

## HOME WORKING POLICY

Version Number	4
Date Revision Complete	January 2018
Policy Owner	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Author	HR Officer
Reason for Revision	The policy required updating in line with the requirement for it to be reviewed on a 3-yearly basis
Data Protection	Areas of low level risk identified and addressed
Proof Read	SMT, EMT, Human Resources Team
Date Approved	January 2018
Approved by	EMT
Next Review Due	January 2021

Audience – Training and Awareness Method	Briefing note produced for Managers
Effective Date	February 2018

Internal References	Absence Management Policy Blackwood's Safety Management System. – Risk Assessment. Disciplinary Policy Equalities and Diversity Policy Flexible Working Policy Grievance & Disputes Resolution Policy & Procedure Email and Internet Usage Policy
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External References	ACAS Guide to Flexible Working (2007) ACAS Homeworking – a guide for employers and employees (2014)
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Comments	
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## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

Blackwood recognises that many of the duties and responsibilities undertaken by employees on its behalf do not have to be performed exclusively on Blackwood premises. Increasing technology solutions, advances in mobile and agile working patterns, difficulties facing commuters and individual requirements to balance work and domestic responsibilities effectively are factors which make periods of working at home a sensible option for both Blackwood's customers and employees.

These factors, together with an increasing demand for family friendly policies to improve recruitment and retention and improve work-life balance, has encouraged Blackwood to develop this Policy to facilitate working from home whilst ensuring that its interests, those of employees and customers are properly managed. Irregular and ad-hoc home working may also benefit employees.

## **2. SCOPE**

Blackwood's Home Working Policy extends to all employees of Blackwood and its subsidiary companies including the Directors and Chief Executive.

Blackwood promotes Home Working as part of its wider support for increasing the number of disabled people we employ and recognises the benefit this policy would bring for disabled employees.

The Policy should be cross referenced to the Email and Internet Usage Policy, which can be found on The Loop and provides more detail to IT considerations which should be followed before any agreement for Home Working is confirmed.

## **3. POLICY PRINCIPLES**

Blackwood's Home Working Policy will:

- I. Be clear and easily understood by all employees
- II. Be fair and equitable and non-discriminatory
- III. Reflect the needs of our diverse organisation, in line with the Equalities and Diversity Policy
- IV. Reflect statutory requirements and best practice
- V. Be flexible and adaptable to changing needs

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

- I. To support home working as an option for flexible working in line with our Flexible Working Policy.
- II. To support employees seeking a work/life balance through flexible working.
- III. To establish a consistent approach to the management of home working.
- IV. To maintain the safety and welfare of home working employees.

## 5. KEY OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 Introduction to Home Working Procedures

Whilst some tasks traditionally lend themselves to working at home quite easily, such as report writing, developments in technology such as increased use of laptops, home PCs, e-mail, mobile phones, Skype for Business and the internet have combined to extend the range of tasks which can now be done as efficiently at home as in the office and in some areas home working can boost productivity. The effective management of home working arrangements requires the commitment of both the ~~line~~ manager and the employee to the principles contained in these procedures.

### 5.2 Definition of Home working

For the purposes of this Home Working Policy, home working or remote working is defined as a flexible working arrangement which has been agreed between the employee and the manager and where an employee's home is their occasional or regular place of work for some of their working week.

Under this definition the "normal place of work" remains the relevant Blackwood location as specified in the employee's contract of employment. As such, there is no automatic right for any employee to work from home and home working will always be at the discretion of the manager having considered the business case and the benefits to both Blackwood and the employee.

### 5.3 Eligibility

To be eligible to request a regular home working arrangement, an employee must generally satisfy the following requirements:

- Completed their six-month probationary period and be confirmed in post
- Demonstrated an ability to work with minimal supervision
- Excellent performance and a track record of achieving deadlines and/or objectives

### 5.4 Factors which will be considered

5.4.1 **The Job** – not all jobs are suitable for home working. A high proportion of job roles require regular face-to-face supervision within Blackwood as well as team working. Jobs which include administrative tasks or are project based are more suitable, therefore, than those which are customer focussed.

5.4.2 **The Individual** – self-starters who can work on their own initiative and with minimal supervision are more likely to be effective home workers than those who require more support and guidance.

5.4.3 **The Business Case** – the employee must be able to demonstrate the benefit to both Blackwood and the manager of home working including taking into account any additional costs that may have to be incurred (e.g. IT requirements). An assessment of the impact on the rest of team and service delivery must also be considered. Where it is anticipated that home working will have a negative effect on the team or the service, then the request is likely to be refused.

## **5.5 Ad hoc or Irregular Home Working**

Employees who wish to work at home from time-to-time and where no regular pattern has been agreed or is necessary should obtain their manager's agreement having given at least 24 hours' notice of the event. In these circumstances, an employee need not formally "apply" in terms of this Policy to work from home. If, however, a regular pattern of home working emerges then the manager and employee will meet to review the arrangements in terms of complying with this policy.

## **5.6 Regular Home Working**

Where an employee would like to request regular home working (e.g.; for part of their working week) or home working for a defined period, they should meet with their manager to present their proposal including the Business Case for such an arrangement. The manager will consider the request, taking the provisions of this Policy into account and guidance from HR, and respond to the employee within 10 working days. Any agreement will be recorded in writing and a copy held on the employees file.

If required, the employee may appeal the manager's decision by following the procedures contained within the Grievance and Disputes Resolution Policy & Procedure.

## **5.7 Agreement to Home Working**

Where a request for home working is approved, the following must be agreed and recorded before any home working takes place:

### **5.7.1 Period of Home Working**

The number of hours per day and days per week must be determined to allow specific and measurable tasks to be completed and these hours must not exceed the requirements of the Working Time Regulations. Guidance can be obtained from the HR Team. A home worker will maintain a record of hours worked at home recording hours in the usual format on their standard Flexi Sheet.

### **5.7.2 Trial Period**

All Home Working Agreements (except ad hoc arrangements) will be subject to a trial period of three months to review the effectiveness of the new arrangements. The review of arrangements should include the impact on team members and service delivery as well as the quality of performance being measured. Following the end of a successful trial period, the Home Working Agreement will be confirmed and reviewed on an annual basis thereafter.

### **5.7.3 Communication and Contact**

Managers and employees must be able to easily contact the employee by telephone during the agreed period of home working. Home working employees should let their manager know in advance of any time they will not be available. The employee will continue to attend and contribute to Team Briefings and Meetings through Skype for Business.

#### **5.7.4 Absence Reporting**

Blackwood's Absence Management Policy will continue to apply to those working from home. It is usually unacceptable for an employee who is absent through sickness to instead use "working from home", however there may be exceptions and each case should be judged on its own merits. E.g. An employee who has a broken toe and who is unable to drive may be allowed to work from home or may be given a Fit Note from their GP to permit home working.

#### **5.7.5 Contract of Employment**

The employee's contract of employment will continue during the Home Working Agreement with no permanent change to the contract unless varied under the Flexible Working Policy. Individuals' employment contracts may need to be amended by agreement to reflect homeworking. Homeworkers must be treated the same as office-based staff with equal access to development opportunities.

#### **5.8 Health & Safety**

Home workers continue to be covered by Blackwood's Health and Safety Policy and managers must ensure that these rights are properly protected. This may include visiting the employee at home to ensure the environment is suitable for home working. Failure to address environmental or Health and Safety concerns may render the employee and Blackwood liable to prosecution. Equally, the home working employee must accept that they have a responsibility for their own health, safety and welfare whilst doing so, including the reporting of any work-related incident/accident to their line manager and that this is recorded according to Blackwood's Safety Management System.

The manager will request a risk assessment is carried out to determine whether the employee's home is suitable for the work to be undertaken using Blackwood's standard risk assessment. In addition, the Health and Safety Advisor should instruct the Home Worker to carry out a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessment. Any recommendations contained within the risk assessment report should be in place before home working can be agreed.

Home working employees should not release their home address and telephone number to customers or arrange meetings with them at their home. Home working employees should use their company mobile phone in the first instance, and where it is necessary to use a home telephone for business calls the 141 system should be activated to "with-hold" their number before dialling.

#### **5.9 ICT Considerations**

The Business Solutions Team will be consulted regarding the work to be undertaken and any subsequent risk to Blackwood's systems and data. Where appropriate and supported by the Business Case for Home Working, a member of the Business Solutions team may provide equipment, advice to the employee on the use of Blackwood equipment (e.g. laptop or upgrades to a home PC) and will determine whether remote access to Blackwood's systems is possible including any related costs. The employee must make any Blackwood equipment available for a Portable Appliance Test upon request.

Equipment will not normally be provided to those employees who retain a workstation in Blackwood's offices and who work from home on an ad hoc or irregular basis. The loan of equipment may be possible from time-to-time.

Detailed guidance for Managers and Home Workers is contained in the Email and Internet Usage Policy.

#### 5.10 **Insurance**

Regular home working employees are advised to inform their Insurers as regular working from home may affect their insurance provision and cover.

#### 5.11 **Managers' Responsibilities**

The manager's responsibilities will include:

- Ensuring the Risk Assessment is completed
- Maintaining regular contact with home workers to prevent isolation
- Agreeing defined work tasks to be carried out
- Establishing performance measures including face-to-face supervision to assess progress
- Agreeing individual working arrangements
- Arranging regular team meetings to include home workers
- Respecting the Home Working Agreement
- Identifying any homeworking related training needs so all parties can conduct job roles effectively

#### 5.12 **Homeworker's Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the homeworker will include:

- Agreeing working arrangements with their manager
- Agreeing work/projects to be completed
- Being available and contactable at the times agreed with the manager
- Being responsible for their own health and safety at home
- Attending the office when required

#### 5.13 **Care for dependants**

It is not appropriate to combine home working with dependant care, such as young children or elderly relatives and as such any agreement to home working must not be viewed as an alternative to paid dependant care.

Employees with dependants may wish to apply to work flexibly under Blackwood's Flexible Working Policy.

#### 5.14 Expenses

Home working employees may continue to claim approved expenses. Business travel carried out during home working will be calculated from home to the place of business only on days which are specified as home working; otherwise they should deduct their usual travel costs to the workplace. Employees may not claim for travel costs to and from their normal place of work. This includes occasions when an employee may be asked by their ~~line~~ manager to attend their usual work place on a day that would normally be designated for home working.

#### 5.15 Other Costs

Blackwood will not reimburse the cost of any additional heating, lighting, telephone charges, insurance premium or any other costs incurred because of home working.

Where telephone calls are required to be made and/or received, a Blackwood mobile phone should be used.

#### 5.16 Flexible Working Policy

Employees requesting home working because of the needs of dependants may consider making an application under the right to request flexible working, although the provisions of this Policy will continue to apply should a request under the Flexible Working Policy be granted. Any change to a working pattern under these circumstances will result in a permanent change to the employee's contract.

#### 5.17 Termination of Home Working Agreement

Blackwood or the employee, on receipt of at least one month's written notice, can terminate the agreement to home working.

Following consultation with the employee, Blackwood reserves the right to terminate a home working agreement where there is a change to the service delivery or the arrangement no longer meets the needs of the department/service.

The employee may also request a change to the home working agreement should their circumstances change and/or home working is no longer suitable.

Should the home working arrangement prove to be unsatisfactory or the employee is found to be abusing the agreement (e.g. submitting false time records, caring for dependants during working time) then the home working agreement will be terminated. An abuse of the home working agreement may be dealt with under Blackwood's Disciplinary Policy.

#### 5.18 Equality and Diversity

Blackwood will not discriminate in the operation of this policy on the basis of age, gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, marital status, family circumstances, political orientation, sexual orientation, medical condition or disability. Blackwood aims to promote equality of opportunity for all and complies with the current legal requirements in relation to equality and diversity issues.

### 5.19 **Monitoring and Reporting**

The Human Resources Team will:

- I. Carry out regular checks to ensure that all employees of Blackwood are complying with the principles, objectives and the minimum standards of this Policy.
- II. Review on an annual basis on the effectiveness of the policy including an analysis of those employees who have requested home working under the terms of this Policy.

### 5.20 **Appeals**

Employees have the right to appeal against any decisions made on matters covered by this Policy according to Blackwood's Grievance Procedure.