

National Joint Council for local government services

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**To: Chief Executives in England, Wales and N Ireland
(to be shared with HR and Finance Directors)
Members of the National Joint Council**

24 March 2023

Dear Chief Executive,

Remote / Home and Hybrid Working

The 2022 pay agreement included a commitment by the NJC to produce guidance on homeworking. Local employers should work with recognised trade unions when updating or developing homeworking practices and policies in order to deliver, where possible, best practice working arrangements.

Flexible working is a feature of the modern workplace in most, if not all, councils and a shift to more remote / home and hybrid working will likely have been accelerated by the pandemic. You are encouraged to familiarise yourself with [information freely available](#) that includes an overview of some of the key considerations of developing a hybrid working organisation and feedback from a series of round-table events held with local authorities.

There are [significant workforce issues](#) for organisations to consider when developing local remote / home and hybrid working policies. These include:

- ***Is hybrid working right for my organisation?***
- ***Location, location, location ie, exploring which roles are time / location dependant***
- ***Consultation and engagement with employees and recognised trade unions***
- ***Productivity and performance:***
 - It is important to ensure visibility for remote / home and hybrid employees, especially if they are a small cohort of people working this way
 - Ensure all staff communications are able to reach everyone, regardless of their place of work on any given day
 - Monitor career progression to check remote / home and hybrid workers are not being disadvantaged
 - Remote / home and hybrid working can lead to increased productivity for some, but different people work in different ways, and different jobs have different needs, so it is important not to take a one-size-fits-all approach to making decisions and when assessing the impact on productivity
- ***Teamwork and collaboration***
- ***Leadership and management***

- **Employee health and wellbeing:**

- HSE advises that risk assessments should cover [home workers](#) in order to ensure they have a healthy and safe environment in which to work
- All parties should understand where responsibility for a safe working environment lies. For example, the employer must ensure all equipment it provides is safe. Whereas, the employee is responsible for ensuring, for example, their home's electrical system is safe
- Check in regularly with employees, including, for example, through regular online team meetings
- Take account of the potential challenges to employees' physical and mental health and well-being, and the importance of having robust policies and practices
- Conducting regular staff surveys in order to better understand employees' experiences of remote / home and hybrid working
- Look out for signs of loneliness etc for remote / home and hybrid workers who are lone workers (eg, live alone)
- In extreme cases, there has been some evidence of increased remote / hybrid and home working leading to an increase in domestic abuse
- Remote / home and hybrid working can improve work-life balance but can also produce negative outcomes for some employees, and possibly some employers, if someone feels pressured to do it. For example, to take on caring responsibilities for a family member

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion:**

- Homeworking can be a reasonable adjustment for workers with a disability, but it is important it is not used as a way of an employer avoiding the duty to provide reasonable adjustments in the office / workplace
- Risk assessments should take account of the particular requirements of workers with a disability

- **Smart working and technology:**

- It is important to ensure confidentiality and data protection where work is being conducted in employees' homes
- Employers should ensure existing data protection policies specifically mention remote / home working and are applicable when work is conducted away from the usual workplace

- **Finance**

- Consider whether there are any insurance implications for the employer and employee arising from new working arrangement

- **Governance and accountability**

- Consider developing a briefing document that sets out the responsibilities of the employer and of the employee

The NJC welcomes feedback from local parties on this guidance, in order to gain more examples of best practice.

Yours sincerely,

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