



# **Home Working Policy**

## **September 2020**

## **1. Introduction**

DDAT is committed to adopting modern flexible working practises - where appropriate to do so. The Trust recognises that there may, on occasion, be circumstances when it would be more beneficial or flexible for staff to work from home on a temporary basis.

Homeworking is a type of flexible working (see schools flexible working policy), however there should be no assumption that other aspects of flexible working such as amended hours are automatically part of this home working policy.

Working from home can increase some staff's motivation, promote work-life balance, reduce employee stress and improve performance and productivity. There are, however, certain implications to working from home, for example staying compliant with the GDPR, overtime, and health and safety issues. This policy outlines good practice to overcome any potential implications that may occur and ensure that the Trust & school's protocols will continue to be upheld by staff working from home.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all DDAT employees whose roles have the scope to work from home. It is recognised that not all roles are suitable for home working, for example those who provide a direct service to the pupils, or roles where direct face to face contact is needed on a frequent basis (for example reception) as the requirements of the organisation. Each role may be considered on its own merit.

Home working arrangements must not have an adverse effect on any particular group or service.

Any arrangement for home working must meet business needs and the employee's needs so it is favourable for both parties.

DDAT premises will be the main place of work for all employees, however some roles may allow for some flexible home working with time split between an employee's home and their normal place of work (school/office).

Home working will only be carried out to an agreed work pattern normally on a part-time, temporary or ad hoc basis.

The decision about whether an employee or group of employees should be allowed to work at home will rest with the Headteacher and/or the Trust.

Whilst working from home, employees are still bound by the Trust policies and should be cognisant of the Trust's Data Protection Policy, Information Security, Acceptable Use Policy and Staff Conduct Policy.

The Trust reserves the right to withdraw home working from an employee following discussion with their line manager. Notes of the decision should be maintained. Managers will regularly review appropriateness of home working.

### **3. Expectations**

#### 3.1 Working from home is not:

- An automatic contractual right through express or implied terms; it is granted at the Trust's or school's discretion and requires prior approval.
- Intended to create a situation in which staff members feel obliged to work excessive hours.
- A condition in which the school or Trust must provide equipment for use at home. The equipment already provided for the role should be efficient to allow employees to undertake the duties at home. Where it is not then this may determine if home working is appropriate.
- A substitute for the care of dependants, e.g. children.

#### 3.2 Employees should be able to demonstrate they can:

- Take reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their work.
- Follow the guidance and procedures outlined in this policy for safe working practices whilst working at home.
- Report any incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and ask for guidance as appropriate.
- Take part in any training conducted to meet the requirements of this policy.
- Report any dangers or potential dangers they identify, as well as any concerns they may have in respect of working alone at home to their Line Manager.
- Ensure that they do not arrange any physical meetings with service users, parents, pupils, employees of other agencies parents or other members of the public to be held at home.
- Maintain safeguarding standards in line with the Department for Education statutory guidance - Keeping Children Safe in Education Document (as amended).
- Work independently and on their own initiative; Motivate themselves; Complete projects within set deadlines; Manage workload effectively; Cope well under any new pressure posed by working at home; Adjust to new work practices; Maintain contact with all affected by own work.

#### 3.3 Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are arrangements in place for identifying, evaluating and managing risks associated with working from home. Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out regularly.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that employees working from home are at no greater risk than employees working within the school or Trust.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements in place for monitoring incidents associated with working from home.

- Putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice, which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working from home.
- Providing an outline of how work will be monitored, produced and delivered. Clear work objectives with measurable outputs must be established and documented, in advance of the arrangement commencing. For home working to take place it must be established that the work to be done at home can be completed without regular/frequent face-to face contact or direct supervision.
- Contact times and availability should be established in advance and be within the agreed contracted hours.
- Remind staff that all other conditions of employment as set out in the contract apply.
- Making it clear and record how productivity and performance management issues will be assessed.
- Ensuring all members of staff working from home adhere to this policy & Safeguarding Standards & Practices.

3.4 The Data Protection Officer is responsible for providing advice to Headteachers/Trustees on:

- Ensuring all laptops used for work have sophisticated anti-virus software and malware protection.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the data protection principles outlined in the GDPR.
- Ensuring laptops used for lone working are resilient, are able to efficiently recover lost data and have sophisticated cyber security.

## **4. Health and Safety**

The Trust recognises that there may be an increased risk to the health and safety of employees when working alone at home. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the school/Trust has a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees.

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of themselves when lone working at home, as well as any other people affected by their work.

Before agreeing to home working, managers should consider any further training necessary.

The Trust retains the right to check the employee's work areas in their own home for Health and Safety and information security purposes. The need for such inspections will depend on the nature of the work undertaken. Whilst working at home temporarily, there is no increased risk using display screen equipment (DSE) if you are using the equipment correctly e.g. sat at a desk/table and not having to bend your neck too far forwards or backwards. Laptops should not be placed on cushions or your lap causing the vents to become obstructed as this could cause the device to overheat.

Reporting Accident/Near Miss reporting procedures apply equally to incidents arising in the employee's home.

Physical meetings with service users, parents, pupils and employees of other agencies must not be held at home. Meetings with employees at home should be avoided.

Where the agreed working pattern allows for flexibility, both manager and employee should monitor to ensure excessive hours are not being worked. It is important that working patterns and hours are not detrimental to the employee's health and comply with the Working Time Regulations.

The line manager will conduct individual risk assessments following each request to work from home and consider any reasonable adjustments. Requests may be rejected if the level of risk associated with a staff member working from home is too high, or the risks cannot be managed effectively.

Risk assessments will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, or when there has been a significant change in working practice.

## **5. Equipment**

The school/Trust will not usually provide staff members with additional equipment to use at home. Employees may use school/Trust equipment for home working purposes where this is already provided by the school/Trust, e.g. school/work laptops.

Employees will be responsible for ensuring that they have suitable telephone and broadband available, and contacting their own provider in the event of any technical issues.

Any school/Trust equipment will remain the property of the school/Trust and will be returned upon request. Any faults with the equipment provided by the school/Trust must be reported to your line manager immediately.

The Trust is not responsible for the maintenance, replacement, or repair of any personal equipment that is used. When using a home telephone or personal mobile phone for official work purposes a detailed record of official calls should be kept for reimbursement purposes.

## **6. GDPR and Security**

The employee must ensure that information and equipment are kept securely.

In particular private and confidential material must be kept in lockable secure storage at all times and all equipment should be stored away safely and securely at the end of each day. This is to prevent damage and any unauthorised use. Line managers must be satisfied that all reasonable precautions are taken to maintain confidentiality of material in accordance with the ICT policy. Wherever possible, personal data will not be taken home by staff members for the purposes of

home working, due to the risk of data being lost or the occurrence of a data breach. If any unauthorised person has access to data, this is considered a data breach.

Any breach of confidentiality will be dealt with in accordance with the DDAT's Disciplinary Procedure.

Staff working from home will be encouraged to go paperless, where possible, as paper files cannot be protected digitally and may end up misplaced.

If the use of paper is unavoidable, the school requires employees to store paper copies of personal data in lockable secure storage which is in a secure location within the home.

Staff members are not permitted to let their family members or friends use any school or Trust equipment. Screens must be locked when the employee moves away from their laptop.

Whilst working from home employers are still bound by working within the Trust policies, and in particular should be cognisant of the Trust's Data Protection Policy, Information Security, Acceptable Use Policy and Staff Conduct Policy.

Staff are responsible for the security of confidential information when working from home.

## **7. Communication**

It is essential that good communication is maintained at all times between the employee and their line manager. The line manager and employee should plan and agree how they will communicate effectively with each other. These arrangements should be agreed and regularly reviewed in light of operational experience. This will help to mitigate the potential increased feelings of isolation and ensure that the employee and line manager are kept up to date.

The employee must agree arrangements with their line manager on an ongoing basis to ensure effective communication, and to enable the line manager to fulfil their duty of care.

All staff members working from home will be contactable throughout their agreed normal working hours by their line manager or other work colleagues.

A staff member's phone number and home address will not be shared to others without their permission.

The school understands that staff working at home have the right to privacy out-of-hours and should be able to separate their working and home lives, and so communication is only compulsory during the agreed contracted working hours.

**Please speak to your line manager if you are feeling isolated or struggling with your mental health.**

## **8. Costs and expenses**

The Trust/school will not contribute to any household expenses incurred whilst performing home working duties, e.g. heating, lighting or council tax.

## **9. Sickness Absence**

If staff members are sick during a period of working at home, then the normal sickness reporting rules must be followed, and they will adhere to the usual procedures.

## **10. Insurance**

The Trust's existing insurance policies (both public and employer's liability as part of the DfE's Risk Protection Arrangement - RPA) will continue to operate and cover the homeowner. Home working employees are advised to take out a household insurance policy if they do not currently have one. It is a condition of this policy that employees inform their household insurers of any home working agreement. If regular home working is undertaken, the Trust may request a copy of the current household insurance policy and a copy should be kept on the personal file.

## **11. Mortgages and Tenancy Agreements**

Employees working from home must inform anyone with an interest in the property (e.g. Building Society, Bank and Owner) of the position.

## **12. Agreement to work from home**

Prior permission needs to be obtained before an employee can work from home. The employee should make the request to the Headteacher or the Trust as appropriate. Consideration will be given to any such request and a decision regarding the suitability of working from home will take into account all the relevant circumstances.

The line manager will advise the employee whether the application is agreed, including reasons for non-approval if applicable.

In the event of a non-approval, the employee has the right to request a review of the decision within 10 working days from the original decision date. The decision will be reviewed by the school Governing board or an employee of the Trust. There is no further right of appeal following the review committee's decision.

The line manager will then finalise the working arrangements, taking into account any equipment or other resource issues required.

A homeworking declaration form must be completed and signed by the employee and their manager prior to homeworking. A copy is given to the employee and copy will be held on their personal file.



## Home Working Declaration Form

I have read, understood and agree to the Trust's policy and guidelines on homeworking.

I accept the offer to work from home and accept that this offer may be withdrawn by my line manager following discussion.

Signed:

Employee:

Date:

Manager's Signature:

Date Agreed: