



Working from Home Policy

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Working from Home Policy

Widespread home-based working presents a variety of organisational and personal challenges, particularly because of the sudden change in circumstances requiring rapid adaptation.

As employers the Acorn Federation takes its duty to undertake risk assessments for employees while they are at work, including when they are working from home, seriously. Although it would not be practical, or safe, for workstations to be inspected by managers, or in many cases, for additional equipment/furniture to be provided, there are ways in which we can work together with staff to protect their health during this difficult time.

Define your space – separate work from home

Setting up a dedicated working area, where possible, will help you to separate your work-life from your home-life. Having a dedicated workspace assists with consciously entering the mental zone for work.

Are you sitting comfortably?

Spending long hours at a poorly set up workstation could leave you with back, neck, hip and knee pain and muscle strains. Make sure you set your workstation up as well as you can in the circumstances and if you need any support then contact the headteacher. Sit at a desk or table where possible. Sitting on a bed or sofa may seem relaxing but could lead to musculo-skeletal problems in the longer term.

Try to ensure that you:

- have a chair that is supportive, stable and comfortable (ideally with adjustable height and tilt though this may not be possible)
- use a separate screen or laptop riser if you have one so you're not looking down whilst you're typing
- use a separate keyboard, which tilts, and mouse if you can, and don't hunch over the keyboard
- use a document holder if you have one, positioned to minimise neck movement
- have good lighting above your workstation avoiding glare and reflections on the screen
- Place a laptop/tablet on a firm surface, not on your lap, at the right height for keying
- have extra back support if pregnant.

Working hours

You may be sharing your home space with other family members and this can, of course, impact on how you are able to work. If you have young children at home for whom you are caring, this may well impact on your working arrangements. If you are sharing childcare responsibilities, it is important to think about how to balance your work and childcare responsibilities. Sometimes this might mean working at different times during the day. It may mean blocking out periods of time to be with children. Please discuss your specific working arrangements and any restrictions during this period with the head teacher.

Take regular short breaks

Taking regular breaks is essential. Try following the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes take 20 seconds to look at something that's at least 20 feet away. Ideally you should get up and walk over to whatever it is you're looking at so you can stretch your legs and give your eyes a rest. Try to take a break of 5 – 10 minutes every 50 – 60 minutes. Make a cup of coffee, have a chat with a member of your household, or simply walk round your home.

Always make time for lunch away from your workstation

It is important to take a lunch break – get something to eat and drink and try to have time away from your desk. This may be a good time to have a social call with a colleague – compare notes about working from home or just talk about non-work issues. As and when Government guidance allows, take a walk if you can, or if you have one, at least go into your garden or on to your balcony.

Go out for some fresh air

Don't spend the whole day indoors hunched over your laptop working non-stop. Be sure to plan in some time to go outside each day, before, after or during your working day, as Government guidance allows. Go for a run or a walk if you are able to; or take the dog for a walk.

Socialise with colleagues

Just because you're not working alongside your colleagues doesn't mean that you can't socially interact with them. Make time for the conversations you would usually have in the staffroom. Arrange on-line evening social events.

Remember the days before email...

Communicating via email is quick and easy but it means we lose interaction with people. Before you send an email, ask yourself whether you could have this conversation over the phone. You can always follow up with an email after, to get the best of both worlds.

Know when to stop

It may be tempting to continue working and telling yourself "just another ten minutes". It could mean that you're still sat at your workstation two hours later, and this is not good for your wellbeing or your effectiveness.

You are not expected to respond to emails in the evening or at the weekend. There is no expectation to read or reply to emails before 8:30am and after 5:30pm on working days.

At the end of your working day it is good practice to put your phone away and switch off your computer.

Policy written using information from the NEU website - neu.org.uk