



JOINT HOME-WORKING POLICY

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1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Both Councils are committed to providing high quality services to customers by a highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce. The purpose of this policy is to promote a more efficient and flexible service delivery by enabling employees to reduce the need for excessive travel which will help to increase productivity.

2 Scope of the policy

- 2.2 This policy applies to all employees from Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council whose roles have been designated by their manager in discussion with the employee as being suitable for home-working or to employees who may wish to be considered to undertake home-working.

3 Supporting policies

- 3.1 As equal opportunities employers, both Councils have equality and diversity employment policies in place and provide flexible working arrangements and managers are encouraged to respond positively whenever possible to requests for varied working arrangements.
- 3.2 The Council's standard policies in relation to the secure storage and confidentiality of information apply equally to all employees working from home. This includes compliance with the **Data Protection Act 1998** and the **Freedom of Information Act 2000**. Confidential information must be destroyed in line with service guidelines.
- 3.3 Employees must ensure they comply with all current ICT policies, these can be found on the intranet at both Councils.
- 3.4 Employees must comply with their Council's Flexible working policy.
- 3.5 The Joint Organisational Change Policy will be used whilst consulting with employees during the implementation of contractual home-working requirements.

4 Home-working Patterns

- 4.1 There are various ways that home-working may operate, ranging from occasionally to regular home-working arrangements that are agreed between a manager and an employee by a variation to contract. All employees will need to complete the documents in **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** and obtain the appropriate authorisation from their Manager, the Corporate Health and Safety Manager and ICT before the commencement of any home-working or mobile working arrangements. These forms will only need to be completed **once** unless an employee's circumstances change.

4.1.1 Occasional home-working

Taking work home occasionally, on an ad hoc basis, to concentrate on a particular project or task may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where a specific task needs dedicated and focussed input and/or could be undertaken more efficiently at home.
- Where staff take work home on an ad-hoc basis.

Occasional home-working must be agreed with the line manager in advance. Employees will be supplied with appropriate equipment to enable occasional remote working i.e. a vasco fob.

4.1.2 Regular contractual home-working

Working from home for a percentage of time on a regular basis as part of an agreed working pattern. This arrangement will be reflected in the contract of employment. Attendance in the office is agreed on set days and the employee may also make outside visits. This may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- To facilitate a more flexible working pattern and more flexible use of office space.
- Where the job involves frequent/regular outside visits.

4.1.3 Mobile worker(s)

Mobile workers may start and end their day from either a specific work/establishment base or their home. They plan their visits to make best use of their time and resources. Some mobile workers will spend most of their day out in the field, visiting sites and/or service users starting their day from the most appropriate location either the work base or at home.

4.1.4 There will be a requirement to “hot desk” on the occasions when they are working in the office. Hot-desking requires employees to work at whichever desk and computer is available rather than at a personal workstation.

5 **Benefits**

5.1 Benefits associated with home-working:

- Can improve productivity (volume and quality).
- Provides greater flexibility in an employee’s working day.
- Supports the Green Travel Policy.
- Savings on business mileage and car parking expenses / spaces.
- Uses office accommodation more efficiently.
- Provides greater freedom to manage workloads.
- Provides greater motivation, job satisfaction, and personal wellbeing.
- Contributes to recruitment and retention.
- Supports and complements e-government.
- Allows employees who have a disability or temporary health issue to continue working.
- Allows employees with a temporary transport issue to continue working.

6 **Limitations**

6.1 The disadvantages to home-working that need to be considered are:

- The management and training of staff using their home as a work base can be more difficult.
- Social and organisational isolation.

- Lack of division between work and home.
- Non compliance with Working Time Regulations.
- An employee's home environment may not be appropriate for home-working.

6.2 Home-working is based on trust and a line manager will be required to trust their employee to work the hours agreed as part of any home-working arrangement. If the manager has evidence to suggest that this trust has been broken, an employee will be required to return to the office with immediate effect. This may also result in disciplinary action.

6.3 A manager can revoke a request for home-working where an employee's performance, attendance or conduct is a cause for concern.

7 Suitable roles

7.1 Before agreeing home-working arrangements, the line manager should give full consideration to the suitability of the job role(s) to be undertaken from home. Consideration needs to be given to which aspects of a job are appropriate for carrying out at home and how the home-working arrangement might impact upon service delivery.

7.2 The following points will assist with this assessment:

- Nature of the work
- Impact on customers and service provision
- Nature of location of employees home (for example, is there broadband availability?)
- Impact on other employees and services
- Commitment, attitude and circumstances of the employee(s)
- Supervisory and reporting arrangements
- Regularity required of contact and attendance at meetings
- Confidentiality and sensitivity issues
- Compatibility of combining field based work with home-working

7.3 In all cases, the council will reserve the right to change any home-working agreement should the needs of the service change.

7.4 Home-working should only be used if the needs of the job and the service allow it taking account of the above considerations. Home-working should not be used as a substitute for care arrangements such as for childcare or for other personal reasons unless formally requested under the Council's flexible working policy.

8 Pilot scheme

- 8.1 Where a Manager is considering if some or all of the employees within a service can home-work, it is recommended that home-working is piloted in the first instance. This will allow the relevant Head of Service or Manager to evaluate the impact and to ensure that any disruption is minimised once the scheme rolls out to the wider service(s).

9 Contractual home-working and trial periods

- 9.1 Where a Manager agrees that an employee(s) location of work will need to vary to home-working on a regular basis, the line manager is requested to complete a contract amendment form and forward to Human Resources. The employee will then be issued with a revised contract of employment.
- 9.2 Job roles identified as **regular** home-working will be subject to a contractual change of contract which will include a review period for the home-working arrangement at the end of the **three month period** and with an agreed date for review thereafter.

10 Health and safety

- 10.1 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 all employees have a general duty to:
- Take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions whilst they work and to follow safe working practices;
 - Co-operate with other employees in carrying out duties of care imposed on the employer;
 - Not interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interest of health, safety and welfare;
 - Report accidents or unsafe working conditions to their employer.
- 10.2 This general duty, along with all other Council policies, applies equally to employees working at home.
- 10.3 All staff who work from home on a regular basis will be provided with a council laptop, monitor, mouse and keyboard. A health and safety self assessment of the working environment, including the desk and computer setup should be completed. This has to be signed off by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager prior to home-working commencing and the release of Council ICT equipment. A copy of the Health and Safety self-assessment will be sent to Information Services
- 10.4 The Council reserves the right to inspect an employee's home-working environment. This would only be done however with prior agreement of both the employee and the Corporate Health and Safety Manager. If the remote worker is unwilling to agree to a home assessment or if, after the home assessment, the Corporate Health and Safety Manager concludes that the home workstation is not appropriate, the line manager will need to advise the remote worker that they may no longer be eligible to work from home with immediate effect.
- 10.5 Employees should be reminded that whilst working at home they must take responsibility for:

- Reporting to their line manager any accident or injury without delay.
- Ensuring smoke detectors are present and working.
- Dealing with any first aid/medical emergency that may occur.

10.6 Homeworkers and those working remotely must supply a contact number to their line manager where they can be reached at all times. This is to fulfil lone working requirements. The employee should agree with their line manager whether or not it is necessary for the employee to check in with them or a designated colleague at an agreed time on a home-working day.

11 Managing working time

11.1 The Councils' guidelines on the Working Time Regulations require all employees to have a minimum 30 minute break every six hours, to ensure that a consecutive 11 hour break is taken within every 24 hour period and that a maximum 48 hour working week applies. This ruling applies equally to employees working at home.

11.2 Employees will be responsible for ensuring that they follow the flexible working hours policy and ensure they adhere to the Working Time Directive. The management of attendance and working time is in accordance with the employees' host authority.

11.3 Employees must remain in contact with the office during the working day and will be expected to attend all meetings and appointments as required. Meetings and appointments should not be arranged at the employee's home.

12 Equipment provision

12.1 The employee's department is responsible for the cost of any equipment which is provided to undertake home-working successfully. Most employees can undertake home-working after being supplied with a tag or token (contact Information Services to determine exactly what is required), although line managers should note that not all Council programmes are available via this system.

12.2 Where employees are provided with equipment to work from home, they are required to take reasonable care of it, use it for Council business only and in accordance with any appropriate operating instructions and within the requirements of the Data Protection Act. All equipment remains the property of the Council and must be returned upon request.

12.3 Any equipment that is supplied by the Council must be tested in line with current procedures and must be made available upon request. Employees should ensure that any obvious signs of damage to equipment are reported immediately to their line manager.

12.4 All employees planning to apply for Home-working should complete a Home Workstation Assessment (**Appendix B**). This must be completed and signed by the line manager (with a copy sent to the Corporate Health and Safety Manager) before home-working can commence. Any issues should be raised with the Corporate Health and Safety Manager immediately. Home-working equipment will not be provided until the IS team receive this Workstation Assessment.

12.5 Where employees working from home on an occasional basis are using their own

equipment, they must ensure that it is operating correctly, is safe to use and that any information stored will not contravene the Data Protection Act or enable others access to unauthorised Council information.

- 12.6 Whilst working from their home the employee is responsible for all costs associated with broadband costs, heating, lighting and ventilation etc. to ensure a safe and healthy working environment.
- 12.7 Telephones – where necessary employees will be provided with a Teleworker phone or a council mobile phone or Blackberry. Where this is not deemed appropriate, particularly in the case of occasional homeworking, reimbursement will not be made for business calls made using a personal telephone. This arrangement needs to be agreed before the commencement of home-working.
- 12.8 ICT support - The Service Desk will provide support to employees accessing Council ICT systems using council-supplied equipment. Employees should be reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that any council equipment issued to them is kept in good working order. The Service Desk will not provide support to an individual's personal ICT equipment.
- 12.9 The Service Desk will not normally carry out a home visit to resolve issues with council equipment. If technical assistance is necessary, it will be the responsibility of the employee to transport the piece of equipment to one of the main council offices for diagnosis and/or repair wherever possible
- 12.10 In the unlikely event that access is required in the home for maintenance or compliance purposes, this must be granted, subject to reasonable notice being provided.
- 12.11 Should ICT arrangements for home-working fail – for example, a remote connection to council systems cannot be established because of a broadband fault - the employee will in most circumstances be required to return to the office.

13 Confidentiality, Data Protection and Freedom of Information

- 13.1 The Council's standard policies in relation to the secure storage and confidentiality of information apply equally to all employees working from home. This includes compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Confidential information must be destroyed in line with departmental guidelines.

14 Insurance, Mortgages and Tenancy Agreements

- 14.1 An approved home-worker is covered by the Council's insurance arrangements for employer's liability.
- 14.2 If a contractual regular home-working arrangement is agreed the employee should notify their insurance company and landlord or mortgage provider that they will be working at home. The Council will not meet any additional costs incurred as a result.
- 14.3 Formal notification to mortgage lenders, or landlords, to obtain agreement to the partial use of premises for work may be required. Please check with relevant parties to find out if this affects you.

- 14.4 The insurance liability cover for staff who want to work at home is as follows:
- 14.5 Employer's Liability – The Council's policy covers staff members for normal business working but not if the member of staff was injured due to a fault within their home environment. Risk assessments must be carried out before home-working commences.
- 14.6 Personal Accident – The Council's policy covers staff members for normal business activities so would not cover the complete home environment.
- 14.7 Computer Equipment – All computer equipment owned by the Council is covered by the Council's insurance providing that it is maintained and kept safe. ALL equipment must be kept in a safe environment and laptops must not be left in an unattended vehicle. Personal computing equipment, even if used for council work, is not covered by the council's insurance.
- 14.8 Public Liability – Meetings with members of the public should take place in a place of work (an office) not at home. Public liability insurance does not cover members of the public. Any member of staff visiting another member of staff in the home will be covered in the normal way.

15 Performance Monitoring

- 15.1 Managers are expected to monitor performance for the individual as well as the service to establish the effectiveness of remote working. If, at any time, the manager is concerned that the remote worker is not working adequately or appropriately, then the manager can require a return to normal office-based working with immediate effect.
- 15.2 Regular one to one meetings should be used as an opportunity to discuss and resolve any problems or difficulties which may have been encountered. If problems cannot be resolved (for example, a remote worker's access to the network is blocked for a considerable period of time due to network connection problems), then the manager may require the remote worker to withdraw from the home working arrangement.

16 Application Process

- 16.1 All staff applying for home-working need to complete **Appendix A** which needs to be signed off by the Manager. All staff applying for homeworking will need to complete a Health and Safety Assessment (**Appendix B**). This will be reviewed and signed off by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager before home-working commences.
- 16.2 In addition to the completion of **Appendix A or B**, where a manager agrees or requests that an employee works from home on a regular basis then the line manager will also need to complete a Contract Amendment Form (this form can be found on the Council's intranet) which will detail the regularity of the home-working to be agreed and the reasons for it along with any reasons for which this arrangement may be terminated. This will form a permanent change to the employee's contract of employment.

- 16.3 Ad hoc home-working that has not been agreed as contractual home-working will need to be monitored and managed by the line manager. The employee requests to homework via an outlook calendar appointment no later than 24 hours before they wish to homework, the manager will either accept or reject a request depending on the reason for home-working and service cover provision.
- 16.4 Home-working should not be requested for personal reasons such as, to care for children or in any other circumstance where normal working hours for the day cannot be achieved. Home-working should be considered only where the needs of the service can be fulfilled.

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SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL & CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Joint Home-working policy

Manager & Employee Checklist and Agreement

To be completed by the manager with the home-worker present **before** working from home or remotely can begin. Once completed, the original checklist needs to be:

- signed by manager and employee,
- approved by Head of Service, and
- sent to Human Resources with other relevant forms if applicable.

Pattern of home-working requested:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Occasional <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile worker <input type="checkbox"/> Regular			
Issue	Yes	No	Comments/action
1. ICT Equipment & Materials			
• Has the employee received training regarding ICT systems and/or had an opportunity to test access to relevant work systems from a remote location?			
• Is all the relevant equipment in place (including access to Broadband)?			
• Have you discussed ICT security and confidentiality issues?			
• Has the employee completed the Workstation Assessment for DSE Users for his/her home work station? (not applicable for occasional remote workers)			
2. Performance Management			
• What arrangements are in place for monitoring work output, work quality etc?			
• What is the contact telephone number in the event of an emergency?			
• Have you reminded the employee about Council policies still applying, in particular those relating to data protection, health and safety and confidentiality?			
• Is the employee confident that he/she understands the implications of these policies?			
• What arrangements are in place for the employee to receive/make telephone calls while working remotely?			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What will happen if the work output or any other aspect of performance management is not considered satisfactory? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which day(s) will the remote worker be working remotely? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the arrangements for daily contact? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you explained to the employee what will happen if ICT connectivity/ access becomes a problem? 			
3. Insurance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the employee confirmed he/she understands the insurance requirements set out in the policy document? 			
4. Any other issues			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you or the remote worker have any other concerns or queries? If so, please list in the comments column. 			

Manager's declaration:

I have explained the policy on home working to the employee and I am satisfied that he/she understands everything that is required of him/her relevant to the type of home-working this employee will undertake.

Signed: Job Title:

Date: Division:

Employee's declaration:

I confirm that my manager has explained the policy on home working and that I understand my obligations under the policy as set out in both the policy and this checklist.

Signed: Job Title:

Date: Division:

Head of Service Approval:

Signed: Job Title:

Date:

Please forward a copy to Information Services for approval to release home-working equipment and a copy to Human Resources to place on the employee's personal file.

Equipment Required	
Date released	
Comments	
Actioned by (NAME)	

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL & CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

**For All Employees Working from Home
Workstation Assessment for DSE Workers**

Name of Employee:

Location of workstation in the home:

Section:

Equipment ID No:

Section A

This section should be completed by the employee prior to the commencement of any working from home arrangement. If necessary a Health and Safety assessor may need to arrange to come to your home to carry out a further assessment.

The Screen	Yes	No
1. Is the screen easily readable?		
2. Is the screen image stable and without excessive flicker?		
3. Is the screen glare free?		
4. Is the screen free from reflections?		
5. Does the monitor swivel?		
6. Does the monitor tilt easily?		
7. Does the screen height allow a comfortable head position?		
8. Do you know how to adjust the screen controls?		
The Keyboard		
9. Is the keyboard tiltable?		
10. Is the keyboard separate from the screen?		
11. Is there space in front of the keyboard sufficient to provide support for your hands when not operating the keyboard?		
12. Do the keys have a matt surface to avoid reflective glare?		

13.	Are the symbols on the keys legible?		
Desk			
14.	Does the desk have a large surface to allow a flexible arrangement of screen, keyboard, documents and related equipment?		
15.	Is the height of the desk correct?		
16.	Does the height allow operation of the keyboard with the hands in a neutral position without bending the hands at the wrist?		
Document holder and foot rest			
17.	Is a document holder available if required?		
18.	Is the document holder if required, able to be adjusted and positioned to minimise the need for uncomfortable head and eye movements?		
19.	Is a foot rest available if required?		
Chair			
20.	Is the chair comfortable?		
21.	Is the seat height adjustable?		
22.	Is the seat back adjustable for height?		
23.	Is the seat back adjustable for tilt?		
Telephone			
24.	Do you have a telephone line by your workstation?		
25.	If yes, is the cabling secured and free from trip hazards?		
Environment			
26.	Is there sufficient space for the user to change position and vary movements?		
27.	Is the lighting level satisfactory		
28.	Are you distracted by noise?		
29.	Is the area you have designated your workstation free from loose cables that might cause a slip or trip?		
30.	Are there sufficient power points to operate the workstation equipment?		
31.	Are all portable electrical appliances tested and in date?		
32.	Are you able to ensure all electrical and moving machinery at your workstation is secured away from children who may endanger themselves?		
Reflections and Glare			
33.	Is the screen free from glare or reflections from windows?		

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Signed off by
Corporate Health & Safety Manager:

Date:

Signed by employee or assessor:

Signed off by manager/supervisor:

Date:

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Home-working Flow Chart

