



# STEP Academy Trust

## Working From Home and Occasional Home Working Guidance

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Review: October 2020

### Introduction

STEP Academy Trust Board of Trustees has agreed this Policy and as such, it applies to all Academies within the Trust.

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### 1. Definitions

#### Working From Home (Homeworkers)

Employees are Homeworkers when their contract of employment, specifies that their permanent working base is their home due to working the majority of their working time from this location. This may be specified contractually from the beginning of their employment or be agreed (and confirmed contractually) at a certain point subsequently with their line manager, following a discussion or formal flexible working request. Homeworkers may also be known by the phrase 'Working From Home'.

#### **Occasional Homeworker**

Occasional Homeworker refers to employees working from home on an occasional or limited basis during the week or month. The majority of their working time will be spent at a Trust office. Therefore, the main working base for these employees will be their office address.

Both types of working arrangements can be instigated by an application under the Trust's **Flexible Working Policy**.

For the purposes of this policy terms Homeworker and Occasional Homeworker are used to describe the different categories of staff as defined above.

## **2. Suitability**

In determining whether homeworking is suitable, the following criteria should be considered by line managers (please note that suitability based on criteria below should also be assessed for Occasional Homeworkers).

### Stage 1: The Nature of the Role

- Does the role require a high degree of personal concentrated work with very limited interaction?
- Can the role be done from home in isolation from colleagues?

### Stage 2: Health and Safety Assessment

All employees wishing to work from home will have to complete a health and safety self-assessment form to determine whether the location is suitable for home working.

Managers should also consider the psychological and physical impact on employees who wish to become contractual Homeworkers and how this can be supported and managed.

Employees who work from home are likely to have access to a large amount of computer and paper-based confidential information that belongs to their employer. Such information needs to be properly protected. Consideration needs to be given to the employee's awareness of data protection, information management and ICT security policies, together with their ability to take reasonable care of confidential information and uphold confidentiality.

### Stage 3: Capability, Personal and Role Development

Managers should consider homeworking in accordance with the competencies and criteria which have been identified as necessary to be able to work productively and competently in a home environment:

- competency to undertake work effectively without supervision;
- understanding of the impact of homeworking on the home environment;
- self-motivation, self-discipline and possession of good time management skills;
- clarity of role, deadline and objectives with feedback;
- clarity of personal and team objectives and monitoring arrangements.

Managers should also consider that specific management tasks in their own role may be significantly impacted if they work at home even though other criteria may be satisfied.

## **3. Applying for Homeworking or Occasional Homeworking**

Employees are expected to consider their request to change to Homeworking or Occasional Homeworking carefully and discuss their wishes with their line manager in particular considering how the working pattern might be able to work in practical terms, taking into account the needs of service.

Employees should note that many roles/service areas may not be suitable for either (or both) types of homeworking and therefore they should discuss with their manager the suitability of their role before making a flexible working application for these types of working.

An application form will need to be completed (available via the Flexible Working Policy) and a suitability checklist and health and safety checklist (at the end of this guidance) should also be completed by the employee and Line Manager.

Decisions on working from home will be conducted in line with the Flexible Working policy. Home working arrangements will be subject to a trial period of up to 3 months. In this time, the working from home pattern will be reviewed regularly by the manager with the employee. Following the end of the 3 months trial a decision will be made to either reject or confirm the arrangements as permanent, but to be reviewed annually.

If the final decision is to confirm the arrangements, this will be confirmed in writing **with the understanding that it will be reviewed on at least an annual basis, or when requested by either side.**

The Trust reserves the right to request a change to existing arrangements if they are no longer suitable for the needs of the service/business area.

Any changes to arrangements would have to be justifiable and not reasonably foreseen by management when implementing the existing arrangement.

Reasonable notice and consultation would also need to take place before any change is made.

For further guidance, please see the **Flexible Working Policy**.

#### **4. Additional Support and Communications for Homeworkers and Occasional Homeworkers**

Employees should be aware that as homemaker or occasional homemaker they are bound by all the Trust's terms, conditions, and policies of employment such as the Code of Conduct for example.

Employees should receive all relevant information, briefing papers and internal departmental communications.

Clear work objectives with specific targets should also be identified and set by line management for employees.

Line managers should ensure that the employee makes clear their 'visibility' to team members by confirming the hours of their work and availability for contact throughout the working day. This should be confirmed prior to the homeworking arrangement commencing.

'Visibility' by internet and telephone is necessary for all confirmed available times whilst working at home.

VPN/Secure Envoy access to shared files may be required and this should be enabled by management if deemed necessary.

Employees must not use their arrangement as an alternative to registering sickness absence. If the employee is unfit for work, notification of sickness absence to management must take place in accordance with the Sickness Policy.

#### **5. Conditions and Requirements for Homeworkers/Occasional Homeworkers (A – Z)**

##### Confidentiality and Security

It is the responsibility of employees to carry out their duties when working from home in line with the Trust's data protection, information management and ICT policies. Any breaches of these policies by employees may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Employees will be expected to ensure the confidentiality and security of any papers, files, documents, disks and equipment in their possession. This will include:

- keeping passwords secure;
- logging out of the computer when leaving the work room;
- having access to secure storage facilities for documents.

Guidance on information management can found in the STEP Information Management Policy.

Managers should ensure that employees are aware of ICT security policies before a homeworking arrangement is agreed.

Employees should have an awareness and knowledge of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and this should be checked by their manager. All aspects of STEP's GDPR policy, Online Safety and Social Media Policy, and 'Acceptable Use Agreement' should be followed.

### Domestic Arrangements

All employees are required to carry out work duties during their hours of work. Caring responsibilities or domestic activities should not to be carried out during a homeworker's working hours and employees should ensure that any domestic and childcare/carer arrangements are in place during working hours.

All employees will need to clarify their hours of work and availability for contact by management and team workers in advance. This should be confirmed in the homeworking confirmation agreement before the commencement of the arrangement.

### Equipment/workstation/systems

Employees are required to report any system, electrical, internet or other problems that prevent normal homeworking, to their manager at the earliest opportunity

The employee will be required to work from Trust premises should there be a systems (e.g. electric) or equipment failure at the home unless agreed otherwise by management.

The Trust will provide employees with the appropriate technology equipment to carry out their duties.

Office equipment, including furniture, will be provided by the Trust where there is a business need and the employee does not have suitable equipment/furniture in their home. Provision of equipment will be subject to the requirements identified by the checklists for Homeworking.

Additional or specialist equipment may be required as a reasonable adjustment due to an employee's disability and may be provided by the Trust.

The employee is responsible for keeping all equipment in good condition, reasonable wear and tear excepted. Employees should report any damage to property or equipment, however caused, to their manager as soon as possible.

All equipment and furniture provided by the Trust remains the property of the Trust and must be returned at the end of homeworking arrangement. Prior to termination of employment, the Trust has the right to enter the homeworker's home to remove all Trust property. Without prejudice to the Trust's legal right, entry must be by mutual agreement.

## Health and Safety

Employees have a legal duty to take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected. This includes:

- reporting faults which may be hazard to health or safety;
- compliance with health and safety regulations;
- following their manager's advice regarding their working environment.

Employees should seek advice and complete the Health and Safety Checklist at early stage with their line manager, Head of HR (or the Academy's HR provider) and Governance.

## Hours of Work

Contracted hours of work will remain the same as previously (unless otherwise agreed via flexible working) and employees should record their hours of work (via a timesheet) to submit to management at least monthly.

The Trust does not as a rule expect staff to work beyond their contractual hours. Employees must gain management authorisation before working additional hours with an aim to claim through Time Owed In Lieu or overtime. If individuals choose to work additional hours, they and their manager, need to have regard to the provision of the Working Time Regulations, most notably:

- Average weekly working hours should not exceed 48 hours;
- Set working patterns should allow for at least:
  - 11 hours consecutive rest in any 24 hour period and
  - 24 hours consecutive rest in any 7 day period.

In line with the Working Time Collective Briefing Note, employees should ensure that they take an unpaid rest break of at least 20 minutes to ensure that they never work consecutively for 6 hours or more.

In line with the Flexible Working Guiding Principles, work patterns should not include working days of longer than 10 hours (excluding lunch break) on a regular basis.

Homeworkers should be also be aware and comply with team members' core hours of availability as defined by the service based on the requirements of the customer/client base.

## Leave

Annual leave planned in advance should be requested, as normal, from the line manager. Where employees wish to book leave at shorter notice, discussions should take place with line managers via telephone to approve this.

## Sickness

In line with the STEP Sickness Policy, employees who are unable to work due to sickness should report this to their line manager in the normal way. Sick certificates should also be sent in line with the procedure.

When employees are able to return to work, the line manager should clarify whether a back to work interview should be done over the telephone or in person in the office.

## **6. Additional Conditions and Requirements for Homeworkers (based at home)**

### Contractual

Where a job is deemed suitable for homeworking the contract will reflect the normal place of work as the employee's home.

The contract shall provide that the employee is required to attend work premises at reasonable notice and for whatever periods as may be necessary to, for example, take part in meetings, submit completed work and undertake training and development.

The employee may also be required to attend the Trust offices at any time when requested by management.

The Trust has the right by prior appointment, to visit the employee's home to inspect equipment and storage facilities including a right of access to filing cabinets and computer files relating to Trust activities.

The homeworking arrangement should reflect the expected hours of work and provisions for any evening or additional working requirements (see the Flexible Working documents for guidance on flexible working principles).

### Insurance

Employees will be covered as Homeworkers under the Trust's employer liability and public liability insurance if they are working in accordance with Trust's procedures. Employees should notify their buildings and contents insurer, to inform them that they are working from home – generally office work does not incur any increases to premiums.

Employees should be aware that as a Homeworker they are bound by all the Trust's terms, conditions and policies, e.g. disciplinary and code of conduct even though they are not in a trust building.

If there is an increase to premiums **and the Trust has requested the change to homeworking**, reimbursement may be made if no alternative insurance can be found.

## Appendix A - Suitability Checklist for Homeworking and Occasional Homeworking

Assessment by Line Manager (For joint discussion with employee in conjunction with Flexible Working Application Form)

**NAME:**

**JOB TITLE:**

THE WORK	COMMENTS:
Is the work self-contained/how much of it can be carried out away from the office?	
Is the work measurable? (e.g. report writing/project work)	
Does the work require very frequent supervision and checking?	
Does the role require a high degree of personal concentrated work with very limited interaction?	
Is there clarity regarding monitoring/supervision arrangements?	
Is there clarity regarding the objectives required, deadlines to be met and when feedback will be given?	
Is there little need/dependence on large numbers of paper files or other work based records/equipment which cannot be accessed from other locations?	
Is a high proportion of time already spent away from the office on outside visits?	
What is the proportion of time involved in the provision of services within the community?	
How will the employee cope with reduced social contact? Are measures in place to ensure that regular contact is maintained with the employee?	

THE WORK	COMMENTS:
Does the home where the work will be carried out meet the health and safety requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act and Management of Health and Safety regulations?	
Is the home environment conducive to work and not subject to frequent interruptions/distraction/noise?	
Is there enough space to work comfortably?	
Is there adequate storage to maintain confidentiality and ensure security of Trust property?	
Is the employee aware of the Trust's Data Protection, Information Management and ICT policies (consider if they need training in these areas)?	
THE TEAM	
What will be the effect on the level and quality of the service?*	
Is the employee flexible so that team/service needs can be met? This might include working from the team location rather than home to cover absence of other colleagues at short notice?	
Is the employee willing to co-ordinate their time to ensure that team links are maintained? At least one day per week should be spent at the team location so that team meetings, 1-1's, networking, etc can take place	
What will the effect of this proposed flexible working pattern be on the rest of the team? Has it been discussed with them? Are there any issues to be resolved*?	
Will this pattern of working impact on appropriate and fair cover in the office? For example, telephones/visitors.	
Is the employee able to confirm their availability for contact with their team and customers on a daily basis (i.e. discuss outlook/calendar access)?	



THE PERSON	COMMENTS:
Is the employee able to be self-motivated and self-disciplined?	
Are they able to work with minimal direct supervision?	
Have they demonstrated self-motivation, self-discipline and possession of good time management skills?	
If you are a manager, have you considered if specific management tasks may be significantly impacted by working at home?	
Can outputs be maintained if the proposed new flexible working pattern is agreed?	

\* link to application form

## APPENDIX B -- Health and Safety Checklist for Homeworking and Occasional Homeworking

Any employee considering homeworking or occasional homeworking should ideally attend a short training session (if available) to enable this assessment to be adequately completed. If there is no course availability, the checklist should still be completed by the homeworker prior to the line manager agreeing to homeworking.

<b>HOMEWORKER SELF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST</b>
---------------------------------------------

Details	
Homeworker's name:	
Line Manager:	
Description of the tasks:	

Have you been trained in how to work safely at home?	
Is the area where work is undertaken suitable for the task with regard to space, heating, lighting, ventilation etc?	
Is your office in a separate room in your home?	

Chair & seating	Y	N	Comments:
Torso reasonably upright, facing forward (not twisted)?			
Sitting fully into the chair?			
Back rest of seat goes up, down and tiltable?			
Backrest supports spine, particularly lower spine?			
Head & neck upright (not bent down, back or to the side)?			
Glasses do not affect head position (see above)?			
Telephone does not affect head position (see above)?			
Shoulders, upper arms & elbows relaxed by sides?			
Seat height goes up and down ensures elbows are at same height as keyboard?			
Forearms horizontal to keyboard?			
Wrists & hands straight (not bent up, down or to the side)?			
Space to rest hands & wrists in front of keyboard?			
Thighs horizontal to floor & lower legs vertical. Legs not crossed?			
Feet flat on floor / footrest & no pressure behind knees?			
Armrests adjustable (not a requirement)?			
Chair swivels & glides easily?			

Monitor	Y	N	Comments:
Monitor is directly in front of you at a comfortable distance?			
Monitor height ensures that when your head in upright position, the eye line comes to top of the screen?			
Screen size suitable for intended use?			
Document holder to be either at side of, and at same height as monitor, or across keyboard?			
Characters readable?			
Brightness & contrast adjustable?			
Glare avoided?			

Keyboard	Y	N	Comments:
Keyboard tiltable?			
Keyboard characters readable?			
Keyboard technique effective (use of all fingers, soft key touch & hands/wrists free of desk and wrist rest)?			
Wrist & forearm kept straight while typing?			

Mouse	Y	N	Comments:
Mouse positioned by side of keyboard?			
Mouse moved from upper arm & shoulder (not the wrist)?			
Mouse suitable for tasks & works smoothly?			
Adjustable speed, accuracy and primary button?			

Furniture & environment	Y	N	Comments:
Work surface large enough (room to change position)?			
Reach distances comfortable?			
Surfaces free from glare?			
Lighting suitable?			
Window coverings work?			
Temperature & humidity comfortable?			
Noise levels comfortable?			
Software should have suitable format on the screen?			
Trained in main software used?			
Workload manageable?			
Frequent changes of activity away from the computer (5 to 10 minutes every hour)?			
Aware of eye & eyesight checks available?			

<b>Laptops</b>
<i>Where a laptop is in lengthy or repeated use it must have a separate keyboard and mouse and either a separate screen or laptop riser. Without these, it should only be used for short periods in the community or office. There is no need to conduct a formal DSE assessment for short-term laptop use but, where possible, the user should apply the ergonomic principles in this assessment.</i>

Other:	Y	N	Comments:
Is there a risk of injury from manual handling?			
Is all equipment being provided to carry out the work suitable for that work and regularly checked?			
Is any electrical equipment used (for the purpose of work) had PAT or is new and so doesn't need PAT?			
Do you carry out pre-use checks of equipment?			
Do you know how to report accidents/incidents?			
Does your house have adequate security (for example, locks on the doors and windows)?			
Can you exit your home office quickly in the event of a fire?			
Can you be assisted in the event of an emergency?			
Are there any persons in the house who you have caring responsibilities for?			
Do you suffer from any illnesses or conditions that may affect your work?			
Do you feel that there are any other work-related hazards present or any generic safety issues that may need further attention?			

Overall assessment of the risk

RISK RATING	Slightly Harmful	Harmful	Extremely Harmful
Highly Unlikely	Trivial	Tolerable	Moderate
Unlikely	Tolerable	Moderate	Substantial
Likely	Moderate	Substantial	Intolerable

RISK LEVEL	ACTION AND TIMESCALE
Trivial	No action required. No records need to be kept
Tolerable	No additional controls are required. Consideration may be given to a more cost-effective solution or improvement that imposes no additional cost burden. Monitoring is required to ensure controls are maintained.
Moderate	Efforts should be made to reduce the risk, but the costs of prevention should be carefully measured and limited. Risk reduction measures should be implemented within a defined period. Where the moderate risk is associated with extremely harmful consequences, further assessment may be necessary to establish more precisely the likelihood of harm as a basis for determining the need for improved control measures.
Substantial	Work should not be started until the risk has been reduced. Considerable resources may have to be allocated to reduce the risk. Where the risk involves work in progress, urgent action should be taken.
Intolerable	Work should not be started or continued until the risk has been reduced. If it is not possible to reduce the risk even with unlimited resources, work has to remain prohibited.

Overall assessment of risk is: Trivial/Tolerable/Moderate/Substantial/Intolerable

If the risk assessment is substantial or intolerable, control measures must be implemented to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable before home working is agreed.

Signed:  
EMPLOYEE ..... Date .....

PREMISES ADDRESS: .....

Signed:  
MANAGER ..... Date: .....



## Checklist for Homeworking (overall check) – when homeworking has been agreed

Department:

Employee Name:

Factor		Discussed & Agreed
1.	Policy on Homeworking issued and explained.	
2.	Working arrangements at home – space and safety considerations.	
3.	Health and Safety Guidelines issued and explained.	
4.	Hours of work – how are these to be recorded? How might any additional hours worked be taken. Note: agreement must be sought with management before additional hours are worked.	
5.	Working Time Regulations provisions - hours, daily rest, weekly rest, breaks away from workplace after 6 hours of work.	
6.	Supervisory arrangements.	
7.	Performance objectives and measures.	
8.	Arrangements for collection/delivery of work.	
9.	Communication channels with the office.	
10.	Attendance at meetings, training programmes, job reviews.	
11.	Procedure for reporting accidents.	
12.	Procedure for reporting sick.	
13.	Insurance arrangements.	
14.	Telephone card/other expenses/reimbursement.	
15.	Telecommunications facilities provided.	
16.	Equipment/furniture issued, if any.	
17.	Stationery issued, if any.	
18.	Security of data/confidentiality (including any training arranged and attended).	
19.	ICT support.	
21.	Termination of homeworking or return to office working.	
22.	Review period/date.	