

# Human Resources

## HOMWORKING

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South Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue  
WORKING FOR A SAFER  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

## HOMEWORKING

### INTRODUCTION

1. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) recognise that homeworking can bring advantages both to the employee and to the organisation.
2. As a member of the Dignity at Work Partnership<sup>1</sup>, SYFR is committed to promoting a positive working environment where the dignity and respect, to which all employees are entitled, is not undermined. No employee should be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, gender or gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or spiritual belief, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, marital/parental status, family ties, trade union or political belief, hours worked, or any other reason, either directly or indirectly.
3. SYFR is committed to promoting a flexible workforce that enables employees to balance their home and work commitments. Clearly not all roles and/or employees will be suitable for Homeworking consequently each situation will be considered on its merits.
4. Homeworking should not be viewed as a 'perk', but should be regarded as an alternative way of working in relation to specific circumstances.

### SCOPE

6. This scheme will apply where a specific task/s is considered to be appropriate to achieving the intended benefits of the scheme. An employee's grade, normal working hours or normal working location does not limit eligibility.
7. There are many different reasons why people might want to work from home. Line managers should give priority to staff that need to work from home. For example they may have a disability which makes attendance in an office on a daily basis difficult, or they may have childcare or other caring responsibilities which mean they have to spend periods of time at home.
8. Where an employee considers that the performance of a specific task/s would be carried out more effectively from home, they can request authorisation from their function head.

### BENEFITS OF HOMEWORKING

9. For South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue:
  - The scheme will make available more flexible ways of working that should, in turn, increase effectiveness. Surveys show that remote workers and those working from home tend to be more productive and have lower levels of absenteeism than office-based workers

<sup>1</sup> The Dignity at Work Partnership is a partnership between the Government, Unite (the UK's largest union) and major public and private sector organisations. For further information on the Partnership, see [www.dignityatwork.org](http://www.dignityatwork.org)

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- The scheme will contribute to ensuring SYFR is recognised as a flexible employer
- The scheme may provide a more supportive environment to address a specific task, which should alleviate the pressures often associated with meeting deadlines etc
- The scheme can free up valuable workspaces
- The scheme can help to progress the environmental agenda of the organisation, particularly in relation to time and travel efficiencies, i.e. less need for employees to travel, particularly at peak periods, which is when the highest CO2 emissions are made
- Where a particular task/s requires enhanced levels of concentration, working from home may reduce the amount of distractions, which should facilitate a more effective outcome
- Providing employees with access to the scheme can improve motivation and commitment as working from home provides a degree of flexibility.

### 10. For the employee:

- Working from home may lead to greater job satisfaction, enabling a better quality of work to be produced
- Working from home may further allow employees to better manage their work and personal life commitments
- Working from home can often lead to more efficient uses of time. Commuting time can be switched to productive time.

## SUITABILITY

### 11. Many tasks may be considered for homeworking, although not every employee undertakes work that is suitable to be carried out at home. The function head must make a judgement regarding which tasks are appropriate, taking into account the following:

- There should be clear objectives and measurable outputs (e.g. the production of reports, drafting of policies, project work etc.) in order to appreciate the timescales associated with the task
- The work requires long periods of uninterrupted quiet
- The nature of the task/s should not be dependent upon direct supervision for the duration of the homeworking
- The work does not involve significant amounts of communication between the

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employee and other parties. Additionally, arrangements must be made to ensure there is effective communication between the employee's home and their normal workplace

- Arrangements must be made to ensure that any confidential information is protected and not disclosed.

The above considerations are not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive. The function head retains discretion as to whether the tasks are suitable to be carried out at home.

12. It is essential that the employee has the attributes needed to be able to work effectively away from their usual workplace. The function head must be satisfied that the employee has the following:

- Good time management skills
- Self-motivation and discipline
- Decision making and problem solving skills
- The ability to work without direct supervision
- The ability to meet scheduled deadlines
- A suitable place to work at home
- An awareness of the health and safety implications of using the home as an appropriate working environment.

These attributes and skills should be included in the person specification for a post suitable for home/remote working.

## LINE MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES

13. Line managers should treat each application to work from home on its own merits and give it sympathetic and careful consideration, considering the practicalities outlined in Appendix A and with regard to the operational needs of the team.
14. Line managers should consider the needs of the individual applying to work from home, including the individual's welfare. Special consideration should be given to applications for homeworking from people with disabilities. Working from home could be considered a 'reasonable adjustment' under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in some cases.
15. Issues that line managers should consider when considering the needs of the individual and their suitability for homeworking can be found in Appendix C - Homeworking Suitability Assessment. The line manager should complete the assessment together with the employee, when discussing suitability for working from

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home.

16. Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that they liaise with both the employee and the Health and Safety function to ensure that a risk assessment has taken place, where appropriate, prior to any home working commencing.

### EQUIPMENT

17. SYFR will not provide any additional computer equipment/printers etc to homeworkers. Homeworking employees would be required to utilise or purchase such equipment for use in their own homes.
18. SYFR will ensure that homeworkers have remote access to the organisations computer network drives as required.
19. The Health and Safety function will carry out a risk assessment of the employee's home working environment to ensure health and safety requirements are met. No home working can commence prior to this risk assessment taking place.
20. When working with VDU's, the employees work station must be comfortable to avoid causing musculoskeletal problems, the screen should be free from glare and regular breaks must be taken to prevent tiredness. Further information can be obtained from the Health and Safety function and/or Occupational Health Unit.
21. An employee working at home must inform their manager as soon as possible in the event of accidents, incidents or dangerous occurrences. This is to ensure compliance to Health and Safety legislation.
22. Further information on the health and safety implications of working from home are outlined in Appendix B and D. More detailed advice should be sought from a Health and Safety Advisor, and a risk assessment carried out, prior to commencing any homeworking.

### SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

23. The employee is required to confirm that they are able to maintain the security and confidentiality of documents within their home and comply with ICT security (details of which are available from ICT and the intranet) and data protection requirements (further details available from the DPA Officer within ICT).

### SICKNESS ABSENCE

24. If an employee working at home is sick, they must telephone the Occupational Health Nurse Advisor on 0800 5878544, as per the usual absence reporting procedure. Further information on absence is available in the Absence Management policy.

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### FLEXIBLE WORKING SCHEME

26. For those employees conditioned to the Flexible Working Scheme, they will have the discretion to tailor their working time. On this basis, the 'core times' criterion of the Flexible Working Scheme will not apply for those working from home on a particular day. Employees working from home must still work the minimum hourly requirement for either a full or half day in accordance to the Flexible Working Scheme.
27. Hours worked will be credited to the employee's flexible working balance via the standard procedure.

***If you require any further guidance on this document please contact the Human Resources Function.***

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### Appendix A

### HOME WORKING REQUIREMENTS – THE PRACTICALITIES

Not all of the practicalities described may be applicable in all cases of homeworking. All areas are to be discussed between the line manager and the proposed homeworker.

<b>Technical Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate electrical and telephone sockets</li> </ul>
<b>Health and Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Health and Safety function can provide information on health and safety in relation to home working</li> <li>• SYFR can provide a first aid kit and basic first aid manual to employees who homework on a regular occasions or for a prolonged period / more permanently. This can be obtained via the Supplies function.</li> <li>• All employees must complete, at the very least, a risk assessment form, which must be signed off by their line manager. The Health and Safety function will arrange a risk assessment of their work space, where appropriate, in compliance with health and safety law.</li> <li>• SYFR will have the right to visit the home workers home in order to carry out health and safety inspections by prior arrangement</li> <li>• As part of the risk assessment, SYFR will ensure that all homeworking employees have smoke alarms fitted</li> <li>• Any accidents in the course of work must be reported and recorded in SYFR's accident book</li> </ul>
<b>Expenses and Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expenses will be paid for all work related travel from home (where home is the contractual place of work) to destination and back in line with current SYFR expenses policies</li> </ul>
<b>Insurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SYFR's employer and public liability insurance will cover home bases</li> </ul>
<b>Data Back-up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All data must be backed up in line with ICT instruction. Further information is available from the ICT function.</li> <li>• All documents to be backed up remotely in the appropriate place on the SYFR network</li> </ul>

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<b>Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT security is critical, especially in a networked system</li> <li>• Passwords must be protected and not used by others outside the organisation</li> <li>• Access to SYFR's central files should not be given to non-employees</li> </ul>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All employees are covered by SYFR's Confidentiality Policy</li> </ul>
<b>Data Protection Act</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff must comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA)</li> </ul>

### Communication Structures

Effective communication is vital to successful homeworking. The following guidelines will help to ensure that homeworkers continue to feel part of the organisation.

<b>Core contact times</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diary dates emailed in advance to line manager weekly and updated if changed</li> <li>• Frequent or daily telephone contact/e-mail with line manager to be agreed</li> </ul>
<b>Personal contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at away days</li> <li>• At least monthly visits to main office base or as otherwise negotiated between the potential homeworker and the line manager</li> <li>• Involvement in, and attendance at, organisational meetings as required</li> </ul>
<b>Internal communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All internal documents to be circulated to homeworkers</li> </ul>
<b>Access to technical support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of SYFR's internal ICT support for remote access difficulties. Employee will be responsible for own equipment maintenance</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring of work performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular support and supervision sessions with line manager as defined in SYFR policy (i.e. PDRs etc)</li> </ul>

### Tax Issues

For tax purposes the Inland Revenue does not accept that homeworking is a workplace if there is no objective requirement in nature of an organisation's job/work which requires some or all duties of an employment to be carried out at home.

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### Appendix B

#### Health & Safety Issues

Management should be aware of key legislation concerning homeworking. Health and Safety Act regulations cover homeworkers as well as workplace-based employees and include:

- The management of health and safety at work regulations 1999
- Display screen equipment regulations 1992
- Manual handling operations regulations 1998
- Control of substances hazardous to health 2002
- Reporting of injuries diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations 1995

In addition, the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 state that an employer must provide a supply of adequate First Aid provisions to homeworkers. Therefore a first aid kit will be provided to all employees who work from home on more than an adhoc basis. It must also be noted that Health and Safety inspectors have the right to visit homeworkers as well as carry out inspections in workplaces. Consideration must also be given to potential training needs such as first aid and fire safety.

An initial homeworking risk assessment (Appendix D) should be carried out, by the employee, prior to an application for home working being approved. Further information on issues relating to the health and safety of homeworkers can be obtained by contacting the SYFR Health and Safety Advisor.

Following receipt of the initial homeworking risk assessment (Appendix D), the Health and Safety function will arrange for a risk assessment to take place prior to the commencement of homeworking. If, following this assessment, the homeworking environment is deemed unsuitable, the application will be declined and homeworking cannot take place.

Pregnant employees who work from home will be required to follow the Lone Working procedure in order to ensure their health and safety. Further information on lone working procedures can be found in the Lone Working policy, available from the intranet or Transactional HR. Similarly, in other circumstances where the Health and Safety function deem it necessary, homeworking may only take place under the proviso of the Lone-Working policy. This is to ensure that the health and safety of all employees is maintained, regardless of their work base.

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## Appendix C

### Homeworking Suitability Assessment

This form should be completed, along with the Risk Assessment Form, in cooperation with the intended homeworker, as an assessment of suitability for homeworking.

<b>Name of intended homeworker</b>	
<b>Home address</b>	
<b>Area of home intended to be used as a workplace</b>	
<b>Managers name and telephone number/extension number</b>	
<b>Function</b>	
<b>Summary of the main duties of the homeworker and what equipment will be used in the home to undertake</b>	
<b>Date of Homeworking Suitability Assessment</b>	

Please complete this section as fully as possible and return the completed form, together with any other supporting documentation (i.e. Initial Risk Assessment Form) to the Function Head for authorisation.

<b>During discussions of the suitability for homeworking, options have been discussed and implications, such as how the employee will balance any caring and homeworking responsibilities without long working hours have been explored.</b>	
<b>Please provide comments where appropriate.</b>	
<b>Are there any areas of the employee's job/role that cannot be done as easily at home as in the office?</b>	
<b>What is the proportion of the employee's work that can be done at home?</b>	

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<p><b>Is the employees work subject to regular change or variation?</b></p> <p><b>How will such changes/variations be managed if the employee was to work from home?</b></p>	
<p><b>How will the proposed homeworking fit in with the working patterns of other members of their team/function?</b></p> <p><b>What problems may arise if the employee was to work from home?</b></p>	
<p><b>Will cover be required during the periods the employee is working from home?</b></p> <p><b>How will any cover be provided without placing an unfair burden on other members of the team/function?</b></p>	
<p><b>Are there any performance management issues that will need to be taken into account?</b></p> <p><b>It may be helpful to link this to the employees PDR.</b></p>	
<p><b>Does the employee have line management responsibilities?</b></p> <p><b>Will there be any implication for the people whom the employee line manages and how will these issues be managed?</b></p>	
<p><b>Is the area to be used for homeworking suitable?</b></p> <p><b>Please refer to the Health and Safety Advisor and link to the Homeworking Risk Assessment (Appendix C)</b></p>	
<p><b>Does the employee have the ICT equipment required (this will not be provided by SYFR)?</b></p> <p><b>Does the employee have sufficient ICT skills to ensure the safe and</b></p>	

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effective use of such equipment from home?  Are there any ICT training requirements?	
Does the employee have sufficient, secure storage facilities?  Please consider any Data Protection implications.	
Are there any issues that may affect the effectiveness of managing the employee at distance?	
Does the work proposed clearly defined objectives or have clear performance management indicators?	
What are the proposed arrangements for adequately keeping in touch?	
Please provide any other information/concerns/supporting evidence that would assist during the decision to approve or reject Homeworking.	

Signed (line manager): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (employee): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**FOR FUNCTION HEAD**

Once completed, please forward this form, together with the Initial Homeworking Risk Assessment, to Human Resources for monitoring administrative purposes.

**I have discussed and considered this request for homeworking with the employee's line manager and find the postholder / post to be:**

Suitable for homeworking       Unsuitable for homeworking

Suitable for homeworking in part\*       (\*Please state number of days \_\_\_\_\_)

Signed (Function Head): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Appendix D

#### Initial Homeworking Risk Assessment

This form should be used by the employee to undertake an initial assessment of the suitability of that part of their home which has been identified as the intended location for homeworking. It must then be signed by both the employee and the line manager before being submitted to the Health and Safety function for a full risk assessment to be arranged.

No homeworking can take place prior to the full risk assessment by the Health and Safety function taking place.

<b>Name of intended homeworker</b>	
<b>Home address</b>	
<b>Area of home intended to be used as a workplace</b>	
<b>Managers name and telephone number/extension number</b>	
<b>Function</b>	
<b>Summary of the main duties of the homeworker and what equipment will be used in the home to undertake</b>	
<b>Date of Homeworking Suitability Assessment</b>	

Is the size of the room adequate for the intended purpose and is there sufficient space to move around safely?	Yes / No / N/A	Comments
Is there a source of natural light?		
Can the light be sufficiently controlled by blinds or curtains?		
Is the artificial light sufficient for the intended tasks?		
Is adequate ventilation available?		

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Does the heating system provide a comfortable temperature which is appropriate for the tasks?		
Is there sufficient storage space for the intended range of tasks?		
Are proposed work surfaces large enough for the intended tasks?		
Is a suitably adjustable chair available?		
Are there sufficient <i>fixed</i> electrical sockets to cope with essential electrical equipment?		
Are electrical and telephone sockets appropriately located to avoid the need for trailing cables across the room(s)?		
Is the work area suitable for any necessary manual handling activities?		
Is a suitable smoke alarm fitted and tested regularly?		
Is there any requirement for additional health and safety equipment (i.e. footrest, ergonomic keyboard/mouse etc)?		

**Employee's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

**Line Manager's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

This form must be submitted to the Health and Safety function in order for a full risk assessment to take place.

Further information on health and safety issues can be obtained from the Health and Safety function.