



Bridgewater Housing Association Policy

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Links to other documents	Appendices 1. Information Security Incident and Personal Data Breach Management Procedure 2. Data Subject Rights Procedure 3. EVH Terms and Conditions 4. Flexible Working Policy 5. 5. Authorised Vehicle Users Policy
Consultation	This policy was issued to all staff for comment.
Appendices	Appendix 1: Health & Safety Checklist Appendix 2: EVH Note on Remote Working

1. INTRODUCTION

Remote working is where an employee works away from their employer's location for all or part of their working week on a permanent, hybrid, or ad hoc basis. The practice has been around for a long time but has become increasingly popular to promote flexibility within the workplace, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21 resulted in a significant increase in this practice.

Remote working can be:

- an original contractual arrangement from when the employee commenced employment,
- requested by an employee as part of a flexible working statutory entitlement,
- a reasonable adjustment,
- a change in organisational culture to provide employees with choice and utilise the benefits of remote working,
- implemented by Bridgewater Housing Association following the necessary consultation and contractual change processes.

There are two types of remote working:

- **Occasional/Hybrid:** employees have a contractual work base (i.e. office location), but work remotely on an ad hoc basis, through informal arrangements with their team and line manager with a hybrid approach, employees can arrange a rota within their team to allow them to carry out their role from home. As long as the member of staff is in the office for 60% of the time.
- **Contractual:** employees work off-site as defined in their contract of employment for a specified period of their working week.

2. SHR STANDARDS OF GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This policy is intended to provide additional assurance to the Board of Bridgewater Housing Association that it is complying with:

Standard 3

The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.

Standard 4

The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

Standard 5

The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

Standard 7

The RSL ensures that any organisational changes or disposals it makes safeguard the interests of, and benefit, current and future tenants.

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

This Policy aims to:

- Benefit the business from creative solutions, ideas, and projects by allowing staff to do these remotely, without interruptions.

- Ensure our high level of service is maintained at all times, meeting demands of our service requirements.
- Promote our culture of inclusion.
- complement our health and wellbeing strategy.
- Support and embed our commitment to environmental sustainability practices.
- Set out the parameters to ensure the above conditions are met.

4. OCCASIONAL REMOTE WORKING

For occasional remote working, an employee works their contracted hours from the location specified in their contract of employment. However, on occasion, it may be more effective if an employee has an ad hoc day working remotely. This can be effective when managing certain situations such as:

- Disruptions to dependants' care arrangements (temporary short term arrangement),
- Project work,
- Adverse weather,
- Commuting disruptions,
- An injury or sickness where the employee is fit to work but is unable to commute to their contractual work location.

In all the above situations, work will be carried out effectively and efficiently with the appropriate resources, including an electronic device, e.g. laptop or tablet with sufficient broadband speed and a functioning phone.

All situations for occasional remote working will be discussed individually with the employee's line manager, and they will consider the request balancing employee and business pressures and provide a decision. Where it is for dependent care, this would be seen as a short-term arrangement.

5. COSTS/ALLOWANCES

Employees who occasionally work remotely will not have expenses approved for items such as paper/ink/subsistence/internet service/wear and tear on equipment. Laptop equipment is available from the Association's pool, and we encourage no printing. A work mobile phone can be provided. Also, the saving in time and money getting to/from work is a reasonable notional offset to any minimal personal cost of occasionally working remotely.

6. HYBRID WORKING

As part of the legacy of the pandemic in 2020/2021, Bridgewater HA recognises that some roles can be carried out from the home. This is offset by the need to continue to offer excellent customer, front-facing services, and promotion of a good culture within the staff team. Hybrid working offers both, by allowing staff to agree rotas within their teams, allowing them to work up to 40% of their time from the house. These are not contractual arrangements, and the staff member will be asked to cover holidays and sickness by coming back into the office at any time and at short notice or be asked to come into the office at short notice to assist with tasks as required by their line manager.

Some teams may put an embargo on Hybrid working for all or some of their staff to ensure that the functions in the team are working smoothly. This is fluid and can change as the needs of the team change.

7. CONTRACTUAL REMOTE WORKING

Contractual remote working can occur via the following: -

- Making a Flexible Working Request: An employee with the required continuous service can request remote working via their statutory entitlement.
- Organisational Culture and Practice: Bridgewater hopes to promote regular remote working for all where it is practical, meets the needs of the Association and individual employees.

8. FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUEST

Employees wishing to request remote working as a contractual arrangement can discuss the request with their line manager and follow up with a formal request in writing following the Association's Flexible Working Policy. The process outlined in the policy will be followed.

Any decision to accept or reject the application will be based on the Association's business needs and requirements at the time of the request and, in line with the Association's Flexible Working Policy. Any change to the employee's working arrangement would be regarded as a permanent contractual change and therefore, must be confirmed in writing. Due to the change being permanent, a 3-6 month (depending on the nature of the role) trial period will normally take place first before any permanent change takes effect.

9. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The Association wishes to embrace the significant benefits remote working can bring such as:

- the efficiency of performance,
- health and wellbeing of employees and,
- the positive environmental impact through reduced commuting

Bridgewater Housing Association supports a culture of remote working as a permanent contractual arrangement as long as business and service delivery needs are met and enhanced. The Association trusts its employees to fulfil their contractual obligations concerning their job role. Whether an employee is working remotely or, at the Association's location(s), the expectation on performance standards remains the same.

The Association believes a model of blended working can be best. This means a mixture of remote and onsite working, which brings the most benefits for both business and employees. It allows for continuing face-to-face social interaction, collaboration, along with enjoying the benefits of remote working. Staff can use the Hybrid Scheme (where available) for up to 40% of their working week.

Bridgewater Housing Association appreciates that not all employees would like to work remotely, some employees may prefer to attend the office for their working week. Any employee who wishes to continue to come to their normal work location can continue to do so.

Section managers will discuss with employees how remote working arrangements will work within teams and sections, including any rota for office cover and existing working patterns.

Any permanent changes to a work location is a contractual change of employment and agreement will always be sought in the first instance.

10. CONTRACTUAL CHANGES

If contractual remote working has been agreed, the Association will write to the employee to confirm the change and any associated terms with the change. This will require Health & Safety risk assessments on the DSE Workstation at home, as well as a review period being established.

11. COSTS/ALLOWANCES

There may be expenses that can be claimed directly by employees from HMRC. Please refer to HMRC website for the most up-to-date information.

12. TRAVEL EXPENSES

Work-related travel expenses will be paid at the rate stated in your terms and conditions of employment, and as specified in the Association's Authorised Vehicle Users Policy.

13. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Bridgewater Housing Association promotes a culture of trust and respect for all. Performance Management will be carried out in the same way as if employees were in the office. As in the office, if the quality or volume of work while working remotely is not at the required standard, this will be addressed via the Association's performance management process initially on an informal basis. Matters will be managed confidentially with individual employees.

14. HEALTH & SAFETY

A health and safety assessment will be carried out according to the Association's health and safety checklist (Appendix 1), which covers VDU risks and general precautions for householder electrical safety. Domestic electrical supply configurations are outwith the control of the employer and are the responsibility of the staff member. Employees will perform their assessment, and their line manager will then validate results during a discussion or remote visit. The employees will be expected to report any changes that may affect the arrangements in the future (in which case another assessment may be necessary).

15. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The Association's IT infrastructure is capable of supporting remote working and gives employees remote access to calendars, phones, mail, and documents. To take advantage of home working, employees are required to have their broadband at sufficient speed in place. Bridgewater Housing Association will provide the appropriate equipment and/or software to allow people to work remotely. Where staff are provided with a laptop computer to access the Association's infrastructure remotely they are encouraged to take this equipment home on a daily basis to assist with Business Continuity issues and accommodate unexpected periods of injury or sickness where home working may be appropriate.

16. DATA PROTECTION

Staff must keep to the same high standards of data security that would be expected of them in the office.

17. BREACH OF POLICY

Any breaches of this policy may be dealt with in accordance with Bridgewater Housing Association's disciplinary procedures.

18. POLICY AVAILABILITY

This document can also be provided in large print, braille, audio or other non-written format and in a variety of languages, on request.

19. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, operational requirements or staff feedback.

Appendix 1

Bridgewater Housing Association's health & safety checklist for employees working remotely.

This list is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with section 3.20 of the Health and Safety Manual.

Electrical Equipment

The safety and maintenance of the domestic electrical supply/installation is the responsibility of the householder. The Association will only take maintenance responsibility for any equipment it directly supplies.

Householder checklist:

- Do you have sufficient space to work?
- Ensure electrical equipment is turned off when not in use and before performing any checks
- Check plugs are not damaged
- Check domestic electrical supply is suitable for the equipment in use
- Check plugs are correctly wired and that the outer cable covering is gripped at the point it enters the plug or equipment.
- Check outer covers of equipment are sound and have no loose parts or missing screws
- Check all leads and cables routinely against damage to the outer covers
- Check for burn marks or other signs of overheating
- Repair any electrical equipment with the potential to harm
- Check and secure all trailing wires – the best way is to use power outlets nearest to the equipment. Where this is not possible, tuck trailing wires securely under desks etc. and out of typical walkways
- Do not have young children unsupervised in any area where you are using electrical equipment
- Do you have a clear escape route in the event of a fire?
- Please confirm that you do not undertake any tasks that would, for safety, require more than one person present. Please confirm that there are no health reasons against you working alone. If the work is not at your home

Working with VDU's

The Association's self-assessment tool will be used to ensure workstations are set up appropriately and will be the responsibility of the employee to maintain the correct setup once this has been completed.

Appendix 2

EVH – Remote Working (Information Note)

Issued: September 2020

Introduction

Many organisations moved to large-scale remote working overnight in March 2020 when COVID-19 lockdown restrictions came into force. This was originally intended to be on a temporary basis however, as the government begins to ease restrictions, many employers are actively considering whether a blended approach to office and remote working could become a more permanent feature.

Remote working is when an employee works away from the employer's location for all or part of their working week. Remote working can bring many benefits to both employers and employees, to realise these it is important that remote working is managed appropriately and consistently throughout the organisation. Remote working can either be occasional whereby employees work remotely on an ad hoc basis or have a contractual arrangement to work remotely on specified periods during the working week. This information note brings together key factors which employers should consider when moving towards more contractual remote working arrangements.

1) Contractual changes

If an employee's normal place of work is the office location, then a move to permanent remote working arrangements is a change to the terms and conditions of their employment. This applies whether the change is for some or all of their normal working hours. This change can occur either via a flexible working request or if an organisation decides to promote the opportunity to work remotely as part of its culture and practice. If an employee makes a flexible working request using their statutory right, this should be managed in line with the organisations flexible working policy.

Further information on changing terms and conditions of employment is available in our information note, available at the following link: <https://www.evh.org.uk/hr-support/terms-andconditions-of-employment>

If remote working is agreed by the employee, a contract variation letter should be issued stating the changes to the employee's normal place of work. This letter should also specify other relevant details such as which days the employee will work from home. A trial period may be beneficial before confirming permanent contractual changes. Details of any agreed trial periods should be included in the contract variation letter.

2) Should you provide equipment for an employee who is working remotely?

If remote working is a part of the employment contract an employer has a duty of care to ensure that the employee can work safely, which includes ensuring that they have the appropriate equipment to do so. If the employee does not have access to their own equipment this should be provided.

If the employer provides an employee with office and IT equipment, they should ensure the following steps are in place:

- The employee has been provided with sufficient information and training to allow them to use the equipment safely.
- The employer should confirm to the employee that the equipment provided is for business purposes only and that appropriate care should be taken of the equipment.
- The employee can confirm that they have broadband at sufficient speed in place to support remote working.
- Employers should ask the employees to sign an agreement that lists the equipment provided to them, the agreement will confirm that they will report any faults promptly and return it to the employer on termination of their contract.

3) Health and Safety

Employers have a duty of care regarding the health and safety of all employees while at work including those working remotely. It is the employee's responsibility to report employment related

hazards, but the employer is responsible for the equipment they supply and risk assessing the environment to ensure a safe place of work.

A risk assessment of the employee's work environment should be conducted and can be done by the employee, but they will need to be provided with appropriate training to do this.

The following areas should be covered:

- Is the work the employee is doing from home being done safely?
- Does the employee have an area where they can carry out work safely?
- Is the correct equipment in place to allow the employee to work safely?
- Are employees taking regular breaks including a lunch break away from their computer?
- Are managers maintaining regular contact to ensure employees do not feel isolated?
- Are reasonable adjustments being made for any employee who has a disability?
- Has an appropriate DSE risk assessment of the employee's workspace been carried out?
- Employees also have a responsibility for their own health and safety and or concerns. Employers should ensure employees are aware of the following:
 - Regular contact should be maintained with their line manager and colleagues.
 - Any health and safety risks or concerns are communicated to their line manager promptly.
 - Any remote working arrangements that need to be changed are discussed with their line manager.

In addition, HSE has guidance on working from home which is available on their website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>

4) Information Security and Data Protection

Employees who work remotely are likely to have access to a large amount of computer and paper-based confidential information through the course of their duties. There should be clear rules on the use of company computer systems including on personal devices, these should include storage of both electronic and hard copy data. This should be incorporated into the organisations Data Protection policy and employees should be provided with appropriate training on this.

The employer should ensure that employees are aware of their responsibilities including:

Ensuring that confidential information is always stored securely.
Reporting any concerns about the safety and security of confidential information to their line manager.
Ensure they are aware of the organisation's Data Protection policy and participate in any training on this.

Further information is available from the Information Commissioners Office at the link below: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/working-from-home/>

5) Communication

It is important that effective communication is in place for all employees, including those who are working remotely. Employers can enhance remote communications by making effective use of online meetings, emails and ensuring employee's calendars are up to date.

It is likely that most organisations will adopt a blended model which includes some remote working along with office-based working. It will be essential that effective communications are in place for remote workers who should be included in team meetings, staff training and events. If an event is scheduled for a day when a worker is due to work remotely it is reasonable for an employer to request that they attend the office on that day.

6) Expenses

Employers should set out in their remote working policy what expenses will be covered. This should be consistent with other policies which cover expenses.
Employees may be able to claim tax relief for some expenses from the HMRC.

Further information on claiming expenses for home working can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/taxrelief-for-employees/working-at-home>

7) Monitoring Performance

It is important that line managers communicate with employees who are working remotely about their workload and performance standards. Below are some suggestions for monitoring performance remotely:

- Set regular one to one meetings with employees
- Communicate with employees regularly about workload and performance
- Provide feedback on a regular basis
- Set clear expectations and goals then trust your employees to do their job

If performance issues are identified this should be managed confidentially and in line with the organisation's performance management processes.

If there are any monitoring facilities in place e.g. clocking in/out, employees should be informed of these, and these arrangements should be included in the organisations remote working policy.

8) Mental Health and Wellbeing

It is important that employers have measures in place to look after the mental health and wellbeing of employees including those working remotely. Employees working remotely can be affected in a variety of ways which could include:

- Employees can start to develop unhealthy habits in relation to diet, increased alcohol consumption and decreased exercise.
- Increased or decreased work demands could affect the employee's ability to cope or their motivation to carry out tasks.
- Employers should consider adopting some of these practical steps in order to manage the impact these things will have on the employee:
 - Demonstrate strong leadership from the top which should be done well and often.
 - Line managers should check in with their staff regularly to find out if they are ok.
 - Encourage employees to raise any concerns they have.
 - Promote employee counselling.
 - Promote any relevant information for staff in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

Review

The content of this note will be kept under review and updated in line with current guidance. Should you require any specific advice, please contact the HR team on 0141 352 7435 or by email to hr@evh.org.uk.

Sources of Information

- <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>
- <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/working-from-home/>
- www.mind.org.uk
- www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/7-simple-tips-to-tackle-working-from-home/>