**Remote and Home Working Guidelines**



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# Introduction:

This guidance applies to REMOTE WORKING and HOME WORKING.

**Remote working** is effectively job tasks carried out away from the office base. A remote worker is someone whose role requires or enables them to work away from the office, either from home, other locations, or a bit of both.

For clarity remote working may be:

* duties carried out by someone who works out and about and may use their home as a base or may be office based
* duties carried out by someone who works from their home some of the time.

Home Working is when an employee enters into a contractual home working arrangement.

Home working is work, which is performed at the employee's home all of the time instead of an LBE site.

The development and growth of communication methods and information technology in general enables the Council to utilise different working locations where appropriate.

# Remote and home working can present a number of challenges such as identifying the potential impact on the Council, service delivery, the team and the employee. These are addressed below.

# Application:

This guidance applies when:

An employee enters into a contractual home working arrangement i.e. the home becomes the contractual place of work and the employee is a ‘home’ worker.

Or

If an employee’s role is suitable for remote working.

There is no need for an employee who is classified as a remote worker to make a formal application for remote working. Remote workers will be able to work from home on an ad hoc/informal basis provided it is agreed with the manager on each occasion. Remote working arrangements will not form part of the terms and conditions of the employee’s employment, and, whilst managers are encouraged to consider requests for remote working there is no obligation to agree requests, particularly where there is concern about the impact on service delivery. Likewise, whilst the Council may encourage and support the implementation of remote working and continue to seek flexibility from employees in this respect, it is recognised that this is not necessarily suitable for all and mutual agreement should be sought with the employee to implement any remote working arrangements.

This guidance does not cover flexible working in its broader form e.g. annual hours, term time working, or flexible working for employees with dependent care responsibilities. For guidance on these arrangements, please refer to the Council’s [Flexible Working Arrangements Policy.](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/intranethr/EVPxEFBrWshArl2C2T1sYS4Bkm5YEZ4_Y8SF1IYpMh2fQQ?e=fHfe3e)

Remote and home workers can work flexibly in terms of their start and finish times.

However, as a result of entering into a formal contractual agreement for home working homeworkers cannot participate in the Councils Flexi Time Scheme in order to take time off in lieu, whereas it is possible to do so if you work remotely from time to time.

Remote or home working should not adversely affect the quality of service delivered to clients/customers. Whilst the Council acknowledges that working remotely or from home can have benefits for the Council as well as the employee, it is essential that any remote or home working arrangements support the delivery of departmental objectives, and should only be agreed where it is practical, and the performance of the individual can be measured in terms of outcomes.

# Principles:

Managers will aim to be flexible but must consider how the arrangements will impact on service delivery and the performance of the team (if applicable). Remote and home working shall not be considered as an option where the arrangement would in any way be detrimental to service delivery.

All employees will be treated equitably, and remote and home workers will be expected to comply with Council policies and procedures in particular with regard to Information Security, data protection, confidentiality, security, E-mail and Internet usage, and Health and Safety.

# Benefits of Remote and Home Working:

Home and remote working can have a number of benefits for both the employee and the organisation including:

* Improved efficiency and effectiveness
* Improved service delivery/productivity
* Improved job satisfaction/morale
* Improved work life balance
* Time and cost savings on commuting and business mileage
* Reduction in office accommodation resulting in cost savings
* Reduced levels of absence
* Retention of trained employees who might otherwise have to leave for domestic reasons resulting in savings on recruitment and training of new staff
* Increased staff retention (including giving options to employees for remaining in work who have suffered illness or disability)
* Supporting the Council’s [Equality in Employment Policy](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/intranethr/Efxnwg_TSlpPl98jQ45sungBDbB5osCqpj8kjD1RTKExUA?e=ftxIuo), for example home working may benefit some employees with a disability.

# Managers Responsibilities:

The manager is responsible for organising/ensuring the following for remote and home workers:

* making sure that a General Health & Safety risk assessment is undertaken by the employee, using the [Health and Safety Self Assessment Checklist](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/intranethealth/Shared%20Documents/Health%20and%20Safety%20Forms/H%20S%20Self%20Assessment%20Checklist%20for%20HomeRemote%20Workers-%20May%202020.docx?d=w489fb5533ec94d11ba5134580f74dfee&csf=1&web=1&e=uAoSzo) which is available on Enfield Eye. Any gaps identified **must** be addressed before the employee starts to work from home.
* considering the allocation of tasks, productivity, quality and desired outcomes
* making all necessary enquiries to ensure that there are no health issues which could result in risk to the employee in working alone
* where a safety concern arises consult the Corporate Health and Safety Team for advice
* ensuring that employees attend all compulsory and any appropriate training courses e.g. health and safety
* ensuring the employee is familiar with the Council’s DSE training principles
* ensuring employees are clear as to their duties and have received the appropriate training
* ensuring there are suitable measures to monitor the well-being of remote and home workers, for example how often and at what times contact will be made or when the employee is expected to make contact
* establishing procedures to be followed in an emergency – this may involve obtaining further contact details
* ensuring that an appropriate workplace maintenance regime is agreed and established
* monitoring the work of maintenance and service contractors, where relevant
* taking all reasonable steps to ensure that adequate rest and meal breaks are taken and that work does not extend beyond the agreed hours
* establishing specific procedures for adequate supervisory contact by telephone, electronic mail or visit, to include monitoring of the well-being of the employee and reporting of sickness, injuries and incidents
* ensuring that employee will be reasonably (e.g. comparable to arrangements that would apply if s/he was not working from home) contactable during hours working at home, by work phone and email

The manager should liaise with ICT to identify what equipment should be made available to the employee.

Where a manager has concerns regarding poor performance, these should be discussed with the employee on a one to one basis. In the event that the employee’s performance does not improve within timescales given, the manager should follow the [Principles of Managing Capability](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/intranethr/EZZQYd__kiVCqk8PES160QoBeNjJQNZVb1ToUFKzd1hcWg?e=dJudwi) which could potentially result in the withdrawal of the home or remote working arrangement.

# Employee Responsibilities and Considerations:

All employees that work remotely or at home must read the [Health & Safety - Home Working Guide](https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm). In addition the employee **must** complete the following sections of the Online Health and Safety training, which can be accessed by going into the Workplace tab on Enfield Eye, then click on the Online Safety Learning site.

1. Display Screen Equipment Awareness (DSE)
2. Fire Awareness
3. Risk Assessments

The employee **must** also read the Health & Safety handbook, and is also responsible for the following:

* ensuring they have broadband connection, which enables connection to the Council’s network
* complying with the Council’s policies in relation to Information Security, Data Protection and E-mail and Internet Usage
* reporting any IT failures to ICT and their line manager
* ensuring that they undertake a general health and safety risk assessment using the [Health and Safety Self-Assessment Checklist](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/intranethealth/Shared%20Documents/Health%20and%20Safety%20Forms/H%20S%20Self%20Assessment%20Checklist%20for%20HomeRemote%20Workers-%20May%202020.docx?d=w489fb5533ec94d11ba5134580f74dfee&csf=1&web=1&e=uAoSzo) available on Enfield Eye
* attending Council premises for appropriate training and meetings at management’s request
* co-operating with the risk assessment process, report any problems, carrying out regular checks of equipment and their workplace and reporting faults to ICT or their line manager, as appropriate without delay
* taking all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised access to the work or work equipment
* reporting any accidents which occur during the agreed working hours to the manager immediately
* reporting any health problems immediately, which may be attributed to, or aggravated by, their working arrangements
* adhering to risk assessments and ensuring that a safe means of escape in an emergency is kept readily available
* where safety concerns arise, consult the manager or the Health and Safety Team.
* Comply with the Council’s [Lone Working Policy](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/intranethealth/Shared%20Documents/Plans%20and%20Policies%20and%20Guides/Lone%20Working%20and%20Violence%20at%20Work%20Arrangements.docx?d=wbd6ccaa722a3403ba2304132c8e1b68d&csf=1&e=9lWjhp)

Employees need to take personal responsibility for the health and safety aspect of remote and home working. Employees should ensure that the environment at home or different sites offers the following:

* suitable “office” space, ideally a separate room but at least a dedicated space if home working
* freedom from interruptions and distractions
* security and confidentiality
* ability to meet Health and Safety requirements

# Managing Remote and Home Workers:

## Sickness:

Return to work discussions should ideally be conducted at a designated office/site but may be conducted remotely with the manager’s agreement. Absence and attendance review meetings should be conducted at a designated office/site.

## Contact:

Managers must agree with remote and home workers when and how often contact will be made. This will very much depend on the nature of the work undertaken by the employee. Managers responsible for managing home or remote workers must exercise flexibility when agreeing contact arrangements. It should be noted that remote and home workers may on occasions need to make contact outside of, or more frequently than the agreed working times. Contact should be made by work telephone, email or text unless otherwise agreed with the employee.

Managers who work remotely or from home wishing to meet with an employee at their remote/home working address should ensure that appropriate arrangements to do so are agreed with the employee.

## Working Hours:

Managers must agree with home or remote workers their expectations in terms of working hours. For example, times that the employee must be available to take telephone calls.

## Training and Development:

All employees who work from home or differing sites are expected to attend training events organised by their manager.

## Performance Assessment Reviews (PAR):

All performance reviews (including interim reviews) must be conducted at a designated site/office.

## Leave Requests:

All requests should be made in the usual way to the manager who is responsible for authorising them.

## Communication:

The manager is responsible for ensuring that regular home or remote workers are kept up to date with corporate messages and departmental and team events.

## Team Meetings:

Employees working remotely, at home or differing sites must arrange their working time to enable them to attend team meetings. Home workers may be required to attend via Skype, or depending on the circumstances, required to attend in person. There should also be informal meetings with the team and other opportunities to maintain regular contact through telephone and e-mail.

## Individual Meetings:

Managers must ensure that remote and home workers have one to one meetings as considered necessary by both parties, at an agreed location.

## Post:

If applicable, suitable arrangements should be made for delivery of the remote and home worker’s post.

## Expenses:

The following conditions apply for remote and home workers when claiming travel expenses, provided the employee is entitled to claim travel expenses, or mileage when using his / her vehicle for business purposes and this has been previously agreed with the manager;

* Remote working - employees may claim travel expenses for reimbursement of fares/additional mileage for travelling to and from the location of the meeting from their agreed base for the day.

or

* Home working - fares / mileage may be claimed for journeys between the employee’s home address and the location of meeting or training event

#  General Data Protection Regulations:

As with all other staff, remote and home workers should be mindful of their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations (**GDPR**) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679). GDPR is complex so advice should always be sought for contentious issues.

All staff must use personal data in a professional and responsible manner and abide by GDPR. Personal data is any data held about a living individual who can be identified from that data. Extra safeguards are in the legislation for sensitive data held about an individual e.g. race, religion, health, political opinions, criminal convictions, etc.

In particular, remote and home workers must ensure that information is kept secure at all times.

The office environment is normally more secure than the home or remote environment. Therefore, it is particularly important that home or remote workers to ensure that all documents, files and data displayed on computer monitors are used and seen by only themselves – friends, visitors and relatives are not allowed to access/view Council related work.

Also, restricted access to the home worker’s computer and Council computer systems must be managed via unique user identities and passwords.

If home or remote workers have any GDPR queries they should discuss them with their manager.

# Health & Safety:

The Council has a general duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and this applies whether employees are working in a conventional office, at home or remotely. This general duty is qualified by the principle of “so far as is reasonably practicable”. In other words, the degree of risk in a particular job or workplace needs to be balanced against the time, trouble, cost and physical difficulty of taking measures to avoid or reduce the risk.

Individual employees are required to work safely ensuring that their skills, knowledge, experience and training are sufficient for them to do this and to co-operate with their employer, who has a statutory duty to comply.

# Use of Equipment:

Use of Council computers, Internet, telephone and mobile phones for personal purposes must be in accordance with the Council’s [Employee Code of Conduct](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/intranethr/ETWgqeGxwNxOgkimwwEMGzcBAK_j8guXb4esutLdeiUTMw?e=oFE5FV) and the [Email, Internet and Social Networking Usage Policy.](https://enfield365.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/intranethr/ETvTWeG9Wp1MitOFFd-bpCIB5IpvZEDOA_tAz3IwTl5_fQ?e=jcRjgI)

Any equipment supplied to the employee by the Council remains the property of the Council at all times.

In particular, using a laptop also has health and safety implications, in terms of the ergonomic issues that can affect the health and comfort of the user. To reduce these hazards, employees should consider the following:

* Position the laptop wherever possible, on a desk or other level surface at a suitable height for comfortable use
* Pick a comfortable location, away from reflections on the screen and ideally parallel to the light from windows
* The laptop should always be positioned directly in front of the user when in use. Other frequently used items should be within near reach
* A suitable seat should be used wherever possible, that enables the back of the user to be held in the best ergonomic position e.g. as it would be in a fully adjustable office-type chair. When using such a chair, the height should be adjusted to ensure the keypad of the laptop is at elbow level and knees are in-line with the hips
* The laptop should not be used for prolonged periods without use of a docking station.
* When not in use the laptop should be kept securely, ideally under lock and key and out of sight to passers-by e.g. when left in a car

To ensure that the equipment is not at risk when in use, users of laptops should ensure:

* The cooling fan is kept clear to avoid overheating of the laptop
* The laptop is never used inside its carry case – it will overheat.
* Laptops must not be used in a moving vehicle where you may be in contravention of road safety law
* Transport of the laptop over long distances should preferably be in specially designed bags for this purpose. Use a suitable laptop back pack or wheeled laptop case
* Do not misuse the laptop e.g. pounding the keys
* Avoid strong magnetic fields, heat and electrical interference as it may corrupt the data on the laptop

This guidance is aimed at assisting employees to use their laptop safely and securely.