

**Home Working Policy
Work Life Balance (WLB)**

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales



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Policy Procedures and Guidance

Contents

Section	Title	Page No
Section 1	Policy Statement	3
	Definition of Homeworking	3
	Eligibility	4
	Principles of Homeworking	4
	Training and Awareness	4
	Evaluation and Monitoring	4
Section 2	Homeworking – Procedures And Guidance	5
	1 Eligibility And Suitability	5
	2 Application	5-6
	3 Management and Communications with Homeworkers	6-7
	4 Home Facilities and Office Environment	8
	4.1 Health and Safety	8
	4.2 Information Communication Technology (ICT)	8-9
	4.3 Telecommunications	9
	4.4 Furniture and Equipment	9
	5 Security And Confidentiality	10
	6 Insurance and Legal Requirements	10
	7 Costs of Homeworking	10
	8 Ceasing Homeworking	11
	9 Monitoring and Review	11
	10 Contract of Employment	11
	11 Appeals	11
Appendix A	Assessing Suitability / Proposal for Working from Home	12
Appendix B	Application to Work from Home	13-14
Appendix C	Costs of Homeworking	15-16
Appendix D	Appeals	17

Policy Statement

Introduction

1. The Higher Education Funding Council For Wales (HEFCW) Work-Life Balance Framework, part of the Diversity Strategy was established in order to:
 - (i) sit alongside and support HEFCW's Flexible Working Policies (as required by the Work and Families Act 2006) and;
 - (ii) establish a culture whereby employees could obtain a satisfactory balance between their work and home commitments whilst at the same time allowing for service provision to be further enhanced.
2. HEFCW maintains the view that in any organisation, individuals make the difference between success and failure. For this reason, HEFCW's employees are seen as a key resource.
3. Employees join HEFCW from across the community, whether it be local, national, or possibly international. Each employee brings with them different expectations, aspirations and needs. As an employer, HEFCW acknowledges that individuals at all stages of their lives work best when they are able to achieve an appropriate balance between work and all other aspects of their lives. As a responsible employer, HEFCW believes that by creating a range of employment policies to address the working relationship between it and its employees, it can help promote opportunities for achieving a work-life balance that benefits the organisation and its employees.
4. Homeworking is considered to be one of a range of employment policies, which aims to contribute to the goals outlined above.
5. HEFCW recognises that a wide range of jobs can be considered for homeworking.
6. All applications for homeworking will receive careful consideration before a decision is reached.

Defining homeworking

7. Within HEFCW, homeworking can be defined as a form of organisation / or performing of work within the context of an employment contract where work which could be administered at the employers offices is undertaken at the home location of an employee.
8. Homeworking within this policy is defined as follows:
 - (i) Fulltime Homeworking – the employee's home becomes the main or sole base for work activities in agreement with their line manager and is in excess of 80% of the employee's contracted hours.
 - (ii) Occasional Homeworking – where an employee works at home in agreement with their line manager and is less than 80% of the employee's contracted hours.

Eligibility

9. This policy covers all employees within HEFCW subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

Principles of homeworking

10. All employees, regardless of homeworking status, will be subject to HEFCW's policies, procedures and guidance in addition to their terms and conditions of employment.
11. A number of key principles are enshrined within this homeworking policy. In particular that homeworking:
 - (i) is inextricably linked to the 'business case' which includes enhanced productivity as well as increasing the potential to allow services to be more responsive to others;
 - (ii) is built upon the concept of overall trust between the employer / employee and that all requests for homeworking are considered openly, equitably and on a voluntary basis;
 - (iii) ensures full time home workers are properly equipped to do their job at home;
 - (iv) addresses the health and safety of all employees who work from home;
 - (v) allows for home workers to contribute to group / team activity and that personal isolation does not occur;
 - (vi) incorporates data protection and confidentiality processes and they are fully understood by employees;
 - (vii) sits alongside equalities of access to promotion and personal training and development;
 - (viii) is clearly outlined in contracts of employment where applicable, fully explaining and outlining the partnership between HEFCW and employees;
 - (ix) meets any concerns, allegations or suggested policy misuse and these are incorporated and channelled within existing HEFCW policies already in place i.e.; grievance or disciplinary.

Training, awareness and information

12. To ensure effective implementation staff will require the skills to manage and sustain relationships with employees or their line managers working from home. Employees working from home will also require the skills to develop new working practices that home working presents. If further training is required this should be discussed with the individual's line manager and notified to HR. Information regarding the policy will be included in employee induction programmes.
13. The policy, associated procedures and guidance is available via the intranet.

Eligibility and Suitability

14. All employees are eligible to participate in HEFCW's homeworking scheme, although some roles will be less appropriate to effectively work from home. Those employees most likely to operate effectively by working from home should be able to additionally:
 - (i) work without close supervision;
 - (ii) be self reliant and able to cope with reduced social contact with work colleagues;
 - (iii) cope with the additional pressures which can arise as a result of working in the home where the demands of home life can be difficult to ignore;
 - (iv) manage the proximity of work and home life so either do not become unacceptably intrusive.
15. Homeworking will not be granted where it is considered by the line manager that the efficiency of service provision will be adversely affected or the costs significantly outweigh the benefits. Changes to the existing working arrangements for a particular job will be determined by the Head of Team, line manager and the employee involved.
16. It is important to emphasise that working from home places a different set of demands upon an employee. These should be recognised at the outset so that an employee's suitability for homeworking can be assessed. Appendix A outlines some of the issues that must be discussed between the line manager and employee when assessing the suitability of working from home and completing the application form.
17. The application for homeworking is separate from the application for VPN access. Approval for VPN access does not guarantee approval for homeworking and vice versa. Refusal for VPN access does not necessarily mean refusal for homeworking and vice versa.
18. If your application for homeworking relies on access to the VPN, the VPN must be proven to work effectively prior to approval for full time homeworking being granted.

Application to work from home

19. An employee applying to work from home on a full time or occasional basis will be required to submit an application (please refer to Appendix B) to their line manager. Full and proper consideration will be given to all requests for homeworking. This includes considerations as outlined in Appendix A as well as additional considerations relating to the individual role and duties, in line with service provision.
20. The decision to approve or refuse an application will rest with the line manager and Director of Strategic Development/Director of Finance & Corporate Services/Chief Executive (as appropriate) who will, where necessary seek advice from HR before making a final decision. If an application is refused the employee can request reasons for the decision and has the right to appeal.
21. A homeworking arrangement is approved for a maximum period of 12 months before the line manager and employee are required to formally review the suitability of the arrangement continuing. Homeworking arrangements are subject to review within a

maximum period of 12 months and employees will be required to formally re-apply for homeworking every three years. HR will notify employees annually as to which method of review is required during the cycle. Employees will be required to formally re-apply for Homeworking in line with changes in circumstance.

22. Where an approved home worker (full time or occasional) moves home they will need to reapply for homeworking status at their new location. Employees must inform their line manager at least two weeks before they move home. The line manager is responsible for ensuring HR, ICT and Facilities are aware of the move. HEFCW's appointed supplier will relocate homeworking furniture and equipment if required and arrangements must be made via Facilities.
23. An employee will have a right to appeal against a decision in respect of a request to undertake work at home. The appeals process is outlined in Appendix D.

Managing and communicating with homeworkers

24. To be a successful homeworker, the employee must be a self-motivated individual who is also in a position to undertake work that requires little regular contact from their line manager.
25. Different techniques are needed to manage employees that may be away from the office for most of their working time and line managers will need to be concerned with managing the quality and quantity of outputs rather than controlling methods of work and time.
26. An employee will need to know:
 - (i) what is expected of them;
 - (ii) how they will be judged.
27. 3.4 Using the MoPD scheme, line managers will need to:
 - (i) devote attention to the planning and scheduling of work;
 - (ii) set clear objectives;
 - (iii) devise realistic performance measures;
 - (iv) set targets which an employee understands;
 - (v) monitor the quality and volume of output;
 - (vi) give regular feedback and appraisal of work;
 - (vii) have a system for review at appropriate intervals;
 - (viii) design appropriate training provision, which might include, time management or measures to develop the personal qualities and skills needed for effective homeworking.

28. No job exists in isolation so homeworking is likely to have an impact on the rest of the team or Directorate. Line managers will need to consider:
- (i) the possibility of reviewing and redefining the breakdown of activities into jobs to facilitate homeworking;
 - (ii) changes that may be required to existing work methods;
 - (iii) means of communication with colleagues and supervisors; and
 - (iv) procedures to ensure delivery and collection of work and distribution of office information.
29. Keeping in touch with an employee is the key to successful remote management.
30. Although those who work at or from home will experience fewer interruptions, they may feel isolated as a result of the loss of opportunities to discuss and develop ideas and resolve problems. Possible actions to prevent this can include:
- (i) regular briefing and supervision;
 - (ii) regular team meetings;
 - (iii) visits to the office;
 - (iv) newsletters;
 - (v) social events
 - (vi) local networks of homeworkers who can meet or keep in touch;
 - (vii) instant messaging and audio/video links.
31. In exceptional circumstances, homeworkers may occasionally need to allow other individuals to visit their home. For example, employees may expect to receive pre arranged visits for the purpose of:
- (i) installing, repairing and servicing equipment provided by HEFCW;
 - (ii) periodic checks in relation to the adequacy of security;
 - (iii) checking health and safety arrangements.
32. If a formal meeting is required (e.g. with stakeholders, providers or representatives of other agencies), suitable premises must be obtained away from the home.
33. In exceptional circumstances, employees will also be expected to allow relevant HEFCW personnel to visit their homes at pre-arranged times.
34. Full time home workers will be required to visit their office base with their line manager at pre agreed times.
35. For those who work away from the home it is important that contact arrangements are agreed, e.g. the employee will be available at a certain time at their home or will contact the office at certain times during the day.
36. Times of the availability of an employee must be notified to their line manager in advance.
37. Line managers will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for delivery and collection of work.

38. Where possible this should coincide with planned visits to offices, e.g. team meetings. If this cannot be arranged, costs of delivery and collection will be borne by HEFCW as necessary. Where a computer link is available work may be electronically transmitted as agreed with the line manager.

Homeworking facilities and working environments

Health and safety

39. HEFCWs' Health and Safety policies apply equally to home workers.
40. The workspace requirements for home working need to be reasonably free of interruptions and noise. Home workers will be required, after receiving appropriate training, to undertake a risk assessment of their work activities, work area and workstation.
41. Employees must be familiar with the Display Screen Equipment Policy. It will be the responsibility of the employee to ensure compliance and to carry out and record a DSE workstation self assessment.
42. Employees will be informed of their responsibilities and trained as appropriate to enable them to maintain a safe and healthy working environment, undertaking risk assessments and workstation self assessments.
43. Electrical equipment provided by HEFCW must be inspected by a member of the ICT team prior to installation. Home workers will be issued with a residual circuit device and will be instructed in its use. The residual circuit device will be recalled periodically for testing.
44. Electrical installations and equipment not supplied by HEFCW (e.g. wall sockets) remains the maintenance and safety responsibility of the individual(s) who would normally hold the liability (e.g. householder, landlord).
45. It is the responsibility of the employee to report any accidents, incidents or work related issues to their line manager and Office Manager. HEFCW will supply a basic first aid kit to full time home workers and a portable first aid kit will be made available on request to occasional home workers.

Information communication technology (ICT)

46. Provision of information technology for the home worker will be assessed by the ICT Team and will take into account the requirements set out by the employee and their line manager. In general, full time home workers will be issued where required with a laptop and mobile phone. HEFCW has a Virtual Private Network (VPN) and employees wishing to use this facility will need to make arrangements with the ICT Team prior to them commencing working from home. To enable access to the VPN, Broadband must be in place which is at the employee's expense. Occasional users will be supplied, when required, with a pool laptop with dialup facilities and a pool mobile for business calls. Inventories of all ICT equipment will be drawn up and signed by the homeworker and an ICT team member and copied to the line manager.

47. Full time home workers will be required to hot desk when in the office. Hot desking requirements are dependent upon availability of space within the offices and will be decided on a case by case basis. It will be the responsibility of the home worker to ensure a workstation/desk is available when based in the office.
48. Full time home workers requiring access to the VPN must ensure that this has been proven to work effectively prior to their approval for full time homeworking being granted
49. The ICT equipment provided by HEFCW must be used in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy, Information Security Policy and other relevant policies available on the Intranet.
50. Equipment provided by HEFCW is solely for the use of the home worker. No additional hardware or software must be attached or installed to the equipment without prior approval from a member of the ICT team.
51. The home worker will be responsible for ensuring that any technical fault is reported to the ICT Team following the procedures set out in the ICT section of the Homeworking handbook. The ICT Team will assess the most appropriate form of response. Under no circumstances must the home worker allow any other individual to maintain or repair the equipment other than one appointed by HEFCW.
52. HEFCW is not responsible for maintaining and/or repairing personal equipment used by the home worker.

Telecommunications

53. As standard, full-time home workers may be provided with a mobile for business calls or may be eligible for reimbursement of the costs should a mobile be unavailable and a landline or personal mobile is used. Circumstances may arise where a mobile is unsuitable due to poor reception for instance. In such cases, an alternative will be provided.
54. Occasional users may be provided with a pool mobile or will be eligible for reimbursement of the costs should a mobile be unavailable and a landline or personal mobile is used. Where employees use a landline or personal mobile, itemised bills must be submitted as proof of business calls.
55. Please refer to the Mobile Phone Policy for further details.

Furniture and equipment (office/home)

56. HEFCW will offer to provide furniture and equipment to support full time homeworking. The Homeworking Handbook provides details regarding the provision of furniture and equipment to support homeworking in accordance with the HEFCW Homeworking policy.
57. For occasional home workers, a dedicated workstation will continue to be provided in their contractual base office. Occasional home workers will not be issued with homeworking furniture and equipment.

58. Where an employee requires adjustments to be made via the Disability Equality in Practice policy and Reasonable Adjustment Procedures, this will be reviewed on an individual basis in line with specific requirements.

Security and confidentiality

59. The home worker will be responsible for ensuring all necessary steps are taken to ensure security and confidentiality of all information held. This will involve taking precautions to secure documents and equipment against theft, damage and misuse. It will include the following measures:
- (i) adhere to the Information Security policy;
 - (ii) all information will be stored securely to prevent unauthorised access by third parties (including members of the employee's family);
 - (iii) information will not be viewed in the presence of unauthorised third parties;
 - (iv) restricting use of paperwork and equipment to the employee of HEFCW only, without exception;
 - (v) keeping equipment turned off and password protected when not in use;
 - (vi) passwords to be used on screensavers and restricted or above documents;
 - (vii) virus protecting software installed by the ICT Team must not be removed under any circumstances;
 - (viii) restricted or above waste must be properly disposed of to prevent unauthorised access to the information contained therein (e.g. shredded);
 - (ix) no documents or equipment to be left unattended in vehicles;
 - (x) HEFCW information, eg, manual or electronic records, can only be stored in or on HEFCW owned property;
 - (xi) any suspected security violation must be reported immediately to the HEFCW Information Security Officer.
60. Employees working at home will be required to comply with all relevant legislation, the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

Insurance and legal requirements

61. Equipment owned and or provided by HEFCW remains the liability of HEFCW. In the event that such equipment is stolen or damaged, this must be reported immediately to the line manager and ICT Team. HEFCW reserves the right to seek reimbursement for damaged equipment as a result of employee negligence if proven.
62. It is an employee's responsibility to notify their household insurer of their homeworking status and also, if this arrangement ceases at any time.
63. It is the responsibility of the home worker to ensure that any change in Council Tax liability is dealt with through the responsible individual (e.g. the householder). HEFCW will not make any contribution to the home worker's Council Tax bill.
64. Before starting a homeworking arrangement, employees should inform anyone with a proprietary interest in their home and ensure the occupation of their home is not subject to terms or conditions or covenants that prevent them working from home.

Costs of homeworking

65. Appendix C provides full details of HEFCW's approach on reimbursement of homeworking costs.

Ceasing homeworking

66. An employee can request for a full time home working arrangement to cease and to return to office based working. In such circumstances, employees must put a formal request to their line manager, including the date on which they would like to return to office-based work, giving a minimum of two months notice for the arrangement to cease. Advice will be sought from HR, the Facilities team and the line manager who will make a decision based on objective and job related reasons. This decision will be confirmed in writing to the employee, normally within three weeks of receipt of the request. Should the employee wish to appeal the decision, the appeals process is outlined in Appendix D. The line manager should keep HR, Facilities and ICT informed of any change in circumstance.
67. HEFCW can withdraw the provision of any homeworking arrangement by giving two months notice for the arrangement to cease. In such circumstances HEFCW must outline the reasons and business criteria to discontinue such an arrangement. These will be put in writing to the employee and arrangements made for the line manager and employee to discuss further. Should the employee wish to appeal the decision, the appeals process is outlined in Appendix D. The line manager should keep HR, Facilities and ICT informed of any change in circumstance.

Contract of employment

68. All employees undertaking full time homeworking arrangements will receive revised terms and conditions as set out in a written contract of employment which will need to be signed prior to the commencement of the homeworking arrangement.

Appeals

69. Employees are entitled to appeal against a line manager decision. This appeal will follow the appeals process detailed within the Grievance procedures.

Appendix A

Assessing suitability/proposal for working from home

(Key discussion issues to be considered by the line manager and employee)

Line manager

1. What proportion of the employee's work is done alone or as part of a team?
2. Are there alternative methods of doing their tasks that might facilitate homeworking?
3. What proportion of the employee's work could be done at home?
4. Are current work practices and processes appropriate for homeworking – if not, can they be changed with team agreement?
5. Will the employee require access to specific equipment, tools, materials, or documents in order to work? Are there practical and cost problems with this requirement? Can this equipment be provided?
6. Does the employee manage any other team members and if so how will this occur if the employee works at home?
7. How much technical or other support does the employee provide to other employees?
8. Can the ICT requirements be met?
9. How will office cover be maintained? e.g. Broadband availability
10. How can confidentiality of information be maintained?
11. Will service delivery be impaired during normal working hours?

Employee

1. Am I able to work on my own with only phone and email contact to fall back on?
2. Will I miss the support of working within a team?
3. Am I able to be self motivated enough to work from home?
4. Will I be able to organise my work within my hours and not allow work to disrupt my home life outside working hours?
5. Am I planning to move home in the immediate future?
6. Am I able to accommodate personal circumstances to accommodate my work?
7. Am I prepared to check my working environment to ensure it complies with health and safety requirements?
8. Have I planned to undertake regular checks to my working environment to ensure it continues to be a safe working environment?
9. What arrangements will I need to make for regular contact with my manager?
10. Do I have the space needed to work at home? If not, how can this issue be overcome?

Appendix B

Application to work from home

Employee name		Line manager name	
Home address		Home phone number	
Proposed homeworking arrangement (indicate as appropriate)	Fulltime homeworking (above 80%)	Occasional homeworking (Below 80%)	

Proposed homeworking days	Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday	Proposed duration of homeworking arrangement (max. 12 months)	
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Desired start date	
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Supporting information / rationale (completed by employee)
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Employee signature		Date	
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Rational for decision for homeworking (completed by line manager). Please refer to considerations of suitability outlined in Appendix A
Approved / Not Approved

Line Manager Signature		Date	
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Supporting comments (Director of SD/F&CS/CEO)

Approved / Not Approved

Director of SD/F&CS /CEO Signature		Date	
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Please forward a copy of this signed application to HR

Office use Only:

Date received

Contract of Employment issued

Appendix C

Costs of homeworking to the employee - Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Equipment

Description	Basis for claim	Eligibility	Evidence required	Method of payment	Tax liability
Travel expenses	Travel expenses incurred on behalf of HEFCW for fulltime homeworkers the normal place of work will be deemed as home	Fulltime	Yes	Current Travel & Subsistence rules apply	See T&S policy Refer to Inland Revenue Regulations SE32370
Travel expenses	For occasional homeworkers, the normal place of work will be deemed as the office location not the individuals home	Occasional	N/A	N/A	See T&S policy Refer to Inland Revenue Regulations SE32370
Telephone/ mobile phone and internet access charges	Business calls / made from home phone or mobile phone	Fulltime Occasional	N/A	Direct billing to HEFCW or reimbursement of actual costs detailed in bills	Zero – if business use only
Connection fees charged by an Internet Service Provider	Installation approved by ICT	Not eligible	N/A	N/A	N/A
Post Expenses	Post expenses incurred on behalf of HEFCW	Fulltime Occasional	Yes	Current T&S Policy rules apply	See T&S Policy rules
Council Tax	Increase in Council Tax payments due to homeworking	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Business Rate	Home worker becomes liable because of the homeworking arrangement	None	N/A	N/A	N/A

Description	Basis for claim	Eligibility	Evidence required	Method of payment	Tax liability
Capital Gains Tax	The home worker loses exemption from Capital Gains tax because of the homeworking arrangement	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Insurance	Increase in insurance premium due to homeworking	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Heating / lighting/ power and other household expenses	Increase in costs of utilities (gas, electricity, oil etc) as a result of homeworking	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Laptop	Required to perform duties of job.	Fulltime Occasional	Management decision & ICT availability	Purchased / provided by HEFCW directly	Zero – if business use only
Workstation furniture	See Homeworking Handbook Provided by Facilities	Full Time	Management & Facilities decision	Purchased / provided by HEFCW directly	Zero – if business use only
R.C.D	See Health & Safety policy	Fulltime Occasional	Provided by Facilities	Purchased / provided by HEFCW directly	Zero
Basic First Aid Kit	Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations	Fulltime Occasional	Risk Assessment documentation	Purchased / provided by HEFCW	Zero