

8 things to think about when asking employees to work from home



For years we have heard that, with advances in technology, working from home would become the norm. Now, this feels more relevant than ever. This is going to be an enormous change for many people as commuting, socialising and working change due to recent events.

Planning this change for your business is of paramount importance and you will need to assess what elements of work can be done safely from home. The following considerations will help.

1. Are employees equipped to work from home?

You will need to address how employees will continue to work. For example, do they need additional equipment? Laptops and printers spring to mind. If you are providing employees with items of hardware, these should be logged and signed for as they must be returned to the business if the employee leaves.

2. Are processes secure?

Something that can often be overlooked in these situations is data security and confidentiality. Is an employee working from home on their own laptop? If so, they should have antivirus protection installed. What about the rest of their household? Are they in the habit of using it as well? It would be wise to remind employees that the same rules apply when it comes to following GDPR and company policy on confidentiality.

3. Family matters

Normally with working from home we would advise that this cannot be combined with childcare. But we live in an unusual time. At the time of writing, many children are not able to attend school full time. Therefore, some sensible compromises must be made for parents working from home. It will help to practise patience and understanding with those employees who are balancing family commitments with their workload.

4. Employee expenses

Upon instruction to work from home, employees may have questions about their expenses. To compensate for the increased cost of electricity, a tax-free home working allowance of £6.00 per week can be paid. Phone calls made on personal devices and essential stationery items can be claimed on expenses.

5. Manage motivation and keep in touch

It is really important that teams remain motivated. Once the novelty of working from home has worn off, keeping employees productive is going to test your leadership skills.

Holding a daily meeting helps and ensures that work timetables and routines are maintained.

If you have questions about your legal obligations when it comes to asking employees to work from home, call us.

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Working from home does not mean staying in PJs till noon. Video conferences encourage employees to get ready for work as they usually would. WhatsApp groups, Microsoft Teams, Slack and Skype can fulfil a dual purpose of social interaction and work, but not everyone is disciplined enough to limit their time spent on social apps. The influx of breaking news can also be a distraction. Setting task lists and deadlines can help to keep employees on track with their priorities.

6. Dealing with delays

During times of uncertainty it's possible that some normal tasks may be difficult to complete due to disruption or delays. If project work has had to be put on hold, why not introduce your team to eLearning or allocate study time for professional development?

7. Health and safety

Employee health and safety must be maintained when home working is instructed. A risk assessment for home working can help you to assess the situation and understand capabilities.

We offer core eLearning modules that can help to protect employees during this time, such as: Health and safety for homeworkers, Coronavirus awareness and Lone working out of the workplace.

Encourage staff to take breaks just as they would in the office as the Working Time Regulations still apply. Make sure employees sign off at the end of the day and suggest an end of workday transition ritual. This can help employees switch off in the absence of their commute home.

If an employee is unwell and unable to work, they must follow the usual company policy on reporting sickness absence.

Don't forget to look after your own health too. The business needs you.

8. Protect your business

A home working policy clearly sets out business rules and expectations for work. Having a policy is the first step. Communicating it to employees in good time is also essential to protect your business.

