



Safety & Wellbeing Policy Arrangement

Section 37 - Health and Safety for Homeworking

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Further guidance on this matter can also be obtained from the safety team at healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk

Arrangement Section 37 – Health and Safety for Homeworking

Introduction

Since the introduction of flexible working, opportunities to work at home on behalf of North Lanarkshire Council continue to be explored by many employees. Even although the work takes place in an employee's home environment, the duties placed upon the employer by the Health and Safety at Work Act, and associated regulations, still apply.

Homeworking is the process of undertaking any work activity on behalf of the council within a home environment. This guidance should also be applied to other situations where work activity is being carried out in temporary accommodation that would not normally be considered a workplace.

This document is aimed at providing support to managers who are required to manage employees who participate in home working.

Guidance on specific situations can also be obtained from the Safety & Wellbeing Team email healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk

Details of a range of core topics now follow.

1. Legal Background

As has been outlined previously the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a duty on employers to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees including homeworkers. Many of the regulations made under the act also apply to the homeworking. In particular these include:

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
- The Display Screen Equipment Regulations
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations

The above list is not exhaustive and other regulations that may need to be considered include, The Health and Safety (Working Time) Regulations, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

It is also worth noting that working from home may affect your insurance cover. Homeworkers are responsible for making enquiries with their own insurance providers.

2. Risk Assessment

Any work activity requires to be risk assessed. Homeworking is no different. Any work activity that takes place must be the subject of a risk assessment. All managers must take steps to undertake a risk assessment of the work activity and put in place the control measures that are determined necessary by such an assessment.

If the general risk assessment identifies that there are some concerns regarding the proposed homework place these should be brought to the attention of the employee concerned and if necessary the homeworking activities delayed until the employee has been able to rectify the concerns and the working environment is considered to be of a reasonable standard.

Risk assessment information can be found within arrangement section 4 of the health and safety policy folder. Assistance on the risk assessment process can be obtained from Service based risk assessors contactable via the Service health and safety coordinator.

As part of the risk assessment process employees are instructed to complete the Homeworking Self Assessment Form.

3. Council Guidance Documents

The risk assessment process may well highlight specific health and safety concerns about the work activity taking place in the work place. Whilst general advice is given on the most likely issues identified, account must be taken of all health and safety guidance published at a national and Council level. See the Health and Safety pages of [CONNECT](#) for more information.

4. Work Equipment

There is a duty on employers that provide equipment for employees to work at home to ensure that the equipment is safe and appropriate for the task, to include suitable controls.

Additionally, homeworkers must be provided with:

- Proper information and training on how to use the provided equipment;
- The equipment provided is checked regularly and kept in a condition that does not cause harm to homeworkers or others;
- Appropriate protective equipment and devices such as guarding etc. must be provided.

Service guidance is available on the health and safety issues associated with work equipment.

5. Manual Handling

The moving of materials and equipment between the normal workplace and the home will be a regular hazard to those involved or supporting homeworking. As with all manual handling activities there must be an initial consideration to the elimination of the handling tasks. Where this is not seen as reasonably practicable then a manual handling assessment must be undertaken in order to identify the control measures required to reduce the risk of injury to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable.

More detail on the manual handling assessment process and protocol can be found in service documentation.

Specific homeworking issues that may need to be addressed via the manual handling assessments include:

- Handling loads that are heavy, bulky, difficult to grasp or unstable, e.g. movement of documentation, equipment to and from the workplace to the home environment;
- Awkward lifting, reaching or handling e.g. storage of materials in the home, where storage opportunities may be limited or restricted;
- Pushing or Pulling, e.g. pulling trolleys etc. too and from the workplace, transport and the home steep gradients may increase the risk to those involved;
- Twisting and stooping for example during storage or recovery of materials.

The manual handling of loads is often thought to be the process of moving the material to and from the workplace, manual handling may also occur during the work process and it is important to consider the ergonomic issues that may well be associated with the work activity in conjunction with any handling activity.

6. Electrical Equipment

Any electrical equipment supplied by the employer and used by home workers must be maintained by the employer, this includes the regular electrical assessment of electrical safety.

There is only an expectation on Services to maintain the equipment that they provide. There is no expectation to undertake maintenance of the sockets or fixed wiring within the home. However if the general risk assessment identifies that there are some concerns regarding the domestic electrical system these should be brought to the attention of the employee concerned and if necessary the homeworking activities delayed until the employee has been able to rectify the concerns.

Basic Electrical Safety Checks that must be considered include:

- ensuring plugs are not damaged;
- check that the domestic electrical systems are adequate for the intended work equipment;
- check plugs are correctly wired and maintained;
- check that the outer covers of electrical equipment are in good condition and undamaged;
- check that cables, leads and wires etc. are not damaged;
- check for burn marks or other signs of overheating;
- check that there are no trailing cables, wiring etc.

More specific information on the safety of electrical equipment can be obtained from Service information sources.

7. Substances

Whilst it is unlikely that those undertaking homeworking on behalf of the council will be using substances hazardous to health, it is still essential that the general risk assessment consider the need for an additional assessment on the substances that may be used.

In assessing the substances that may be in use the following factors should be included:

- are they flammable, toxic, corrosive, harmful etc;
- do they give off fumes during storage or use;
- are they stored safely giving due consideration to the children or other householders;
- are any of the householders likely to have adverse effects from exposure to the substances, e.g. dermatitis or asthma etc.

Substances being used for a work activity must be included in a COSHH assessment, more details on the mechanisms and assistance available can be found in Service guidance.

8. Display Screen Equipment

Homeworking tasks are likely to include the use of computers and therefore there is a need to undertake an appropriate DSE assessment and to provide the appropriate workstation equipment, information, instruction and training.

The standards set for the workstations within the workplace apply equally to the homeworking situation and managers/supervisors will need to take steps to ensure that these standards are being applied prior to the commencement of homeworking.

Details to be considered include:

- Equipment being used to form the workstation;
- Vision screening & provision of corrective eye wear in accordance with council guidance;
- Ergonomic issues;
- Sufficient workspace.

The completion of a DSE assessment must take place before any homework takes place and then repeated should circumstances change. More details on the mechanisms for DSE assessments can be found in Service guidance.

9. New & Expectant Mothers

The risk assessment process must, where appropriate, take account of the risks to the unborn child, or to someone who is still breast feeding.

Particular risks that need detailed consideration include:

- lifting/carrying of heavy loads;
- standing or sitting for a prolonged period of time;
- exposure to infectious diseases;
- exposure to lead;
- work-related stress;
- workstations and posture;
- exposure to radioactive materials;
- other peoples smoke in the workplace;
- threat of violence;
- long working hours;
- excessive noise in the workplace.

Homeworking is often seen as a useful tool for new mothers wishing to continue to work after the birth of a child. It is important that Service managers/supervisors arrange for a risk assessment to be undertaken at regular stages throughout a pregnancy as the risks will change. An assessment is also required when someone returns to work and must include a consideration of any breast feeding arrangements that take place at that time.

More specific advice is available from Business, Organisational and People Solutions on all aspects of maternity leave and working during a pregnancy.

10. First Aid/ Incident Reporting

Service managers/supervisors must take steps to ensure that there is an adequate provision of first aid facilities for homeworkers. This will extend to the appropriate provision of suitable information, instruction and training. More specific details on [first aid](#) can be found within Council guidance.

Service managers/supervisors need to have in place appropriate local procedures to permit the reporting of accidents that occur whilst an employee is involved in any aspect of homeworking.

11. Consultation

The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 combine to ensure that homeworkers are consulted on a number of health and safety issues.

In addition the safety representatives appointed by recognised trade unions can represent homeworkers. It is also appropriate for homeworkers to be represented by a representative of employee safety and to be involved in the election of such representatives.

More detail on the consultation and representation requirements associated with the above regulations can be found within Service guidance.

12. Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors will already be aware of their duties to manage the health and safety. This duty also extends to those that work in a home environment. Health and safety is an integral part of the management process and should managers/supervisors feel that they require further training in the management of health and safety then they should, in consultation with their own manager, contact their health and safety section for further information on the training options that exist within the Council.

Appendix 1 aims to help managers and supervisors put in place some of the main aspects of health and safety management associated with homeworking.

It is important to remember that all aspects of management, including safety, need to be monitored and reviewed. With this in mind, managers and supervisors will need to ensure that they review the risk assessments regularly in order to ensure they are still valid, for example has the employee moved the homeworking location to another room of their house? Over and above this the supervisor/manager should also undertake an

occasional visit to the work location with the purpose of checking that all the agreed health and safety measures are in place and being used.

Specific details on the content of such inspections can be found in the Council guidance.

Homeworking Checklist for Managers

The checklist below is not intended to be exhaustive and each work location is likely to be unique, however it should provide a degree of direction in relation to the main health and safety management issues that need to be addressed by the line manager when facilitating homeworking. The line manager should use the list to demonstrate they have planned and assessed the significant risks. Indicate who is undertaking the action along with a date for completion. If an action is not required, this should be noted with "N/A"

Employee:

Work location:

	Action Required	Action by	Action date
1	General Risk Assessment specific to proposed workplace (generic assessment is not appropriate)		
2	Implementation of recommendations from general risk assessment.		
3	DSE Assessment.		
4	Manual Handling Assessment.		
5	Work equipment appropriateness confirmed for location.		
6	Electrical systems assessed as appropriate for intended work activity.		
7	Substances used included in a COSHH assessment.		
8	Specific assessment of pregnant worker/ new mother.		
9	Provision of information, instruction and training on all above assessments		
10	Equipment included on register of inspection.		
11	Trade Union representative/ Representative of Employee Safety advised of homeworking locations.		
12	Review Dates for assessments identified and monitored.		
13	Check with HR Section about maternity issues etc.		
14	Enter homework location onto Service register of locations.		
15	Make inspection plan.		

Signed (Manager/Supervisor) _____

Information Sheet – Working from Home

This information sheet aims to give employees a basic introduction to issues that need to be considered when working from home. Employees have an important role in keeping everyone safe whilst working at home.



If you work from home, your line manager will arrange for a site specific risk assessment of your work activities. This process will help decide if sufficient steps have been taken to prevent harm to you or anyone else who may be affected by your work.

You may find that a few different risk assessments/checks are needed to ensure all the significant risks have been given due consideration.

If you use a computer for working at home then a specific assessment will be undertaken to ensure it is being used in a manner that will minimise any discomfort. For example using a laptop on the kitchen table is unlikely to be safe and appropriate for anything other than a few minutes of use and if you are using a computer at home a standard kitchen or dining room chair will not meet the expected workplace standards. If you are considered a “display screen equipment (DSE) user” you will be entitled to an eye test and the findings of your workstation assessment will be needed to help the optician complete this. You should seek advice from your line manager about the eye test and how this can be arranged.

It is likely that you will use electrical equipment such as a computer or printer provided by your Service. Your line manager will be responsible for the maintenance and repair of the equipment but you will need to report any defects and make the equipment available for inspection (or complete and record the inspection yourself). Make sure you are familiar with the inspection and testing scheme for your work equipment. The Council is only responsible for the equipment they supply. Electrical sockets and other parts of your domestic electrical system are your responsibility.

Your line manager will also give you specific guidance on the first aid and incident reporting measures that are most appropriate. If you use specialist equipment beyond the standard stationary items normally used in a workplace then you can also expect some guidance on how to use, inspect, maintain and report faults to such equipment.

As a result of the risk assessment process a “system of work” or procedures manual may well be developed and will deal with a range of identified hazards (possibly including chemicals and manual handling) You are required to implement any defined control measures and bring to your line manager’s attention any concerns you have about the way in which you are working.

Remember to consider the impact of your work on yourself, other members of the family or visitors to your house. Make sure you prevent trailing cables and keep equipment out of reach of those who may not understand how to use it safely.

Additional information and support on working at home can be obtained from your Service Health and Safety team, or from the health and safety pages of CONNECT.

Appendix 3

Homeworking self assessment checklist

This form should be completed initially by the home worker and returned to the line manager. Any matters of concern should be resolved before home working commences.

The responses should be reviewed annually, and at any time if significant changes occur.

	Yes	No	N/A
1. General			
Have you read and understood the guidance on home working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Fire			
Is the work area tidy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are waste materials regularly disposed of to avoid accumulation of combustibles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know how you would get out in an emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all exit routes clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a smoke alarm fitted and tested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Electrical Equipment			
Are the flexible leads in good condition (e.g. free from cuts, fraying and damage etc)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the flexible leads positioned where they cannot easily be damaged or cause a trip hazard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the socket outlet in good condition? (e.g. not cracked or damaged or showing any signs of overheating etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the equipment switch on and off properly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is all equipment (including any AC to DC adaptors and AC adaptors) in good condition? (e.g. not damaged, no loose or missing casings etc) and free from signs of overheating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the cables securely fixed in all plugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. DSE			
Have you completed the DSE workstation assessment e learning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you carried out a DSE workstation assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Slips, trips and falls			
Are walkways and the workstation area clear of any tripping hazards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Working Alone			
Have you read the guidance on Lone Working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed a mode and frequency of communication with your supervisor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Accidents and First aid			
Are you familiar with accident/incident reporting procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Security			
Can exit doors and accessible windows be secured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Risk Assessment			
Has the Homeworking Risk Assessment been discussed?			
Risk Assessment Reference Number:			
<p>To be completed by home worker / line manager as appropriate.</p> <p>List any matters of concern which need attention before homeworking starts:</p>			

Home worker's name:	Date:
Job Title:	
Home worker's signature	
<p>By signing this checklist you are agreeing that the checks have been completed and understood.</p>	
The matters of concern raised above have been addressed and home working is agreed.	
Line manager's (name):	Date:
Job Title:	
Line manager's signature	

Impact Assessments

Document Title: Health and Safety Policy - Arrangement Section 37 -
Health and Safety for Homeworking

Date: 01 April 2017

Review Date: As circumstances dictate

Environmental Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant environmental impact; no significant detrimental impact has been identified.

Equality Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant equality implications; no significant issues have been identified.

General Comments: This document is the arrangement section, relating to the reduction of risks to those undertaking homeworking. This is associated with the Council's health and safety policy as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The general aim of the council is to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for all persons working for or make use of Council Services. Nothing in the document serves to have any negative impact on the above issues and indeed, in general, associated documents will encourage positive consideration of the factors to ensure all members of the workforce and community are afforded access to the same safe and healthy workplace.