**Homeworking policy**

**Policy statement**

Employees may undertake some of their duties away from one of the Company’s workplaces or away from their normal place of work, for a number of reasons and with varying degrees of frequency.

The Company recognises that homeworking can be beneficial for individuals and, to this end, will seek to accommodate it wherever possible.

Homeworking 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, such as core working hours.

There are two main categories of homeworking:

* occasional/ad hoc homeworking: 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 Company workplace and is subject to the prior approval of a line manager. 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
* regular homeworking: this is an agreement between the Company and the employee to work the working week from home, or a combination of homeworking and attendance at a Company workplace, on a regular and on-going basis.

Whatever the circumstances leading to a situation where Company employees have been granted permission or recruited to work from home, this policy applies and all employees much comply with the requirements set out below.

Please note that this policy should not be taken as forming an employment contract and may be updated at any time.

**Eligibility**

Employees are eligible to apply for homeworking in the following circumstances:

* where the employee has successfully completed the probationary period attached to their job role
* where the employee’s role does not involve supervisory duties that require undertaking in person alongside the team members involved
* where their home environment is suitable
* no aspect of the employee’s recent appraisal was marked as unsatisfactory
* the employee’s disciplinary record is clean.

Applications for homeworking will be granted where the employee’s line manager is satisfied that the needs of the business can continue to be met while the employee works from home.

Homeworking must be cost-effective and ensure that there is no significant increase in workload on colleagues. The work done by the employee must be capable of being done from home.

The line manager may liaise with the HR Department in relation to applications for homeworking, to confirm the arrangements.

**Making homeworking applications**

Employees that wish to apply for homeworking, either permanently or on a temporary basis, should submit an application to their line manager.

Homeworking may invalidate an employee’s home contents insurance policy. Employees are required to check the policy prior to applying and, if successful, provide a copy of the policy wording and schedule to their line manager if their application is granted.

**Occasional/ad hoc homeworking applications**

The application should set out the reasons for requesting homeworking.

Examples may include a project or set of tasks that requires peace and quiet and a lack of interruptions. A backlog of tasks or a major project may also give rise to an employee wishing to request homeworking.

There may be family commitments such as the long term illness of a relative or dependant. In this situation, we would also ask that you refer to the Company’s policy on time off for dependants.

There could be issues relating to the recovery from mental or physical illnesses which may make a request for homeworking conducive to the smooth recovery of the employee.

Various transport considerations may give rise to a request for homeworking.

**Regular homeworking applications**

Prior to making an application, employees must discuss their proposed application with their line manager. In such a discussion, the employee should consider the following aspects of the formal application and discuss any issues arising from the points below with their line manager informally.

Once a discussion has been held by the employee’s line manager, the employee should submit a formal application, which should address the following points:

* confirmation that the employee meets the eligibility criteria for homeworking
* the date from which the arrangements are intended to start (at least *[insert time period]* from the date of the application)
* the proposed number of days to work from home - the whole working week, or only certain days
* proposed hours of work
* the proposed organisation of the home working environment - available separate room, security arrangements for Company equipment and Company materials/documentation
* extent of availability to attend the workplace, for meetings, cover colleague absences etc
* how the employee proposes that contact will be maintained with their line manager.

As part of the application, you should demonstrate how you will achieve the following:

* managing workload independently
* self-motivation and working to own initiative
* adapting to the different working practices involved
* problem-solving and different pressures associated with working alone
* adapting to different methods of being line managed and liaising with colleagues.

**Application decisions**

The Company aims to respond to formal applications for homeworking within *[insert time period]* of the application being received by your line manager.

Line managers may need to meet with the employee to discuss the issues arising from the application. The Company's *[delete as appropriate - Health and Safety Officer/Occupational Health]* will likely visit the employee’s home to carry out a risk assessment.

**Accepted applications**

If the line manager accepts the employee’s application, written confirmation will be provided and a Homeworking Agreement will be issued for the employee to sign and return.

Each request is considered on its own merits. The Company is under no obligation to permit a period of homeworking at a present time because it has agreed to it in the past.

**Rejected applications**

If the line manager is unable to accept the employee’s application, the reasons for the rejection will be issued in writing to the employee. The employee may appeal the decision within 5 working days of the decision being issued. The reasons for the appeal should be set out in writing and sent to the senior manager specified on the rejection communication.

**Homeworking agreements and trial period**

Accepted applications will be subject to the signing of a Homeworking Agreement and the successful completion of a trial period.

The aim of the trial period is for both the employee and the Company to evaluate whether the new working arrangements set out in the Homeworking Agreement work as expected.

At the end of the trial period, the line manager will meet with the employee to evaluate the success of the trial. The line manager will determine whether the trial has been successful and confirm that the Homeworking Agreement may continue. During the trial period, or at the evaluation meeting, either side may propose reasonable amendments to the terms of the Homeworking Agreement to facilitate a smoother working arrangement. The Company reserves the right to terminate the Homeworking Agreement by declaring the trial has been successful if proposed amendments are unreasonable, unworkable, no amendments can be implemented or the employee’s work output, quality, oversight etc suffered to the detriment of the Company.

**Homeworking agreement**

The homeworking agreement drawn up during the application process, and bespoke to the employee’s circumstances, sets out the terms of the arrangement for the employee to work from home. It will reflect the following points, subject to any modification agreed during the trial, as well as the practical considerations to enable the homeworking to operate smoothly:

* the Company reserve the right to terminate the homeworking arrangement at any time for any reason on reasonable notice
* employees are required to be available during the core hours specified in their homeworking agreement
* if any issue arises that causes an employee to no longer meet the eligibility criteria at the outset of this policy, the Company will review the homeworking arrangement and may terminate it on reasonable notice
* the homeworking arrangements will be subject to regular review
* employees working from home will be expected to attend meetings and other office-based events as and when required by their line manager
* employees working from home are required to comply with Company policies, including holiday, performance targets, sickness, absence etc.

**Homeworking practical arrangements**

The Company supplies homeworkers with the necessary equipment relevant to their job role. The equipment remains the Company’s property and will be installed and removed at the Company’s cost. The Company may need to attend the employee’s home to update, maintain or repair/replace the equipment and will give the employee reasonable notice of the need for this.

Employees should take reasonable care of the Company equipment and only use it for Company business. IT and telephony equipment may only be used in accordance with the Company’s IT, telephony, data protection and monitoring policies.

Personal equipment that an employee uses for work purposes remains their responsibility and the Company is not liable for any loss, damage, repair or replacement of any personal equipment. If an item of equipment is deemed necessary for work, the employee should contact their line manager.

Employees should maintain regular contact with their line manager so that the Company can work towards early resolution of any problems. This applies to problems with Company equipment and also in relation to the ongoing suitability of the homeworking arrangement; pressures and stress occur equally to homeworkers as they do to those working at the Company’s offices and the Company encourages the early reporting of these issues so that practical steps can be considered and implemented to the mutual agreement of both the homeworker and the line manager.

The costs of electricity, water, heating, telephone, broadband and other utilities will not be covered by the Company. These costs will remain the employee’s responsibility.

Employees must keep Company data and Company materials safe and secure at all times, ensuring reasonable precautions are being taken to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Data Protection policy.

Employees should refrain from revealing to customers/clients that they work from home. Employees must not provide their personal address or personal contact details customers/clients or third parties associated with the Company. Meetings between customers/clients and employees at home are prohibited. All communications should be routed through the Company workplaces.

[Optional] The Company will reimburse employees for their reasonable costs, including costs for travelling, subject to agreement from their line manager and the receipt of an expenses form.

**Health and safety for homeworkers**

The Company’s health and safety policy applies to homeworkers. Employees should refer to the separate health and safety policy for more details.

Homeworkers are required to comply with a number of health and safety considerations in respect of the space utilised as their workplace in their home environment. Homeworkers are required to attend the office to undergo health and safety training.

**Risk assessment**

A risk assessment will be undertaken to determine any relevant risks and to prevent harm to the homeworker or anyone else who may be affected by their work, in respect of the workplace itself and the working arrangements. The Company may need to check such workplaces from time to time as the homeworking arrangement proceeds. The Company may require self-assessment of the some aspects of the workplace and training may be provided as necessary. Any steps necessary from these various risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure the homeworker has a safe workplace.

A specific risk assessment will be done on employees who inform the Company that they are pregnant. In order for this to take place, homeworking employees who become pregnant should notify their line manager of their pregnancy immediately. More details about what to do are available in the Company’s policy on Pregnancy and Maternity.

**Moving home**

If employees move home, the homeworking arrangement will be reassessed. If the Company considers that the house move would make, or has made, homeworking unsuitable, this may result in the homeworking period coming to an end.

**Electrical equipment**

Homeworkers are required to use all equipment supplied by the Company safely and in accordance with best practice and manufacturer’s guidelines. The Company will check all Company electrical equipment for safety. Homeworkers will be responsible for any other electrical equipment used by them in their work activities and will continue to be responsible for the safety of electrical sockets and wiring in their home.

**Working hours**

Employees are responsible for ensuring they complete their working hours as defined in their contracts of employment. Each employee should complete at least *[insert number]* hours of work each day to be undertaken between the core hours of *[insert start time]* to *[insert end time]*.

**Working time**

Employees are responsible for ensuring they take their rest breaks as defined in their contracts of employment. Working time should be monitored and rest breaks of at least 20 minutes for every six hours of working should be taken.

**First aid**

First aid equipment will be provided by the Company for the homeworker. Employees are covered under the Company’s accident insurance policy in their home. Accidents must be reported immediately to the nominated person set out in the Company’s Health and Safety Policy. Employees are referred to this policy which contains details on the health and safety obligations including RIDDOR, HACCP and COSHH.

**Hazardous substances**

The safety of any substances provided by the Company to the homeworker will be suitably labelled with the appropriate information supplied in relation to any substances which are hazardous to health, so that employees can identify these.

**Positioning of equipment**

Training on the ergonomic positioning of IT equipment will be provided during the implementation of the homeworking arrangement, together with best practice guidance on breaks. The Company will provide checklists for this for the benefit of employees.

**Employee conduct**

If homeworking becomes unsuitable due to employee conduct or performance, the homeworking arrangement may be terminated immediately. Further disciplinary action may also be taken in line with Company policy.

**Homeworking abroad**

Employees who want to temporarily work from a different location that is not their usual home address, such as a holiday home abroad, must request the Company’s express written permission first, because this may impact on issues such as internet connection, service delivery, the employee’s ability to attend the office quickly if needed, data protection, the security of company property and the employee’s health and safety.