

31. How to Manage Homeworking

1 OVERVIEW

You may wish to offer homeworking to employees as an alternative workplace arrangement to an office. Employees may work entirely at home or split their work activities between their home and the workplace, depending on the arrangements agreed with you.

Technology has evolved to enable employees to work from remote locations, which can improve service response and assist employees in achieving work life balance. Therefore, it is recognised that offering homeworking can benefit both the employer and employee.

If you decide to exclude certain positions from homeworking because you deem them unsuitable, ensure that any criteria and qualities you apply are non-discriminatory.

2 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Legal obligations in the context of homeworking mainly focus on health and safety law. You must ensure that your safe employee working practices continue while the employee is working from home.

The employee also has responsibilities regarding health and safety and these should be clarified with the employee.

3 KEY POINTS

If an employee wishes to request to work from home for all of part of their working time, you should outline the process in one of your employment policies, such as your Health and Safety policy.

You will need to discuss with your employee what hours they will work while at home and whether there will be any constraints around this.

You should also remind employees about confidentiality and data protection and that they are responsible for the security of work-related data while they are working at home.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

When recruiting into a job that will involve homeworking, you should assess whether candidates have the necessary skills and qualities. These include:

- self-discipline
- the ability to work without direct supervision
- organisational skills
- effective time management ability
- effective communication skills
- an ability to cope with potentially conflicting demands between work and home/family.

Employers are under a duty to take care of the health, safety and welfare of homeworkers in the same way as for employees working on the employer's premises.

- Ensure that the worker's home environment is suitable for homeworking and as hazard free as possible.
- Depending on the type of work involved, the homeworker may have to be trained in the handling of any equipment and materials that form part of the job.
- If the work involves using a computer, provide the homeworker with written guidelines and procedures for the use of visual display equipment and require the homeworker to sign a copy of the guidelines, confirming that he or she has read, understood and agreed to them.
- Consider whether any furniture, tools and equipment needed for the work should be provided by the employer or the homeworker.
- If the equipment is provided and paid for by the employer, then they will be in a position to determine how it is used and set down rules or restrictions regarding its use.
- Check your insurance policies (eg employers' liability insurance) to make sure that the necessary cover is in place for employees who work at home.
- If the homeworker's job involves dealing with confidential or sensitive information, take appropriate steps to ensure that all working arrangements are secure and any documentation to be held in the home will not be subject to breaches of confidentiality.
- If the homeworker is likely to obtain personal information about individuals in the course of their work, you should ensure he or she is trained in Data Protection, the General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act.
- It may be appropriate to agree with the homeworker set times when he/she will be available so that contact can be made by email/telephone. You may also agree how often the homeworker is required to attend the main workplace for meetings etc.

5 NEXT STEPS

- Consider whether any of the jobs your employees hold would be suitable for homeworking.
- Decide what your rules are going to be around homeworking and make sure these are clearly documented.
- Ensure that you understand your obligations as an employer extend to homeworkers, in terms of safe working practices.

6 FACTSHEETS TO HELP

- Promoting an equal opportunities workplace and avoiding discrimination
- Employee Benefits Package
- Guidance on Family Friendly Policies
- Health and Safety in the Workplace

7 FOR MORE ADVICE AND INFORMATION

ACAS - (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. www.acas.org.uk

Achieve in Bath & North East Somerset - free recruitment support, advice and help. Matching job seekers, employers and course providers to help employers recruit, train and retain employees. www.achieveinbathnes.co.uk

Future Bright - free help & support for businesses and employees to realise their full potential. Provide access to training and development, workshops and networking. HR support to promote career progression and best practice to attract and retain staff. www.futurebright.org.uk

***Bibliography** - this fact sheet was produced by Rathbone HR Solutions in association with Cool Ventures Ltd in December 2018 with content sourced from; HR Inform (www.hr-inform.co.uk), ACAS (www.acas.org.uk), CIPD (www.cipd.co.uk), the pensions regulator (www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/employers), HMRC (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs), the Information Commissioner's Officer website (www.ico.org.uk)*



Created for Future Bright by Cool Ventures - Business Support in Bath, Bristol, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and throughout South West England www.coolventures.co.uk