





Working from Home Best Practice Guidelines

This Best Practice document has been compiled to assist members putting in place a working from home model in this unprecedented time. It provides guidance on how best to support employees, communicate with customers and maintain service delivery whilst working from home.

The Best Practices have been divided into 4 key areas:



-  **Communication** covering different communication types and tools
-  **Health and Wellbeing** including ergonomics and mental health
-  **Operations** which covers supporting the business and customers
-  **Performance Management** to support employees and quality of service

Communications

Frequent and clear communication is vital when employees are working from home. It enables the employer to set expectations, goals and deliverables and it allows the employee to feel connected to business objectives so that everyone is on the same page. It's easy to take normal communication for granted so you must be pro-active, so everyone feels part of the team/work. There are a variety of tools to help you communicate when working from home.





Tools

Usual communication tools work well, such as email and phone calls however you might consider:

-  **Instant Messenger Services**
These are excellent services to have quick conversations. Allowing you to chat directly, as part of a team, share files and host calls.
-  **Video Calls**
Are a great way to feel connected to your employees as you're able to observe body language and facial expressions which play an important role in communication styles.

Meetings

As meetings will need to change, there are a few different methods available:

-  **Frequent Personal 1:1s**
This enables the employer and employee to discuss performance and deliverables in a private and safe environment. When setting up 1:1s be sure to take employee preferences into consideration if possible, such as timing of calls.
-  **Team Huddles**
Can be held at the start (or end) of the day, a short check-in to welcome the team and can be a useful way to give quick updates or answer questions.
-  **Team Meetings**
Keep everyone in the loop and creates a sense of togetherness even when the team are not in the same place.
-  **Team Building/Activities**
A great way to engage team members and improve motivation. They can be in the form of team online quizzes, drawing contests etc.

General Advice

Don't be afraid to over communicate at the beginning but do be aware of team or employee needs. Some teams or individuals may require more, or less check-ins depending on their work and ability to work independently. However, also ensure you don't micromanage and check-in too frequently as you want employees to feel trusted.

Be sure to share how employees can reach you, this avoids confusion and miscommunication. Chit-chat is encouraged, not all communication should be business only. Lighter topics and small talk enables you and the employee(s) to maintain a relationship and retain office culture.

Health and Wellbeing

With employees working from home, employers should ensure the health and wellbeing of their employees is observed. Their working from home set up should be safe and suitable for working from home and in accordance with health & safety legislation. Employees working from home should adhere to all company guidelines, policies & procedures as they would if working on site.

Ergonomics

As defined by the HSE, "ergonomics is the relationship between the worker and the job and focuses on the design of work areas or work tasks to improve job performance. The goal of ergonomics is to provide maximum productivity with minimal physiological or health cost to the worker" [Ergonomics Fast Facts](#).

WHAT IS ERGONOMICS?

Ergonomics is the relationship between the worker and the job and focuses on the design of work areas or work tasks to improve job performance. The goal of ergonomics is to provide maximum productivity with minimal physiological or health cost to the worker. A number of factors play a role in ergonomics; these include **body posture and movement (sitting, standing, lifting, pulling and pushing)**, and **environmental factors (noise, lighting, temperature and humidity)** (Dul et al 1993).

Although many employees relate ergonomics to Display Screen Equipment (DSE) /computer use, it is relevant to all workplaces and work tasks e.g. Manual Handling of objects and people, environmental factors, work stations for both DSE work and non DSE work.

You should ensure that your employees are following HSE guidelines to ensure best practices are being maintained in working from home set ups. The following guide from the HSE provides [ergonomic tips to improve workspace](#).

Encourage your employees to take regular breaks from their computer/workstation.



Image: HSE

Mental Health

Working from home, in our current situation can add additional stresses and worries upon employees such as lack of childcare, caring for an elderly relative or financial worry. Therefore, it is important to remind employees of resources available to them such as private health insurance or the [HSE website](#) or helplines.

Where possible, hold regular 1:1 check-in calls with employees to enable the employee to discuss concerns. Open & frequent communication will help to maintain moral and keep managers/management up to date with employee concerns.

Also, ensure employees are taking adequate breaks and vacation time as required.

Operations

It is possible that operations will be severely impacted by the transition to work from home. It is important to assess your capability quickly and determine how much of your service is viable. Setting temporary changes in order to allow time for more sustainable solutions should be the first focus. Consider the following points:

Customers

- 🌐 Communicate often and set clear expectations on service offerings
- 🌐 Set timelines, where possible, for a resumption of paused services
- 🌐 Use various methods of communication to ensure saturation of your message e.g. e-mail, social media, support portals or websites
- 🌐 Review SLA's and start discussions on what is realistically achievable

Contact Channels

- 🌐 Review all available contact channels in conjunction with your available resources
- 🌐 Identify your critical issues and choose your channels appropriately
- 🌐 Refine your service offerings to suit your current capability
- 🌐 Utilize the opportunity to test new service offerings

Resources

- 🌐 Focus your resources into specific channels to maximize throughput
- 🌐 Audit employees home setups to understand each person's ability to provide support
- 🌐 Refine scheduling for individuals to help sustain productivity

Employees

- 🌐 Look for opportunities to allow flexible working time
- 🌐 Encouraging work life balance is important to help performance
- 🌐 Gather feedback on challenges faced in the home working environment

Performance Management

Continuing performance management during the home working period may be challenging but it is necessary to ensure continued high-quality service and to enable a smoother transition back to the workplace. It should be expected that performance will decrease for some employees. Consider the following points:

- 🌐 Review expectations for employees and determine if adjustments are required
- 🌐 Inform employees of expectations for the home working period
- 🌐 Focus on regular check-ins, continued coaching and on-going feedback
- 🌐 Tailor performance management to the individuals taking into consideration their current work environment
- 🌐 Equip managers to tackle challenging conversations with strong guidance and process