



# Home Working Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Home working is a type of employment arrangement where staff members can do work at home instead of their workplace. It is an increasingly popular arrangement in the UK and realising the potential benefits from it, many employers operate it on various conditions.

There are two types of home working:

- **Contractual** home workers are employees based at home on a regular basis either for all their working week or part of it.
- **Occasional** home workers spend the majority of their time at their workplace but now and then may work from home, normally to perform a specific non-routine task that requires a high level of concentration with minimum interruptions. It can also be used in specific circumstances where an employee cannot get to their workplace but could still do the work (for instance an injury or bad weather). It is up to the employer to set parameters for occasional home working and determine each request on its own merit. This type of arrangement does not require contractual change and it can be withdrawn at any time.

ng homes recognises that occasional home working is a much more common arrangement and the flexibility and benefits it can bring to both the employer and the employee.

## 2. Principles

- 2.1** Benefit the business from creative solutions, ideas and projects by giving staff the opportunity to do these at home, without interruptions
- 2.2** Not to compromise the usual level of service offered to our customers
- 2.3** Set out the parameters to ensure the above conditions are met
- 2.4** Home working is not a substitute for suitable care arrangements

## 3. Home Working Parameters

For occasional home working the number of days working at home requires to be agreed with the line manager and HR. This will allow for consistency and fairness across the Association. Any request for home working must include detailed reasons for the request and the benefits to the Association.

When considering each request, the line manager will assess this against this policy and also take into account any business pressures at that time.

### Communication

Home working is a form of lone working. This means that there may be a risk that staff members may not have immediate access to another person for assistance or supervision if circumstances require.

To mitigate against this risk, staff that are working from home are required to:

- Keep their work calendar up-to-date so colleagues know where they are;
- Agree a schedule or protocol for keeping in touch with their manager. This would normally be on a daily basis. This is particularly important for ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff, especially staff that live alone;
- Be contactable by phone during working hours

## **Employees Who Are Carers**

Home working is not a substitute for suitable care arrangements. Staff members with dependents who need to be looked after by someone other than the employee when they are working should ensure that suitable care arrangements are in place to cover the time when they are working from home.

## **Performance Management**

Working from home presents a particular challenge to normal management controls but the risk of potential abuse can still be managed. To ensure ng homes gets value for money, home working will be managed by results (rather than managing time and the way the task is done). The line manager will therefore agree with the staff member the outcomes of work to be produced at home and expect those to be delivered. As long as it brings the desired benefits to the business, it would not matter how many hours or at what time of the day the work is done.

The Association takes performance management seriously. Managers will work with staff to agree a process for performance management for those who are working from home.

Breaches of the policy will lead to the home working arrangement being withdrawn and potentially formal disciplinary action.

## **Health & Safety**

A health and safety assessment will be carried out according to ng homes' health and safety checklist (Appendix 2) and a DSE assessment (Appendix 3) which covers VDU risks and general precautions for householder electrical safety. Domestic electrical supply configurations are outwith the control of the employer and are the responsibility of the staff member as home-owner/tenant. **Staff will be asked to perform their own assessments and results will then be validated by their line manager during a discussion or home visit.** Staff can use the attached Appendix 4 which has been taken from the Gov.uk website to assist in creating their own workspace and staying healthy at home.

The employee will be expected to report any changes that may affect the arrangements in the future (in which case another assessment may be necessary).

ng homes would not normally provide office furniture (e.g. desks and chairs) to enable home working.

## **Costs/Allowances**

No allowance for paper/ink/subsistence/internet service/wear and tear on equipment will be considered or paid. It is considered that the saving in time and money getting to/from work is a reasonable notional offset to any personal cost of working from home.

There may be expenses that can be claimed directly by the employee from HMRC. Please refer to HMRC website for the most up to date information.

## **Insurance**

It is the employee's responsibility to assess the personal implications of home working with respect to household insurance. If you are in any doubt, then please contact your insurance company directly for further information.

### **Recording the days of working from home**

All staff members must record all days worked from home on CIPHR.

ng homes reserve the right to withdraw the home working arrangement for business reasons at any time, with immediate effect.

### **Terms and Conditions**

Staff members who work from home are still governed by the same terms and conditions of their contract of employment. The Staff Code of Conduct and all other ng homes policies, procedures and associated guidance remain in place and should be adhered to during any period of home working.

Staff members who are unwell during a home working day must inform their line manager, following the normal absence reporting procedure.

### **Technical Support**

ng homes' IT infrastructure is capable of supporting this concept and gives employees remote access to calendars, e-mails and documents. Staff who ask their manager's approval to work from home on a particular piece of work would be expected to have their own computers and broadband already in place. ng homes does not commit to provide the installation of equipment and/or software to allow people to work from home. ng homes will be able to supply mobile devices (e.g. smart phones or such like) to allow some employees to keep in touch when not in the office. This means that ng homes would not need to pay for installation of telephones or the bills, as the employees would be able to use the mobile devices provided for them.

It will be required that staff have basic fire wall and anti virus software installed on their home computers, in order to protect ng homes' office IT system from any harm. In a further effort to ensure the security of our systems and the information placed on it by users. Virus detection software is installed on all desktops and laptops on the network and users are responsible for virus checking of downloaded files.

## **4. Cyber Security**

Working from home and remote system access can provide great business benefits but exposes the organisation to new risks that need to be managed. To do this the Association needs to identify and assess the risks and establish policies and procedures that support home or mobile working or remote access to systems that are applicable to users.

### **What is the risk?**

Home working and remote access extends the transit and storage of information (or operation of systems) outside of the corporate infrastructure, typically over the Internet. Mobile devices may also be used in spaces that are subject to additional risks such as oversight of screens (shoulder surfing), or the theft/loss of devices.

It is important that all staff and Board members dealing with Association business follow sound mobile working and remote access practices. To protect the organisation from risk all users must be aware of the following risks and ensure that they guard against these at all times:

- **Loss or theft of the device:** Mobile devices are highly vulnerable to being lost or stolen, potentially offering access to sensitive information or systems. They are often used in open view in locations that cannot offer the same level of physical security as your own premises.
- **Being overlooked:** Some users may have to work in public open spaces, or in premises/places where there are other people present, where they are vulnerable to being observed when working. This can potentially compromise sensitive information or authentication credentials.
- **Loss of credentials:** If user ID/credentials (such as username, password) are stored with a device used for remote working or remote access and it is lost or stolen, the attacker could use those credentials to compromise services or information stored on (or accessible from) that device.
- **Tampering:** if the device is left unattended, an attacker may attempt to subvert the security controls on the device through the insertion of malicious software or hardware. This may allow them to monitor all user activity on the device, including authentication credentials.

#### **Maintaining Awareness:**

All users will be trained on the use of their mobile device for the locations they will be working in. Users will be supported to look after their mobile device and operate it securely by following clear procedures. This will include direction on:

- cyber security
- secure storage and management of user credentials
- incident reporting
- situational/environmental awareness (the risks from being overlooked by others, etc.)

## **5. Home Working during Emergency Situations e.g. Covid-19**

In response to any emergency situations which require our offices to close e.g. Covid-19, following Scottish Government guidance, the default position should be to work from home where possible. Staff members that cannot work from home should discuss their circumstances with their line manager to determine the next steps.

Such situations are temporary, will be continually assessed and managed appropriately in consultation with the Board and staff.

Whilst undertaking caring responsibilities while working from home would not normally be considered possible, ng homes recognises the exceptional circumstances facing the Association and its employees. If you are required to provide care, you should discuss the arrangements with your line manager including what the impact on outputs will be and/or the hours that you are able to work. It may be appropriate for other leave to be considered and this should be discussed with the line manager.

For clarity, home-based work or working from home means performance of your duties, from a home or private setting. Ordinarily, working from home:

- Does not alter an employee's terms and conditions of employment.
- Does not attract subsidy.
- Does not normally mean that equipment will be provided by ng homes for use at home.

## 6. Data Protection

When working from home data protection can be particularly challenging. Below are some tips to help deal with this:

- Follow the Association's policies, procedures and guidance and avoid the temptation to do things in a way that you think is more convenient, such as sending emails through your personal account
- Only use technology (hardware or software) that has been approved by the Association as this will provide the best protection for personal data
- As you may be sharing your home working space with other family members always consider confidentiality and try to hold conversations where others are less likely to overhear. Where possible position your screen where it is less likely to be overseen.
- At home it is unlikely that you will have confidential waste bins. Always follow the Association's guidance or safely store print outs until you can take them into the office to dispose of them securely
- Don't mix data from the workplace with your own personal data. Ideally, all staff will be provided with secure technology to work with, however, if you are using your own device or software please ensure that this is kept separately to avoid accidentally holding data for longer than is necessary
- To avoid the loss or theft of personal data, please put paperwork and devices away at the end of the working day if possible
- Be extra vigilant about opening web links and attachments in emails or other messages. Don't click on unfamiliar web links or attachments claiming to give you important coronavirus updates. If you receive any suspicious emails then please report these to IT Support, [itsupport@nghomes.net](mailto:itsupport@nghomes.net) as soon as possible
- Use strong passwords, whether using online storage, a laptop or some other technology, it's important to make your passwords hard to guess. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) recommends using three random words together as a password (e.g. 'coffeetrainfish' or 'walltincake'). Make sure you use different passwords for different services too.
- Communicate securely, Use the communication facilities provided to you by your organisation where available. If you need to share data with others, then choose a secure messaging app or online document sharing system. If you have to use email, which isn't always secure, consider password protecting documents and sharing the passwords via a different channel, like text.
- Keep software up to date, if you're using your own equipment, don't be an easy target for hackers. Keep your security software up to date to make it more difficult for them to get in. The organisation's IT Consultants will manage this for you on the Association's equipment.

More information can be found on the Information Commissioners Office website <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/working-from-home/how-do-i-work-from-home-securely/>

## **7. Other Related Policies**

- Terms and Conditions of Employment
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Equality & Diversity
- Attendance and Absence Management
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Discipline and Grievance Procedures
- Health & Safety Manual
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Stress Management
- Hybrid Working Policy

### **1. UK General Data Protection Regulation 2021**

The ng group will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation 2021 (UK GDPR) and our own Data Protection Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in our Fair Processing Notices.

### **8. Policy Review**

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier in line with regulatory or legislative guidance/changes or good practice guidelines.

### **9. Equality Impact Assessment**

This Policy is equally applicable to all and has no detrimental impact on protected characteristic groups as specified within the Equality Act 2010.

## **Appendix 1**

ng homes' health & safety checklist for employees working from home. This list is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with section 3.20 of the Health and Safety Manual.

### **Electrical Equipment**

The safety and maintenance of the domestic electrical supply/installation is the responsibility of the householder. ng homes will only take maintenance responsibility for any equipment it directly supplies.

#### **Householder checklist:**

- Ensure electrical equipment is turned off when not in use and before performing any checks
- Check plugs are not damaged
- Check domestic electrical supply is suitable for the equipment in use
- Check plugs are properly wired and that the outer cable covering is gripped at the point it enters the plug or equipment.
- Check outer covers of equipment are sound and have no loose parts or missing screws
- Check all leads and cables routinely against damage to the outer covers
- Check for burn marks or other signs of overheating
- Repair any electrical equipment with potential to harm
- Check and secure all trailing wires – the best way is to use power outlets nearest to the equipment. Where this is not possible tuck trailing wires securely under desks etc and out of normal walkways
- Do not have young children unsupervised in any area where you are using electrical equipment

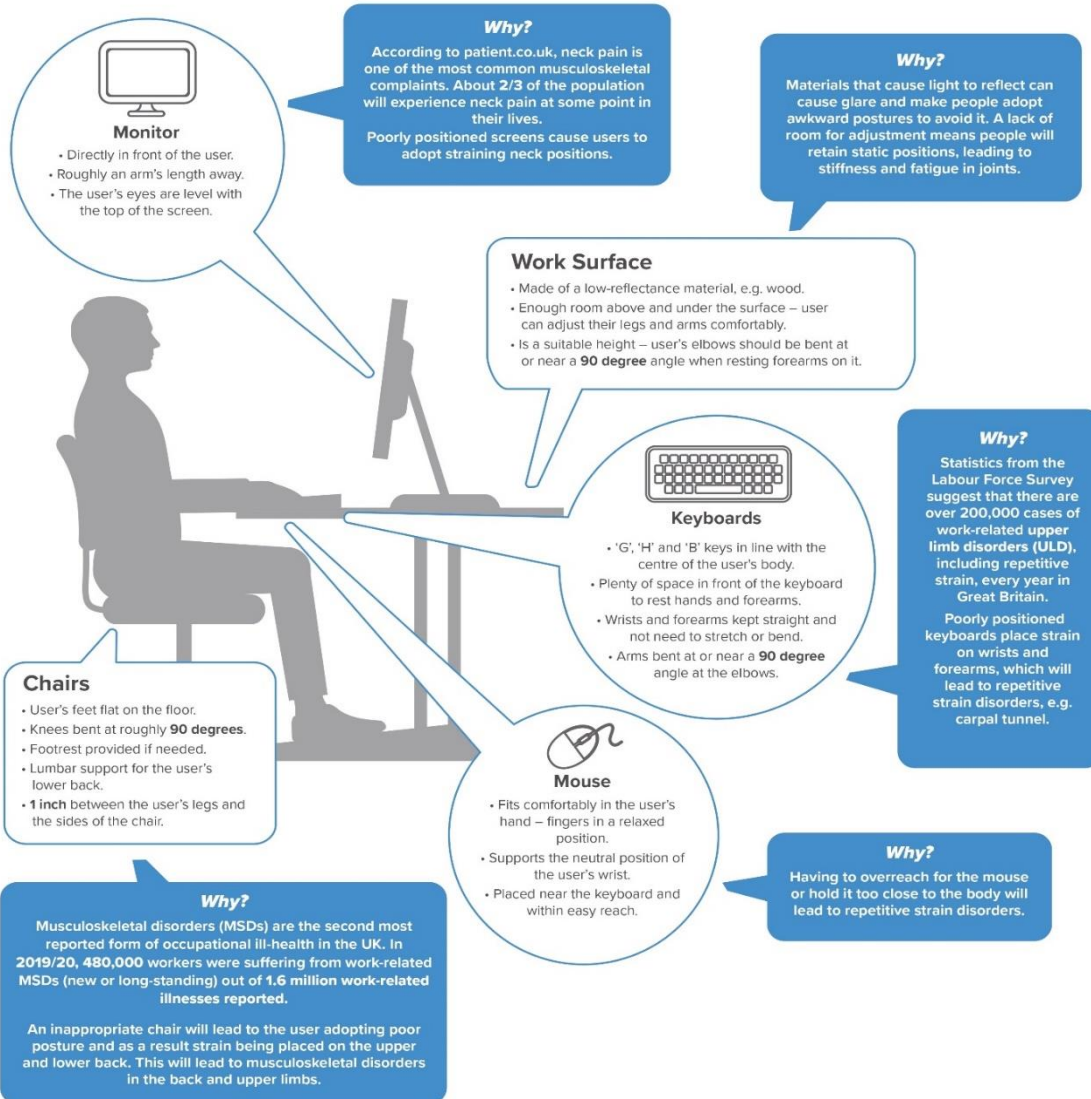


## Appendix 2

# Desk Ergonomics

### Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders

Do you know what the risks are when working at a desk for prolonged periods? Do you know how display screen equipment should be arranged so users can work without experiencing strain whilst at their workstation?



## Stretching and breaks

- DSE users should get up at least once an hour so to stretch and change their position.
- DSE users should carry out small exercises at or away from their desk to prevent prolonged strain.
- Users should take their designated breaks and break up long periods of DSE work with other tasks.

### Why?

Regular stretching will relieve tension and strain, while breaks will give their body a chance to relax and recuperate after intense work periods.






**STAGE 3 – PHOTOGRAPHS OF WORKSTATION (at time of Assessment)**


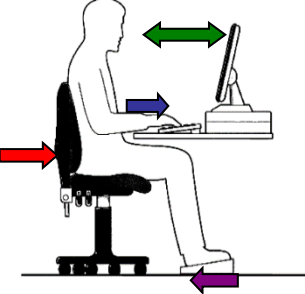
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**STAGE 4 – ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN**

	Question	Self-Assessment – to be completed by the DSE User	Comp. Person Assessment – comments (including actions taken)	Further Actions Required	Actions Completed (person and date)
1	Do you feel any pain, discomfort or stiffness in your neck, shoulders, arms or hand(s) during or after using IT equipment?				
2	Have you have felt any of the above when working with IT equipment in the past (e.g. at another workstation or during previous employment)?				

3	Do you/have you had any health problems that could affect your work with IT equipment? (For example: epilepsy, back problems, poor circulation)				
4	Are the words on your screen clear, easy and comfortable to read?				
5	Is the image on the screen stable and flicker- free?				
6	Can you adjust the brightness and/or contrast?				
7	Does your screen: 	Swivel?			
		Tilt?			
8	Are there any reflections on the screen? (For example, from windows or lights)				
9	Is the keyboard separate to the screen?				
10	Can you tilt the keyboard?				
11	Can you easily read the letters, numbers and symbols on the keyboard?				

12	Do you have a comfortable keying position?				
13	Is the mouse suitable for your needs?				
14	When using a mouse do you: a) Keep it close to the keyboard?				
	b) Have a straight wrist and relaxed hand?				
	c) Take your hand off the mouse when you are not using it, i.e. type using both hands?				
	d) Support your wrist and forearm while using the mouse?				
15	Does the mouse work smoothly at a speed that suits you?				
16	Is the software you use suitable and can you use it comfortably?				
17	Is your work surface large enough?				
18	Can you comfortably reach and use the equipment/papers etc. on your desk?				
19	Are your work surfaces free from reflections? (For example, from windows or lights)				

20	a) Can you adjust your seat's: 	Back height?				
		Back tilt?				
		Seat height?				
	b) Does your seat have wheels/glides?					
21	Is your chair adjusted as follows: 	The small of your back supported?				
		Forearms horizontal?				
		Eyes level with the top of the screen?				
	Feet flat on the floor without too much pressure from the seat on the backs of the legs?					
22	Do you have enough room under your desk to move your legs and change position?					
23	How long do you work at a computer before taking a break?					
24	How often do you have an eyesight test?					

25	When was your last eyesight test?				
26	Do you wear glasses <b>only</b> when you are working with IT equipment?				
27	Do you feel that the lighting levels are suitable?				
28	Do you have comfortable levels of ventilation?				
29	Is the workplace at a comfortable temperature?				
30	Are there comfortable noise levels in the workplace?				
31	Do you have any other concerns or comments regarding your workstation or DSE use?				
32	Have you received adequate information, instruction and training on DSE use, hazards, risks, control measures, reporting faults and injuries and in the use of hardware and software?				