Managing staff who work from home

1 . Supporting and managing staff

As an employer, you're responsible for supporting and managing your employees when they're in the workplace and when they're working remotely.

Whether employees are in the workplace or working from home, you'll need to consider:

- how to manage performance
- how to monitor performance
- training and development
- health, safety and wellbeing – including reasonable adjustments

Managing performance

You should consult your employees and their representatives about how performance will be managed.

Discuss and agree:

- how to manage and measure performance
- clear objectives
- learning and development that can be done remotely

For example, an employer might agree to assess the quality of work done rather than the time an employee spends at their desk.

Managers who previously assessed performance in person might need different skills to manage employees working from home.

Supporting staff who are working from home

You should support your employees to help them:

- motivate and organise themselves
- have a good work-life balance
- manage their time

This can help improve performance and reduce stress and anxiety.

Supporting new starters

You should help new starters settle in, so that they do not feel isolated.

For example, you could:

- send them an induction pack
- give them a clear schedule for their first week
- set up meetings to introduce them to their colleagues
- explain the organisation's structure and how their role fits in

If they will not be permanently working from home, you could give them information about the workplace.

Training

You should think about introducing training specifically for working from home and hybrid working, as well as making sure all staff have access to their usual training and development.

Training is important not just for staff who work from home. Consider how training could help their line managers.

Training could include:

- communication skills
- digital skills
- making decisions about hybrid working
- managing staff remotely
- managing work-life balance
- promoting equality
- team building

Acas training for employers and managers

Acas provides training on managing performance and flexible working, including working from home and hybrid working.

Find training and events

2. Monitoring performance

It's important to trust your employees to do their job.

If monitoring is too much or does not respect the employee's privacy, it can damage trust, cause stress and reduce productivity. In some circumstances, it could also breach their legal and human rights.

You should also remember that employees are entitled to some privacy at work, including when they are working from home.

Consult and create a policy

You should consult with employees and any representatives before introducing any form of monitoring. Together you should agree and create a clear policy.

You must tell employees about any monitoring arrangement and the reason for it, except in extremely limited circumstances – for example, if you suspect criminal activity.

Find out more about consulting employees and their representatives

Ways of monitoring

These might include:

- looking at use of email
- checking website visits
- recording or listening to phone calls

Any monitoring arrangements must follow human rights and data protection laws.

Impact assessments

You should do an 'impact assessment' to decide if and how to monitor staff.

You should:

- clearly set out the reasons for monitoring and the likely benefits
- identify any negative effects the monitoring might have
- consider other options to monitoring or different ways to carry it out
- understand the law around monitoring – for example, how information will be collected and used
- decide whether there is a valid reason for carrying out monitoring

3. Keeping in touch

It's important for employers and employees to keep in touch with each other when working from home.

It's a good idea to:

- agree how and when to communicate with each other
- make sure everyone has the right tools to keep in contact and knows how to use them
- be understanding and flexible about individual circumstances

Getting communication right

Where possible, you should provide different ways for people to stay in touch to prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation. For example, instant messenger tools, video meetings, as well as emails.

It's important to find the right balance and be clear about the purpose for getting in touch. Constant or unnecessary contact can cause stress and affect morale.

Using too many different methods to communicate can also be confusing and stressful. You should talk to your employees and any representatives about which communication methods work best and when.

It can be harder to notice problems people are having if you're not meeting face-to-face. When communicating remotely, employers and managers should:

- ask the employee how they are feeling
- be aware of any changes in behaviour or tone of voice
- listen carefully to any concerns

Remote meetings

Online meetings are one of the main ways to communicate remotely, but should be used appropriately. Too many meetings can reduce productivity and cause stress, anxiety and fatigue.

When arranging a meeting you should:

- make sure it's definitely needed
- schedule it as far in advance as possible, and make sure there are enough gaps between meetings
- make the purpose of the meeting clear to those attending
- check if anyone might find attending difficult, for example because of caring responsibilities or disruptions

One-to-one meetings

One-to-one meetings are good opportunities to talk about how work is going, as well as how people are feeling.

Managers should have regular one-to-ones with each member of their team, including new starters.

Social activities

Making time for social activities can help keep employees feeling connected and motivated. For example, quizzes and coffee catch-ups using video calls.

It's important to make sure everyone feels included, no matter where they are working.

4. Expenses and equipment

You should consider any extra costs employees might have when working from home. Discuss who will pay these costs with employees and their representatives.

Common expenses include paying for equipment.

Find out more about homeworking expenses on GOV.UK

Equipment and technology

Your staff might need equipment and technology to work from home. Having the right equipment can help avoid stress.

You should regularly review how equipment and technology is working, and agree with your staff and their representatives:

- what's needed to do the job – for example, a reliable and secure internet connection, or a suitable desk and chair
- who will provide or pay for equipment and repairs
- what technical support and training is needed – for example, to set up any new equipment or technology

You should also consider day-to-day issues, for example:

- how to report any issues and to who, for example the IT team
- how they will monitor use and handle information
- rules around data protection and information security
- what to do if a work device is lost or stolen

You must protect staff from any health risks from using 'display screen equipment' (for example, computers, laptops or smartphones).

Find out about working safely with display screen equipment from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

More about working from home and hybrid working

When thinking about managing staff, you should also consider:

- requests
- health, safety and wellbeing
- having a policy

Find out more about working from home and hybrid working