

Remote working policy

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Introduction

This policy sets out the arrangements that apply to colleagues whose contractual base is their home and also colleagues who sometimes work remotely, but their contractual base is one of our care homes.

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

Home Working Policy

We are committed to supporting a positive work-life balance for our employees and recognise the benefits of flexibility that homeworking can provide. We also recognise the benefits it brings to our organisation as we do not carry the fixed costs of a central office based in a metropolitan city such as London or Birmingham.

Roles that are home based are specified in our contracts of employment. This part of the policy applies only to those roles. Where hybrid working is being undertaken, please see the relevant section of this policy.

Place of work

As a homeworker you are permitted to work from your home address. If there is a change to your home address, you must let us know immediately.

You are responsible for ensuring that you have adequate space and reliable methods of communication such as internet and telephony to your home location to enable effective working, including making calls, attending online meetings and completing work remotely.

For many home-based roles, there is a requirement to regularly attend one of our care homes. This could be for routine visits, in-person training and for meetings that we have determined are best conducted in person. In such cases, you will be provided with as much notice as possible.

Working outside the UK

Homeworking from abroad is not permitted under this policy. Working from abroad, even on a temporary basis, may give rise to complex immigration issues, tax liabilities, data security, and other legal considerations. Where there is a request for remote working from abroad this must be discussed and authorised by your line manager and the relevant director. Any agreement is likely to be limited to a period of no more than one or two weeks.

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 must also update your calendar and use out-of-office messages appropriately to indicate when you are available, travelling, or in meetings (whether they be remote, in person, internal or external).

If you need to temporarily change your hours for any reason, you should speak to your line manager.

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 follow our organisation's time off for dependant's section of the Special Leave Policy, contacting your line manager at the earliest opportunity.

We also have a Family Leave policy, which sets out the how employees can support a range of caring responsibilities while working for us. The statutory right to carer's leave is intended to be for planned and foreseen caring commitments.

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 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 experiencing any difficulties.

Rest breaks

It is 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 uninterrupted rest break of 20 minutes during any working day that exceeds six 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.

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 our sickness absence policies.

Technology and equipment

To assist you while homeworking, you are provided with:

- a laptop computer;
- a mobile phone;

You must take care of any equipment we provide you with, and notify your line manager and the IT team of any faults with the equipment.

If you need any other equipment, you should notify your line manager. Any other equipment provided for work remains the property of us and should be returned at the end of your employment.

Financial assistance

You may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home, provided the expenses are solely work related. If you wish to benefit from this tax relief, see the Government's guide on claiming tax relief for your job expenses at www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home.]

Health and safety

We have the same health and safety responsibilities for homeworkers as for any other worker. We 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 part of our on boarding process, or if your contractual base changes to your home address, and this will be repeated at appropriate intervals during your employment with us.

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

Your line manager will escalate the matter to our Health and Safety team to look into what action can be taken.

Data protection

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
- Appropriate disposal of confidential information – we recommend scanning or cross cut shredding; and
- ensure that work-related information is safeguarded when working in public spaces, for example by:
 - positioning your laptop so that others cannot see the screen;
 - not leaving your laptop unattended; and
 - 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.

Insurance

You are responsible for checking that all home and contents insurance policies provide adequate cover while homeworking. We will cover any extra premium incurred upon submission of the appropriate documentation.

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.

Hybrid working policy

Introduction

The following sets out our approach to hybrid working, which recognises that some colleagues will split their time between working in one of our care homes and working remotely. Hybrid working is an important element of both our:

- strategy for adapting to, and thriving in, the new working environment following the coronavirus pandemic; and
- commitment to supporting a positive work-life balance for our employees.

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

Who is covered by hybrid working

Hybrid working is available only on a case-by-case basis and any agreement to hybrid working must be authorised by the relevant director for that area of the organisation.

The nature of our work is that many roles will not be suitable for hybrid working unless there are specific reasons that will usually fall within a reasonable adjustment.

Split between attending work and working remotely

The ratio of time attending your contractual care home base and working remotely will be determined on a case-by-case basis, considering any arrangements that are in place for other colleagues in the organisation who perform a similar function, and any reasonable adjustments that are recommended for that individual.

Arrangements while attending your care home

Working hours

For days on which you are attending your care home, your normal hours of work are set out in your contract of employment.

Safe-working measures

We encourage our workforce to let us know if they have any concerns, have identified any potential risks, or have any suggestions for further adaptations we can make. You can do this by raising concerns or making suggestions to our Health and Safety Team.

We all have a role to play in ensuring that we all can work in safe environments, and everyone must follow our safe-working instructions. A failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence and dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedure.

Arrangements while working remotely

Working hours

While working remotely, you must be available and working during your normal hours of work, as set out in your contract of employment.

We ask you to be mindful that you are not overworking - "downtime" from work is essential. To help maintain your wellbeing, please make sure that you take adequate rest breaks including a 20-minute break if you are working for more than 6 hours.

Please be as clear as possible with your line manager about your hours of work for days on which you are working remotely. Making use of tools such as shared calendars and out-of-office messaging can help colleagues to be aware of your availability on these days.

Sickness

When working remotely, you should not work if you are unwell. If you are sick and unable to work, our sickness absence policy applies.

Technology and equipment

We will not usually issue additional equipment to enable you to work from home, unless this has been suggested as reasonable adjustments through an occupational health referral.

Where equipment is provided to you, you must treat this in the ways set out under the Home Working Policy section above.

Financial assistance

We do not usually provide you with any financial assistance in relation to the costs you may incur as a result of working away from your contractual care home base.

Health and safety

Where you are working remotely the same health and safety provisions as set out under the Home Working Policy above apply.

Data protection

Where you are working remotely the same data protection provisions as set out under the Home Working Policy above apply.

Requesting flexible working

This policy focuses on how our organisation operates hybrid working, but there are many other forms of flexible working, and these are detailed in our flexible working policy.

Review date	Next Review Date
March 2025	March 2027