**Advice on Home Working Covid-19**

Following on from recent information from the Government with regards to the ongoing Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, there is now an even greater demand for employers to offer employees facilities to work from home, where it is possible.

As an employer, the legal duties, in respect to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its workers still applies to those that are now working from home.

For those employees working from home employers should consider if workers can carry out their work activities safely and ensure that there are suitable control measures in place to protect them from any significant hazards that have been identified. The diagram below illustrates a simple procedure you can use to help you do this.

Employers should also regularly review the arrangements that have been put in place to ensure they remain suitable. This can be done by speaking to your employee over the telephone and by reviewing completed checklists where you choose to use these. Any issues that are raised should be corrected and a record of the discussion kept on file.

**Work Stations**

Employees should be advised to set up a designated work area, such as a desk or home office. Employees should also be encouraged to set up their home work stations in line with HSE display screen equipment guidance wherever possible (you can download a practical workstation checklist here:

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

Simple tips employees can take to reduce the risks from display screen work include:

* Work stations should be well lit
* Eyes should be level with the top of the screen.
* Forearms should be able to rest comfortably with upper arms vertical.
* Sofas and working from a bed is not acceptable. Factors like this will increase the risk of upper limb disorders and eye strain.



**Other Considerations:**

**Employee Wellbeing**

During these challenging times, it is important to keep in contact with your employees who are home working, to monitor their wellbeing and to avoid issues that may relate to stress. A good way to do this is to:

* Set up conference calls with the rest of their team, so that home workers can interact and share any problems or concerns they may have.
* One on one calls, just to check in on employees should also be encouraged and will show support from the Company.

This will also help the business to stay ahead of any potential issues that may arise. **Remember to keep records of any assessments or any actions taken for home workers and keep them in their personnel files**. If you have an employee assistance programme, then remind staff of the details and how they can use the service.

Practical tips for employers to help employees reduce stress when working from home include:

* Instruct employees to **set up a comfortable workstation** where possible, in a dedicated area of the house, away from other people and distractions – ideally somewhere where they can close the door at the end of the working day.
* **Maintain normal work hours and routine** – Some flexibility may be required, for example, for those looking after children. However, it is important for employees to understand that they’re not expected to work more hours whilst working from home.
* **Take regular breaks** – encourage employees to move away from their work area regularly to stretch, make a cup of tea or get some fresh air…
* **Set clear expectations** and encourage employees to set boundaries (such as resisting the temptation check emails/ mobile phones outside of working hours.)
* **Keep in touch** – Communicate with employees and encourage them to check in regularly with colleagues and managers for support – use technology such as Microsoft Teams, Whatsapp and Video Calls where you can to maintain personal connections.
* **Eat well, exercise and rest!**- Ensure employees are aware of the importance ofprioritising their physical and mental health.

**Useful Links:**

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/while-working>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>