DRAFT JOINT HOMEWORKING POLICY

CONTENTS

APPENDICES

1   Purpose

To provide guidance for managers and employees when considering working from home or remote working i.e. not from an office base.

2   Introduction

The business requirements of the Service are a crucial factor in determining whether or staff or teams can participate in homeworking on an occasional or more regular basis. As equal opportunities employers both Councils provide flexible working arrangements and managers are encouraged to respond positively whenever possible to requests for varied working arrangements. However, there is no automatic entitlement to homeworking arrangements and the efficiency and effectiveness of the service as assessed by the line manager will be paramount in reaching a decision as to whether homeworking for any period is approved.

Homeworking is a flexible working option, which can bring benefits to all.

Benefits

Benefits associated with homeworking:
- Improves 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 compliments e-government.
- Supports and contributes to Best Value.
- Allows employees who have a disability or temporary health issue to continue working.
- Allows employees with a temporary transport issue to continue working.

3   Limitations

The disadvantages to homeworking 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.

Homeworking is based on trust and a line manager will be required to trust their employee to work the hours agreed as part of any homeworking agreement. If this trust is broken, an employee will be required to return to the office with immediate effect. This may also result in disciplinary action.

Staff may request to work from home for the whole of their working time although it is envisaged that it is more likely that homeworkers will work partly from home and partly from the office, or on an occasional basis (less than 10 hours per week).

4   What jobs are suitable?

Before agreeing any homeworking arrangements the line manager should give full consideration to the suitability of the job role to be undertaken on a homeworking basis. Consideration needs to be given to which aspects of a job are appropriate for carrying out at home and how this might impact on service delivery. The following points will assist with this evaluation:

- There should be no adverse impact on the quality of service provision.
- There should be clear objectives and measurable outputs (e.g. production of reports, policies, etc).
- The work must be able to be done without face-to-face contact or direct supervision and carried out at times when the employee does not need to be accessible in person or available for meetings at short notice.
- If in a supervisory or line management role would it still be possible to manage or supervise these staff if and when they work from home?
- There should be no increase in workload for colleagues as a result of working from home.
- Can IT systems required to undertake the homeworking request be accessed and supported? Is there any additional cost to this?

In all cases the agreement will be that employee will be required to revert to their original working base should the needs of the service change.

Homeworking should only be used if the needs of the job and the service allow it after the above has been considered, however homeworking should not be used as a substitute for care arrangements such as for childcare or for other personal reasons.

5 Health and safety

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;
- To co-operate with other employees in carrying out duties of care imposed on the employer;
- Not to interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interest of health, safety and welfare;
- To report accidents or unsafe working conditions to their employer

This general duty, along with all other Council policies applies equally to employees working at home.

All staff who request to work from home and/or are provided with Council IT equipment (not tags or tokens in isolation) should undertake a health and safety self assessment. This has to be signed off by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager prior to homeworking commencing and the release of Council IT equipment. A copy of the Health and Safety self assessment will be sent to the IT department.

The Council reserves the right to inspect an employee's homeworking 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 Adviser 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.

Employees should be reminded that whilst working at home they must take responsibility for:
- Reporting any accident or injury to their line manager without delay.
- Ensuring smoke detectors are present and working.
- Dealing with any first aid / medical emergency that may occur.

Homeworkers and those working remotely must supply a contact number 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 homeworking day.

6 Managing working time

The Councils guidelines on the Working Time Regulations requires all employees to have a minimum 30 minute break every six hours, 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.

When working from home a CDC employee should access Wintime (CDC) via the on-line system and clock in and out of work as they would when entering / leaving the office. An SNC employee should record time spent working from home as such on the employee's flexitime sheet.

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.

7   Equipment provision

The employee's department is responsible for the cost of any equipment required to undertake homeworking successfully. Most employees can undertake homeworking 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. (Please note a tag or token will not be issued to an employee until the Manager and Employee Checklist **(Appendix1)** and Workstation Assessment for DSE Workers **(Appendix 2)** has been completed – a copy of these forms will be sent to Information Services. Should an employee not comply with this policy all homeworking rights will be removed including tags or tokens..

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.

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.

Employees supplied with Council equipment are also required to complete a Working from Home Workstation Assessment (Appendix 2). This must be completed and signed by the line manager (with a copy sent to the Corporate Health and Safety Manager) before homeworking can commence. Any issues should be raised with the Corporate Health and Safety Manager immediately. Homeworking equipment will be removed and homeworking ceased if this is not done.

Where employees 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.

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.

Telephones – where necessary employees will be provided with a work phone or blackberry. Where this is not deemed appropriate reimbursement will not be made for business calls made using a personal telephone. This arrangement needs to be agreed with before the commencement of home-working.

8   IT support

The helpdesk will endeavour to provide support to employees accessing Council IT systems using approved software where possible. Employees should be reminded however that it is their responsibility to ensure their own equipment is in full working order, and fit for purpose. IT will not provide support to an individuals own equipment.

Home visits will not normally take place. If technical assistance is necessary, it will be the responsibility of the participant to transport the piece of equipment back to work for diagnosis and/or repair.

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.

<u>Information services will not support personal computer equipment</u>

Should IT arrangements for homeworking fail the employee will in most circumstances be required to return to the office.

9 IT security

Employees must ensure they comply with all current IT policies, these can be found on either Council's intranet or in the SNC staff handbook..

10 Confidentiality, Data Protection and Freedom of Information

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.

11 Insurance, Mortgages and Tenancy Agreements

An approved homeworker is covered by the Council's insurance arrangements for employer's liability.

If a contractual homeworking 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.

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.

The insurance liability cover for staff who want to work at home is as follows:

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 homeworking commences .

Personal Accident – The Council's policy covers staff members for normal business activities so would not cover the complete home environment.

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.

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.

12 Performance Monitoring

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.

Regular one to one meetings should be used as an opportunity to discuss and resolve any problems or difficulties that 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.

13   Requesting homeworking

All employees should complete a homeworking application form for any form of homeworking, and before homeworking commences. This will need to be supported both by the employee's line manager and Head of Service.for the first application. Thereafter an application will be agreed by the line manager for ad hoc homeworking (that not agreed as contractual homeworking).

All employees should also complete a homeworking checklist. (Appendix 1) before any homeworking commences.

All staff applying for homeworking or is in the possession of Council IT equipment such as laptops/tags or tokens will need to complete a Health and Safety Assessment. This will be reviewed and signed off by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager before homeworking commences. Where an employee is requesting to work from home on a regular weekly basis then the line manager will also need to complete a Contract Amendment Form that will detail the regularity of the homeworking and the reasons for it to be agreed along with any reasons it may be terminated. This will form a permanent change to the employee's contract of employment.

Where homeworking is not contractual the employee must seek approval from their line manager to work from home either by telephone or e-mail on each occasion homeworking is requested. Just because authority has been given using the homeworking application, the health and safety assessment and the manager checklist, will not mean every request for homeworking will be granted and the employee must not assume this will be granted.

Homeworking should not be requested for personal reasons such as to care for children or in any other circumstance where a normal working hours for the day cannot be achieved. Homeworking should be considered only where the needs of the service can be fulfilled.

14   Ceasing homeworking

Homeworking is a voluntary arrangement and either party may chose to request a change to this arrangement. Homeworking arrangements can also be withdrawn if circumstances change and the employee can no longer comply with policy or if there is an adverse effect on service provision.

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL & CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Working from Home Policy

Manager & Employee Checklist

The manager and the employee (the "home worker") complete this checklist **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.

Please note that this checklist needs to be read in conjunction with the Working from Home policy (the relevant paragraph or section numbers are shown in brackets, as appropriate, in the Issues column).

Issue	Yes	No	Comments/action
1. IT Equipment & Materials			
• Has the employee received training regarding IT systems and/or had an opportunity to test access to relevant work systems from a remote location? (4.2)			
• Is all the relevant equipment in place (including access to Broadband)? (4.2.3)			
• Have you discussed IT security and confidentiality issues? (4.3)			
• Has the employee completed the Workstation Assessment for DSE Users for his/her home work station? (If yes, attach a copy. If no, insert date when this will be completed.) **NOTE: An assessment only has to be completed if the homeworker is likely to work more than 10 hours or use Council IT equipment.**			
2. Performance Management			
• What arrangements are in place for monitoring work output, work quality etc? (4.7.1-4, 4.8.1-2**)**			
• What is the contact telephone number in the event of an emergency? (4.4.5-6**)**			
• Have you reminded the employee about Council policies still applying, in particular those relating to data protection, health and safety and confidentiality? (4.3 & 4.4)			
• 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? (4.4.5)			
• What will happen if the work output or any other aspect of performance management is not considered satisfactory? (4.7.6 & 4.8)			
• Which day(s) will the remote worker be working remotely? (4.7.1)			
• What are the arrangements for daily contact? (4.7.4)			
• Have you explained to the employee what will happen if IT connectivity/ access becomes a problem? (4.8.2)			
3. Insurance			
• Has the employee confirmed he/she understands the insurance requirements set out in the policy document? (4.5)			
4. Any other issues			
• 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.

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 to Information Services as approval to release homeworking equipment.

Equipment Required	
Date released	
Comments	
Actioned by (NAME)	

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL & CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

**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 in the first instance when the employee is provided with Council Equipment or is going to work for more than 10 hours per week at home on a contractual basis. If necessary an 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?		
34.	Are the windows fitted with a system to attenuate the daylight that falls on the workstations?		
Heat and Humidity			
35.	Is the workstation free from excessive heat?		
36.	Is the atmosphere sufficiently humid?		
Health			
37.	Are you free from eyestrain associated with using the equipment?		
38.	Are you free from stress associated with using the equipment?		
39.	Are you free from pain in the hands, arms, shoulders or neck associated with using the equipment?		
40.	Is the software suitable and easy to use?		
41.	If you have substances stored at home that come under the COSHH Regulations, this could include such items as toner or cleaning products, are they securely stored and has a suitable assessment been undertaken?		
42.	Do you have access to a first aid box?		

Section B

To be completed by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager:

I have read the above workstation assessment and my recommendations are that the following changes need to be made to comply with the Regulations:

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Signed off by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager:……………………………………….

Date:…………………………………

Signed by employee: ………………………………………………………………………

Signed off by manager/supervisor:

        …………………………………………………………………….

Date:

        …………………………………………………………………….

HOME WORKING APPLICATION FORM

(to be completed by all employees working at home on a contractural basis – one application only required or for each occasion of ad hoc homeworking) This form will be retained by the persons line manager

Employee Name:	
Department:	
Post Title:	
Home Address: (where home working will be based)	
Home Telephone Number:	
Mobile Number:	

Reason for application: (please include why you are making the application, what benefits there are to both you as an employee and the Council, what effects this might have on your colleagues and how any problems might be overcome)

Signature:	
Date:	

Authorisation		
Line Manager I support the homeworking application.	Print:	
	Signature:	
	Date:	

(NOTE: An application for homeworking will not be approved if not supported by the Line Manager).