

Homeworking Policy

Key words:	HR010	
Version:	1.0	
Approved by:	CCG Governing Body	
Date approved:	November 2014	
Name and designation of author/originator:	GEM CSU Human Resources	
Name of responsible Committee:	CCG Governing Body	
Date issued for publication:	December 2014	
Review date:	October 2016	
Expiry date:	November 2016	
Target audience:	All staff	
Type of policy (tick appropriate box):	Non-clinical <input type="checkbox"/> ✓	Clinical <input type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory to read?	Non-clinical staff <input type="checkbox"/> ✓	Clinical staff <input type="checkbox"/> ✓
Which NHSLA Risk Management Standard(s)?	Not applicable	
Which relevant CQC standards (where applicable)?	Not applicable	

Version	Section/Para/Appendix	Version/Description of Amendments	Date	Author/	Version
---------	-----------------------	-----------------------------------	------	---------	---------

1.0		Adoption by CCG	Nov 14	HR	

HOMWORKING POLICY

1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The organisation supports homeworking in appropriate circumstances either occasionally (to respond to specific circumstances or to complete particular tasks) and in some cases on a regular basis to support improved organisational productivity and performance whilst helping employees to improve the quality of their working life and/or more effectively combine work with their other responsibilities.

In addition, occasional or permanent homeworking can, in certain circumstances, be a means of accommodating a disability and can be requested as a means of flexible working under the separate Flexible Working Policy. Circumstances may also arise when the organisation requires an employee to work from home for all or part of their working week.

- 1.2 This policy provides a general overview of homeworking as one of a range of flexible working arrangements adopted by the organisation. It sets out the criteria against which applications must be considered and identifies a number of issues which require thought before a decision to allow working from home is made by both the employee and employer.
- 1.3 All homeworking arrangements will be introduced on a 3 month trial basis in the first instance and will be subject to review annually.

2 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 The scheme potentially applies to all employees of the organisation.

3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Homeworking is defined as when an employee voluntarily uses their home as their work base on a regular basis. It could mean working a set number of days a week or a month on a formally agreed basis. It can also include occasional work from home on an informal or intermittent basis to accomplish a particular piece of work or to cope with specific domestic issues.
- 3.2 Homeworking is a practical consideration where an individual's work is self-regulated and is discrete to the extent that it can be undertaken outside the office.
- 3.3 Any job may be considered on its own merits. However, jobs that involve project work or identifiable output, or those which provide services within the community may particularly lend themselves to this type of work. Jobs that may not be suitable or practicable are those that provide a direct service to patients or the public.

4 POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF HOMWORKING

- 4.1 The purpose of the homeworking scheme is to allow working at or from home where this is appropriate and would achieve benefits for both the organisation and the employee.

4.2 Benefits for the organisation should include:

- Improved service delivery, eg quicker turnaround of tasks and/or higher quality through improved uninterrupted concentrated time
- Lower absenteeism
- Potential release of office accommodation
- Improved retention/recruitment of employees (eg people with disabilities or those with caring responsibilities)
- Encouragement of output focussed management by objectives
- Contribution to reducing environmental pollution and traffic congestion

4.3 Benefits for the employee should include:

- Extra flexibility in working hours providing potential for increased productivity
- Uninterrupted time to meet deadlines and targets
- Greater flexibility for combining work and domestic arrangements (but it is not a substitute for adequate childcare arrangements)
- Reduced travel time and costs

5 FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

5.1 A request for homeworking is unlikely to be approved, on either an occasional or permanent basis, if:

- The employee needs to be present in the workplace to perform their job (for example, because it involves a high degree of personal interaction with others or involves equipment that is only available in the workplace);
- The employee's most recent annual appraisal identifies any aspect of their performance as unsatisfactory;
- the line manager has advised the employee that their current standard of work or work production is unsatisfactory;
- the employee has an unexpired warning, whether relating to conduct or performance; or
- the employee needs supervision to deliver an acceptable quality and/or quantity of work.

5.2 Any employee wishing to apply to work from home will need to be able to show that they can:

- work independently, be self motivated and use their own initiative
- manage their workload effectively and complete work to set deadlines
- identify and resolve any new pressures created by working at home
- demonstrate a commitment from both manager and applicant to make the scheme a success

6 APPLICATION PROCESS

- 6.1 Applications for home working will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure outlined in the Flexible Working Policy. However, the employee and their manager will need to consider all of the issues highlighted above.
- 6.2 Where a request is agreed, the homeworking arrangement will be subject to review after 3 months to ensure that it is meeting both the needs of the service and the needs of the individual; if it does not, reversion to the previous working arrangements will be necessary.
- 6.3 Where a request is rejected, the employee has the right of appeal against the decision in accordance with the grievance procedure.

7 SPECIFIC CONDITIONS APPLYING TO HOMEWORKING

- 7.1 Homeworkers benefit from the same terms and conditions of service as comparable workers working from organisation premises. However, in order to take into account the particular working arrangements, an individual written agreement will also be necessary. In particular, it will be necessary to specify:
- Place of work including frequency/days worked at home
 - Hours of work. Greater flexibility within the limits of the Working Time Regulations may be possible than standard working times perhaps with specific times when homeworkers undertake to be working or to be contactable. There will need to be agreement about attendance for meetings or other business purposes at the organisation's premises.
 - Expenses claims
 - Procedures for reporting absence including sick leave, special/family leave and annual leave
 - Provision of and the conditions for use and security of equipment provided and data/documentation, including the organisation's IT policies
 - Health and Safety arrangements
 - Procedure for arrangements for a return to office based work, initiated either by the organisation or by the employee
- 7.2 The organisation will not make any contribution towards additional costs incurred at home (eg heat, light etc)
- 7.3 If the request for homeworking is approved, employees will be subject to the same performance measures and appraisal processes that apply to office based employees and care must be taken to ensure that objectives and outcomes are measurable through remote management.
- 7.4 Homeworking will not be approved until health and safety, welfare and ergonomic considerations are met satisfactorily. Further details are in Appendix 1 to this policy.

- 7.5 Homeworking, especially if it involves large parts of the week away from the workplace, can place particular stresses on individuals and may result in them feeling isolated or excluded. The organisation will, therefore, ensure that homeworkers are provided with relevant information and access to e-mail and the intranet. They will also be expected to attend relevant team meetings with their colleagues.
- 7.6 Feedback on performance is very important for homeworkers. It is important to ensure that mechanisms for the delivery of feedback are clearly defined and that regular discussions and one to one meetings are arranged to ensure that homeworkers are clear about what they are required to do and that they are not having difficulties in doing so.
- 7.7 Homeworkers must be given the same access to training and career development opportunities as comparable workers working permanently at the organisation's premises and are subject to the same appraisal processes as these other workers.
- 7.8 Homeworkers should be offered development opportunities relating to their specific job, core skills and, if required, self management skills.

8 SECURITY

- 8.1 Employees are reminded that they have a legal obligation to store information safely, to protect it from loss, destruction or damage. This requires storage that is secure against theft and damage, and the protection of systems from computer fraud and virus attacks.
- 8.2 There are significant security issues around staff using personal computers at home, and so the overriding principle is that the lap tops provided by the organisation should be used in all instances. If this is not possible, then discussions should occur between line manager and local ICT.
- 8.3 The standard criteria when using a non-NHS owned computer for home working is as follows:-
- 8.3.1 Employees should seek permission from their line manager and it should be agreed that it is safe and right to do so.
 - 8.3.2 All users of IT should read, understand and abide by the Computer Use Policy
 - 8.3.3 Documents should not contain patient, staff or commercially recognisable information.
 - 8.3.4 Documents should not be saved onto the home computer.
 - 8.3.5 Documents should be saved only to a storage device provided by the organisation.

- 8.3.6 Documents should be transferred to an NHS computer as soon as possible and then deleted from the storage device. These devices are scanned for viruses once they are plugged into any of the organisation's devices.
- 8.3.7 Only hardware, accessories media and software owned, leased and/or controlled by the organisation and any formally contracted 3rd parties may be used in any part of the organisation's Computer System.
- 8.3.8 Connecting Trust equipment to private communication links, such as broadband is possible with security tokens and the appropriate agreement and approval of your line manager who should also take into account the budget implications of using this type of connection. N3 support for clinical access should not be used for internet browsing.

9 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 9.1 Employees should never use their private PCs for working with any data related to patients, staff or the organisation's confidential work.
- 9.2 Employees have a duty of confidentiality in relation to the organisation's business and should ensure that no other person has access to any such information which they keep at home or in their cars in the execution of their work.
- 9.3 Home Faxes should not be used for sending confidential information as the information can be retained on the fax drive.
- 9.4 Employees have a duty to be aware of their responsibility for the confidential storage and destruction of information when working from home. All paper with e-mail addresses and organisational information should be shredded as a matter of course and not placed in domestic rubbish bins.

PRINCIPAL HEALTH AND SAFETY DUTIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Note: this is not an exhaustive list. This Schedule should be read in conjunction with the organisation's Health and Safety Policy.

1. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:

The organisation will carry out a risk assessment of the homeworker's working space/room prior to confirmation of a home-working agreement. A risk assessment will also be carried out on the work activities of homeworkers. A decision will be made in respect of each risk assessment whether sufficient steps have been taken to prevent harm to the homeworker or anyone else who may be affected by their work.

2. Electricity at Work Regulations 1989

The organisation will ensure that all of the electrical equipment provided for the homeworker's use has been checked for safety. Homeworkers will be responsible for any other electrical equipment used by them in the course of their work activities and for the safety of electrical sockets and electrical installations in their home.

3. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

The organisation will be responsible for checking the safety, including appropriate labelling, of all substances provided to the homeworker for the performance of their duties. Information will be given to homeworkers so that they may identify any substances hazardous to health which they are likely to encounter.

4. Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992

The organisation will provide training and information on the best ergonomic position of all VDU equipment, the importance of breaks from work, body posture and exercises for each homeworker. A checklist will also be provided for points to be considered when using VDUs at home.

5. First aid

The organisation will consider jointly with the homeworker the provision of first aid equipment.

6. Pregnant employees

Any homeworker who becomes pregnant will be required to their line manager of their pregnancy and undergo risk assessments in accordance with the Family Leave policy.

7. Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995

The organisation will advise all homeworking employees on the required process for notifying any injury and/or illness to the organisation.

8. Stress at work

Employees are required to notify their line manager if they feel they are suffering from stress at work as a result of their homeworking. They may be given a questionnaire to assist in assessing the stress they are under and to identify reasonably practicable steps that can be taken to reduce this.