



General

Homemaker is committed to flexibility, so that it can meet client and staff needs: and staff may, with the express approval of the Director, work from home to provide a service in an area where there is no Homemaker office, or as part of flexible working. Although homeworking is categorised as a type of flexible working, employees should not assume that other aspects of flexible working (such as amended hours) are automatically part of such an arrangement.

The following guidelines aim to ensure that there is clarity for the organisation and the workers on the expectations of the homeworking contract, that home-based staff are well-linked into the communication and support systems of the organisation, and that the homeworking environment meets the organisation's health and safety standards.

Definition of Homeworking

The types of homeworking that this policy covers include:

- Home as the main place of work.
- Flexible homeworking with time split between home and the office.
- Mobile working with a base at home to travel to the office, and to clients.
- The office as the main place of work with working from home occasionally

Eligibility for homeworking

Any member of staff who has passed their probation period may apply for homeworking.

Applying for homeworking

Any employee who wishes to be considered for any type of homeworking should apply in writing to the Director, with as much information as possible about how they think this will work; how they will perform their role, the impact on their job, and how it will affect Homemaker, its staff, clients and commissioners. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent nor create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

Risk Assessment

Homemaker has a duty of care to its employees and will carry out a risk assessment before homeworking will be approved. Any concerns identified by the risk assessment will be discussed by the employee and the manager; along with how these concerns will be addressed, by whom, and the timescales allowed for this.

If the concerns are not addressed to Homemaker's satisfaction, we reserve the right to refuse an application for homeworking.

Personal security

Although based from home, homeworkers must not use their home for meetings with clients or staff from other agencies, although the manager may visit from time-to-time, by agreement, to undertake supervision, etc. Visits to clients will normally take place at the client's home. Homemaker may arrange with a local organisation for the occasional use of a meeting room where this is needed.

When the homeworker is making a home visit to a client, they will follow the same procedures as other caseworkers by informing the office of the details of their visit and arranging tracking where necessary. The provisions of the Lone Working Policy will apply.

The homeworkers' addresses and private telephone numbers will not be divulged to those outside the organisation. The contact address will be the charity's main office and mail will be forwarded on to the homeworker: where essential a PO Box system will be set up by Homemaker at the discretion of the Directors.

Confidentiality of information

The homeworker should take care not to leave client files on view at home. Any information on clients, or other confidential information, should be stored in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. Homemaker will provide a lockable metal cabinet for this purpose.

All computer systems should be password-protected. The homeworker will ensure that all computer files are saved within the One Drive, not onto their desktop. The computer should be locked in the metal cabinet when not in use.

Provision of equipment

Homemaker will provide all equipment, stationery and postage needed for the work. The manager will hold an inventory of all equipment provided to the homeworker. Before the homeworker leaves the organisation's employment they will ensure the return of all property belonging to Homemaker, including all files and information on the organisation's business.

All staff are issued with a Homemaker mobile phone as part of their job; where a homeworker has poor signal, a 'signal booster' may be provided, for which Homemaker will pay. In extreme circumstances, a separate telephone line may be installed solely for work use, funded by the organisation, which will be given out to other agencies and clients. Any telephony provided by Homemaker should be used for work purposes only and should be disconnected/returned as soon as the worker leaves Homemaker's employment. There will be a discussion of whether there is a need for a separate broadband line. Where this is required then it will be provided by Homemaker.

Security of equipment

Where the worker is using Homemaker equipment at home, e.g. computer, phone etc the worker will arrange for insurance cover and Homemaker will pay for any consequent increase in the home contents insurance for the equipment. The worker will be responsible for adherence to the conditions of the insurance cover to ensure that the cover is valid. Where no current contents insurance exists, a specific policy must be taken out to cover Homemaker's equipment. Portable laptops will be covered by Homemaker's insurance.

They should confirm to their line manager that there is nothing within their mortgage agreement/lease preventing them from working at home.

Health and safety

The worker's line manager will be responsible for undertaking an initial risk assessment of the work area to ensure the suitability of the property and basic compliance with health and safety guidelines. The worker will then be responsible for maintaining their home work-space in a safe condition. The worker should bring any concerns about health and safety to their manager as soon as possible and should report on any changes to their home which would affect their working environment. The manager should arrange for a fresh risk assessment to be undertaken of any new or different work-space.

Hours of work and availability for contact

The line manager will agree hours and pattern of work and availability with the worker and this will form part of their work contract. Homemaker's policy on working hours and time off in lieu will apply to homeworkers.

Home office allowance

Homemaker will make a payment, as part of the worker's salary, to contribute to the cost of the worker being based from home. This is calculated to cover the cost of heating, lighting and power while the worker is based at home. This allowance will be part of the worker's total salary, and thus subject to tax and National Insurance contributions. It is the responsibility of the worker to ensure that heating and lighting is adequate for them to perform their role.

Travel expenses

Expenses will be paid at the prevailing rate for all staff. The area over which Homemaker will reimburse travel expenses will be dependent on where the homeworker is based and will be agreed with each individual and form part of their contract. The line manager will agree which is the individuals 'main place of work', and this will affect the point at which travelling expenses are payable.

Attending the main office and other meetings

Homeworkers will be required to attend Staff Meetings, Team Days and any other staff events or meetings organised at the office or elsewhere. Reasonable notice will be given for all such meetings.

Communication with main office

Details of the homeworker's appointments and movements must be entered onto their Outlook Calendar and updated daily where appropriate.

Support for homeworkers

Homeworkers will have review and performance meetings at the same frequency as office-based workers. The venue for these meetings may vary between the homeworker's home, the manager's office, or at an agreed location; and will be agreed in advance with the manager.

It is recognised that although structured supervision and support will be scheduled, homeworkers may miss out on informal support and sharing which happens naturally in the office environment. Homeworkers are therefore encouraged to call their manager and other colleagues to consult on work questions and to share information, particularly after difficult meetings or phone calls.

Homeworkers will receive a copy of all general information circulated to office-based staff to ensure that they are kept up to date and are included in decision-making.

Change of situation

Where there is no local office base it may be a criterion of the post for the member of staff to be home-based. Where there is a change of situation this should be discussed at the first opportunity with the line manager.

Review of homeworking contract

The line manager will keep the operation of the homeworking agreement under constant review. Where there are any management concerns that the arrangement is not working, for whatever reason, these will be discussed with the homeworker and where appropriate a

director, and an action plan agreed. Action may include withdrawal of the homeworking agreement.

Other terms and conditions

All other terms, conditions, policies and contractual arrangements applicable to office-based staff will also apply to homeworkers.

Date policy reviewed and approved: January 2018

Date for next review: January 2020