

Homeworking Policy

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Introduction

1. There is no standard definition of homeworking or teleworking but we mean the situation where employees undertake work at home with the assistance of information technology. This could be 100% of the time at home, a split between office and home, a split between working from home and making outside visits, or another pattern. For the purposes of this policy we will only use the term “homeworking”
2. We define four levels of homeworking:
 - **Level 1:** Employees based at an office, but who occasionally work from home e.g. to complete a specific piece of work. Typically, an employee will normally need to get their manager’s agreement each time working at home is needed,
 - **Level 2:** Employees based at an office, but who regularly work at home. Typically, an employee will normally let their managers know where they are, but there will be a general understanding that working from home is acceptable.
 - **Level 3:** Employees with a permanent arrangement to work a preset part of each week at home and a preset part at the office. The employee’s location each day is fixed.
 - **Level 4:** Employees based permanently at home. The employee’s location each day is fixed.

Principles

3. To work effectively, homeworking has to meet the business needs of the service as well as those of the individual. At levels 3 and 4 it is a formal, contracted arrangement entered into jointly by the Council and the employee.
4. Homeworking is not offered as a right, but is based on the suitability of the post and person concerned and must be agreed with the department in each case. It is subject to agreement by your Head of Department in consultation with the Head of Business Services who will advise on the HR and IT requirements. Levels 1 and 2 are entirely at the Council’s discretion and can be withdrawn at any time.

Who can homework?

5. The Heads of Department, in consultation with Personnel and IT can agree which posts are suitable for homeworking. This is entirely at their

discretion, although there are certain procedures to follow if the request is made within the Council's Flexible Working policy. Considerations will include:

- Can the work be delivered and received electronically?
 - Can output be delivered electronically to the work base?
 - Is output measurable?
 - Is direct face to face or telephone contact with the customer a requirement of the post?
 - Is physical access to shared resources necessary to perform duties?
 - Are the required telecoms links and IT systems available?
 - Does the home accommodation comply with health and safety regulations?
 - Does the employee need to come to the office to collect work or deliver output more than twice a week?
 - Can adequate supervision arrangements be put in place?
 - Does the employee have to supervise staff and is it possible?
 - Does it produce any savings e.g. office costs
6. It is unlikely anyone who supervises significant numbers of staff will be able to work at levels 3 or 4.

Contractual and Working Arrangements

7. Most terms and conditions of employment will be identical to those for office based staff, but there will be some variations. Certainly for staff working at levels 3 and 4 there will have to be an agreed contract of employment stating those variations before homeworking can start. Staff at levels 1 and 2 are unlikely to need significant contract variations, but certain procedures may need to apply. Managers should consult Personnel for advice.
8. The exact terms, conditions and procedures that will apply will vary on a case by case basis. But some general principles that are likely to apply are:

- Contracted homeworking employees will be subject to performance measures, processes and objectives similar to those that apply to office based employees.
- Managers must agree working hours and patterns, contact times and availability with the employee in advance. Unless otherwise agreed contracted hours will remain the same when employees commence homeworking. Employees working from home must be available to managers, colleagues and where applicable the public, by phone and e-mail during their working hours.
- Employees' concerns about working arrangements must be brought to the attention of their manager without delay.
- There will be no automatic right to revert to previous working hours, patterns or location for those working at levels 3 and 4, but requests will be considered. The Council will manage cases where the arrangements are clearly not working well through the Dismissal and Disciplinary Procedure and insisting on a change of work location or pattern of work will be a sanction available to it under that procedure.
- During homeworking, mileage or other travel costs for employees working at levels 1 or 2 will be payable on business journeys from home, subject to this not exceeding the costs which would have been incurred to work locations from the notional office base. Journeys from home to the office location for meetings etc. will not be paid for. The detail of this will need to be agreed in each individual case.
- For employees working at levels 3 and 4, mileage or other travel costs will be payable on business journeys from home. Journeys from home to the office location for meetings etc. will be paid for. The detail of this will need to be agreed in each individual case.
- There will be no payment to the employee for using their home as a work base. The Council views the benefits to the employee of working at or from home, and the saving in terms of private (home to work) mileage to balance any additional costs which may be incurred as a result of homeworking.
- Employees must agree the organisation of their work and deadlines to be achieved with their line manager. Requests for changes in hours will be treated in the same way as office based employees
- Homeworking employees may be required to attend the Council's premises at agreed times for meetings, training, supervisory matters etc.

- The Manager will ensure that staff have access to circulars and other information relevant to their work.
- Employees and their colleagues are to ensure that all staff are included in relevant activities in order to avoid potential isolation of homeworking staff.
- Good communication is essential to effective homeworking. The manager and employee should plan and agree a communication plan which should be reviewed in the light of operational experience.
- It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that a proper framework and agreement is set in place prior to homeworking commencing. The manager remains responsible for the supervision of the employee throughout all the employee's working hours.
- Employees working from home will have the same opportunities for career development and training as office based employees.

Equipment

9. The IT, telephone and communications equipment needed will be determined by the IT Unit who will arrange for its installation and removal when needed. Employees will be required to sign an "Acceptable Use Agreement" setting the rules regarding its use. But the main points will be:
 - Council supplied equipment must not be used for non-work purposes
 - Council supplied equipment must not be used by family or friends
 - Non-Council equipment must not be connected to Council equipment
10. Furniture such as a desk, chair, lockable drawers etc. will also be provided by the Council where needed. This will usually be decided after the Health and Safety risk assessment has been carried out.
11. Any equipment will remain the property of the Council who will bear the cost of installing, maintaining and/or moving it. Where equipment is provided employees must take reasonable care of it, use it only in accordance with any operating instructions and return it to the Council when requested or when employment ends.
12. The cost of business phone calls will be met by the Council. How this will be calculated or how to claim will be agreed before homeworking starts.

13. Employees must have their manager's written agreement before any personal item of equipment is used. The Council is not responsible for maintenance costs, replacement or repair in the event of loss or damage to any personal equipment that the employee uses.
14. IT support will be available for home workers, but only during normal office hours. If equipment has to be serviced in the IT offices then the home worker may be required to bring it in rather than IT collect it. The exact arrangements will depend on the circumstances.

Health and Safety

15. Employees working at or from home have statutory duties and responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act. In addition, they are required to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of anyone else who might be affected by their actions and omissions.
16. Employees are expected to co-operate with their line manager in ensuring a safe and healthy working space at home.
17. Before homeworking is agreed at levels 3 or 4, employees must undertake a home workplace risk assessment and complete and return the attached form to their Manager. Only if any identified risks can reasonably be removed will homeworking be agreed. The Council retains the right to check the employee's home based work areas for health and safety purposes. The need for such inspections and their frequency will depend on the homeworking level and the nature of the work to be undertaken.
18. Once the equipment supplied by the Council has been installed a Display Screen Equipment self assessment form must be completed and sent to Personnel. The form is available on Infolink.
19. Employees must not have meetings in their home with clients, customers, or officers from other agencies, or divulge their home address or telephone number to them.
20. Managers and colleagues will be expected to meet regularly with homeworking staff to discuss work issues, and with the agreement of both the employee and their manager these meetings can be conducted in the employee's home. Otherwise those meetings will have to take place on Council property.
21. In order to ensure the safety of staff working alone or at remote locations they must comply with normal procedures to ensure that their whereabouts are known.

22. One of the bonuses of homeworking is that employees can operate outside of standard working hours. However, this also brings with it the potential to work extended hours. It is important that working patterns and level of hours is not detrimental to health and wellbeing. It is part of an employee's responsibility to ensure that their manager is informed about the number of hours they work and to comply with the Working Time Regulations.
23. Employees must report any health and safety concerns to their manager at the earliest opportunity.
24. For Health and Safety and Insurance purposes, any work related injury, accident, sickness or disease must be reported immediately using the Council's procedures.
25. It is strongly recommended that any Level 3 or 4 home worker attends an Appointed Person first aid course in the first 6 months of their appointment.

Security of Information

26. All information and equipment must be kept secure at all times. Managers must be satisfied that adequate precautions are in place to maintain confidentiality of material in accordance with the Data Protection Act and Council guidelines, policies and procedures.
27. Employees must keep all information confidential and secure and must report any loss of information and any potential risks to that information e.g. a break in or attempted break in. Employees must not show (or allow to be shown) any data to any members of their family or visitors to the household.

Insurance

28. Using a domestic home officially as a workplace is a "material fact" as far as household buildings and contents insurers are concerned. Employees must inform their insurers and make any arrangements necessary to cover the new circumstances before commencing home working. Those arrangements are to include confirmation from the home contents insurers that they will agree to continue to provide "personal liability cover" for domestic activity in the home when it contains a workplace. Personal liability cover is routinely included in most comprehensive contents policies. Any resistance by an insurer to confirm this should be referred to the Council's Insurance Officer immediately.

29. To the extent that it is possible the Council has insured the equipment and furniture and other things it provides to employees to enable home working to take place. Employees do not need to arrange their own insurance for loss, damage or theft of those things.
30. Employees are required to take all reasonable care of the things provided and if any have to be transported in an employee's vehicle they should be carried securely in the boot or an obscured compartment and never at any time left unattended in a vehicle or anywhere else away from the employee's home."
31. Home workers will continue to be covered by the Council's other general insurances including employer's liability and public liability which provide indemnity in respect of injury or harm in circumstances where the Council is legally liable.
32. In the event of an accident or injury at home, it may, however, be very difficult to prove negligence on the part of the Council, because the officer working at home would be primarily responsible for their own working environment. Any accidents must be reported immediately using the Council's procedure.

Mortgage and Tenancy Arrangements

33. Employees working at or from home on a regular basis must inform anyone with an interest in the property of their intentions.

Tax Liabilities

34. Specific advice should be sought from the Inland Revenue by the employee prior to commencing homeworking.
35. Generally, working at or from home is viewed by the Inland Revenue as being a matter of choice, and it is therefore unlikely that expenses will be allowable for income tax relief unless the particular job requires the employee to perform duties at home rather than elsewhere. Further advice should be sought from the Inland Revenue.
36. Working from home may affect an employee's capital gains tax liability if they sell, or otherwise dispose of their home. This generally will only apply if part of the house has at some time been used exclusively for employment purposes.
37. If, however, no part of the home has been used exclusively for business then, depending upon individual circumstances, full relief could be available.

38. Working at or from home will not attract business rates.

LEWES DISTRICT COUNCIL
 HOMEWORKING – RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (to be completed by employee)

Name:	Work Activity:
Address:	Work location within house:
Telephone Number:	Assessment Date:

1 Environment	Yes	No	Management action required	Date Completed
Is the room set aside specifically for the work?				
If no is there adequate separation from non workers? (e.g. children and pets)				
Is the lighting adequate?				
Is adequate heating provided?				
Is adequate ventilation available?				
2 Electrical				
Is the fixed electrical system in good condition?(e.g. no damaged sockets or wiring)				
Are there enough sockets to accommodate all appliances that will be used?				
If no, where more than one appliance is powered from a single socket, is a proper fused multi socket adaptor used?				
Are there any cables which create trip hazards?				
3 Fire				
Is the work area tidy?				

Do you regularly dispose of waste material?				
Are your exit routes kept clear of obstructions?				
Is there a smoke alarm fitted on each floor of the house?				
4 Workspace and storage				
Is there enough space to work comfortably?				
Does the work area provide enough privacy and freedom from disturbances?				
Do you have sufficient storage space?				
Are floor coverings sound and free of trip/slip hazards?				
Do you have a desk? (Minimum dimensions L 1200mm D 800mm H720mm)				
Do you have a chair?(It must have a 5 castor base, and be adjustable for height/backrest angle and backrest height)				
5 Manual Handling				
Does the work involve manual handling?				
If yes, has a manual handling assessment been carried out?				
If yes have you received manual handling training?				
6 Hazardous Substances				
Does the work involve the use of any chemicals/substances?				
If yes has a COSHH assessment been carried out and made available to you?				
7 Accidents/First Aid				
Do you know the Council procedure for reporting accidents?				

Do you have a first aid kit available?				
Have you received first aid training?				

Please add any additional comments

Employee Signature:

Date:

Please return this completed form to your Manager

Managers Signature:

Date:

When Managers actions have been completed please send a copy to Personnel Services