

# NHS Wales

## COVID19 Home Working Advice and Guidance for Managers and Staff

### 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 outbreak has necessitated a rapid switch for a number of NHS Wales employees to home working so as to support the government's strategy to delay the spread of the virus. The move to home working and in some cases remote working from another location is enabling business continuity across a significant number of functions where such working arrangements can be accommodated.

For home working to be effective there are a number of approaches which both employers and employees can follow to ensure that individuals continue to be effectively supported whilst undertaking their roles from a different location and that vital work continues through to be undertaken.

### 2. What is Home Working?

During the ongoing COVID19 outbreak, employers and individuals have been advised by the Government, to implement social distancing measures, to reduce social interaction between people, to reduce the transmission of the virus and to work from home where they can. NHS Wales organisations are therefore extending the use of home working arrangements to an increased number of staff (where it is a viable option for the employee's role / circumstances) to enable and assist with the home working advice from the government and to ensure social distancing measures are adhered to.

### 3. Preparing for Homeworking

ACAS have produced a comprehensive schedule of advice and guidance [Working from Home for employers and employees](#). The advice covers areas which need to be considered and addressed such as Health & Safety, Equipment and Technology, setting clear expectations and wider employment matters such as terms and conditions.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) have also published a series of tips ([Getting the most from remote working](#)) to help individuals and organisations make the most of remote working. The tips cover; Online meetings, Managing remote teams and Working remotely.

HEIW have developed a [NHS Wales Staff Wellbeing Covid-19 Resource](#) of wellbeing resources and tools in partnership with staff health and wellbeing leads across NHS Wales and Trade Union partners. The resource is intended to be organic and the content will be adapted as the situation changes and all staff are encouraged to visit the site and explore its content.

### 4. Which employees should be considered for home working?

In line with the government's announcement, individuals who can work from home must be supported to do so. More specifically, home working, where viable, must be considered for the following employees;

- Those that work in a non-critical role and they cannot at that time be deployed to another department / role, to ensure the continued provision of essential services.
- Those that work in either a critical or non-critical role but in accordance with the current Government Guidance and medical advice are advised to work from home or to be 'shielded' for a period of at least 12 weeks. In addition, and where appropriate, those employees who live in a household with vulnerable others who need to be "shielded" whose life might be put at risk if they were to transmit the virus.
- Employees that work in a critical role but they are required to self-isolate because a member of their household has suspected COVID19 symptoms.

In addition to the above, all employees in critical roles must consider whether there are aspects of their role and working week, which can be undertaken from home. In such circumstances the normal pattern of the working week could be adjusted to consolidate such activity so as to reduce the number of days which they are required on an NHS site.

All managers must identify their critical and non-critical roles, within their department / function. In respect of the identified non-critical roles, managers will need to consider whether the role(s) are suitable for home working and if so what equipment and technology etc. is required and available to support it.

**Employees who are identified as working in non-critical roles and home working is a viable option, will not automatically be permitted to work from home on a continuous basis. These employees may be required to provide skeleton staff cover in their workplace and / or be deployed by the Health Board/Trust to work outside their normal role and / or in an unfamiliar department / workplace at another NHS Wales site in order to maintain essential services.**

## **5. What are the potential home working options for employees?**

Managers will decide on the most appropriate home working model and arrangements for their employees working in non-critical roles and yet to be deployed to assist the Health Board/Trust to continue to provide essential services to our patients, donors and service users.

Managers must wherever possible enable and ensure that employees can continue to maximise their contributions, to meet the needs of the service and ensure, as far as is reasonably possible and practicable, that the NHS Wales network can support robust workplace and home working arrangements during the COVID19 outbreak.

## **6. Business Continuity**

For business continuity, some employees may be required to work split shifts (days, weeks on a rotational basis - same time and different places). This model will reduce to the minimum the number of non-critical employees required in the workplace, at any one time and support the government's aim to maximise working from home and social distancing measures.

Managers should ensure that, where it is essential for the support and delivery of core NHS services during the Covid-19 outbreak, that support departments / functions are required on NHS sites, that they have the minimum number of employees required to maintain a service on-site who are absolutely essential and who are providing services which cannot be delivered through off-site working. In these circumstances limited skeleton staff cover arrangements should be put in place.

The model will ensure that where it is essential for a department to remain open there will always be the smallest number of employees required to be working on a rostered basis in the department / function (skeleton workforce). This could, if required, enable staff from the wider team be deployed at short notice, to support other essential services across the Health Board/Trust.

The model may help to reduce the feeling of social isolation that many employees may already be experiencing, at this time. It will also promote team working and the feeling of continuing to be part of a team at what is and will continue to be a very challenging time for our employees.

## **7. Logging onto the network when home working**

The following process should be adhered to, when logging onto the NHS Wales network to work from home, during the COVID19 outbreak;

- Where an employee already has Microsoft Office365, they should access Microsoft products like email, calendar and skype through logging on at [WWW.Office.com](http://WWW.Office.com). Employees do not need a VPN token to access Microsoft Office365, only access to home broadband.
- Where an employee does not have Microsoft Office365 but has a VPN token, they must not stay logged on throughout the day. Instead they should log on, update their emails and transfer any relevant documentations etc. to their desktop and log back out when finished.
- Employees may find it easier to log on using a VPN token outside of normal office hours.
- Where an employee is required to use Skype, they should avoid using the video option, as this uses up a lot of NHS Wales network capacity.

## **8. The manager's responsibilities**

Managers have the following responsibilities where their employees are working from home during the COVID19 outbreak:

- Ensure the employee understands the agreed home working arrangement and whether they will be working split shifts or home working at different times of day;
- Ensure that the workload of employees is fair and equitable;
- Ensure so far as is possible that employees are provided with appropriate, safe and fit for purpose equipment and technology, to enable them to work productively from home e.g. a laptop (Microsoft Office365 and / or VPN);
- Ensure home working employees are allocated on a regular basis, appropriate work to undertake;
- Ensure that they monitor and review the performance and outputs of home working employees, against work plans on a regular basis, to ensure that the process is working effectively. The manager must be aware that there may be periods when an employee may not be able to work at home e.g. the NHS Wales network goes down for a period of time etc;
- Ensure that all employees who are working from home, complete a COVID19 Home Working Employee Risk Self-Assessment Form and where possible, address any identified issues. If the issue(s) cannot be resolved the employee should raise and discuss this with their manager;
- Inform the Health Board/Trust's Workforce & OD/HR Department when an identified home working employee has recovered from a COVID19 related period of sickness.

## 9. The home working employee's responsibilities

Employee's will have the following responsibilities should they be working from home during the COVID19 outbreak:

- Inform their manager, if they do not have access to home Broadband or their Broadband cannot support home working, due to download speed or data allowance etc. The manager should consider what other types of work might be suitable, if IT systems are not accessible;
- Undertake their own COVID19 Home Working Employee Risk Assessment (**Appendix 1**) as the Health Board/Trust does not have the staff capacity, to ensure all new ad hoc home working employees have such an assessment ,conducted by a trained Health Board/Trust assessor;
- Take care of their own health and safety and that of other people in their home environment, during agreed home working shifts, days etc. (**Appendix 1, 2 and 3**);
- It is appreciated that working from home may lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Managers must keep in regular contact with teams (wherever possible daily) and individuals are encouraged to access online assistance (Mind materials), organisational Employee Assistance Programmes and on-line resources etc.
- Take responsibility for their health and wellbeing by utilising the Health Board/Trust support services as outlined in **Appendix 2 and 3** of this document and the organisation's/NHS Wales Health and Wellbeing pages, as well as the specific [NHS Wales Staff Wellbeing Covid -19 Resource](#)
- To adhere to Health Board/Trust IM&T, Data Protection and Information Governance policies and procedures;
  - Ensure that all Health Board/Trust equipment / technology and documents are used correctly and appropriately at all times;
  - Ensure that equipment / technology and documents are properly secured in their home, at all times, to avoid theft, loss and damage. **N.B.** The employee will not be liable for the theft, loss or damage of Health Board/Trust equipment / technology, where they have taken all reasonable steps;
  - Ensure when transporting equipment / technology and documents from work to home or home to work that these items are not left unattended and / or and unsecured at any time;
  - Ensure that any paper based data / information that is no longer required is appropriately destroyed e.g. using a cross-cut shredder or confidential waste disposal. If the employee is not able to shred, the documents must be appropriately stored and brought into the workplace to be shredded or destroyed as confidential waste at a future date.
- Employees should be aware that the Health Board/Trust regularly monitors computer usage, to ensure that it is not being misused.
- To maintain regular two way communication with their manager and team colleagues.
- To be contactable and available by telephone and / or email to their manager and Workforce &OD/HR team, at all times within their agreed home working hours;
- To utilise their personal home Broad Band to access the NHS Wales network.

## 10. Health and Wellbeing Tips for Home Working


- ✓ Break up long spells of Display Screen Equipment work with rest breaks (at least five minutes every hour) or changes in activity
- ✓ Avoid awkward, static postures by regularly changing position
- ✓ Try to get up regularly and move
- ✓ Avoid eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time


- ✓ Telephone your colleagues instead of emailing them or use video calls for social interaction
- ✓ Leave your desk or working area at lunchtime
- ✓ Drink water regularly


**COVID19 HOME WORKING EMPLOYEE RISK SELF-ASSESSMENT**









<b>Employee's Name and Employee Number:</b>	<b>Department and Division:</b>	<b>Date of the Self-Assessment:</b>
---	---------------------------------	-------------------------------------

**Key: Level of Risk**

 Of concern, early action needed

 Acceptable but clear need for further action

 Good but may need further action

HAZARD	REGULATIONS		WHO MAY BE AFFECTED	CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE	RECOMMENDATIONS		
<b>Display Screen Equipment</b>	The Health and Safety (DSE) Regulations 1992.	Upper limb strain from seating position or repetitive movement.	Home worker;	Machines provided are suitable for their intended purpose  maintenance of machines is restricted to designated persons who have received adequate training;			
							
							
<b>Work Equipment</b>	The Provision and Use of Work Equipment (PUWER) Regulations 1998.	Trapping, entanglement, electrical risks, & musculoskeletal problems.	Home worker; family members; visitors;	Ensure work equipment is suitable for intended use; Ensure work equipment is safe for use, and maintained in a safe condition;			
							
							
<b>Electricity</b>	Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.	Electric shock or fire.	Home worker; family members; visitors;	Plugs are correctly wired and maintained; Plugs, leads, wires and cables are checked regularly and kept			
							

				in a condition that does not cause harm.			
<b>Manual Handling of IT equipment e.g. monitors</b>	The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.	Musculoskeletal strain or injury, particularly to the back.	Home worker; family members; visitors;	Avoid lifting heavy, bulky loads or materials; Avoid steps and steep ramp when lifting is necessary,			
<b>Fire</b>	The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (The Order) See Health Board/Trust Fire Safety Policy for further legislation	Electric shock or fire.	Home worker; family members; visitors;	Smoke detectors fitted  Exit is easily accessible from designated home working area			
<b>SECURITY</b>	<b>REGULATIONS</b>		<b>WHO MAY BE AFFECTED</b>	<b>CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		
<b>Equipment</b>	General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018 and associated legislation		Your Health Board/ Trust	Individual can store equipment in a secure environment when not in use for business purposes			
<b>Documentation</b>	The Computer Misuse Act 1990;  The EC Directive on Legal Protection of Databases 1996.  Electronics Communications Act 2000  <i><u>Not exhaustive</u></i>		NHS Wales Informatics Services  NWSSP	Individual can store documentation in a locked unit or similar when not in use  Ensure passwords are not disclosed to others			

**Important:**

**It is the responsibility of the employee to inform their manager of any issues / potential issues identified in the above Risk Self-Assessment and where circumstances change in respect of their COVID19 Home Working Risk Self-Assessment.**

Employee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**The employee must retain their completed  
COVID19 Home Working Risk Self-Assessment Form  
for their personal records**



## The Health and Wellbeing of Ad Hoc Home Working Employees

### *Mental Health and Wellbeing*

#### *Why it's important?*

Working from home can be challenging and given the temporary but potentially significant duration of the changes in the national situation it is important that individuals are supported to look after their health and wellbeing.

High levels of anxiety, are somewhat to be expected due to the unclear and uncertain nature of what is occurring across the world as a result of the COVID19 outbreak. If you are worried, anxious, stressed or experiencing low mood etc. it can interfere with your ability to perform effectively in work.

#### *Helpful Tips*

If you are worried, anxious, stressed or experiencing low mood etc. and it is interfering with your ability to work (in the workplace and / or ad hoc at home), you can access one to one support from the your organisation's Occupational Health department, Clinical Psychology Team / external counsellor services.

Primarily individuals need to keep in contact with colleagues and any questions or concerns, need to be raised with managers as would be the case in ordinary circumstances.

HEIW have produced a [NHS Wales Staff Wellbeing Covid -19 Resource](#) containing a range of health and wellbeing links and support.

Mind have produced a range of resources and tips on their website under the heading *Coronavirus and your wellbeing*, (<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>) which include how to plan and prepare for working from home or staying indoors:

Common themes in the available online advice to look after your mental wellbeing include:

- Limiting social media use;
- Getting fresh air and going for a walk (avoid contact with others and obey social distancing rules);
- Catching up with friends – perhaps you could try a video call every evening with a family member or friend so that you can have a chat over a cup of tea;
- Eating well;
- Getting enough sleep;
- Make sure you take regular rest breaks including a lunch break away from your home working environment, if possible.

## The Health and Safety of Ad Hoc Home Working Employees

### Musculo-Skeletal Disorders

Most home working will be undertaken using either a table or desk (if the employee already has one set up at home). It is important that home working work does not increase your risk of developing some kind of MSD. It is therefore very important that you assess your workstation before you start work, on a daily basis, to ensure that any adjustments required are made, to ensure you are comfortable, correctly and safely.

#### *Helpful Tips*

Undertake a daily Workstation Assessment using the checklist below:

#### Workstation Checklist

- Is your seat back adjustable?
- Do you have good lumbar support?
- Is your seat height adjustable?
- Is there excess pressure on underside of thighs and backs of knees? If so a foot support is needed?
- Are you feel flat on the floor or on a foot rest?
- Have you sufficient space for postural change i.e.no obstacles under your workstation?
- Is your mouse close to the body?
- Are your wrists excessively bent (up, down or sideways)?
- Is your screen height correct and angled to allow a comfortable head position?
- Is your display screen at approximately arm's length, with the top of the screen at your eye level?
- Is your chair stable and ideally adjustable?
- Is your keyboard tiltable and separate from your, with sufficient space for hands and arms?
- Is your work surface large enough for a comfortable layout of screen, keyboard, mouse, documents and other related materials>.

**Please note** it is recommended that you undertake a workstation assessment on a daily basis, to support your COVID19 Home Working Employee Risk Self-Assessment.

### Eye Strain

Long spells of computer work can lead to tired eyes and discomfort, caused by screen glare, poor image quality etc. Possible symptoms are soreness of the eyes and headaches.

#### *Helpful Tips*

To avoid these symptoms, proper care needs to be exercised in your home working environment. Ensure your computer is well positioned and properly adjusted. Take frequent breaks your computer. Ensure you have adequate lighting levels with additional levels of light, if there is no natural light in the room you are working in.