

HOME WORKING POLICY

Policy

Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council recognises the advantages of home-based working.

This policy describes the working arrangements and expectations that will apply if you work from home.

Scope of this policy

It applies to all staff who are home-based whether full time, part time or fixed term.

Safe working environment

Health and safety for home-based staff applies in the same way as office-based staff, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that you work in a safe manner and that you follow all health and safety instructions issued by us.

If you identify any potential risks when working from home, you should refer these to the Lead Councillor for Staffing in the first instance.

Some of the most important considerations include: -

- If possible, an area should be set aside from the rest of your living space to ensure that you are able to work from home without distractions,
- Your home office should have adequate space for you to work safely and comfortably,
- Your desk should be large enough to accommodate your equipment and paperwork,
- You should have sufficient storage, and your workspace should be organised, so equipment is close to hand,
- Your work area should be well lit, with natural lighting, if possible,
- Equipment and sockets should be situated to avoid potential trip hazards, and,
- You must also ensure that you visually check the cables of any electronic equipment supplied to you regularly (and at least every 6 months) and report any defects.

Facilities and equipment

The council will provide you with the following equipment for you to work from home and we will maintain and replace these items when necessary.

- Filing cabinet (which will be lockable for those staff who hold personal data)
- Laptop computer, mouse and keyboard
- 27" monitor

It is your duty to ensure that proper care is taken of the equipment provided to you and to let the lead councillor for staffing know of any need to maintain or replace the equipment. Should you identify any further equipment that is necessary, please discuss this with the lead councillor for staffing.

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All equipment provided by the council is for you to work safely and effectively at home and cannot be used for personal use by you or your family.

All equipment will belong to the council, and you will be required to return it to us promptly should you leave our employment. If we are unable to make suitable arrangements, we may collect the equipment and any documents before your last day.

Hours of work

As a home-based worker, your contract of employment will specify the number of hours you are to be at work and contactable by telephone or email. These hours are to be managed flexibly as required to meet the responsibilities of the post.

You must be mindful to take adequate rest breaks which should be, as a minimum:

- A break of at least 20 minutes during each working day over 6 hours,
- A daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, i.e. the time between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day, and,
- At least one complete day each week when no work is done.

Potential conflicts of interest

During your hours of work, the council expects that your work environment enables you to work effectively and that you are not distracted by domestic matters. It is not appropriate to combine homeworking with caring for a dependant.

Data protection

As a home-worker you are responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with the council, secure. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to:

- Keep filing cabinets and drawers locked when they are not being used,
- Keep all documentation that belongs to us in the locked filing cabinet always except when in use,
- Set up and use a unique password for the laptop computer, and,
- Ensure that documents are saved to the server rather than the laptop computer's hard drive.

Furthermore, the laptop computer and other equipment provided by us must be used only for work-related purposes and must not be used by any other member of the family at any time or for any purpose. This protects our data and yours.

If you have a telephone conversation where you are discussing confidential work matters, you should ensure that such calls take place in privacy to avoid inadvertent breach of confidentiality.

Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements

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Whilst our Employer's Liability Insurance extends to home based staff, and any council equipment installed in your home will also be covered, you should ensure that any agreement with your landlord or mortgage lender allows you to work from home, and that your house buildings and contents insurance will not be invalidated by you working from home.

As per your contract of employment, you will be required to provide evidence that you have the correct insurance cover to work from home (see clause 11.2).

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

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Notes

The Good Councillor's guide to being a good employer provides advice and guidance around how to manage a homeworker.

Guidance

Where there is text in [square brackets] this part may be updated or be deleted if not relevant. An alternative option may have been provided.

Important notice

This is an example of an employment policy designed for a small council adhering to statutory minimum requirements and does not constitute legal advice. As with all policies it should be consistent with your terms and conditions of employment.

This document was commissioned by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for the purpose of its member councils and county associations. Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this document are correct at time of publication. NALC cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions and changes to information subsequent to publication.

This document has been written by Worknest HR – a company that provides HR advice and guidance to town and parish councils. Please contact them on 01403 240 205 for information about their services.