

Flexible Working Policy: Guidelines for Working from Home

Introduction

These guidelines aim to provide a clear approach to effective working from home and outline the various arrangements and conditions that may apply including those relating to health and safety. Requests to work from home as part of a regular and ongoing working pattern should be made in accordance with the University's Flexible Working Policy and Procedure.

These guidelines aim to support managers and employees in understanding how home working can work effectively. Working from home means performing work duties for agreed hours from the home (i.e. normally in the employee's private dwelling) or another remote location. The flexibility and productivity outcomes available from working from home can be attractive to both the University and employees. Such arrangements are based on a philosophy of trust and mutual benefit and support a system of performance and recognition based on employee outputs rather than attendance at work.

The University recognises that working from home can:

- be mutually beneficial where work needs to be done with minimum distraction or interruption, therefore improving productivity;
- assist with flexibility around reasonable caring, dependent or domestic responsibilities;
- support a phased return to work after maternity or sick leave; or as a reasonable adjustment;
- save use of cars and other transport, reduce commuting time and easing car-parking requirements. This will also help to reduce congestion at peak times, reduce pollution and help to lower our carbon footprint;
- relieve office space pressures;
- reduce instances of sickness absence where an employee is unwell with a minor contagious condition but is well enough to be productive from home;
- support the effective recruitment and retention of employees.

What type of work can be undertaken at from home?

There are various roles within the university that can accommodate home working. Duties which may lend themselves particularly well to home working may include:

- report or policy writing;
- desk based research;

- completion of notes or minutes;
- preparation or administration for academic work;

However, not every role will be suitable for home working and each request must be considered on a case by case basis. Although each case will be considered on its own merits, it is unusual for the following roles to be able to work from home on a regular basis:

- those involving direct customer face to face contact on a frequent basis (for example reception);
- those which include frequent face to face contact with other team members; servicing and serving other University facilities or assets (e.g. security office, physical recreation assistant, grounds worker);
- those involved in the delivery of teaching and other face to face support and duties for undergraduate and postgraduate students

Working on campus is important for fostering a thriving teaching and research environment and so agreements to work from home should be balanced and complement time on campus.

Regular home working is also unlikely to be suitable for employees who would be carrying out primary carer duties whilst working from home. In these circumstances flexibility in working hours may be more suitable depending on operational requirements.

In addition, home working may not be suitable for employees who require additional supervision such as new employees on probation, apprenticeships/interns and those undergoing formal capability reviews.

Working Effectively From Home

Managing Disruptions:

Whilst working from home can help to reduce the distractions associated with working in a work based environment, there are other distractions that may arise when working from home. These can include disruptions from family and friends and if applicable employees may need to let them know that they are working and unavailable despite being physically present at home. In addition, the temptation to engage in household matters whilst at home can cause difficulties.

It is important to recognise that when working from home employees are indeed still working and must be contactable as they would be if working on campus.

Competencies and Behaviours:

It is important to consider the competencies and behaviours needed for effective home-working, which include:

- self-motivated, self-reliant and disciplined to work without direct supervision;
- flexibility and good time management skills;
- able to work with reduced social contact.

Health and safety considerations:

Most of the work that employees are likely to undertake at home is paper based work or work on a computer and as such should not introduce additional health and safety risks that are not already present in the home environment. The home worker should refer to guidance on the University's web pages regarding the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and the principles for setting up an appropriate workstation at home. Further information is available on IntraBrunel:

<https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/safety/policiesandguidance/Documents/Display%20Screen%20Equipment%20Form.docx>

The home worker should also refer to the "Working Alone" leaflet available at www.hse.gov.uk.

Communication:

Good communication is an essential part of any successful home working arrangement. Provision must be made to allow effective communication with work colleagues and external clients during the working day.

The arrangements for contact should be agreed prior to working from home. The employee's home phone number and home address may not be divulged without their express permission.

Under no circumstances are arrangements to be made for students, clients or representatives to meet with the employee at their home. All such meetings should be carried out at the University campus or external setting to maintain the necessary level of professionalism and safety.

Equipment and technology:

As the University campus remains a work base for the employee and a desk and equipment is provided on campus, the University does not usually provide the employee with additional IT equipment, phone, broadband connection or furniture to work from home

The employee is responsible for ensuring that they have suitable telephone and broadband services where required and for contacting the service provider in the event of any technical issues. No payment will be made by the University to provide this service. It is not possible for the University to provide IT support for equipment owned by employees.

Employees who are using University supplied and supported equipment can receive telephone support from IT Services, but if the issue cannot be resolved by telephone, they will be required to bring the equipment on site, as home visits are not possible.

All employees are required to use their own and supplied equipment correctly and to take reasonable steps to maintain any equipment provided, removing defective equipment from use and reporting defects on supplied equipment to their line manager. University equipment may not be used by others i.e. family and friends etc.

Office 365 Free Office Software enables you to download and install the latest copy of Office on your personal device from the Cloud. For more information on

downloading the software go to
<https://connect.brunel.ac.uk/DisplayAsset/?Asset=431>

Security of information and data protection:

Appropriate security must be obtained for all University information stored on a computer (including back-up arrangements) and there must be secure storage for any confidential information. Employees are responsible for ensuring the security of University property and all University information, files, documents, data, etc. within their possession. This includes paper and electronic material. Employees should review the security advice available on IntraBrunel at <https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/cc/security/Pages/default.aspx> and discuss any security implications of home working with their manager and Information Services.

In most cases it will not be necessary for employees to transfer private or confidential information from the University to home as these files should be stored and accessed by using either:

- the intranet to remotely access the data using the virtual private network (VPN);
- work on the data in SharePoint, where the data is held securely and any communication over the internet is encrypted.

Both the above methods avoid the need to store any data on the local computer. The computer must also be password-protected. All home workers are required to adhere to the University's Data Protection Policy whilst undertaking University business. A copy of the Data Protection Policy is available on IntraBrunel <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/information-access/data-protection>

Insurance:

The employee must understand that it is their responsibility to assess the implications for them of home working, for example with respect to taxation, insurance, mortgage, rental or leasing arrangements. The University will not pay any additional costs incurred by the employee. Homeworking will be agreed on the basis that the employee has addressed any potential issues.

Costs/expenses:

No contribution will be made by the University towards normal household expenses attached to home working, such as heating, lighting or council tax costs. When an employee is working at or from home, journeys made to the normal office base will not be reimbursed as normal home to work rules apply.

Working From Home Arrangements and Terms

Working from home is not a contractual right through either expressed or implied terms. Where working from home arrangements are in place they will not constitute a change to an employee's terms and conditions of employment. Working from home arrangements will be subject to review to ensure that they remain appropriate for all parties and may be modified through discussion

Employees working from home must fulfil their contractual working hours although there may be some flexibility in the operation of working hours whilst working from home. As with office based work, it is important that employees remember to take regular breaks.

Employees who are unable to work due to sickness should inform their manager in the usual way in accordance with the Absence Policy and Procedure regardless of their work location.