Wellbeing when working from home

1 . Health, safety and wellbeing

Employers are responsible for their employees' health, safety and wellbeing – both when they are in the workplace and when they work remotely (including working from home).

Employees also have responsibilities.

Employer responsibilities

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has advice for employers.

Find advice for employers from the Health and Safety Executive

Employee responsibilities

Employees have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety at work.

Anyone who works from home should keep in regular contact with their manager. They should also tell their manager about:

- any physical or mental health and safety risks
- any working arrangements that need to change – for example, because of caring responsibilities

Employees and managers should communicate regularly and work together to find solutions.

2. Risk assessments

By law, employers must conduct a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment of their employees' working environment.

If an employer is not able to carry out a full risk assessment, they should provide their employees with information on working safely at home. This could include asking them to carry out a self-assessment of their workspace and equipment.

If changes are needed to make sure an employee can work at home in a safe and healthy way, employers are responsible for making sure they happen.

Employers should review risk assessments regularly to make sure their employees' working environments remain safe and healthy.

For more information, you can:

- find advice on risk assessments from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- download a homeworking questionnaire from the CIPD

Checking insurance cover

Make sure your insurance covers employees working from home.

You should also remind your employees to check that there are no issues with them working from home. Employees should check with their home insurer and their mortgage provider or landlord.

3. Mental and physical health

Employers should pay attention to the mental and physical health of their employees. Everyone should be encouraged to look after their health – for example, by getting support and doing regular exercise.

Employers should not make assumptions. They should speak with their staff and agree on what support may be needed – for example, if an employee with a disability needs reasonable adjustments.

Disability

Mental and physical health issues can be considered disabilities under the law (Equality Act 2010). Employers must make reasonable adjustments for employees who are disabled.

Find out more about:

- disability at work
- reasonable adjustments
- supporting disabled people at work

Mental health

Employers should think about how to support their employees' mental health and wellbeing. They should talk to them about any problems they might be having.

Find out more about supporting mental health at work

Stress from changes at work

Employees can find change stressful – including changes in working from home and hybrid working.

Employers can help to reduce stress by helping an employee:

- agree regular contact
- avoid feeling left out and lonely
- feel trusted and supported
- know how to get help with their mental health
- know how to report IT issues
- know what is expected of them – for example, when working from home

Physical health

Employers should make sure their employees have the necessary equipment and information to work safely. Employees might experience pain if they do not have the right working equipment – for example, they might have back problems caused by an unsuitable chair and desk.

Employers 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)

Work-life balance

When staff are working from home, they can struggle with:

- finding it harder to switch off from work
- working longer hours

Employers must follow the law on working hours. Employees have a right to rest breaks and should make sure they take them.

Employees might find it helpful to:

- have clear start and finish times
- switch off their work equipment at the end of the working day
- take regular rest breaks away from a screen

Find out more about:

- working hours
- rest breaks

Sickness

Employees who work from home can feel pressure to work while ill (this is sometimes called 'presenteeism'). Employers should encourage them to take sick leave when they're ill.

Employees should make sure they:

- know what sick pay and leave they're entitled to
- take sick leave if they're not well enough to work

Find out more about sick pay

Advice from the NHS

The NHS offers advice, tips and tools to help you make the best choices about your health and wellbeing.

Visit the NHS Live Well website

4. Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment can still happen when employees are working from home. For example, through social media, emails, phone calls or online chat.

Examples of bullying and harassment that can happen remotely include:

- inappropriately stopping someone from coming to meetings or activities
- putting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media
- putting someone down in meetings
- revealing sensitive personal information
- spreading false rumours

Employers should include guidance on use of different communication methods, including social media, in bullying or disciplinary policies. This should clearly set out what behaviour is unacceptable.

Find out more about:

- bullying
- harassment

5. Domestic violence and abuse

Employers have a legal duty of care to their employees and should:

- look out for signs of domestic abuse
- respond appropriately
- support someone who is experiencing domestic abuse
- keep a record of incidents at work and when employees report domestic abuse, and any actions taken

Find out how to recognise domestic abuse on GOV.UK

How an employer can help

Employers should make clear what support is available if an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, such as:

- finding a way to communicate safely, for example by text message if calls are not possible, or a different email address if their email is being monitored by the perpetrator
- agreeing on a code word or hand signal for someone to use to alert others that they're experiencing domestic abuse
- arranging another place they can do their work instead of at home
- being flexible around working hours
- time off, for example to attend support appointments
- helping the person get other appropriate support

Employers should consider having a domestic abuse policy. They should develop it in consultation with employees and any trade union or employee representatives.

The policy should set out:

- a clear commitment to taking the issue seriously
- common signs of domestic abuse
- the support available for employees and managers

All employees should be made aware of the policy and be able to access it.

Employers can download:

- managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse on the CIPD website
- a domestic abuse toolkit for employers on the Business in the Community (BITC) website

Help and support

You can find more guidance on domestic abuse from GOV.UK.

People experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse can contact organisations including:

- Refuge – national domestic abuse charity, also provides a 24-hour helpline
- Women's Aid – domestic abuse support for women and children
- Respect – provides help for perpetrators
- Galop – LGBT+ anti-violence charity

The Bright Sky app is for anyone who's experiencing domestic abuse or is worried about someone else.

Employers can get advice from:

- Hestia – Respond to Abuse app and advice line
- Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA)

More about working from home and hybrid working

We have further detailed advice on:

- requests
- having a policy
- how staff are managed

Find out more about working from home and hybrid working