



UWU Model Homeworking Policy



1. INTRODUCTION

Homeworking has been recognised nationally and internationally as a positive and environmentally friendly system of employment, and has also been recognised as just one of a range of flexible working arrangements that employers and employees can consider.

The UWU takes the view that homeworking and remote working should be seen as a benefit to any union as an organisation. This is because not only do homeworking and remote working lead to an increase in productivity and better performance; there are significant cost benefits and environmental benefits as well. Less travel is undertaken, meaning both that more time is available to work and less costs incurred, and work life balance is also improved; this can have positive effects on both physical and mental health.

Homeworking supports many unions' environmental objectives by reducing unnecessary car travel, freeing up office accommodation and helps in attracting and retaining staff by providing alternative methods of working.

This recommended Policy is intended to provide a measure of consistency in the introduction of homeworking across unions. This document provides guidance for employees and managers, where the use of homeworking is being considered, and protection of employees and managers, where homeworking is to be introduced.

The Health and Safety aspects of homeworking are described in section 4 of this policy and must be implemented for any employee who will be working from home.



2. DEFINITIONS OF HOMEWORKING

2.1 Occasional homeworking

Employees occasionally work at home, typically on an ad hoc basis where necessary, appropriate or convenient.

2.2 Partial homeworking

An agreed arrangement for homeworking has been made between an employee and management to work from home for part of the working week. For example:

- This may include working mornings or afternoons in the office and the rest of the working day at home;
- Or working 1, 2, 3 or 4 days at home each week.

2.3 Full homeworking

An agreed arrangement for homeworking has been made between an employee and management to work from for the entirety of the working week.

Under this scenario the employee would only come to the office if and when it was deemed necessary by them (in the event that they need to work closely with colleagues for example) or when reasonably required by their line manager (e.g. team meetings if not possible via video link).



3. ASSESSMENT FOR SUITABILITY

3.1 Assessment

In order for homeworking to be adopted an assessment needs to be carried out to consider the suitability of the job to the proposed arrangements.

3.2 Suitability of the job

The assessment should relate to the duties undertaken and should be conducted by the employer in consultation with the individual employee or group of employees concerned and trade union(s).



4. HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS OF HOMEWORKING

4.1 Responsibilities of [nominated officers]

[Nominated Officers] will ensure that;

- all activities are covered by suitable and sufficient risk assessments
- employees receive adequate training for the duties which they undertake
- managers and employees adhere to the Health and Safety arrangements described in this document
- Reports and monitoring should be considered by the relevant Health and Safety Committee and, where relevant, the JNC

4.2 Responsibilities of managers

In considering each proposal of homeworking, and before the work is permitted to start, managers **will**:

- make all necessary enquiries in consultation with the employee and, if necessary, with Occupational Health Service. If there is any doubt about the safety of the home office advice should be sought from a safety advisor
- ensure that the employee has returned the completed and signed risk assessment checklist

This will be a two part process:

1. The employee will need to complete the risk assessment checklist.
2. The manager will then discuss this with the employee and complete the management section of the form.

The employer will need to decide whether the conditions are acceptable in the light of this information.

Managers must also set up safe systems of work and ensure that:

- an adequate written description of the work activity is provided to the employee.
- employees do not undertake duties for which they have not been trained.



- employees are provided with adequate information, instruction and training on Health and Safety issues relating to the type of work being carried out eg. display screen equipment
- all necessary management actions arising from the risk assessments are completed.

there are suitable measures to monitor the well-being of homeworkers working alone away from home eg. phone contact/e-mail.

Once homeworking has been approved, managers **will**:

- establish procedures to be followed in case of emergency
- respond as appropriate to issues raised by employees and trade union safety representatives
- 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 risk assessment is made whenever there is a significant change in homeworking employees' circumstances.
- establish specific procedures for adequate office / supervisor contact by telephone or e-mail to include monitoring of the well-being of the employee and reporting of injuries and incidents
- ensuring regular and timely feedback and reports to the health and safety committee and appropriate consultation/negotiation committees within the union

4.3 Responsibilities of Employees

Homeworking employees **must**:

- attend any designated training
- accurately complete and return the risk assessment checklist form to the manager and provide any other necessary information
- report to manager any problems or potential problems, with regards to the safety of work equipment, the place of work, or the system of work
- Co-operate with any measures which are introduced to establish a safe system of work
- work within the parameters of the working time directive i.e. take breaks away from the workstation
- carry out a visual check of both the equipment and the place of work every three months or as often as the work area is altered or re-setup and report faults or dangerous conditions to line management without delay



- take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised access to work or work equipment
- 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.

Homeworkers, like all employees, must take care of their own safety and that of anyone who may be affected by their working at home. Additionally, homeworkers are responsible for the safety of the premises used for homeworking.



5. REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES, PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

5.1 Financial considerations

Appropriate equipment will be provided by the union for homeworking. The level of provision will vary according to each job and how much of it is performed at home.

Appendix B sets out what costs, charges and provision should be borne by the union depending upon the particular homeworking arrangement entered into:

Expenses for part-time, reduced hours and job-share workers are available on a pro rata basis.

5.2 Telephone provision

Where it is considered appropriate for the employee to have a business line the relevant manager and the IT department must be involved before a business phone is agreed. This can take the form of a mobile phone.

Employees are entitled to a refund of business calls on receipt of an expenses claim form where no business line has been provided.

5.3 Supply of equipment

Where employees are provided with equipment and supplies they are responsible for the ordering and collection of such supplies from the office where it is reasonable and with due regard to manual handling issues.

5.4 Faults

Where electrical equipment develops a fault the employee must notify their managers as soon as reasonably practicable. Where the fault relates to a piece of portable mobile equipment (e.g. laptop computer) and it cannot be rectified over the telephone, the union is responsible for making arrangements with the employee for transporting such equipment to the union for diagnosis and/or repair.



6. PROVISION, ACCESS AND SUPPORT

The frequency of homeworking, and the nature of the duties undertaken, will normally dictate the level of IT provisions, access and support required by an employee. When determining what provisions an employee requires, managers should look at what is reasonable given the nature of the job.

6.1 Occasional homeworking

Employees who require use of a computer when doing homeworking on an occasional or ad hoc basis will use union systems at all times given GDPR requirements.

Employees must consider the security issues of sending sensitive information via the internet. Employees will need to be conversant with GDPR and Data Protection principles.

6.2 Partial and full homeworking

Employees who require use of a computer and access to union systems in order to perform the duties of their job will (depending on the circumstances of each case) be provided with all necessary equipment in order to enable them to discharge their duties fully.

6.3 Other considerations

Employees must use union systems if they need union network access and IT support.

If the homeworker moves home the employee must ensure that the transfer of union IT equipment is done in a safe and secure manner.

Connections provided to and from the union IT network must be provided via the IT department. This is to prevent security breaches and ensure access to the union 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.



7. INSURANCE

The Union will provide insurance cover for employees and for the equipment it has supplied to an employee for homeworking. The employee must make all reasonable efforts to ensure the union's equipment is secure and safe.

The risk assessment checklist in Appendix C includes aspects of home security.

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.



8. SECURITY OF EQUIPMENT AND INFORMATION

8.1 Security

- An assessment is required to consider security measures for the purposes of the protection of computer and other equipment, electronic data and manual data held and used in the home office. This will occur as part of the initial Health and Safety self-assessment and will continue to take place regularly.
- The employee must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of union equipment as they would their own property.
- Union equipment that is put in an employee's home will be detailed on a department inventory and will be tagged appropriately. A copy of this inventory will be signed by both the manager and employee.
- Employees should not remove tagging devices.

8.2 GDPR and Data protection

- The union is responsible for ensuring that all data connections into the union's computer network, local area networks or wide area networks are secure from hacking and from virus attack.

Employees working at home must comply with the GDPR/Data Protection Act and be compliant with union's data protection policy and procedures as they would if they were working in a union office.



9. MANAGEMENT ISSUES

9.1 Management monitoring procedures

i) Management support

The employees manager will monitor how the employee is progressing in regard to quality and quantity of work and if they need any assistance, training and/or support.

ii) Sickness

If an employee is ill on a day that s/he should be working at home, they must inform their line manager by telephone and follow standard union sickness reporting procedures.

iii) Hours worked

- The times to be worked by the employee while at home must be agreed in advance if they are not in accordance with the employees' contractual hours or (agreed) flexible working hours. Colleagues, members and the manager need to know when they are contactable.
- The hours worked should fall within contractual hours unless otherwise agreed with the relevant manager.
- Homeworkers must complete time-sheets/flexi sheets in the same way as the rest of the team where these are relevant and in use within occupational grades.
- Homeworkers must keep their work calendar up to date and viewable by their line manager/other relevant team members.
- Any extra hours worked at home other than those falling within usual flexitime arrangements should be agreed in advance.

iv) Training and development

Employees working at home must have equal access to training and development as their team members. This will be in line with their regular Employee Development sessions, departmental requirements and relevant probationary requirements.

v) Trial period/regular reviews

- All employees and posts new to homeworking are subject to a minimum 12 week trial period (apart from exceptional circumstances) in order to ensure



that the homeworking arrangements operate satisfactorily for both management and home workers.

- New staff who are appointed on a homeworking basis should have a period of time based in the office before homeworking commences. This will allow them to familiarise themselves with their work and colleagues.
- The homeworking arrangements must be reviewed regularly (every 3 months). This must include health and safety considerations.

9.2 Communication procedures

i) Regular contact

- The manager must define how often homeworkers contact the office via phone or e-mail.
- Employees' home addresses must not be given out.
- The homeworker should use the union's calendar system where available so that the manager and colleagues have access to their diary at all times. They must also use a message taking facility if they are out of the home office.
- Managers should maintain contact with homeworkers to monitor and provide feedback on work undertaken.
- There must be arranged time when the team manager can be consulted by the employee.
- Managers may want to set up a 'buddy' relationship for the homeworker whereby team members keep one another informed of day to day happenings. This also helps to reduce the level of isolation and unreleased stress which some homeworkers may otherwise experience.
- Managers may also consider working together in establishing a 'support network' for homeworkers, where they can discuss and share issues pertinent to the changed working arrangements.
- Homeworkers must be kept up to date with union developments.

ii) Post - in/out

- The homeworker must make arrangements with management to collect and send work related post.
- The internal mail collection system will not apply to homeworkers.
- Receipts are required for any stamps used and money will be redeemed in line with usual petty cash arrangements.



10. CONTRACTUAL VARIATIONS

It is essential that homeworkers' terms and conditions of employment equate with those of workplace based employees. However, homeworkers may be subject to variations in conditions which will either form part of their contract of employment if homeworking is a permanent arrangement or be an addendum to the contract in the form of a letter if homeworking is on a temporary or trial basis.

The degree of homeworking and the arrangements made for equipment will usually dictate what terms need to be included. Variations of terms and conditions that may apply are as follows:

Workbase

It must be clearly stated where the employee will be based. This is important for travel claims.

Hours/times of work

These will be as set out in the employees' contract of employment, unless other arrangements are mutually agreed. 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. Employees and managers are reminded of the provisions of the Working Time Directive. Furthermore overtime will not be paid unless agreed in advance by the manager concerned.

Return of union property

The union's property must be returned when the employee's employment comes to an end. Management will arrange for any equipment to be collected at a mutually agreed time.

Homeworking Policy

Home workers must be fully aware of the contents of the Policy on Homeworking and agree to comply with the requirements of it, for example, those on Health and Safety, security of information and equipment, and communication with the workplace.



Union equipment and files

The employee will return electronic and other equipment, files or records belonging to the union if deemed necessary for the purpose of checking its function and safety, or for repair.

Meeting clients

Homeworkers must not use their own home for meetings with members, clients or colleagues.



11. APPEALS

As with all flexible working practices, homeworking is subject to the appeals process. Where no specific policy exists, the grievance procedure should be used.



12. ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

12.1 Relevant legislation and other documentation

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 as amended (1999)
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Employment Relations Act 1996

12.2 Policies

Homeworkers, as with employees based at any site, are in the employment of the union and, as such, are expected to work within the parameters of all policies.

12.3 HSE guidance including specific HSE Disability advice

HSE guidance Essentials of Health and Safety at Work. Homeworking - Guidance for employers and employees on health and safety. INDG226

Health and safety for disabled people and their employers
www.hse.gov.uk/disability/largeprint.pdf (2015)

Equality Act 2010 and associated guidance



Appendices

A - Employee self-assessment for homeworking

B - Costs of Homeworking/Reimbursement of Expenses

C - Risk assessment checklist