

## **HOMEWORKING POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

The Council recognises the advantages of home-based working although it does not suit everyone, and some job roles may not be appropriate to undertake at home.

This policy describes the working arrangements and expectations that will apply if an employee works from home.

### **2. Scope of this policy**

The policy is applicable to all staff who are home-based whether full time, part time or fixed term. It does not apply to office-based staff who work from home on an ad-hoc basis.

### **3. Safe working environment**

Health and safety for home-based staff applies in the same way as office-based staff, in so far as is reasonably practicable. Any working environment should be safe with employees adhering to all health and safety and work-related policies.

All home working employees are required to complete and submit a 'Home Based Workers Risk Assessment' retained by the Town Clerk. This checklist identifies any possible hazards in your home working environment and following completion measures may need to be taken to control any risks identified.

This checklist should be completed annually, or more frequently if there are any changes to arrangements such as new equipment, changes to the home-office space or house move.

Some of the most important considerations include: -

- If possible, an area should be set aside from the rest of your living space to ensure that you are able to work without distractions,
- The home office should have adequate space for you to work comfortably and safely,
- The desk should be large enough to accommodate equipment and paperwork,
- Preferably the home working space should have sufficient storage and be well organised, with equipment close to hand,
- The work area should be well lit, with natural lighting if possible,
- Equipment and sockets should be situated to avoid potential trip hazards, and,
- Regular visual checks on cables of any electronic equipment supplied to you should be carried out reporting defects accordingly.

Bewdley Town Council reserve the right to visit an employee's home at an agreed time for work-related purposes, including health and safety matters and to inspect, service or repair equipment (e.g. for PAT testing).

### **4. Facilities and equipment**

The council may provide equipment to enable working from home and will maintain and replace items when necessary.

It is an employee's responsibility to ensure that proper care is taken of the equipment provided and any faults/defects should be reported to the Council as soon as possible. Should the risk assessment identify the need for further equipment this should also be reported to the council.

All equipment provided belongs to the Bewdley Town Council, and upon termination of employment it will be expected to be promptly returned.

### **5. Hours of work**

A contract of employment will specify the hours of work with the expectation that an employee is contactable by telephone or email. There may be times during the working day when an employee is not available in which case these should be flagged to the Clerk (or the Chair of the Council) with prior authorisation, this does not include comfort breaks.

All employees by law are permitted to take adequate rest breaks which should be, as a minimum:

- A break of at least 20 minutes during each working day over 6 hours,
- A daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, i.e. the time between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day, and,
- At least one complete day each week when no work is done.

#### **6. Potential conflicts of interest**

During hours of work, the council expects that a work environment enables effective working and that there is minimal distraction of domestic matters.

In the case of emergency requiring attendance relating to a non-work matter, notification of such should be forwarded to the Clerk or Chairman.

#### **7. Data protection**

Employees are responsible for keeping all documents and information associated material secure at all times. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to ensure:

- that filing cabinets and drawers are locked when they are not being used,
- that all documentation belonging to the Town Council is safely secured except when in use.
- that passwords are set up on all IT equipment and applications,
- that documents are saved to cloud based software.
- that sensitive telephone conversations take place in privacy.

#### **8. Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements**

Bewdley Town Council's Employers' Liability Insurance extends to home-based staff and covers council equipment in the home working environment.

Employees may also be required to seek permission from its landlord or mortgage lender to allow for a working from home arrangement.

Employees are also required to report their home working status to their own insurance provider to ensure no infringement invalidates the domestic policy.

## Home Working Risk Assessment Template

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Assessor: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Risk	Yes / No	Action Required
<b>Desk Area</b>		
Do you have adequate space to work comfortably?		
Is there enough space underneath your desk to stretch your legs?		
Are there trailing electrical cables around your working area that need to be tied up?		
Is your working area warm, well-lit and well-ventilated?		
Do you need to a desk lamp to improve lighting?		
Is your working area clutter free so that you can focus easily on the task?		
<b>Display Screen Set-Up</b>		
Is your desk chair set up correctly? Is your lower back supported, are there armrests and are your feet flat on the floor?		
Do you have enough surface space on your desk to work comfortably?		
Are your keyboard and mouse clean and within easy reach, without having to stretch?		
Is your display screen clean and positioned so there is no glare from a window or light?		
Is your display screen level with your eyes so it does not cause discomfort to your neck or head?		
Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?		
<b>Fire and Electrical Safety</b>		
Are smoke detectors working and checked regularly e.g. every month?		
Do you regularly dispose of waste, including papers, to prevent a build-up of fire 'fuel'?		
Does any electrical equipment spark or show signs of burns and so needs removing from use?		
Do any wires look damaged or frayed and so need removing from use?		
Do you regularly inspect your electrical equipment to check for signs of wear and tear?		

Do you switch off equipment when not in use?		
Do you have emergency arrangements in place in case of fire?		
<b>Stress and Welfare</b>		
Do you take regular breaks away from your workstation?		
Do you carry out regular stretches at your desk to avoid stiff or sore muscles?		
Do you sit with good posture or are you hunched over the desk?		
Do you have easy access to first aid equipment if required?		
If you regularly use a computer, do you have your eyes tested every year?		
Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?		
<b>Manual Handling</b>		
Are all items that you need for work within easy reach?		
Are heavy items stored on lower shelves to avoid the need for lowering them?		
Do you know how to correctly pick up, carry and lower heavy items?		
<b>Slips, Trips and Falls</b>		
Are floor coverings, such as carpets and rugs, secure?		
Do you frequently carry hot drinks and food upstairs/downstairs and risk tripping?		
Are stairways and corridors clear of trip hazards?		
Is the floor area around your desk clear of boxes, papers and wires?		
<b>Lone Working</b>		
Are you familiar with your employer's lone working health and safety policy?		
Do you know the name and number of a manager or supervisor who you can get in touch with easily?		
Do you have a system for regularly 'checking in' with your employer if you are not visibly online each day?		
Is your home kept secure whilst you are working there?		
Are important files and laptops kept locked away securely when not in use?		

Number of Actions Required: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Actions Completed: \_\_\_\_\_