

# MHA HOME/HYBRID WORKING POLICY

TO:	Governance Sub-Committee
PREPARED BY:	Collette Anderson (CS & Innovation Manager)
SUBJECT:	Review of Home/Hybrid Working Policy
DATE OF MEETING:	22 May 2023
APPROVED BY:	Paul Martin (Chief Executive Officer)

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## 1) **INTRODUCTION**

This policy applies to employees and workers of Milnbank Housing Association (MHA).

Home/Hybrid working is where staff members can do work at home instead of at their workplace. There are two types of home working:

- **Contractual** home workers are employees based at home on a regular basis either for all their working week or part of it.
- **Occasional** home workers spend most of their time within the office but may work from home occasionally, normally to perform a specific non-routine task that requires a high level of concentration with minimum interruptions. It can also be used where an employee cannot get to their workplace but could still do their work from home (for instance an injury or bad weather). MHA as the employer, is responsible for setting parameters for occasional home working and will determine each request on its own merit. This arrangement does not require contractual change and it can be withdrawn at any time.

In line with the ethos of a Community Based Housing Association, and always putting tenants, customers, and the local community first, MHA does not consider any employees to be 'contractual homeworkers'. This policy merely enables the Association to permit certain employees to work from home on occasion, due to business or personal circumstances. The following procedures, therefore, are relevant only for the *occasional* circumstances where employees may be permitted to work from home. MHA recognises the flexibility and benefits occasional homeworking can bring to both the employer and the employee.

## 2) **POLICY PRINCIPLES & CONDITIONS**

Without losing sight of MHA's purpose and the need to continue to offer excellent customer, front-facing services, and promotion of a good culture within the staff team, the Association recognises that some job roles can occasionally be completed at home and wishes to embrace the benefits home/hybrid working can bring such as:

- The efficiency of performance
- Health and Wellbeing of employees
- The positive environmental impact through reduced commuting

MHA supports a culture of occasional home working if business and service delivery needs are met and enhanced. The Home/Hybrid Working Policy aims are as follows:

- To support a positive work-life balance for the Covid-19 pandemic recovery.
- To benefit the business from timeous high-quality reports, policies, and projects by giving appropriate staff the opportunity to do normal office-type work at home, without interruptions.
- Not to compromise the usual level of service offered to our tenants and other customers.
- To set out the parameters to ensure these aims are met.

### **a) Home/Hybrid Working Conditions**

For occasional home/hybrid working there is a maximum limit of 2 days per week. The only situations where this could be waived are:

- Bad weather or injury prevents the employee from being able to commute/attend the office, but they're well enough to work at home.
- Disruption to a dependant's care arrangements.
- The office/service is affected by a disaster when staff may be required to work from home.

For regular home/hybrid working there is a minimum of 3 days which must be worked in the office.

All home/hybrid working requests must be submitted in writing to line managers, clearly justifying the reason(s) for the request. The line manager will subsequently discuss the request with the individual and decide on the outcome of the request, taking into consideration the employees' circumstances as well as the requirements of the business.

An agreement to work from home occasionally will not change the employees' contractual terms and conditions of employment in respect of working hours or normal location of work, it's merely an informal arrangement. MHA reserves the right to vary or terminate the home/hybrid working arrangement at any time, due to a change in business needs, performance concerns or if there is a change to the employees' job role.

If staff have permission to work at home regularly, this will not apply when they are required to cover for another colleague who is absent on holiday, sick leave etc. MHA reserves the right to withdraw the home working arrangement for business reasons at any time, and with immediate effect.

Furthermore, a home/hybrid working arrangement is not the same as a flexible working agreement. If you wish to make a more permanent change to your hours of work/working pattern, location/place of work etc., you will need to request this separately through MHA's Flexible Working Policy.

### **b) Home Working during exceptional circumstances**

In exceptional circumstances (e.g., a pandemic), MHA may require staff to perform some, or all, of their duties from home. If this happens it will be on a temporary basis. MHA will do all it can to discuss these temporary arrangements with staff in advance of them taking effect and will keep them under review.

## **3. MANAGEMENT OF HOMEWORKING**

Working from home presents a particular challenge to normal management controls but the risk of potential abuse can still be managed. To ensure MHA receives VFM, home working will be managed as follows:

- Prior to any homeworking arrangement being agreed, the employee must complete a Homeworking Risk Assessment form (Appendix 1) to assess if their home environment is suitable for working.
- Any request for home working must detail the benefit(s) to the employee, and equally MHA, that the arrangement will have.
- All staff working from home are required to complete a 'Home Working Record' and submit to HR daily (Appendix 2). The purpose of the record is to determine if any amendments are required to roles and/or job descriptions and subsequently MHA's service delivery. Furthermore, the Record will gauge if staff are managing their workload effectively or if any adjustments are required.
- When working from home staff will be subject to all their usual contractual obligations, duties/responsibilities, terms and conditions, MHA's policies/procedures and expected standards of conduct and performance.
- All staff are expected to maintain daily contact with Line Managers via email or telephone and provide regular updates on the work undertaken.
- Any IT issues/concerns, preventing the employee working from home effectively, should be directed to Euro Systems or the Finance & IT Manager.
- If because of illness or injury, the employee cannot work from home on a day which was previously agreed, the Managing Attendance Procedures for reporting an absence should be followed.
- MHA recognises that working from home can at times feel lonely. Employees are encouraged to contact their Line Manager or HR if they are feeling isolated, require guidance or support. Furthermore, MHA's free Employee Assistance Programme is available for staff to access.
- Any breaches of the Home/Hybrid Working Policy will result in the arrangement being withdrawn immediately and could potentially lead to formal disciplinary action.

#### **4) KEY POINTS FOR HOME/HYBRID WORKING**

Home/Hybrid working won't work for or be available to everyone. It will depend on the job role, the function the employee works in, the level of supervision required for the employees' role, and any minimum levels of physical cover required as well as the technology and environment available to the employee at home.

Home/Hybrid working will not be available for those who need to be on site to do their jobs. For MHA this includes: front-facing service delivery staff (Housing Service Officers, Maintenance Assistants & Officers, reception based, community focused, in-house trades, and Estates Team roles etc.)

**a) Equipment**

It is MHA's Policy that all equipment, including computer equipment, and materials necessary for you to work from home will be provided and maintained (and replaced when necessary) by the Association.

It is your duty to ensure that proper care is taken of equipment and materials provided by MHA. Staff shall be responsible for any damage to the equipment which goes beyond ordinary wear and tear. You should also ensure that your broadband speed and mobile phone reception is of a standard which allows you to be able to perform your duties to an acceptable level and be contacted throughout the working day.

On termination of your employment or contract for any reason, MHA will have the right to visit your home at an agreed date/time and retrieve all equipment and documentation belonging to the Association.

You are strictly forbidden to undertake any work for MHA on your own home computer or laptop. All work associated with MHA must be accessed and completed using MHA's equipment.

**b) Costs Associated with Home/Hybrid Working**

MHA are not responsible for any costs associated with homeworking, including the costs of heating, lighting, electricity, broadband internet charges, telephone calls or printing. It is considered that the saving in time and money spent travelling to and from work is a reasonable notional offset to any personal costs incurred whilst working from home.

Employees may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred because of working from home, provided the expenses are solely work related. However, employees should refer to the HMRC and/or Scottish Government's website for the latest information. Any claim processed is the responsibility of the employee.

**c) Security**

You must not allow members of your household or third parties who are not employed or engaged by the Association to access or use MHA's equipment.

You are responsible for keeping all documents and information always associated with the Organisation's business secure and you are strictly forbidden to remove any paperwork from the office that contains personal or sensitive information relating to MHA's residents, other customers, or personnel.

The computer/laptop and any other equipment provided by MHA for you must be used only for work-related purposes and must not be used by any other member of your household or third party at any time or for any purpose.

#### **d) Health and Safety**

MHA is obliged under Health and Safety legislation to ensure the H&S of homeworkers. The Association is therefore required to ensure that:

- All equipment and systems of work in your home are safe.
- All articles and substances (if necessary) are handled and stored safely.
- An assessment of your workstation is conducted annually or as otherwise deemed appropriate.
- Information and training on the safe use of equipment, including display screen equipment, is provided to you.
- Risk Assessments are carried out in respect of the work you are undertaking.

If you work from home, you have a duty to ensure, in so far as is reasonably practicable, that you work in a safe manner and that you follow all Health and Safety instructions issued by MHA. If any issues arise with your workstation, it is your responsibility to report these to your Line Manager immediately.

Employees should not provide residents, contractors or any other third parties, with details of their home address or personal phone number.

Any accidents at home, whilst working, must be reported immediately to the Health & Safety Officer and/or your line manager. Any other H&S concerns should be reported immediately as they arise.

In the unlikely event where homeworking arrangements become permanent or semi-permanent, MHA will be responsible for providing office furniture (desks, chairs etc.) However, for temporary homeworking arrangements, it is the employee's responsibility to ensure they can work comfortably from home and their health is not at risk.

#### **e) Insurance and Legal Considerations**

Working from home may affect an employees' home and contents insurance policy. The employee is responsible for checking that all home and contents insurance policies provide adequate cover for home working prior to commencing work from home. Also, the employee must ensure the equipment they are using to work from home is adequately covered under their policy.

MHA is not responsible for any increased costs to home and contents insurance premiums because of the employee wishing to work from home.

Employees and workers will remain covered by MHA's public and personal liability insurance policy for activities involved in the performance of their duties.

#### **f) Mortgage or Rental Agreements**

Employees are solely responsible for checking applicable mortgage or rental agreements to ensure they are permitted to work from home, and for obtaining any requisite permission to work from home.

## **5) EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Whilst working from home, employees are still subject to the Association's Policies, Procedures and Code of Conduct.

### **a) Working Hours**

The core hours of work from home are between 9am – 5pm, Monday - Friday, unless other arrangements are already in place with regards to working hours (e.g., flexible/reduced working arrangements). During this time employees' must be available to respond to any calls, emails or join online meetings etc.

Employees will be required to attend the office for purposes relating to their job role, on request, and they are expected to make themselves available to do so during their normal hours of work. The dates and times of such visits will normally be agreed in advance, if possible.

### **b) Working Time Regulations**

Employees must ensure that they take adequate rest breaks, whilst working at home, in accordance with the Working Time Regulations 1998. Employees must:

- For those who work more than 6 hours per day, take a break during each working day of at least 20 minutes, during which they must stop work.
- Ensure they have a daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, e.g. The period between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day must not be less than 11 hours.
- Have at least one complete rest day each week when no work is done.

### **c) Performance Management**

MHA trusts its employees to fulfil their contractual obligations concerning their job role whilst working at home. However, whether an employee is working at home or in the office, the expectation on performance standards remains the same. Employees' performance whilst working at home, will be managed in the same way as employees working in the office. If the quality or volume of work produced whilst working at home does not meet the required standards or expectations, this will be addressed via MHA's Managing Performance Policy. During which time, the homeworking arrangement will cease, temporarily, until the matters have been dealt with.

## **6. MONITORING OF POLICY**

It is anticipated that the Home/Hybrid Working Policy will be reviewed every two years, or as otherwise deemed necessary by the Governance Sub-Committee.

## **7. DATA PROTECTION**

MHA controls the personal information that we collect, this means that we are legally responsible for how we collect, hold, and use personal information. It also means that we are required to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) when collecting, holding, and using personal information.

**HOMEWORKING SELF RISK  
ASSESSMENT FORM**

**APPENDIX 1**

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>General conditions</b>	<b>Employee Response</b>	<b>Satis Y/N</b>	<b>Employer Response</b>	<b>Satis Y/N</b>
<b>Location/Security of Residence</b>  Security of employee?  Security of visiting staff?  Access and egress?				
<b>Workroom</b>  Location of room within property? (upper/ground floor)  Ease of access and egress in case of emergency?  Workroom dimensions/size (11m <sup>3</sup> suggested minimum)  Workroom Lockable?  Secure storage facilities?				



<b>General conditions</b>	<b>Employee</b>	<b>Satis.</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Satis.</b>
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
<b>Lighting</b> Natural/artificial lighting (specify type and no. e.g. windows, pendant/ upright/ fluorescent) Blinds/curtains installed? Is the lighting likely to cause a glare problem?				
<b>Heating</b> Type e.g. gas central heating? Room temperature easily adjusted/ maintained?				
<b>Ventilation</b> Natural/mechanical e.g. window vents, air conditioning, fans?				
<b>Floor Surfaces</b> Absence of slip/trip hazards? Floor covering type suitable?				

<b>General conditions</b>	<b>Employee</b>	<b>Satis.</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Satis.</b>
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
<p><b>DSE Workstations</b></p> <p>Workstation equipment suitable for purpose e.g. desk, <u>adjustable</u> chair, IT equipment?</p> <p>Workstation equipment of sufficient size e.g. desk?</p> <p>Workstation equipment set up correctly?</p> <p>Any additional equipment required to facilitate home working?</p>				
<p><b>Electrical Safety</b></p> <p>Estimated age of property?</p> <p>Confirm 13A single phase 240V AC supply</p> <p>State number of sockets in room used?</p> <p>State number of plugs required for I.T. or other relevant appliances used?</p> <p>Confirm fuses / circuit breakers in place on electrical distribution box?</p> <p>Confirmation that all electrical wiring, fixtures and fittings are electrically sound and that no known electrical defects exist.</p>				

<b>General conditions</b>	<b>Employee</b>	<b>Satis.</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Satis.</b>
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
<b>Fire Safety</b>  Smoke detectors (LD2 system): number and locations?  Show suitable fire escape routes?  Is fire extinguishers available for use? (State location and type)				
<b>Use of Hazardous Substances</b>  Are you required to use any hazardous substances during the course of the work?  Are appropriate storage facilities in place?  Has a COSHH Assessment been carried out for the substance?				
<b>Working Practices</b>  Is the workroom suitable for the task(s) to be carried out?				
<b>Communications</b>  Appropriate means of communication in place?				

**Declaration**

I confirm that I have completed the above self-risk assessment to the best of my knowledge, and I have received a copy of the Associations Home/Hybrid Working Policy. Should my homeworking request be authorised, I will take all reasonable precautions to ensure my own safety and that of any others who may be affected by my activities while I am working at home.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ (Employee)

**Health & Safety Officer Review - Comments**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Designation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Employer Recommendation – Line Manager**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Designation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYEE HOME WORKING RECORD**

**APPENDIX 2**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DESIGNATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Date</u>	<u>Details of Work Carried out/Contacts Made with Residents/Contact with Staff/Records Updated</u>

