



West Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue Service

## Home Working Policy (Green & Grey)

### **OFFICIAL**

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## 1 Introduction

Home working should be regarded as an alternative way of working in relation to specific circumstances.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) recognise that home working can bring advantages both to the employee and to the organisation.

WYFRS is committed to promoting a flexible workforce that enables employees to balance their home and work commitments. Clearly not all roles and/or employees will be suitable for home working, consequently each situation will be considered on its merits.

For the purposes of this Policy a distinction is made between members of staff who have (or wish to apply for) a formalised agreement with their line manager to work from home on a permanent basis (home workers), and those who work from home on an occasional basis without a formalised agreement (short term home workers).

Home workers are employees of WYFRS and therefore will be managed in the same manner as other workers. Being a home worker will not prohibit or disadvantage the employee from applying for other posts in WYFRS. Where existing home workers are appointed to a new post, the home working arrangements will be reviewed as part of the appointment

All agreements to work from home are made on a voluntary basis unless otherwise negotiated with an individual employee.

For the avoidance of doubt, approval for home working, either permanent or short term/occasional, can only be given by the appropriate Area Manager/Executive Officer. Line Managers wishing to approve these working conditions must consult with their Area Manager/Executive Officer before any agreement is given to the employee concerned. In addition, Area Managers/Executive Officers will regularly review any agreement which has been given for home working to ensure the effectiveness/efficiency of the arrangement and may, following consultation with the individual, remove that agreement.

### 1.1 Scope

Eligibility for home working, whether permanent or short term, is not affected by the employee's normal work location, grade/role or normal working hours. However employees wishing to work from home on a permanent basis would be required to work agreed hours for insurance purposes. Short term home workers may only accrue maximum hours of a standard working day as appropriate to their contract of employment.

There are many different reasons why people might want to work from home. Line managers should give priority to those employees who need to work from home, for example, they may have become disabled/injured, which makes attendance in an office on a daily basis difficult, or they may have emergency childcare or other caring responsibilities which mean they have to spend a short period of time at home.

## 2 Suitability for Short Term Homeworking

Where an employee considers that the performance of a specific task would be carried out more effectively from home, they can request authorisation from their line manager.

Many tasks may be considered for short term home working, although not every employee undertakes work that is suitable to be carried out at home.

There should be clear objectives and measurable outputs (e.g. the production of reports, drafting of policies, project work etc.) in order to determine the timescales associated with the task.

The line manager must make a judgement regarding which tasks are appropriate, taking into account the following:

The work requires long periods of uninterrupted quiet

- The nature of the task should not be dependent upon direct supervision for the duration of the home working
- The work does not involve significant amounts of communication between the employee and other parties. Additionally, arrangements must be made to ensure there is effective communication between the employee's home and their normal workplace
- Arrangements must be made to ensure that any confidential information is protected and not disclosed.

The above considerations are not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive. The line manager retains discretion as to whether the tasks are suitable to be carried out at home.

### **3 Permanent Homeworking**

#### **3.1 Line Managers' Considerations**

When considering whether or not an employee is suitable to be allowed to work permanently from home all of the above considerations in relation to short term homeworking should be taken into account. In addition, line managers should also consider why the employee has made the request and how this would work in practice in relation to operational effectiveness.

There should be no impact on other members of staff, for example there should be no increase in workload for the remaining staff.

It is essential that the employee has the attributes needed to be able to work effectively away from their usual workplace. The line manager must be satisfied that the employee has the following:

- Good time management skills
- Self-motivation and discipline
- Decision making and problem solving skills
- The ability to work without direct supervision
- The ability to meet scheduled deadlines
- A suitable place to work at home
- An awareness of the health and safety implications of using the home as an appropriate working environment.
- The ability to communicate well both orally and in writing
- The ability to cope with reduced social contact and isolation
- The ability to demonstrate they have no dependant caring responsibilities within stated working hours.

Further guidance is available from Human Resources.

#### **3.2 Line Managers' Responsibilities**

Line managers should treat each application to work from home on its own merits and give it sympathetic and careful consideration, taking into account the practicalities with regard to the operational needs of the team and organisational requirements.

Line managers should consider the needs of the individual applying to work from home, including welfare. Consideration should be given to applications for home working from people with disabilities as this could be seen as being a 'reasonable adjustment' under the Equality Act 2010.

When considering suitability for working from home, the line manager should assess the sensitivity of the work to be undertaken from home and ensure that all necessary measures are in place to protect the information

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that they liaise with the employee and the Health and Safety department to ensure that a risk assessment has taken place, where appropriate, prior to any home working commencing.

An annual review of the risk assessment must be undertaken by the line manager and any electrical testing of equipment carried out. The results should be forwarded to the OHSU.

It is important that line managers agree set working hours with the employee. Before sanctioning any home working applications, they should contact the Corporate Human Resources Manager in order to discuss potential contractual implications. Line managers will need to discuss potential contractual changes relating to the facilitation of home working.

Employees should be supplied with clear written information detailing the expectations WYFRS has of them and what the employee can expect in return. This information should detail to whom the employee reports, working hours, contact and communications information, requirements to attend meetings and all other relevant information in order to ensure that the operation of home working works smoothly for both parties. Any travel commitments will be paid for as per the current policy

There will be a trial period of 3 months where there will be no permanent change to the employee's contract. During this period, there will be regular reviews at intervals as agreed by the two parties. If after the 3 month period both parties are satisfied with the home working arrangements then a permanent change will be made to the employee's contract of employment.

### **3.3 Employee Responsibilities**

- Where the homeworking arrangement is permanent, the employee must complete a quarterly checklist relating to the condition of any WYFRS supplied equipment and forward it to their line manager.
- An employee working at home must inform their manager as soon as possible in the event of accidents, incidents or dangerous occurrences.
- The employee should work safely and comply with any control measures identified in the risk assessment.
- The line manager should be informed if the home-worker becomes pregnant and refer to the Maternity Policy. This is to ensure compliance with Health and Safety legislation.
- If an employee working at home is sick, they must telephone the Central Staffing Team and their line manager in accordance with the usual absence reporting procedure.
- If the employee moves house, s/he must give reasonable notice to enable the Authority to move, reinstall equipment and lines etc.
- Homeworkers who wish to return to the traditional workplace must give four weeks written notice.
- If the Authority wishes to terminate the agreement then a minimum of 8 weeks written notice will be given and the employee will return with no loss of conditions of service.
- The employee should be aware that they may need to check issues such as their tax position, mortgage or tenancy agreement and insurance policies.

## 4 Equipment

WYFRS has a duty to home workers covered by the following acts and regulations. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, PUWER 1998 and the DSE Regulations 1992.

When working with VDUs, the employee's work station must be comfortable to avoid causing musculoskeletal problems, the screen should be free from glare and regular breaks must be taken to prevent tiredness. Further information can be obtained from the Health and Safety department and/or Occupational Health Unit.

WYFRS will provide any additional computer equipment/printers etc. to home workers and be responsible for the service and maintenance of supplied equipment. Home working employees may be able to use their own desk and chair subject to a risk assessment, otherwise this will be supplied. An application for home working will be refused if there is not sufficient space to accommodate the equipment.

There is an expected minimum standard of security, both physical and IT, dependant on the nature of the work to be undertaken. WYFRS will ensure that home workers have remote access to the Authority's computer network drives as required. If necessary a separate phone line may be installed. WYFRS will not pay for any additional costs incurred by employees using their home for work unless there is a statutory duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

In order to ensure that health and safety requirements are met, the Health and Safety Department will carry out a risk assessment of the employee's home working environment, using the checklist supplied in form HSW 9262. In the case of short term home working, the employee must complete a self-assessment using the checklist supplied by the OHSU. No home working can commence prior to these risk assessments being carried out and any necessary control measures being implemented. In addition no home working should commence until communication support arrangements are in place.

### 4.1 Security and confidentiality

The employee is required to confirm that they are able to maintain the security and confidentiality of documents within their home and comply with information security (details of which are available from ICT and the intranet) and data protection requirements (further details available from the Information Management Officer within Corporate Services).

### 4.2 8. Health & Safety

The Authority has a legal and moral duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees including those who work from home. The procedures and control measures required to ensure compliance with the Authority's duties are contained in Appendix 1. A distinction has been made between home workers and short term home workers.

Representative bodies will, on request be given access to any risk assessment and safety check information held for individual home workers. Representative bodies can, at the request of the homemaker visit their home for the purposes of carrying out health and safety related assessments. Trade Union representatives will be consulted on any Health and Safety issues relating to their members working at home and to represent home workers, as appropriate, in consultations with employers on health and safety matters.



## 5 Appendix 1

### 5.1 Summary of Health and Safety Requirements

#### General

Management should be aware of key legislation concerning homeworking. Health and safety legislation covers homeworkers as well as workplace-based employees and relevant law includes:

- Management of health and safety at work regulations 1999
- Display screen equipment regulations 1992
- Manual handling operations regulations 1998
- Reporting of injuries diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations 1995

In addition, the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 state that an employer must provide a supply of adequate First Aid provisions to homeworkers. Therefore a first aid kit will be provided to all employees who work from home on more than an ad-hoc basis. It must also be noted that Health and Safety inspectors have the right to visit homeworkers as well as carry out inspections in workplaces. Consideration must also be given to potential training needs such as first aid and fire safety.

Pregnant employees who work from home will be required to follow the conditions of the New & Expectant Mothers Policy in order to ensure their health and safety.

#### Home Workers

A 'home worker' is defined as a person who wishes to work from home on a permanent or near permanent basis.

Any such personnel must:

- Carry out an Initial Home Working Risk Assessment (HSW 9262) to determine the suitability of their proposed work area in the first instance.
- They must then submit the assessment to the H&S Department for their review.
- If the proposed work environment is deemed to be suitable for work the individual must submit a Home Working Application.
- If this is accepted then the Authority will provide all necessary equipment and fittings to enable the individual to work at home.

Once the equipment is in place and the work area has been finalised a representative from the H&S Department will visit the home to carry out a thorough assessment of the intended work area. This will include completion of:

- A 'Homeworking Hazard Checklist' (HSW 9263)
- A DSE assessment

Once completed they will be returned to their line manager with any comments for improvement where necessary.

**Thereafter:**

The individual must complete and return a quarterly 'Homeworking Hazard Checklist' (HSW 9263) to their Line Manager.

The line manager must review the arrangements and risk assessments on an annual basis to ensure that no changes have occurred.

**Short Term Home Workers**

Short Term Home Workers are defined as employees that carry out occasional work from home for short periods of time. Any such personnel that have the potential to carry out such work must be identified by the line manager and the home worker must complete a self-assessment by using the 'Home Working Hazard Checklist' (HSW 9263). This must be returned to the Line Manager and reviewed if any changes occur in the future.