agreed working hours, e.g. if the working area is in a family living room it is not acceptable for members of the family or others to use the room during the agreed working hours

Display Screen Equipment

Where display screen equipment is used the workstation must be assessed using the Council's DSE assessment form ([Hyperlink to DSE Forms and guidance](#)).

Personal Safety / Security

Home workers must not meet any customers or agents in their home and must not release their home address or home phone number to people not employed by Cornwall Council or its partners. For business contact purposes, a council phone number must be made available.

Stress

Individual home workers and line managers should be aware that home working may affect their wellbeing from the working alone and isolation viewpoints. It is therefore very important that regular communication and other relevant support mechanisms are in place to mitigate these risk factors. Both staff and line managers should be familiar with the relevant policies on home working and stress management.

Accident Reporting

Employees working at home must inform their manager in the event of accidents, incidents or dangerous occurrences. Initial reports should be by telephone followed by the appropriate recording on the Council's accident reporting system.

Hazardous Substances

If home working involves the use of hazardous then COSHH assessments must be carried out for all substances used.

Fire Safety

It is recommended that all persons working from home have a smoke detector fitted which should be regularly checked.

Insurance

Home working arrangements are covered by Cornwall Council's Employers Liability Insurance. If IT equipment is to be loaned to the employee, arrangements must be made to notify the insurers via the Finance Section. Home workers must advise both their insurance and mortgage companies of any home working arrangements agreed with Cornwall Council.

Annex A. Home Working Health and Safety Requirements

| | Occasional Home Worker | Regular Home Worker | Permanent Home Worker |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Home working request form | N | Y | Y |
| Guidance on DSE use (including laptops) | Y | Y | Y |
| DSE Part 1 self assessment | N | Y | Y |
| DSE Part 2 Departmental DSE Assessor | N | N * | Y ** |
| DSE Part 3 | N | N | If required by DSE 2 |
| Line manager visit | N | N | If required |
| PAT testing electrical equipment provided by Cornwall Council | Y | Y | Y |
| Visual inspection of electrical equipment by home worker | Y | Y | Y |
| General Home Working Self Assessment Checklist | N | Y | Y |
| Smoke detector fitted | N | N | Y |
| Home worker training session | N | Y | Y |

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A regular home worker is someone who spends upwards of 40% of their working time at home.

A permanent home worker is someone who has no office base in Council premises and works from home all the time unless out visiting sites or clients etc

* If no problems highlighted in the DSE Part 1 then a photograph of the home working area and work station must be provided.

** Forced breaks may be built into computer software

Annex B. Home Working Self Assessment Checklist

Thank you for completing this form. It will be used to assist your line manager and the health, safety and wellbeing team in assessing whether your working conditions at home comply with current best practice.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Name: | | Date of Completion: | |
| Address: | | Job Title: | |
| | | Department: | |

| Subject Area | Yes | No | N/A | Comments |
|--|-----|----|-----|----------|
| Fire | | | | |
| Is the work area tidy? | | | | |
| Are waste materials regularly disposed of? | | | | |
| Are exit routes clear? | | | | |
| Do you have an escape plan? | | | | |
| Is a smoke alarm fitted? | | | | |
| Do you have a suitable fire extinguisher readily at hand? | | | | |
| Have you been trained how to use it safely? | | | | |
| Electrical Equipment | | | | |
| Is there any apparent damage to cables or casing? | | | | |
| Is there evidence of overheating (look for discolouration)? | | | | |
| Is there any damage to plugs or sockets? | | | | |
| Are cables secure in all plugs? | | | | |
| Is all Council supplied equipment in date for annual PAT testing? | | | | |
| Slips, Trips and Falls | | | | |
| Are floor coverings sound and without defects? | | | | |
| Are walkways clear of obstruction and tripping hazards (e.g. trailing leads)? | | | | |
| Display Screen Equipment (DSE) | | | | |
| Have you completed Part 1 of the DSE assessment form? | | | | |
| Has Part 2 of the DSE assessment form been completed for you work station (Permanent home workers only)? | | | | |
| Has Part 3 of the DSE assessment form been completed (only if | | | | |

| Subject Area | Yes | No | N/A | Comments |
|--|-----|----|-----|----------|
| required as a result of Part 2). | | | | |
| Have you seen the Council's guidance on use of DSE (including laptops, notebooks, PDAs etc)? | | | | |
| Have you seen the Council's other guidance on safe use of DSE (comfortable seating, zones of reach etc)? | | | | |
| Security | | | | |
| Do you carry a Council provided mobile phone. | | | | |
| Do you require a personal attack alarm? | | | | |
| Do you ensure your doors are kept locked if your work station is in a position where you cannot see or hear anyone approach? | | | | |
| Do you operate a call in procedure with your line manager | | | | |
| Do you ensure that you do not give out your address or personal phone details? | | | | |
| Have you facilities to ensure that any confidential files taken home can be locked away when not in use? | | | | |
| Working Environment | | | | |
| Is the temperature comfortable (Minimum 16°C)? | | | | |
| Do you have adequate lighting including task lighting (desk lamp etc) as necessary? | | | | |
| Is the level of ventilation comfortable (e.g. no draughts)? | | | | |
| Accidents / First Aid | | | | |
| Do you know the procedure for reporting accidents or work related injury / illness? | | | | |
| Do you have a first aid kit available at home? | | | | |
| Manual Handling | | | | |
| Do you carry out any significant manual handling activities associated with your home working? | | | | |
| Have you attended any manual handling training? | | | | |
| Driving | | | | |
| Do you drive on business? | | | | |
| Is your vehicle insured for business use? | | | | |
| Does your vehicle have a valid MOT certificate where required? | | | | |

| Subject Area | Yes | No | N/A | Comments |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| Do you hold a current driving licence? | | | | |
| Personal Wellbeing | | | | |
| Do you suffer from any medical condition that may affect your ability to work from home? | | | | |
| Are you aware of the Council's policy on stress management? | | | | |
| Hazardous Substances | | | | |
| Will you be using any hazardous substances whilst working from home? | | | | |
| If so, have you seen the relevant COSHH assessment for their use? | | | | |
| Do you require and personal protective equipment and if so has it been provided? | | | | |

| List of Equipment Provided by Cornwall Council | | Serial / Model Number Where Relevant | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| | | | |
| Any Other Comments Regarding Your Home Working Environment | | | |
| | | | |
| Home Worker Signature: | | Date: | |
| Line Manager Signature: | | Date: | |