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Management

A GUIDE TO WORKING FROM HOME

From MY Compliance Management Ltd

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Please note – This is guide is provided by MY Compliance Management Ltd and is not intended as Government Guidance or legal advice. Please use the links below for official Government advice.

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Useful Links

World Health Organisation - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

NHS Website - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Public Health England/Government Website -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

1 SCOPE OF GUIDANCE

This guidance is for any members of staff who are working from home during a Crisis or Health Pandemic and is primarily aimed at protecting their health, safety and welfare.

Some aspects of it may also be of use to workers who are off work and in self-isolation, particularly in relation to mental and physical health and welfare.

The guide doesn't cover whether or not you should be allowed to work from home.

Link - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-employees>

2 HOW SELF ISOLATION AND SOCIAL DISTANCING APPLIES TO YOU

During a Health Pandemic or Crisis, everybody should be practising social distancing. This means reducing physical interaction between people in order to minimise the transmission of Covid-19.

You Should:

1. You can go for a walk outside if you stay more than 3 steps away from others.
2. Avoid other persons who may be displaying any symptoms of Coronavirus no matter how mild. More details can be found via the link attached to this requirement.
3. Avoid any non-essential travel of any kind including public transport.
4. Work from home wherever possible.
5. Avoid small and large outings/gatherings, public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
6. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. We advise that you do not visit each other's houses unless absolutely necessary (to drop off or collect essential items). Instead to communicate using technology such as phone, internet and social media platforms.
7. Wherever possible use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

In addition, some individuals are asked to self-isolate. This means that you should not leave your home for the self-isolation period.

You should self-isolate for at least seven days if you have symptoms including a high temperature and/or a new and continuous cough.

If you come into contact with somebody who has these symptoms then you should self-isolate for fourteen days.

If you fall into the following categories you should self-isolate for twelve weeks whether you have symptoms or not:

1. solid organ transplant recipients
2. people with specific cancers
3. people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
4. people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
5. people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
6. people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors.
7. people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs.
8. people with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD
9. people with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell disease)
10. people on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
11. women who are pregnant and who also have significant heart disease, congenital or acquired

If you are in any doubt about whether to self-isolate, then you should consult your GP via telephone or 111 via their website.

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-new-measures-to-protect-people-at-highest-risk-from-coronavirus>

3 SETTING UP YOUR WORKSPACE

When we are in work, we operate in a clear work area with our equipment set up in a way that best suits our posture and minimises the risk of strain or injury.

This should also be the case when working from home.

It may be the case that you are considering working on a bed, sofa or on the floor. We would recommend ensuring you are able to work in a similar way to the office.

Working in one of these areas will not be beneficial in the short term and may cause injury in the long term.

It also makes it harder to differentiate our work life from our home life, which can impact on the number of hours we are working as well as our mental health.

You should establish a clear work area in the house. Ideally, this would be in a corner of a room that you can leave when your workday is finished.

If this is not possible, then you should close down and tidy away all of your work equipment from whatever area it occupies when you are finished.

For example, your computer should not remain on your dining table when you are eating your evening meal.

Display Screen Equipment assessment and provision of proper equipment.

Health and safety legislation imposes a duty on employers to minimise the risks posed by Display Screen Equipment (DSE) including PCs, laptops, tablets and smartphones.

When working from home for short term or long term periods the risks should always be measured and controlled just as they would in the workplace.

Your employer should:

- Do a home workstation assessment or provide you with the guidance to allow you to do so for yourself. (you can find a MY Compliance Management DSE Audit by going to Modules > Library)
- Meet your needs for specialist work equipment where possible, including allowing you to take equipment such as keyboards, mouse, risers, etc, home.
- Where it isn't practical to take equipment home, such as ergonomic chairs or height adjustable desks, encourage you to find other ways of creating a comfortable working environment.

In addition to ensuring that you have the appropriate equipment and that it is set up correctly, there are some basic guidelines that you should follow in order to minimise the risks.

These are displayed on the HSE Website with the link below.

Link: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.htm>

4 SEPARATING HOME & WORK LIFE

It's vitally important while working from home that clear boundaries are set to ensure a Work/Home life balance is reached. This isn't just important in terms of physical safety but also in terms of your mental welfare.

When working as usual you will have clear start and finish times for your working life, it is also just as important to have the same structure when working from home. This is a basic step to stop yourself from overworking.

Make sure that you close everything down ahead of your finishing time and move away from your work area as soon as you are off the clock.

This helps to create a physical and mental line between your home life (leisure, family, rest time) and your work life (structure, office, working mind)

You should also ensure that you adhere to the Working Time Regulations by:

- Resting for at least eleven hours between shifts.
- Working no more than forty-eight hours per week (we would recommend much less than this whilst at home, e.g. not exceeding your contracted working week).

In addition to taking DSE breaks of at least five minutes every hour, you should ensure that you take your proper rest breaks. The legal minimum is one uninterrupted twenty-minute break if you work over six hours, though some employers allow for more or longer breaks.

You should:

- Stand up and walk away from your desk for an adequate break.
- Try and eat away from your desk wherever possible to ensure you are able to have 'rest time'.
- Go outside in order to get fresh air and sunlight, whether on your main break or during your shorter DSE breaks. This will help physical and mental wellbeing.

Establishing a routine is just as important as rest breaks during a working day. This ensures that you are able to keep up with timescales and ensure that you minimise any disconnect from reality.

A clear routine can include setting alarms or timers to alert you when to take breaks, scheduling contact with others through calls and virtual meetings etc.

It's important to set out your day and week in advance and stick to your plans. Try to incorporate some form of physical activity, but make sure you have a good balance of essential activities and recreational activities.

5 CONTACT WITH OTHERS: SOCIALISING & ISOLATION

It is of course important that you keep in regular contact with Friends and family during a 'working from home' period.

This will support you in minimising the mental impact of feeling isolated and lonely. This will help to minimise the mental health effects of long-term isolation and maintain a link to the wider world and your life.

There are a variety of ways to stay in contact with friends and family. Most people will have access to the internet through a smart phone if not a laptop or PC, and therefore will be able to use WhatsApp, Snapchat, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Linked In, Zoom or other means to do this.

Workers without the internet are unlikely to be working from home, unless supplied with a dongle from their employer. In this instance, you should ensure that you follow your employer's policy on acceptable use of their systems if using the internet on a work laptop or desktop.

Management should ensure that they stay in touch during this period, however this call should be more about how you are coping at home and how you are feeling. This would then lead on to a conversation around what support the colleague requires from the employer and the conversation can then look at performance and how this is affected during the circumstances.

It's important that if you do not feel your manager is very responsive or reactive in approaching you with contact that you raise your concerns with them. If this is unsuccessful and you do not feel supported by your employer/manager you should contact a union representative who will be able to give you advice on how to manage the situation.

If your work space uses programmes such as Microsoft Teams or Google Hangout's you may want to use the chat function to stay up to date and communicate with your colleagues. It's also important to not only discuss work related issues/subjects but to disconnect and talk about nonrelated work subjects such as TV or Sports.

If your workplace doesn't have anything like this, then it is worth looking into setting up a shared workplace on Slack or other chat programmes as a way to keep in touch and keep the conversation going.

Many of these offer a free platform to use up to a certain period/data limit etc.

6 PROTECTING HEALTH, SAFETY & WELFARE

The steps/guidance within this document are designed to provide you with a clear distinction between work and home life. It's also to help you define a clear routine to follow to ensure you can still interact with friends and family but to be able to have an efficient home and work life balance. However, these are not a guaranteed cure all and it is still important to take what steps you can to

look after yourself and to recognise when you need help.

The benefits of physical exercise include improving your health and lifting your mood with many more believed to help mental state and physical fitness. The capacity of individuals for exercise will vary, but if even all you can do is go out for a short walk, it is still believed to have a positive impact on your life in some way.

If you suffer from illness or injury, you should ensure that you seek medical advice where appropriate and take whatever measures are necessary to allow you to recover. If you suffer anything serious, you should call 999 and seek medical assistance.

'Stress is the body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure. It's very common and can be motivating to help us achieve things in our daily life, and can help us meet the demands of home, work and family life.' Taken from the NHS website, Stress can be defined in many ways but the NHS provide clear hints and tips on how to avoid getting stressed when working from home.

1. Split up big tasks -- If a task seems overwhelming and difficult to start, try breaking it down into easier chunks, and give yourself credit for completing them.

2. Challenge unhelpful thoughts -- The way we think affects the way we feel. Watch the NHS' video to learn how to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

3. Talk to someone -- Trusted friends, family and colleagues, or contacting a helpline, can help us when we are struggling. This can be online, by phone or seeing someone in person. Watch the NHS' video for more ideas.

****Further tips are available on the link provided with this guidance document****

If you are staying at home more than you usually would, it might feel more difficult than usual to take care of your mental health and wellbeing.

There is a fine balance to be struck between staying aware of what is going on and becoming anxious and depressed by the enormity of everything.

You will know yourself where your triggers lie in this respect, so do not be afraid to set boundaries around those areas.

If the news is too much for you to cope with, consider asking a friend to relay any important information to you, so you don't need to watch/read it all yourself to get the one or two pieces of information you need.

If certain posts on social media distress you, you don't necessarily need to completely avoid social media, but do consider unsubscribing from some pages that frequently post content that upsets you, or hiding posts from friends that have a similar effect.

We advise that anyone reading this guidance document to use credible sources including Public Health England, NHS, Government Websites and Official guidance and the World Health Organisation guidance/Website.

For mental health guidance you can visit Mind UK 's website as well as the NHS website which gives some clear guidance around how to stay informed in a way which will have the least effect on your mental state of mind.

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/stress>

7 CARING FOR OTHERS

Carers and Home Working

If you are a carer - Looking after a family or children, an elderly relative, a disabled or vulnerable person it can be difficult to find a healthy balance between your caring duties and your work demands.

Your employer should make allowances to support that in any instance, and your union representative can support you with that.

However, during this crisis many more people may find themselves with caring responsibility who didn't have them before, and it can be harder to separate that role and your job when working from home.

We have attached a useful link which will give some guidance around the right steps to take when caring for someone.

Link: <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

Flexible Working

You have the right to request flexible working if you are trying to balance your job and caring responsibilities, and most civil service employers have policies which support this.

Flexible working could include changing your shift pattern, reducing or compressing your hours, job sharing, or flexi-time.

Due to the unprecedented nature of the current crisis, we would expect employers to be extra flexible with carers and particularly those who are working from home.

If there are any difficulties with this, you should raise them with your manager.

We have provided a link below to the ACAS website who will be able to give you some further advice on Flexible working and Reasonable Adjustments.

Link: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus/time-off-work-to-look-after-someone>

8 CHALLENGES: WORKING FROM HOME

5 Main Challenges when Working from Home

As millions of people around the world are currently working from home, we wanted to provide you with some main challenges after talking to our clients and researching and how to overcome them in your day to day working schedules.

1. Managing your own Time and Schedule

There's no doubt that working from home gives you extra time you would otherwise spend commuting, but you're likely to have much less time than you think you may have. It's important to try and stick to your 'normal business day' and ensure people living in your household (friends, family) understand these timelines/workloads to ensure you are not interrupted.

2. Struggling to Determine the clear lines of Personal and Professional Life

When working from home it becomes difficult to differentiate between workspace and personal space. We would advise our clients set aside a physical space for working, separate from the rest of your home wherever possible.

If you have a spare room it would be worth setting this up as your Temporary home office with the ability to shut the door.

If unable to do this it's important to still be able to 'come away' from the work space so, pack your office equipment up and leave it to one side to enable your home space to remain outside of working hours.

Ultimately, the clearer the boundaries you draw — both in space and time — between your work life and personal life, the better you can keep the two comfortably distinct.

3. Communication and Coordination Struggles

It's hard enough to hold productive in-person meetings to coordinate different team members' efforts to remain aligned. When everyone works from home, it becomes all the harder to stay on the same page.

Home working can be tough when you're used to brainstorming ideas and discussing work issues over a lunch break or in the office, however with Technology in the current age it's important we take full advantage! With Microsoft Teams, Zoom meetings, Google Workspace and many more, we have access to video calls, messages, and file sharing which enables us to still communicate effectively in the work space.

Take full advantage and make sure you check in on your colleagues! It's worth remembering they will feel the same as you in these times of crisis.

4. Social and Mental Isolation

Even those of us with no underlying health conditions, working from home during a health pandemic can be a worrying time. Sitting at home or in a room by yourself all day takes a toll.

We must be adaptable and understand how important social interaction still is during the current time. With Applications such as Facetime, Skype, Snapchat we can continue to communicate with friends and family.

It's important to consider exercising during your breaks even if this is just a gentle stroll around the local area to disconnect from the work isolation.

5. *Lack of direction/Unclear Performance Understanding*

Senior Management will play a vital role to ensuring businesses and colleagues feel valued and are motivated during this current circumstance. It's important to send a clear message to the workforce to understand the business position.

If you work for an employer, remain in close communication with your supervisor. Ask them which projects you should prioritise and when they expect you to reach each milestone.

At least once each week, connect with them to discuss your progress, your challenges, and any ideas to address those challenges. Keep them in the loop so they can provide better feedback and direction.

9 SUPPORT & AID DURING CRISIS

Supporting Each other & Our Community

In the current crisis Families, Communities, and people are engaging in how we can all help and 'do our bit' to help this current cause. The obvious one is to 'stay at home whether you can'.

But Staying in touch with each other, regularly reviewing your work with your manager, is key to ensuring you do not feel isolated in your own home.

Whilst this is not strictly related to work, being aware of local groups will allow you access to support if you need it and to offer support to others if you are able.

This is hugely beneficial to everyone and reflects the collective ethos of solidarity that led to the foundation of the trade union movement and the business community.

Remember if you need advice on the current Covid-19 health pandemic please use the 4 main sources of information.

- NHS Website - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- World Health Organization - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Government Website – As per link below.



Please see the link below for the Government website page of Guidance.

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>