NHS

University Hospitals Sussex
NHS Foundation Trust

Remote Working

Managers Guidance

1.0   Principles

1.1   This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Worklife Balance Policy and associated guidance and any application for regular remote working must be considered in accordance with the principles and process outlined in the Worklife Balance Policy.

2.1   UHSussex is committed to helping everyone achieve a healthy worklife balance and to encourage all staff to have flexibility in their roles. As we strive to provide continuous, excellent care for our patients it is important that the needs of our service and availability of our workforce are matched and as an employer of choice retain and be able to recruit to our workforce.

1.3   Remote working is a type of flexible working which, depending on the agreement between the service and staff member and can also be used in conjunction with other arrangements such as flexible hours, working part-time, term-time working or the staff members core hours.

1.3   Remote working for the purposes of this guidance refers to time spent by a staff member working remotely at home or another agreed location, for all or part of their contracted hours rather than on Trust premises. Some staff may wish to adopt a hybrid model of working: spending a proportion of their working time remotely and in the office or their usual place of work.

1.4   Remote working may be considered as a long or short term arrangement. It may be considered if a member of staff is unable to attend Trust premises for a specific reason or as part of a "return to work" process. There will be occasions when remote working may be necessary due to unexpected events, such as major incidents or situations such as a global Pandemic. In these circumstances, staff are required to work flexibly in accordance with the needs of the service and this may also require staff to work on site.

1.5   It is accepted that not all job roles may be suitable for remote working, however managers are committed to give careful consideration to all requests and accommodate remote working wherever possible to ensure maximum flexibility is provided to allow staff to balance their home and work responsibilities and the needs of the service are continued to be met.

2.0   Regular Remote Working

2.1   If the staff member is already employed by the Trust and expresses an interest in occasionally or working remotely on a regular basis, the staff member should initially discuss the proposal with their line manager informally with a view to reaching an agreement. If it is not possible to agree to accommodate the request, an application should be made for flexible working in accordance with the Worklife Balance Policy.

2.2   Prior to regular remote working starting, relevant and satisfactory risk assessments must be completed by both the manager and the staff member (assessing the suitability of remote working, for Display Screen Equipment use and Lone Working).

2.3   Details of the regular remote working arrangements must be confirmed in writing using Appendix A – Checklist and Agreement for regular remote working.

2.4   Both the manager and staff member may decide that a trial period should be implemented as part of the flexible working request. The trial period will allow both parties to review how the arrangements work in practice and whether or not they are likely to create any practical difficulties for the department or Trust as a whole. If a trial period is agreed, it should be for a defined period and with an agreed review date. This review will determine whether the regular remote flexible working can be implemented.

2.5   The line manager and staff member should record the details of the remote working application form, making clear the start and end date of the trial period. At the end of the agreed trial period, a review meeting will be held. The outcome of this review meeting will determine whether the flexible working arrangement can be accommodated.

2.6   Regular remote working arrangements will be monitored and reviewed as part of normal supervision, appraisals or discussions and 1:1 meetings at regular intervals by the line manager and staff member to ensure their continued effectiveness, particularly in terms of service delivery, impact on colleagues and the health and wellbeing of the individual member of staff. As jobs change it may be that a role that was previously approved as a remote working role may no longer be suitable for remote working and should become workplace based. In these situations a staff member may be required to return to the workplace, but any changes will only be made after discussion and mutual agreement or consultation with the individual staff member giving a reasonable period of notice.

3.0   Equipment

3.1   Depending on the amount of time the staff member is likely to spend working remotely, the Trust may agree to any of the following:

- Agree with the staff member how a laptop is to be used and that work may be limited to a certain number of hours per day.
- Purchase and install a similar workstation, chair and desktop computer to those used in the Trust's offices.
- Provide furniture and IT equipment from stock already in the Trust.

3.2   An adequate internet connection remains the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that they are able to access UHSussex systems remotely.

3.3   Any equipment provided or purchased by the Trust for homeworking remains the property of the Trust and must be returned. The Trust reserves the right to make a deduction from the staff member's salary for the market value of the equipment should it not be returned to the Trust at the end of the remote period of working or should the staff member leave the Trust.

3.4   After discussion and completion of the relevant Risk Assessments and the Homeworking Checklist, it may be concluded that the home or other agreed location is not suitable for work due to lack of space or other issues.

3.6   Staff are reminded that it is not permissible to use Trust owned equipment for private use or use by others.

3.7   The Trust will not reimburse any costs incurred whilst remote working, including but not limited to regular expenses such as mortgage/rent, broadband, heating, lighting or expenses travelling to the workplace.

4.0   Security and confidentiality

4.1   It is essential that staff working remotely maintain confidentiality to the same high standard that would be required on-site.

4.2   Patients' medical case notes must not be taken home or off-site under any circumstances.

4.3   Staff are responsible for ensuring that all UHSussex property and all UHSussex information, files, documents within their possession are kept secure, including all NHS property in transit.

4.4   The Trust's Information Governance Staff Handbook will apply.

4.5   Staff must not permit confidential UHSussex documents or patient/staff identifiable data to be accessed by unauthorised persons. Personal identifiable data must not be stored on or uploaded to a non UHSussex computer. Staff are responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with Trust business secure at all times.

4.6   In the interests of data security all remote workers must ensure they have appropriate security equipment recommended by the IT department e.g. encrypted memory/safesticks to ensure the safe transfer of data between the Trust and home or other remote location Confidential information must not be sent via personal (non NHS.NET/UHSussex) e-mail accounts.

4.7   Staff must not save documents to their own personal computers.

5.0   Health and Safety

5.1   Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA), employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff. The Trust therefore has a duty to assess risks to remote workers.

5.2   Relevant risk assessments must be completed by the staff member and reviewed by their line manager prior to remote working commencing in order to ensure that Health and Safety requirements and security and confidentiality requirements are met. These risk assessments include: Home Working, Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and Lone Working. In addition the Trust is required to ensure that all equipment used by people for work is suitable and safe and that adequate training has been given. Further guidance is provided at Appendix B.

5.3   Staff also have responsibilities under health and safety legislation and have a duty:

- to take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and that of other people who may be affected by their activities at work
- to co-operate with the Trust in order to comply with health and safety duties

- to use all work items provided by the Trust in accordance with the training and instructions they receive to enable them to use the items safely
- to inform the Trust of any work situation that could present a serious danger to health and safety or of any shortcomings in the Trust's health and safety arrangements.

6.0   Accidents/Incidents

6.1   Staff members working remotely must inform their manager in the event of an accident/incident during working hours. Initial reports should be by telephone and a Datix form completed.

7.0   Communication

7.1   It is important for staff to stay connected to colleagues and managers whilst working remotely and continue to feel part of the UHSussex team even though they may not be working on-site all of the time.

7.2   Remote workers must maintain good communication with their colleagues and their manager and should discuss and agree how this will work in practice before starting to work from home or another agreed location. This is likely to be in the form of regular meetings to allow messages to be cascaded, staff to ask questions, teams to stay connected and to check in on each other and utilising remote working systems/technology, such as Microsoft Teams.

7.3   Staff working remotely will be expected to visit the offices of the Trust whenever required during their normal working hours. This may include, but will not be limited to, attendance at relevant internal meetings on any of the hospitals sites or external meetings. Attendance at mandatory training courses will also be required.

7.4   It is essential that all working arrangements, including availability, messaging, visiting the 'office', how work is to be transferred between the Trust and home and the disposal of confidential waste, are fully discussed and agreed between all relevant parties before home working starts. Reference should be made to the Information Governance Staff Handbook.

8.0   Hours of work

8.1   The hours and working pattern must be agreed with the line manager prior to commencement of remote working to ensure that the staff member does not work in excess of their normal working hours and meets the requirements of the Working Time Regulations 1998.

9.0   Base location

9.1   Where a staff member works remotely on a regular basis their base location will remain as the relevant hospital site. The staff member will be required to visit the appropriate Trust office on a regular basis for which travel expenses will not be paid.

10.0 Insurance

10.1 It is the responsibility of the remote worker to provide adequate home buildings and contents insurance. The staff member will need to inform their insurance company that they work remotely on a regular basis and of any equipment owned by the Trust that is kept there.

10.2 The remote worker must inform their landlord or mortgage lender if they are working from home or another agreed remote location on a regular basis as there maybe restrictive covenants, lease terms or similar legal restrictions preventing the use of a staff member's home for business use.

10.3 The Trust will not reimburse any extra costs as a result of the above and will not accept liability for damage caused to the home or its contents.

11.0 Taxation and Council Tax

11.1 Any remote worker who chooses to work at home would not be entitled to any tax relief on additional outgoings. The position changes if there is a requirement to work from home where there could be tax relief on a proportion of the costs for heating, lighting and rent on a room used for business purposes (Inland Revenue Leaflet IR104). Tax relief is not available on any given portion of the council tax.

12.0 Health and Well-being

12.1 Frequent rest breaks should be incorporated into the day to stand and move about, to take fresh air and exercise.

12.2 Annual leave should be taken at regular intervals and in line with Trust Policy.

12.3 It can be isolating working remotely and so remote workers must keep up communication with colleagues and friends and ask for support, training or assistance when needed. Staff members have access to a wide range of support available on the staff internet pages under the Health and Wellbeing or Staff Welfare pages including:

- The Staff Counselling Services/HELP Services – staff can self-refer or ask their manager to refer them
- VIVUP Mental Health Support phone line – 03303 800658 (no referral needed)

13.0 Staff responsibilities

13.1 Staff undertaking remote working are required to:

- Discuss and agree work objectives, working patterns and hours to fulfil contracted hours
- Be contactable remotely throughout their contracted working hours by the line manager/supervisor and other UHSussex colleagues
- Be available to attend the workplace for specified reasons including but not limited to meetings or training courses as required by their line manager
- Comply with the Trust's Policies and Procedures whilst working remotely; provide a safe work space to ensure own health and well-being and maintain patient confidentiality at all times
- Complete any required risk assessments

- Take care of trust equipment and report any lost, damaged or stolen equipment to their manager
- Maintain statutory and mandatory training compliance
- Trust absence and sickness reporting procedures will continue to apply

14.0 Line manager responsibilities

14.1 Where remote working is requested, line managers are required to consider:

- The suitability and compatibility of the job, the role and the home or other location
- The health and safety, security, financial, HR and IT issues involved
- The potential impact on the level of service delivery, efficiency or effectiveness
- How the staff members performance will be supported, including appropriate output measures, formal supervision through management guidance and appraisal process
- An appropriate communication system is put in place to keep the remote worker informed of all relevant departmental and corporate developments which impact on their work and them as a UHSussex member of staff
- To inform the staff member that they will be required come on to Trust premises when required
- Ensure the staff member has undertaken relevant mandatory training and organise any further training that may be required e.g. Health and Safety aspects of work at home and the management of time
- Complete any required risk assessments
- Support and monitor the health and wellbeing of staff who are working remotely, helping them to stay connected to their teams
- Liaise with staff to agree work expectations and to remind them of their obligations in relation to adhering to all relevant Trust Policies including health and safety, information governance, data security and patient confidentiality requirements.
- Adhere to Working Time Regulations in respect of weekly working hours and rest breaks, reminding staff of this periodically so that they do not routinely work in excess of normal working hours

Appendix A – Checklist and Agreement for regular remote working

This document should be used to help determine whether regular remote working meets the needs of the service and as a record to support any subsequent agreement.

This document should be completed in conjunction with the flexible working application form contained within the Work Life Balance/Flexible Working Guidance.

Name:	
Job title:	
Department:	
Line manager:	
Date of request:	

I wish to work at home on the following days:

Every Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday/Friday *(delete as appropriate)*

Regular remote working – Trial Period

Start date:

End date:

Review date:

The Trust reserves the right to change the dates of the trial period at any time as necessary.

At the end of the agreed trial period the Trust reserves the right to require the staff member

to revert to their previous working arrangement	
Arrangements for dealing with phone calls, emails, letters and other correspondence:	
Arrangements for contact with the line manager:	
Arrangements for maintaining confidentiality and security of Trust information:	
Arrangements for attendance at Trust premises:	
Any specific arrangements applicable to the role:	
Declaration	
I understand that the Trust will not pay any costs of working from home other than those previously agreed and itemised above.	
I understand that the agreement can be terminated at any time by either party, giving reasonable notice.	
I have read, understood and agree to the Trust's guidance on home working.	
I confirm that I am up to date with my statutory and mandatory training (including Information Governance)	
I confirm that I have adequate insurance for working from home	
I confirm that I have told my mortgage provider/landlord of my plan to work from home and checked that I am allowed to under my mortgage/rent agreement.	
I confirm that relevant risk assessments have been completed and signed off	

(Home working, Display Screen Equipment and Lone Working)	
I confirm that I must return any equipment provided in a reasonable condition, allowing for reasonable wear and tear over the period of the homeworking agreement or I must repay the market value of the equipment. *In the case of the latter, the Trust will make reasonable efforts to resolve this through discussion with you but reserves the right to make a deduction from your salary for the market value of the equipment.*	

Signed by (Staff member)	**Date:**
Authorised by (line manager):	**Date:**

Appendix B – Health and Safety Guidance Notes

Employer responsibilities

1. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to assess all significant risks, which include risks to home workers. Employers must also make adequate arrangements for managing their control measures.

2. In addition, under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, employers are required to assess display screen equipment risks, ensure that workstations meet the minimum requirements, inform users, plan work for changes of activity/breaks, provide eye tests and provide health and safety training. The employer must also arrange a workstation assessment of all display screen equipment users, including those working at home.

3.   Under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), employers are required to ensure that all equipment used by people for work is suitable and safe and, importantly, that adequate training has been given

Staff responsibilities

1.   It is not only the employer who has responsibilities under health and safety legislation. Under the HSWA, staff have a duty to:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and that of other people who may be affected by their activities at work

- Co-operate with their employer to enable the employer to comply with health and safety duties

- Use all work items provided by their employer in accordance with the training and instructions they receive to enable them to use the items safely

- Inform their employer of any work situation that could present a serious danger to health and safety or of any shortcomings in the employer's health and safety arrangements

Risk assessment

1.   In most cases, the staff member's home office will require control measures to be put in place following the risk assessment. What the employer does then depends on factors such as how much time the staff member is likely to spend working at home, and what the budget is.

2.   The home worker must have received training in good ergonomic and safe working practices.

3.   Relevant risk assessments, including Home working, Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and Lone Working must be completed by the staff member and reviewed by the line manager prior to commencing home working.

Practical steps to home worker safety

1.   Perhaps the single most important contributor to healthy working at home is the way the Staff member's workstation is set up. Many people already have a room or part of a room kitted out with desk and computer, but it is unlikely to satisfy a health and safety assessment. Additionally, many people assume it is acceptable to work on a laptop at the dining table, or sitting on a sofa. Although ergonomics and display screen equipment hazards are important, there are other risks present to home workers that are not always obvious.

2.   **Lighting -** adequate lighting is very important if people are to avoid eye strain. Natural daylight is vastly preferable to artificial light. Adjustable task lighting should also be considered if good natural light is not

present and for cloudy or dark days. Vertical window blinds are good for eliminating glare on sunny days and avoiding unnecessary heat gain. Workstations should be positioned side-on to the main source of natural light. Facing a window will expose the user to glare and put the keyboard and monitor in shadow, while sitting with a window behind will cause glare on the screen.

3. **Dehydration –** Taking sufficient fluid is very important if people are to maintain their mental capacity. Remind home workers to keep a bottle of water on the desk and to ensure they drink at least two litres of water each day, or more in hot weather. Homes are often kept warmer than offices in winter and staff should be advised on how to ensure the atmosphere is not too dry.

4. **Noise** - Environmental and background noise can be an issue in the home. Other members of the family may be at home while the staff member is working, so music and loud conversation are possibilities. Traffic and aircraft noise may be a nuisance and neighbours may also cause noise. Some compromise needs to be reached, especially if the staff member needs to concentrate on detailed work or use the telephone a lot. Otherwise it may simply not be possible for the staff member to work at home.

5. **Lone working** - An aspect of home working is that in most cases the staff member will be working alone. Lone working in many scenarios is recognised as a risk that needs to be controlled. Home workers also face hazards due to working alone. A formal 'keep in touch' process (depending on the type of risk assessed) should be negotiated alongside new employment contracts or prior to the staff member starting home working. When working alone offsite there should always be a nominated individual who will be the point of contact, for seeking advice and to escalate concerns.

6. **Stress** - both employer and staff member need to understand and discuss possible disadvantages before any agreement to work at home is reached, certainly on any long-term plan to work from home. In order to avoid unnecessary stress, discussions should cover points such as the following:

- Is the staff member able to cope with the isolation of working without day-today support from colleagues and supervisor?
- How able is the staff member to solve routine problems thrown up by IT, telephone calls, the work itself?
- Will the home situation impact on their ability to do the job? Discuss partners, childcare, elder care, pets, neighbours, environmental noise
- What agreement is to be reached on hours? Will the staff member be expected to work specific hours, and will it be acceptable for the employer to contact them out of those hours?
- Will work be controlled by automatic means, say by software? How much control will the staff member have over the pace of work? This can be a significant cause of stress

- How will the work and the staff member's performance be assessed? Are both parties happy with the arrangements?
- What training will the staff member need?

On an ongoing basis, much stress can be avoided by maintaining good contact with home workers. Managers can do this in a number of ways, such as:

- Including home workers when setting up team meetings, briefings and training days
- Including home workers on training courses
- Emailing and telephoning home workers every day, ensuring there are reasons for permanent home workers to come into the office regularly so they maintain informal contact with their colleagues.