

Homeworking policy



WORKING TOGETHER

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Policy Overview

This policy applies to all employees of Chorley and South Ribble Borough Councils. There is no minimum service requirement.

This document is part of a family of policies which provide advice and information on achieving a work-life blend; see the Parental Leave, Flexible Working and Leave policies for more information.

Homeworking is a form of flexible working that can bring benefits to an employee and the councils. However, the success of homeworking depends if the role, the individual and the home are suited to this type of working practice.

Homeworking may result from an organisational need, initiative, or response to Government advice in a crisis. It may also be agreed following a formal request from an employee.

Government legislation promotes flexibility in the workplace including the provision of homeworking. Whilst we seek to support alternative ways of agile working, all such decisions will be made whilst considering operational requirements and the needs of other employees.

Policy Objective

The aim of this policy is to:

- Provide effective and flexible working arrangements
- Reduce travel and accommodation costs
- Help the councils meet the objectives of their policy on flexible working
- Assist with the recruitment and retention of employees
- Support service delivery and increased productivity through more effective working and better work life balance.

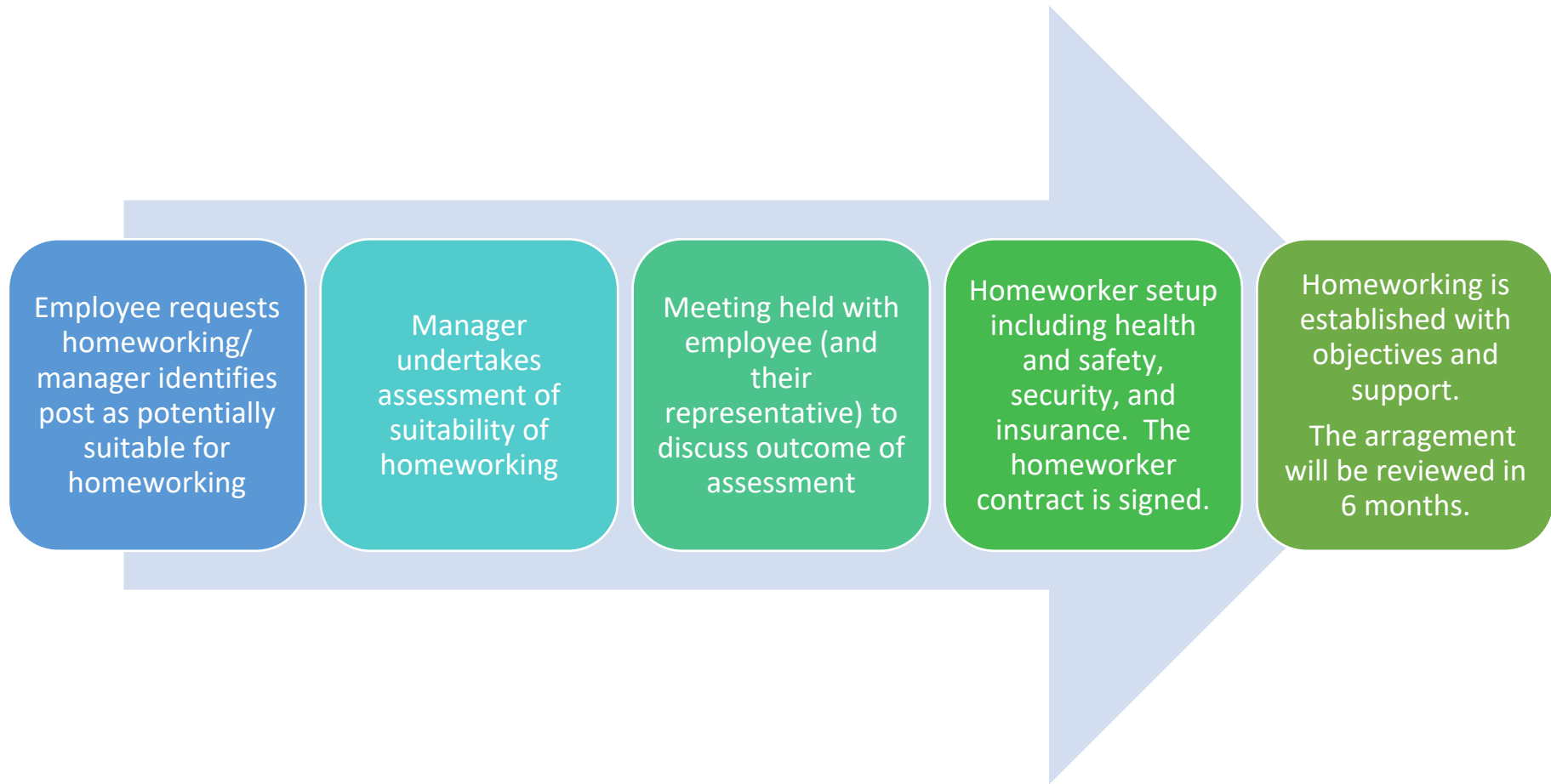
Types of homeworker

Homeworkers are employees who are based at home for a defined part, or all of their contractual hours, for the purpose of carrying out their work with the agreement of the councils. There is no reduction in grade, loss of status or career prospects.

Type	Description	Further information
Workplace based	Work is based primarily in the office/workplace, with occasional days being worked at home.	<p>A formal application and formal contractual agreement is not required to cover this category of homeworking.</p> <p>If it may be necessary/advantageous to work from home on an ad hoc basis an employee should obtain agreement in advance on each occasion from their line manager, and agree the work to be delivered. The line manager has the right to refuse a request for operational/practical reasons.</p> <p>Occasional homeworking may be appropriate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow an employee to work more effectively on a piece of work where concentration is important and to avoid the interruptions of the office; • Provide a solution where an employee is temporarily unable to travel to their normal place of work or a personal incident prevents them from working at their normal place of work. Homeworking would not be considered if the employee is declared medically unfit for work.
Homeworker	Work is carried out primarily at home with occasional days in the workplace.	<p>The employees and the councils will enter into a formal contractual agreement for an employee to work from home as their main base.</p> <p>Decisions on the appropriateness of homeworking will always be made on a specific basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To aid retention of skilled/experienced employees • To respond to an individual's formal request/application for flexible working arrangements, • To enable more effective delivery of services and the creation of a flexible workforce • To aid recruitment as part of an overall employee benefits package.

Hybrid worker	Work is carried out between home and work on an agreed pattern.	<p>Where operationally feasible and appropriate, in line with the guidance for homeworkers, the councils may enter into a formal agreement for an employee to work across home and work.</p> <p>For hybrid home workers the workplace remains the main base.</p>
Crisis homeworker	Work is carried out at home on a temporary basis in response to an incident or crisis situation on council instruction.	<p>A formal application and formal contractual agreement are not required to cover this category of homeworking.</p> <p>In a crisis situation or as a result of a major incident preventing employees working at their normal place of work the councils may require employees to work from home if the role allows on a temporary basis as part of business continuity procedures.</p> <p>During this time the organisation will ensure employees are kept up to date with frequent communication and line managers will keep in regular contact and agree the work to be delivered and the timescales to be met.</p>

Hybrid/Homeworker approval process



Step one – Homeworker Request

- The Employee requests a hybrid/homeworker working arrangement in writing to their manager. OR
- Manager may identify that a vacant post should be recruited to on a hybrid/homeworker basis.

Step two – Assessing Suitability

- The manager, supported by HR, will consider:
 - Service delivery implications
 - Suitability of the job
 - Cost effectiveness
 - Suitability of the individual employee
 - Impact on other employees
 - Suitability of the working environment.
- The [assessment](#) will be recorded.

Step three – Discussions with the employee

- The manager, supported by HR, will arrange a meeting with the employee and their representative to discuss the request.
- If the request is [declined](#) the employee will have the reasons confirmed in writing.
- If the request is [approved](#) the employee will be advised of next steps.

Step four – Setting up homeworking

- [Health and safety assessment](#) undertaken
- [Security assessment](#) undertaken
- [Equipment](#) is requested
- [Insurance and tax](#) informed
- Working pattern and [working arrangements](#) are finalised
- [Homeworker contract](#) is signed

Step five – Establishing and reviewing homeworking

- Employee agrees to adhere to the [homeworker responsibilities](#)
- Manager will agree [objectives](#)
- Arrangements for support agreed – including [health and wellbeing](#)
- [Home worker expenses](#) agreed
- [Review](#) every 6 months

Assessing Suitability

The manager will undertake an objective review of the impact of homeworking using the following criteria.

Service delivery implications

- Will service delivery including office cover be impaired?

Suitability of the job

- Does the work involve tasks that can facilitate homeworking?
- Can work be performed on an individual basis with clear objectives/performance indicators?
- Is the work subject to regular change or variation?
- What proportion of the employee's role can be done at home?
- Is there adequate admin/general support for the home worker?

Cost effectiveness

- Does the work require specific equipment or documents and any practical or cost issues with this?
- Is the necessary IT infrastructure in place including technical support?
- Are there any financial benefits to the organisation if the employee is a homeworker?

Suitability of the individual employee

Does the employee demonstrate the following skills, abilities, and behaviours:

- Self-motivation
- Self-reliance and discipline to work without direct supervision
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Initiative, flexibility and time management skills
- Able to cope with reduced social contact and isolation
- Able to cope with competing demands for work and [family](#)?

Impact on other employees

- How would the line management responsibilities of homeworkers be exercised from home?
- Would the workload or working arrangements of other employees be affected?
- Do colleagues have any other concerns? The manager may need to discuss the request with those employees who might be affected by the change.

Suitability of the working environment.

- Is the home site suitable including a suitable workspace for ICT equipment and space for storage?
- Are there any confidentiality/GDPR issues?
- Is reliable, fast broadband available?

If the homeworker moves home, it will be necessary for the line manager and employee to determine if the homeworking arrangement can continue from the new location.

Homeworking and care of dependents

Employees will be expected to have adequate care available to enable them to work their contracted hours. It will ordinarily be expected that employees are not responsible for caring for dependents during work time.

Declining an application

The decision to accept or reject an application will be determined by the line manager in consultation with the appropriate senior leader and will be based on an objective assessment regarding the role and individual's suitability for homeworking.

If an application is rejected this will be confirmed in writing with the reasons for the decision. The employee will be able to appeal the decision in writing outlining the grounds of appeal in full to HR within 5 working days of receiving the decision.

Approving an application

If the formal request is approved all homeworkers are required to sign a homeworking agreement which will be subject to review every 6 months. If circumstances change arrangements will be re-assessed and/or if it is agreed that homeworking is no longer appropriate arrangements will be made to revert back to the original way of working providing one month's notice.

Health and Safety Assessment

Every applicant who makes a formal application for homeworking will need to agree to a health and safety risk assessment being undertaken to identify any adjustments or equipment needed to carry out the work in a safe environment and they will also need to undertake a DSE assessment for their workspace.

Line managers are responsible for completing the necessary risk assessments and ensure they are reviewed when circumstances change. Where a safety concern arises the line manager should consult the Health and Safety team.

Security Assessment

A security assessment is required for the protection of computer and other equipment, as well as electronic and manual data held and used in the home office. This will occur as part of the initial health and safety assessment and thereafter at regular intervals.

The employee must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of council equipment and is responsible for advising the councils of any material changes to security arrangements to enable a further assessment to be arranged.

All homeworkers must comply with the ICT Security Framework to ensure that the councils' data is safe and secure.

Equipment and Supplies

For hybrid/homeworkers the councils will provide the equipment needed to undertake the work. This may include ICT equipment and/or office furniture.

Use of council computers must be in accordance with the councils' ICT Acceptable Use Policies. The equipment provided must not be used for means other than homeworking, or it may be viewed as a benefit in kind and the individual may be liable to tax.

The councils are responsible for maintaining equipment supplied to a homeworker and will need to be given access to employee's homes to check that electronic and other equipment is safe and functioning properly, subject to reasonable notice being given. If the homeworker moves home, they should inform ICT and their manager.

Insurance and Tax

Employees working at home with consent of their service are covered by the councils' insurance arrangements (Employer's Liability and Personal Accident Insurance) as if they were working at the workplace. Risk and Assurance must be informed of the equipment the employee has in their home so this is also covered.

Employees must have both buildings and contents insurance and must inform their insurer that they are a homeworker. Any consequential increase in household insurance will not be reimbursed by the councils.

Capital Gains Tax is unlikely to impact unless a room is permanently set aside for work and has no other function. Individuals should consult the tax office to discuss their own situation.

Working arrangements

- **Sickness**

Sickness must be reported in accordance with normal sickness reporting procedures, for more information consult the Attendance Policy.

- **Hours worked**

Working times need to be agreed in advance if they are not in accordance with the employee's normal pattern so that colleagues, councillors, partners, and managers know when a homeworker is available. Homeworkers are to document working hours in the normal way and request leave or time away using the normal procedures.

- **Training and Development**

Employees working at home will have equal access to training and development as other workplace-based colleagues. They will also be subject to the normal PDP process and undertake training around homeworking along with managers.

- **Regular Contact and communication**

The line manager should confirm how often homeworkers attend their team's office base and contact the team. Homeworkers must use and keep their Outlook calendar up to date. Managers should contact homeworkers at least weekly to monitor, provide feedback on work undertaken and provide updates on council development and support.

- **Team Meetings**

Employees working at home should attend all team meetings and video calls. Managers should ensure homeworking arrangements do not adversely affect other team members.

- **Individual meetings**

Managers must ensure homeworkers have one to one meetings as often as other team members and at least six weekly.

Responsibilities of homeworker

Homeworking employees must:

- Attend appropriate training and meetings at management's request;
- Co-operate and adhere with the risk assessment, report any problems, carry out regular checks of equipment and report faults to the manager without delay;
- Under no circumstances should the homeworker provide unauthorised access to the work or work equipment to any other individual. Breach of these guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken;
- Report any accidents which occur during the agreed work hours;
- Report health problems possibly attributed to/aggravated by working arrangements;

Objectives

Mutually agreed targets should be established so the employee is clear what is expected when working at home and the line manager can monitor how the employee is progressing in terms of quality and quantity of work and if they need any assistance, training or support.

If support has been provided and homeworkers are persistently not meeting the agreed objectives, the homeworker review may be brought forward.

Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of employees, especially homeworkers is extremely important. In addition to the councils' regular health and wellbeing services extra support is available:

- Follow these [tips](#) for remote working.
- Book in a [Wellcheck Appointment](#) through HR or your line manager.
- Check out [Every Mind Matters](#) and [Mind](#).
- Take regular exercise; a walk, jog, or online exercise classes such as [this](#) and [this](#).
- Check in regularly with your manager and team.
- Take part in the health and wellbeing activities promoted through the intranet.
- If unwell report your sickness to your manager and rest until you are fully recovered.

Reviewing homeworking

Homeworker arrangements will be reviewed every 6 months. If there are concerns about the arrangement the manager will arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss the issues. If the concerns cannot be reasonably alleviated the arrangement will be terminated.

Homeworker expenses

Travel Expenses

Business travel will be paid in accordance with the councils' policy.

The administrative centre for the purpose of claiming travel expenses will normally be the employee's team base, or some other location considered relevant to the employee's employment, not the employee's home. Only mileage in excess of the distance between home and the administrative centre can be claimed

Homeworking allowance

Homeworkers are able to claim tax relief through HMRC using this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>

It is the employee's responsibility to keep HMRC up to date if their circumstances change.

Example Hybrid/Homeworker Agreement

Name: _____

Service: _____

Directorate: _____

1. Agreement

It has been agreed that the above named (the Homeworker) will be allowed to work at/from home for _____ day(s) or _____ hours per week subject to the exigencies of the service. This agreement will take effect on _____ and end on _____.

Homeworking days will normally be _____ or hours working at home will normally be _____. Where service needs dictate, for supervision purposes or where meetings have been arranged, the Director of the Service reserves the right, by prior arrangement, to vary homeworking days. Where there is a need to vary homeworking days, alternative days will be agreed in advance between a homeworker and his/her Line Manager/Head of Service.

When working at/from home, a homeworker will adhere to the attached agreed action plan/task list/output list and his/her progress will be monitored by his/her Line Manager/Head of Service on a _____ basis.

Whilst working at home, a homeworker is expected to maintain daily telephone or email contact with his/her Service and will have access to appropriate ICT equipment for other forms of communication.

2. Pay and Conditions

This working arrangement will not affect a homeworker's basic rate of pay, holiday entitlement or, overall weekly working hours.

Essential car user allowance lump sum will not be affected by homeworking. Subsistence allowance will not be payable for time worked from home, unless the employee was called to, for example a meeting.

The administrative centre for the purpose of claiming travel expenses will normally be the employee's team base, or some other location considered relevant to the employee's employment, not the employee's home. Therefore only mileage in excess of the distance between home and administrative centre can be claimed.

3. Health, Safety and Insurance

Both the employer and the employee have the same responsibilities whether work is undertaken on council premises or at the employee's home.

The existence of this agreement confirms that a risk assessment has been carried out for the above named homeworker and that conditions for working at home have been deemed satisfactory.

Providing the risk assessment has been carried out, a homeworker will continue to be covered by the councils' employee's liability insurance. To maintain this cover, a further homeworker risk assessment will be carried out every six months whilst this agreement is in operation.

4. Provision, use and Maintenance of Equipment

Further to discussion between a homeworker and his/her Line Manager, the following items of furniture and equipment will be issued to the Homeworker for his/her exclusive use.

Faults to general office equipment must be reported immediately by a homeworker. Faults relating to ICT equipment should be reported to the ICT helpdesk.

Stationery items are available from _____.

5. Computer Security, Use of Software, Data Protection and Information Security.

Please refer to the councils' ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Data Protection Policy.

6. Monitoring of homeworking

Prior to commencing the homeworking, the Manager and the homeworker shall agree the targets to be met.

Outputs must be monitored and reviewed by the Manager on a _____ basis.

7. Termination of Agreement

Either a homeworker or his/her Service can terminate this homeworking agreement subject to one month's written notice.

Any difficulties which arise with working at/from home will be highlighted through monitoring arrangements. However, if a service has evidence of a homeworking agreement being abused the service can suspend the agreement immediately pending a full investigation. A homeworker retains the right of appeal against such action with immediate effect.

8. Repayment of ICT Set-Up Costs

If a homeworker leaves the councils for any reason other than death, redundancy, restructure or ill health retirement, within 1 year of entering into a voluntary formal homeworking arrangement, then the councils reserve the right to recover any costs associated with setting up ICT equipment in the employee's home. This repayment will not be pro-rata for completed months service with the councils.

In exceptional circumstances the Director has discretion to waive wholly or in part the repayment.

9. Abuse of the Policy

Any employee who is in breach of the Homeworking Policy will be subject to the councils' Disciplinary procedure, which may result in dismissal.

10. Declaration

I confirm that I have read and understand the councils' Homeworking Policy and agreement contract and agree to abide by it.

Signed: _____ (Homeworker) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Line Manager) Date: _____

Singed: _____ (Director) Date: _____