

Working from Home (COVID-19)

In the current crisis caused by the Covid 19 virus, many people are being asked to work from home. As an employer you are still required to look after the health and safety of your employees when they are working from home, whether it is a temporary situation or a regular one. As this situation has arisen very quickly, it is unlikely you will have had a chance to properly consider any health and safety issues your homeworking staff may face.

You will need to consider such things as:

- How will you keep in touch with them?
- What work activity will they be doing?
- Can it be done safely?
- Do you need to put control measures in place to protect them?

Using IT Equipment

Generally speaking, there is no increased risk from display screen equipment (DSE) for those working at home temporarily, so there is no specific requirement to do a DSE assessment on the home 'workstation'. However, domestic tables and chairs are often not at the correct height to work for long periods using a computer, and using a laptop or tablet while sitting in a lounge chair/settee etc. can create neck and shoulder strain.

Consider the following:

- Breaking up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least 5 minutes or changes in activity).
- Avoiding awkward, static postures by regularly changing position.
- Getting up and moving or doing stretching exercises.
- Avoiding eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time.

If it appears staff may need to work from home for an extended period of time, you should consider allowing staff to take some equipment home. This may include specialised keyboards or mice or possibly monitor risers and desk lamps. It may also be necessary to supply the homeworking employee with cushions to support them or even ergonomic chairs to use at home.

Homeworking and Stress

It is suggested that you should create good lines of communication between staff members and any central office. There are many video-conferencing platforms available now, many of which are free to use.

There will always be greater risks for lone workers with no direct supervision and no one to help them if things go wrong. Home working can cause work-related stress and affect people's mental health, as being away from colleagues can make it difficult to get proper support.



It is important to make sure you keep in touch with your staff working from home, if contact is poor, staff may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned. This can affect their mental health, but will also adversely affect their ability to work.

Put procedures in place so you can keep in direct contact with home workers and this should assist you in recognising any signs of stress as early as possible. It is also important to have an emergency point of contact and to share this so that people know how to get help if they need it.

The contents of this Newsletter are for reference purposes only and do not constitute legal advice. Independent legal advice should be sought in relation to any specific legal matter.