



# Home Working Policy

Section	Procedure	Page
1	General Principles	1, 2
2	What is home working?	2
3	Deciding that home working is appropriate	2
4	Designated home workers	2, 3
5	Hours of work	3
6	Caring responsibilities	3
7	Keeping in touch	3
8	Rest breaks	3, 4
9	Sickness	4
10	Technology and equipment	4
11	Financial assistance	4
12	Health and safety	4, 5
13	Data protection	5
14	Insurance	5
15	Mortgage or rental agreements	5
16	Summary	5

## 1. General Principles

This policy sets out arrangements that apply to designated homeworkers. A designated homeworker is an employee who spends **all** their working time at home or at another suitable and agreed remote location. If working hours and time is split between attending the workplace and working remotely, the hybrid working policy will apply.

**This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.**

We are committed to supporting a positive work-life balance for our employees and recognise the benefits of flexibility that homeworking can provide. If we do not currently offer you homeworking but you would like to request it, you can make a formal request to your Line Manager. If you are not eligible to make a formal request for homeworking under the statutory procedure, you may still submit a request on an informal basis to your Line Manager for consideration on an informal basis.

Some roles may be more suitable for homeworking than others. Individual requests for homeworking will be considered on a case-by-case basis and dependent on whether work can be done effectively from home. We cannot agree to all requests because different job roles require different commitments and often work is required to be done from various locations.

If making a request to work from home personal consideration should be given to organisational and time-management skills, the ability to work and motivate without direct supervision, and the potential pressures associated with conflicting demands of work and family.

## 2. What Is Home Working?

There are different models of home working, and it is important that anyone who is a 'home worker' understands the type of home working agreement that they are working under:

- a. Designated home workers: employees whose contract of employment states that they will be based at home for all or part of their working week.
- b. Flexible home workers: employees whose contract of employment states a specific site or sites as their working base, but who may work at home on occasion with approval of their Line Manager. Their working at home may be occasional, or through routine may have developed a regular pattern of set days per week.

## 3. Deciding That Home Working Is Appropriate

It may initially be decided that a role is suitable for designated home working on creation of the position and as such any subsequent job advertisement could state such. This will likely happen when it is not necessary for a post holder to be present at a specific location on a regular basis to carry out their responsibilities. However, District roles are not exclusively or automatically accepted to be home worker roles, and, at all times, it remains at the absolute discretion of the district to decide.

If a role is considered suitable for home working job applicants will be required to confirm they have suitable facilities for home working. If they do not have the equipment they need, the district will, if assessed as necessary and appropriate, provide it.

Home working may also arise following a flexible working request from an employee, or as part of a wider reasonable adjustment for an employee following an assessment of needs. Any request for home working or flexible home working should be made in writing by the employee to their Line Manager. Following any such request, Lay Employees and Line Managers should defer to the flexible working procedures and consider legislation with the support of the District Lay Employment Officer.

Home working should not under any circumstances be used as a replacement for care arrangements. Lay Employees must be able to focus on their paid responsibilities for all of their agreed contractual time. Requests for occasional home working must be agreed in advance with the Lay Employees Line Manager.

## 4. Designated Home Workers

It is a requirement of a Lay Employee's employment that they carry out a risk assessment of their home working environment and take all reasonably practicable measures to reduce risk.

A risk assessment form is to be provided to the Lay Employee by their Line Manager with an expectation that the Lay Employee completes and returns the form completed no later than 1-week after the Lay Employee's first day, or within 1-week of receiving the form. This is so the contents of the form can be assessed and, if necessary, appropriate action can be taken. If the risk assessment determines that the environment and/or equipment is not suitable for home working, then we will:

- Purchase the equipment required, for which an anticipated budget should already have been agreed and put in place during the development of the role
- Suspend, temporarily or permanently, the home working arrangement whilst a solution is found. If this is the case, alternative workspace belonging to the Methodist Church will be provided. Every effort will be made to ensure this is as local to the Lay Employee as practically possible.

Key points to note:

- The Line Manager should ensure and manage the budget for any equipment that the district is required to provide and make the necessary arrangements for purchase and set up.
- The district remains responsible for the safety and maintenance and retains ownership without exception of all equipment that it supplies.
- Where an Lay Employee satisfies the district that they have equipment suitable to do their job, the Lay Employee accepts that they are responsible for its safety and maintenance.

Depending on the results of the risk assessment, the equipment required may include but not be guaranteed to be or exhaustive to a laptop or PC; a printer; mobile phone; desk; chair; lockable storage, and an amount of stationery reasonable for the role.

## 5. Hours of Work

While homeworking, you must be available and working during your normal contractual working hours. If you are not subject to fixed working hours, you must be available and working during any core hours set out in your contract of employment.

You should be as clear as possible with your Line Manager about your actual working hours while homeworking. This will help us to ensure that your working hours are kept within reasonable limits.

You should also consider updating and using the out-of-office message or signature on your work email to let colleagues know your availability. If you need to temporarily change your hours for any reason, you should speak to your Line Manager.

## 6. Caring Responsibilities

We understand that homeworking means time saved on commuting and this may help with caring responsibilities. However, you must not have any caring responsibilities during your working hours.

We expect you to make adequate arrangements for childcare or care for other dependants just as you would if you were attending the workplace.

If you need to deal with an unexpected or sudden problem related to a dependant, you can take time off to manage the situation in the short term and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements. In these circumstances, you should discuss this with your Line Manager at the earliest opportunity.

## 7. Keeping In Touch

We appreciate that homeworking may leave some individuals feeling isolated or excluded from the workplace. We encourage you to be proactive in reaching out and connecting with your colleagues.

Your Line Manager will keep in regular contact with you via email, telephone and zoom, or teams. You should ensure that you keep your Line Manager up to date with what you are working on. You should also notify your Line Manager if you are unsure about what you are required to do, or if you are experiencing any difficulties.

## 8. Rest Breaks

It important for your health and mental wellbeing that you take regular breaks and that you are not overworking. Although you have remote access to the workplace, you are encouraged to disconnect any work-related technology when you are not working. You are also encouraged to establish boundaries between your work and home life.

We do not expect you to work longer hours while you are working remotely. There is no expectation on you to respond to emails or schedule work calls outside of your regular working hours unless there are exceptional circumstances.

You have the right to an interrupted rest break of 20 minutes during any working day that exceeds 6 hours. Even if you are busy, it is essential that you find the time to take this away from your workstation and not at the beginning or end of the working day. Taking a lunch break will count as your daily rest break if working 6 hours a day. You should also ensure the time period between stopping work one day and beginning the next is not less than 11 hours.

Lay Employees over-18 are usually entitled to 3 types of breaks - rest at work, daily rest, and weekly rest.

Rest at work - Lay Employees have the right to one uninterrupted 20-minute rest break during their working day if they work more than 6 hours a day. This could be a tea or lunch break. The break doesn't have to be paid - it depends on their employment contract - however it should be away from their workstation and at a time that's not the very start or end of the working day.

Daily rest - Lay Employees have the right to 11 hours rest between working days, e.g., if they finish work at 8pm, they shouldn't start work again until 7am the next day.

Weekly rest - Lay Employees have the right to either an uninterrupted 24 hours without any work each week or an uninterrupted 48 hours without any work each fortnight

In the event the home worker is under-18, different rules apply, and the district advise you contact the Lay Employment Officer.

## 9. Sickness

When homeworking, you should not work if you are unwell. If you are sick and unable to work, you should follow the reporting requirements set out in your employment terms.

## 10. Technology and Equipment

To assist you while homeworking, you may be provided with items such as a laptop, printer, desk, chair, and/or mobile phone. You must take care of any equipment we provide you with and notify your Line Manager of any faults with the equipment. If you feel that you need any other equipment, you should notify your Line Manager.

## 11. Financial Assistance

You may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred because of working from home, provided the expenses are solely work related. See the Government's guide on claiming tax relief for your job expenses at [www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home](http://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home). If you have any further questions around this, contact the District Administrator.

## 12. Health and Safety

We have the same health and safety responsibilities for homeworkers as for any other worker. Your Line Manager will liaise with you to undertake a risk assessment to ensure that your workstation is appropriate and that you are working in a safe manner.

As a homeworker, you are required to take responsibility for your own health and safety and anyone else in the home who is affected by your work. You must notify your Line Manager if:

- you feel any discomfort due to working remotely (such as back pain).

- you believe that there are any work-related health and safety hazards, and/or
- if any work-related accidents occur in your home.

Your Line Manager will escalate the matter to look into what action can be taken.

### **13. Data Protection**

Lay Employees, who are homeworking, are responsible for keeping information associated with our organisation secure at all times. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to:

- practise good computer security, including using a unique password for your work laptop, and any other devices you use for work.
- keep all hard copies of work-related documentation secure, including keeping documents locked away at all times except when in use; and
- ensure work information is safeguarded when working in public spaces, for example by:
  - a) positioning your laptop so that others cannot see the screen.
  - b) not leaving your laptop unattended, and
  - c) not having confidential/business-sensitive conversations in public spaces.

In addition, the laptop and other equipment provided by us must be used for work-related purposes only and must not be used by any other member of your household or third party at any time or for any purpose.

### **14. Insurance**

You are responsible for checking that all home and contents insurance policies provide adequate cover while homeworking. If any extra premium is incurred and upon submission of the appropriate documentation, we will make consideration to recompense you.

### **15. Mortgage or Rental Agreements**

You are responsible for checking applicable mortgage or rental agreements to ensure you are permitted to work from home, and for obtaining any permissions necessary to work from home.

### **16. Summary**

It is agreed that all home working arrangements are reviewed regularly and can be withdrawn if it is demonstrated that:

- The performance of a Lay Employee has suffered as a result of home working, and/or
- The effectiveness of the team in which the Lay Employee works is compromised; and/or
- Business needs are not being met.”