

Home Working Guidance

Introduction

With the social distancing restrictions placed on the country by the Government due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council has had to quickly arrange for staff to work from home.

The single most important action we can all take in fighting coronavirus is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives. The Government have advised that all those who can work from home should, and the Council has been making significant changes to its operations and IT provisions to enable as many people as possible to do so.

For those working from home the Council still has a responsibility to ensure that they are working safely. However, the HSE have confirmed that there is no requirement for employers to carry out workstation assessments during this temporary period of home working.

Display Screen Equipment

All staff will have completed the iLearn Display Screen Equipment module and should use the learning from this to set up their workstation at home.

The HSE have a home working page on their website that can help you set up your home working station. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>

Where possible, staff should not set up their workstation on the living room couch as this will not provide the support required.

Staff that have access to a laptop and can work from home should ensure, where possible, that they use a laptop with docking station so that they can connect a proper keyboard and monitor to their set up, instead of being hunched over a laptop all day. If you don't have a docking station but have a home computer, you may still be able to connect your home computer's keyboard and mouse to your laptop via available USB ports.

Appendices 1 and 2 show how you should set up your workstation.

It is important for staff to remember to take screen breaks. Get up from your working area and take a walk around your house or garden, remember to stretch. The attachment to this guidance contains information on what stretches can be done when at your workstation.

Home Office/working area

You may have a room with a desk in it, or you may be sitting at your kitchen table. Wherever you are working there should be enough space for work to be carried out comfortably. Often spaces used for home working such as attic rooms or basements, are not suitable because of poor lighting, cramped space or inadequate ventilation. Make sure that you have enough light to work properly, if you need to

borrow the lights from beside your bed or rearrange your “home office” so that you work beside the window then this will benefit you. If possible, and with the agreement of your manager you may wish to borrow some of the equipment from your normal office such as monitors, chairs, wrist supports etc. to give you a more comfortable set up at home. This should be coordinated with by your manager to ensure that social distancing requirements can be maintained.

You should ensure that your home working area is as private as possible. If it is possible that other members of your household could overhear the content of your online meetings then you may wish to consider using earphones.

You should ensure that you cover or arrange the leads from the computer so as not to cause a tripping hazard for you or your family members.

You should ensure that any electrical sockets or extension leads you are using at home are in good condition, in that the leads are not frayed and there is no visible damage to the sockets.

Mental Health

We must ensure mental health is a priority right now. During this period of enforced isolation, it is important that the contacts with co-workers, which are beneficial to our mental health are maintained to prevent feelings of isolation and even depression. Practical ways for staff to stay in contact include:

- Having regular Teams meetings, including informal catch-ups / tea breaks.
- Online meetings/skype.
- E-mail and telephone each other.

Furthermore, achieving a sensible work/life balance is essential for good mental health. Being endlessly connected to work by our phones or computers blurs the boundaries between our work life and our personal life. Where possible, stick to your normal working hours and ensure that you get outside for one piece of daily exercise, even if it's just a walk around the block.

Employee Duties

It is important for employees to:

- **Keep to their normal working hours** - Be ready to start your day at the same time as you would normally arrive in your office or workplace and finish your day at the same time. At the end of a working day, it's best to switch off your computer and tidy away papers and other items.
- **Get dressed** - the prospect of staying in pyjamas all day is the most tantalising aspect of working from home. But washing and getting dressed will not only improve your state of mind, it will psychologically prepare you to start work. Whether you need to change into business attire depends on the type of person you are and the nature of the job you have. Some people find that getting dressed formally is helpful, and useful if they need to dial into a video call.

- **To do lists** – When working from home it can be challenging to keep track of what you have to do throughout your workday. It's easy to lose sight of priorities, tasks, and deadlines. Start your day by reviewing priorities for the day. When you make your task list, stick to it. It's tempting to just leap into your email, but with a little extra focus, you can move the needle while working from home. Set goals and time limits for each task. After you complete each task, cross it off the list. This simple technique is both effective and fulfilling.
- **Get out** - Working from home shouldn't mean you stay cooped up indoors all day. While you might not miss your daily commute, it does guarantee that you leave the house at least once during the day. So, get your shoes on, get outside and enjoy that fresh air. A different perspective will also help undo mental blocks and give you a fresh pair of eyes for any tasks you're struggling with.
- **Take regular breaks** - It's good to have a routine when you're working from home, but work shouldn't become monotonous. You shouldn't stay glued to your screen all day. It's important to take regular screen breaks and get up from your desk and move around just as you would in the office. If your favourite song comes on the radio belt it out and have a little boogie, just make sure that you're not on a video call at the time.

Managers Duties

It is important for managers to:

Keep in regular contact with remote workers – this will help to avoid feelings of isolation and loneliness. It's a good way to ensure that workers are well and that they understand information and instructions presented to them.

Set expectations and trust your team – be clear about mutual expectations and trust your team to get on without micromanaging. Focus on results rather than activity.

Communicate the organisational plan – be open and honest with all workers and ensure clarity. Explain what the organisation is doing to help protect its workers, their families and friends, and the organisation itself.

Use varied methods of communication –this can include teleconference-based applications, which introduces a visual human interface, but can also include telephone, email or applications such as WhatsApp.

Use social distancing for groups of people – during extreme situations such as Covid-19, workers will need to conduct virtual meetings rather than meet face-to-face to prevent further spread. In rare circumstances where face-to-face meetings need to occur, it is important to follow the government's advice on social distancing, making sure to keep a reasonable distance from one another.

Provide disability support – ensure that coaching support and remote-based organisation still takes place for those who require additional support. Encourage workers to send photographs to highlight any potential issues or adjustment queries

Set boundaries between working and non-working hours – allow workers to disengage from work when they are required to. This can also involve agreeing

varied or flexible working hours with workers. Avoid sending communications during this period unless it is an absolute necessity. This will allow workers to continue a healthier work-life balance.

Encourage workers to discuss wellbeing/mental ill-health concerns – this can help to alleviate symptoms and prevent them from worsening. It also allows managers the opportunity to adopt preventative measures. Seeing staff in person also makes it easier to spot the warning signs that someone might be struggling with their mental health and wellbeing, so where possible ensure that you are carrying out regular 1:1s through Teams.

Working Securely

If you are working from home and have remote access, please follow the remote working guidance below. Be aware that criminal hackers are looking to exploit the current situation and an increase in malware activity has been seen.

Be extra vigilant especially with email and attachments. **If you are in any doubt, don't open suspicious attachments even if they appear to come from a trusted source. Don't click on any links unless you are absolutely sure they are safe, even if they appear to come from a trusted source.**

You must take care to ensure that anything you are working on is not overlooked by members of your family. Remember that the Council's Information Security Policy and Data Protection Policy still apply to you when you are working remotely.

Keep it secure, keep it private.

Dos and Don'ts

Do's	Don't's
Do ensure that your laptop computer is authorised for remote working.	Don't use privately owned computing equipment, including mobile phones, to store or process Council data. You must ONLY use Council provided equipment for processing and storage of Council data.
Do follow guidelines and controls for applications such as PARIS that contain personal, sensitive or confidential information.	Don't use a Council laptop that has not been authorised for remote working.
Do notify IT immediately if you suspect that there has been a security breach or data loss.	Don't allow family members or others to use your Council laptop for any purpose whatsoever.
Do notify IT immediately if you suspect that there has been a security breach or data loss.	Don't leave laptops unattended in cars even if they are locked and switch them off when they are not in use.

Do keep laptops and confidential or sensitive information with you at all times.	
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Passphrase requirements for those staff who have remote access to Council systems

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, many organisations are looking to provide remote access to systems for their workers so that they can work at home and stay safe. However, Cyber criminals are also looking at this and in the coming weeks and months we are going to see a surge in phishing attacks via email, scam messages via messenger and SMS, and other social media routes. You **must** be especially vigilant and suspicious, especially when dealing with Council data.

One of the best methods of protecting our information other than being vigilant and suspicious, is by use of complex and secure credentials for logging into systems. There is a very simple way to do this using a method called a passphrase.

The key to making passphrases secure and easy to remember is to find a method that works for you. A passphrase must include upper and lower case letters, numbers and special characters. The longer the better – it's passphrase length that increases security more than passphrase complexity.

Here's an easy method:

1. Pick three unrelated words that you're likely to remember, e.g. chair, lawnmower and shovel and join them together to get chairlawnmowershovel.
2. Now put a random number somewhere and it becomes chairlawnmower47shovel.
3. Make some of the letters upper case and you have chairAwnmower47Shovel.
4. And add a special character (or two if you prefer) and you'll have a password that can't be guessed or cracked easily:Chair!Awnmower47Shovel!

Using a passphrase in this way will defeat the normal types of attack.

It is an essential requirement that you use passphrases when accessing Council systems remotely to mitigate the risk of malware attacks. Our remote access system currently has a maximum password length of 14 and you will need to remember this when setting a passphrase. You can use 3 unrelated 4 letter words (NOT profanities as these are common and usually attacked quickly), or 2 unrelated 6 letter words. Combine these with a single number and a single special character, e.g. Forkstar3Toad!

Keeping your passphrases safe

Having to remember a large number of passphrases for different systems can be challenging. If you have a smartphone, then there are a number of secure apps called password managers that can help with this. One that we can recommend is

KeePass. It's free, it can work on many different systems and it's very secure. It's available on the Company Portal Apps section for Council phone users. Android users will find it on the Google Play store, iPhone users will find it on the Apple Store, C and Mac users (Including iPad users) can find it here:

<https://keepass.info/download.html>

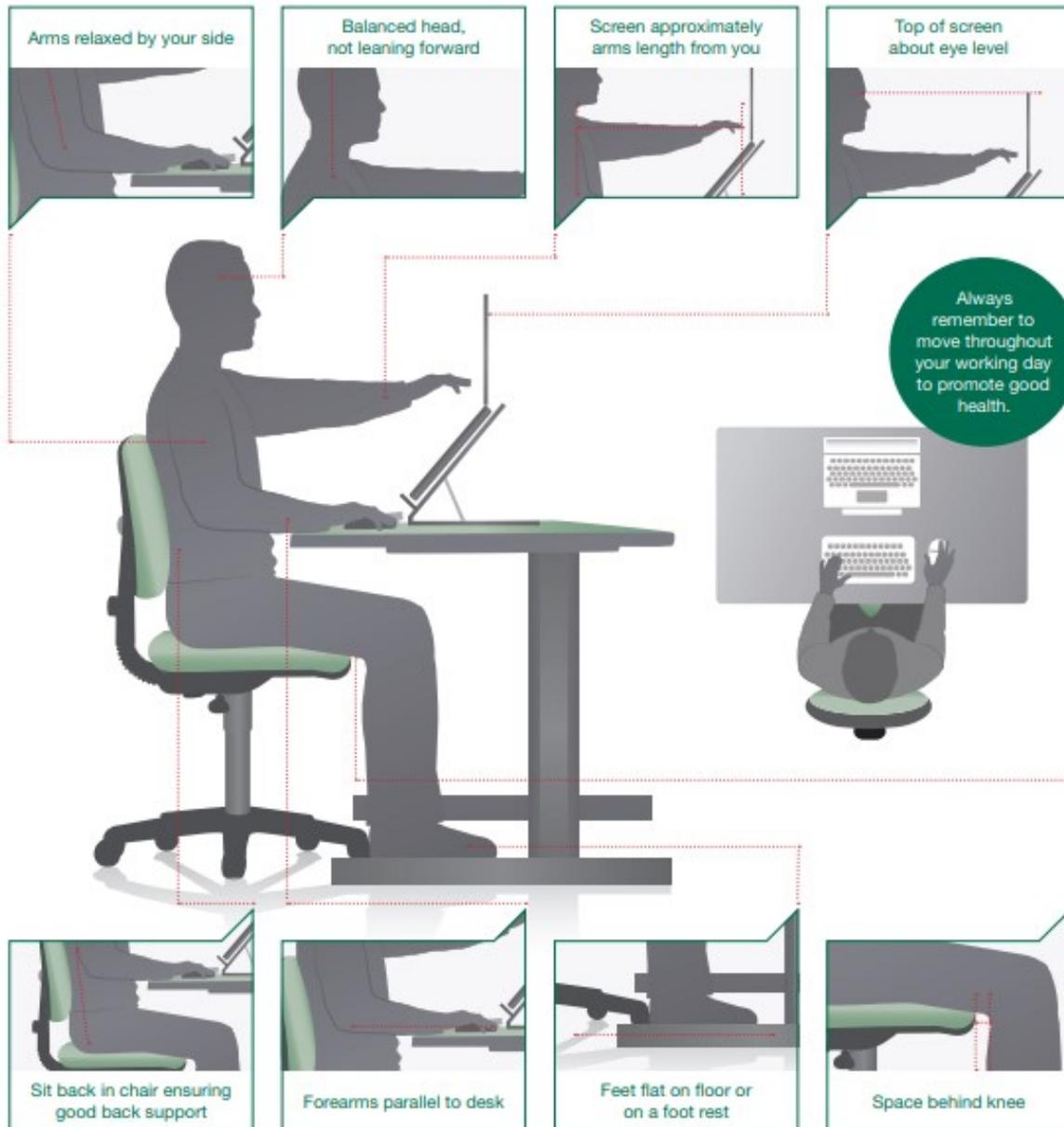
Use of a password manager will mean that you will help lighten the load on IT Support staff by reducing reset requests for passphrases. Please consider using one and make sure it's installed on a separate device **not** your work laptop.

Appendix 1. Laptop Helpful Hints

For good laptop use with mini keyboards.

Laptop Helpful Hints

For good laptop use with mini keyboards



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Appendix 2: DSE Helpful Hints

For your perfect workstation setup.



DSE Helpful Hints

For your perfect workstation setup

Arms relaxed by your side



Balanced head, not leaning forward



Screen approximately arms length from you



Top of screen about eye level



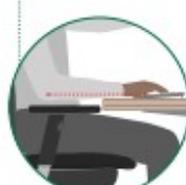
Always remember to move throughout your working day to promote good health.



Sit back in chair ensuring good back support



Forearms parallel to desk



Feet flat on floor or on a foot rest



Space behind knee



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