



Tudhoe Learning Trust

Homeworking Policy

Approved by: Trust Chief Executive Officer

Date: September 2024

Last reviewed on: September 2024

Next review due by: September 2026

Introduction

The Trust recognises that from time to time it may be convenient and/or necessary for an employee to work from home on a short-term, temporary or on a permanent basis.

Homeworking can be very beneficial for both an employee and the Trust as an employer as such the Trust encourages schools to try to accommodate homeworking where this is possible.

This policy explains how to apply for homeworking, and the things your line manager will take into account when considering your request. It also covers the safeguards that need to be put in place and the practical arrangements that make homeworking a success.

In applying this policy, the Trust will not unlawfully discriminate in respect of any of the protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act and specified below:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

This policy does not form part of your employment contract and the Trust may update it at any time.

What is homeworking?

Homeworking means working from home on an occasional, a temporary or a permanent basis. It could be a one-off day. It could be a new pattern of working partly from home. It could be working entirely from home for a fixed period or indefinitely. There are lots of options.

Homeworking does not entitle you to choose when and how you work. It simply means you do your job from home. Your contractual obligations, including your core working hours, continue to apply. Any changes to these would need to be agreed between you and the Trust.

Occasional homeworking

There are various reasons why you might want or need to work from home on a particular day or for a short period. These could include:

- logistical difficulties in getting to work, for example on a snow day;
- needing to concentrate on a work document in a quiet environment.

Homeworking that changes your 'place of work'

This is when you have agreed a new working arrangement with us. It is where your home becomes your working base for at least some of the week/month, temporarily or permanently.

Is your role suitable for homeworking?

The Trust will consider a request for homeworking under this policy if you are an employee, have passed your probationary period and completed all necessary training for your role, or where homeworking is a reasonable adjustment under the *Equality Act 2010*.

Your line manager will need to be satisfied that your role is one that is suited to homeworking (not all are).

You will also need to have the personal attributes and skills that mean you should be able to do your job effectively from home. Things like:

- the ability to work independently;
- self-motivation;
- self-discipline;
- good time management;
- the ability, through remote technology, to access materials you will need and speak with people you'll need to speak with;
- being able to separate work life and home life.

Your personnel record, including your recent conduct and performance levels and any unexpired warnings, will be taken into account when decisions are made in relation to homeworking.

Your home environment must be suitable for homeworking. This includes having an appropriate working area, a reasonably strong internet connection and appropriate security measures in place.

How do I apply for homeworking?

Occasional homeworking usually needs to be arranged at short notice. That might be because your child wakes up unwell (in which case you should also consider compassionate leave and/or leave of absence request), or where poor weather makes it advisable for you to stay at home. In those types of situations, you should contact your line manager as soon as you think you will need to work from home. They will decide whether to authorise your homeworking on that occasion.

If you would like to make homeworking a normal part of your employment contract, you should discuss this with your line manager as a first step. If you then decide to make a formal request for homeworking under this policy, you are required to follow the procedure set out in our Flexible Working Policy. All trust policies are available on the trust website at www.tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk

It is important that we have enough time to consider your request properly, so please ensure any request is made well in advance of when you would like the homeworking to begin.

What should I include in my application?

Tell us in as much detail as you can about the homeworking arrangement you are proposing. In particular:

- What your working week/month would look like.
- Whether homeworking would be a temporary or a permanent arrangement.
- When you would like the homeworking to begin.

- How you think homeworking could work for you, for your role and for the school.
- Why you think you and your role are suited to homeworking.
- How you would do your job just as effectively from home.
- How you would maintain appropriate contact and relationships with colleagues, clients, suppliers and your manager.
- How you would protect confidential information belonging to us and to our clients, customers, staff, suppliers, associates, contractors.

If you believe that homeworking would be a reasonable adjustment under the *Equality Act 2010*, you should tell us that and explain why.

When we receive your request

Your line manager and the Trust HR Manager will arrange to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss your proposed homeworking. Following the meeting, they may want to visit your home (possibly more than once) to assess its suitability, which may include carrying out a health and safety risk assessment.

You may be required to arrange and pay for any necessary modifications and your homeworking request may be refused if those modifications are not made within a reasonable timeframe, or if they do not rectify any health and safety risk(s) identified.

The Trust may also want to carry out a data protection risk assessment before deciding whether to agree to the homeworking.

Your line manager will write to you to let you know whether they are able to agree to your homeworking request. Each request will be considered on its own merits. Even if a similar request has been approved in the past, your line manager is not tied to doing the same in the future.

If your request is approved, you will be required to complete a trial period. If that trial period is unsuccessful, you may need to return to the previous contractual position, unless some other arrangement can be agreed.

If you are unhappy with a refusal of your request under this policy, you should write to the Trust HR Manager within 5 school working days of receipt of the decision, explaining your reasons.

Setting up homeworking

Property and equipment

The Trust might loan you some of the things you will need to be able to do your job properly and safely from home. These may include stationery, a laptop/desktop computer, desk and chair, secure filing cabinet, shredder, dedicated phone line, mobile phone. We may ask you to cover or contribute to the cost of any necessary installations such as broadband connections.

You must take good care of anything that is loaned to you and return it when requested.

You may use the equipment or other property we provide for reasonable and lawful personal use.

If you intend using any personal equipment such as a computer for homeworking you must check with us first. We will need to make sure that it's suitable and secure. Any personal

equipment that we agree to you using remains your responsibility, so you would need to cover the cost of things like repairs.

Household bills

You will be expected to cover the cost of utilities including heating and electricity necessary for your homeworking.

Mortgage, lease and insurance

You are responsible for making sure that your mortgage or lease and home insurance do not restrict or prevent your home being used for work.

You should discuss with your home insurer any changes that may need to be made to your policy to ensure that you are fully protected while working from home. You are responsible for any premium increase or additional premiums.

Tax

There may be tax implications to homeworking as you may be eligible to claim for tax relief. You should get specific advice on this.

Managing homeworking

Employees who work from home are subject to the same rules, procedures and expected standard of conduct and performance as all other employees.

Contractual obligations, duties and responsibilities remain in place, as do our workplace policies.

Your line manager will want you to remain as involved as possible in school business and activities while you are working from home. This includes having access to news, events and benefits, as well as opportunities for professional development, training and promotion.

Your line manager and other colleagues will keep in regular contact with you during your homeworking via phone, email, video conferencing and face-to-face meetings with your line manager, team or governor/board meetings as appropriate. As part of a homeworking agreement, you may be required to attend work on a regular basis e.g. one day per week or per half term as required.

Your line manager will endeavor to monitor your wellbeing during extended periods of homeworking and ensure you are supported as appropriate. If at any point you feel isolated or lacking guidance or support, you should discuss this with your line manager in the first instance.

Where an IT or other problem prevents you from working effectively from home, you should contact your line manager immediately. Your line manager may require you to come into a school or office to work until the issue has been resolved.

If you cannot work on a homeworking day because of illness or injury, you must follow the procedure set out in our Sickness Absence Policy.

Expenses

The school will reimburse you for reasonable postage, photocopying, printing costs and reasonable travelling costs in respect of meetings with our clients/customers.

You should email your expenses claim form to your line manager at the end of each calendar month.

Health and safety

The Trust may carry out periodic health and safety risk assessments of your homeworking, as well as maintenance checks and electrical testing.

You have a responsibility to take reasonable care. If you have any health and safety concerns, or if an accident or incident takes place, you must immediately report this to your line manager in line with our Health and Safety Policy.

It will not usually be appropriate to hold work-related meetings in your home, or to give out personal details like your address. If you are unsure about any aspect of this, contact your line manager.

Security, confidentiality and data protection

While working from home, it remains vitally important to continue protecting personal data and the rights and privacy of individuals, as set out in this Policy. Our high standards must be adhered to at all times. You must ensure that you follow all Trust Policies, in particular our Data Protection Policy and our Acceptable Use of ICT Policy. All Trust Policies are available from your line manager and are available on the Trust Website at www.tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk

Only equipment that has been approved by your line manager may be used for homeworking.

Whenever you are prompted to install a legitimate update to your computer or other equipment, you must do so.

Data protection audits and risk assessments will be carried out periodically.

Handling of Personal Data

All electronic personal data should be stored securely using passwords and data encryption.

All hardcopies of personal data, along with any electronic copies stored on physical, removable media should be stored securely in a locked box, drawer, cabinet, or similar.

Personal data must be always handled with care and should not be left unattended or on view to other parties at any time.

If personal data is being viewed on a computer screen and the computer in question is to be left unattended for any period of time, the user must lock the computer and screen before leaving it.

All employees working from home must ensure that they use all reasonable efforts to comply with the above including, for example, setting aside a specific room or part of their home (ideally behind a lockable door, in a room with lockable windows) for home working, particularly when handling personal data.

The Trust recognises that home workers may not always be able to ensure a degree of security comparable to school or office premises, but all reasonably practicable efforts

should be made to ensure the best security possible in the circumstances. Where working from home has been approved on a long term or permanent basis and appropriate security precautions cannot be met, your line manager may consider providing appropriate storage on loan to you.

You must report any actual or potential breach of security, confidentiality or data protection to your line manager immediately.

If you are unsure about any aspect of security, confidentiality or data protection, you must speak with your line manager.

Accessing your home

The Trust may need to access your home to set up the homeworking and to carry out risk assessments, checks, and repairs to our equipment.

The Trust may also need access in order to retrieve our property, whether during the homeworking, at the end of the homeworking arrangement, or when your employment ends.

We will give you as much notice as possible that we need to enter your home and you must cooperate with our reasonable requests.

What if you move house?

We will reassess the homeworking arrangement.

If we consider that the house move would make, or has made, homeworking unsuitable, we will discuss this with you and we may decide to bring the homeworking to an end. If that happens you will usually be able to return to your previous contractual place of work, although that cannot be guaranteed.

Ending the homeworking arrangement

If you want to bring your homeworking to an end, you should speak with your line manager.

The Trust may decide to end your homeworking arrangement on reasonable notice if we think that it is not working as it should, or that it has become or will soon become unsuitable.

If homeworking has become unsuitable because of your conduct or performance, we may terminate the homeworking arrangement immediately and require you to return to the normal location for your role. We may decide to implement our Disciplinary Policy or our Performance Management Policy, which could lead to you being suspended and/or your employment being ended.

When your homeworking arrangement has ended, we will usually be able to bring you back into the workplace, but that cannot be guaranteed (and may not be appropriate if we act in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy or Performance Management).

Further Information

If you would like any further regarding this policy and procedure, please contact Trust HR Manager at office@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk or Tel: 01388 811765