

# HRP 21 Home Working Policy

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## **The aim of this policy**

UDC is committed to providing clear guidance on matters of policy to all our employees, promoting a culture of fair treatment, respect and dignity, irrespective of individual differences.

The Council respects the importance of work-life balance and is committed to delivering a working environment that supports effective service provision and helps employees achieve the right balance between work and home. This policy aims to provide managers and employees with clear guidance regarding home working and how such requests will be dealt with.

In managing the application of this policy, consideration should be given to the individual's requirements and circumstances in relation to the protected characteristics as detailed under the Equality Act 2010.

This policy applies to all UDC employees. It does not apply to agency workers (any such requests should be dealt with through their agency).

*Any employee who requires this policy in an alternative format or language should contact Human Resources.*

## Introduction

Uttlesford District Council wishes to employ a lean, agile and diverse workforce and a wide range of flexible working arrangements are available to support this, full details of which can be accessed from UDC's overarching Flexible Working Policy (HRP18).

This section of the document sets out the policy and provides guidance to employees and managers about **home working**, its benefits and how to put it into practice.

UDC's guiding principles on home working are:-

- all permanent and fixed term contract employees may request home and/or mobile working either on a permanent, temporary or ad hoc basis;
- home or mobile working can be considered by UDC / line managers for individual posts or teams, the decision on whether to designate a post or posts as mobile or home based will be made by the line manager with the agreement of the employee;
- an employee's contract will be updated to reflect their home working work pattern;
- the policy applies to those staff who regularly work from home – ie once a week or more and every week
- it is a pre-requisite that for home-based positions, a dedicated work area must be provided within the employee's home;
- informal arrangements where employees may work on an ad-hoc basis from home or other work base(s) will be agreed directly between employees and line managers. If home working, then becomes a regular practice for that employee then this policy will apply.
- homeworking should not be used for child-care or general care purposes. In cases where employees have children or have care responsibilities for members of their family, they may be asked to demonstrate that alternative arrangements have been planned, particularly during nursery or school holiday periods for those with children, or homeworking may not be permitted

## Essential questions

1. What is home working?
2. What are the benefits of home working?
3. Who can work from home?
4. How does an employee apply for home working?
5. What health and safety issues need to be taken into account for home working?
6. What are a line manager's responsibilities in relation to home working?
7. What equipment and facilities are required for Home Working?
8. Who meets the costs of providing equipment and/or furniture for home working?
9. What does UDC provide in terms of IT equipment and telecoms/internet access?
10. What about security of Council information?
11. Will UDC reimburse Travel Costs incurred through home working?
12. Does UDC's insurance cover home working?
13. How should a home worker report sickness absence?
14. What if an employee or manager wants to change a home working arrangement?
15. How will employees be managed while working on their own or without direct supervision?
16. What training should a home worker attend?
17. How should working hours be recorded?
18. Can I work from a different country?

## Essential questions with answers

### 1. What is home working?

Home working allows employees to carry out all, or some of their work in their own home, rather than coming into a fixed Council workplace. Home working is becoming increasingly popular as a way of reducing unnecessary travel, supporting work-life balance and enabling better use of workplace accommodation.

At UDC, home workers can be broken down into 3 typical categories:-

- **Home worker** – this is when an employee works at home all of the time or for at least 80% of their working week or works at home some of the time and makes outside visits for the remainder of their working time. These home workers are not necessarily allocated a Council workplace/work station, but will be provided with a workstation at home, if required; they will usually continue to have an office as their administrative base, and hot desking may be part of the arrangement. If a post is permanently designated as homeworking by UDC the employee's contract will be updated accordingly to reflect their home working status.

**Note: Even though an employee can be classed as a permanent home worker, they will still be expected to come into the office to attend 1-2-1's and team meetings, appraisal reviews and any other such meetings at their manager's request.**

- **Home worker for part of the week** – this is when an employee works from home on specific days or a number of days per week and at a Council workplace/s at other times. UDC will usually provide either a permanent workstation or a space from a bank of workstations (commonly referred to as hot desking). They will usually continue to have an office as their administrative base. The employee's contract will updated accordingly to reflect their home working status.
- **Ad hoc home worker** – this is when an employee carries out occasional work from home but does not have a regular pattern of home working. Typically, this is where, for example, it would be more efficient to do a specific piece of work at home and the job can be effectively carried out this way or where the timing or location of appointments means that it is not worth travelling to their normal office base. For this type of home working the employee's contract of employment does not change and UDC workplace remains the employee's designated place of employment. Ad hoc home working would not normally warrant provision of Council equipment although some provision may be necessary for health and safety reasons.

### 2. What are the benefits of home working?

Home and mobile working has many benefits for both UDC and its employees. These include:-

For you

- no travel time, so more time to do other things

- saving on fuel from not travelling to and from work
- reduced wear and tear on your vehicle
- carbon footprint savings
- Peace and quiet away from the office

For the council

- carbon footprint savings
- achieves travel plan targets
- will in time enable hot desk arrangements to be put in place
- will free up parking spaces
- More productive staff (away from office distractions)

### **3. Who can work from home?**

All permanent and fixed term employees are eligible to request working from home and managers are encouraged to consider the feasibility of home and/or mobile working as an effective working arrangement for teams and individuals. Home working is undertaken on a voluntary basis, except where designated by UDC.

Of course, not all positions are suitable for home working and nor will all individuals be suited to home working or be able to from a practical perspective. The Flexible Working Application form (Appendix One) and Initial Assessment of Suitability for Permanent Home working (Appendix Two), together with early and open dialogue, will help managers and employees consider whether home working is a suitable option for the employee and/or their post. As a guide, typical criteria for jobs that are suitable for home working include:

- information gathering and processing roles rather than manual work;
- a limited requirement to be in designated places;
- minimal need for supervision;
- work that can be measured by defined objectives, milestones and outputs;
- work that requires high levels of concentration;
- work that doesn't need any large business equipment.

### **4. How does an employee apply for home working?**

When considering permanent or contractual home working as an option an early and open dialogue between employee and manager is required.

Employees and managers will need to complete the Initial Assessment of Suitability for Permanent Home Working form (Appendix Two). It identifies issues that need to be considered and helps the employee and manager identify how barriers could be overcome.

Depending on the nature of the work and the practicalities surrounding equipment or furniture provision, managers & employees may wish to consider running a trial home

working period of 1 to 3 months, for example, to test the effectiveness and suitability of the new arrangement.

A formal written application to work at home is not required for ad hoc home working – employees and managers should simply discuss and agree this between them as and when required. However, there will be a need to carry out a Health and Safety Self Assessment and Display Screen Equipment Assessment.

If a role is changed by UDC from office-based to home-based and existing employees are affected, a consultation process will be followed to ensure suitability and identify other solutions if required, before any changes to terms and conditions are confirmed in writing to the employee. Before designated homeworking is set up, the suitability of the job and the home base will be assessed using the Initial Assessment of Permanent Home Working Suitability (Appendix 2). Ways of managing service delivery, communication, workload, records, health and safety, and so on will be agreed.

## **5. What health and safety issues need to be taken into account for home working?**

There are a number of health and safety issues that need to be considered when planning home working and both the manager and individual employees have a responsibility to ensure that adequate health and safety arrangements for working from home are in place. Areas that need particular consideration are:

- use of work equipment, particularly computers
- ensuring the work environment is safe for the employee and does not create hazards for family members
- work related stress, which could arise from feelings of isolation or difficulties with separating their work from home

**All relevant assessment forms can be found on the Intranet.**

## **6. What are a line manager's responsibilities in relation to home working?**

- Consider what roles might be suitable for mobile or home working – flexibility provides many benefits and can be a cost-effective alternative to providing dedicated council accommodation, saving on accommodation costs as well as meeting employee and other Council needs;
- encourage and fairly consider requests from all employees for flexible working. Keep an open mind and only refuse a request if there are objective business or health and safety reasons to do so. The information given on the application form by the requesting employee, together with early and open dialogue, will help managers in considering the business case. If there are concerns, rather than a flat refusal, consider a trial period or a compromise. If it is not possible to agree to a request, explain the reason openly and honestly to the employee;
- consider the impact on the rest of the team of any new working arrangements – discuss openly at team meetings;

- consider the employee's suitability for home working – are you confident that they are suited to working alone, without direct supervision?
- if an eligible employee is exercising their legal right to request flexible working managers must ensure that the set legal process & timescales are followed - full details are given in UDC's overarching Flexible Working policy (HRP 18) ;
- consider home working as a potential effective reasonable adjustment to enable disabled employees to gain or stay in work or as a way of supporting rehabilitation
- monitoring the health and safety of home workers and addressing any health and safety issues that are identified using relevant assessment forms
- agree appropriate communication channels, times of contact and any regular meetings between the home worker and manager/team;
- record the agreement and arrangements – ensure that you and the employee each have a signed copy . Monitor and review the arrangements regularly;
- arrange for provision of a revised employment contract where terms and conditions change (for example; if an employee becomes a permanent home worker but not necessary for ad hoc home working arrangements) notify UDC HR Admin and if appropriate, notify customers and colleagues;
- arrange and have regular “home worker” review discussions with the employee – especially in the early days of the new working arrangement – such discussions could be built into U-Perform review meetings;
- if the home working arrangements are not working satisfactorily, discuss the problems with the employee, with a view to resolving them wherever possible. If this is not feasible, the manager will discuss a return to conventional council-based working with the employee and will confirm the decision in writing. If this is not possible, other options will have to be considered (e.g another work base, or redeployment).
- Monitor the extent of ad hoc home working and if necessary formalise arrangements.

## **7. What equipment and facilities are required for homeworking?**

For regular home working, employees should ideally have somewhere that can be properly set up as their office working area – whilst this does not need to be a separate room, the space must be large enough to provide sufficient space for working. The work area should have adequate lighting, heating and ventilation and ideally have an opening window. The line manager should complete the Equipment checklist (Appendix 3)

For employees who work from home on an ad hoc basis, it is not necessary to have a dedicated room or space set aside for work but a safe environment is important. See Health and Safety checklists for home working and DSE use.

## 8. Who meets the costs of providing equipment and/or furniture for home working?

This will vary depending on the circumstances. If UDC asks an employee to work from home, employees will be fully consulted about the arrangements and supplied by UDC with any equipment that is necessary for their work, including storage cabinet (s) if required and a desk and chair if the employee does not already have suitable furniture. Where home working is a reasonable adjustment for an employee, UDC is responsible for funding any required furniture and/or equipment – but funding may be available via Access to Work. Where necessary for the employee to carry out their role, Access to Work will assess and fund (in line with usual guidelines) both work and home-based workstations.

The employee's service area will pay for the cost of any agreed equipment and furniture required for permanent home working which is initiated by UDC as a business requirement. Whilst there is an upfront cost, this may be viewed as "invest to save" as such costs can provide long-term savings to UDC that may outweigh the on-going cost of providing Council accommodation and dedicated office workstations.

## 9. What does UDC provide in terms of IT equipment and telecoms/Internet access?

The manager and employee will need to discuss between them exactly what is required - e.g. computer, telephone line, broadband, access to UDC's IT network etc in order for the employee to do their work effectively from home. Managers will need to assess the business case for any investment required to facilitate home or mobile working and service areas must fund the purchase of any new requirements.

For home workers, if it is a requirement of the job, UDC will pay for necessary IT equipment including computer and mobile phone. The Equipment Checklist (Appendix 3) must be completed at this time.

IT equipment – IT equipment will be supplied by UDC and remains UDC property. It is your responsibility to take reasonable care of the equipment. All UDC equipment should be used only by yourself (not friends or family) for work purposes in line with current policy. Encryption and information security policy must be applied (see link) [http://contman2/uttlesford\\_intranet/file/PPN%2063%20\\_D\\_%20-%20%20IT%20Acceptable%20Use%20Policy%20\\_COCO\\_.pdf](http://contman2/uttlesford_intranet/file/PPN%2063%20_D_%20-%20%20IT%20Acceptable%20Use%20Policy%20_COCO_.pdf), as in the workplace. Unauthorised software must not be installed on UDC computers. Call or email the UDC Helpdesk for IT support. If your equipment breaks down and this cannot be resolved within 2.5 hours, unless non-IT based work is available, you should move to a UDC hot desk to work. If this is impractical, then the time must be taken as holiday or flex.

Most home workers will need a permanent workstation at home or, if provided with a laptop, a docking station, screen and keyboard and access to UDC's IT network.

## 10. What about security of Council information?

Employees are responsible for the safeguarding and security of Council information, following UDC's policies on acceptable use of IT.

Security and confidentiality – all work carried out from home is subject to UDC policy on security [http://contman2/uttlesford\\_intranet/file/PPN%2063%20\\_D\\_%20-%20%20IT%20Acceptable%20Use%20Policy%20\\_COCO\\_.pdf](http://contman2/uttlesford_intranet/file/PPN%2063%20_D_%20-%20%20IT%20Acceptable%20Use%20Policy%20_COCO_.pdf), confidentiality, information governance and record management. Any confidential material including paperwork must be locked away when not in use; confidential paperwork must be shredded and disposed of.

## 11. Will UDC reimburse Travel Costs incurred through home working?

Travel / mileage – travel / mileage is claimed in the usual way – speak to your line manager and /or refer to the Excess Travelling Time and Expenses Policy see HRP 9 Guide 1.

## 12. Does UDC's insurance cover home working?

UDC's insurance covers all employees working from home, subject to a risk assessment of their working environment to ensure all health and safety requirements are met. Council equipment held at an employee's home for the purpose of carrying out work for UDC is also insured by UDC. Business meetings with non-Council employees (for example; contractors, suppliers) must not be held at home.

Managers must check that home workers complete the Health and Safety Self Assessment and review their DSE Workstation Risk Assessment annually.

Employees are advised to inform their household insurers and landlord or mortgage company that they work from home and model letters have been prepared for employees to use, which is available from UDC HR Admin.

## 13. How should a home worker report sickness absence?

UDC's normal arrangements apply for reporting any sickness. The manager must be notified on the day in question and a return-to-work interview will be conducted when the home worker is fit to work again, either by telephone or face-to-face. ***Any emergency situations preventing work should be communicated to the manager as soon as possible.***

## 14. What if an employee or manager wants to change a home working arrangement?

As an agreement for an employee to work at home on a permanent basis may involve both UDC and /or the employee in significant cost, and may also mean permanent changes in office arrangements, an employee has no automatic right to alter or end

the home working arrangement once any trial period has been successfully completed.

Equally, UDC has no automatic right to alter or end the arrangement without proper notice (with the exception of justifiable operational needs, performance or disciplinary action).

Any alterations will need to be discussed and a mutually acceptable arrangement arrived at, with at least one month's notice of the wish to make the change, unless Occupational Health or other legal recommendations apply. For example, if an employee is thinking of, or is about to move house, it makes sense for a decision on a request to work from home to wait until the move has happened. Or, if a house move becomes necessary once an arrangement has been put in place, the employee should give their manager as much notice as possible and the continuation of home working will be subject to the location and facilities of the new accommodation being acceptable to UDC – business travel and mileage claims policy and guidance must be taken into account.

Where home working is agreed as an adjustment for a disabled employee, the arrangement's continued benefit and reasonableness needs to be considered, as required by law.

Open and early dialogue between employee and manager together with regular review discussions about the home working arrangement are encouraged at all times.

#### **15. How will employees be managed while working on their own or without direct supervision?**

Sometimes home workers find it difficult to adapt to working with limited social contact, while others find it hard to separate their work from their home life or to manage their time.

It is important for managers to consider the competence of the employee in areas such as time management and self management when deciding whether home working is appropriate for them. Managers should regularly monitor the home worker's performance and check how they are coping with the home working environment.

The law on rest breaks and health and safety applies as for office-based roles. See the Home Working – Risk Assessment Safety Checklist. (Appendix 4)

Entry to your home – you will need to allow reasonable access to UDC personnel when / if required. Visits will be arranged with giving suitable notice.

#### **16. What training should a home worker attend?**

Home working employees would be expected to attend any planned work-related training whether it be for development or change in practice purposes. If these sessions are to be held at an office location, the employee would be expected to attend the session at their manager's request.

Home working employees would also be expected to complete all of the training specified in the Home Worker Risk Assessment Safety Checklist (Appendix 4).

## 17. How should working hours be recorded?

Working hours and records – you must take regular breaks and use the flexi spreadsheet or other suitable electronic format to record your working hours. The requirement for council employees to take a minimum of 30 minutes' lunch break exceeds (but overrides) the Working Time Regulation (WTR). The authority advocates that a minimum of 30 minutes lunch break **must** be recorded as part of the day's calculations on all occasions when 6 hours or more are worked. Adolescent workers (i.e. those over the minimum school leaving age but under 18) must take a break of 30 minutes when more than 4½ hours are worked). Normal working pattern and availability for taking calls, etc will be agreed with your manager. Raise any concerns with your manager as you usually would. If you find over a period of time that on average more than 40% of the work - two days' a week if you are a full-time employees - is done at one other single location, this must become the new designated administrative base, under HMRC tax regulations.

## 18. Can I work from a different country?

Yes, this is possible for some people depending on their role and individual circumstances and would normally be on a short-term basis. We appreciate that it can be costly to travel abroad, and some staff may want to spend more than the normal 2 weeks abroad, especially those visiting family, but can be restricted on the time allowed to be away from work due to service delivery needs. When considering a request to work abroad, as well as the points already raised in this document the manager and employee must also consider the following before a request can be granted;

- Can the employee deliver the service at the appropriate time? Consideration needs to be given to the time difference and working arrangements. Currently, we have restrictions on accessing some data abroad, such as Department of Works & Pensions (DWP), so staff with access to such data either directly or indirectly via Uttlesford's Benefits department may not be permitted to work abroad currently but we are looking into this.
- Will some of the employee's duties be affected such as site visits/attending face to face meetings and can the service accommodate these?
- Will their absence have a detrimental impact on the service? For instance, are they in a role which is a 'single point of failure'?
- Is there an appropriate secure internet connection and all the appropriate IT systems can be accessed to allow the employee to work seamlessly from that country? (seek advice from the IT manager) The employee will be permitted to take their council laptop abroad and although it is covered by our insurance policy no claim will be made for less than the value of the Council's excess of £1,000 and the equipment is not insured if the damage is due to the employee's negligence.

- Employees are covered by the council's employee liability insurance so they are able to give advice to the public and still be covered for employee liability as a result of the advice given
- Is there an adequate telephone reception that would allow the employee to work seamlessly from that country and which would not incur extra costs to UDC and our residents/clients when contacting the employee (seek advice from the IT Manager).
- Council data can only be stored on our secure network systems and not on the laptop. The laptop should only be used for business use and not for personal use.
- The council will not pay any costs that may be incurred to allow the employee to work from that country, such as increased mobile phone bill, internet connection charges – the employee will be required to meet these costs
- In the event that the employee is unable to work because of loss/stolen/broken equipment or no internet/phone connection etc then the employee will be required to take flexi/annual/unpaid leave to cover the period they are unable to work
- In the event that they are unwell then they should follow the normal sickness absence reporting process.
- The employee must provide their contact details such as the address where they are staying, their personal email address and mobile number
- During a pandemic such as Covid-19 the government's advice on travel arrangements must be adhered to such as 'essential travel only' and 'quarantining' rules
- All requests must be approved by either an Director, Strategic Director or Chief Executive (depending on the role)

## Associated Documents

Designated homeworking:

Appendix 1 - [Flexible Working Application Form](#)

Appendix 2 - [Initial Assessment of Suitability for Permanent home working](#)

Appendix 3 – [Designated homeworking equipment list](#)

Appendix 4 – [Home Working – Risk Assessment Safety Checklist](#)

Appendix 5 – [Health and Safety Forms – refer to Health and Safety on Intranet](#)

[Letter 1: Confirmation of change to designated homeworking I \(available from UDC HR Admin\)](#)

[Letter 2: Agreement for Home working between UDC & employee \(available from UDC HR Admin\)](#)

[Letter 3: Model example from employee to Home Insurers \(available from UDC HR Admin\)](#)

[Letter 4: Model letter for landlord or mortgage provider re: Home Working \(available from UDC HR Admin\)](#)

HR Policies – [Flexible Working Policy \(HRP 18\)](#)

[Excess Travel Policy \(HRP 9\)](#)

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[Equality & Diversity Policy Guide 3 Advice & Funding for Reasonable Adjustments](#)

[ICT Information Security Policy](#)

## More information

The following provide access to a variety of helpful information on home and mobile working

- DTI Telework Guidance 2003 ([www.dti.gov.uk](http://www.dti.gov.uk))
- [IOSH H&S in Teleworking guidance](#)
- National Unison Homeworking and Teleworking Negotiators' Guide ([www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk))
- HSE Guidance on Homeworking ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) and look under the alphabetical listing for Homeworking)
- ACAS guidance on flexible working ([www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk))

Employers Forum on Disability **Telephone** 020 7403 3020

**Fax:** 020 7403 0404

Minicom: 0207 4030 040

**Email:** [website.enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk](mailto:website.enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk)

<http://www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/index.htm>

## Legal Context

Employment Act 2002

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

Data Protection Act 1995

Equality Act 2010

**Can't find what you are looking for?**

- For more information contact HR Admin 01799 510424 / 409 /318
- Email: [humanresources@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:humanresources@uttlesford.gov.uk)
- IT Helpdesk – 01799 510412