

Homeworking and Health & Safety FAQ

Answers to common queries
around homeworking and your
duties as an employer



This FAQ should be read in conjunction with our [Homeworking and Employment Law Guide](#).

What do we need to do to protect colleagues who now find themselves working from home?

You should carry out a risk assessment of the work being carried out in the normal way. In the most common case, where people are working on laptop computers, this should include a brief assessment of the workstation set-up. A [Homeworking Checklist and DSE Risk Assessment](#) form is available from our Coronavirus Advice Hub.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) suggests that those working from home during the pandemic may be deemed as ‘temporary’ homeworkers and therefore an in-depth assessment is not required?

That's right. Whilst the HSE does suggest this on its website, it then goes on to say that employers should ask employees to undertake a workstation checklist. Furthermore, it is unlikely that those still working from home are no longer deemed as doing so ‘temporarily’ and therefore we believe that you do need to assess this risk.

What are our liabilities for those working from home and what responsibilities do we have for our staff regarding injury, back, shoulder and neck pain?

Health and safety legislation does not apply in a domestic setting as such; however, if employees are injured then they should still report under your normal accident procedures and inform you. Unless they are injured using the company’s work equipment, then clearly you cannot be responsible for tripping over a dog/children’s toys, etc.

You should be in regular communication with your employees, and this communication should also be used to check that staff are comfortable and taking the necessary rest breaks away from their workstation (five to 10 minutes every hour). There should be an organisational risk assessment in place for homeworking.

What are our liabilities for those working with computers?

Any employee who uses a computer – commonly referred to as Display Screen Equipment (DSE) or a Visual Display Unit (VDU) – for one continuous hour or more per day, every day, is deemed to be a DSE ‘user’.

DSE users must undertake a DSE/VDU self-assessment as required under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992. Users are also entitled to an eyesight test paid for by the employer (where necessary) and a contribution towards corrective lenses (glasses) where an optician deems these to be necessary for DSE/VDU usage specifically. This cost is usually set by the employer.

Do we need a homeworking policy?

We recommend that employers develop and implement a homeworking policy to ensure everyone understands:

- How homeworking will be managed;
- How people will be set up to work from home, and who will provide and pay for equipment;
- How the employer will carry out risk assessments;
- How things like expenses, tax and information security are handled; and
- The employer's approach to homeworking in non-emergency situations.

Who should complete the organisation's homeworking risk assessment?

This should be the person that manages health and safety within the organisation, with the assistance of two to three others to check the contents. Whilst those undertaking the risk assessment are not strictly required to have undertaken specific risk assessment training, they are required to be deemed as 'competent' by the organisation. Ellis Whittam can work with you to complete risk assessments – call 0345 226 8393 or email enquiries@elliswhittam.com for more information.

Should we use the DSE self-assessment or the homeworking checklist for homeworkers?

We recommend you complete both for each homeworker. A **Homeworking Checklist and DSE Risk Assessment** form is available from the Coronavirus Advice Hub, which combines the two. There is also a separate **Homeworking Risk Assessment** if you prefer to keep them separated. You will also need to liaise with employees on the findings from both.

What equipment do homeworkers need to be provided with?

You should take "reasonably practicable" steps to ensure that homeworkers are comfortable whilst working with DSE/VDUs. It may be that you allow them to take some of the office equipment home; however, you will need to ensure that additional risks (such as manual handling) are mitigated and that this does not cause further risks (such as COVID-19). Alternatively, if you believe that this is not reasonably practicable, you may allow for work equipment to be ordered and delivered to their home.

Do we have to provide everyone with a chair and desk?

You will need to assess the amount of time employees spend using DSE/VDUs, and if you determine that this is a reasonably practicable solution then yes, you should provide them with a chair. You may decide to allow employees to choose their own and claim a sensible proportion back through expenses.

What are our duties with regards to Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and is this our responsibility to organise?

All equipment should be portable appliance tested (PAT). For a computer, this can be as far apart as every five years. Clearly, at present, this is difficult. If you can make “reasonable efforts” to have this undertaken, then that should be sufficient to meet statutory requirements. If the equipment is yours then yes, you should organise PAT testing.

Do we have to supervise homeworkers?

It is important that regular communication with employees is maintained when they are working from home in order to help maintain good mental health during these trying times.

Are homeworkers classed as lone workers?

Yes, and with lone working, there will always be greater risks with no direct supervision or anyone to help them if things go wrong.

We advise you keep in touch with all lone workers, including homeworkers, and ensure regular contact to make sure they are safe.

Do we have to provide insurance?

It's a good for employers to remind their employees to check with their insurance provider that they are covered for homeworking. Employees may also wish to check with their mortgage provider or landlord that there are no issues with them working from home. Employers should also make sure that their insurance covers employees working from home.

What training do we need to apply?

All homeworkers will need to be fully trained in the tasks that they are employed to do and the equipment they will be using. Homeworkers will also need to be trained in emergency procedures in case of an accident in the home. Additionally, supervisors/managers of homeworkers will need to be trained in how to deal with employees working off site, e.g. prearranged regular contact, how to recognise signs of stress in homeworkers, etc.