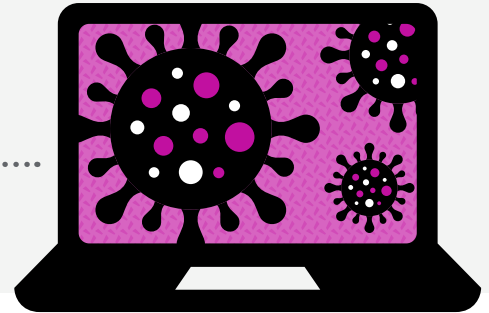


Health and safety guide: Hybrid working

Risk factors to consider with hybrid working.



Everyone has a responsibility when it comes to health and safety especially during this time where working from home and from the office may be necessary. Employees also have a responsibility for their own safety when homeworking. These guidelines are provided to help employees ensure they are working in a safe and healthy environment at home and in the office. An example assessment is also included in appendix 1.0. It is worth noting hybrid working arrangements are not only a benefit to manage COVID-19 risk, but also a benefit in the event of other issues e.g. weather events.

Please note it is important you adhere to your own organisation's health and safety policies and should refer to your own internal guidance and management requirements at all times.



Hybrid working

Hybrid working or "blended working" is being adopted by many different industries as a new way of working. Hybrid working involves employee's splitting their time between the physical workplace and a home working environment. The hybrid workplace gives reassurance to employees while COVID-19 restrictions are still in effect. Hybrid working also creates a flexible working environment, maintaining employee wellbeing.

It is key that an office risk assessment is in place covering transport and office risk, and that the home working assessment is linked to the office risk assessment where practicable. For example, the home working assessment should specify the likely time at home and within the office.

Key steps towards introducing hybrid working should include:

- Creating an overall policy on hybrid working including guidance / assessments. This may change due to job role.
- Ensuring suitable training for managers and employees on hybrid working.
- A communication strategy for hybrid working with all employees, including information on how to request hybrid working and contractual requirements.

Back in the workplace considerations:

- Conduct a review of your COVID-19 risk assessment, ensuring hybrid working arrangements are noted, and are part of risk controls.
- Consider "bubbles" where departments work on set days as part of the hybrid approach.
- Refresh training and procedures when employees return e.g. fire, security, ergonomics. It may be useful to outline the company's hybrid working policy at this time.
- Hygiene, hands, face, space and fresh air should be a consideration.
- Ensure regular updates of home and office risk assessments are made as legislation updates are received. This ideally should be done together.

Prior to any return to the workplace, organisations may wish to consider undertaking a listening exercise with their workforce (e.g. online survey). This will help them to understand employee's specific working preferences for the future, as well as learn more about their experiences of working during the pandemic. It's also worth bearing in mind the impact of a large-scale return to the workplace on those employees who have continued to work in the workplace throughout the pandemic, and their preferences for working patterns.

Guidance for employees



Home working equipment

Where it is reasonable and possible, basic equipment should be provided (such as a keyboard and mouse) by your employer. If you are an occasional homeworker and require additional or specialist equipment, you should request this via the process outlined by your company's policy.



Homeworking during pregnancy

If you are pregnant, it is important that you follow the government guidance during this period of risk of exposure to COVID-19. If you are pregnant and have not informed your organisation's HR, it is important to do so in line with your company's policies and procedures. As you may now be working from home during your pregnancy, your employer may need to reassess your working environment and wellbeing.



Suitable work area and safe environment

Here are some examples of 'good practice':

- Identify a segregated area to work away from any distractions, if possible.
- Use a workspace and desk that are large enough with ample leg room.
- Make sure lighting, heating and cooling/ventilation are suitable.
- Ensure your electrical system is safe. Do not overload extension blocks and route cables, this will prevent them from being trip hazards or getting entangled with your feet under your desk.
- Be organised and try to maintain a clear desk policy so you don't have piles of paper or clutter on your desk.
- Have a smoke detector/fire alarm that you test regularly. A small fire extinguisher is also recommended.
- Try to keep basic first aid kit if possible.
- Fix any trip or slip hazards around your home.



Simple steps for optimising your workstation

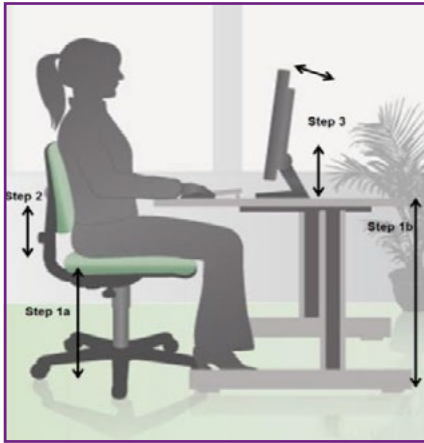


Diagram 1.0 – Workstation step guide.



Diagram 2.0 – Workstation peripheral guide.

Step 1a – adjust the height of your chair

- Adjust the height of your chair so that with relaxed shoulders your forearms, wrists and hands are approximately horizontal with the keyboard.
- Adjust the height and angle of your backrest to provide good support to your back, particularly your lower back.
- Use a chair that allows you to sit comfortably at a suitable height with sufficient back support, if you do not have a height adjustable chair.

Step 1b - optimise your desk

- If your feet are not flat on the floor use a footstool or an object that allows you to keep your feet flat.

Step 2 - adjust the position of your screen/s

- Screen/s should be straight ahead of you. If you have two or more screens and one of them is dominant, it should be positioned directly in front of you and the secondary screen/s positioned to the left or right.
- If you do not have a separate monitor, elevate your laptop to the suitable height – be resourceful and use a box, books or an item that will keep the laptop stable (if a lap-up is not available).
- Avoid glare by adjusting the lighting or by moving your screen/s. If the glare is coming through a window, adjust blinds/curtains or orientate your workstation so that it is 90° from the window.

Arranging your peripherals

- Keep your keyboard and mouse within easy reach.
- Keep your arm and wrist relaxed and straight; don't bend them up, down or to either side.
- Avoid typing with your wrist in contact with the desk.
- Move your whole arm and not just your wrist.
- Rest your hand lightly on the mouse – do not force or squeeze it.

Other considerations for your health and safety



Stay safe

- Keep in regular contact with your line manager. Hybrid working may limit manager contact.
- If you are showing symptoms related to COVID-19 you should follow the government guidance and isolate yourself from others.
- You should also contact the health service. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>



Be well

COVID-19 and the easing of lockdown restrictions is understandably causing some employees a great deal of worry and increasing levels of stress and anxiety. It is very important to look after your mental health and wellbeing at this time.

Below are some simple steps that can be taken to help reduce stress and anxiety:

- Use reputable sources for the latest information regarding COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions – it's important to avoid speculation and use official sources.
- Stay connected – it's important to stay in touch with friends, family and work colleagues to maintain a strong support network. It really helps to talk through worries and concerns with others.
- Try to find distractions with enjoyable things – making time to do things we enjoy is a good way of distracting ourselves from the news.



Take breaks and stretch

- Remember to take frequent breaks and get up from your chair. Aim to have a 5-minute break every hour.
- Look away from the screen at distant objects while doing stretching exercises for neck, arms, wrists and hands.



Be prepared for an emergency

- Have a plan for an emergency, whether it is a fire or other situations. Keep your contact details on your organisation's specified system.



Working with children present and caring for others

- You may be homeworking whilst young children are home which may require arranging a routine that allows you to work whilst sharing responsibilities of supervising children.
- A general expectation is that you will balance your work needs against your family responsibilities and there is an expectation of flexibility from both you and the organisation. If, despite working flexibly in this way, you encounter any issues and are not able to fulfil your normal working hours, you should speak to your line manager.
- Utilise hybrid working to fit in as much as possible with the home environment.



Further information

This includes Willis Towers Watson guidance, Mind and Health and Safety Executive information links:

- <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-gb/insights/trending-topics/covid-19-coronavirus>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>
- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

You can also contact our Health and Safety Deputy Practice Leader, [Chris Brown](#).

Appendix 1.0 – Example home working assessment and workstation

It will be essential that the home environment is monitored to ensure that changes of circumstances that may be prejudicial to effective home working may be identified and issues resolved. The questions on the following pages will take you through all of the relevant areas. If you have any queries or concerns please discuss these with your manager.

The form may be completed and saved in Word, or printed and completed by hand. If you save it electronically, please rename the document, using your name to identify the file. Please retain records and act promptly in relation to actions derived from the risk assessment process.

When the form is complete, please keep a copy for yourself and send in the internal post or via email to human resources for action in respect to identified issues:

Name	
Job Title	
Division	
Connected to which office?	
Hybrid Working Arrangements (if applicable)	
Line Manager	
Home Address	
Contact Telephone Number	
Staff Number	
Date questionnaire completed	
What is the nature of your work?	
How much of your working day is spent at home? Please quantify this by specifying: How many hours per week? How many hours per day?	
How much time spent at the office (usual)	
Applicable office risk assessment reference number	
Are you aware of the office risk assessment and has been suitably reviewed / trained?	
Are you a habitual PC user (use the PC for more than 2 hours per day)? If yes, please complete the workstation assessment at the end of this document	

1. Please describe the area that you propose to use when working at home.

Which room would you be using?	
Would you be using the whole of the room for a work area, or a part of it? Please describe.	
Will the work area be devoted to being a workplace? (Please indicate wholly, partially, etc.)	

Diagram of home working space

Please draw a sketch of the room you intend using for working at home.

The following details must be provided, either on the diagram, or below:

- the main **dimensions** of the room
- the location and size of any **windows** and **doors**
- the location of any internal walls within the area
- the location of any **fixed or immovable objects**, such as radiators, built in cupboards or furniture you do not wish to move within the room
- the location and number of **power sockets**
- the location and number of **telephone sockets**
- the location of any wall and ceiling **lights**
- the **location** and **dimensions** of any desk already situated in the room. Please include position of the PC and printer, if applicable.

(The diagram of the area to be used will be sufficient for space planning purposes.)

2. Workstation	
Do you already have a suitable desk and chair and will this provide sufficient space to work in? Advice on suitable equipment can be found at the end of this document.	
Is there sufficient space to enable you to get in and out of the work area easily?	
Do you use a laptop at home? If so, do you use a separate keyboard or as a stand alone laptop? Would a laptop riser be beneficial?	

3. Storage facilities	
Will you need storage facilities at home in connection with your work? If so, do you have floor space to accommodate suitable cupboards or filing units? Please describe.	

4. How noisy will the home be while you are working?	
Have you been in your home during working hours, so that you have a good idea of the level of noise?	
Are other members of the household present during working hours and will you find this distracting?	
Is there any noise from other sources within the home during working hours?	
Is there any noise from sources outside the home (i.e. neighbours, passers by, local children, traffic, heavy machinery etc.)?	
Do you believe this will have an effect during your working day?	

5. Is the work area adequately lit?	
Is this by natural light, electric light, or both?	
Would you need any task lighting in addition to the lights already present in the working area?	

Is the room exposed to direct sunlight? If so, are there any means of controlling its effects? Please describe.	
Do you anticipate any problems associated with lighting when working at home?	

6. Is the work area well heated and ventilated?

Does the work area tend to be hard to heat during winter months? If so, how would you tackle this if you worked at home?	
Does the work area tend to be very hot during the summer? If so, how difficult would it be to work under these conditions?	

7. Health & safety

Can you anticipate any potential health and safety hazards or potential health risks from working at home? If so, please describe.	
Do you have a smoke alarm in your home?	
Do you require a first aid kit?	

8. Is there adequate security at the home?

Is there adequate security at the home, such that you feel you can operate with no fears for your own safety or for the security of company property? If not, please provide details.	
Where is the property located? i.e. is the area remote, busy etc? Please describe.	
Have you ever experienced any problems relating to home security (i.e. burglary, vandalism, etc)? If so, please describe.	
Do you have window locks on all windows?	
Do you have a burglar alarm? If so, is it connected to a monitoring station?	

9. Electrical safety

Is there evidence that the PC and other electrical equipment, has been tested for safety within the last two years? (There should be a PAT (portable appliance testing) date label on each piece of equipment.)

Do you require a surge protector?

10. Manual handling

Are there any heavy item(s) (eg. boxes of heavy files) that you are required to carry to be able to do your job?

If yes, please give examples:

11. Delivery access

Is there adequate parking/access at the home for deliveries and servicing of equipment, for example? If so, please describe.

On which floor of the property is the work area?

12. Other members of your family

Do you anticipate any problems from other members of your household or from neighbours if you are working at home? If so, please describe.

13. Are the following parties (where applicable) likely to raise any objections to home working? If so, please describe.

Landlord

Mortgage Lender

Insurer of the property

Local Authority

You should make formal enquiries of all of these parties (where applicable) before proceeding with any home working investigations. Generally, these parties will not have any objections - if there are any questions please contact your divisional management.

14. Planning on moving home?

Are you planning a move of home in the near future? If so, please give details of likely timescale and location, if known.

If you have any queries or concerns about the above questions or about the suitability of your home for home working, please discuss them with your manager.

Suitable equipment and workstation set-up

Furniture

Any furniture purchased should conform to the following minimum specification:

- **Desk:** Height should be approximately 72cm above floor level
- **Chair:** Must have 5-star castor base and adjustable seat height
- **Filing cabinet:** This should be fitted with an anti-tilt mechanism

It should be noted that any expenses incurred through the purchase of furniture for home workers is to be borne directly by the relevant business unit.

Posture

Check the following to ensure correct posture:

- User should be able to sit square onto the PC whilst working.
- Arms should be horizontal with the keyboard.
- Feet should be flat on the floor or on footrest.
- Top of screen should be slightly below eye level.
- Screen should be approximately an arm's distance away.

Mouse

- Keep your mouse within easy reach and do not over-reach.
- Keep your arm and wrist relaxed and straight. Don't bend it up, down or to either side.
- Move your whole arm and not just your wrist.
- Rest your hand lightly on the mouse – do not force or squeeze it.

Taking breaks

Remember to take frequent breaks! You should aim to have a 5-minute break in every hour. This doesn't mean going to sit in a comfy chair for five minutes. Anything that takes you away from looking at the screen and using your mouse or keyboard for five minutes can be considered a break. Having none or too few breaks can cause headaches, neck and back ache, dry eyes, aching arms/wrists, stress, tiredness.

Workstation assessment example

Chair	Yes	No	Details
Is your chair comfortable?			
Do you know how to adjust the following?			
▪ Chair height?			
▪ Back rest?			
▪ Seat pan?			
▪ Arm rests?			
Are your feet flat on the floor without too much pressure on the back of your thighs?			
Are your forearms horizontal to the desk when in a typing position?			
Keyboard	Yes	No	Details
Is the keyboard comfortable to use?			
Is your keyboard positioned close to the edge of your desk (about 10-15cms)?			
Are the characters on the keys easily readable?			
Do you use a wrist rest?			

Mouse	Yes	No	Details
Is the mouse positioned close to you?			
What side is the mouse?			
Do you use a mouse wrist rest?			
Is the mouse comfortable to use and works smoothly?			
Do you use your wrist to move the mouse?			
Display screen	Yes	No	Details
How many screens do you use?			
Are your eyes at the same height as the top of the screen?			
Is your screen one arm's reach away from you?			
Are the characters clear, readable and the text comfortable to read?			
Is the image free of flicker or movement?			
Is the screen free from glare?			
Other equipment	Yes	No	Details
Is the phone within close reach?			
What side is the phone on?			
Do you hold the phone between your ear/shoulder, not using your hands?			
Do you have to do significant amounts of copy typing?			
Do you often place paper in front of the keyboard and lean over paper to type?			
Do you use a laptop at work?			
If using a laptop do you have a screen on stand and separate keyboard and mouse?			
Environment	Yes	No	Details
Is there enough room to change position and vary movement?			
Is under your desk free from clutter?			
Other	Yes	No	Details
Do you have any discomfort or other symptoms which you attribute to your workstation?			
Do you have any medical problem that is affecting your workstation?			
Do you take regular breaks from your workstation?			
Do you have any other comments/concerns about your workstation?			

I agree that any relevant details may be released to Human Resources, my Line Manager or Health & Safety Manager as appropriate. Information of a personal, sensitive or medically confidential nature will not be released unless I have explicitly consented to this in writing. Other, non-sensitive information will be released on a need to know basis to enable any recommendations or modifications to be made.

Signature:

Date:

Printed Name:



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