

## **Home working Guidance (Revenues and Benefits Pilot)**

### **Assessment for Suitability**

Home working will not suit every type of job or every individual. In order for employees to participate in this home working pilot an assessment needs to be carried out, to consider the following:

- suitability of the job to the proposed arrangements
- cost effectiveness of home working
- suitability of the working environment
- specific needs of the individual employee
- Improved service to customers

### **Suitability of the job**

The first stage of the assessment needs to relate to the duties undertaken to ensure that the job is suitable for home working and should be conducted by the manager in consultation with the individual employee. It must be demonstrated that participating in this pilot will not be detrimental to the speed or quality of services provided or detrimental to the efficient working of the team.

### **Suitability of working environment**

A Home Worker Self Assessment Form will need to be undertaken within the first week of an employee working from home. Depending upon the nature of the proposed arrangements, this can involve a Health and Safety and insurance assessment of the employee's proposed home office.

### **Specific needs of individual employee**

The final part of the assessment for home working is to consider the specific needs of the individual employee. These will include practical matters such as layout of equipment, as well as issues such as tackling isolation and ensuring work does not disrupt home life outside of work hours.

### **Health and Safety**

Dacorum Borough Council has a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and this applies whether employees are working in a conventional office, at home or remotely. This general duty is qualified by the principle of "so far as is reasonably practicable." In other words, the degree of risk in a particular job or workplace needs to be balanced against time, trouble, cost and physical difficulty of taking measures to avoid or reduce the risk.

In the case of home working, employees need to take a high level of personal responsibility for the safety aspect of home working.

There are critical areas to consider when complying with health and safety legislation and managing risks to home workers. These include but are not limited to:

Health, Safety & Welfare  
Accident Reporting  
Display Screen Equipment /DSE  
Electrical Risks

Information, Instruction and Training  
Manual Handling  
New and Expectant Mothers  
Noise  
Personal Protective Equipment  
Substances Hazardous to Health  
Work Equipment

## **Health and Safety Requirements - Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Managers**

In considering each proposal of home working, managers will:

- make all necessary enquiries in consultation with the employee to ensure that there are no health issues which could result in risk to the employee's well-being from working alone.
- seek advice from The Council's Corporate Health and Safety Officer should there be any doubt about the safety of the home office. This will be evident from the Home worker self assessment form.
- ensure that the employee has returned the completed and signed Home worker self assessment form.

If managers are in doubt over the suitability of home working it may be necessary for the manager and/or the Corporate Health and Safety Officer to arrange a visit to the home to ensure that safe conditions are maintained. If a home visit is necessary reasonable notice will be given. Once home working has been approved, managers will:

- establish procedures to be followed in case of emergency
- ensure that a suitable workstation is set up with appropriate equipment and furniture giving special attention to ergonomic issues.
- ensure that adequate general inspections of the workplace and equipment are carried out (where necessary) and that the appropriate maintenance regime is agreed and established
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that adequate rest and meal breaks are taken, and work does not extend beyond the agreed hours
- ensure that a review of the self assessment is made whenever there is a significant change in home working employees' personal or family circumstances and/or changes in the work/home office/work environment.
- establish specific procedures for adequate office / manager contact
- ensure that the home-worker has access to adequate first aid provisions. It is the responsibility of employees to keep this replenished. Managers should also ensure that home-workers know the procedure for reporting an accident at work, and that employees working from home are aware of the importance of reporting any incidents to ensure compliance under the RIDDOR Regulations 1995.

## **Employees**

Home working employees must:-

- complete and return the home-worker self assessment form to the manager and provide any other necessary information
- Complete a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment form and return to manager
- report to the manager any problems or potential problems, with regards to the safety of work equipment, the place of work, or the system of work
- carry out a visual check of both the equipment and the place of work as often as the work area is altered
- take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised access to the work or work equipment
- advise the manager if work time is likely to significantly extend beyond the agreed period
- report any accidents which occur during their agreed working hours
- report any health problems or illnesses which may be attributable to, or aggravated by, their working conditions.
- notify their own insurance company (or their landlord's insurance company) of their plans to work at/from home to avoid invalidating the household insurance policy.

Home workers, like all employees, must take care of their own safety and that of anyone who may be affected by their working at home. Additionally, home workers are responsible for the safety of the premises used for home working. Further guidance can be accessed by contacting the Corporate Health & Safety Officer [helen.price@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:helen.price@dacorum.gov.uk) 01442 228518 x2518

## **Allocation of ICT equipment**

### **Fault reporting**

Where electrical equipment develops a fault, the employee must notify their manager and ICT as soon as reasonably practical. Where the fault relates to a piece of portable mobile equipment (e.g. laptop computer) and it cannot be rectified over the telephone, the employee is responsible for making arrangements for transporting such equipment to the Council's office for repair. Faults to larger pieces of equipment (e.g. PC) will be diagnosed via a visit from an ICT specialist from the Council. Employees will be required, upon reasonable notice, to allow the Council access to their premises to repair equipment or rectify faults. The Council's ICT Specialists will be required to show clear identification when arriving at an employees home.

### **Other considerations**

Before undertaking any home working arrangement employees must confirm in writing that they've read the Corporate ICT guidelines relating to mobile or home working. If the home worker moves home, the transfer of the Council's ICT equipment will be completed by or be supervised by a DBC ICT professional. Connections provided to and from the DBC network must be provided ICT. This is to prevent security breaches and ensure access to the Authority's network facilities is protected. Specific facilities in this regard have already been put in place and any

unauthorised connection could seriously compromise the security of the whole network and the services provided on it.

### **Telephone**

There will be various telephone options trialled under this pilot, which will help the Council shape the future policy/procedure on home working. Your manager will advise you on which method you will be using.

### **Insurance**

The Council's insurances will continue to operate as if the employee was physically based at Council offices. The employee must make all reasonable efforts to ensure the Council's equipment is secure and safe. Council equipment must not be left in unattended vehicles, as there is no cover for theft in such circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the employee to notify their own insurance company (or their landlord's insurance company) of their plans to work at/from home to avoid invalidating the household insurance policy. Occasional, ad-hoc days of working at home will not usually increase the cost of a household insurance policy. Any increase in cost of household insurance will not be reimbursed by the Council.

### **Security of Equipment and Information**

#### **Security**

Before being authorised to work from home, the employee must read and sign acceptance of the policies;

- DBC700 IS – Remote and Home Working Policy
- DBC170 IS –Government Connect GCsx Acceptable Usage Policy (For staff accessing RESTRICTED information)
- DBC010 IS – Corporate Information Technology Security Policy

Staff must also familiarise themselves with DBC '999' Incident Reporting procedure

An assessment is required to consider security measures for the purposes of the protection of computer and other equipment, as well as electronic data and manual data held and used in the home office. This will occur as part of the initial Home-worker self assessment and will continue to take place regularly.

The employee must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the Council equipment as they would their own property. The employee is responsible for bringing to the Council's attention any material changes to security measures at their home to enable a further inspection to occur. Council equipment that is put in an employee's home will be detailed on the corporate asset management system.

Council owned equipment must be encrypted and employ the use of dual factor authentication, to a remote gateway on which the Councils applications are served. Save for the session, information will not be stored on the device.

Portable computer devices should be switched off, logged off, or the keyboard locked when left unattended, even if only for a few minutes.

If a USB stick is to be used for non-confidential or restricted information, the USB stick MUST be encrypted.

If a user is using their own device, for non-confidential or non-restricted information access, the computer must have anti-virus installed and current, anti-malware installed and current, a software firewall installed and current.

The council owned devices and / or the users own equipment must be scanned for vulnerabilities on a weekly basis.

Council owned and/or the users own equipment, must have the latest Microsoft and other vendor patches applied.

Network and Application passwords must not be written down or disclosed to other family members.

Mobile phones used for work must be secured with PIN and / or other mechanisms

### **Data protection**

Employees working at home must comply with the Data Protection Act and be compliant with the Council's policies and procedures as they would if they were working in a council office. In order to ensure that the council's confidential data is secure and safe while at home employees must ensure that:

- All confidential electronic data is protected by a password / authentication mechanisms.
- All employees authorised to work from home must read and sign acceptance of the Data Protection Act 1998 Policy (DBC 100 IM)
- All confidential paper data is secured in a locked cabinet or case, when not in use (this will be provided by the Council where necessary)
- Confidential waste will need to be disposed of by the incinerator service provided by the Council.
- Confidential / Restricted information must be transmitted using a secure email account (GCSX / Gsi)
- Personal information will NOT be stored on the users home computer or the Council owned laptop.
- Personal Information must only be used for the purpose it was collected.
- Remember that all Council information may be disclosed under Data Protection or Freedom of Information Acts.

## **Management Issues**

### **Setting targets**

The Manager and employee need to set mutually agreed targets so the employee has a clear idea as to what is expected of him/her when working at home. The manager needs to ensure the employee is meeting the targets through the normal performance management process.

### **Sickness**

If an employee is ill on a day that s/he should be working at home, s/he must inform his/her line manager by telephone in accordance with the Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure.

### **Hours worked**

The hours worked should fall within the Council's contractual core hours unless otherwise agreed with the manager. Home workers must notify their team by telephone or e-mail if they are away from their home office for any reason and must keep their electronic diary up-to-date. Home workers must not be contacted at home outside of their normal office hours, unless mutually agreed.

### **Trial period/regular reviews**

The pilot will last for a period of six months (ends 31/12/2012). However there will be regular reviews on the arrangements to ensure that it is working satisfactory for the service and the employee. Problems may result in the home working arrangement being withdrawn temporarily or permanently.

### **Regular contact**

The manager must define how often home workers must attend and contact the office via phone or e-mail. Managers must be in contact with home workers at least once a week to monitor and provide feedback on work undertaken.

The home worker should use the Microsoft Outlook calendar system where available so that the manager and colleagues have access to their diary at all times.

### **Team meetings**

It is important that employees who work at home attend team meetings as normal. The team should try to organise meetings when everyone would be working in the office. There should also be informal meetings with the team and other opportunities to maintain regular contact through telephone and e-mail.

### **Post - in/out**

The home worker must make arrangements with their manager to collect and send work related post.

### **Hot Desks**

There will be a dedicated area at the Civic Centre for employees who are predominantly working from home to connect their laptops so that they can occasionally work in the office. This area will require a 'clear desk' policy, to enable user flexibility.

## **Printing**

Home workers will need to send printing to an MFD which office based staff can access.

## **Working Time Directive**

Home-working employees are expected to comply with the Working Time Directive. Managers should monitor hours worked to ensure that they are not excessive and employees should ensure that they take regular breaks and not less than half an hour in any full day shift.

## **Training**

It is recommended that managers attend a course to understand the principles of effective management within the home working environment.

## **Contractual Variations**

All employees who will be participating on this flexible working pilot will receive a letter confirming temporary changes to terms and conditions. However, managers reserve the right as well as employees to terminate the working arrangement with one weeks' notice.

## **Hours/times of work**

The Council's core working hours will still apply for this pilot. Flexi-time would apply to home workers and, like office-based employees, managers must agree in advance that it is appropriate for flexi-time to be taken. Time will be recorded in the normal manner.

## **Return of Council's property**

The Council's property must be returned when the employee's home working arrangement or employment terminates. Management will arrange for any equipment to be collected at a mutually agreed time. This will take place either before the termination of contract or within a week of this date.

## **Termination of home working agreement**

Under the terms of this pilot, the period of notice required to terminate the home working agreement is one week on either side. There must be valid reasons, by employee or manager, as to why the arrangement needs to be terminated.

In operational emergencies e.g. lack of cover to meet service requirements the home working arrangement may be suspended or terminated after consultation with the employee with immediate effect. In the case of poor performance, the home working arrangement may also be suspended or terminated with immediate effect.

## **Travelling**

When employees need to travel into the Council Offices, mileage will not be reimbursed. For meetings/conferences away from Council offices, mileage will be reimbursed in the normal manner.

## **Consent to enter employees' premises**

The employee must give the Council the right to access their domestic premises, with reasonable notice, to check that electronic and other equipment is safe and

functioning properly, to undertake periodic health and safety inspections, to repair equipment or rectify faults or to retrieve Council property and records if it needs to be replaced or returned to the Council. If this is refused the Council reserves the right to terminate the home working arrangement.

### **Heating and Lighting**

Office heating and lighting costs for the home are not paid by the Council, however, there may be tax deductions for these that employees can take advantage of. Please check the HMRC web site for more information on [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk) or contact your local tax office for more information.

### **Broadband**

There will be no re-imbusement for Broadband costs under the Pilot.