

## GUIDANCE SHEET – GS046

### **Homeworking**

#### **The issue:**

Some employees habitually work at home as agreed through their contract of employment. In these cases there is still an obligation on the Authority to ensure that arrangements are put in place to ensure that they can work safely. The Home Working Policy defines Home working as ‘where work that could be carried out at Council premises is undertaken at the home of an employee. The work must be work that would normally be carried out at the employee’s workplace.’ This guidance does not apply to ad-hoc homeworking where an employee works from home occasionally and not on a regular basis e.g. to complete a set piece of work or to meet deadlines.

#### **What do I need to know?**

Where employees work from home they should be treated the same as other employees and the health and safety requirements and policies which apply to the workplace will still apply.

#### **What do I need to do?**

Managers must:

- Identify home workers and ensure that homeworking is formally agreed in accordance with current Personnel Policies (if in doubt seek advice from your Personnel Officer).
- Ensure that a risk assessment is carried out for any homeworkers, their workplace and the activities undertaken. This should include a display screen assessment where applicable (hyperlink).
- Ensure that any actions identified following the risk assessment are completed and the contents of the risk assessment is communicated to the relevant employees as set out in the Risk Assessment Policy and Corporate Management Arrangements.
- Ensure that a home workers are suitably experienced, have received instruction, and if necessary, training on the risks they are exposed to and also know the control measures.
- Provide suitable equipment for the employee to use, and information on the safe use of the equipment provided. Ensure equipment is properly maintained.
- Advise employees of the potential health and safety risks associated with working at home, including the risks to other members of the household, especially children.

### **Managing Home Working Risks: Carrying out a suitable and sufficient assessment of lone working risks**

You must consider the risks to which employees designated as home workers may be exposed while undertaking their work activities on behalf of the Authority. Generally the home working environment will be low risk. The assessment should take into account the activity, the environment and the individual, and must: -

- Identify the risks associated with home working and who is likely to be affected,
- Identify what the Authority needs to do to reduce and control associated risks.

- Be representative of the home working activities carried out, taking account for out of hours working, means of communication, level of supervision etc.;
- Be carried out by competent persons
- Undergo periodic review to ensure that the assessment remains current, takes into account any changes that have occurred since the time of the previous assessment, and control measures implemented continue to remain effective.
- The assessment of the risks should take into account:-
  - ⇒ The working environment;
  - ⇒ The activity/ies (task/s) to be conducted;
  - ⇒ The abilities, medical fitness, age, experience, and competence of all persons that work from home.
  - ⇒ Means and level of supervision required, e.g. meetings with managers or indirect telephone contact and how often;
  - ⇒ Provision of suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training to all staff who work from home, on risks of home working, of the risk-control measures to be implemented, and of their individual responsibilities.

The risk assessment should help decide the correct level of control measures required, eg. level and frequency of supervision, communication methods and provision of any necessary additional work equipment. Those activities identified as highest-risk must be prioritised, and consideration must be given to avoidance of risk before considering appropriate risk-control measures. Risk-control measures may be simple such as providing a mobile phone to enable help to be summoned promptly and easily if required, and suitable instruction and training, or provision. Suitable steps must be taken to check that the recommended control measures are fully used in the manner intended, and Managers should periodically review the risk assessment (at least annually is the general recommendation) to ensure it remains accurate and adequate.

A generic risk assessment to help identify the risks home workers may encounter is attached as appendix 1. This assessment can be adapted and amended to reflect the relevant risks.

## **Work Equipment**

The employee should be provided with any work equipment needed for them to be able to the job. Employees must be trained on the use of any equipment provided and the equipment should be maintained to ensure that it can be used safely.

## **Display Screen Equipment**

The requirements of the [Display Screen Equipment Policy](#) and associated [Corporate Management Arrangements](#) apply to employees who work from home. Employees who habitually use DSE equipment must have a DSE assessment. The [Homeworking Self Assessment Form](#) should be filled in and this becomes the DSE assessment. Employees who work from home must be provided with suitable equipment which meets the minimum standards set out in the [Display Screen Equipment Policy](#) and [Corporate Management Arrangements](#) e.g. chair with wheels, adjustable height. It is not recommended that

employees use laptops for prolonged periods of time. If laptops are to be utilised then further guidance is available in guidance sheet 33 [‘Working With Laptop Computers - Guidance for Managers and users of such equipment’](#).

## **Occupational Health Screening and Assessment**

Home workers generally carry out low risk work activities so would not routinely require any occupational health screening or assessment.

### **The legal position:**

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, 1974 Employers have a legal duty to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess and control the risks to their employees, including the risks associated with working from home.

### **Further Information**

Further information can be found in:

- [Homeworking: Guidance for Employers and Employees on Health and Safety](#), Health and Safety Executive, INDG226, single copy free from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS, Tel: 01787 881165, fax 01787 313995

### **Contacts**

In the event of you needing advice/further health and safety information on Homeworking please contact the Health and Safety Division as detailed below:

Chief Execs/Corporate Services:	01443 86 <b>4359</b>
Education and Leisure:	01443 86 <b>4858</b>
Environment:	01443 86 <b>4008</b>
Social Services:	01443 86 <b>4900</b>

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Activity / Workplace Assessed: **Homeworking (office / administrative type tasks only)**

Location / Department: **[specify]**

Persons consulted / involved in risk assessment: **[insert name/s]**

Risk Assessment Reference Number:

Date: **[insert in full]**

Review Due Date: **[within 12 months of initial or review date]**

Reviewed On: **[insert 'New Assessment' or date of review assessment]**

Reviewed By: **[insert name]**

Significant Hazard (* see prompt list below – not exhaustive)	People at risk and what is the risk Describe the harm that is likely to result from the hazard (e.g. cut, broken leg, chemical burn etc.) and who could be harmed (e.g. employees, contractors, visitors etc.)	Existing control measures What is currently in place to control the risk?	Risk rating				Further action required What is required to bring the risk down to an acceptable level? Use hierarchy of control described in guidance note when considering the controls needed.	Actioned to: Who will complete the action?	Due date: When will the action be complete by?	Completion date: Initial and date once the action has been completed
			Likelihood	Severity	Multiply (L) x (S) to produce Risk Rating (RR)					
					L	S				
Display screen equipment (DSE) – desktop and laptop	<p>Authority employees using DSE at home for work purposes.</p> <p>Risk of upper limb disorder from unsuitable setup of desktop workstation or poor ergonomics / posture during use of a laptop that may cause employee to stretch, twist, lean forward or sit uncomfortably in order to use equipment.</p> <p>May cause short-term discomfort in wrist, neck, back, arms and shoulders when duration of use is of short duration. Discomfort may last for several hours following prolonged use, and may become permanent following repetitive use.</p> <p>May also cause eyestrain if monitor size is too small for size of text/images displayed, or distance between employee and screen is too great depending on their individual eyesight ability.</p>	<p>Computer equipment is suitable for the nature of work for which it is provided.</p> <p>DSE risk assessment conducted for each homeworking employee who habitually uses DSE for work purposes to identify any specific equipment requirements. Assessment considers the use of portable DSE if relevant.</p>					<p>Provide training in suitable DSE workstation assessment, set up and adjustment to enable employee to make any necessary adjustments at home.</p> <p>Provide employee with training on the risks associated with the use of a laptop PC (particularly unsafe practices that involve twisting and bending the neck and/or torso in order to type and/or view the screen) and of appropriate set up that enables good posture.</p> <p>Consider provision of a suitable desk and chair to employees that frequently work from home that requires the substantial use of DSE for prolonged periods (1+ hours) if they do not have suitable furniture at home already. Consult the employee to help ensure furniture provided is suitable for their home.</p> <p>Encourage employees to visually inspect electrical equipment and plugs for faults and notify their line manager (or IT) immediately of any faults with any CCBC equipment.</p>			

							<p>Instruct staff not to attempt to repair faults themselves unless competent and authorised to do so safely.</p> <p>Encourage employees to manage their workload to enable them to take regular breaks from the use of DSE.</p>			
Workload causing stress	Authority employees working at home who may experience work-related stress.	<p>Monthly team meetings to discuss workplans and maintain teamworking.</p> <p>Daily contact between homeworker and/or Line Manager / colleagues via e-mail and/or telephone.</p> <p>Quarterly 1:1 meetings with Line Manager and each homeworker to discuss individual workloads and workplans.</p> <p>Annual performance development review meetings</p> <p>Homeworking employees provided with the same information and support as office-based staff, including social events</p>					<p>Encourage homeworkers to contact the office if they require support. Arrange regular face-to-face contact with work colleagues if necessary and/or appropriate.</p> <p>Increase frequency of 1:1 meetings if need identified.</p>			
Manual handling of equipment and documents	Authority employees working at home who may have to manually handle heavy equipment and documents to and from a vehicle to / from their home at risk of injury and backpain arising from manual handling.	Employees that regularly work from home and required to transfer heavy documentation provided with a wheeled bag.					<p>Provide suitable training in manual handling of loads, including in and out of vehicles and advise how to arrange work area in home to minimise risk associated with stooping, twisting or overreaching due to inadequate space.</p> <p>Minimise necessity for Homeworking staff to transfer heavy equipment, or provide suitable lifting/carrying aids supported with suitable and sufficient training regarding its use.</p> <p>Conduct task-specific manual handling risk assessments for each homeworking employee for any medium-high risk manual handling activities.</p> <p>Arrange for heavy items to be delivered to homeworker's home.</p>			

Electricity	Authority employees working at home, their family and any visitors to their home at risk of electric shock from electrical equipment.	All portable electrical equipment provided by the Authority periodically tested by a competent person, either by return of equipment to the office or a competent person attending homemaker's home.					Advise homemaker to ensure the fixed electrical installations within their home are periodically tested and maintained.  Instruct homemaker to connect electrical equipment to a residual current device (RCD) provided.			
Work activities of new and expectant mothers	Authority employees working at home that are new or expectant mothers – risk of harm to mother, new child or unborn child due to work postures, manual handling, work equipment, exposure to substances hazardous to health or small work equipment components in home.	Specific risk assessment conducted for each individual employee that is a new or expectant mother by their line manager or other designated competent person to identify specific hazard, assess the risk associated with each and risk-control measures necessary.								
Violence	Authority employees working at home and their family – potential for physical assault or verbal abuse causing physical injury or psychological stress.	Homeworking staff notified of any members of the public likely to have contact with them with a history of contacting or threatening other staff at home.  Homeworking staff instructed not to disclose their home address to any member of the public, and to notify their line manager immediately if they suspect a client/member of the public becomes aware of their home address or telephone number. Police notified if deemed necessary.  Staff have access to the Authority's Violence at Work register database.  All work-related visitors carry CCBC or other recognisable identification badge.  No meetings / work related visits to homemaker's home other than by					Provide homeworking employees with general home security advice.			

		<p>authorised CCBC staff or their representative, with homeworkers' prior permission.</p> <p>Homeworker notified in advance of any planned work-related visits to homeworker's home, although meetings arranged at an office location where possible.</p>								
Hazardous substances	Authority employees working at home, their family and any visitors to their home at risk of serious ill health from contact with hazardous substances	Employees instructed to not take home any hazardous substances.								
Work equipment (machinery)	Authority employees working at home, their family and any visitors to their home at risk of serious injury from work equipment if faulty, poorly maintained or inadequately guarded.	<p>The need for any work equipment other than display screen equipment eliminated so far as possible.</p> <p>Homeworking employee provided with information, instruction and training regarding safe set up, storage and use of any equipment necessary to store or use at home.</p> <p>Any work equipment necessary for homeworking is periodically inspected, tested, serviced and repaired as necessary by return of equipment or competent person attending homeworker's home.</p>								

Risk Assessor(s)	Signature(s)	Designation:
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DEFINITIONS: **Hazard – Something with the potential to cause harm Risk – Chance that the harm will be realised**

**Hazard Prompt List:** asbestos, glazing, noise, vibration, electrical, poor ergonomics, repetitive motion, manual handling, heat / cold, fire, flammable materials, slip, trip, fall, fall from height, falling object, collision, glare, adverse weather, sharps, substances (dusts/liquids/gases), stress, lone working, confined space, moving parts, crushing, entrapment, compressed air, lighting, operation of vehicles, unstable stacking/storage, violence (Physical/verbal)

Likelihood (L)

Multiply (L) by (S) to produce the risk rating (RR)

Severity (S)

SEVERITY		1 Unlikely	2 Possible	3 Very Likely
	1 Slight/minor injuries/minor damage	1	2	3
	2 Medium Injuries/Significant damage	2	4	6
	3 Major Injury/Extensive Damage	3	6	9

Likelihood

3 – Very likely  
 2 – Possible  
 1 – Unlikely

Severity

3 – Major injury/Extensive damage  
 2 – Medium injury/significant damage  
 1 – Slight/minor damage

1 = Low risk, action should be taken to reduce the risk if reasonably practicable.

2,3,4 = Medium risk, is a significant risk and would require an appropriate level of resource.

6 & 9 = High risk, may require considerable resource to mitigate. Control should focus on elimination of risk, if not possible control should be obtained by following the hierarchy of control.