

HR Elite

A Guide to Homeworking



A Guide to Homeworking

Introduction

Homeworking has significantly increased over recent years with staff either working regular hours from home or working ad hoc hours to complete specific pieces of work without interruption or disruption.

Homeworking provides benefits for employers and employees alike but does not come without its challenges. However, with careful thought and planning whilst ensuring regular and effective communication homeworking can provide for high performance and high productivity.

What is homeworking

Homeworking often falls within flexible working options and is a term generally used to describe a situation, where by agreement a worker performs some or all of their work at home.

Why do we have homeworkers

Attitudes to homeworking vary and there are still a lot of employers/managers who doubt the employees effectiveness when working from home. However, the benefits can be significant but need to be balanced against the needs of the business and of course not all jobs can be performed from home, just as not everyone will be disciplined or motivated enough to work from home.

A number of practical matters need to be considered for homeworkers.

Equipment and Tools

A very important matter to agree before an employee starts to work from home is who is going to provide the equipment e.g furniture, PC/laptop, mobile phone, broadband etc. If the company provides the equipment this is ultimately their property and they can instruct who can use it. Often furniture such as desks and chairs are provided by the employee as they would already have these facilities in their house. If the company provides the technical equipment they can stipulate that this can be used for work purposes only and no other family members can use it.

Insurance

Employers will need to check with their insurers that homeworking is covered. Quite often low risk activities such as administration are covered but other activities may not be, it is important to be clear about this. The employee should also check that they have the appropriate insurance policies in place, failure to do this could lead to current insurance policies being invalid. The employer should really ask for a copy of this as evidence that homeworking is covered and pay any additional costs as a

result of the homeworking. The employee should also be advised to contact their mortgage provider or landlord to let them know about their homeworking.

Health and Safety

Employers of homeworkers have the same health and safety obligations as if the employee was in work. It is essential that a full risk assessment of the working environment is carried out along with a DSE risk assessment. PAT testing should also be carried out on any electronic equipment the homeworker is using. Other areas of health and safety to consider are lone working, fire risks and mental health and wellbeing. The employee themselves also need to ensure that they are working in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and as the control that is usually exercised over a homeworker by the employer is limited Section 3 (2) of the Act places obligations on homeworkers themselves that they and other persons (including members of the household and visitors) are not endangered by the work activities being performed at home. Homeworkers must also ensure that they oblige by the Working Time Regulations which sets a limit of 48 hours on the working week unless the employee has chosen to opt out.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Some working hazards go beyond the physical. Working from home can be lonely and can also take a period of adjustment. Managing their own time and trying to separate work from home life and all its distractions can be difficult. Maintaining effective communication with the homeworker can help with the feeling of loneliness and isolation. Employers should ensure that they have regular contact with the homeworker, keeping them as up to date as possible and fully engaged with workplace activities. Employers should also allow for a certain degree of flexibility for the homeworker e.g not having to work a solid block of hours and it is advisable that the homeworker takes more regular breaks than they would had they been at work, especially where they are a full time homeworker.

Communication

Communication with a homeworker will be very different compared to when the worker is usually in work, however, this is one of the most important aspects of ensuring homeworking works.

Agree with the homeworker how you will communicate with them. It may be that they have a company mobile phone and will be expected to communicate whenever is required during the agreed working from home hours. Frequency of both e mail and telephone contact should be discussed. The homeworker may also be required to attend the workplace at certain times, this should also be agreed. Work may also be required to be delivered or collected from the employees home.

Communication is critical for many reasons and in these times we now have many tools available to assist us with this e.g Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, mobile phones. Employers may wish to have a daily regular call with the homeworker or even a team call to check and plan work.

Data Security and Confidentiality

Where the homeworkers role involves dealing with confidential or sensitive information the employer needs to ensure that all documentation and information is held securely. Homeworkers need to abide by the usual rules and procedures on confidentiality and data protection. Under GDPR legislation a breach of personal data is likely to give rise to notification obligations.

HR Elite Homeworking Toolkit - £99 plus VAT

HR Elite have designed a Homeworking Toolkit to support and guide Managers in the effective management of Homeworkers which includes 26 essential checklists, guides and documents.

1. Working Space Checklist for Managers
2. Risk Assessment Template for Homeworking
3. Homeworking Policy
4. Guide to Homeworking for Managers
5. Skills Audit Chart
6. Stakeholder Audit Form
7. 'Am I a trusted Manager' Questionnaire
8. Guide to Communicating Effectively with Remote Employees
9. Keeping in Touch Checklist
10. Communication Methods for Remote Working Chart
11. Guide to Leading Remote Video Meetings
12. Agenda for Video conference Call
13. Guide to Effective Meetings
14. How to Organise Meetings List
15. Meeting Agenda/Record Form
16. Performance Management Checklist for Managers
17. Guide to Performance Management for Managers
18. Conducting an Effective Supervision Meeting Checklist
19. Overcoming Difficulties with Homeworking Checklist for Employees
20. Motivational Factors and Empowerment Handout
21. Motivation Questionnaire
22. Demotivation List
23. Lack of Trust Causes List
24. Poor Time Management List
25. Guide to Good Time Management
26. Stress Handout for Employees

Fees: £99 plus VAT – To purchase or for more information please contact info@hrelite.co.uk or call 01206 700690.