Flexible Working Options

Managers’ Guidance for Occasional Home Working

Introduction
The majority of jobs within Newcastle University need to be undertaken primarily within the workplace. Flexibility may, however, be agreed for occasional working at home. As with other working arrangements there will be many roles for which this is not practical and an assessment of the role needs to be made before considering whether this option is viable for a particular post holder.

Circumstances where home working can be considered will vary and any such arrangement must clearly benefit the Unit/Service. The arrangement must be explicit and the expectations detailed.

This document describes arrangements for staff working from home on an occasional basis with the agreement of their manager, but where this is not a formal requirement of their job. This may be for example when a member of staff requests permission to work at home in order to complete a piece of work which needs to be done with minimum distraction or interruption. There must be a clear benefit to the area of work for home working to be approved.

Most of the work undertaken at home by University staff is generally administration, office/paper based work or work on a computer. In general, this is not work involving high risk, but there are some key areas to be aware of which are covered in this guidance.

NOTE This guidance does not cover:
• Academic staff where working at home is more of a normal expectation of the role
• Staff whose primary workplace is their home and which is required by the University
• Arrangements put into place where the home working arrangement is part of a reasonable adjustment for a disabled member of staff to assist them to work effectively and safely

Practical issues
While the University has a duty to take reasonable care of staff’s health and safety, staff are expected to take primary responsibility for ensuring safe working conditions in their home. You may have to follow local arrangements to record when you are working at home.
Flexible Working Options

Get permission

It is important to gain permission so that your line manager knows where you are and there is no possible confusion about why you are not at your normal place of work.

Health and Safety and Risk Assessment Principles

Offices and other places of work are configured to ensure that the work is done safely. This is not necessarily the case when working at home. It should also be borne in mind that whilst you may be aware of certain hazards associated with the work you are doing, your family or others in your home may not be. Whatever you are doing, you should at least make a mental note of any possible risks to the health and safety of yourself and others who are present whilst you are working. If you are unsure you can ask your local Health and Safety Officer for further information.

**Work Area:** The provision of a separate room within the home is not essential. You must ensure that work can be carried out in a safe manner and that you are able to separate work from your home life.

**Display Screen Equipment (DSE)**

If you are using a computer at home, you should undertake an assessment of your work station and make sure it does not constitute a health and safety hazard. You can use the forms and self help systems available on the University Safety Office web site at [www.safety.ncl.ac.uk/guidance-displayscreenequipmentsassessments.aspx](http://www.safety.ncl.ac.uk/guidance-displayscreenequipmentsassessments.aspx)

The aim of the DSE guidance is to minimise the risk of musculo-skeletal damage and visual fatigue and advise you to pay attention to the desk, chair, screen and keyboard, lighting and space to work.

Laptops should only be used for limited periods since prolonged use given the elevated nature of the keyboard compared to a normal inclined keyboard can cause wrist discomfort.

**Movement of materials**

If you are moving materials or equipment between work and home you also need to consider manual handling and the suitability of your vehicle. You are prohibited from taking any hazardous substances (solvents, chemicals, biological agents, tissue samples and radioactive material) from your workplace to your home.
Flexible Working Options

Accidents
If you have an accident relating to the work you were doing at home, you should keep a brief record of what happened and any detrimental effects and enter this in the Accident Record when you next come into the University.

Electrical equipment
You are responsible for the wiring/electricity circuit in your home, but the University remains responsible for the regular maintenance of any electrical equipment that it provides to allow you to carry out work at home. If you are provided with a computer, for example, you should make sure that it is periodically PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) checked to make sure it is safe. Make sure that you do not do anything that affects the health and safety of yourself or others in the home e.g. trailing leads.

Insurance:
University equipment is covered by University insurance when used anywhere on University business. This includes in your home, provided that you follow the guidelines for use of equipment. Equipment being used that is your personal property must be covered by your personal or home insurance. If University equipment is being used at home it should be kept in a safe place, out of sight when not in use and regularly returned for PAT testing.

University equipment, data or work related materials must be insured if being transported by personal vehicle. If this is an occasional occurrence it should be covered by your motor vehicle insurance. If the materials were more than paperwork, a laptop or small pieces of equipment you may need to inform your insurer.

Use of Computers and Data

Security Data Security
With your line manager, you must also assess any risks to the confidentiality of data under the Data Protection Act and the University's policies on data security and copyright regulations. All the University data protection and data management requirements must be followed. This will include preventing access by unauthorised persons to computer or paper materials and management and storage of any data storage devices (USDB Keys, CD's, DVD's etc).

All Information security policies can be found at
www.ncl.ac.uk/itservice/rules/
The ISS rules of use can be found at
www.ncl.ac.uk/itservice/rules/useofitfacilities/
Information Security / Data Protection courses are available for Managers / Staff on request via SDU
www.ncl.ac.uk/staffdev/workshops/details.php?ref=1274796276
Flexible Working Options

Computer equipment and software use
All University software is governed by the licence arrangements the University has with our suppliers. Employees must ensure that equipment / software they are using is covered for use away from Campus. The details for each licence and the terms of use can be found at www.ncl.ac.uk/iss/software/ licences/

Providing equipment and paying expenses:
Where home working is regular or occasional but not a requirement of the job and arrangements are made at your request, you will be expected to meet costs of purchase and maintenance of equipment, telephone usage and to be responsible for virus checking arrangements etc. In exceptional circumstances, with written support of your Head of Unit/Service, expenses for telephone costs may be claimed.

Supervision/management and contact:

Contact
Arrangements must be agreed for availability regarding telephone and e-mail contact from your manager or colleagues if you are working from home.

Management
Work objectives need to be agreed at the outset of any home working arrangement. It should be remembered that not everyone is experienced at motivating themselves when working in isolation all day, in their home environment. Some staff may need some additional encouragement or home working may not be suitable for them.

Human Resources
Author Pamela Graham
6 July 2011