

Guidance on Working From Home

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the University's Flexible Working Policy <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/policy-and-procedure/flexiblework/> and Lone Working Policy <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/proc-prac/loneworking/>.

This guidance does not cover formal academic research leave as this is covered by the Research Leave Policy <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/rbi/staff-students/support/research-leave/>.

Working from home (homeworking) can be an effective, efficient and productive way of working. It is not suitable for all types of roles or for some roles all of the time. Aberystwyth University employs people who work all over the world. Some, due to the necessity of the role and tasks, work from home for some or all of the day or work in remote locations e.g. during periods of research activity.

This guidance aims to cover the information required for decision makers (both the employee who wishes to apply to work from home and line managers who may require it of employees). **Any existing informal arrangements for homeworking must be revisited to ensure they comply with this addendum.**

1. Guiding principles

It is paramount that agreement to homeworking **does not**:-

- result in a detriment to the student experience;
- have a negative impact on services;
- negatively affect other colleagues of the university in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

2. What is Homeworking?

Homeworking occurs when an employee of the University is given express permission by the University to undertake their role in their normal private dwelling or another agreed location which is not University premises.

In the majority of situations, the employee will always retain access to an Aberystwyth University workstation at their normal work place (which may be a hot-desking arrangement). The exception to this is where an employee undertakes homeworking under a contractual obligation from the employment start date.

Where an employee requests homeworking there is no requirement on the University to provide equipment, furniture or materials for homeworking and the employee is responsible for ensuring a suitable work environment. The exception to this is where the employee is contracted from the start date to work from home.

Employees who have approval to work from home will be required to attend their place of work or other part of the University outside of the homeworking agreement or, in the alternative, when requested by their line manager.

There are three types of homeworking:-

a) Regular Homeworking Regular homeworking is a discernible pattern of work which usually entails set times/days being worked at home. The agreement relies on mutual trust and must be to the benefit of both parties. Regular homeworking cannot take place prior to a request being made and express approval being given by the line manager. No employee may be told that they are required to work from home unless it is a requirement of the role.

Where homeworking is a requirement of the role, this will be specified in the job advert, agreed at interview and included in the statement of particulars as a requirement. Any equipment, furniture and materials that the University will provide will also be outlined in the contract.

Roles where this may be a requirement include:-

- *Working at other Academic Institutions* – where employees are to be based in different universities, employees may be recruited locally to do this;
- *Regional HE Advisor* – based in England;
- *International Officer* – located overseas;
- *Externally Funded Posts* – where required to be based elsewhere;
- *Overseas Working* – where offices are not always available or appropriate.

N.B. this list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

b) Occasional Homeworking can be agreed between the line manager and employee where it is beneficial to undertake a particular task or project activity away from the normal workplace. For example to provide quiet writing time on an ad hoc basis.

c) Phased return to work – which support an employee return to work following a period of long-term absence. This is a temporary arrangement for up to 4 weeks. This arrangement may support an employee return to work where the advice of the GP/OH Adviser indicates that an employee may be fit to return to work based on a number of reasonable adjustments, which may include an element of homeworking, during an agreed phased return to work. (See Managing Sickness Absence Procedure <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/policy-and-procedure/sickness/>).

3. Assessing whether a post is suitable for homeworking

When considering whether a role is suitable to be worked from home, an assessment will be made of the specific requirements of the role and the impact of the delivery of the work from home on:-

- the student experience;
- work colleagues;
- line management responsibilities;
- effective communications;
- the work of the department;
- services which operate outside of 'normal' opening hours;
- the work of the University;
- the health of the individual and recommendations from a GP/OH Adviser.

A Homeworking risk assessment must be completed as part of any request for regular home working. The form can be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/humanresources/Homeworking--Self-Assessment-Checklist.pdf>

4. Application Process

a) Regular Homeworking – The request must be outlined on the Flexible Working Application Form. The Form can be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/humanresources/Flexible-Working-Request-Form.pdf> . A copy of the Homeworking Risk Assessment must be attached to the Flexible Working Application Form.

Managers who receive an application for homeworking are encouraged to consider, in an equitable and positive manner, the rationale presented by employees for homeworking. There is no contractual right to homeworking and each request will be considered in line with the Flexible Working Policy and this Addendum. Where applications cannot be supported, employees will have a right of appeal against the decision made to decline their application.

Under no circumstances should an employee undertake homeworking without approval from the Head of Professional Service/Institute Director or deputed and agreement from the Director of Human Resources or depute.

It is important that the employee works their “normal” pattern of working hours to ensure efficient communication, for example, an employee whose regular hours would be 9am – 5.30pm would be expected to work the same hours at home.

Should agreement be given for regular homeworking it will be agreed for no more than one year at a time and reviewed every three months by the employee and line manager. In the case of academic staff, this review will be prior to the start of each academic year to enable consideration to be given to the requirements of the teaching timetable.

Employees are expected to be office based in their Institute/Professional Service Department unless a variation to this has been approved through the Research Leave Policy or Flexible Working Policy.

This arrangement can be rescinded by the University at any time with the appropriate employee contractual notice.

b) Occasional Homeworking – each request should be made via AberPeople self service. Details of how to apply can be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/staff/your-sites/aber-people/> and <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/staff/your-sites/aber-people/userguides/#user-guide>

c) Phased return to works – each request should be considered in accordance with the Managing Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure. Having received a recommendation from the GP/OH Adviser, an absence review meeting should be arranged between the employee and the line manager. Any agreement made must be clearly documented in a letter to the employee prior to the phased return commencing.

5. Benefits of Homeworking

- Supporting employees to return to work on a phased basis by working from home as part of a reduced programme of attendance at their place of work.

Such requests are usually supported by a recommendation from the GP/OH Adviser;

- Increased job satisfaction of employees who wish to work from home;
- Increased productivity.

6. Risks associated with Homeworking

The following risks must be considered and addressed (as necessary) as part of the Risk Assessment process.

- Concerns about data protection and data integrity;
- Quality of personal equipment used for work purposes including evidence of annual PAT Testing;
- Quality of access to networked facilities, internet connection/speed and telephone network coverage;
- Break down in team cohesion due to lack of face to face interaction with colleagues and a lack of transparency of work outputs which may result in dissatisfaction from other staff if not supported by excellent communication between the manager and team members;
- Exclusion of employee from social interaction and liaison with all departments;
- Possible lack of consistency of communication;
- Delivery of expected work outcomes is not monitored as regularly as with colleagues;
- Lack of ability to maintain contact/availability during working hours;
- Perception of staff that the colleague working from home is 'not available'.

7. Manager's Responsibilities

- All line managers have a responsibility to ensure staff are safe and their health is not negatively impacted by working at home;
- To undertake and approve a risk assessment with the employee to ensure their responsibilities are being met and review this on an annual basis;
- To maintain regular contact to ascertain health and safety is being adhered to;
- When the line manager is on leave/absent from the workplace, to notify the employee of the depute arrangements put in place;
- To ensure that any changes to equipment, working arrangements or circumstances are appropriately recorded on the risk assessment;
- To ensure that tasks and work outputs are delivered on time. This should be done via monitoring regularly the work undertaken to ensure efficiency is maintained with reviews, meetings and supervision as appropriate;
- To ensure contact and communication can take place during the "working day";
- To receive confirmation from the employee that they have informed their insurance company in writing of their intention to work from home and listed any additional equipment provided by the University as part of that insurance cover;
- To ensure that the employee has informed/ received approval (where required) from their landlord/mortgage provider regarding their intention to work from home;
- To ensure security of data through compliance with the Information Services Policy for both employee and the University and any equipment provided by the University;
- To ensure a risk assessment is undertaken as part of the application process and satisfies themselves that any risks identified are appropriately resolved/managed/controlled.

8. Employees Responsibilities

Health and Safety is a shared responsibility between the employee and the line manager. The employee has the following specific health and safety responsibilities:-

The employee who has received agreement to work from home must:

- Maintain a working environment to acceptable health and safety standards;
- Inform the manager of any illness or sickness or accident immediately it happens and record in on AberPeople;
- Inform the manager of any changes to the home or personal situation which could affect their health and safety (e.g. moving home, building work, expecting a baby);
- Ensure the workspace is safe, secure and suitable to the work being undertaken;
- Undertake a DSE (display screen equipment) assessment;
- Report any work-related accidents whilst working at home, actions taken and whether RIDDOR required.

The employee will also need to:-

- Inform the manager of any illness or sickness immediately it happens and record in on AberPeople;
- Have appropriate IT security on all PCs used for work purposes in the home;
- Comply with the University's policy in respect of data protection whilst working at home. This includes the transportation of any documentation between the workplace and home environment;
- Devote their time to work and not have sole responsibility for children or other dependants during working time at home.

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