

Below is a crowd sourced list of advice on home working from those working on staff development within member institutions. With many thanks to Charles Marson, Head of Employee Relations and Human Resources Business Partnering at Falmouth University and his colleagues on the Staff Development Forum.

Staff guidance

- Take your work equipment home each day so that, if the position changes overnight, you have everything you need.
- Review what you need to facilitate working at home effectively and safely. Talk to your line manager if you think you need any equipment.
- Undertake a DSE assessment of your home work station and let your manager know of any matters needing attention. We want you to be safe whilst working at home.
- Make sure you have all work saved to your network folders so you can access it easily and securely when at home.
- Think about what work you could do during an extended period of working from home. Work is unlikely to flow as usual so this could be a good time to complete any outstanding mandatory training, archive work, review policies and practice, update template documents etc.
- Think about how much contact you would want with your work colleagues and manager during an extended period of working from home - over and above the normal supervision meetings. It would be good for you and your colleagues to find ways to replicate the daily informal contact you have - maybe a Teams meeting first thing every morning or a chat late Friday to close off the week and share plans for the weekend.
- Make sure you are available during your normal working hours or as otherwise agreed with your manager. All the expectations on you in performing your role still apply.
- Give yourself a routine. Working alongside colleagues will give you natural break points in the day and opportunities to look away from computer screens, get up and move etc. To keep yourself comfortable when working from home think about whether a routine works best for you including when you start and end your working day.
- You may find some useful information here - <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/blog/dont-forget-the-human-side-of-homeworking-11-mar-2020> and <https://www.digitaltrends.com/news/how-to-stay-sane-when-working-from-home-4-tips-from-a-professional/>
- All employment policies will still apply unless you are notified of a variation. That includes:
 1. You should report if you are sick
 2. Annual leave should be booked as usual

Manager guidance

- Think about how you will replicate the social aspects of work for your team with some regular informal chats.
- Make sure your team can all access Teams and any other resources they need.
- Plan for tasks that your team can undertake during an extended period and any on line resources that may be needed to facilitate this.

Managing homeworkers

How staff who work from home are managed will influence whether homeworking will be a success. Some managers find managing homeworkers more difficult than managing office staff. On the one hand, it may appear easier if staff spend more time in the office, but on the other, the potential benefits of homeworking arrangements may outweigh this.

Here are some key ingredients for managing productive homeworking:

- building trust between staff who work from home and their manager
- agreeing how work performance will be supervised and measured
- communicating effectively

Building trust

A lack of trust has been found to be the greatest barrier to achieving successful homeworking. For it to stand any chance, there should be a healthy relationship of trust and confidence between homeworker and manager.

This can be a challenge for managers who prefer to have employees in sight and supervise face-to-face so they can actually see if employees are having difficulties, working too much or not enough.

Such managers can question whether staff who cannot be seen are committed and productive. Concerns of this nature can be legitimate and may need investigating, but an entrenched attitude of this nature can be a challenge to constructive business change.

Supervising work performance

How can a manager build and maintain a homeworker's relationships with themselves, colleagues and teams? The employer should make sure the homeworker, those they cooperate and liaise with and report to all fully understand:

- what is expected of them in their roles
- how they are expected to work together.

All parties are likely to have to try harder to foster these connections than they would if they were based in the same workplace. Also, staff who work from home may need to make extra effort to keep colleagues up-to-date on how their work is progressing and to offer help to others in building a spirit of co-operation.

This is a task managers can find more difficult with homeworkers if they prefer to rely on assessing performance by what they see staff doing, and the number of hours spent in the office. For example, a manager may be accustomed to overhearing good phone conversations with customers, or having minor discussions about workloads and challenges throughout the day.

It may be advisable to judge staff who work from home on the quantity and quality of the work they produce, or agreed work objectives achieved. For example, a manager may find it more beneficial to focus on the number of customers handled, or whether or not sales targets are met.

Staff who work from home need to be clear on how they will be managed and how their appraisal process will be conducted. It is best to agree in advance when and where manager and homeworker will meet to review performance.

It can help if staff who work from home keep a diary outlining the time they spend working and on what, and talk regularly with their line manager to review progress on work or any concerns.

It is also advisable for a line manager to monitor homeworkers to make sure they do not over-work. Some staff who work from home can feel the need to work too hard as justification for working from home. A manager who recognises that a homeworker is over-working should have a quiet word with them as a first step towards getting them back on the right course, so they take breaks and do not work excessive hours.

What should a line manager do if a homeworker is not performing as they should? Performance management of staff who work from home should be consistent with that of office staff, so it would be advisable to focus all assessments on work produced and whether or not objectives have been met.

If a manager has concerns, they should have a quiet word first as this may clear up misunderstandings or help them understand the problem. The manager can then provide support if necessary. But, if the homeworker's performance does not improve, the manager may need to act further in line with the organisation's disciplinary or capability policies.

Communication

This can be another challenging area, as research has found that office-based managers tend to communicate more frequently with office-based staff than home-based staff, and more often than managers who travel and work at home, yet who still have to effectively supervise and support their staff.

How do managers and colleagues effectively keep in touch with staff working from home? Before any homeworking arrangement is approved, an employer should explain to the prospective homeworker how information, ideas and feedback will be shared with managers

and colleagues. This might be through email, telephone, video conferencing, regular and planned face-to-face meetings, or a blend of these.

An employer will need to come to an agreement with the homeworker not only over how, but when and where contact will be made. Also, an employer should review these arrangements regularly to ensure they are working for everyone involved.

In practice, an employer will need a system for keeping in touch with all staff who work from home in similar roles. Otherwise, running the organisation could become overly complicated and, as a result, ineffective.

Regular face-to-face meetings via Teams can help employees overcome any feelings of isolation and keep in touch with the rest of the business.

How does a manager or colleague know when staff are working from home? Generally, a homeworker should work the hours agreed with the employer. Depending on what is agreed with the employer, there may be some flexibility on when the homeworker works outside the core hours.

It can be helpful for staff working from home to establish a system where colleagues are aware of their day-to-day availability.