

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Home Working Policy

Introduction

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough recognises that in some instances it can be more efficient for staff to work at their home address although the option is always available for staff to work from their nearest office in Huntingdon or Peterborough and these offices will be considered as the office base.

In this policy Homeworking is the term covering office-related roles where:

- Employees who work almost entirely at home apart from carrying out regular or occasional duties/meetings at the office, or at engagement events
- Employees who are office-based and work from home occasionally with agreement of their line manager.

The suitability of the post which is almost entirely home based will depend on the role, the individual and the needs of the organisation and be set out in the contract of employment.

This Policy should be read alongside the organisation's other policies, in particular the Health and Safety Policy and the Lone Working policy.

In the event that the member of staff is sick when they had planned to be working at home the normal sickness reporting rules must be followed. Employees who are sick should not attempt to work from home but should take the time as sick leave and not jeopardise their recovery in any way.

Hours of Work

Homeworking is a type of flexible working which, depending on the agreement between Healthwatch and the employee, can also be in conjunction with other arrangements such as flexible hours, working part-time, or the employer's core hours.

However, homeworking and other forms of flexible working do not have to be used together. For example, if a project requires it Healthwatch could stipulate that a homemaker works the same working pattern as office-based staff.

Employees must be available by telephone during working hours when working at home and check emails regularly.

The line manager will agree the work pattern with the employee.

Office-based staff will need to seek the approval of their line manager if they wish to work at home temporarily and for what purpose. For instance, when a staff member has to produce a report and the home environment offers less distraction than the office. The line manager will consider the need to provide cover for the service when deciding if a staff member can work at home. The employee can be required at short notice to come into the office if this is required.

Safe Working Practices

1. Equipment

The employee should ensure that they work at home using safe working practices, particularly in relation to using IT equipment.

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that they are aware of the correct posture for using a computer or laptop, the need for breaks etc. The home environment is entirely the responsibility of the employee.

Employees need to ensure that no confidential data is stored on their own IT equipment, a Healthwatch Cambridgeshire laptop, PC or USB stick without appropriate encryption and that laptops and PCs have suitable anti-virus protection.

It is the responsibility of any employee working at home using their own IT equipment to ensure that that equipment has adequate spyware, firewall and antivirus protection and that any wireless connection is secure and password protected.

2. Communication

It is the line manager's responsibility to agree with the homeworker how information, ideas and feedback will be shared with colleagues. This might be through email, telephone, video conferencing, regular and planned face-to-face meetings, or a blend of these.

All employees must keep an online diary, accessible by the rest of the team, outlining the time they spend working and on what and meet up face-to-face regularly with their line manager to review progress on work or any concerns.

Healthwatch homeworkers are required to attend regular meetings in the office and expects all staff to engage with team meetings and supervision meeting with line managers. Line managers will ensure these are planned well in advance.

Homeworkers will be excused meetings only if the line manager gives permission for business reasons or because of approved absence for personal reasons.

Regular face-to-face meetings will help homeworkers overcome any feelings of isolation and enable them to keep in touch with the rest of the business.

It may be possible for the homeworker to join in a meeting through a telephone or video conference facility.

3. Confidentiality

The employee must ensure the confidentiality of all material that relates to their work at Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough when they are at home. This means that papers should not be left about and that laptops are not left unattended. Other people in the home should not have access to any information relating to Healthwatch and the work of the employee. Laptops, papers and other information should be stored as securely as possible within the home environment.

Confidential information must not be stored on any personal IT equipment, this includes tablets and smart phones.

4. Insurance Cover

Employees are advised that working from a home address may affect the provisions of any home contents insurance and they are advised to inform their insurers prior to commencing working from home.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough laptops are covered by the organisation's insurance. Laptops are insured while in suitable secured premises or with the person. They are not insured when left unattended in vehicles.

The employee's own computers and equipment remain the employee's responsibility and must be insured through their own insurance policies.

5. Personal Safety and Professionalism

Employees must not to release their home address or home telephone number to non-members of staff. Employees working from home who have a Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough mobile phone should keep it with them and switched on during working hours.

If the Healthwatch office is contacted with a request to speak to a member of staff who is working at home the caller will be advised the person is out of the office and will take a phone number from the caller. The office-based employee will then phone or email the employee working from home so that they can contact the caller.

In order to maintain a professional approach and appearance, meetings with other professionals should not be held at an employee's home. For safety reasons, employees should not meet volunteers or clients at home. Meetings with colleagues or trustees may occasionally be held at home with prior consent of the line manager.

Office-based staff need to record all working at home, especially any meetings, clearly in their Outlook Calendar.

Potential Drawbacks of Homeworking

These possible drawbacks of working from home should be considered and reviewed regularly in order for Healthwatch to put measures in place to help and support homeworkers. Possible drawbacks include:

- Social isolation - regular meetings should help support homeworkers if they are feeling isolated or suffering from stress and depression due to feeling socially isolated.
- Communication - Healthwatch and line managers will review how they communicate developments and changes with staff based at home.
- Separating home life from work - Homeworkers need to be careful not to allow work to encroach on their home life. A member of staff working at home could have an impact on other members of the family, for example not using a room that is the work office or making sure they do not disturb their family member who is working. Healthwatch is conscious that this is a difficult balance to strike when their home is their office.
- Danger of over-work or working unsocial hours - Healthwatch has identified that there is a danger of working longer hours and not taking adequate breaks when you work from home, this will be monitored by line managers.

Travel costs and other expenses

Employees working from home are expected to provide their own furniture, heating, lighting, broadband, phone connection etc. All printing should be done in the office. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will provide consumables such as stationery and stamps.

Refer to Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Expenses Policy for detail of expenses that will be reimbursed.

Approved by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Board of Directors

Date: January 2019

Responsible Officer

Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire