

The benefits and dangers of home working

3 years ago



The COVID-19 pandemic made home working a necessity for a huge number of people when it first struck in March 2020. Since then, the whole concept of office working has been redefined, with many people able to work more effectively from home, wasting less time, money and energy commuting.

Whilst home working brings a wealth of benefits, there are a number of important considerations for both employers and employees to ensure equilibrium is maintained.

Employers have the same health and safety responsibilities for people working at home as for any other worker. Most of the time, risks to home workers will be low and the actions employers should take to protect them will be straightforward. Considerations as part of any risk assessment should include:

- Stress and poor mental health
- Using work equipment safely
- The home worker's environment

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety.

The following advice is shared from www.hse.gov.uk

Employers must protect workers from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it. This applies equally to home workers as any other workers.

Home workers will face many of the same issues as any other worker, but it can be more difficult to provide adequate support and maintain social links.

People who are deprived of social contact through work can feel isolated or disconnected, bringing on

pressure and stress or aggravating pre-existing mental health problems.

Manage the risks of stress from working at home

There are practical things employers can do to help manage the risks of stress and mental health problems for home workers.

- Talk openly with them about the possibility of them becoming stressed or mentally unwell
- Involve them in completing [stress risk assessments](#) so they can help identify potential problems and solutions
- Keep them updated on what is happening so they feel involved and reassured
- Have regular keep-in-touch meetings or calls so they can share any concerns
- Make home workers aware of any occupational support available to them
- Take account the needs of the individual – if someone is a home worker for medical reasons you may need to meet their needs differently

Talk to home workers

Without day-to-day contact, it is harder to recognise symptoms of stress or mental health problems, so employers may need to build in additional opportunities to ensure home workers are safe and well.

It is also important for employers to keep in regular contact with home workers, as a team and one to one. Meetings should be accessible to all your workers.

It may be useful to review how the work is done to reduce any potential causes of stress. Employers should talk to their workers to find out if they are facing any issues.

Work/life balance

Those working at home can sometimes work longer hours, making them tired and stressed. Speak regularly about workloads, demands and training needs.

Employers should encourage home workers to take regular breaks and use their annual leave. They should make sure people aren't working too long to meet unrealistic deadlines or feel obliged to answer emails outside normal working hours.

Stress can build up over time and the causes can be work-related or from other issues. Whatever the cause, it's important that any worker gets help as soon as possible, and you should support them to do so.

Find out more

HSE provides guidance on [managing stress at work](#). They also have [talking toolkits](#) that will help you have conversations with your home workers.