

HOME WORKING

1. Introduction

The vision of Barnet Council is that the future organisation will be a smaller organisation with a smaller more efficient corporate support function with a greater concentration of resources on service delivery. Implementing a flexible working programme alongside the intended increased use of systems and automation will enable the council to become a more efficient organisation. The provision of flexible forms of working, play an important part in making it possible to attract and retain the best possible staff. In particular rigid adherence to traditional patterns and methods of working may discriminate against staff that do not wish or are unable to conform to more conventional ways of working.

The Council's 'Modernising the Way We Work' initiative is a key driver in creating a more flexible workforce with flexibility from the traditional nine to five day. It is therefore regarded as being a key factor in demonstrating the council's commitment to fair and equal treatment inside the workplace.

A home based worker can be defined as someone who has an agreed arrangement with management for home working and works more than half of their time from their home.

The following descriptions may apply:

- 1.1 Home worker** – Works from home and only comes into the office for meetings. They are fully equipped with the necessary equipment and technology that enables them to perform their duties at home.

Home Based Workers, will not have an allocated desk but will have access to 'hot desking' facilities when they 'visit' an office building for short periods of time. The council will supply the desk, chair, PC Screen, Printer, Broadband, phone, expenses and other necessary equipment to enable the employee to carry out their job from home.

- 1.2 Home Based Mobile Worker.** – Starts and finishes most days at home, but spends the majority of their time working away from an office. They may spend 1-2 days at the office or visiting residents or businesses.

The council will provide appropriate mobile technology and a home broadband. They will not have allocated desks but will be part of 'hot' or 'shared desking' facilities in an office building.

- 1.3 Office based mobile worker** – Starts and finishes most days at the office, where the team is based, but spends the majority of their time working away from the office, either in other offices, visiting residents or businesses.

They will be issued with the appropriate technology to allow them to work from home occasionally. They will be provided mobile wireless technology (laptop or tablet) synchronised with files and email when off line. Systems can be used from a home broadband or a public wireless via the Citrix RPT system. They will not have

dedicated office base but will be part of the hot or shared desking arrangements when in an office environment.

- 1.4 Office Based 'Hot Desker'** – Work from any office using available vacant desks, using the appropriate technology (thin client device) to connect to the main servers. Where necessary they may also have a Citrix RPT so that they can occasionally work from home using their own technology and broadband. They will not have dedicated office based desks but will be part of the hot or shared desking arrangements when in an office environment.
- 1.5. Fixed Based Office worker** – Spend the majority of their working day at their desk with an allocated desk because of the specific technical or administrative role that they perform.

No change from current arrangements. There may however be some who will occasionally work from home with the use of appropriate technology (Citrix RPT) to perform their tasks.

- 1.6** A definition is needed under Inland Revenue rules to differentiate between any employee working as a formal and contractually home based person and an employee home-working on an ad-hoc basis. The contract of employment needs to address the location(s) where the job will be performed.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 Not all employees will be suited to home working either on a full or part time basis. Eligibility will be determined by:
- the suitability of the home workspace,
 - requirements of the job,
 - impact on service delivery
 - time spent on site, at meetings, computer or telephone
 - the individual's skills and responsibilities
 - ability to work unsupervised
 - ability to effectively solve problems

Managers and employees will also be required to demonstrate how working from home can enhance the quality of service.

- 2.2 Line-managers must ensure that all proposals are assessed in a fair and consistent manner and must provide valid and objective reason (s) if the request is refused.
- 2.3 The final decision on a home working request rests with the line-manager. On occasions where it is not possible to reach mutual agreement, the manager shall notify the employee in writing of the reasons why home-working will not be appropriate. HR will review this decision, to ensure that there is a consistency of approach across the council. For further information please refer to the eligibility criteria in the [Flexible Working policy](#).

3. Employment Conditions

3.1 Principles

Home based workers continue to adhere to all the terms and conditions in their existing employment contract, other than slight variations to the elements listed below.

They shall be managed as office based employees in areas such as:

- performance management
- career development & training opportunities
- attendance at 1:1 and team meetings
- urgent meetings (where presence is required at short notice)

Differing nature of home and office based work requires certain differences in terms and conditions to ensure that:

- home based workers are treated fairly in relation to other employees
- there is sufficient flexibility to take account of different job requirements and personal circumstances.

Home based working may be initiated by the individual or may be initiated by the employer in line with the Modernising the Way We Work (MWW) initiative. Employees will however be briefed and consulted on the variation of the employment contracts based on the nature of the job and when facilities have been made available. For a list of Contractual Variations see Appendix A. All normal policies and procedures apply unless stated otherwise in this document.

Home based or mobile working represents a long term commitment for both the individual and the Council. Arrangements should normally only be entered into where there is an expectation on the part of the individual and the Council that it will endure for a reasonable period.

3.2 Trial period/regular reviews

All home working arrangements **may be** subject to an initial trial period, for further information please refer to HR [Flexible Working Policy](#). Upon successful completion of the trial period they will be issued their variation in contractual terms by letter. All home working arrangements will be reviewed annually in line with the Appraisal process. All applications for Home working must be made via the [Home working Application Form](#) at **Appendix B**.

New employees appointed on a home working basis should have a period of time based (a maximum of 3 months) in the service before commencing home working. As this falls within the recruitment 18 week assessment period any

problems identified during this period may lead to home working being withdrawn temporarily or permanently.

3.3 Travelling & Vehicle Allowances Expenses

Where the employee's home is their base of work, an occasional casual car user allowance is available for staff where they are required to travel from their home for business purposes to business sites other than their team location.

When an employee travels direct from home to a location that is not their normal office working base, the Council will reimburse any additional travel costs either mileage or public transport.

Where an employee attends their team's office base and then has to travel to other sites, any additional expenditure incurred will be reimbursed.

The allocation of this allowance may be reviewed in the event of a change the nature of your duties and location of work. Please refer to section 2 HR Procedures, Vehicles and Travel Allowances Policy for further details on mileage and Insurance.

3.4 Additional Household Expenses

Under income tax law any payment by an employer towards additional household costs incurred by an employee who works at home would normally give rise to tax charges for employees. Since 2003, employers are able to pay employees, an amount, currently £2 per week (£104 per year) without supporting evidence of costs that the employee may incur. An employee may submit a claim form for this amount for heating and lighting in relation to home based working on a quarterly basis as part of their claims process.

3.5 Facilities

Equipment

To assist the employee to work from home, any necessary equipment will be provided by the council. An inventory of the current equipment will be maintained and shall remain at all times the property of the council.

The equipment will be insured by the council and is provided solely for employee's use for work connected with their employment. Computers and audio visual equipment are insured against all risks **excluding** loss or damage from an unattended vehicle.

The employee is responsible for ensuring confidentiality of work information at their home address. The employee's right not to disclose their home address and phone number except to immediate colleagues who require it for work purposes should be respected.

Employees should not use items supplied by the Council for personal purposes, as a tax liability may result. Use of IT Equipment owned by the Council will be subject to the IT Equipment Usage Policy.

Telephone

Home workers must have a means of communication with the Office/line manager during working hours.

It is important that arrangements are made for telephone, fax or email access to ensure that effective communication can be maintained with colleagues, clients and management. The precise details will vary according to the individual home working arrangement and are likely to be different if a member of staff is permanently based at home compared than if working for 2 days per week at home.

The council will pay for installation and rental of an additional phone line. It must be solely used for business purposes to avoid any additional income tax liability.

4. Other Requirements

Risk Assessment

Line managers of home workers are required to carry out risk assessments of work activities carried out by employees wherever those activities take place. This involves identifying the hazards relating to their work activities and deciding whether sufficient steps have been taken to prevent harm to them or anyone else who may be affected by their work. This shall be carried out jointly with the employee. (Refer to the Hazards Checklist in Home Working Information Pack).

Breaks

It is important that the employee makes provision for breaks during the day, to comply with the Working Time Regulations and Display Screen Equipment Regulations.

Sickness

Individuals working from home will be subject to the normal sickness absence procedures; therefore if they are unable to work they should contact their line manager by 10.00 a.m. on the first day of sickness (see Attendance Management Policy). The appropriate certification for any period of sickness should be provided.

Annual leave

Requests for annual leave must be sent to and agreed by the line manager in the normal manner. Where some employees have access to online leave requests they should use the online system to make requests. In situations where the employee does not have access to the online system they shall have a leave card with leave entitlement to arrange holidays in advance with their line manager in the usual way.

Training and Meetings

Employees working from home must always make themselves available for meetings with their line managers, team meetings and any training sessions or courses.

Under no circumstances are arrangements to be made for clients or representatives to meet with the individual at their home. All such meetings should be carried out at the council's offices in order to maintain the necessary level of professionalism.

5 Security of Information

- 5.1 Home workers will be responsible for ensuring that all council information (both paper and electronic) is kept confidential and secure to prevent access by a third party.
- 5.2 Line managers will be responsible for ensuring that the correct level of security is maintained at their home, including checking for the use of passwords for computer access. The line manager may agree that the provision of additional equipment will be necessary e.g. fire and tamper proof boxes or lockable filing cabinets.
- 5.3 Where the Home worker has access to systems containing personal data they must use this information in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 1998](#).
- 5.4 Line managers will need to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place to minimise the potential loss/damage of original council paperwork/ documentation.

6 Insurance

- 6.1 The Councils Employers and Public Liability Insurance arrangements will cover Home workers in the same way as other employees.

Employer's Liability – If a Home worker suffers an accident or loss in the course of their employment and whilst carrying out council business which may have been caused by the Council's negligence, any claim which arises will be considered under this insurance.

Public Liability – Injuries, loss or damage suffered by third parties allegedly by the negligence of the Home worker, whilst carrying out their duties, will be considered under the council's insurance. If, however, claims arise within the employees home for which the Council has no control (e.g. defects on Home worker's premises outside the defined work area at home) they would not be covered and Home workers should check the position with their Household Insurers (see 6.2).

- 6.2 **Home Insurance** - Home workers are responsible for ensuring that their home insurance (property and contents) covers them for working at home, including any third party liability arising in their home. The council will meet any reasonable costs of any additional expenses/premiums should these arise as a result of home working arrangements that cannot be covered by the council's policies.
- 6.3 **Mortgages** – home workers are responsible for checking with their mortgage provider that working from home is permitted and mortgage terms and conditions will not be affected.
- 6.4 **Equipment Insurance:** Council Property Insurance covers all equipment provided for home based working on an "all risks" basis subject to policy terms and conditions. Home workers shall not incur any liability provided that they take reasonable care of the property.

7 Legislation

Legislation places a duty on employers to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees. All employees also have a duty to take reasonable care of themselves and others and to co-operate with managers to comply with relevant legislation. (See Health Safety & Welfare Policy, [Home Working – Section 22](#) on the Intranet site).

Line Managers must ensure that home based working is carried out in a safe and secure environment. The following requirements must be met before people work at home:

- check there are no restrictions on working at home (refer to **Home working Guidance Notes – Deciding on Home working**)
- ensure that the employee building/contents insurance(s) are not affected by home working (see **Home working Guidance Notes – Deciding on Home working**. A draft letter is included in the Council's Home Working Information Pack available on the intranet)
- the Council's rules on Information Security in the home environment. (Data Protection Policy is available on the Council intranet site)
- compliance with Health & Safety requirements. A Hazard checklist is included as part of the Home based registration process and included in the Home working Information Pack

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to reflect any changes arising from the Accommodation Strategy and the Modernising the Way We Work (MWW).

APPENDIX A

CONTRACTUAL VARIATIONS

Home working is **not** available to all employees. A home working agreement will be drawn up prior to the arrangement commencing and in the case of existing employees their contract of employment will be amended accordingly.

The terms and conditions of home workers should equate to those of their colleagues including access to training and career development opportunities.

Variations to terms and conditions that may need to apply are as follows:

Work base

It must be clearly stated where a home worker is to be based. This is important in terms of claiming travel expenses and travelling time and will normally be the office base for the home worker's team, or some other location considered relevant to the employee's employment, rather than the employee's home.

Hours/Times of work

Unless otherwise mutually agreed the number of hours, times of work and any flexible working arrangements will be those which are normal for the work group to which the employee belongs and in the case of existing employees will have been set out in the original statement of particulars.

Occasionally it may be mutually convenient for the employee to work additional or flexible hours, where necessary this shall be agreed in advance.

Any additional hours worked by agreement shall be credited either as time off in lieu or overtime (if applicable within your service group). In agreeing variations the provisions of the Working Time Regulations and the council's policy on working time must be observed.

Moving home expenses

Employees will normally be responsible for any costs incurred when moving home in regard to the movement of Council equipment.

Home working – guidance notes

Home workers should be provided with a copy of the guidance notes and be required to comply with the employee obligations referred to.

Meeting clients

Home workers must not use their own homes for meetings with clients.

Consent to enter employees' homes

The employee must give the Council the right to access their domestic premises, subject to reasonable notice being given, to check that electronic and other equipment is safe and functioning properly, to undertake periodic health and safety inspections, to repair equipment or rectify faults or to retrieve Council property and records if it needs to be replaced or returned to the Council.

Termination of the home working agreement

The Council may terminate or amend the home based working agreement at any time, subject to consultation and two month's notice in writing. Similarly the same will apply for employees who wish to terminate this arrangement. An employee or service must have valid reasons for ending the arrangement. In operational emergencies, e.g. lack of office cover or in the case of poor performance, the arrangement may be suspended or terminated with immediate effect.

Should there be a welfare reason where staff can no longer work at home, management will waive the period subject to appropriate verification (i.e. medical certificate, health and safety risk assessment, significant change in personal circumstances etc.)

This is separate from the period of notice which is required to terminate employment set out in the contract of employment.

Return of Council property

The Council's property must be returned when the employee's home working arrangement or employment is terminated. Management will arrange for any equipment to be collected at a mutually agreed time.

APPENDIX B

HOME WORKING APPLICATION FORM

A standard corporate wide application form that forms the basis of the initial assessment for a member of staff wishing to work from home.

Personal details

Applicant name:

Work telephone:

Home address (potential home base)

Home telephone:

Line manager name:

Line manager ext.

1. Employee role

(a) State your current job title and your main responsibilities.

(b) Estimate as accurately as you can on average per month of your working time spent on the following activities.

i. Time spent on your work computer

Less than 20%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80% or more
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ii. Time spent on the telephone

Less than 20%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80% or more
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iii. Time spent in meetings (formal or informal).

Less than 20%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80% or more
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iv. The % of time in other work activities away from your desk (e.g. travel).

Less than 20%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80% or more
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(c) Estimate the average number of visits and total duration (in hours) per month you think you may need to make to the office to perform your current role:

	Operational Reasons	One to Ones	Team / Dept Meetings	Appraisals	Other
Visits					
Hours					

2. Employee considerations

(a) How long have you been in your current role?

Less than 6 months 6 months -1 year 1-2yrs More than 2yrs

(b) Briefly describe how you have demonstrated that you are able to work independently overcoming work related issues using your own initiative whilst managing your time and workload effectively?

(c) How important to you is the office environment and regular face to face contact with colleagues?

(i) Office Environment

Very important

Reasonably important

Not Very Important

Completely Irrelevant

(ii) Face to Face Contact with Colleagues

Very important

Reasonably important

Not Very Important

Completely Irrelevant

(d) Do you have any special needs?

If Yes please specify (e.g. disability which requires specific equipment).

Yes

No

3. Suitability of the home premises and working environment

(a) How much time do you spend travelling to work each day?

15 mins 16-30 mins 31-45 mins more than 45 mins

(b) What is your main mode of transport to and from work?

Walk Self Driven Car
 Bus Tube
 Train Motorbike/Bicycle
 Combination of some of the above

(c) Do you feel you have sufficient information on home working to be able to balance the demands of your work and life outside the council if you became a home worker?

Yes Don't Know No

(d) Do you have adequate space to work within your home that will allow you to perform your job effectively without interruptions?

Yes Not Sure No

If Yes Please Specify _____

(e) How many other individuals are likely to be in the home during the course of a normal working day? If children, specify current age.

Adults	Children	
	0-4 years	
	5-11 years	
	11 – 16 years	

(f) If children are likely to occupy the premises during a normal working day is there another adult present available for their supervision

Yes No

If you answered 'No' to the above what other child care arrangements (if any) would you have in place?

(g) Are you Pregnant? (as this has Health & Safety Implications)

No Yes

4. Authorisation

Employee to fill in the section below

I _____ wish to be considered for Home working.

Date of earliest possible start of Home working will be _____

Signed (employee). _____

Line Manager to fill in the section below

This application has been considered and is successful/unsuccessful

Preferred date for relocating the above employee as a Home worker (agreed by manager and employee and subject to logistics) _____

Preferred Start Date as a Home worker _____

Signed (Line Manager)..... **Date**