

# **REMOTE WORKING POLICY**

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# Remote Working Policy

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Remote working Policy is part of Tendring District Council's flexible working arrangements. It is an important valuing diversity initiative aimed at transforming the way we work, improving service delivery and promoting work-life balance.

## 2. What is Remote working?

2.1 Remote working is where an employee carries out a number of their duties away from their named office base. This includes time working from home and/or 'in the field' perhaps on site visits.

Within Tendring District Council, no employee will generally be expected to be home-based for more than 2 or 3 days of a 5 day week (pro rata for part time employees). Should there be a situation requiring an extended period of remote working this would be agreed between the individual and their Line Manager

## 3. The Benefits

3.1 The benefits can include:

- Improved productivity, flexibility and retention;
- Family friendly, supports work/life balance - and can reduce stress;
- Assists in a wider catchment area for recruitment and retaining a diverse workforce;
- Can make employment more feasible for disabled jobseekers;
- Helps rehabilitate employees who are on long term sickness;
- Potential to reduce travel - greener/ reduces 'carbon footprint'/lower occupational road risk;
- Supports flexible working and deployment of resources to meet changing business needs;
- Potential to allow scarce office accommodation to be used more effectively for collaborative work and meetings, reduces the pressure on office parking;
- Promotes smarter working.

## 4. The Costs

4.1 The costs associated with the setting up of flexible homeworking arrangements mainly relate to the home broadband connectivity costs necessary to provide remote

access to the network. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) Aug 2017 identifies that 90% of East of England households already have internet broadband access. In Tending superfast broadband will be available to 98% of all households by early 2020.

Employees may wish to consider purchasing additional home working equipment through personal choice. The Council will not reimburse employees for any household costs associated with flexible homeworking

## **5. Suitability for Homeworking**

5.1 There is no automatic entitlement to work from home. Line managers in conjunction with the Head of Service make the decision whether homeworking and/or remote working is appropriate for specific posts and then work with the post holder to determine their readiness for working in this way.

5.2 Assessing the post means considering how the service is currently delivered and being clear about the results expected from homeworking, The manager, in discussion with the employee will consider how the work and goals set will be monitored and measured.

## **6. Consideration for remote working.**

In the first instance the Post will be reviewed by the manager (with the post holder if appropriate) to determine the degree to which the duties of the post can/need to be carried out remotely, either at home or 'in the field'. This analysis should record the specific duties as well as an estimation of the amount of time away from the office. See Appendix 1. This will be authorised by the Head of Service and HR will be informed.

Secondly, the line manager, with the post holder will discuss and agree their readiness and willingness to work in this way. No post holder, even if a post is identified as suitable, will be required to work from home (See Appendix 2). However, some 'work in the field' may be an essential aspect of the role and this aspect of remote working may be a requirement of the post.

TDC reserves the right to require a post holder to work from any TDC location to ensure adequate provision of a service.

Managers are to liaise with IT when considering the equipment requirements and costs.

The manager needs to keep a written record of the reasons for refusing any request for remote working and discuss these with the employee.

Employees who have current warnings/cautions under the Disciplinary and Capability

procedures may be required to work from an office base until their warnings have expired.

## **7. Review**

7.1 Each remote working arrangement will be reviewed to monitor its effectiveness for both the employee and the Council. Review periods will be determined by the manager. The first review will usually be after a three month period. Subsequent reviews will occur annually, or as determined by the manager.

## **8. Guidance on Remote working**

8.1 Staff that work from home are covered by the same Tendring District Council policies and procedures as all other employees. Arrangements (usually a combination of face to face and 'virtual') therefore need to be organised so that employees can attend regular team and supervision meetings, meet with those they manage, participate in developmental activities and so on. Workloads need to be appropriately organised and quality and performance management maintained, whether an employee is a remote worker or is office based.

8.2 There will be differences in the way people interact when staff work remotely and some aspects of management that may be taken for granted in the conventional office environment, need to be given careful consideration

## **9. Contract of Employment**

9.1 Terms and conditions of employment remain unchanged except as follows:

9.2 When an employee is working at or from home and subsequently leaves the home to attend a work site, they may claim mileage once they have exceeded the usual equivalent of the return journey from home to their office and back

## **10. Health and Safety**

10.1 TDC expects all employees, when working remotely, to be aware of and take reasonable and sensible health and safety precautions for themselves and others. This includes:

- Ensuring that work calendar is up to date to show their location.
- Designated lone working staff to use the Skyguard Personal Safety Device.
- TDC portable appliances have up to date PAT tests and that equipment is returned to the office at an agreed time to enable testing to be carried out.

10.2 If a manager or employee considers it is necessary for the organisation's Health and Safety Officer to assist with a home assessment they will do so. This is likely to be where an employee has declared themselves to be disabled under the Equality Act and remote working is considered a reasonable adjustment.

10.3 Any employee working remotely should report any sickness or accidents in line with usual procedures as detailed in the Staff Handbook and update their calendar accordingly.

10.4 DSE regulations apply to the workplace work station only. Staff are expected to apply their own assessment to their remote working location e.g. their home or other non TDC premises.

10.5 Further advice is available from the Health and Safety Officer.

## **11. Changing /Terminating the remote working arrangements**

11.1 Remote working arrangements will be reviewed as indicated above, to ensure that they meet service/ team and individual needs. An arrangement may be ceased or varied:

- by the manager, in consultation with the employee, giving one month's notice.
- by the employee, in discussion with their manager and giving one month's notice, or less if the manager and employee agree that this is appropriate.

## **12. ICT and other equipment for remote working**

12.1 For the avoidance of doubt, when using the Council's IT equipment and/or being logged onto the Council's IT network, the Council's IT policies apply to staff whether working remotely or in a Tendring District Council building. This includes all IT Security and Data protections policies.

12.2 Managers will decide what equipment if any, is supplied for remote working, depending on the needs of the job. This decision will be made within the framework of equipment purchased by Tendring District Council and the subsequent support coverage will reflect the equipment priorities. Requests for equipment outside of this framework are treated as an exceptional request and need to be supported with Head of Service authorisation and the budget codes to fund any additional equipment request.

12.3 Remote workers will be supplied with a laptop. For those without, the loan of portable IT equipment can be considered. Standard IT equipment provision is one of

each of the following:

- Laptop
- Keyboard
- Mouse
- Screen
- Docking station
- Either a Skype headset or a Skype handset

One set of the above listed equipment is supplied for each employee or hot desk location.

Any additional IT equipment that is purchased including mobile phones, are met from service budgets.

12.4 In considering home working arrangements, like any other working practice, consideration will need to be given to the overall budget available. Whilst the Council provides a laptop and skype handset/ headset for flexible working, many employees voluntarily purchase or already have small, inexpensive additional pieces of IT equipment that they use out of personal preference e.g. a second USB mouse, a second USB keyboard or re-use a personally owned screen or smart TV to supplement their laptop. All of these devices can be easily connected to an employee's laptop.

12.5 Regular remote workers will not necessarily have a designated desk at their work centre and when visiting the work centre they will have access to hot desking facilities. Teams are expected to collaborate and plan their time and work locations proactively to manage the use and availability of hot desks to meet the needs of the service.

12.6 All ICT equipment supplied by Tendring District Council will be recorded on the IT inventory and be the responsibility of the employee to whom it has been issued.

12.7 All equipment must be returned or made accessible to Tendring District Council upon request. In the event of failure of equipment (if equipment is portable), the homeworker will be required to contact the IT Service Desk. The remote worker must ensure ICT equipment provided by Tendring District Council is not used by non Tendring District Council staff. The Corporate IT Team has some remote support capabilities but it may be necessary for the IT device to be '*returned to base*' during normal office hours for repair which will be undertaken by prior arrangement through the IT Service Desk

12.8 In accordance with Council policies and Data Protection Legislation, the remote worker must take steps to ensure that all Council and partner data is kept secure at all times, is neither visible nor accessible to non-Tendring District Council employees nor shared with any party(s) unless in accordance with published Council privacy notices, statutory rights and approved Data Information Sharing Agreements/Protocols.

12.9 For advice and guidance on purchasing equipment for staff with disabilities, please contact the IT Service desk.

12.10 Upon leaving employment all ICT and other equipment must be returned.

### **13. Insurance**

13.1 Tendring District Council's employer liability insurance covers employees working from home and, in line with the health and safety requirements above, the Council has a responsibility to provide a safe working environment, and the employee to ensure that relevant health and safety guidelines are followed. Failure to follow the relevant guidelines may jeopardise any claim against the Council. The same insurance provisions apply as in an office environment:

- All portable / removable equipment must be locked away when not in use or when the remote working location is empty or unattended, nor should it be left visible in a vehicle. It is crucial that laptops are turned off during transit to activate the hard disk encryption protocols protecting data in the event of theft or loss.

NB There is no insurance cover outside of the UK.

### **14. Planning Permission and Council Tax**

14.1 Employees are responsible for checking and resolving any homeworking restrictions in their mortgage agreement or lease or rental agreement. The homeworking arrangement does not affect an employee's Council Tax and payment of this is the employee's responsibility.

### **15. Tax implications**

Remote working will not give rise to adverse tax implications for employees or the Council as, for revenue purposes, the proposed procedures do not fall within the very tight definition of homeworking used by the Inland Revenue.

### **16. Confidentiality and Security of Data**

16.1 Employees are required to keep any work data used away from the office confidential and secure. All work data remains the property of Tendring District Council and may be required at any time. All such data must be relinquished on request or when the business relationship ends.

16.2 Employees are not permitted to keep either electronic or paper files at home on

a permanent basis. Tendring District Council has statutory obligations to fulfil requests for information under several acts of parliament such as Freedom of Information and current Data Protection Legislation and it has to be able to gain access to that information at short notice. Files that are part of work in progress may be stored at home until the work is completed. However, they must be returned to the employee's workbase, to be stored in accordance with the data retention policy and schedule. All electronic data must only be stored on the Council's secure network. No copy data can be stored in any other location or format.

16.3 The following security instructions must be followed by all staff

- The laptop must be locked, using Control/ Alt' Delete key when leaving it unattended.
- To protect data privacy, take steps to ensure that the screen is not visible by others to protect data privacy rights.
- Always ensure that the laptop is turned-off completely when not in use and during transit/ storage to ensure that the hard-disk encryption is activated.
- Ensure that all information governance rules are adhered to at all times, including; compliance with published data privacy notices, protecting, sharing, timely destruction/ retention.
- If you suspect that your password has been compromised change it and report the suspicion as soon as possible to the IT Service Desk.
- If you suspect that a security breach has occurred report it immediately by contacting the IT Service Desk on 01255 686599 or email [ITServiceDesk@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:ITServiceDesk@tendringdc.gov.uk)
- Paper files containing personal or confidential information must be disposed of using the Council's secure waste facilities and MUST NEVER be placed in domestic waste bins.

## 17. Access

17.1 As part of the homeworking arrangement the Council, with the employee's consent, may require reasonable access to an employee's home, for example to:

- Ensure it meets health and safety requirements;
- Install, maintain, check or collect equipment or material that belongs to the Authority.
- To remove files stored either electronically or in paper format to comply with the Council's legal obligations in satisfying requests for information.



## Appendix 1

### Assessment of Post for Remote Working

#### Form for Assessment of post for Remote Working

Name of Post and Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment completed by (name) on (date): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of current postholder: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment of post: Tasks that can be completed remotely:

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These findings were discussed with (name/s) who currently holds this post.

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Signed (post assessor): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Head of Service/Director confirming agreement with the assessment:

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To be reviewed on (date): \_\_\_\_\_

Admin note for HR :To be filed against post: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2

### Consideration of Post Holder for Remote Working

#### Form for consideration for Remote Working

Name of Post and Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by (name) on (date) with (post holder name)

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes of discussion and agreement:

**EITHER:** It has been agreed that (name) will work remotely for up to X days per week with effect from (date).

**OR:** It has been agreed that (name) will continue to be office based and will not work from home/remotely.

#### Barriers to remote working

IT: \_\_\_\_\_

Risk Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

This arrangement will be reviewed on (date)

Signed (post assessor) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (post holder) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Head of Service/Director confirming agreement with the assessment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Admin note for HR :To be filed against post holder's details

## **Appendix 3: Guide to support decision making**

### **A. The Post**

#### **The work**

1. Is the work self-contained/how much of it can be carried out away from the office?
2. Is the work measurable? (e.g. report writing/project work)
3. Can the work be carried out without frequent supervision and checking?
4. Does the work require supervision/ management of others? Can this be carried out effectively with a homeworking arrangement?
5. Is there little need/dependence on large numbers of paper files or other work based records/equipment which cannot be accessed from other locations?

### **B. The Post Holder**

#### **The Person**

1. Is the employee able to be self-motivated and self-disciplined?
2. Are they able to work with minimal direct supervision?
3. Is the employee flexible so that team/service needs can be met? This might include working from the team location rather than home to cover absence of other colleagues at short notice?
4. Is the employee willing to co-ordinate their time to ensure that team links are maintained?

5. If the employee manages others, have they considered their supervision and management responsibilities? The impact of homeworking on their team?

6. Are measures in place to ensure that regular contact is maintained with the employee, including meetings?

7. Is the employee covered by the Disability Discrimination Act and is remote working considered to be a reasonable adjustment?

### **The location**

1. Has the post holder completed and returned their health and safety self-assessment?

2. Are there any issues that need to be addressed? If so, what actions are being/have been taken?

3. Is there adequate storage to maintain confidentiality and ensure security of Council property?

### **The Team**

1. What will the effect of this proposed working pattern be on the rest of the team? Has it been discussed with them? Are there any issues to be resolved?

2. Has consideration been given to how the pattern of working will impact on appropriate and fair cover in the office? E.g. telephones/visitors

## **Appendix 4: Skills you need to be a successful remote worker**

- Ability to work independently with minimum supervision.
- Ability to cope with minimal face to face intervention.
- Level of relevant knowledge/skill.
- Ability to communicate - knowing when and how to raise problems.
- Ability to communicate with team.
- Ability to set own goals and priorities and work on own initiative.
- If managing others, ability to set goals and priorities of others, manage appropriately and supervise delivery of service.
- Productivity and reliability.
- Time management skills – can the employee schedule their work so as to deliver on time, manage others if appropriate, and avoid becoming a workaholic.
- Ability to balance work and domestic responsibilities.
- Home working environment, is it secure and free from interruptions.
- Ability to take on greater personal responsibility.
- Levels of self-discipline and self-motivation.

### **Working remotely**

Consider your wider work approach:

- Set work hours and communicate these to colleagues, those you manage, your manager.
- Do not regularly work in excess of 48 hours per week in a rolling 17 week period, as required by the Working Time Directive.
- Take regular breaks.
- Keep office area separate to area used by family, if possible, and avoid mutual interference.
- Keep work and equipment, safe, secure and organised.
- keep in regular contact with those you manage, colleagues and manager call into the relevant work location (e.g. Town Hall, Pier Avenue etc.) on a regular basis
- Keep your manager advised on work progress and alert any appropriate colleagues, including your manager, if there are any problems.
- Review relevance and convenience of home working on a regular basis.
- Ensure health and safety risk assessment is carried out and recommendations are actioned. This process should be reviewed following any change to the working practice, the work environment, after an accident or injury or annually, whichever is the sooner.
- Maintain professional conduct and image.
- Actively engage in personal development plans.
- Obtain timely and constructive feedback.
- Ensure you access regular information e.g. newsletters, vacancy list etc.
- Develop trust with your manager.

- Develop trust with and motivate any staff you manage.
- Be disciplined and self-motivating.
- Adhere to archiving procedures, do not keep excessive files / documentation at home.
- Regularly review your homeworking practice to assess that is still appropriate.

## **Managing Remote Workers**

- Have an open, positive attitude towards home working.
- Be able to trust the employee to do the job without constant face to face supervision.
- establish clear, measurable objectives and targets for the employee and monitor their attainment
- Provide timely and constructive feedback.
- Facilitate open communication amongst the team and be proactive in facilitating team working.
- assist employees to create work patterns that are conducive to home working
- Ensure that personal development plans identify skills that may be underdeveloped as a result of home working.
- Ensure agreement is reached with home worker about attendance at meetings, when contactable, regular supervision meetings, regular contact, targets and work tasks etc.
- Ensure training opportunities and personal development plans are developed and progressed.
- Ensure adequate time is agreed when the homeworker will be in the office to interact with colleagues / those they supervise.
- Discuss responsiveness e.g. phone contact and regularly checking/ responding to emails.
- Ensure regular two way communication and exchange of information e.g. forwarding newsletters, vacancies and career development opportunities etc.
- Be available to offer support, guidance and supervision to the home worker as well as giving timely and constructive feedback.
- Be proactive about encouraging interaction with colleagues/ those supervised.
- Review home working arrangements on a regular basis.
- Keep records of location and responsibility of manual files or data and regularly review.
- Be aware of potential problems and be proactive about client/colleague feedback and tackling concerns promptly.
- Be flexible.
- be aware of policies, procedures and processes as they affect home working and staff working at home
- Be aware of the impact of the work programme on the patterns of working, including the proportion of time spent at home and contact with the office.