



## H & F Mencap

# Working From Home Policy

### Policy statement

HF Mencap is committed to promoting flexible working in order to facilitate effective and efficient working. This policy outlines the circumstances under which the HF Mencap will allow employees to work from home. It also details the actions required to facilitate a home working arrangement. This policy applies to office based employees and does not apply to support workers. The intention of this policy is that it will ensure fair treatment and consistency of approach, which is understood by all managers and employees. It provides a standard framework for reporting, monitoring and managing home working in line with business and individual need. This document takes into account current employment legislation.

The flexibility and productivity outcomes available from working from home can be attractive to both HF Mencap and employees. The arrangements are based on a management philosophy of trust and mutual benefit. The employee will retain a dedicated office workstation (or desk-sharing arrangement) at their normal place of work. A detailed assessment needs to be made, by both the employee and the HF Mencap, as to whether the individual will be a suitable home worker and whether the role to be performed is appropriate. Work from home requests will be agreed at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer. Employees may be limited on how many hours they may do from home each week.

### 1. Aims

- To enable HF Mencap to maintain high quality services that are responsive to the needs of the individuals using our services.
- To offer employees a method of saving travel time and improve work-life balance, with the view of increasing staff motivation and job satisfaction.
- To increase productivity from employees due to fewer interruptions than an office environment, homeworkers can also be less affected by bad weather or travel disruptions.
- To maintain best practice by following up to date guidance and legislation.

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## 2. Definitions

1. **What is home working?** Home working is about using the employee's home as a base for work instead of the employee coming into a workplace.

## 3. Scope

These guidelines can be applied in principle to all HF Mencap office employees, regardless of contract type or duration, (other than those employed on a casual basis), although it is recognised that because of the nature of some roles, homeworking is not practical for all.

**3.1** Certain roles have aspects for which working from home would appear to be well suited, and some examples as given below:

- report writing
- desk based research
- completion of notes or minutes
- administration
- workshop preparation
- jobs requiring high periods of concentration
- Relatively autonomous jobs

**3.2** Positions with the following requirements will not normally be considered for home working:

- direct client face to face contact on a frequent basis
- being a member of a team who needs to have frequent face to face contact with other team members
- a high level of supervision or line management responsibility

## 4.1 Employee Characteristics

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Having established the suitability of the job for home working the suitability of the employee needs to be considered. Home working does not suit everyone. Office dynamics and informal information flows may have a significant impact on the employee's performance. Some employees may develop better in a traditional office environment, and those without very much experience in their role are likely to need closer supervision which would not be possible if they were working from home. Individuals may also have a distorted view of home working – often “rose coloured” – with little recognition or understanding of the potential drawbacks, and it is important that both the advantages and the disadvantages are considered. A trial period may be appropriate in order to gauge suitability before any longer term arrangements are put in place. Helpful personal qualities are likely to include:

- Self-motivated
- Self-disciplined
- Enjoy the challenge of working on their own
- A flexible approach
- Able to organise working time effectively
- Able to work without direct supervision
- Confident to work away from the office environment
- Able to work on their own without day to day social interaction with colleagues
- Able to travel to meetings and site visits
- Able to “switch off” from work and maintain a proper balance between working and non-working hours

## **5. Requests to Work from Home**

**5.1** An employee should approach their line manager with a request for home working, and a rationale for why this request is being made (for example to enable them to complete a report).

Normally this rationale will outline the benefits of working from home and the expected outcomes.

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**5.2** If the request is supported then this will apply on an adhoc basis as and when required and as agreed between the employee and the manager.

**5.3** This guidance should ensure an appropriate and equitable response to employee requests for home working, with decisions taken and communicated in an efficient and fair manner. It is granted at the HF Mencap's discretion and requires the approval of the appropriate line manager following discussion with the employee.

**5.4** A manager may refuse a request to work from home, but should aim to be as flexible as possible in accommodating such a request.

## **6. Health and safety considerations**

**6.1** Most of the work that staff would undertake at home is paper-based work or work on a computer, and as such should not introduce health and safety risks not already present in the home environment.

**6.2** The home worker should refer to guidance on <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/> regarding the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and the principles for setting up an appropriate workstation at home.

**6.3** The home worker should refer to the safety guidance note regarding lone working as well as the "Working Alone" leaflet available at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

## **7. Equipment and technology**

**7.1** As the HF Mencap office remains a work base for the employee and a desk and equipment is provided on site, the organisation will not normally provide the employee with additional IT equipment, phone, broadband connection or furniture to work from home.

**7.2** The employee is responsible for ensuring that they have suitable telephone and broadband services where required, and for contacting the service provider in the event of any technical issues.

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**7.3** Employees who are using HF Mencap supplied and supported equipment can receive telephone support from IT Services (Riven).

**7.4** All employees are required to use their own and supplied equipment correctly and to take reasonable steps to maintain any equipment provided, removing defective equipment from use and reporting defects on supplied equipment to their line manager. HF Mencap equipment may not be used by others i.e. family and friends etc.

## **8. Security of information / data protection**

**8.1** Appropriate security must be obtained for all HF Mencap information stored on a computer (including back-up arrangements) and there must be secure storage for any confidential information. Employees are responsible for ensuring the security of HF Mencap property and all related information, files, documents, data etc. within their possession, including both paper and electronic material.

**8.2** In most cases it will not be necessary for employees to transfer private or confidential information from HF Mencap to home as these files should be stored and accessed by the remote working software. This avoids the need to store any data on the local computer. The computer must also be password-protected.

**8.3** All home workers are required to adhere to the Data Protection Policy whilst undertaking work related business.

## **9. Insurance**

**9.1** The employee must understand that it is their responsibility to assess the implications for them of home working, for example with respect to taxation, insurance, mortgage, rental or leasing arrangements. Homeworking will be agreed on the basis that the employee has addressed any potential issues.

**9.2** HF Mencap equipment would be covered by the HF Mencap's own insurance.

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**9.3** The HF Mencap liability insurances that provide cover for the legal liabilities of HF Mencap and its employees whenever they are engaged in HF Mencap business. This cover applies irrespective of where the activity is taking place.

## **10. Costs/expenses**

**10.1** No contribution will be made by HF Mencap towards normal household expenses attached to home working, such as heating, lighting or council tax costs.

**10.2** When an employee is working at or from home, journeys made to the normal office base will not be reimbursed as normal home to work rules apply.

## **11. Communication**

**11.1** Good communication is an essential part of any successful home working arrangement. Provision must be made to allow effective communication with work colleagues and external clients during the working day (where appropriate).

**11.2** Employees must be contactable throughout normal working hours by the line manager and other HF Mencap employees. The arrangements for contact should be agreed prior to working from home. The employee's home phone number and home address may not be divulged without their express permission.

**11.3** Under no circumstances are arrangements to be made for clients to meet with the employee at their home. All such meetings should be carried out at the HF Mencap office building or a similar professional setting in order to maintain the necessary level of professionalism and safety. Certain employees may be required to attend client homes (depending on individual role) such as client referral assessment or advocacy meeting. Such staff must follow the lone working policy.

**11.3** All staff working from home should send a report to their line manager at the end of the working day feeding back on what they have achieved **within that day**. This report will be stored within their staff file and monitored to ensure performance productivity.

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## **12. Responsibilities**

### **12.1 Line manager responsibilities:**

- To consider requests for home working and how this can benefit HF Mencap, the individual and the environment and be flexible in their approach.
- To notify employees of relevant arrangements, and to provide the employee with a copy of this home working guidance.
- To ensure that the employee is aware of expectations and the required standard of work.
- To provide feedback and to discuss and evaluate the arrangement.

### **12.2 Employee responsibilities:**

- To abide by the requirements of this document.
- To give details of a mobile and/or home telephone number and to facilitate communication with the HF Mencap as appropriate. To deliver the expected work outcomes.
- Understand and consider all the information within these guidelines, in particular their own responsibilities regarding health and safety, data security and confidentiality.

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