**Home-Working Policy and Procedures**

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# Introduction

## Policy statement

The purpose of this policy is to set out the practice’s position and procedures on home working. The policy aims to describe the rules and working arrangements that will apply when it is agreed that an employee will work from home.

## Principles

The practice is committed to exploring different ways of working in order to attract suitably qualified clinicians and other skill groups to work at the practice.

Where it is technically and operationally feasible, home working arrangements will be considered as an alternative (either on a temporary or permanent basis) to working at the practice premises.

In addition, all employees with 26 weeks’ continuous service with the practice are entitled to make a request for flexible working (see flexible working policy). Home working is a type of flexible working and, therefore, the practice will give careful and proper consideration to such requests.

Individual requests for home working will be reviewed on their own merits and agreement to a specific request will depend on an objective assessment of whether the employee’s work can be done from home without any detriment to the practice’s services or patient relationships. As every job is different and every employee is different, the practice cannot guarantee to agree to every employee’s request to work at home.

## Status

The practice aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have in respect to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of a contract of employment.

## Training and support

The practice will provide guidance and support to help those to whom it applies understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Additional support will be provided to managers and supervisors to enable them to deal more effectively with matters arising from this policy.

# Scope

## Who it applies to

This document applies to all employees of the practice who either work occasionally at home or whose permanent work base is their home.

## Why and how it applies to them

**Employees**

While working at home, the employee must develop a strategy to cope with the potentially conflicting demands of work and home and/or family and endeavour to work in an organised and disciplined way.

They will be expected to manage their domestic arrangements in order that there is minimal disruption to other family members, where applicable, and no disruption to themselves during their shift/working time. They should be able to undertake the work expected of them in a secure environment in accordance with the practice’s policies and procedures.

Operationally, home workers will replicate their normal roles, only the location will be different.

If employees do not understand their responsibilities or any terms or requirements set out in this policy, they should seek clarification from their manager.

**Managers**

The manager will involve home workers, as appropriate, in one to one meetings, ensure continued compliance with health and safety requirements and arrange supervision sessions and regular team meetings. Meetings may be face-to-face, via telephone or video conference facilities.

# Definition of terms

## Home worker

A home worker is an employee whose contractual place of work is home based.

## Working at home

This can be an occasional arrangement with the employee working from their home on an ad-hoc basis or a more regular arrangement with the employee working mainly from their own home (in the latter case the “home worker” definition will also apply).

## Meetings/hearings/interviews

Any meetings/hearings/interviews that a home worker needs to be involved in may be conducted “virtually” or remotely through facilities such as telephone, video conference, webinar etc.

# Process and guidance

## Eligibility for home working

The skills and attributes of a home worker include:

* Self-discipline
* The ability to meet performance targets and standards, both clinical and operational (as appropriate)
* The ability to work remotely and alone with telephone supervision
* Good organisational skills
* The ability to manage time effectively
* An ability to cope with the potentially conflicting demands of work, home and/or family

Applicants for home working must not be subject to any disciplinary or capability proceedings.

Home working may be suitable for applicants who have a long-term condition or disability (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) or may be proposed as a reasonable adjustment to help them continue in work. All such cases will be considered on an individual basis. In all cases, a referral will be made to occupational health for advice.

If a permanent agreement is made for an employee to become a home worker, they will agree an amendment to their statement of terms and conditions of employment, i.e. a change to their place of work to “home based”. All other terms and conditions of employment will remain the same.

## Equipment and materials

All equipment, including computer equipment, and materials necessary for the employee to work at home will be provided to the home worker and maintained (and replaced when necessary) by the practice.

All equipment supplied for home working will remain the property of the practice and will be removed should the home worker cease to continue to work at home or where employment is terminated for any reason. The practice will have the right to visit the employee’s home at an agreed time and retrieve all equipment and documents belonging to the practice.

It is the home worker’s duty to ensure that proper care is taken of equipment and materials provided by the practice.

Any damage to property or fixtures and fittings will be returned to the condition prior to installation. The pre-installation inspection notes and photographs will be used to establish the extent of any claim.

Equipment failure should be notified to the practice as soon as possible. If the problem is not resolved, the manager and home worker should discuss options to continue to provide the service or undertake other activities.

If the problem continues and resolution is likely to be substantially delayed, the home worker will be recalled to work at the practice premises until the problem is resolved.

## Security and confidentiality

The home worker must carry out work for the practice in a room that is private and confidential and must not allow members of their family or third parties who are not employed by the practice to access or use the practice’s equipment.

The home worker is responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with the practice’s services and patients secure at all times. Specifically, home workers are under a duty to:

* Keep filing cabinets and drawers locked when they are not being used
* Keep all documentation belonging to the practice under lock and key at all times except when in use
* Set up and use a unique password for the computer
* Agree special arrangements for the disposal (shredding or otherwise) of confidential paper waste produced at home

Furthermore, the computer and other equipment provided by the practice for the home worker must be used only for work-related purposes and must not be used by any other member of the family or third party at any time or for any purpose.

The home worker will be able to access [insert any IT or telephony systems etc] and will take inbound and outbound telephone calls if required.

Under no circumstances will patient or personal identifiable information be permitted to be removed from the premises in any format without the express permission of the data controller.

The practice will keep a record when passing ownership of data to an individual (e.g. for project work or research and development) and ensure this is authorised by the Caldicott guardian/data controller. The individual may then need to be separately registered under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Home workers will be made fully aware of their information governance responsibilities and the necessary declaration forms will be completed to ensure that users understand the terms and conditions for the use of the information and/or media in question.

A record will be made of any individual items (including files, records, etc.) being taken out of and being returned to the practice.

## Health and safety

The practice is obliged under health and safety legislation to ensure the health and safety of home workers in the same way as practice-based staff. The practice is, therefore, required to ensure that:

* All equipment and systems of work in the employee’s home are safe
* All articles and substances are handled and stored safely
* An assessment of the employee’s workstation is conducted
* Information and training on the safe use of equipment, including display screen equipment, is provided to the home worker
* Risk assessments are carried out in respect of the work the employee is carrying out

All home workers have a duty to ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that they work in a safe manner and that they follow all health and safety instructions issued by the practice from time to time.

## Insurance

The home worker is responsible for checking that all home and contents insurance policies provide adequate cover for the fact that they work at home (either on a permanent or temporary basis).

## Performance management

Home workers will usually be allocated a line manager at the nearest practice premises to their home.

The practice will normally expect the home worker to keep in regular telephone contact with their line manager.

Supervisory meetings will include discussion of the specific issues associated with home working and any problems or issues that the home worker has experienced or that the line manager believes have arisen.

Meetings/reviews may be conducted either face to face, by telephone or video conference.

During the first six months following commencement of home working, one to one meetings will be held monthly.

## Visits to practice premises

Home workers may be required, on request, to attend the practice for purposes such as training, performance assessment and team meetings. Times of such visits will be agreed in advance. Team meetings will not normally be more frequent than monthly/bi-monthly and will include clinical supervision activity (where applicable).

The home worker will be paid for time spent at the practice on such visits. Travel expenses as set out in the practice’s expenses policy will apply.

## Visits to the employee’s home

The practice reserves the right to visit the home worker at home at agreed times for work-related purposes, including information governance and health and safety matters. It is a condition of any home working agreement that the employee agrees to accept visits from management in their home. Such visits will be for the purposes of:

* Delivering and collecting work/equipment
* Providing a channel for reporting and communication
* Performance monitoring and feedback
* General discussions about work-related matters
* Ensuring health, safety and security
* Any other work-related purposes that the practice considers appropriate

## Working hours and time-sheets

Home workers will be expected to comply with agreed work patterns, start and finish times, etc. Standard working practices and working time directive requirements will continue to apply and breaks should be taken as instructed or at least the minimum of:

* One uninterrupted rest break of at least 20 minutes when working more than six hours
* Eleven hours' continuous rest between each working day

[Timesheets should be completed each day. The home worker’s line manager will confirm adherence. Home workers will need to send the completed time sheet, complete with electronic signature, to their line manager who will authorise, sign electronically and send to the administrator.]

## Sickness absence procedures

If the home worker is sick and unable to work, he/she must telephone his/her line manager as soon as possible, indicating the nature of the illness and how long they expect to be unable to work. The practice’s sickness absence policy and procedure will apply in these circumstances.

Sickness absence meetings/reviews may be held via telephone, video conference or face to face, either at the employee’s home or at the practice premises.

Return to work interviews will normally be held via telephone and documentation will be completed on-line and sent via email.

Should there be a substantial alteration to the home worker’s ability to perform their role at home this will be discussed with the employee and may include referral to occupational health.