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Bae Abertawe
Swansea Bay University
Health Board

HOME WORKING POLICY

This document can be made available in alternative formats and other languages, on request, as is reasonably practicable to do so.

This policy has been screened for relevance to equality. No potential negative impact has been identified so a full equality impact assessment is not required.

Policy Owner: Director of Workforce and OD
Approved by: Health Board Partnership Forum
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1. Introduction

Swansea Bay University Health Board is committed to promoting flexible working in order to facilitate effective and efficient working allow employees to achieve a good home/work balance and to allow for social distancing within workplaces. This policy outlines the way in which employees can be supported to work from home. It also details the actions required to facilitate a home working arrangement.

Home working arrangements must always take into account the needs of the service.

- There must be no adverse effects on the level and quality of service
- There should be no significant increase in workload for other colleagues as a result of an employee working from home.
- Arrangements for effective communication with the manager and workplace must be maintained.
- Working from home should be carried out at times when the employee does not need to be accessible in person at short notice.
- Any spare office/desk space that is created as a result of the employee home working should be made use of with appropriate cleaning regimes in place.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Health Board. However, it is recognised that not all roles are suitable in whole or in part for home working.

3. What is meant by Home Working?

3.1. Definition

Home working can be used to describe circumstances in which an employee uses their home as a base on a regular, occasional (ad hoc) or permanent basis rather than the employee attending the workplace.

However, this policy is intended to cover regular and occasional (ad hoc) home working where the employees retains a Health Board work base. It is not intended that home working should be a full-time arrangement. Rather, it is envisaged that staff may have the option to work part of the working week or working day at home.

Regular home working arrangements must be agreed between the employee(s) and their manager and must be set out in a written agreement. Occasional (Ad hoc) working will be agreed with the manager as necessary.

3.2. Benefits of Home Working

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The benefit of Home Working to both employee and Health Board are as follows:

- Well motivated staff who feel that they work for an organisation that is flexible and which trusts them;
- Potentially increased output and quality of work due to fewer distractions than working in an office environment.
- Increased discretion for the employee in the management of work /life balance
- Creation of a better quality of life for employees
- Increased motivation, productivity and job satisfaction.
- The retention of valued and skilled employees for whom the ability to work at home is the preferred option;
- Allows for the accommodation of the requirements of disabled employees or employees with temporary health conditions;
- The reduced pressure on car parking on site and minimising of travel expenses.
- Promotion of a positive image as an employer of choice.
- A saving of travel time and costs and reduction in environmental damage
- Provides a solution to a temporary problem e.g. staff may be unable to travel to the office but could provide continuity by working from home for a period.
- Potentially reduced accommodation costs and better use of existing premises and resources;
- Allows for effective social distancing in line with current guidance to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff.

3.3. Types of Home Working

There are various ways that home working may operate, ranging from ad hoc occasions that arise and do not form a routine, to more regular arrangements.

3.3.1. Occasional/ad hoc Home Working

Taking work home occasionally, on an ad hoc basis, to concentrate on a particular project or task may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where a specific task needs dedicated and focussed input and/or could be dealt with more efficiently at home e.g. saving travelling time and lack of interruptions;

- Where it is difficult for staff to get in to work e.g. adverse weather or a short but unavoidable commitment at home, a temporary health issue or a need for self-isolation/quarantine preventing an employee from attending work.

3.3.2. Regular Home Working

Working from home for a percentage of the time on a regular basis, the individual would come into the office for the balance of time. This may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where the function of the post requires little face to face contact with colleagues and/or clients;
- To facilitate a more flexible work pattern, perhaps to accommodate other demands for the employee or the employer e.g. to allow for improved social distancing and effective use of office space;
- Where an individual plans his/her work arrangements to enable the achievement of defined outputs each week/month from home;
- The job involves frequent/regular outside visits/ meetings/clinics and it is more appropriate to attend these from home.

3.4. Suitability of Home Working

While there are many advantages to home working, a detailed assessment must be made, by both the employee and the Health Board to assess

- whether the role to be performed can be undertaken from home
- whether the employee is suited to home working
- whether the home environment can be made suitable for home working

3.4.1. Roles

Managers and employees are encouraged to be flexible when considering if a role/task can be undertaken from home. In general, this is most likely to be administrative/office based roles and jobs that involve project work or identifiable output.

However, any job that does not involve direct patient care, provision of laboratory/estates/ catering or cleaning services or operation of machinery may potentially be adapted for home working.

Consideration must be given to the impact on and inter-relationship with other jobs, access by the public, access to/by colleagues, access to required information and technology and potential costs and savings.

The following job characteristics may lend themselves to home working: Defined output tasks; discrete projects or functions; relatively autonomous jobs; jobs requiring frequent travelling; jobs requiring long periods of concentration, jobs that can be undertaken remotely by means of technology.

3.4.2. Suitability of employee's circumstances including the home environment.

Having established the suitability of the job for home working, the suitability of the employee's circumstances must be considered including an assessment of the employee's home environment (see below).

Home working will not be appropriate for all staff, even where their role lends itself to home working.

Formal and informal information flow between colleagues on site may have a significant impact on the employee's performance. Some employees may develop better in a traditional office/workplace environment, and those with only a short period of experience in their role are likely to need closer support and supervision, which would not be possible if they were working from home.

Employees need to be self-motivated, enjoy the challenge of working on their own, be able to organise working time effectively and be confident to work without direct supervision away from the office environment. They should be confident that they are able to work on their own without day-to-day social interaction with colleagues and maintain a proper balance between work and home life.

Some employee's may not recognise the potential drawbacks, and it is important that both the advantages and the disadvantages are fully considered.

A trial period may be agreed in order to gauge suitability before any longer term arrangements are made.

4. Requests to Work from Home.

The decision to allow or require an employee to work from home on an occasional or regular basis may be instigated by the employee or the Health Board.

Temporary short-term working from home arrangements (up to 3 months) can be mutually agreed between the manager and the employee at any time to address a specific short term time limited issue. For example, a period of home working may be agreed as part of a rehabilitation process to return to work after sickness, to address a particular short-term domestic issue, or to undertake a short period of project work.

Where this is mutual agreement there will be no necessity to implement the formal request process. However, it is good practice for the employee and manager to complete a request form setting out the agreement and indicating that this is mutually agreed and does not count as a statutory flexible working request.

4.1 Employee request for home working

Where an individual is requesting to work from home they must complete the application at [Appendix 1](#) and submit this to their Line Manager for consideration in line with the normal flexible working request application.

The line manager will be responsible for considering applications to work from home in a fair and consistent manner taking into account the impact on the service. It is the Health Board's policy to view any requests for home working in a positive light and the Health Board will wherever possible and practicable, agree to the request.

4.2 Consideration of a request for home working

Consideration of the specific job tasks should identify those tasks that can be performed away from the main work base and it may be possible to agree an occasional or regular home working arrangements.

The following issues should be taken into consideration:

- The service provided/tasks required and the impact upon the employees workload and that of the wider team.
- Does the job require long periods of uninterrupted mental concentration?
- Does the job require a lot of ad hoc communication between groups of staff?
- Can the work be measured in terms of output, or if not, is it possible to come to an agreement with the employee about the amount of time particular tasks will take?
- What will be the effect on services to the public?
- Can the work readily be undertaken at home?
- How can the work be monitored?
- How should contact be made?
- What equipment will be required and who will provide it?
- What costs would be incurred to the Health Board in terms of equipment?
- Is the employee suitable for home working and understands the implications.

If on consideration of the factors above the Line Manager is not able to accept the application at this step, they must provide the employee with a written response to their request including details of the reasons for rejecting the application.

If the request is accepted in principle, a health and safety assessment of the home working environment must be carried out before home working can be formally agreed.

4.3. Assessing the Home Environment

An employee who works from home is afforded the same protection under health and safety legislation as an employee who is office/site based. It is therefore vital to ensure the home working environment is suitable before home working is agreed.

The employee needs to take personal responsibility for the health and safety aspect of home working. An employee needs an environment at home that offers the following:

- Suitable “office” space, ideally a separate room but at least a dedicated space, along with a desk and chair.
- Freedom from interruptions and distractions;
- The ability to maintain security and confidentiality, both of IT equipment and physical files and in dealing with confidential call/discussions.
- Ability to meet Health and Safety requirements;

It is not appropriate to combine home based working with the care of dependants within their contracted working hours and employees will be required to confirm that suitable alternative care of children/dependents is in place.

Employees must be available to attend Health Board premises with reasonable notice when required to do so to deal with a work related matter or attend team meetings or training activities.

The employee will be required to undertake a self-assessment of the suitability of the home environment ([Appendix 2](#)). If this assessment identifies any particular risks, it will be the responsibility of the Line Manager and employee to discuss ways in which the risks may be minimised or eliminated. In some circumstances, it may be necessary to seek further advice from the Health and Safety department.

The home environment must be deemed safe to work in before home working can be agreed. In some cases, it may be that the home environment cannot be made suitable to accommodate home working and if this is the case, the reasons must be set out in writing.

4.4 Home Working request instigated by the Manager.

Where the home working request is instigated by the manager e.g. to ensure adequate social distance in the Health Board office/ work area, this must be discussed with the employee and there must be consideration of their personal circumstances and home environment as above. Where an employee does not feel they would be able to cope with home working, it may be possible to allow short periods of home working initially to see if they feel able to maintain it.

5. Home Working Agreement

When it has been agreed that the employee will work from home on an occasional or regular basis this will be introduced initially on a trial basis for a period of 3 months.

At the end of the three months, there must be a review and a decision made as to whether the arrangement is satisfactory for all parties, if it needs some adjustments, or if it cannot be made to work satisfactorily.

Where it is, or can be made to work effectively, it can be made a longer-term arrangement with the agreement of both parties, for a period up to 4 years with regular annual review.

A home working agreement ([Appendix 3](#)) will be issued by the line manager, with advice from HR, which the employee must sign. The signed agreement must be retained on the employee's personal file and the employee should retain a copy.

6. Management of Home Working Agreements

To ensure that a home working employee is working effectively and feels part of the wider team it may be necessary for the manager to adapt their style of management.

6.1. Communication to and Management of Home Working Employees

Clear communication systems with home workers are just as important as for the office/site based worker. The Health Board has a number of electronic communication methods which are available to home workers. However managers may need to consider how to ensure home working staff receive information that office based staff receive on a face-to-face basis.

To make the scheme work effectively, there needs to be trust between the employee and the manager along with clear indicators of what the manager and employee expect from work.

The Line Manager must determine how work will be monitored, produced and delivered.

The Line Manager must agree how contact will be maintained and how frequently.

Employees may be required to attend their office/ work base or other Health Board premises for the purpose of meetings, team building events etc.

6.2 Performance Management

Clear work objectives with measurable outputs must be established and documented, in advance of the arrangement commencing. These objectives will be reviewed through regular 1 to 1s. The line manager will need to establish how the employee will be kept informed of matters that affect them or their work.

The manager must make clear, (in writing) how productivity and performance management issues will be assessed.

Home workers must have comparable induction, performance management, access to learning and development , career development opportunities and team events as other Health Board employees .

The Health Board reserves the right to terminate home working arrangements if service levels are adversely affected, or if the Health Board wishes to transfer the employee back to an on-site role.

7. Practical considerations

7.1. Provision of Equipment

Where appropriate, the Health Board will provide, install and maintain equipment to assist with home working. Factors taken into consideration in determining what is required may include the frequency/regularity of home working and whether it has been instigated by the Health Board or the employee.

The following items of equipment may be required depending on the frequency/regularity of the home working:

Remote access to the Health Board IT servers, a PC/laptop and mobile phone and where the home working is instigated by the manager it may be necessary to provide a desk, chair, printer, secure filing cabinet etc.

In relation to maintaining the equipment, it may be necessary for the employee to bring the equipment in to the Health Board offices or to allow someone to visit them at home in order to carry out the relevant maintenance.

Any Health Board equipment installed in the home remains the property of the Health Board and can be recalled at any time.

Where equipment is provided the employee must:

- take reasonable care of it;
- use it only for official purposes;
- use it only in accordance with any operating instructions;
- return it to the Health Board when requested;
- use it in accordance with any existing Health Board policies.

The Health Board will provide IT helpdesk support during standard working hours (this does not include home visits). The Health Board will also take responsibility for the repair/replacement of lost, damaged or stolen equipment, provided the employee has taken appropriate precautions to safeguard the equipment.

Upon the termination of the home working agreement, employees must return all Health Board equipment.

The Health Board is not responsible for the maintenance, replacement or repair of any personal equipment that the employee uses. The Health Board will not in most circumstances provide items such as furniture, heaters, fans or smoke alarms for use in the employee's home.

7.2. Insurance

The Health Board's existing Welsh Risk Pool indemnity will continue to apply to cover the home worker in the same way as if they were at work on site. It will also provide cover for any Health Board equipment located at the home of the employee as long as suitable agreed security arrangements are in place.

Employees are advised to inform their Home and Contents insurer of the change prior to the start of home working, making it clear that they are home working not running a business from home. They should also make it clear that no work visitors or clients will visit the home, the only possible exception being the line manager or other Health Board staff for maintenance of Health Board provided equipment.

Any additional expense incurred by the employee because of an increase in insurance premiums would be considered to be the employee's responsibility

7.3 Mortgage and Tenancy Agreements

Whilst working from home is unlikely to have an impact, employees are advised to notify their landlord/mortgage companies of the fact that they will be working from home in order to ensure that there are no terms or conditions, leases or covenants that prevent them from working at home.

7.4. Health and Safety

Home workers are afforded the same health and safety protection in law as office/site based staff. As such all Health Board health and safety policies and procedures will apply to home workers. This includes the requirement for employees to report any work-related accidents.

7.5. Data Security/ Confidentiality

Employees who work from home are required to comply with all IT and information security, confidentiality and information governance policies and requirements of the Health Board. This includes acceptance and adherence to the Internet and Email Acceptable Use Policy.

The employee will have a direct responsibility for all Health Board information/material held at their home and must ensure that it is not accessible to non-authorized people including other members of their household. Suitable arrangements must be made for the destruction of confidential waste.

The employee must make all reasonable efforts to ensure that confidential telephone conversations are not overheard by others in the household.

Employees should be aware of their responsibilities under the GDPR / Data Protection Act (2018) which apply whether working in an office or at home. Ideally, person identifiable, confidential or sensitive information and material should not be kept at home. Where it has to be, it must be kept secure at all times. If necessary, a lockable cabinet will be provided by the manager.

Employees who transport equipment (e.g. laptops) and/or person identifiable, confidential and sensitive information should not leave this in an unattended vehicle at any time.

7.6. Working Hours

The flexible working hours scheme will apply to home based staff in the same way that it does to office/site based staff. Any flexible working pattern should be considered as part of the initial application/agreement and any subsequent requests to change those arrangements should be made according to the existing procedures.

During the agreed working hours, the employee is expected to be available to return calls, answer emails and provide information in a timely manner.

Arrangements for working more than the normal weekly contracted hours will be by agreement with the line manager. Payment for any additional hours will be in accordance with the appropriate national terms and conditions of service.

The hours worked will not exceed those applied through the Working Time Directive.

7.7. Visits to the Home Worker

Where necessary arrangements should be made to permit the manager and other appropriate Health Board employees to visit the employee at home for purposes connected with work. This should be by prior arrangement and at a mutually convenient and reasonable time.

In most circumstances where a face-to-face meeting is required, this should be held on a Health Board site.

The Health Board does not permit members of the public to visit the employee whilst working from home.

7.8 Personal Safety and Security

Employees should not release their home address except to their line manager or have post sent to their home address by external organisations / individuals.

If a contact number is required and a mobile phone has not been provided for the employee to use at home, the office base number should be given. Other employees must not give out the home worker's address or personal telephone numbers. It is the manager's responsibility to ensure that this is clear to all employees.

Employees should not meet colleagues, or representatives from other agencies, at home (this is for insurance and tax purposes as well as personal security). Meetings should take place at the Health Board premises.

7.9. Contractual Terms

If the employee is an occasional or regular home worker, there will be no requirement to issue a variation to the substantive contract of employment, although the employee will be required to sign a home working agreement.

All other terms and conditions of employment remain unchanged by a home working application.

7.10. Expenses

For occasional and regular home workers, travel expenses will only be paid for those miles travelled which are in excess of the distance which they would normally travel from their home to their office/work base.

The Health Board will reimburse home working employees for any business calls if these are not free within the employee's personal mobile phone contract. In some circumstances, the Health Board will provide a mobile phone for the home worker.

The Health Board will also reimburse home working employees for postage costs on production of receipts. Stationery should be ordered through the usual channels and collected from Health Board premises by the home working employee.

7.11 Household Expenses

For any staff moving to home working in a temporary basis or having been based on a HB site any additional household expenses incurred whilst working from home should be offset by reduced travel costs and the Health Board is not planning to make any contribution to these costs. As we move forward and consider the benefits of adopting formal contractual homeworking this will be reviewed.

7.12. Dependant/Child Care

It is a condition of the home working agreement that arrangements for dependant/child care have been made in order to allow the employee to work from home without disruption. Any changes to dependant/child care arrangements that will impact on an Home Working Policy- August 2020

employee working from home must be reported to the manager immediately and may lead to a review of the agreement.

7.13. Review of a Home Working Agreement

Any home working arrangement should be reviewed periodically (at least once a year). This will allow both parties to assess whether the arrangement is still appropriate.

8. Termination of a Home Working Agreement

All home working arrangements must be reviewed on an annual basis.

A home working agreement can be terminated, by either party, by giving three months notice and the employee will return to office based working. This may be varied in exceptional circumstances.

9. Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed as required, but no longer than 2 years after Implementation.

From: SBU Inquiries

Sent: 27 August 2020 06:50

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Home Working Policy- August 2020

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Subject: New Policy

I write to advise that the following policy has been added to the Corporate Policies database:

- Home Working Policy

The policy is available to view via the [corporate policy database](#)

Gwasanaethau Corfforaethol / Corporate Services

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Bae Abertawe/ Swansea Bay University Health Board

Pencadlys / Headquarters

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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Bae Abertawe yw enw gweithredu Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Bae Abertawe

Swansea Bay University Health Board is the operational name of Swansea Bay University Local Health Board

