



EAST RIDING
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Home Working Policy and Procedures

Supportive Safety Guidance Document

Lead Directorate and Service:	Corporate Resources - Human Resources, Safety Services.
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1. Background

This safety guidance document provides information on safe home working.

Many of the hazards, which might compromise health and safety while working at or from home, will be the same as in the workplace, but there will be additional hazards too. Health and safety law covers home workers in the same way as any other worker. The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) enforces the Health and Safety at Work Act and the regulations made under the act, which also apply to home working.

HSE Inspectors can visit employers and also have the right to visit home workers, to ensure that risks from work and working at home are properly managed. Similarly in accordance with the Councils' Corporate Health and Safety Policy, Safety Services can enter any part of Council premises or sites to inspect conditions relating to the safety, health and welfare of employees, this includes home workers.

If it is felt that working practices pose a significant risk to the health and safety of those working in the home environment, or any others who may be affected by the work being undertaken, the work will be stopped immediately.

2. Foreword

In accordance with the Councils' Corporate Safety Policy, the Council is committed to pursuing continual improvements in health and safety. This safety guidance document supports this commitment and forms part of the Councils' health and safety management system. This document only applies to those defined as home workers in the Councils' home working policy. Ad hoc home workers should be aware that they have to report accidents and that they are responsible for minimising risks when completing work related activity.

3. Implementation

Directorates are responsible for the implementation of this safety guidance document, and communication of its content as appropriate.

This safety guidance document is available on the Safety Services intranet page and, where employees do not have access to the Council's intranet, via their line manager/headteacher.

The Council relies on the co-operation of all employees, and trade unions for the successful implementation of this safety guidance document.

A review of this safety guidance document will be undertaken 3 years after its implementation, and where significant changes in legislation or working practices deem this appropriate.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Directors and Heads of Service

Directors and Heads of Services are ultimately responsible and accountable to the Chief Executive for ensuring this safety guidance document is issued to their management team.

4.2. Managers

Managers are responsible for achieving the objectives of this safety guidance document where relevant to their area of service delivery and are responsible for ensuring that:

- The information contained within this safety guidance document is implemented and complied with;
- Managers should ensure that instruction is provided on good ergonomic and safe working practice in the home office, to include:
 - Workstation set up and assessment;
 - How to adjust the chair;
 - How to adjust the workstation where appropriate;
 - Good posture;
 - Avoiding unnecessary repeated stretching, bending, twisting to reach equipment and materials;
 - Changing tasks and position regularly to vary the posture;
 - Taking regular breaks;
 - Performing regular, simple exercises involving fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, back, legs;
 - What to do if the symptoms of repetitive strain injury, etc are experienced.
- Managers must complete the first home workers risk assessment with the home worker at their home and for ensuring that corrective actions are completed;
- Managers must complete an annual inspection. If the home office is found to be defective they must ensure that corrective action is taken by the home worker/owner and inspections completed more frequently until issues are resolved;
- Managers must ensure that home workers complete all appropriate documentation as instructed in this guidance document.

4.3. Employees

Employees must ensure they carry out assigned tasks and duties in accordance with information, instruction, training and agreed safe systems of work. Specifically they must ensure:

- This safety guidance document is complied with;
- They take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and that of other people who may be affected by their work activities;
- They co-operate with their employer on matters of health and safety;
- All work items provided by their employer is used in accordance with the training, instruction and manufacturer's documentation they receive to enable them to use the items safely. In addition to this, home workers should inform their staff of any work situation that could present a serious danger to health and safety or of any

- shortcomings in the authority's health and safety arrangements;
- Complete all safety documentation as instructed in this guidance document;
- They must maintain housekeeping and building maintenance as required of a place of work.

4.4 Safety Services

The primary function of Safety Services is to support the Council and its employees by providing professional, authoritative, impartial advice on all aspects of health, safety and wellbeing. Where managers/headteachers require further assistance, safety services will advise on achieving compliance with this safety guidance document. Additionally Safety Services can support with DSE/Workstation Assessments if there is a health need.

4.5 Occupational Health

Occupational Health is available to provide managers, headteachers and employees with guidance on work related health issues. Further information on the role of Occupational Health can be found on the Council's intranet.

5. Arrangements

5.1 Specific Home Worker Risk Assessment Requirements

Appendix 1 is a copy of the Council's Home Worker Risk Assessment Form. This must be completed annually. The manager/employee are jointly responsible for completing the first assessment together, thereafter it is the responsibility of the employee to revisit annually and raise any defects and corrective actions taken.

Section 1 – Workspace

Handling loads can cause serious injury particularly to the back. It is essential that work being undertaken at home is organised in such a manner that hazardous manual handling tasks do not take place. Where manual handling does form part of the job, an assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the Manual Handling Operations Regulations so as to reduce identified risk to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

Further information on assessing manual handling risks is available in the Council's Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders Safety Guidance document and accompanying safety guidance notes.

The working area needs to be tidy and clean. A cluttered untidy working environment can give rise to accidents, especially, slips, trips and falls and can increase the fire risk. Home workers should be encouraged to operate the same high standards in their working area 'at home' as would be expected in the office.

Slips trips and falls can be a risk in any environment. Home workers need to be as aware of the risks in their own home as they would be regarding risks in any other office environment. Good housekeeping is very important in ensuring that risk from slips, trips, and falls are reduced to the lowest possible level

The home worker may have access to highly sensitive information relating to service users which could be inappropriately accessed. Therefore adequate secure storage should be considered. This will also reduce the potential accident hazard from a cluttered

environment.

Section 2 - Lighting

Adequate lighting is very important if people are to avoid eyestrain. Natural daylight is vastly preferable to artificial light, but good, non-glare lighting is needed in order to cope with dark and cloudy days. Adjustable task lighting should also be considered. Consideration should be given to:

- Is the natural lighting sufficient for the task?
- Does artificial lighting provide levels when natural lighting is not sufficient?
- Will extra lighting be necessary and how will this be provided?
- Is additional task lighting required and if so who will provide it?
- Is there any uncomfortable glare from reflective surfaces and can this be eliminated?

Section 3 - Electrical Safety

Where home workers are provided with electrical equipment to enable them to undertake their work from home the Council is responsible for the maintenance and regular inspection of that electrical equipment. The Council is only responsible for the equipment it provides; electrical sockets and other parts of the home workers domestic electrical system is their own responsibility.

It is however the employees responsibility to ensure that the electrical equipment (including their own) is safe to use on a day to day basis. The following basic visual inspections should be undertaken prior to connecting and using any electrical equipment:-

- Check that the cable/flex and plug is in a good condition;
- Plugs should be free from cracks, rattles, signs of overheating or damage and the flex is secure with no conductors exposed;
- Cables/flexes should be free from cuts, fraying and damage, without joints and should not present a trip hazard when in use;
- The item of equipment should be free from damage and operate as intended;
- The environment must be suitable for the intended use of the equipment.

The manager must provide the necessary details (including cost and detail codes) to Infrastructure and Facilities (cyclical@eastriding.gov.uk) in order to include the home workers equipment on to the electrical equipment inspection and testing schedule.

Section 4 - Temperature & Ventilation

Consideration of working temperature and ventilation:

- Are fixed or portable heaters safe and without risk?
- Are methods of cooling the area during the summer months, safe and without risk?
- Are working areas sufficiently insulated to maintain a comfortable working area. For example if the member of staff wants to work in their conservatory can it remain warm enough in the winter and cool enough in the summer?
- Will windows and doors supply sufficient ventilation/fresh air?

Section 5 - Noise

Environmental and background noise is often an issue in the home. Other members of the family may be at home at the same time so music and loud conversation is a possibility. Neighbours may be noisy. Some compromise needs to be reached, especially if the individual needs to concentrate on detailed work or use the telephone a lot. Otherwise it may simply not be possible for the member of staff to work at home.

Section 6 – Work Equipment

Work equipment must be checked regularly (this includes electrical equipment) by a competent person and kept in a condition that does not cause harm to the home worker or others. The employee must make arrangements with the relevant Council department, the manager is responsible for ensuring that up to date information is available.

Home workers must receive appropriate information, instruction and training on how to use the equipment they have been provided with so that the job can be done safely. Home workers must work to this standard or the manufacturer's instructions if no other training has been received.

Work equipment that is provided for the home worker must be constructed or adapted to be suitable for its intended purpose. All equipment should be supplied with the appropriate manufacturers/suppliers manuals and where necessary the appropriate safety data sheets/control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) data sheets.

As previously stated, the Council (as the employer) is only responsible for the equipment they supply. Electrical sockets and other parts of the home workers domestic electrical systems are their own responsibility. The Council is not responsible for testing of electrical equipment used in a home office which it does not supply.

All work equipment must be maintained in a safe working condition and must be regularly inspected. Consideration should be given to:

- Where equipment is used, will equipment become damaged?
- Can equipment be secured when not in use?
- Are children at risk from the equipment?
- Is the equipment at risk from being accidentally damaged by children?

5.2 Additional Safety Expectations

Display Screen Equipment Assessments

All users of display screen equipment must complete a risk assessment in accordance with the Council's Display Screen Equipment Safety Guidance document and accompanying Laptop Use Guidance Note, which includes home workers. The same documentation and process is to be followed.

Fire Risk Assessment

It is necessary to carry out a fire risk assessment for home working premises. The fire risk assessment should be undertaken by following the supportive guidance notes for the completion of means of escape fire risk assessments, and by completing the Councils'

Fire Risk Assessment form. The guidance and fire risk assessment form can be found on the Safety Services page on the intranet.

New & Expectant Mother Assessments

When assessing the risks to home workers the Council has a duty to pay particular attention to new and expectant mothers. Risks include those to the unborn child or to the child of a woman who is breast feeding – not just risks to the mother herself. Further information can be found in the Councils' New and Expectant Mothers' Safety Guidance document.

Inspections

Managers also have a responsibility to undertake regular health and safety inspections of those members of their team who are working from home. Inspections should be undertaken on an annual basis.

The home worker is responsible for completing a monthly inspection (reference appendix 2), which should be retained by the home worker, corrective actions should be taken as appropriate. The annual manager inspection will include a review of this information.

If it is felt that working practices pose a significant risk to the health and safety of those working in the home environment, or any others who may be affected by the work being undertaken, the work will be stopped immediately.

Accident & Incident Reporting

As with any other working arrangements, members of staff including home workers have a duty to report accidents arising out of or in connection with a work activity. Further information on reporting accidents and dangerous occurrences can be found in the Councils' Accident and Incident Reporting Procedure. All accidents, which occur during the course of employment duties, must be reported regardless of severity.

Well-being

Some home workers may experience psychological stress due to working in isolation or working with limited social contact, which can lead to a lack of self-confidence. Managers must ensure that potential home workers possess maturity, trust-worthiness, self-sufficiency, self-discipline, good time management skills and good communication skills. Home workers must notify their manager immediately of well-being issues.

You should make sure that you have regular face-to-face contact with home workers so that they feel part of your team and a valued member of the organisation. Further guidance is available under the Council's Wellbeing at Work Policy.

First Aid

The Council is required to ensure that adequate arrangements for first aid are available for employees. Using the HSE guidance, home working is generally low risk activity and the number involved in a given venue is one. Therefore the recommendation is that the home worker is given instruction to be an appointed person. The home worker and manager should discuss the best means of summoning assistance for significant injuries

sustained in work activity. Minor injuries are to be dealt with as they would any other incident which occurred in the domestic environment. A home worker who feels that they are more prone to injury or the need for first aid should raise this with the manager.

Smoking Restrictions

In accordance with The East Riding of Yorkshire Council's No Smoking Policy, home workers are permitted to smoke in their home during the course of their work unless they invite others into an area of their home for work purposes.

Data Protection

For the protection of vulnerable persons all work related sensitive information must be stored in accordance with data protection principles. If locked storage would be utilised in the workplace then the same must be applied in a home office setting.



HOME WORKER RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Assessment of: _____

Department: _____

Directorate: _____

Home Address: _____

For further help or advice contact Safety Services on 01482 391117 or email safety.services@eastriding.gov.uk

1.0 Work Space

- 1.1 Is there enough space to undertake the work activity?
- 1.2 Is there sufficient space within the work area to move around safely?
- 1.3 Is there sufficient storage for work related items?
- 1.4 Is the work environment organised to minimise manual handling activities?
- 1.5 Is the working area well maintained?
- 1.6 Is the flooring even, in good condition and designed to minimise slips?

2.0 Lighting

2.1 Is the lighting in the work area suitable and sufficient?

2.2 Is additional/improved lighting/ task lighting required?

2.3 Is the provision of blinds at windows suitable?

2.4 Are surfaces non-reflective i.e. floor/wall/ceiling coverings?

3.0 Electrical Installations

3.1 How old is the electrical wiring and does it need to be checked by a competent person (are there any burn marks on plugs and sockets)

3.2 The numbers of sockets - are there sufficient sockets to allow equipment to be positioned safely with out the need for trailing sockets/use of extension leads?

3.3 Are any sockets in dangerous locations for example near water or steam?

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3.4 Will the home workers own electrical equipment need to be used and if so is it in safe condition?

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3.5 Will any electrical equipment provided by the home worker have a detrimental effect on the equipment provided by the Council?

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4.0 **Temperature, Humidity and Ventilation**

4.1 Is the temperature and humidity in the work area comfortable?

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4.2 Can adequate ventilation be achieved in the form of opening windows etc.

5.0 **Noise**

5.1 Are noise levels acceptable in the working area (equipment, other activities, other people etc.)?

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6. Work Equipment

6.1 Is work equipment regularly checked & tested by a competent person (PAT tested)?

6.2 Is the equipment used in accordance with training, instruction and/or manufacturer's instructions?

6.3 Is there evidence of damage to work equipment?

6.4 Is equipment and information stored correctly?

7. Additional Safety Expectations

7.1 Is the fire risk assessment up to date?

7.2 Has a display screen equipment assessment been completed?

7.3 Are monthly inspections completed and filed?

7.4 Have well-being issues been addressed?

Signature of Employee and Date: _____

APPENDIX 2 - MONTHLY INSPECTION SHEET – HOME WORKERS

Name

Date of inspection

	Yes/No	Action Required
Are risk assessments up to date?		If no, you are responsible for updating.
Are you aware of the location of the health and safety policies and guidance documents relevant to your duties?		If no, you should view via the intranet. Clarification should be sought via your manager.
Is the area secure?		If no, you are responsible for ensuring that Council property and any sensitive data is protected.
Have you felt isolated by lone working?		If yes, discuss with your manager and review the home working agreement.
Is there sufficient workspace?		If no, you are responsible for resolving housekeeping issues. If necessary revisit the risk assessment with your manager.
Have you got adequate storage and do you use it?		If no, you are responsible for housekeeping issues. If necessary revisit the risk assessment with your manager.
Is the work area clean and tidy?		If no, take immediate action.
Is electrical equipment in good working condition?		If no, if personal items remove from use. If it is Council equipment, raise with your manager.
Are cables well maintained and secure to prevent trips?		If no, if personal items remove from use. If it is Council equipment, raise with your manager.
Is electrical equipment portable appliance tested (PAT tested)?		If no, raise the issue with your manager.
Is there suitable lighting – natural/artificial?		If no, revisit the risk assessments.
Contact numbers for first aid support up to date?		If no, you are responsible for updating the information.
Have you had any accidents?		If yes, ensure that you complete paperwork (AIF form).