Trust Guidance

Working from home and remote working

NHS University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust

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Purpose

Home/remote working is a key element of working flexibly and this guide sets out the key factors for managers and colleagues to consider, for safe and successful implementation. Home/remote working can help individuals balance work and home life; additionally, evidence indicates it improves retention and increases job satisfaction, which in turn supports high commitment and performance. It is also an important factor in balancing gender equality in the workplace as it can help women (who remain primary child / carers) balance their work and care commitments.

There are increasing opportunities to work remotely, whether that is from another workplace or working from home. Advances in IT and online communication are creating an environment that is equally or even more effective than working solely from an office or workplace.

The purpose of this guidance is to set out arrangements for home working/ distance working and to provide a framework for a consistent approach, ensuring that colleagues are working safely and in line with the Trusts policies and procedures.

Who should read this document?

All Trust staff.

Key messages

Home/remote working is a key flexible working option which can positively impact on colleague experience and wellbeing. It gives individuals greater control over how and when they work, whilst enhancing personal productivity and job satisfaction.

As part of the Trust's sustainable strategy it reduces traffic related pressure on and around the site and reduces office space and onsite parking.

Homeworking does not need a 'reason' to be considered' all colleagues whose work can be delivered remotely should be able to discuss this as an option for the way they work and indeed it may be a requirement in some roles.

Links to policies and procedures

Flexible Working Policy G:\DocumentLibrary\UHPT Trust Documents\Human Resources\Flexible Working Policy.pdf

Display Screen Equipment Standard Operating Procedure G:\DocumentLibrary\UHPT Documents\Occupational Health(DSE) SOP

Guidance on DSE Home advice leaflet. Staffnet/OccHealth/GuidanceforHomeWorkers.pdf

Lone Working Policy G:\DocumentLibrary\UHPT Trust Documents\Security\Lone Working Policy.pdf

1	Introduction

The case for home / remote working is set out above and is a key element of transforming work for the future. This guidance sets out the steps to implement safely and successfully.

Specifically, this guidance will;

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- Assist both the staff member and line manager to discuss all of the considerations that will support a successful introduction of home/remote working that is safe, productive and meets the needs of the wider team, patient/customer.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the staff member, line manager and the wider team to support home/remote working.

2	Principles of Successful Homeworking

- Homeworking is a credible option for many staff and can result in higher levels of productivity and job satisfaction.
- Helps organisations to reduce the demand for office space, parking spaces, eases congestion and reduces the environmental impact of high levels of commuting.
- With the appropriate equipment and IT infrastructure many posts are suitable for adopting homeworking.
- Homeworking is most successful when there are high levels of trust and good communication between the homeworker, their team and their line manager.
- It is important to identify the colleagues who thrive under the conditions of working from home and have a role that can accommodate this.

3	Exploring the Potential for Homeworking

To support the conversation about introducing or reviewing existing home/ remote working arrangements, please consider the following areas of discussion. Detailed below are a number of questions to work through collaboratively to scope out the potential for homeworking and how to adopt this practice with clear expectations.

Desirability and Practicality	- What are the first impressions of home/remote working? - How might it be adopted? - How often would they want to homework i.e. full time, part of the time or on occasion? - How well suited are they to working from home i.e. how much supervision do they require, how self-motivated and internally driven are they, would they miss not having the same levels of social interaction with their colleagues? - How well suited is their home environment for homeworking? What do they need to ensure that it is safe and meets DSE requirements and has Broadband Connectivity?

	- What kind of information do they work with, how can they keep it confidential and dispose of it securely? Are paper records required and how will they be securely transported between home and workplace? Are GDPR requirements met? Is there potential for confidential conversations to be overheard? - What information, people and services do they need to access to carry out their role and what do they need to put in place to facilitate this (e.g. VPN, MS Teams, Access to Software etc). - In addition to home/remote working, what other flexible working opportunities would they like to access? e.g. working hours to fit around childcare commitments. What other considerations would they need to make to adopt this pattern?
Workplace Environment	- Where will they work at home and how well does it meet DSE guidelines? All home workers should carry out a DSE (Display Screen Equipment) risk assessment. See (DSE) Standard Operating Procedure And guidance on DSE Home advice leaflet. - What adjustments would they need to make to ensure it is safe and fit for purpose? - What could potentially be a distraction – how will they manage those distractions? - What equipment and supplies will they need to obtain from the Trust to support their homeworking e.g. IT equipment, stationary etc. (an important question to explore is the issue of post using franked envelopes which can only be sent from the post room). - Have they got Broadband? Is it fast enough? Is there a cost implication? - If they need to use the phone for work; how will this be achieved and paid for? Is IT Softphone an option? - When will there be an expectation to attend work on site e.g for team meetings, covering colleagues, meetings, training etc? - What will be their working hours and how best can they be contacted?
Line management	- How can I as the line manager ensure they are: - Best supported when home/remote working? - Getting the same levels of supervision, mentoring and development to progress? - Kept informed of what is happening within the team, service and wider organisation? - Having regular 1-1's/Supervision to support their progress and wellbeing? - Clear about how productivity will be measured and how concerns can be raised when it is not as expected? - Continuing to get the recognition deserved for their achievements.

Team working	• What do you think the team will need from them and vice versa to support homeworking when working as a team? • How can they ensure there is regular formal and informal communication so that they feel fully engaged in the work of the team? • What informal communication channels does the team use that you find useful e.g. Facebook, Whats App and Twitter? • How much dependency is there on their work from the rest of the team? • How can the team most quickly identify their availability for communication e.g. use of calendars and on line communication? • How well established are their workplace relationships, how confident are they to maintain those relationships when working at a distance? • What will be the main ways of communicating – e.g. MS Teams? • How will quick questions and queries be resolved so as not to delay progress? • How will they encourage good levels of engagement with the wider team and key stakeholders?
Wellbeing	• What do you both see as being the benefits of homeworking personally? • What are the potential downsides socially and emotionally? • How well do they respond to working in isolation? • When under pressure – how do they respond? Will they have those same coping mechanisms available to them when at home? • Is having clear separation between work-life and home-life important to them? If so how will they achieve that separation and be able to switch off? • As well as the DSE risk assessment would it be beneficial to carry out a risk assessment for musculoskeletal, mental health and stress management issues?

The decision as to whether or not Home/remote working is agreed between a colleague and their Line Manager, will take into account the following factors;

• The suitability of the job/work/task.
• Colleague suitability for home/remote working; ability to work independently with minimal supervision, are self-disciplined and self-motivated and can separate out their home life from their work life.
• Caring responsibilities (e.g. will anyone else be in the home when the member of staff is working/do they have caring responsibilities? Can working hours be adjusted to accommodate childcare?).

4	**Key Responsibilities**

Adjusting to home/remote working may be a challenge for many line managers and colleagues, particularly if they are used to working together face-to-face. The below sets out a framework of responsibilities to guide the line manager and colleague:

Line Managers

- To embrace a flexible working approach with colleagues and actively encourage and consider requests to work from home/remotely in line with service needs and team working arrangements, as well as the member of staff's individual needs particularly where this might be considered a reasonable adjustment for someone with a disability.
- Ensure this guidance is disseminated effectively to teams and that colleagues understand and are aware of the processes for requesting and preparing for home/remote working via the Flexible Working Policy.
- Maintain regular contact – speaking with colleagues regularly through phone calls or virtual meetings.
- Setting clear expectations - making sure that everyone home/remote working knows what is expected of them. This should include agreeing when employees will be available to work, when they are contactable and how they will keep in touch.
- Agree the day to day supervision arrangements to support and guide colleagues.
- Provide regular updates - staff working remotely will need regular updates and communications in line with the rest of the workforce, for example, through staff newsletters or virtual all-staff briefings.
- To carry out an appropriate risk assessment and provide colleagues who are home/remote working with a copy of the DSE Policy for their completion, discussion and action where appropriate, to support a working space that is safe, secure and free from distraction.
- To direct colleagues who are home/remote working to relevant policies such as how information should be both held and disposed of securely.
- Make time for non-work conversations – just as you would usually do in the workplace.
- Be mindful of colleagues feeling isolated, lonely or experiencing a lack of team camaraderie - encourage team get-togethers and frequent interaction via face-to-face technology to build trust and rapport.

Colleagues

- To discuss and agree working and keeping in contact arrangements with their line manager to support a good home/remote working experience
- Be aware of and follow all Trust policies and procedures whilst working at home/remotely or on Trust premises.
- Provide appropriate phone, email and calendar details to facilitate good communications

- In delivering the agreed work objectives, raise any issues of concern or support needed with their line manager.
- Understand and adhere to these guidelines, in particular their own responsibilities regarding health and safety (see below),
- Taking reasonable care of any Trust supplied equipment for Mobile/ Home/remote working.
- Report any damaged, lost or stolen equipment (especially if the equipment contains documentation or data belonging to the Trust), breaches of confidentiality or loss of data or information asset and accidents or incidents whilst working from home, in accordance with the 'Procedure for Reporting all Incidents using Incidents Forms' (via the incident reporting system datix) and where required, in line with the Information Governance Compliance Policy.

5   Practical Aspects

Environment and Facilities

Colleagues who are working from home/remotely need a suitable home working environment which offers:
- Suitable "work" space which meets health and safety requirements (also see 'Health and Safety').
- Adequate equipment including computer, telephone line, broadband connection.
- Freedom from interruptions and distractions.
- Security and confidentiality.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires all employers to ensure as far as is 'reasonably practicable', the health, safety and welfare at work of employees. All staff permitted to work from home must attend to their own health and safety.

All colleagues should risk assess their working environment and The Display Screen Equipment Regulations 2002 will apply. Colleagues and line managers must complete and discuss to the Trust's Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Standard Operating Procedure and should complete the DSE Workstation risk assessment, produced by the Occupational Health and Wellbeing team. Whilst it may be acceptable for the colleague to complete the risk assessment, the risk assessment remains the responsibility of the line manager. This is separate to the colleagues' legal responsibility to work safely and in compliance with safe working practices.

As well as the DSE risk assessment it may be necessary to carry out a risk assessment for musculoskeletal, mental health and stress management issues.

To help achieve a safe and healthy environment, additional lone workers guidance produced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is available here https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm.

Equipment and IT Support

The Trust may at its discretion supply devices to work securely from an individual's own personal computer/mobile device if appropriate.

This will involve accessing the Trust's servers securely using the authentication tools provided by the Trust. Managers should utilise Trust approved software applications for communication with colleagues and to facilitate team collaboration. Tools such as Microsoft Teams are secure, scalable, promote a standardised approach, and are complaint to NHS regulations. Use of generic commercial software is discouraged. Non approved products are known to have security vulnerabilities which are frequently exploited by cyber criminals.

IT equipment must be used in accordance with the Trust's IM&T policies and procedures. Home/remote workers must ensure that all equipment owned by the Trust is kept securely, including whilst in transit.

To get access to the Trust's networks and drives, colleagues will need to be able to connect using a secure line which allows a user to connect a UHP issued laptop to the UHP network. To ensure that they have the correct access, the IM&T Service Desk will be able to support and guide on this via the Staffnet Portal.

There are also a number of communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams, which allows text conversations and video calling functionality, which is helpful for colleagues if they need to participate in meetings or calls. It also enables departments and teams to remain in regular communication. For advice and guidance on this, colleagues should contact the IM&T Department.

Security and Confidentiality

All colleagues are responsible for ensuring the security and confidentiality of Trust property and all Trust data, information, files, documents etc. within their possession. In particular, it is the responsibility of colleagues to ensure the safety and security of any documentation containing personal data in transit, and whilst at home, and that access by unauthorised individuals is not possible at any time. Transporting records from Trust premises requires vigilance and the principles of confidentiality must be maintained at all times. Where there is a breach of confidentiality or loss of data or information asset, this must be reported and managed in accordance with the Trusts Information Governance Policies.

To maintain personal security, colleagues should not invite service users to their home for meetings.

To ensure safe lone working whilst at home, as well as at work or when Mobile working, staff should be familiar and adhere to the Trust's Lone Working Procedure.

| 6 | **Effective Home/Remote Working and Colleague Welfare** |

Hours of work

In maintaining good health and wellbeing, colleagues are reminded to work in line with the Working Time Regulations, taking breaks and rest periods and not routinely working in excess of their normal hours. In addition, the Line Manager may agree with colleagues for reasonable 'time-out' during core working hours in order to help with work-life balance (e.g. taking children from school to an after-school club, or attend appointments).

It is the colleague's responsibility to ensure they complete their weekly contracted hours, however this could be flexibly arranged to suit the needs of the individual and the service, and this can be discussed and agreed with the Line Manager recognising the importance of maintaining boundaries between home & work.

Colleague wellbeing

Colleagues can help to maintain their own wellbeing while working from home by considering:

- Establishing a routine, including a start and end time to your work, as agreed with your manager; this may typically be your normal working hours e.g. 8.30am – 4.30pm but could allow working over 7 days and extended hours if the role permits.
- Discussing home working arrangements with family or the other people you live with and try to establish boundaries so you can work uninterrupted
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, good nutrition and plenty of sleep
- Taking a lunch break (ideally away from your work space/screen)
- Staying connected with other colleagues, whether that is through email, messaging platforms or telephone.
- Taking regular breaks throughout the day to get away from your screen/desk
- Staying active, either by taking a walk (unless unable to do so) or doing simple stretches and exercises at home.

If a colleague feels that their health or wellbeing is deteriorating or is negatively impacted by home/remote working, then this should be discussed with the Line Manager as soon as possible.

Should colleagues incur costs whilst working from home, for e.g. telephone/internet costs or equipment costs in addition to their normal contracts, they should initially discuss this with their line manager to see whether they are able to reclaim these costs. Additionally, colleagues should explore any tax implications or benefits via HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC).

Domestic Abuse Awareness and Support

There may be situations where working from home/remote working places colleagues at greater risk of suffering domestic abuse or violence. Domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, religion or social status, including NHS staff. Line managers should seek to support colleagues by discussing individual circumstances so appropriate support and actions can be taken accordingly. It is important to remember the staff member knows their personal circumstances better than anyone, so it is important to respect their wishes and do what you can to support them.

If Line Managers or staff become aware of the signs of domestic violence and the potential risk that staff may face during a period of isolation, colleagues can be signposted to available support including:

- If someone is in immediate danger, they should always call 999 in an emergency. If they are unable to speak while on the phone, they should use the 'silent solution' system by pressing 55 where the operator will transfer the call to the relevant police force.
- For information, help and support, call the free 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by Refuge on 0808 2000 247 or visit www.nationalhelpline.org.uk if it is not safe to phone.
- Safety Advice for Survivors from Women's Aid, including their survivor's forum, live chat and email services.
- Rape Crisis resources for survivors of sexual violence.
- Men's advice line on 0808 801 0327 for those males suffering domestic abuse or violence.
- National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0800 999 5428
- Save Lives for supporting disabled people at risk of domestic abuse.
- Karma Nirvana for supporting victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage.
- Crown Prosecution Service for crime information and guidance on domestic abuse.
- Respect helpline on 0808 802 0321 for anyone worried about their own behaviour

Internally to the Trust, advice and guidance can also be sought from the Safeguarding Team and Occupational Health and Wellbeing department.