

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET MEMBER

HOME WORKING POLICY

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To outline and seek approval for the council's revised Home Working policy.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The council's Home Working policy was last updated in 2004 and has become outdated. Following the recent move to switch home workers to use their own broadband lines, which will save the council around £20,000 per annum, the opportunity has been taken to overhaul the entire policy.

2.2 The council's revised Home Working policy sets out the three categories of homeworkers (at home, from home and occasional), criteria around eligibility, the initial assessment process, equipment and security measures. Appendices are included to provide useful guidance around health and safety issues.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 To approve the revised policy.

3.2 To reject the revised policy.

3.3 To recommend amendments to the revised policy.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 Accepting the revised policy will ensure that employees are clear on how to request home working, the process to set it up and how it should work in practice, including the various health and safety implications.

4.2 Rejecting the revised policy would leave us with an outdated policy which has not kept pace with changes in technology and in how council services function.

4.3 Recommending further changes to the revised policy would require further consultation and delay implementation.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 As previously mentioned, home workers are now required to utilise their own broadband lines. This will result in savings of approximately £20,000 per annum in IT costs as the council no longer supplies ADSL and telephone lines for home workers. There are currently 23 home workers across the council, the majority (20), are in the Local Taxation and Benefits service.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

6.1 An integrated impact assessment (see attached) has considered the equality implications of this policy.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

7.1 The trade unions have been consulted and are in agreement with the proposals.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the revised policy be approved.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

Civic Centre
Ashby Road
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB
Author: Rebecca Stanford
Date: 13 November 2014

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Home working is where employees undertake their work in their home. There are three categories of home worker as follows:

- At home (i.e. all contracted hours worked at home.)
- From home (i.e. at least 60% of contracted hours worked at home.)
- Occasional (i.e. employees who work from home on an ad hoc basis to complete specific reports or projects.)

1.2 Home start employees are those who do not have a designated office base and work from home, not at home, spending the majority of their time out 'in the field'. Home start employees are not covered by this policy.

1.3 Employees working at home and from home (herein referred to as 'home workers') will have it expressly detailed in their contracts of employment that they are home workers. Occasional home working will be subject to agreement by individual line managers, normally prior to each instance. Much of what follows may not be directly applicable to occasional home working but will provide useful guidance.

1.4 All terms and conditions of employment and council policies and procedures remain in place unless specifically modified by this policy.

1.5 Not all jobs are suitable for home working and all home working arrangements must be approved in advance. Managers will actively consider posts for home working but will not normally require an existing employee to home work. Employees may request to work from home but there is no automatic right and the decision will be taken by the manager, having objectively considered the request and all the implications thereof, including the statutory implications of requests for flexible working. See B.3.6 Flexible Working policy.

2.0 Eligibility and Assessment

2.1 In determining which posts are suitable for homeworking managers must take into account the following general points:

- There must be clear objectives and measurable outputs.
- Suitable telephone and IT links must be available.
- There must be no reduction in the quality or level of service provided.
- Arrangements must be in place for effective supervision and management.

- Arrangements must be in place for effective communication between the home worker and the workplace.
- There must be no increase in the workload of colleagues
- Any increase in cost must be justified.

2.2 Dependent on specific circumstances at home or from home working may not be possible if the following indicators apply:

- Face-to-face contact with the customer is a requirement of the post.
- Physical access to shared resources is necessary to perform duties.
- The majority of the work is undertaken outside or in other premises.
- The employee manages/supervises a team.
- The risks to the health and safety of the employee cannot be reduced to an acceptable level of residual risk.

2.3 If a manager establishes that a post is suitable for home working based on the points outlined at 2.1 and 2.2, then prior to any agreement, the employee should complete an assessment of the homeworking location to confirm the following (See Appendix 1):

- The employee's home must be able to accommodate an office function, preferably in a separate room.
- The employee should not have other commitments (voluntary work, childcare or running a business) whilst they will be home working.

2.4 If Appendix 1 is agreed then a full risk assessment must be undertaken by the manager at the employee's home. This is to ensure that all health and safety risks are identified, documented and controls put in place to eliminate or reduce risks to an acceptable level. (See Appendix 2 and 3).

2.5 Employees have a responsibility to take care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to cooperate with the employer in meeting their legal obligations. As the control that can be exercised over an employee working from home is limited, the day to day responsibility for health and safety will be with the home worker and they should report any concerns immediately. The risk assessment template and guidance (Appendices 2 and 3) should be used for at least annual reviews of the work environment.

2.6 The health and safety manual is available on Intralinc which provides detailed guidance on the various health and safety issues that need to be considered, including, the use of

display screen equipment, work equipment, first aid, fire precautions and the recording and reporting of accidents including those required under RIDDOR. Advice is also available from the Safety Solutions Team.

3.0 Equipment and security

3.1 Subject to the conditions and assessment outlined in section 2, the council will supply equipment which is essential to enable an employee to work effectively and securely from home. This may include:

- Relevant IT equipment/mobile technology
- Small office equipment, such as a set of lockable drawers
- Consumables/stationery
- Furniture such as desks and chairs will only be provided where there is a specific requirement, such as a recommendation from occupational health, a medical practitioner or Access to Work.

3.2 Home workers are required to have a suitable home broadband connection with which to access the council's network. The council will not supply the employee's home broadband or pay for any upgrades to employee's existing home broadband lines.

Note 1: Unlimited downloads with a minimum speed of at least 2 mbps is recommended. If in doubt, contact IT Services for further information.

3.3 Should there be any system downtime which prevents the home worker from actually undertaking work, the following apply:

Planned system downtime:

- Attend the designated office base or take annual/flexi leave.

Unplanned system downtime:

- Two hours or less, paid time at home providing IT have been informed and an estimated fix time is established.
- More than two hours, attend the designated office base or take annual/flexi leave.

3.4 Equipment supplied by the council remains the property of the council at all times and is not for personal use, although the employee may access the Internet for personal use in accordance with C.9 Digital Technologies policy. However, the computer must not be used by anyone other than the home worker (e.g. members of the family, friends etc).

- 3.5 Any costs incurred as a result of changes made by the employee after initial set up (moving house, home improvements, change of use etc.) will be the responsibility of the employee and at their expense. Should a home worker leave the council's employment it is their responsibility to ensure they return any council equipment promptly and in good condition.

Information security

- 3.6 It is the home worker's responsibility to ensure that they maintain the security and confidentiality of work related information within their home at all times, in accordance with the council's Information Security policy, available on Intralinc.
- 3.7 Confidential waste must be gathered up and securely transported to the office on the home worker's next scheduled visit/review. Once in the office, it will be disposed of in the normal way with the other confidential waste that is produced. Alternatively, if the home worker has suitable cross cut paper shredding facilities, the confidential waste may be put through the home shredder and thrown away with the rest of the household rubbish. This should be determined at the initial suitability assessment by the relevant manager.

Insurance

- 3.8 The employee is required to ensure that their buildings and contents insurance policy provides cover for home working. The council will not reimburse any increase in premium should this occur.

Mortgage and rental

- 3.9 Before commencing home working, employees should advise their mortgage provider or landlord that they intend to work from home. The council will not be responsible for any additional costs as a result.
- 3.10 The council will not accept any responsibility for an employee who suffers any detriment, loss or legal action as a result of not obtaining the necessary permissions from their insurer, mortgage lender or landlord.

Planning regulations/council tax

- 3.11 Using a room or part of a room to work in would not normally require planning permission or affect an employee's council tax valuation banding.

4.0 Contracts of employment

- 4.1 Home working arrangements are subject to regular reviews. The first review should take place after one month with subsequent reviews forming part of the annual appraisal thereafter. See Appendix 2.

Hours of work

- 4.2 Home working may be a flexible working arrangement but the requirement remains for the employee to fulfil their contractual obligation. Employees and managers must agree an appropriate working pattern.
- 4.3 Requests from home workers to change their working arrangements will be treated in the same way as office based employees. See B.3.6 Flexible Working policy.

Training and contact

- 4.4 Arrangements may vary but it is essential that home workers receive adequate management, support and training. Meetings should take place on a regular basis. As a bare minimum, the employee should participate in an annual appraisal, during which the suitability and effectiveness of the home working arrangement will be discussed. Where possible, the home worker should also have the opportunity to attend team meetings, training days and receive regular messages and updates.

Expenses

- 4.5 Business travel will be paid in accordance with council policy; therefore mileage is not payable when the home worker attends the designated office base. Any other mileage incurred will have home to office base deducted in the normal way (the lesser than rule), see part B of the council's Finance manual, available on Intralinc.
- 4.6 Under HMRC guidelines, the home will not be designated the employee's base as it is not an objective requirement that the duties be performed at home. Any mileage undertaken to the designated office base will therefore not qualify for tax relief.
- 4.7 If the home workers are required to post items they should make arrangements within their team as to the most cost effective and efficient way of doing this.

Home working allowance

- 4.8 A home working allowance will be payable to employees who work at home or from home:
- An at home worker will receive the full allowance.

- A from home worker will receive an amount pro-rata to their hours of work i.e. hours of work ÷ 37 x the allowance.
- The allowance is not payable to occasional home workers.

Note 2: See B.4 Allowances and Expenses policy for the latest allowance amount.

Withdrawal of home working

- 4.9 If service requirements change and home working is no longer a sustainable option, consultation with a view to agreement will take place with the home worker to find an alternative arrangement. In the event of a failure to agree, the home worker will be given contractual written notice of the change to their contract of employment.
- 4.10 In the event of concern about the employee's health and safety, performance, conduct or capability, the home working agreement may be suspended or withdrawn as part of a sanction/reasonable adjustment or the outcome of action in accordance with the Disciplinary or Managing Performance procedures.
- 4.11 Where the employee wishes to voluntarily cease home working they must make a written request to this effect, giving their reasons, to the manager. Should an employee wish to voluntarily cease home working or resign within 24 months of commencing home working there will be a charge made to the employee to cover irrecoverable set up costs as per the following calculation:

Note 3: Set up costs that may be recovered will exclude any items that may be utilised for another home worker or back in the office, e.g. laptops, screens, headsets etc.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Total home worker set up} \\
 \text{costs} \\
 \text{costs}
 \end{array}
 \begin{array}{c}
 - \\
 \text{(minus)}
 \end{array}
 \left(\frac{\begin{array}{c} \text{Number of complete} \\ \text{calendar months of} \\ \text{employment from date} \\ \text{first set up} \end{array}}{24} \right) \times \begin{array}{c} \text{Total set up} \\ \text{costs} \end{array}$$

- 4.12 Once the home worker has had a request to transfer to the office agreed he/she will normally be prohibited from applying for home working again for a 12 month period.



Home Working Initial Assessment Form

Appendix 1 – A.11

When completing this form the employee should refer to the Home Working policy A.11 and the Health and Safety manual for further information/guidance.

Home worker details

Surname: _____ First name: _____

Payroll no: _____ Directorate: _____

Job title: _____

Home address: _____

Proposed start date: _____

Home working environment

	Yes/No	Comments
Sufficient working space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Suitable workstation? <i>(Detail any equipment requirements below)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Sufficient lighting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Sufficient ventilation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Cables can be safely stored?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
First aid box?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Electrics maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Smoke alarm?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Fire extinguisher?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Clear fire escape route?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Premises can be secured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Household? *(Please provide details, if any of your household be at home when you are home working)*

Equipment and Security

Please indicate any equipment required for home working:

	Yes/No	Comments
IT/mobile technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Suitable broadband in place	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Office equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Please indicate information security arrangements for home working:

Can information be stored securely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Can confidential waste be processed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Employee to confirm the above is an accurate reflection of their potential home working situation:

Signed: _____ **Print:** _____ **Date:** _____

Home working agreed in principle, pending a full risk assessment by manager?
(See paragraph 2.4 of the policy).

Yes No

Manager's response to the request giving clear reasons for the decision:

Signed: _____ **Print:** _____ **Date:** _____

Home Working Risk Assessment Guidance

Appendix 2 – A.11

Hazard	Who may be affected	Consequences/How affected	Examples of control measures	Relevant Regulations:
Display Screen Equipment	Homeworker	Upper limb strain from seating position or repetitive movement.	<p>Machines provided are suitable for their intended purpose;</p> <p>Use and maintenance of machines is restricted to designated persons who have received adequate training;</p> <p>Machines are checked regularly and kept in a condition that does not cause harm;</p> <p>Provision of suitable seating; Homeworkers should take regular breaks.</p> <p>Home workers, where considered DSE users, should undergo a DSE assessment.</p> <p>There is the means to detect a fault.</p>	The Health and Safety (DSE) Regulations 1992.
Work equipment	Homeworker	Trapping, entanglement, electrical risks, and musculoskeletal problems.	<p>Ensure work equipment is suitable for intended use;</p> <p>Ensure work equipment is safe for use, and maintained in a safe condition;</p>	The Provision and Use of Work Equipment (PUWER) Regulations 1998. MHSW Regulations

Home Working Risk Assessment Guidance

Appendix 2 – A.11

			<p>Ensure a suitable standard of lighting is provided; Ensure suitable emergency stop controls are in place; Ensure that work equipment is used only by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training. A system to periodically service and maintain equipment is in place. There is the means to report faults and defects. Work equipment is secured to prevent unauthorised use/tampering.</p>	
Electricity	Homeworker; family members; visitors; consider vulnerable persons (e.g. young children).	Electric shock or fire.	<p>Plugs are correctly wired and maintained; plugs, leads, wires and cables are checked regularly and kept in a condition that does not cause harm. Portable Appliance Testing is carried out when necessary.</p>	Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 RRFSO 2005

Home Working Risk Assessment Guidance

Appendix 2 – A.11

<p>Manual Handling of office equipment</p>	<p>Homeworker</p>	<p>Musculoskeletal strain or injury, particularly to the back.</p>	<p>Avoid heavy, bulky loads or materials; Avoid steps and steep ramps; When lifting is necessary, homeworkers must be informed, instructed and trained in good techniques to help reduce the risks. Risk assessment is undertaken prior to manual handling (TILEO).</p>	<p>The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992. MHSW Regulations.</p>
<p>Slips, Trips and Falls/ other injuries sustained/ accidents</p>	<p>Homeworker; family members; visitors; consider vulnerable persons (e.g. new or expectant mothers, young children).</p>	<p>Physical injury.</p>	<p>Keep work areas tidy and clear of obstructions or objects lying around that may cause person to trip. Clean spills up immediately; Arrange furniture in order to avoid trailing wires; Ensure mats are securely fixed and do not have curling edges; Try to avoid changes of level; Ensure suitable footwear; Ensure adequate lighting. First aid requirements assessed to ensure adequate provision and access to emergency</p>	<p>The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (HSE, 2000 a). First Aid at Work regulations.</p>

Home Working Risk Assessment Guidance

Appendix 2 – A.11

			<p>services/ means to summon help. Means of communication provided. Periodic contact agreed to confirm safety.</p>	
Isolation	Homeworker.	Stress and depression.	<p>Regular face to face contact between company representatives and homeworker; Same information and support for homeworkers as on-site workers, including information on social events; Facilitate communication with other homeworkers and on-site workers; Homeworkers should take regular breaks. Access to lone worker and personal safety training where appropriate. Means of communication provided. Periodic contact agreed to confirm safety.</p>	<p>The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (HSE, 2000 a).</p>



Home Working Risk Assessment Template

Appendix 3 – A.11

Premises:		Area:		Task/process/activity:			
Completed by:		Post:		Date completed:		Review due:	

Significant hazard or hazardous circumstances	Persons at risk	How harm might occur	Existing controls (Findings)	Initial Risk Rating			Additional controls required (Risk reduction plan)	Residual Risk Rating			Action completed by	Date action completed
				PSR	PLR	RRN		PSR	PLR	RRN		

Home Working Risk Assessment Template

Appendix 3 – A.11

Significant hazard or hazardous circumstances	Persons at risk	How harm might occur	Existing controls (Findings)	Initial Risk Rating			Additional controls required (Risk reduction plan)	Residual Risk Rating			Action completed by	Date action completed
				PSR	PLR	RRN		PSR	PLR	RRN		

Manager's signature: _____

Potential Severity Rating (PSR) – if the hazard were to result in injury, what would be the result of that injury.

PSR	Degree of Injury	Guidance
5	Major	Death to one or more people
4	High	Permanent disability – loss of limb, sight, hearing, spinal injury
3	Medium	Temporary disability – e.g. fractures, dislocations, unconsciousness
2	Low	Significant injuries - e.g. abrasions, contusions, lacerations, sprains, strains
1	Minor	minor injuries – e.g. scratches, minor cuts

Probable Likelihood Rating (PLR) – the likelihood that the hazard will result in injury.

PLR	Likelihood of Occurrence	Guidance
5	Almost Certain	Absence of management controls
4	Frequently or Regular	Serious failures in management controls
3	Occasionally	Insufficient or substandard controls in place
2	Remotely Possible	Arrangements appear well managed however, occasional lapses could occur
1	Improbable	Arrangements appear acceptable, loss, accidents, illness could only occur under exceptional conditions

Risk Rating Number (RRN) – the Risk Rating Number derived from the calculation shown below is used to prioritise the observed risks.

PSR X PLR = RRN		
Risk Rating	Score	Priority
RRN	1 -9	Low
RRN	10 – 15	Medium
RRN	16 - 25	High