TEMPORARY HOME WORKING POLICY (CORONAVIRUS)

**Introduction**

This policy sets out our approach to homeworking during the coronavirus outbreak.

As you will be aware, the Government has instructed everyone to work from home, wherever possible. We are therefore asking all staff to work from home unless this is absolutely not possible due to the nature of their role.

We all need to pull together and make adjustments to continue working effectively and meet the demands placed on our organisation. We would like to reassure you that your wellbeing is of the utmost importance to us, and we understand that it may take time for you to find an approach that allows you to balance the demands of work and family life.

**Working pattern**

While you are working from home, you will not be subject to fixed hours and are free to perform the agreed work at times that suit you. However, there are core hours during which you will need to be available. These core hours are 9.30am to 11.30am and 2pm to 3.30pm. If you do not think this will be possible, please speak to your line manager.

As you are free to manage your hours, this will require organisational and time-management skills to ensure you are meeting work requirements.

We ask you to be mindful that you are not overworking due to the constant access to technology and limited opportunity to leave the house. "Downtime" from work is essential.

To help maintain your wellbeing, please make sure that you take adequate rest breaks:

* If at all possible, take [one hour] off for lunch each day. Even if you are busy, it is essential that you find the time to take a break of at least 20 minutes each working day that lasts more than six hours.
* Ensure the time period between stopping work one day and beginning the next is not less than 11 hours.
* Have at least one complete day each week when no work is done.

We also appreciate that you may be under the added pressure of having to deal with the potentially conflicting demands of work and looking after children or other dependants. We suggest that you find an arrangement that suits you and your family, and discuss any changes to your working arrangements with your line manager.

Please be as clear as possible with your line manager about your hours of work. Making use of tools such as shared calendars and out-of-office messaging can help colleagues to be aware of your availability.

**Liaising with your line manager**

You should keep in regular contact with your line manager, making additional efforts to ensure that you keep your line manager up to date with what you are working on. Equally, you should make sure you notify your line manager if you are unsure about what you are required to do.

We would normally expect a homeworker to contact their line manager at least once a day.

Staff should consider all lines of communication, including email, telephone and video calls to ensure relationships are maintained and work continues.

**Sickness**

If you are sick and unable to work, you must telephone your line manager as soon as possible. The organisation's sickness absence policy and procedure will apply in these circumstances.

If you have coronavirus symptoms, which include a fever, a new continuous cough, or a loss of or change in your sense of smell or taste, you must follow the Government's self-isolation guidance at www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance.

**Health and safety**

You should liaise with your line manager to make sure that your workstation is appropriate and that you are working in a safe manner. However, you must also take responsibility for your own health and safety and that of 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 from home (such as back pain), or if you feel that there are any work-related health and safety hazards. Your line manager will escalate the matter to look into what action can be taken.

There are steps you can take to make sure you achieve a comfortable posture while working from home on display screen equipment (DSE). Please watch the video from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on workstation set-up at www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm.

Please also observe these guidelines when working with DSE:

* Break up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least five minutes every hour) or changes in activity.
* Avoid awkward, static postures by regularly changing position.
* Get up and move around or do stretching exercises.
* Avoid eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time.

Employees should follow the usual reporting procedures for any work-related accidents that occur in their home.

**Equipment and materials**

If you need any equipment and materials, you should notify your line manager immediately. We will do our best to ensure that you have all the equipment and materials you need to enable you to work effectively.

However, as you will understand, the requirement for homeworking came about quickly, and so it may not be possible to provide all equipment immediately or at all. We ask that you do your best with what you have.

You must take care of any equipment and materials provided by the organisation, and notify your line manager of any faults with the equipment. Where you are using your own equipment and materials, please notify your line manager.

**Telephone and internet accounts**

You will pay the costs for all telephone and internet connections in your home.

However, we will reimburse you for any additional telephone and internet premiums due to an increase in data or telephone usage needed for work, upon submission of the appropriate documentation.

**Stationery and postage**

You should obtain receipts for any stationery purchased and any items posted in the course of your work and reclaim such costs once a month using our expenses claim procedure.

**Tax**

Employees 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.

**Security**

Employees who work from home are responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with our organisation secure at all times. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to:

* keep filing cabinets and drawers locked when they are not being used;
* keep all documentation under lock and key at all times except when in use; and
* use a unique password for your work computer and any other digital devices you use for work.

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

**Insurance**

Employees should check with their home and contents insurance providers that they have adequate cover for the fact that they work from home/that any of their own equipment is covered for work use.

**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.