

Home Working Policy

1. Summary

- 1.1. SHAL is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of any staff working at home is managed in line with staff members working from SHAL premises.
- 1.2. SHAL tenants will receive a consistent service from all staff, irrespective of the location they may be working from.

2. Objectives

- 2.1. The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework of understanding about how home working operates at SHAL. It is based upon the principles outlined below, which also meet the requirements of employment legislation and support a new modern way of working.
- 2.2. SHAL recognises that for mutual benefit homeworking is an option for many job roles. This policy defines what home working means for SHAL and what needs to be in place to ensure the wellbeing of employees. It is the SHAL's policy to encourage open discussion with employees to ensure that questions and problems can be resolved as quickly as possible.
- 2.3. The policy applies to all employees. In order for the policy to be effective, it is essential that colleagues and those involved in the management of colleagues are aware of the policy and adhere to it. People who work at home have a clear responsibility to adhere to this policy. Failing to do so may lead to disciplinary action from their Line manager.

3. Details

- 3.1. Home working is where staff members can work from their home rather than at their workplace. There are two types of home working:
 - 3.1.1. Contractual home workers are employed based at home on a regular basis for all or part of their working week.

Current version	Date agreed/reviewed	Review due	Owner	Pages
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SHAL is registered in England and Wales as a Community Benefit Society and an exempt charity (number 27772R).

- 3.1.2. Occasional home workers are where an employee cannot get into the workplace but is able to carry out their usual working activities i.e. following an injury, bad weather or as a result of Government guidelines (e.g. working from home wherever possible as a way of minimising the spread of a virus during a pandemic).
- 3.1.3. It is SHAL’s responsibility to set clear parameters for occasional home working and line managers will determine each request on its own merit bearing in mind the needs of those who rent homes from us.
- 3.1.4. Individual circumstances and the length of time these may continue are set in the best interests of SHAL and the individual. This arrangement does not require contractual change and can be withdrawn at any time.
- 3.2. SHAL is responsible for the health and safety of all employees, including those working from home.
- 3.3. SHAL will, in consultation with homeworkers and their representatives
 - 3.3.1. provide information, instruction, training and supervision.
 - 3.3.2. assess all significant risks, including display screen equipment and data protection, in co-operation of the employees working from home.
- 3.4. SHAL will promote best practice in the management of home working. It will regularly review its provisions to ensure that they are legally compliant and reflect best practice.
- 3.5. SHAL will support home working and this will be agreed between the line manager and the individual taking into consideration team and business needs. Individual needs for flexibility will also be considered on a case by case basis.
- 3.6. Whilst home working, employees must take responsibility for their work during SHAL office hours, the system is reliant on there being trust between managers and employees. This is so fundamental that any breach of trust will be treated very seriously and may be regarded as misconduct. Appropriate action may follow under the Disciplinary Policy. If misconduct is found, the agreement to work at home may be withdrawn.

- 3.7. Working at home is a benefit available to all staff and is not a requirement unless it is essential to close the office for reason of pandemic or some other emergency in which case it is required for the sake of business continuity.
- 3.8. Working from home is not an automatic right and days must be agreed in advance with the line manager. There will be some circumstances where working from home is not a viable option or where the operational needs necessitate a different approach. For example, a member of staff whose performance is being reviewed under the capability procedure may not be considered suitable for home working. Such circumstances are expected to be the exception not the norm.
- 3.9. Some roles lend themselves to homeworking more readily than others.
- 3.10. Under homeworking roles can be undertaken from the office, home or in the community such as in village hall. The balance between office and home working will vary depending on the role, the employees and relevant government guidelines.
- 3.11. All roles will have their principle workplace as the SHAL office and, unless a formal contractual arrangement through a Flexible Working (see Staff Handbook) request is in place, will be subject to review and change.
- 3.12. Colleagues should ensure that all SHAL property is used appropriately and responsibly and that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent damage and theft. Any damage or theft of SHAL property must be reported to the line manager immediately.
- 3.13. Colleagues working at home are covered by SHAL's Employer's Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance providing the rules of this policy have been followed.
- 3.14. Communication arrangements must be robust. Colleagues working from home should be contactable, normally by video conferencing, email and by telephone, during normal working hours (see Staff Handbook).

- 3.15. Home workers must let their line manager or colleagues know in advance (where appropriate) of any times they will be out, seeking permission where appropriate. This includes agreeing lunch breaks with their line manager.
- 3.16. All colleagues working from home must ensure that they adhere to SHAL's policies, procedures and guidance in relation to Information Security, Data Protection and Freedom of Information.
- 3.17. The work that colleagues will be carrying out at home is paper-based or computer-based work and in general such work is not high risk. Nevertheless, SHAL has responsibilities under health and safety legislation when colleagues are working from home, including the requirement to undertake appropriate risk assessment.
- 3.18. Staff will be provided with equipment which is appropriate for their job roles and in line with any reasonable adjustments that an individual has.
- 3.19. Any other equipment requested outside of the normal equipment provision will need to be considered once a clear business reason has been made by the individual.
- 3.20. SHAL will not pay any additional household costs as home working arrangements are deemed a mutual benefit.
- 3.21. Staff must be available and able to work on their contracted days whether they are in the office or working from home, unless absence is authorised in advance by the line manager.
- 3.22. Employees should remember that the needs of the tenant, and the service will always take priority. This will mean that staff are expected to be flexible and available to come into the office or make a home visit on a working from home day should a need arise. This may include situations when they are unable to connect to the business systems, or if they are asked to do so by their manager e.g. in the event of sickness of a colleague, inadequate cover, emergency or service need.

- 3.23. Managers will be aware of the personal circumstances of their staff and should try to balance individual needs when calling staff in on working from home days.
- 3.24. Where an employee is being asked to attend the office at short notice, line managers will contact the employee in person and at a time that enables the employee to arrive at their normal starting time. Where this is not possible the employee’s travelling time will be considered as part of their working day.
- 3.25. Staff should log in to the IT and telephony system to clearly indicate their status and availability each day they’re working from home. This includes Auto Replies in Outlook, and keeping their calendar up-to-date. Lunchtimes should also be recorded in calendars where possible.
- 3.26. As a rule staff are expected to work in the same way, whether they are in the office or working from home (e.g. answer the telephone, reply to emails) during the hours the service operates (usually between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm) they will be expected to do this when working from home, unless a change is agreed with their line manager. Whether or not the line manager agrees to a change, will depend upon the circumstances of the request and its impact on the team and service delivery.
- 3.27. In the case of a systems failure, employees should contact their manager, who will need to establish the extent of the system failure, the impact on the service and decide on the appropriate course of action. In some cases, this will involve seeking advice from senior management. Managers should activate their business continuity plans as appropriate.
- 3.28. Working from home means that employees can be flexible in their approach to work, and emphasis will be placed on the outcomes delivered. The days that employees work in the office or work from home will be organised, planned and agreed in advance with their line manager wherever possible.
- 3.29. The needs of the service will always take priority, however a collaborative approach between management and staff is more likely to achieve a mutually beneficial arrangement.

- 3.30. Ultimately the manager will have the responsibility for ensuring that service needs take priority; that staff are treated fairly and are trusted to take responsibility for themselves and their work when working from home.
- 3.31. Employees must understand that these patterns are subject to change; there is no entitlement to work from home on specific days of the week. Consequently, employees must be ready to alter their working pattern if required and should be wary of making any commitments on homeworking days as these may need to change.
- 3.32. Working from home is not normally carried out to enable caring for dependants. Employees are expected to have made alternative arrangements for the care of their dependants during their working day. However, there may be times when there is an overlap during periods of self-isolation or shielding due to pandemics.
- 3.33. The procedure for notifying line managers of sick absence when working from home is the same as when you're due to work at the office.
- 3.34. Working from home is not to be used as a substitute for a working in the office when an employee feels "under the weather" i.e. they feel unable to make the journey into the office but feel able to continue their normal work from home. Last minute changes could impact on other team members and are therefore difficult to accommodate.
- 3.35. It is however recognised that there may be teams or circumstances where such requests may be agreed by exception. In their discussion the manager should consider the hours the employee expects to be able to work and their likely output before determining whether it is appropriate for the employee to work from home in this situation. It is also imperative that the employee has the necessary equipment at home to be able to do this (e.g. laptop and phone etc).
- 3.36. An employee who has reported in as sick and has it recorded as such, is not expected to work either in the office or at home.
- 3.37. Performance

- 3.37.1. Working from home relies on outcomes being understood across the team and being delivered by individuals as part of the team. People are expected and required to deliver clear and explicit results within their contractual hours. The arrangements for how hours are worked will be agreed in advance with the Line manager and agreed across the whole team.
- 3.37.2. This approach will require a strong commitment by managers and employees to plan and ensure that regular 1:1 meetings and team meetings take place and clear outcomes are made explicit.
- 3.38. Working from home requires some changes in relationship between employees and line managers. As a result, there are different responsibilities for all staff. All responsibilities are set out below.
- 3.39. Environment
 - 3.39.1. All employees will ensure their working environment is free from distractions and interruptions and confidential discussions cannot be overheard, including loud music, television and noise from other people living/working in the same home.
 - 3.39.2. Items on display in video calls should not be of an offensive or inappropriate nature.
- 3.40. Employees will:
 - 3.40.1. Agree working arrangements with their line manager (and in consultation with other team members where appropriate). This includes taking breaks and arranging cover.
 - 3.40.2. Ensure their line manager knows when and where they are working at all times.
 - 3.40.3. Ensure their Outlook calendar is up-to-date and their working status is known at all times
 - 3.40.4. Meet agreed work objectives, deadlines and monitoring arrangements, with a focus on outcomes and achievement.

- 3.40.5. Take care of SHAL equipment such as laptops, particularly when travelling or working from home. Any loss, damage or theft must be reported to the manager and the police if appropriate.
- 3.40.6. Continue to dress appropriately, especially when taking part in video calls.
- 3.40.7. Comply with the IT security and general data protection requirements (GDPR), ensuring:
 - a Laptops and phones are locked when left unattended.
 - b Paperwork containing personal data is collated and kept in a secure place and not left on surfaces where it can be seen by other members of the household, especially when left unattended.
- 3.40.8. Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and follow the Display Screen Guidance and other health and safety arrangements and procedures.
- 3.41. Line managers will:
 - 3.41.1. Ensure that safe working practices are understood by employees and that they have the tools they need to do their jobs effectively.
 - 3.41.2. Plan which members of staff are working in and out of the office on any given day. This may necessitate thinking creatively about how home working could work for their staff.
 - 3.41.3. Meet with individual members of their team (and with the team as a whole) regularly if working from home arrangements mean face to face meetings and team meetings cannot happen regularly.
- 3.42. Line managers will ensure members of their team:
 - 3.42.1. Help their team as a whole and as individuals overcome any obstacles and to obtain the resources they need to deliver the outcomes which have been agreed with them.

- 3.42.2. Understand that it is not compulsory to work from home, but that it is an available benefit.
 - 3.42.3. Have access to the appropriate technology to work effectively both in the office environment and from home.
 - 3.42.4. Have access to appropriate training and support to work effectively in the new ways.
 - 3.42.5. Take responsibility for creating a safe working environment when working from home and have access to appropriate support equipment to assist in the creation of a safe working environment when working from home.
 - 3.42.6. Have their individual circumstances and requirements (particularly where an employee has a disability) taken into account, including the needs of newly appointed employees, trainees and apprentices who may initially need to come into the office more often for support rather than working at home.
 - 3.42.7. Have access to continuous performance review process which includes regular 1:1 conversations and/or supervision.
 - 3.42.8. Ensure that information governance, health and safety and data protection requirements are adhered to at all times.
- 3.43. SHAL does not expect to issue additional equipment for home working, other than that which is provided as standard issue, unless there is a medical reason or reasonable adjustment to enable the employee to carry out the duties of the post. Those staff wanting to request additional equipment can complete a business case. Requests will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 3.44. It is anticipated that, in the majority of cases, the costs of working from home will be offset by the savings in the cost and time of commuting to work, and the benefits of an improved work/life balance. Therefore, any costs incurred by working at home will not be met by the SHAL.

4. Outcomes

- 4.1. Employees are able to approach their work in a flexible manner, ensuring they are available for work whether working from home or in the office.
- 4.2. Staff will maintain a healthy work/ life balance and will monitor their own health and wellbeing along with their manager where necessary.
- 4.3. SHAL will offer a full service to its tenants, irrespective of where staff are working from.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. SHAL staff will be invited to review the policy and suggest any comments and amendments prior to the policy being approved by the board.

6. Equality and Diversity

- 6.1. We will treat all our tenants fairly and equally. We will not, under any circumstances, discriminate against anyone because of: age; gender reassignment; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or on maternity leave; disability; race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.
- 6.2. We will understand the different needs of our tenants and we will ensure our services are accessible to everyone.

7. Value for Money

- 7.1. We will regularly review our processes to ensure resources and services are providing best value for money to our residents.

8. Owner

8.1. Housing Manager

9. Version and Revisions

9.1. This policy will be reviewed every 2 year(s).

9.2. Revisions

New version	Date	Revision details