

Home Working Policy and Procedure



EAST RIDING
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Lead Directorate and Service:	Corporate Resources - Human Resources
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Home Working Policy

1. Background and Scope

This policy aims to allow the achievement of efficiency and flexibility to deliver services, reduce costs and increase productivity whilst also supporting individual employees to balance their work life and domestic responsibilities.

This policy applies to all employees of the Council except school based employees unless adopted by the respective school governing bodies.

2. Definitions

There are three categories of home working:

Home Working

‘At Home’

Employees regularly undertake the majority of their work in the home environment or another remote location away from the Council’s office locations. Home working employees usually work with the assistance of information technology and telecommunication links to the office, colleagues and clients.

Working ‘From Home’

Employees undertake part of their work from home or use their home as a base for mobile working.

‘Occasionally Working From Home’

Employees work at home on an ad-hoc basis to complete specific reports or projects.

3. Policy Statement

The Council is working towards reducing costs and raising performance and recognises that working flexibly can assist in achieving these goals.

4. Implementation

Managers are responsible for implementing this policy and whilst the needs of the service will always remain paramount, requests from employees should be considered in line with service requirements.

Home Working Procedure

1. Introduction

This procedure has been developed to assist Managers in determining whether tasks within their service can be performed by the employee in their own home and if so, outlines the issues for consideration. Prior to agreement, home working that requires IT systems and telecommunications installation are subject to a costed feasibility study by the ICT Department and an inspection of the proposed working accommodation by a suitably qualified Manager.

2. Principles

Employees may request to work 'at home' or 'from home' under the Right to Request Flexible Working Procedure. Alternatively Managers may offer this option to employees where they determine there are service benefits from doing so.

Heads of Service will determine which posts are suitable for home working ('at home' or 'from home'). An employee's Manager will determine if and when an employee can work occasionally from home.

Where current posts are considered for home working those employees occupying the posts will be given the opportunity to apply in the first instance.

Normal recruitment procedures apply to new or vacant posts allocated for home working.

All other policies and procedures of the Council that apply to office based employees will apply equally to home workers.

3. Manager Responsibilities

Managers must consider requests for home working and have clear justification if home working is deemed unsuitable.

Managers must keep detailed information on costs, productivity and performance issues arising from home working in order to monitor the effectiveness of the policy.

Managers must monitor the well-being of an employee working 'at home' and ensure that the employee is fully included in all communication, team meetings and information, access to training courses and promotion opportunities, work and social activities as appropriate in order to reduce any feeling of isolation or discrimination.

4. Employee Responsibilities

Employees must agree working hours with their Manager in accordance with the requirements of the service and keep their Manager updated of any changes to their working arrangements.

Employees will plan their own workload and take ownership of their work and must not see the role as limited to their professional involvement with everything else being someone else's responsibility.

Employees will keep their Manager regularly updated regarding workload and related issues and will attend the workplace for team meetings where required.

Employees will be responsible for ensuring that their home working environment complies with Council policies and Health and Safety requirement.

5. Criteria to Assess Suitability of Posts for Home Working

In considering which posts, or aspects of a post, are appropriate for carrying out work 'at home', 'from home' or 'occasionally from home', Managers must take into account the following general points:

- There must be no adverse effects on costs or the performance level and quality of service.
- There must be clear objectives and measurable outputs.
- There must be no increase in workload of colleagues as a result of an employee home working.
- Arrangements must be in place for effective communication between the home worker and the workplace.
- There must be a costed feasibility study by the ICT Department to establish that effective communication links are possible within reasonable costs.
- There must be arrangements in place to ensure security of data.

Additionally, Managers must consider the following points when assessing the suitability of the three different categories of home workers:

'At Home' Category:

- Can work be accessed securely through VPN Networks?
- Can output be delivered securely to section base?
- Can data be stored securely in accordance with the Council's Data

Protection Policy and related principles?

- 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 and capabilities necessary to perform duties?
- Are the required telecoms links and IT systems available?
- Does the home accommodation comply with health and safety regulations?

'From Home' Category:

- Can work be accessed securely through VPN Networks?
- Can output be delivered securely to section base?
- Can data be stored securely in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and related principles?
- Does the employee need to come to the office to collect work or deliver output more than twice a week?
- Is output measurable?
- Is physical access to shared resources and capabilities required on a daily basis to perform duties?
- Are the required telecoms links and IT systems available?
- Does the home accommodation comply with health and safety regulations?

Occasional Category:

- Appropriate arrangements must be made for the employee to supervise any other staff for which he or she is responsible.
- Working at home will only be carried out at times when the employee does not need to be accessible in person or circumstances dictate that this is the most appropriate approach.

The 'at home' and 'from home' category is not available to Managers who have office/mobile staff to supervise due to the consistency and accessibility required when managing a team.

A home working approval form must be completed and signed by the Director in consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources for 'at home' and 'from home' categories of home worker (Appendix A).

Home workers should normally live within reasonable travelling distance of the office to easily enable them to attend the office as required.

Home working will only be approved where essential IT links are possible within reasonable costs.

6. Equipment

The Council will supply equipment needed to enable an employee to work effectively 'at home' or 'from home'. This will include:

- the supply of telecoms lines to allow for connection to relevant networks including e-mail and intranet
- relevant, encrypted IT equipment including PC, laptops (although these are not suitable for prolonged periods of work), printer

- furniture including desk, chair, lockable drawers
- mobile phone where appropriate.

Occasional home workers and employees who work from home will not necessarily be supplied with permanent telecoms links or other equipment but may be given access to 'dial in' using a laptop if appropriate.

Equipment supplied by the Council is not for personal use, although the employee may access the internet for personal use if the appropriate authorisation has been given. Any private use must be undertaken in the employee's own non working time ie. before or after their working start and finish time or in their lunch break. Personal usage of email is limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per day and any excessive or inappropriate personal use could result in disciplinary action.

Equipment must not be used by anyone other than the home worker (eg members of the family, friends etc). All policies of the Council apply to home workers including the e-mail and internet policies.

7. Health and Safety

Most of the regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 apply to employees working 'at home' as well as to employees working within Council accommodation. It is the Manager's responsibility to undertake an initial risk assessment and then annually and conduct annual health and safety inspections of the work area in the home for 'at home' and 'from home' categories, to ensure that the work can be undertaken safely without endangering the health of the home worker or their family. Additionally, electrical equipment supplied by the Council should be regularly tested.

More detailed guidelines and home worker risk assessment forms have been produced and Managers and employees should obtain copies from their designated Health and Safety Officer.

The home worker is responsible for day-to-day health and safety issues and for reporting any concerns to their Manager. They are responsible for completing a monthly health and safety inspection sheet, retaining it and taking any corrective action. The Manager will review these forms annually.

8. Hours of Work

Employees and Managers must agree an appropriate working pattern. Variation of the agreed working pattern must be agreed with the Manager in advance.

Requests from home workers to change their hours of work (ie to part time, job share, full time) will be treated in the same way as office based employees.

9. Contracts of Employment

Terms and conditions of employment for home workers are the same as for office based employees. However, a home working agreement for the 'at home' and 'from home' categories must be signed by the employee and the Manager to ensure the employee is aware of and agrees to the special conditions that working from home requires. Copies of a home working agreement (Appendix B) will be sent to the employee with the contract of employment.

10. Induction and Probationary Period

It is essential that home workers have a structured and full induction programme within the first week. The Council's 'Probationary Period Guidelines for Managers' must be followed.

11. Insurance

Employees working 'at home', with the agreement of their Manager, are covered by the Council's insurance policy for employer's liability and personal accident in the same way as office-based employees.

Equipment supplied to the home worker is also covered by the Council's insurance arrangements providing it is used for work purposes only.

Home workers are required to contact their own insurance company to advise that they will be working 'at home'. This does not usually result in an increase in premium. The Council will not reimburse any increase in premium should this occur.

12. Mortgagee/Landlord

Before commencing home working employees should advise mortgagees or landlords, if rented, that they intend to work 'at home.' The employee is responsible for obtaining authorisation from the mortgagee or landlord, if required. The Council will not be responsible for any additional costs as a result.

13. Planning Regulations/Council Tax

Using a room, or part of a room, to work in would not normally require planning permission.

Working from home should not affect your payment of Council Tax.

14. Travelling Arrangements

Business travel will be paid in accordance with Council policy; therefore mileage is not payable when the home worker

attends the designated office base. Any other mileage incurred will have home to office base deducted in the normal way.

Under HMRC guidelines, the home will not be designated the employee's base as it is not an objective requirement that the duties be performed 'at home.' Any mileage undertaken to base will therefore not be eligible to tax relief. Managers are responsible for informing the Payments Section if employees are home working.

15. Security of Data

Employees must ensure that all information stored and accessed (including written information and that held on the computer) is secure and cannot be accessed by other parties. Failure to keep information secure will be considered as a serious matter and dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

16. Withdrawal of Home Working

Withdrawal of home working will be at the Council's discretion. The home worker will be given written notice in line with their contract of the withdrawal unless it is withdrawn as a result of a breach of trust, in which case no notice will be given. If no suitable post is available at the administrative base, the Council's Retraining and Redeployment Policy will be used to seek a suitable alternative post.

Where capability issues arise (ie the performance of the employee is in question) the Council reserve the right to immediately withdraw home working without notice to enable the employee to be more closely monitored at the office base.

Where the employee wishes to cease home working the employee must make a written request to this effect, giving their reasons, to the Manager. There is no

automatic right of return to the administrative base. However, where an identical office based post (job title, job outline and profile and spinal column point) is available the home worker will be transferred into it. Once the home worker has had a request to transfer to the administrative base agreed he/she would be prohibited from applying for home working in the future, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as the ill health of the employee.

Where an identical post is not available a voluntary transfer to the office base will not be possible unless the employee applies for a different advertised post and is appointed using the Council's normal recruitment and selection procedures.

17. Recovery/Payment of Set Up Costs

Part or full recovery or payment of set up costs will occur should the employee:

- i) voluntarily discontinue home working.
- ii) voluntarily leave the employment of the Council.
- iii) relocate their home to an area where a feasibility study indicates that IT links cannot be achieved within a reasonable cost.
- iv) be subject to disciplinary or capability procedures which require the employee to cease home working.

Should the employee leave or cease home working in any of the circumstances listed at i, ii and iii above, within a period two years from the date of commencing home working, the Council will seek to recover the full amount of the original set up costs.

Should the employee relocate their home to an area where a feasibility study

indicates that IT links can be achieved within a reasonable cost, the employee will be required to pay for 50% of the set up costs for home working in the new property, which may be paid over the following two years by deductions from salary.

Should the employee be subject to disciplinary or capability procedures which require the employee to cease home working (iv above), within a two year period from the date of commencing home working, the Council will seek to recover a proportion of the original set up costs. The amount to be repaid will be reduced by 1/24th for each complete calendar month of service since the commencement of home working.

The final decision on the amount to be repaid will be made by the Director of Corporate Resources in consultation with the Service Director.

Set up costs which will be reclaimed include the cost of connecting the individual to a suitable IT link to enable the individual to access the Council's systems but do not include the cost of furniture and equipment. Any furniture and equipment will be removed from the property and reallocated. The Council in such circumstances will collect furniture and equipment.

18. Training

Managers will ensure that employees who work 'at home' or 'from home' will receive appropriate training in areas such as:

- Time management.
- Communication.
- Basic PC awareness.
- Health and safety.
- FIRST AID.
- Data protection.

Managers of home workers may also require specialist training in:

- Communication.
- Managing staff remotely.

19. Departmental Arrangements

This procedure should be supplemented by more detailed departmental guidelines where appropriate.

APPENDIX A

Home Working Approval Form

East Riding of Yorkshire Council Home working Approval Form					
Post Title					
Post Number					
Number of Hours					
How many other posts could be affected by a decision to approve home working for the above post?					
What is the cost in the first year?					
What are the objectives? (List on a separate sheet)					
What are the measurable outputs? (List on a separate sheet.)					
Will the workload of other employees increase as a result?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
If yes, how?					
How will the home worker be supervised? (Be specific)					
What arrangements are in place for communication?					
How will work be delivered and retrieved?					
Is direct contact with the customer a requirement of the post?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
If yes, how will this be achieved?					
Is physical access to shared resources and capabilities required?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Does the property comply with Health and Safety Regulations?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Does the employee need to come to the office to collect work or deliver output more than twice weekly?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Does the employee have authorisation from the mortgagee/landlords to use the property for home working, if required?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
What was the result of the costed feasibility study by the IT Department?					
Name and Job Title of Manager					
Signature of Manager		Date			
Director of		Signed		Date	
Director of Corporate Resources		Signed		Date	

APPENDIX B**Agreement for Working 'At Home'
Conditions of Employment****Hours of Work**

Your hours of work are specified in your Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment, which is attached. Any variation to your hours of work must be agreed with your Manager prior to making any change. Any annual leave or other leave must be agreed with the Line Manager in the normal way, prior to taking the leave. Sickness must be notified to your Manager, in line with the sickness provisions of your Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety regulations apply to home working and you are responsible for ensuring that appropriate checks are made on all equipment and that you operate a safe working environment. You must liaise with your Manager to ensure that you understand Health and Safety regulations and that they are complied with.

Data Protection

You must ensure that all information stored and accessed (including that held on computer) is secure, cannot be accessed by anyone other than yourself, and has appropriate encryption in order to comply with the Data Protection Act. You must have completed training in Data Protection and, the computer must not be used by anyone other than yourself.

Supervision/Management

You will be required to attend the office, as and when requested by your Manager but in particular for meetings, supervision and training a minimum of once a week.

Communication

You must ensure that you have access to relevant information such as Grapevine and the Council's intranet.

Trust

As an employee who works from home you are trusted to work the hours you have agreed with your Manager. Should this trust be broken you will be subject to the Council's disciplinary/capability policies and may be required to cease the home working arrangement with immediate effect.

Travel

Business travel will be paid in accordance with Council policy. Your base for the purpose of travel allowances is _____.

Other Terms and Conditions of Employment and Policies

Other terms and conditions of employment are as stated in the Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment. All policies, procedures and practices that apply to office based employees will apply equally to home workers.

Withdrawal of Home Working

Withdrawal of home working will be at the Council's discretion. The home worker will be given one month's written notice of the withdrawal unless it is withdrawn as a result of a breach of trust, as identified above, where no notice will be given.

Should you wish to discontinue the home working arrangement a written request must be made to your Manager giving details of the reasons. The Council has no obligation to discontinue home working and provide work at the Council's normal place of work.

Equipment

Work equipment will be provided by the Council. The Council will provide the necessary paper and stationery for use on the computer. The employee and the Manager will be responsible for keeping an up to date inventory of all work equipment.

Costs

The Council will pay for telephone costs, incurred in the use of a modem and work related telephone calls, providing these are itemised. Telephone costs will be paid quarterly, subject to the employee providing an itemised, official and original invoice, highlighting the amount claimed. The Council will not pay for, or contribute towards the cost of accommodation, electricity, lighting, or broadband/mobile connectivity etc.

Miscellaneous Issues

The Council's property will be covered by the Council's insurance policy.

You are responsible for informing your insurance company and mortgage company/landlord of this home working arrangement, and are responsible for any additional costs which may arise as a result.

Change of Address

Should you sell your property you may be liable for Capital Gains Tax, although this is not usually a problem where one person is occupying one room in the house for the purposes of business. However, it is your responsibility to understand and comply with this where appropriate. You may wish to contact the Inland Revenue.

You are required to give your Manager eight weeks' notice, in writing, of any change of address or telephone number.

Should you move out of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council or Kingston upon Hull City Council boundary you will be deemed to have terminated your employment with the Council.

A feasibility study will be undertaken to determine whether you will be allowed to continue home working in your new home.

Should the feasibility study indicate that IT links can be achieved within a reasonable cost, you will be required to contribute 50% of the cost of setting up in any new property. This may be payable over a 24 month period after the move takes place through salary deduction.

Should you leave in any of the circumstances listed in below, within a within a period three years from the date of relocating your home, the Council will seek to recover the full amount of the original set up costs.

Termination of Employment

Should you:

- i) voluntarily discontinue home working
- ii) relocate your home to an area where a feasibility study indicates that IT links cannot be achieved within a reasonable cost
- iii) move outside the East Riding of Yorkshire Council or Kingston upon Hull City Council boundary
- iv) voluntarily leave the employment of the Council
- v) be subject to disciplinary or capability procedures where you are required to cease home working

within a period two years from the date of commencing home working, the Council will, seek to recover a proportion of the original set up costs. The amount to be repaid will be reduced by 1/24th for each complete calendar month of service since the commencement of home working.

Should you or the Council terminate your employment, appropriate arrangements will be made through your Manager to collect the Council's property.

Name: _____

Address at which home working will be performed:

Home address (if different from above):

Telephone number: _____

Mobile telephone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Job title: _____

Total hours of work _____ to normally be worked as _____

I have read and understand the Conditions of Employment.

I have agreed that a Health and Safety risk assessment will be required on the proposed workplace for home working.

I will be responsible for completing and recording monthly Health and Safety checks.

I understand that my line Manager will complete quarterly Health and Safety checks.

I understand that any portable appliances will be checked annually by a representative of the Council.

I will operate in accordance with the Council's safety policy which I have read and understand.

I agree to allow access to my home to my line Managers, IT staff, portable appliance testing staff and any other Council employee who requires access to perform their duties.

I have informed by mortgage/insurance company that I intend to use my home for business purposes.

I understand that the home working arrangement is not a substitute for childcare or other caring/domestic responsibilities.

I understand that the home working arrangement does not affect my status as an employee.

I understand the arrangement for termination of the home working agreement by myself or by the Council.

I understand that I will be required to contribute a proportion of the cost of setting up home working facilities should I move address or leave the Council's employment.

I understand that my work will be monitored.

Please sign to signify that you have read, understood and agree to the conditions above relating to home working.

Name (print)

Job Title

Signature

Date