

Covid-19: Work from home - policies and guidance

In light of the coronavirus outbreak [COVID-19](#), emergency planning has become a major consideration. Work from home has never been so talked about until now as the world faces a war like situation in this public health emergency.

With the use of cloud technology, employees may be able to provide productivity even if they are not in the office. At the same time it improves the job satisfaction and build up operational resilience. Businesses must ensure their capabilities if they are considering allowing their employees to work from home wherever it is possible.

Statutory right for flexible working

Employees in England, Wales and Scotland have a [legal right to request flexible working](#). This could involve working from home in the event of a requirement to self-isolate or working fewer hours if they have to care for sick relatives.

Employers must deal with their requests in a “reasonable manner”, which includes

- assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the application
- holding a meeting to discuss the request with the employee, and
- offering an appeals process.

Employees must have been working for you for at least 26 weeks to make an application.

Some of the questions which may arise when allowing work from home may include:

1 Does the employee role prohibit in any way to work from home?

One of the first steps for an employer is considering whether the job is suitable for homeworking. Many roles may be, but others may not. Some other factors to consider include whether the role needs:

- Team working
- Face-to-face supervision

2 Do you have access to cloud technology?

With the cloud technology, the data is stored in the cloud rather than on individual devices. This makes information accessible from anywhere if you have an internet connection. It builds up much flexibility for your employees to work when and where they need to.

3 Do you provide right devices to employees for work from home?

Organisations need to make sure that they do provide the right devices i.e. laptops, work phones and adequate internet connectivity to their employees so they can work flexibly. In addition to this they must have been given access to the necessary files/folders and drives to function seamlessly.

4 What is the attitude of your employees towards working from home?

While homeworking can be seen as an attractive option, it will not suit everyone. A homeworker needs to be able to cope with working on their own with little supervision. Homeworkers ideally need to be:

- Able to spend long periods on their own and be confident working without supervision
- Self-disciplined and self-motivated
- Able to separate work from home life

Useful resources

ACCA Technical factsheet: [The contract of employment](#)

ACAS Sample homeworking policy

Checklist for setting up homeworking

Use this checklist to make sure employer and employee have everything in place, and keep it as a record of actions taken. It is set up to be used for staff working largely from home, but can be adapted to suit other arrangements if desired.

	Action	Completed (insert date & notes)
1	Employer to make sure employee has a suitable area at home to work	
2	Employer to make sure employee has/is provided with:	
	• Furniture	
	• Phone	
	• IT	
	• Adequate internet connection	
	• Fire extinguisher	
3	Employee to check home insurance covers homeworking and a claim from a third party	
4	Employer to check its insurance covers business equipment in the homeworker's home and a claim from a third party	
5	Employer to carry out a health and safety risk assessment	
6	Employee to tell their mortgage provider/landlord of their plan to work from home and to check they are allowed to under their mortgage or rent agreement	
7	Employee to check if business rates will have to be paid	

8	Employee to check if planning permission is necessary	
9	Employer and employee to agree keeping in touch through, for example:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone/Skype®/email 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned meetings at the main office/base 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned meetings at the homeworke’s home 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation with colleagues 	
10	Employer and employee to agree how often the employee will attend the main base/office	
11	Employer and employee to agree how performance will be monitored and managed	
12	Employer and employee to agree any arrangements for claiming expenses, what can be claimed, how, when and what is taxable	
13	Employer and employee to agree how often the homeworking arrangement will be reviewed, and when and where review meetings will be held – if a trial period has been agreed, when that will be assessed, and what will happen if it doesn’t work out	
14	Employer to put arrangements in writing and/or issue a homeworking policy	
15	Employer to compile a consent form. Employer and employee to sign it to show details of the homeworking arrangement have been agreed	
16	Employer to amend the employee’s contract to reflect the homeworking agreement	
17	Employer to check IT support is in place including what will be provided by who, when and how	

ACAS Checklist for setting up homeworking

Homeworking policy

The main features of a policy for staff working from home are set out below.

INTRODUCTION	
Opening statement	<p>The employer should set out its commitment to flexibility with the aim of meeting both its and employees' needs.</p> <p>It should also make clear that while homeworking is categorised as a type of flexible working, employees should not assume that other aspects of flexible working (such as amended hours) are automatically part of a homeworking arrangement.</p>
Define homeworking	<p>The employer should set out types of homeworking that the policy will cover and whether home or the employer's business premises will be the main place of work. For example, the types might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home as the main place of work. • Flexible homeworking with time split between home and the office. • Mobile working with a base at home to travel to the employer's different premises and customers. • The office as the main place of work with working from home occasionally.
How an employee should apply	<p>The employer should ask an employee to apply in writing, outline the process to be followed and factors to be considered in assessing their application (preferably linking to a flexible working policy), say who will make the decision, and the grounds on which the employee can appeal if their request is refused.</p> <p>To find out more, see Acas guide: The right to request flexible working</p>
BUSINESS CASE	
Is the role suitable for homeworking?	<p>The employer should set the factors for assessing whether the role can be done just as well away from the business base by someone working on their own.</p>
Is the jobholder eligible?	<p>The employer should set out who will be eligible. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those requesting it as a reasonable adjustment. • Those making a flexible working request. • Those who have completed a certain length of service or satisfactorily completed their training and achieved satisfactory in their last annual performance review.
Is the jobholder suitable?	<p>Personal qualities required are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-motivation and discipline.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work without direct supervision. • Ability to complete work to deadline.
Is the home suitable?	Homeworkers need a safe and reasonable space, security and privacy in which to work, and for office-type tasks an internet connection able to support work systems.
Will homeworking be beneficial?	An arrangement should meet business needs and the employee's needs so it is favourable for both.
OTHER IMPORTANT PRACTICALITIES	
Health and safety risk assessments	<p>The employer has a duty of care to its employees and should carry out a risk assessment before homeworking can be approved.</p> <p>It should set out what will happen if the risk assessment identifies concerns including who will make and pay for changes to bring the home up to standard, and what timescale will be allowed.</p> <p>It should also set out what will happen if concerns are not addressed and reserve the right to refuse a homeworking application.</p>
Setting up the employee to work from home	<p>The employer should set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the company will provide. For example, furniture, phone, phone line, Broadband, printer, fire extinguisher, paper. • What the employee is expected to provide. For example, heating and lighting. • Who will pay for any installation and other necessary costs, and, if required and agreed, how costs can be claimed back. • Who the equipment belongs to, who is responsible for maintaining/moving it and how this will be done, and whether it can, or cannot, be used for personal matters by the homeworker or their family.
Running costs and expenses	The employer should state whether it will contribute towards costs in working from home – for example, heating and lighting - and expenses. If so, it should state how much, what can be claimed and how, and what is taxable.
Taxation	The employer should set out the implications of homeworking on tax. To find out more, see HMRC's guidance .
Mortgage, lease and insurance issues	The employee should tell their mortgage provider or landlord and home insurer of their intention to work from home. They should check that there isn't anything preventing them from working at home - for example, in their mortgage agreement, lease or insurance.

	<p>The employee should obtain from their home insurer confirmation of cover should work equipment cause damage and for a claim from a third party. The employer should say if it will pay the extra if the employee's premium rises as a result.</p> <p>Work property and a claim by a third party should be covered by the employer's insurance policy.</p>
The employer's access to the employee's home	<p>The employer should say how frequently and in what circumstances it would require access to the home. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial set-up. • Maintenance of equipment. • Health and safety assessment. • Electrical equipment testing. • One-to-one meetings with managers/colleagues/clients.
If the employee moves home?	<p>The employer should set out what will happen if a homeworker wants to move house.</p>
MANAGING THE HOMEWORKER	
Employee performance	<p>The employer should set out how employees who work from home will be managed consistently with office staff, and given the same opportunities for training, development and promotion.</p> <p>It should also refer to its policies relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and safety. • Monitoring and performance. • Team working. • Communication. • Training, development and support. <p>The employer should ensure that employees who work from home are clear about their hours and the core hours when they should be at work.</p>
The employee's attendance at the main office/base	<p>The employer should set out how frequently, for how long, where and for what reasons the employee's attendance at the organisation's premises will be required.</p>
Security including information	<p>The employer should set out how staff working from home should store and transmit documents and information.</p>