



October 2019

NDPCHS Homeworking Policy

Background

The Department recognises that for some individuals, home working can be of benefit in supporting both their work-life balance and their work productivity (eg when quiet uninterrupted time is needed for writing). It can also be helpful for logistical reasons when someone's role requires them to make offsite visits (eg to study participants or trial recruitment sites).

It is also the case that some roles and activities need to be performed in the office, either because they provide a service across the department and individuals need to be accessible or because they need access to resources such as files that cannot be removed from the office. In addition, most teams will need time together in the office each week in order that they can collaborate and share information effectively with one another. The department expects that the balance of work will be predominantly in the office, rather than at home, but it remains committed to supporting flexible working where appropriate.

Home-working is categorised as a form of flexible working, and in line with other flexible working requests, the department has generally taken the approach that individual groups/line managers are free to agree whatever working arrangements work for them and their teams. As the department has grown, staff members have asked for guidance on what would be reasonable in requesting and dealing with requests to work from home and what the obligations and responsibilities are on both sides.

The senior management committee have therefore agreed the following policy.

Contractual matters

It is envisaged that the contractual place of work for all individuals will remain the department (either ROQ or, in the case of the Undergraduate Teaching team, Boundary Brook House). No-one will be required to work from home.

Groups are free to agree home working arrangements with individuals on either a regular or ad hoc basis.

Arrangements agreed should be recorded in writing (email is fine) and copied to the HR team (hr@phc.ox.ac.uk).

No-one is automatically entitled to work at home, although all employees with at least 26 weeks' service have a statutory right to request flexible working, and this can include remote working arrangements. Forms for this are available on the university Personnel Services website: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/flexible/summary/>. We do not require that requests are submitted using this form, but if a formal request is received in this way, line managers should consult the HR Manager before responding.

Where home working is requested as a reasonable adjustment for a health condition or disability, the HR Manager should also be consulted so that we can ensure appropriate advice is obtained from Occupational Health and/or the Staff Disability Advisor.

Making and responding to requests and reviewing arrangements

Any decision to permit remote working lies with the line manager and we expect Group Leads to ensure consistency of approach within their group. This means that Group Leads will need to discuss and agree approaches with their line managers, making clear that line managers need to keep their Group Lead, as well as HR, informed of requests and changes. Line managers are expected to be reasonable and fair in considering requests and to communicate the reasons for any refusal. Decisions should be consistent across individuals with similar roles.

Factors to be taken into account by line managers may include:

- The nature of the role and its suitability to be performed away from the department

- Data security

- Integration with the team and communications with colleagues

- Access to resources (eg files, software, data, desk space)

Other considerations for discussion include:

- Managing the potential isolation of home-working and the impact home-working could have on factors such as motivation, productivity, team cohesion.

- Agreeing what work would be best done at home and what would be best done in the office

- The suitability of the environment: that there is an appropriate space in which to work comfortably and safely; that distractions are limited; that the individual is contactable.

- Managing the potential impact on work-life balance and work interfering with home life; working excessive hours etc

Arrangements should be agreed on a trial basis for 3 months initially and reviewed annually as part of PDR discussions to ensure that they work for all parties.

Agreements to home work can be revoked or refused by line managers when there are reasonable grounds to do so (eg changes in project that make home-working inappropriate for data governance reasons; concerns with work performance etc).

If someone requests to work from home as a short-term measure to deal with a domestic emergency, this should be accommodated wherever possible. Department policy is that flexible working, including working from home, should be one of the first options considered in such a situation. Where the nature of the role makes home working impossible, then other forms of time off should be made available. Contact the HR Manager for advice.

Practicalities

Where working at home is done regularly, working patterns of team members should be clearly communicated through the team.

When working at home, an individual must be contactable during their agreed working hours via telephone/Skype or other agreed method, should their line manager or other team member need to reach them.

Individuals must expect that their desk/computer in the office might be used by others when they are not in the office. Those working from home on a University–purchased laptop would need to access files via their Novell login rather than remote desktop, to ensure their work PC was available for use by others. The Department can provide simple guidelines on how to do this alongside the Home Working Policy. (NB meanwhile, we continue to work with MSD IT to identify ways to make remote desktop possible from home while the work PC is used by someone else.) Refer to the Department IG106: Mobile and Remote Working Policy for more information about the requirements for working remotely.

Requests for laptops to support homeworking should be discussed with the line manager in the first instance. It is expected that the expense of a laptop will be met from research grants.

It is reasonable for Group Leads and line managers to expect that there will be some days when all team members are required to be in the office (for scheduling of team meetings etc).

As no-one is required to work from home and we expect the balance of work to be predominantly in the office, the department will not reimburse costs incurred in the home such as heating, broadband, printing, furniture etc. It may agree to pay for a laptop if appropriate, but this should not be assumed.

Line managers should keep a record of any requests made and the resulting decisions. Arrangements agreed should be recorded in writing (email is fine) and copied to the HR team.

Health and Safety

The individual and their line manager are required to follow the University Health and Safety guidelines on remote working at premises controlled by employees. This is available at the link below and the relevant section is reproduced at Appendix 1. All staff members involved in homeworking arrangements must ensure they have familiarised and agreed to the arrangements set out in Appendix 1.

Please consult the HR Manager for advice if needed.

Sources of further information/guidance

Health and Safety, DSE regulations:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/safety/policy-statements/s8-09/>

University Personnel Services guidance on homeworking:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/flexible/homeworking>

Appendix 1

Remote working at premises controlled by employees

Certain employees have the discretion to work away from the University, often at home or within colleges, using computing equipment. Departments and institutions with employees who work at these remote workstations must ensure the following:

(a) Where any individual has been provided with University equipment, it should comply with the requirements of this Policy and should be maintained in a safe condition. "Safe condition" means that the screen must not flicker and the equipment, including the flexes and plugs, must be physically intact.

(b) All individuals who use computing equipment, which may be their own, must arrange their equipment such that risk from trips over cabling or flexes is minimised.

(c) If usage is to the extent that the individuals become "users" for the purpose of their employment in locations away from their normal workstation, they must have the risks of using the equipment and the risk control measures explained to them. However, it is not intended that DSE assessors should make visits to remote locations.

(d) Users will be personally responsible for:

(i) Arranging their equipment and workstations in accordance with the diagram in Appendix 2 and taking regular short breaks.

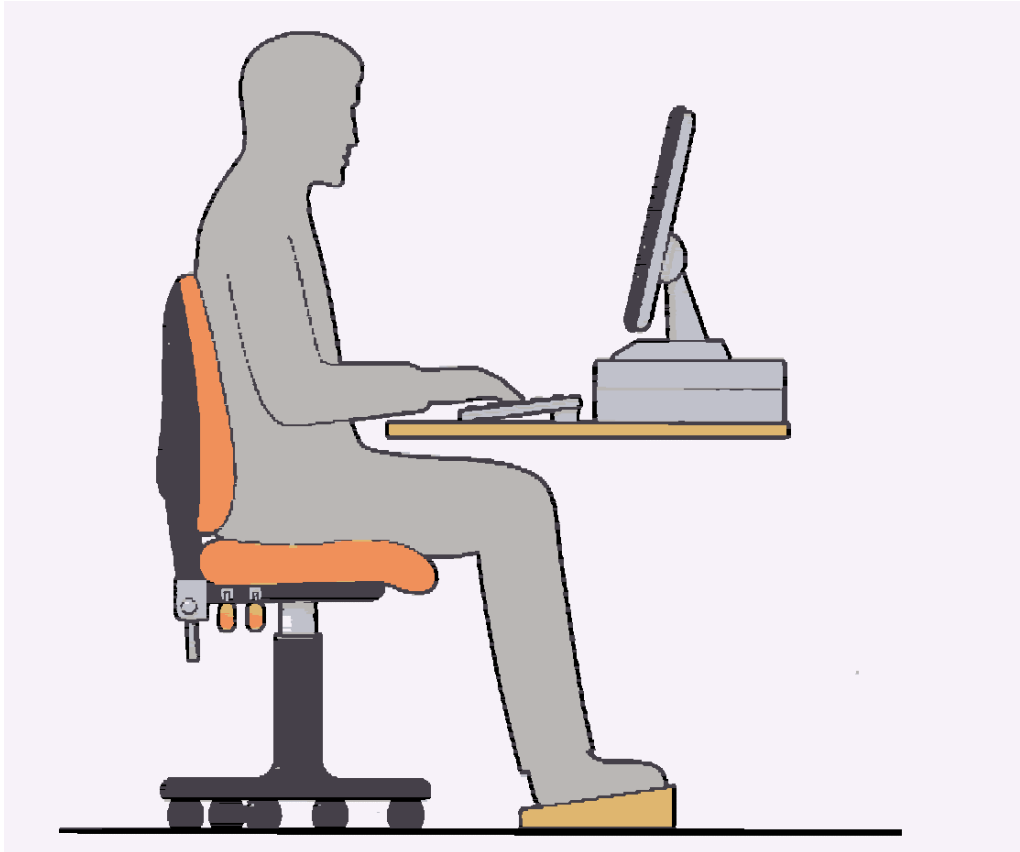
(ii) Arranging a timely repair if their computer screen flickers or their equipment, including the flexes and plugs, become physically damaged.

(iii) Reporting, without delay, to their line manager any personal discomfort, e.g. tingling sensations or pains in their hands or forearms or necks, thought to be associated with the use of the workstation.

(e) These points must be emphasized as part of the formal training of these users and training records must be maintained.

(f) If ill health symptoms are identified, the line manager must refer the individual, without delay, to the Occupational Health Service.

Appendix 2



SEATING AND POSTURE FOR TYPICAL OFFICE TASKS

1. Seat back independently adjustable for height and for tilt.
2. Good lumbar support.
3. Seat height adjustability.
4. No excess pressure on underside of thighs and backs of knees.
5. Foot support if needed.
6. Space for postural change, no obstacles under desk.
7. Forearms approximately horizontal.
8. Minimal extension, flexion or deviation of wrists.
9. Screen height and angle should allow comfortable head position.
10. Space in front of keyboard to support hands/wrists during pauses in keying