



**Isle of Man
Government**

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Homeworking Guidelines

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Isle of Man Public Service Homeworking Guidelines

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Isle of Man Government is committed to promoting and practising equal opportunities in employment and, where practical, supports employees to work flexibly which includes homeworking. This may be on a regular or ad-hoc basis as part of a flexible and agile approach to undertaking a role.

2. Aims

- 2.1 The aims of these guidelines are to
- a) set out the principles to support managers to determine if a request from an employee for homeworking can be supported should the employee's role and their homeworking environment be suitable, and
 - b) enable managers to consider and implement homeworking to improve service delivery, reduce costs and contribute to Government's response to climate change
- 2.2 Greater use of homeworking will enable a range of benefits to both employers and employees, including:
- increased employee satisfaction
 - improved employee wellbeing
 - better staff retention
 - recruitment opportunities
 - potential cost savings on work space and facilities
 - tailoring working hours to better support the needs of the public service, its employees and customers
 - reducing carbon emissions with reduced commuting.
- 2.3 These guidelines are targeted primarily at those employees who have been working from home during the Coronavirus pandemic, but is also applicable to other employees, if homeworking can be accommodated, and where necessary on a phased implementation basis.
- 2.4 The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a framework within which employees and managers can agree arrangements for homeworking. These guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive; however there are certain fundamental principles which must apply and which should be understood by employees and managers.
- 2.5 Any homeworking arrangements must be agreed and be mutually beneficial to the employee, role, team and Department, Board or Office.

3. Homeworking

There are various types of homeworking which can be considered and these include:

Ad-hoc homeworking – This applies to employees who work from home on an occasional ad-hoc basis where there is no agreed pattern of homeworking. Their normal place of work would continue to be their usual work base as set out in their statement of written particulars.

Regular homeworking – This applies to employees who have a regular pattern of homeworking where there is a written agreement in place. A written agreement may be made by email.

Some examples of this are:

- A full time employee who wishes to work from home 2 days per week and their normal place of work the rest of the week.
- An employee who will spend the majority of their hours working from home or visiting sites from their home base, and office based activity is limited to meetings, performance conversations and other activities more suited to the workplace.

4. Principles

- 4.1. Options for homeworking may be considered in relation to any job role that may be carried out equally on site or from another location. It is, however evident that some roles do not lend themselves to any form of homeworking as they can only be carried out on site.
- 4.2. Working from home, by its very nature, is often individual to the role and the employee concerned. There is no automatic right for employees to undertake homeworking as there may be circumstances where a request cannot be accommodated, even if a role is suitable for homeworking.
- 4.3. Homeworking can be undertaken at any location, including away from the Island on a short term basis, so long as all required work activities and availability can be undertaken effectively and specific arrangements are agreed with line managers in advance.
- 4.4. Proposals for homeworking should not be refused without being given reasonable consideration and a sound reason as to why the proposal cannot be accommodated must be discussed with employees and confirmed in writing.
- 4.5. A trial period for up to 3 months of the proposed homeworking arrangements may be undertaken to assess whether or not the arrangements will be beneficial for the employee, manager and service.
- 4.6. When employees are homeworking they must act in a professional way at all times during working hours. This includes satisfying all applicable policies, procedures and any reasonable management instructions. The focus of attention should be on working matters and they should be available to attend a place of work without notice.

- 4.7. Homeworking is not a substitute for suitable care arrangements, however it is acknowledged that employees may want to work from home temporarily because of short term caring responsibilities or until long term caring arrangements are identified. Employees are expected to discuss any caring responsibilities with their manager and demonstrate how they would manage the joint responsibilities of work and caring whilst homeworking.
- 4.8. A request for homeworking may be made under these guidelines or as part of a formal request for flexible working as set out in terms and conditions of employment, which can provide for a permanent change to terms and conditions.
- 4.9. Any employee who does not wish to work from home should not be forced to do so.

5. Equality

- 5.1 In considering requests and business grounds for homeworking, a manager must be careful not to inadvertently discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee because of a protected characteristic they have under the Equality Act 2017. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 5.2 Discrimination has the effect of putting a person with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to others. Care should be taken that homeworkers are not treated less favourably on grounds of any protected characteristic. Homeworking arrangements may be a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person and must therefore be given careful consideration.

6. Implementation

- 6.1 Proposals for homeworking, whether by management or individual employees should be made in writing including a rationale for the proposal. Normally this rationale will outline the benefits of homeworking for the employees and the service area, the expected outcomes and how any implications will be managed, including the need for risk assessments.
- 6.2 Suggested template email agreements for authorising homeworking requests or confirming homeworking proposals by management are attached at [Appendix 1](#).

7. Reviews

- 7.1 Homeworking arrangements should be reviewed should any circumstances change particularly if they are detrimental to a positive homeworking arrangement. In any case it is recommended that once agreed any homeworking arrangements are reviewed as part of regular catch-ups and team meetings to assess if the arrangements are still mutually beneficial or whether any adjustments need to be made.
- 7.2 Where an employee moves house or wishes to change their homeworking location they should inform their manager and the employee and manager should review the homeworking arrangements.

- 7.3 Unless homeworking is part of a formal request for flexible working and a permanent change to terms and conditions, any agreement for homeworking may be withdrawn, if there is a business need. In which case reasonable notice should be given.

8. Appeals

- 8.1 Employees who are dissatisfied with decisions made in respect of homeworking should discuss their concerns with their line manager with a view to achieving an agreement.
- 8.2 Where it is not possible to reach agreement, employees may refer the matter to a more senior manager to consider.

9. Facilities and Equipment

- 9.1 An employee must have a safe and reasonable space which is secure and private in which to work, and for office-type tasks an internet connection able to support work systems must be available. Remote access needs to be authorised by the relevant Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) for the Department, Board or Office with approval of the line manager.
- 9.2 It must be specified what equipment will be required for the employee to perform their work whilst homeworking and who will provide the equipment.

10. Hours of work

- 10.1 It must be agreed when the employee will need to be available for work whilst homeworking. For example, whether the employee will be required to observe strict hours, have complete flexibility over when they work, or have certain "core hours" when they must be available, taking account of any flexi-time working provisions which may apply.
- 10.2 An employee will be required to attend their normal place of work as necessary and must be available to do so during times they are homeworking.

11. Health and Safety Requirements

- 11.1 The Isle of Man Government has a duty of care to its employees, including those who are homeworking whether that be on an ad-hoc, regular or permanent basis. Therefore a risk assessment must be carried out before any homeworking arrangements can be agreed.
- 11.2 The risk assessment should identify any hazards and determine whether steps need to be taken to prevent harm to employees or anyone else who may be affected by their work whilst homeworking. A risk assessment should also identify any reasonable adjustments required for employees who have a disability. If required further advice and support can be obtained from either Occupational Health or the Health, Safety and Welfare Advisory Service, OHR. If changes need to be made to the homeworking environment, the employee and manager are responsible for making sure they happen.

- 11.3 For those employees using display screen equipment it is important that a workstation assessment is undertaken to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal discomfort associated with poor ergonomics and postural support.
- 11.4 Any risks should continuously be assessed in the same way as they would be in the usual place of work and employees have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety. An employee who is homeworking should keep in regular contact with their manager and tell them about:
- any health and safety risks
 - any homeworking arrangements that need to change
- 11.5 Isle of Man Government's employers' liability insurance provides cover for employees when working at home, however the same care should be taken at home as that that would be taken at work. If something happens that is clearly the fault of either the employee or their home, then they will not be covered e.g. if they fall down their stairs because the carpet is loose. If any health and safety risks are not addressed satisfactorily homeworking proposals may be declined.
- 11.6 A Homeworking Risk Assessment Template is attached at [Appendix 2](#).

12. Running Costs and Expenses

- 12.1 Managers should be prepared to reimburse staff working from home for reasonable costs incurred for phone calls or mobile data usage, but as homeworking is considered to be mutually beneficial no contribution will be made towards other household expenses such as electricity, heating and fixed internet connections.
- 12.2 Wherever possible, likely costs should be agreed in advance.
- 12.3 Expenses payments as described above are exempt from tax.

13. Travel

- 13.1 An employee is not eligible to claim travel time and mileage expenses should they have to travel from their home to their normal place of work (or other homeworking venue).
- 13.2 Mileage claims can be made for official journeys to places other than your home or normal place of work, based on any requirements set out in an employee's terms and conditions and/or the Payment of Members Expenses Act. For such journeys mileage will be counted from home or your home or normal place of work, depending on where the journey commences.
- 13.3 However, it is expected that meetings in person will likely be kept to a minimum bearing in mind the availability of Microsoft Teams and other opportunities for remote working.

14. Security and Data Protection

- 14.1 When homeworking an employee must continue to adhere to the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations, as well as

following the Information Security Policy Acceptable Use Guidelines¹. It is the responsibility of any employee homeworking to take all reasonable precautions to protect information which is stored in their home relating to their employment.

15. Supervision

- 15.1 Homeworking arrangements require a high degree of trust along with open and honest communication. Sufficient arrangements must be put in place for the supervision of an employee whilst homeworking to ensure they do not become isolated and to ensure standards of performance are maintained.
- 15.2 The most effective way of managing the performance of an employee working from home is to concentrate on outputs and deliverables which relies on a collaborative approach with regular reviews.

16. References

Further reading in respect of homeworking can be found under Homeworking at the following link: <https://hr.gov.im/policies-procedures-codes-guidance-and-forms/>

- [Supporting Information for Managers and Employees](#)
- [Homeworking Set Up and Checklist](#)
- [Homeworking Overcoming Common Problems Guidance](#)
- [Homeworking Ten Tips](#)
- [Homeworking Employee Wellbeing Guidance for Managers](#)
- [Homeworking Information Security Top Tips](#)

¹Acceptable Use Staff Handbook is available on the intranet (Rheynn-fys) under Policy Guidance [here](#).

Model Written (Email) Agreements

Employee Proposal

Dear xxxx

I write to apply for homeworking on the following basis:

Insert details

I confirm that I have read and understood the terms of the homeworking guidelines.

I have undertaken a health and safety risk assessment using the form at Appendix 2 of the Homeworking Guidelines and confirm that I have a safe and suitable environment in which to homework.

I am aware that if anything changes arrangements must be reviewed and/or arrangements can be withdrawn.

Management Reply:

I have considered the application for homeworking and I have **agreed** to the request. The following details/conditions will apply: or I have considered the application for homeworking but I have **not agreed** to the request for the following reasons:

Management Proposal

I write to confirm proposed homeworking arrangements for this team/division on the following basis:

To include details of No. Staff, Homeworking frequency, arrangements for supervision and team meetings etc

You are requested undertake a health and safety risk assessment using the form at Appendix 2 of the Homeworking Guidelines so that I can be assured that you have a safe and suitable environment in which to homework.

It is acknowledged that any employees who wish to continue to work from their normal place of work will be able to do so.

Homeworking Health and Safety Risk Assessment

Introduction



A place of work should conform to some basic standards and a risk assessments of all the work activities carried out by employees including those homeworking should be undertaken.

This self-assessment enables employees and managers to support the risk assessment process as part of a request for homeworking. An employee is responsible for completing the risk assessment and your manager is responsible for reviewing it and agreeing the suitability of the workspace. However, it is the employee's responsibility to address any flaws in their home revealed by the assessment.

Once completed, this self-assessment must be returned to your line manager. If you have any questions regarding the process or self-assessment document, please contact the Health, Safety & Welfare Advisory Service for support. They can be contacted by phoning 686999 or e-mail: SafetyAdvice@gov.im

Question	Response	Comments
Have you read through the HSE Guidance Document ' Working with VDUs ' or IOM Government Guidance ' Guide to Setting up a Workstation ' Comment: if no, please refer to these documents for guidance	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
Do you work remotely using visual equipment? i.e. travelling between sites/hot desking	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
Do you work from Home using visual equipment for more than 40% of your working week? Comment: if yes, line manager will consider a home assessment being carried out or reviewing working arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Are you currently in any discomfort at the workstation – this includes pain and discomfort in the wrists, fingers, neck, back, arms, legs etc Comment: If yes, line manager to consider desk side assessment review to ensure that all provisions are available for the employee to reduce discomfort.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
Do you suffer from eye strain/headaches whilst working with your visual display equipment? Comment: If yes, review IOM Government Guidance ' Guide to Setting up a Workstation '	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
Does your optometrist know that you work with Display Screen Equipment? Comment: If no or unsure, make them aware at your next appointment	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
If spectacles are required for use whilst working with the display screen, are these in use whilst at work?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
Have you completed a Desk Side Assessment within the last 12 months of your home workstation ? Self Assessment Comment: If not, please complete a self assessment which is relevant for your home workstation	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	

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<p>Do you have adequate space to work comfortably? <small>Comment: If no, it is important that space is found to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal discomfort</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Is there enough space underneath your desk to stretch your legs?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Are there trailing electrical cables around your working area that need to be tied up?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Is your working area warm, well-lit and well-ventilated? <small>Comment: employee must provide appropriate environmental conditions provisions</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Do you have sufficient lighting? <small>Comment: employee must provide appropriate provisions</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Is your working area clutter free so that you can focus easily on the task?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Do you feel comfortable at your workstation?  13 Tips for Productive Homeworking</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Are you familiar with how to adjust your chair?  How to adjust your chair</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<p>Is the chair stable on flooring and allow for easy movement and comfort? <small>Comment: If chair is on carpet it may be necessary for the employee to consider purchasing a chair mat to prevent musculoskeletal discomfort. This is not the responsibility of the employer.</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Can you adjust the height of your chair? <small>Comment: Chair, not provided by employer, it is recognised that chairs adjustable in height can reduce the risk of musculoskeletal discomfort</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Can the small of the back (lumbar curve) be supported by the chair's backrest? <small>Comment: Chair, not provided by employer, should be adjustable in height and provide ergonomic features to reduce musculoskeletal discomfort.</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Can you adjust the height and tilt of the back rest? <small>Comment: Chair, not provided by employer, must be adjustable in height and provide ergonomic features to reduce musculoskeletal discomfort.</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Is there a 2-4 inch gap between the front edge of the seat and the back of your knees <small>Comment: Chair, not provided by employer, must be suitable for employee to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal discomfort.</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Can you get your chair close enough to the work surface to use equipment without over reaching? <small>Comment: Appropriate work surface is important to reducing the risk of musculoskeletal discomfort.</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
<p>Can you put your feet flat on the floor, without too much pressure from the seat on the backs of the legs? <small>Comment: Foot rests must only be used when feet cannot be placed flat on the floor.</small></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	

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Does the chair have a swivel mechanism? Comment: Chair, not provided by employer, must be suitable for employee to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal discomfort.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
Does the chair have 5 castors or glides? Comment: Chair, not provided by employer, should be suitable for employee to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal discomfort.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
Are arm rests fitted to the chair? Comment: Arm rests fitted do support ergonomic principles for an operator's chair.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	
If arm rests are fitted, are they adjustable in height?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	

Please use the space below for any additional information you wish to include as part of the risk assessment.