

BIRCHANGER PARISH COUNCIL

Home working guidance

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1. Scope

This guidance provides an outline of the health and safety actions relevant to Parish Council staff who are home workers or are responsible for home working.

2. Introduction

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and this includes home workers. Home workers are those employees who regularly work at home because of formally agreed arrangements with their managers or who are contracted to work at home. Most of the work that staff would undertake at home is paper-based work or work on a computer and in general such work is not high risk. Nevertheless, the Parish Council has responsibilities under health and safety legislation when staff are working from

home, including the requirement to undertake appropriate risk assessments of work activities, ensuring that any equipment provided by the Parish Council is safe, and ensuring that there is a suitable safe place for the employee to work. The home-based site requires a designated area that is deemed to be an acceptable workspace and the employee must have a clear delineation of when they are working or not working.

3. Assessment of risk

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers are required to undertake a risk assessment of the work activities; this will include work carried out by home workers. The risk assessment should identify the hazards i.e. anything with the potential to cause harm, relating to the home workers' activities and any control measures necessary to reduce the risk of the hazard causing harm to them or anyone else that may be affected.

Line managers must ensure that all hazardous activities, not covered by the Local Rules that they manage are subject to a risk assessment, including home working. They should:

- identify hazards;
- decide who might be harmed and how;
- outline whether statutory provisions are met;
- evaluate the risks and decide on what control measures are necessary to minimise those risks, as far as is reasonably practicable.

The risk assessments must be recorded and any significant hazards and the arrangements in place for controlling the risks from them must be communicated to relevant persons. The Parish Council Risk Assessment Policy provides further details.

Appendix 1 details a checklist that can be used by a home worker to identify any possible hazards in their home working area. Following the completion of the checklist additional control measures may be required to control any risks that have been identified. It is recommended that the risk assessment is reviewed on an annual basis or more frequently if there are any changes to arrangements such as new equipment or relocation of office space within the home.

4. Identification of hazards

The risk assessment for a home worker will be specific to that person, due to his/her personal circumstances, homework location and nature of the work. Therefore the following hazards may or may not be relevant to the home worker's activities but can be used as a guide:

4.1 Working with display screen equipment

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended) cover the safe use of computers and any other equipment with a visual display unit such as a microfiche, laptop or PDA (Personal Digital Assistant).

Display screen equipment (DSE) assessment should be completed for the workstation at home and any adjustments made to the work area as required. The furniture used should comply with the minimum standards for workstations and must be adjusted appropriately.

In order to avoid postural problems and muscle aches the home worker should ensure that regular breaks are taken and tasks varied. Objects should be reachable without twisting and stretching. Any aches and pains that maybe related to computer use should be reported to the home worker's Line Manager immediately. An individual with a health issue that is related to their workstation may ask their line manager or their DSE assessor to refer them to the Occupational Health Service for an assessment.

Home workers using laptops for a significant period should be advised to ensure that they are used on a desk or table and not on the lap. Wherever possible use a separate keyboard, mouse and monitor with your laptop, a docking station will allow the screen, keyboard and mouse to be positioned similarly to those of a full sized PC. If a monitor is not available use a laptop stand.

4.2 Using work equipment

The Parish Council is only responsible for any equipment that is supplied to employees. Line managers must ensure that any equipment that is supplied is:

- The correct equipment is provided for the work activity;
- Information, instruction and training on how to use the equipment is provided;
- The equipment is checked and maintained as necessary.

Home workers need to report any defects to Parish Council equipment immediately to their line manager and not use the equipment if they feel it is unsafe.

4.3 Safe working environment

Issues such as available space, lighting and electrical supplies should be subject to risk assessment. Where possible an area should be set aside from the rest of the living space as the home worker needs to be able to work from home without distraction from home matters. There should be adequate space for the home worker to work safely. The desk area should be large enough for the work and associated equipment e.g. computer. There should be enough storage space and the work space organised so that items are close to hand.

The work area should have adequate lighting and natural lighting if possible. Glare should be avoided especially on desks and computer screens.

Sheds or garages are not usually considered suitable due to safety and security implications as well as possible lack of heating and working in damp conditions. Attics and cellars may have problems due to temperature/damp and provision of natural light.

There should be adequate electrical sockets nearby for electrical equipment and trailing cables must be avoided to prevent a tripping hazard.

There may be other individuals e.g. children who may have access to the home worker equipment; it should be ensured that these individuals are not put at any additional risk by the work environment or equipment.

4.4 Fire safety

Fire safety should be part of the home working routine. Fire precautions should include fitting a smoke detector close to the work area and maintaining it regularly, storing materials correctly and clearing up clutter; vents on electrical equipment should not be blocked; lighting should be used safely i.e., do not place anything that could burn close to electrical light bulbs and know what to do in an emergency. Work out a fire drill so that the home worker or anyone else in the house knows what to do and where to go in case of a fire.

4.5 Electricity

Employers are only responsible for any electrical equipment that they supply; therefore the electrical sockets and other parts of the domestic electrical system are the home worker's responsibility. However consideration must be given to the equipment supplied and the total power that may be required.

4.6 Handling of loads

The handling of loads can cause serious injury particularly to the back. Handling loads that are heavy, bulky or unstable, repetitive handling, twisting or stooping may increase the risk of injury. Some domestic premises may have restricted access, steep stairs etc. which may increase the manual handling risk.

4.7 New and expectant mothers

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires that 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments are carried out for work activities, which take into account any specific risks to female members of staff of child-bearing age who could become pregnant, and any risks to new and expectant mothers.

As soon as you become aware that a member of your staff is pregnant, you should ensure that a specific risk assessment is undertaken and fully documented. This must be completed by the employee's manager and/or Departmental Safety Advisor, in consultation with the member of staff. Examples of common risks include lifting and carrying loads, workstation and posture, exposure to infectious diseases and handling chemicals. The risk assessment will need to be reviewed on a regular basis as the risks will vary depending on the health of the staff member and at different stages of her pregnancy and return to work phase. Full information, together with a risk assessment review form, is available on-line at: (6)

5. Training

Training issues are just as important for home workers as all other employees. Since most home working will involve the use of computers this training should include the correct positioning and use of DSE, manual handling and accident prevention.

6. Managerial issues

It is important that the home worker receives the same management support as other employees. Due to the physical separation of the worker and workplace extra effort will have to be made to ensure that the home worker considers him or herself part of the team. Arrangements need to be put in place to ensure regular contact between the home worker and their base. The frequency of contact will to some extent depend upon the type of work. The member of staff must be made aware of their responsibilities to discuss any concerns with their manager with regard to work-related stress.

7. Insurance

The Birchanger Parish Council's Employer's Liability Insurance will extend to any home workers.

Insurance for any Parish Council equipment installed in an employee's home will be provided by the Parish Council.

The individual home worker must check with their contents insurance and mortgage lender, if appropriate, to ensure that home working does not invalidate the policy (ies). The Local Planning Authority should be contacted to determine if permission is needed for a material change of use of their home (some authorities insist upon this, others do not).

8. Accident and incident reporting

Home workers should be advised of the appropriate form completed for any work related accident or injury.

9. Contractual issues

When the employment of a home worker is being considered arrangements will need to be made on issues including:

- Communication arrangements
- Confidentiality and Data Protection Act
- Sickness and annual leave recording

Appendix 1: Home working checklist

This checklist can be used by a home worker to identify any possible hazards in their home working area. Once completed it can be used in a discussion with your line manager to confirm working arrangements and be used to complete a risk assessment (see appendix 2).

Employee:	KEITH WILLIAMS
Home workplace location:	317 BIRCHANGER LANE, BIRCHANGER, BISHOPS STORTFORD CM23 5OR

	✓ or X	Comments
A – Working area		
1. Is the workplace segregated from the rest of your home and away from distractions?	YES	
2. Is there a safe means of access to the working area?	YES	
3. Is there adequate workspace in the room to work safely and is there sufficient height to stand up in?	YES	
4. Is your home workplace free from tripping hazards?	YES	
5. Are the floor coverings / surfaces in good condition?	YES	
6. Is equipment, bags, paper, files, books etc stored safely off the floor?	YES	
7. Is equipment positioned safely so that no cables are left hanging that could lead to the equipment being pulled over?	YES	
B - Environment		
1. Is heating available to maintain an adequate working temperature in the winter (Minimum 16 °C)?	YES	
2. Is there a means of cooling during hot temperatures, i.e. local cooling, adequate ventilation or hot weather fans?	YES	
3. Are blinds/ curtains available to prevent glare on computer screens?	YES	
4. Is there adequate ventilation in the work area?	YES	
5. Is adequate lighting provided which may be a combination of natural lighting, task lighting and general	YES	

room lighting?		
C – Display screen equipment		
1. Have you completed the display screen equipment assessment for your home workstation?	NO	NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY
2. Are you using a docking station for your laptop?	NO	
3. Have you an external mouse and keyboard for your laptop?	YES	
4. Are you taking short but frequent breaks away from your work?	YES	
D- Emergency actions		
1. Have you access to basic first aid provisions?	YES	
2. Do you know what to do in an emergency? Have you worked out a fire drill so you and anyone else in the house know what to do and where to go in case of a fire?	YES	
3. Have you a smoke detector/s fitted?	YES	NOT CURRENTLY IN USE
4. Are you familiar with the procedures for accident and incident reporting?	YES	
E – Electrical safety		
1. Are Parish Council owned portable electrical appliances PAT tested and a sticker applied?	NO	
2. Do you carry out frequent visual checks on plugs, wiring and casings of electrical equipment?	YES	

Employee signature		Date:
Supervisors signature		Date: