

Top Tips for Working from Home

During the coming weeks a number of staff will increasingly be working from home, and the University has developed guidance to support both members of staff and managers. Below are a number of top tips for making the transition

How you can prepare:-

- Take your University staff laptop or mobile phones home each day, if you have one. So that, if the position changes overnight, you have everything you need.
- Review what you need to facilitate working at home effectively and safely. Talk to your line manager if you think you need any equipment.
- Undertake a DSE assessment of your home work station and let your manager know of any matters needing attention. We want you to be safe whilst working at home.
- Make sure you have work saved to your network folders so you can access it easily and securely when at home.
- Think about what work you could do during an extended period of working from home. Work is unlikely to flow as usual so this could be a good time to complete any outstanding mandatory training, archive work, review policies and practice, update template documents etc
- Think about how much contact you would want with your work colleagues and manager during an extended period of working from home. It would be good for you and your colleagues to find ways to replicate the daily informal contact you have - maybe a Teams meeting first thing in the morning or a chat late Friday to close off the week and share plans for the weekend.

When Working from Home:-

- Make sure you are available during your normal working hours or as otherwise agreed with your manager and that people know when you are available and how to contact you.
- To keep yourself comfortable when working from home think about whether a routine works best for you including when you start and end your working day ensuring you allow regular breaks away from your screen to move about.
- All employment policies will still apply unless you are notified of a variation. That includes/ reporting if you are sick and booking annual leave
- Schedule in times to have regular but informal chats between colleagues and manager as you would if you were co-located. Daily meetings via Microsoft Teams is a good way to keep in touch

Top Tips for Managers

How staff who work from home are managed will influence whether homeworking will be a success. Some managers find managing homeworkers more difficult than managing office staff. Here are some considerations for managing productive homeworking:

1) Building trust

A lack of trust has been found to be the greatest barrier to achieving successful homeworking. For it to stand any chance, there should be a healthy relationship of trust and confidence between homeworker and manager.

This can be a challenge for managers who are used to having employees in sight and supervising face-to-face so they can pick up on visual clues that employees are having difficulties, working too much or not enough. Managers can question whether staff who cannot be seen are committed and productive. Concerns of this nature can be legitimate and may need looking into but should not be the default position.

2) Supervising work performance

How can a manager build and maintain a homeworker's relationships with themselves, colleagues and teams? The manager should make sure the homeworker understands

- what is expected of them in their roles
- how they are expected to work together.

All parties are likely to have to try harder to build and maintain connections than they would if they were based in the same workplace. Also, staff who work from home may need to make extra effort to keep colleagues up-to-date on how their work is progressing and to offer help to others in building a spirit of co-operation.

If managers usually rely on assessing performance by what they see staff doing, and the number of hours spent in the office eg by having informal discussions about workloads and challenges throughout the day, then managing home workers may present a challenge. It is instead advisable to monitor performance of staff on the quantity and quality of the work they produce, or agreed work objectives achieved.

Staff who work at home will need to talk regularly with their line manager to review progress on work or any concerns. It is also advisable for a line manager to monitor homeworkers to make sure they do not over-work. Some staff who work from home can feel the need to work too hard as justification for working from home.

Performance management of staff who work from home should be consistent with that of office staff, so it would be advisable to focus all assessments on work produced and whether or not objectives have been met. If a manager has concerns, they should speak to the member of staff first as this may clear up misunderstandings or help them understand the problem. The manager can then provide support if necessary.

3) Maintaining Communication

This can be another challenging area, as research has found that office-based managers tend to communicate more frequently with office-based staff than home-based staff, and more often than managers who travel and work at home, yet who still have to effectively supervise and support their staff.

Managers need to explain to those working from home how information, ideas and feedback will be shared eg through email, telephone, video conferencing, , or a blend of these.

An employer will need to come to an agreement with the homeworker not only over how, but when and where contact will be made. Also, an employer should review these arrangements regularly to ensure they are working for everyone involved.

Regular face-to-face meetings via Microsoft Teams can help employees overcome any feelings of isolation and keep in touch with the rest of the business.

Useful Links

You may find some useful information here

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/blog/dont-forget-the-human-side-of-homeworking-11-mar-2020>

<https://www.digitaltrends.com/news/how-to-stay-sane-when-working-from-home-4-tips-from-a-professional/>