



Tips for successful homeworking

With the outbreak of Coronavirus- COVID-19, more employees than ever are now working from home for the foreseeable future. For many this will be a new method of working that will fast become the norm. It is key during this uncertain time that businesses continue to operate as normally as possible.

Following Kat Rogers' blog, which looked into the data protection issues which may arise when working from home, we have put together some top tips for how best to make it work from both an employer's and as employee's perspective.

Impact on physical health

Years have been spent designing the most efficient office environment, from ergonomic chairs to support your back, to the layout of desks and the lighting used to provide prime working conditions. When workers then have to work from home a BHSF survey recently found that 37% experienced new back pain since working from home. Employers need to ensure that employees are aware of the way they should be working at home. This could mean providing diagrams of how desks should be set up and making sure that their working environment is as comfortable as it can be in the circumstances.

As employees are unlikely to be sitting at the ideal desk or chair, they need to ensure they are able to get up and move around at regular intervals to try and minimise the impact on their physical health. This could be as simple as suggesting regular breaks are taken, or that they get up and move around their home or garden, whilst making calls. Home workouts are available easily nowadays on the internet and through virtual gyms, so these could be made available to employees who request them.

Stay in touch

For many, working from home for the first few days will be a novel and enjoyable experience, but humans, by their nature, are sociable people and working from home for prolonged periods can leave individuals feeling isolated and disengaged from their workplace. Companies could ask mental health first aiders to check in on colleagues or alternatively implement a buddy system. They do not necessarily need to be from the same team, but could be groups of say 3 people from across the office who have non-work based chats either by text or on the phone. It is often those you don't know that well that you may feel more able to talk to in these uncertain times and a number of our clients have found this to be a good initiative. It's also a good idea to ensure employees are aware of any Employee Assistance programme that you may have in place, which will provide a telephone number for employees to call if they feel a need to talk to someone.

Encourage the use of video calls or other conference facilities where the normal face to face meetings are not possible. This is not just for external meetings but internally as well. It needs to be recognised that it's often

preferable to make a phone call to a colleague or a client compared to sending an email. Make sure that people aren't left out of key office conversations or communications.

Daily team conference or video calls can be used as a way to touch base; not only to discuss work, but also to see how they are finding working from home, if there are any ways that people think that their experience could be improved, or even just catching up as you would have inevitably done if you were in the office! This will help to bring a sense of familiarity to a new experience.

Keep a sense of normality

Simple things like encouraging employees to have a dedicated space in their home which is their office, even if this is just the kitchen table, and attempting to put boundaries in place between work and home life are advisable. Trying to stick to a routine also helps. Having a shower and getting dressed as you would normally will help prepare you to start the day ahead. Taking coffee and lunch breaks and not just sitting on your sofa in pyjamas on your laptop doing work all day.

That being said, don't make the assumption that because colleagues or clients are working from home that it means they are sat on the sofa watching TV, they still have the ability to be a productive team worker. Helping staff at all levels understand this is key to success, as well as knowing when to cut them some slack.

With current technology it is easier now more than ever to stay connected even if not in the same office. The ability to be able to maintain a productive and happy work environment when teams aren't all under the same roof can be more of a challenge. Contact [Camilla Beamish](#) or another member of the Employment Team if you have any questions or need advice.

For more guidance, and further information, visit our [Coronavirus hub](#).