



Home and Remote Working Policy

Introduction

This policy applies equally across all Supreme Group businesses (hereafter, “the Company”).

Definition

Working from home is a very different way of working, which requires colleagues to work independently using Company supplied equipment to remain in contact with managers, work colleagues and/or clients.

Not all colleagues will be able to work remotely or from home and, unless contractually employed as a home worker, will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Home working can be carried out on a permanent, regular or ad hoc basis. There are four main categories of home worker:

Permanent home worker – Staff who work from home permanently as their main place of work and only come into the office for meetings or training, as required. They are provided with the necessary equipment and technology that enables them to perform their duties at home. Permanent home workers will not have an allocated desk in a Company office but will be able to access a hot desk when they need to work from a Company office.

Regular homeworker – regular home workers will work from home on a regular basis, for example one or two days a week, as agreed with their manager. When at home, regular home workers will access Company systems remotely. When in the office, regular home workers, will not have an allocated desk in a Company office but will have access to hot desks.

As outlined below, it is important to differentiate between regular home working and ad hoc home working. Regular home working follows a set pattern and may be something that is requested as part of the Company’s work-life balance guidelines, for example to enable an employee to balance work and dependent care more easily and effectively (however, employees cannot expect to be able to undertake such care whilst working).

Home Based Field Workers – Home based field workers start and finish most days at home but spend the majority of their time working in the field, for example visiting and supporting Company colleagues and clients as required. When at home, home based field workers will be able to access Company systems remotely, either via mobile technology provided by the Company or by using their own IT equipment (or a combination). When in the office they will not have an allocated desk but will have access to hot desks.

Ad-hoc Home-Working – Ad hoc home working is where an employee works from home on an occasional basis when it is appropriate or beneficial to do so. This would typically be on occasions when the diary is clear and work requires concentration and no need to interact face-to-face with others. Another example might be where there is travel disruption due to adverse weather preventing the home to work journey being made.

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Home working - procedure and expectations

These procedures apply to permanent, regular and field based homeworkers only.

Expectations The expectation of both the employee and manager will be set out in a home working agreement, signed by both parties before homeworking commences. Employees working from home on a permanent or regular basis should be able to demonstrate they can:

- Work independently and on their own initiative (employees who are frequently late for work, have a high level of absenteeism, or who frequently miss work deadlines may not be considered ready to manage their own day and work schedule)
- Work in accordance with the core hours agreed with their manager
- Motivate themselves
- Complete projects within set deadlines
- Manage workload effectively
- Cope well under any new pressure posed by working at home
- Adjust to new working practices
- Maintain contact with all affected by own work
- Keep their Company calendar up to date to show when they are working from home and that they are out of the office
- Comply with the Company's Information Security Policy
- Agree arrangements with their line manager so that the line manager is informed of their whereabouts and can monitor performance
- Visit the office, for example to attend team meetings and training sessions, as agreed with their line manager
- Keep fully up to date with organisational news and information via update emails and the staff intranet

Managers of employees who work from home on a permanent basis are responsible for:

- Considering work outputs e.g. how it will be monitored, produced and delivered
- Providing a comparable induction, appraisal, communications, access to learning and development and career development opportunities and team events as for other Company employees
- Setting clear work objectives with measurable outputs which must be established and documented, in advance of the arrangement commencing. These objectives will be reviewed through 1 to1s. The line manager will need to establish how the employee will be kept informed of matters that affect them or their work.
- Making clear, in writing, how productivity and performance management issues will be assessed
- Agreeing how they will communicate effectively with the employee and maintain good communication with the home worker at all times, these arrangements should be agreed and regularly reviewed in light of operational experience

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- Informing the employee of meetings; training sessions and other events they would expect them to attend and will also ensure that the employee is kept up to date with information relevant to their work
- Ensuring that home working arrangements do not have an adverse effect on any particular group of employees. Neither should a refusal to agree home working disadvantage employees from any particular equalities group

Situations where permanent or regular home working may be considered

Permanent or regular home working may be considered:

- When seeking approval to fill a vacancy (management led)
- In response to organisational change and business transformation (management led)
- At the point of recruitment and selection (management or employee led)
- When a current employee requests permanent or regular home working (employee led) Home working cannot be imposed on any existing employee without proper assessment, consultation and agreement. Posts advertised as “home based” are exempt from this but would be subject to assessment.

Suitability of home working

Home working will be an option for many Company employees but due to the nature of home working, it will not be suited to all posts or all people. The decision about whether an employee or group of employees should be allowed to work at home will rest with the Managing Director.

In assessing the suitability of a post for home working, consideration will be given to:

- The relevant cost implications
- The suitability of the job to be carried out from home
- The suitability of the work location within the home
- The suitability of the employees’ personal circumstances
- Efficiencies of service provision.

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.

Home working is not an alternative to the provision of paid care and will not be considered where an employee is looking to reduce the cost of care by carrying out caring functions alongside home working.

Consideration must be given to the suitability of the proposed location. The location has to be adequate both for practical working and to comply with health and safety legislation. Ideally, the employee should have a separate room or area set aside for home working suitable to complete the work effectively and free from distractions.

Other issues to be considered

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Performance Management – employees working from home are subject to the same performance appraisal measures, processes and objectives that apply to all other employees.

Work Patterns - working hours and patterns, contact times and availability should be agreed in advance. Other conditions of employment, as set out in the contract, apply. If any employee has any concerns with their working arrangements, they must bring the matter to the attention of their manager immediately.

Contractual Changes- The manager must ensure that revised contract documentation is issued as necessary from HR to confirm the home working arrangements. A home working agreement must be completed and signed by the employee and their manager prior to home working. A copy is given to the employee and a copy will be held on their personal file.

Pay & Benefits- Pay and benefits are not affected on the basis that fulltime hours for the post are worked. Part-time employees will be entitled to salary and benefits on a pro-rata basis.

Ending the Agreement- The Company reserves the right to withdraw home working from an employee. However, it would not be withdrawn without discussion and notice given.

Travelling & Vehicle Allowances and Expenses

The Company will not pay for home based employees to travel from their home to their team based location or from a work base as determined by the contract of employment to their team based location when they are required to attend the office (at their team based location).

Where, for instance, an employee travels direct from home to a location or other place of work other than their team based location for business reasons, the Company will reimburse any reasonable additional travel costs in excess of the cost of travelling, either mileage or public transport in line with the expenses policy in effect at the time.

Any payment arrangements will be reviewed in the event of a change to the nature of the employee's duties and location of work.

Costs

Employer costs

The Company will not pay to install broadband connections or contribute to contract costs.

Employee costs.

The employee will not incur any direct costs as a result of working from home. When using a personal telephone for official work purposes a detailed record of official calls should be kept and these will be reimbursed in line with the expenses policy in effect at the time.

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There will be no additional allowances for heating and lighting, broadband or other incidentals paid to the employee when they are working from home. However, under income tax law if an employee incurs any additional household costs for heating and lighting as a result of working at home they may be able to claim tax relief on these up to an amount, currently £4 per week (£18 per month), without supporting evidence of costs that the employee may incur. An employee may submit a claim form to HMRC for this amount for heating and lighting in relation to home based working on a quarterly basis as part of their claims process.

For more information, please see the following website:
<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/incometax/relief-household.htm>

Use of Personal Equipment for Work Purposes

In some cases, employees working from home will access the Company's IT systems using their own equipment via a Company administered secure gateway. Company information must only be accessed in this way and must not be held on personal IT equipment.

The Company is not responsible for the maintenance, replacement, or repair of any personal equipment that is used, including broadband lines. When using a personal telephone for official work purposes a detailed record of official calls should be kept and these will be reimbursed.

If employees are unable to work at home due to failure of personal equipment they should discuss at the earliest opportunity alternative arrangements with their line manager, these may include:

- coming to the office to work
- working in another suitable location
- use of leave/flexi time
- alternative work that doesn't need access to systems or use of IT

Company Equipment

Where equipment has been provided by the Company to enable the employee to work effectively at home this will remain the property of the Company. The equipment required will vary from case to case. The line manager in conjunction with IT will make final decisions on what is needed. Where equipment is provided the employee must:

- take reasonable care of it and keep it secure;
- use it only for official purposes during working time;
- use it only in accordance with any operating instructions;
- return it to the council when requested;
- use it in accordance with all relevant Company policies.
- log it on regularly to receive security and AV (anti-virus) updates

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Before an employee commences home working if they are using Company equipment they should be briefed by a member of the IT department to ensure they are familiar with the operational functions as part of the hand over.

Health and Safety Policy It remains the joint responsibility of the line manager and the individual employee, irrespective of where staff work, to ensure that appropriate and proportionate measures are taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and others working in their teams. These measures include information, instruction, supervision and training. Managers and staff have a duty to comply with these standards.

Induction and training - As a minimum, permanent home workers must have undertaken health and safety training, including the use of display screen equipment. Before agreeing to home working, managers should consider any further training necessary.

Use of display screen equipment - All employees working at home will be required to complete a Display Screen Equipment Assessment. This should be completed before commencing work and be reviewed annually, or immediately after any significant change of situation.

Risk Assessment- A risk assessment needs to be undertaken and recorded. It should be reviewed on a regular basis, usually annually, depending on the resultant risk.

Inspection - The Company retains the right to check the employee's work areas in their own home for health and safety and information security compliance purposes. The need for such inspections will depend on the nature of the work undertaken.

Reporting - Accident / near miss reporting procedures apply equally to incidents arising in the employee's home

Meetings - Meetings with service users and employees of other agencies must not be held at home. Meetings with other employees at home should be avoided.

Working Time - Where agreed working patterns allows for flexibility, both manager and employee should monitor this to ensure excessive hours are worked. It is important that working patterns and hours are not detrimental to the employee's health and comply with the Working Time Directive and a suitable exemption to the 48 hour week is signed, where applicable.

Lone Working – Employees working in the field should also refer to the Lone Working Policy that can be found on at website.

Security use of the Company's systems and Information

The employee must ensure that information and equipment are kept securely at all times when not in use.

Hard copies of private and confidential material must be kept to a minimum when working at home and kept securely at all times. This material must be disposed of securely when it is no longer needed.

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Insurance

The Company's existing insurance policies (both public and employer's liability) will continue to operate and cover the employee.

Home working employees are advised to take out a household insurance policy if they do not currently have one. If the employee has insurance, it is a condition of any home working agreement that they inform their household insurers of the arrangements.

Mortgages and Tenancy Agreements

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

The Application Process for permanent of regular home working

Step 1. The line manager discusses the proposals with the employee. The line manager may need to discuss with colleagues proposed arrangements.

Step 2. The employee completes the home working application form.

Step 3. In order to evaluate the employee's suitability managers will have checked

- The home working application form
- Health and safety/suitability checklists
- Person specification
- Job description and,
- Performance record

In particular, managers will take into account any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary in the case of a disabled employee, for example a suitable chair. This will allow managers to ensure that each application for home working is considered fairly.

Step 4. The Managing Director will evaluate and agree the application. The line manager will advise the employee in writing whether or not the application is agreed, including reasons for non-approval if applicable.

Step 5. The line manager will then finalise the working arrangements and the date the employee will commence home working, taking into account any equipment or other resource issues.

Step 6. The line manager completes the Home Working Agreement and sends it to the employee to sign and return. A copy should be sent to HR. The line manager should notify colleagues of the agreed working arrangements.

Ad-Hoc Home working

Ad hoc homeworking fits well with the flexible working principle of being able to choose the work space that best suits the activity you are doing at any particular time and is based on the premise that employees can take responsibility for deciding how and where to do their jobs most effectively in order to deliver on their performance objectives.

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It requires trust, openness and transparency on all sides that homeworking will be appropriate, not excessive and not detrimental to performance or service delivery. There is no absolute right to work from home and managers have discretion to limit or prevent it in specific individual cases where trust or performance has been compromised.

It is important that employees make it clear to their manager and colleagues when they are working from home and maintain good and regular communications.

Review - This policy will be reviewed from time to time as appropriate.

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