



PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL WORKING FROM HOME POLICY

ADOPTED at the Ordinary Meeting on 28th May 2026

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1. Policy

Prudhoe Town Council is committed to supporting flexible working arrangements where these can facilitate effective, efficient, and productive working practices. This policy sets out the circumstances in which employees may be permitted to work from home and outlines the requirements and responsibilities associated with establishing a home working arrangement.

Home working refers to an arrangement whereby an employee uses their home as a base from which to carry out their work duties, either instead of, or in addition to, attending their normal workplace.

2. Defining Home Working

Flexible or hybrid home working refers to an arrangement where an employee divides their working time between their home and the Council workplace on an agreed basis. This arrangement is normally planned in advance and may involve full working days or part days worked from home.

There may also be occasions where the Council requires employees to work from home in order to meet operational requirements, respond to emergencies, or comply with legal obligations. Such arrangements do not constitute “flexible” home working under this policy.

Working from home can support more efficient and productive working by enabling duties to be carried out in a quieter environment with fewer interruptions. It may also provide a more effective use of time where employees who have been working away from their normal work base during the day are able to complete the remainder of their working hours from home rather than returning to the workplace.

Home working arrangements may also be appropriate where office facilities are shared, workspace is limited, or where employees experience regular interruptions that affect productivity. Agreements may be made for regular home working, temporary arrangements for a defined period, or occasional ad hoc home working where appropriate.

Managers and employees should, however, remain mindful of the potential impact of home working on team cohesion, communication, supervision, and employee wellbeing, including the risk of isolation from colleagues or Council activities.

Many roles may be suitable for home working arrangements. Positions that do not require a permanent presence at a specific location, direct operation of machinery, or ongoing face-to-face customer interaction may be adapted for home working. Roles involving project work, measurable outputs, community-based services, or independent working may also be particularly suitable.

When considering the suitability of home working arrangements, the Council will take into account factors including:-

- The impact on service delivery and operational effectiveness
- The relationship and interaction with other roles and colleagues
- Requirements for public accessibility and communication
- Access to information, systems, and technology
- Costs, efficiencies, and potential savings

The following job characteristics may particularly lend themselves to home working:-

- Clearly defined tasks and measurable outputs
- Discrete projects or specialist functions
- Roles requiring a high level of autonomy
- Roles involving frequent travel
- Duties requiring sustained periods of concentration

Due to the nature of certain duties and operational requirements, some roles within the Council may not be considered suitable for home working arrangements.

3. Benefits of Working from Home

Home working can provide a range of benefits for both the Council and its employees.

Benefits to the Council may include:-

- Supporting employees in achieving a healthy work-life balance
- Contributing to the reduction of the Council's carbon emissions through decreased commuting
- Assisting with the recruitment and retention of skilled and valued employees who prefer flexible working arrangements
- Promoting a motivated workforce by demonstrating organisational flexibility and trust
- Potentially improving productivity and quality of work through reduced workplace distractions
- Supporting disabled employees or those with temporary health conditions by providing greater flexibility in working arrangements
- Enhancing the Council's reputation as a positive and supportive employer
- Potentially reducing costs associated with travel and mileage allowances

Benefits to employees may include:-

- Greater flexibility in managing working and personal commitments
- Increased motivation and job satisfaction
- Reduced travel time and associated costs
- The opportunity to work in an environment with fewer distractions
- Improved work-life balance
- A positive contribution towards reducing environmental impact through less commuting
- Whilst home working offers many advantages, both the Council and the employee must carefully consider whether home working is appropriate for the individual and whether the duties of the role can be carried out effectively and safely from home.

4. Conditions

- Home working arrangements must be suitable and effective for both the Council and the employee.
- Requests for home working will normally only be considered once an employee has successfully completed their probationary period.
- Wherever reasonably practicable, requests for home working should be submitted at least two weeks before the proposed commencement date.
- The Council will generally support home working arrangements where operational requirements and service delivery can continue to be met effectively, and where the employee is able to fulfil all duties associated with their role from home.

- Employees must ensure that their home working environment is suitable for work purposes and provides an appropriate setting with minimal distractions during working hours.
- Where home working is requested by the employee, the employee will be responsible for ensuring that a safe and suitable workspace is available within the home, including the provision of appropriate office furniture and equipment unless otherwise agreed.
- Where home working is required by the Council, the Council will be responsible for providing the necessary office furniture and equipment required to undertake the role safely and effectively.
- Appropriate risk assessments of the home working environment must be completed in accordance with relevant health and safety legislation and Council procedures.
- Each request for home working will be considered on its individual merits, considering operational requirements, available resources, the impact on colleagues, and working relationships.
- Employees working from home must remain available and contactable during normal working hours and should respond to telephone calls and emails within the same working day where reasonably practicable. Employees are responsible for ensuring they can be contacted during working hours, including through a mobile telephone where an allowance is provided, as well as via email, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other approved communication systems.
- It is not normally considered necessary for employees working from home to maintain extensive supplies of stationery or office consumables. Large-scale printing, copying, or collation of documents should ordinarily be undertaken at Council premises.
- Regular communication, supervision, and team engagement are essential when working remotely in order to maintain effective working relationships and reduce the risk of professional isolation.
- Home working arrangements must not be used as a substitute for dependent or caring responsibilities.
- Home working agreements may be reviewed and amended where there is a change in circumstances relating to the employee, the operational requirements of the role, or the suitability of the working environment.

5. Responsibilities

Employer Responsibilities

Health and Safety

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Council's Health and Safety Policy, the Council will, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the health, safety, and welfare of employees working from home. The Council reserves the right to inspect home working environments, with reasonable notice, to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, risk assessments, and Council policies and procedures.

Hours of Work

Employees working from home are expected to maintain an appropriate work-life balance and take adequate rest breaks throughout the working day. Employees must avoid excessive working hours and maintain clear boundaries between work and personal time. As a minimum, employees should observe the following:

- A break of at least 20 minutes during any continuous six-hour working period
- A daily rest period of at least 11 consecutive hours between working days
- At least one full day each week during which no work is undertaken

Insurance

The Council accepts liability for accidents arising from the authorised use of Council-provided equipment, provided that such equipment has been used in accordance with any instructions or guidance issued.

Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality

The Council will ensure that employees are aware that personal information relating to colleagues working from home, including personal contact details, must not be disclosed to individuals outside the organisation without appropriate authority.

Employees working remotely must ensure that Council information remains secure at all times. This includes using secure internet connections rather than public Wi-Fi, storing documents securely, and ensuring that confidential information cannot be viewed by unauthorised persons.

Running Costs and Expenses

Where an employee elects to work from home voluntarily, the Council will not normally contribute towards household running costs, including heating, lighting, internet usage, or office furniture. The Council will provide essential equipment required to undertake Council duties from home.

Employee Responsibilities

Health and Safety

Employees are responsible for carrying out their work in a manner that safeguards their own health and safety, as well as that of members of their household and visitors to the property. Employees must also ensure that they take appropriate rest breaks and manage working hours responsibly.

Insurance

Employees must notify their home insurer of any home working arrangement and advise them of any Council-owned equipment kept or used at the property. Employees may also need to inform their mortgage provider, landlord, or property owner, depending on the terms of their agreement or tenancy.

Any personal equipment used for Council business must be operated safely and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The Council will reasonably assume that employees have complied with these requirements.

Accidents, Incidents and Dangerous Occurrences

Employees must report any accidents, incidents, or dangerous occurrences arising whilst working from home in accordance with the Council's Accident Reporting Procedure. Initial notification should be made to the relevant line manager by telephone as soon as practicable, with any required documentation completed subsequently.

Policies and Procedures

All work undertaken on behalf of the Council whilst working from home remains subject to the Council's policies, procedures, and professional standards.

Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality

Employees working from home must ensure that confidential information and Council documents are handled securely and in compliance with data protection legislation and the Council's relevant policies, including any media or communications policies.

Employees should use Council-issued devices, systems, and approved software wherever possible when undertaking Council business remotely. Secure internet connections must be used at all times, and employees should take appropriate precautions to protect confidential information from unauthorised access or visibility.

Remote Access

Employees may use Council-issued laptops and authorised accounts to access systems remotely and undertake their duties from home. Approved communication and collaboration platforms may include Microsoft Teams, Outlook, Word, Excel, and other Council-authorised systems. All relevant data protection, security, and confidentiality requirements must be adhered to at all times.

Council Tax

Where a room or area used for home working continues to be used for normal domestic purposes, there are unlikely to be any Council Tax implications. However, where part of a property is used exclusively for business purposes, employees should seek advice from the relevant Billing Authority regarding any potential implications.

Taxation

Employees who choose to work from home voluntarily are generally not entitled to claim tax relief in respect of household running costs associated with home working. Employees should seek independent advice from HM Revenue and Customs or a professional adviser regarding their individual circumstances.

Equipment

The equipment required for home working will depend upon the nature of the duties being undertaken and the outcome of the relevant risk assessment. The Council will normally provide essential equipment, which may include a laptop, monitor, keyboard, and mouse. Employees are responsible for taking reasonable care of Council-owned equipment. Where equipment is lost or damaged due to negligence or misuse and is not covered by insurance, the employee may be required to contribute towards the cost of replacement or repair.

6. Reviewing Home Working Arrangements

Home working arrangements will be reviewed annually, or earlier where there is a change in operational requirements, employee circumstances, or other relevant factors.

Employees should be aware that misuse or abuse of home working arrangements may result in disciplinary action being taken in accordance with the Council's procedures.

Line managers are responsible for monitoring and evaluating home working arrangements to ensure they remain effective for both the employee and the Council. This will include regular communication, periodic check-ins, and formal reviews where appropriate.

7. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

The Clerk will be responsible for reviewing this policy on an annual basis to ensure continued compliance with legal requirements and alignment with current best practice. Any proposed amendments to the policy will be submitted to the Council for consideration and approval.

Appendix 1 – Home Working Risk Assessment

To be reviewed annually or sooner where circumstances change.

1. General

- Has a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment been completed?

2. Chair

- Is the chair height adjustable?
- Is the backrest adjustable for both height and tilt?
- Does the chair have a stable five-point base?
- Is the chair suitable and comfortable for extended use?
- Is a footrest required?

3. Desk / Workstation

- Is the workspace large enough to accommodate all necessary equipment and allow tasks to be completed safely and comfortably?
- Is there sufficient legroom and clearance beneath the desk or work surface?
- Is there adequate space to access and move around the workstation safely?
- Where a document holder is used, is it positioned at an appropriate height and distance in relation to the monitor?
- Is a clear desk approach maintained to reduce clutter and hazards?

4. Keyboard

- Is there sufficient space in front of the keyboard to support comfortable hand and wrist positioning?
- Are all keys present and functioning correctly?

5. Mouse

- Is there adequate space beside the keyboard to use the mouse comfortably?
- Is the mouse positioned close enough to the keyboard to avoid overreaching or strain?
- Is a suitable mouse mat available where required?

6. Screen/Monitor

- Is the monitor positioned directly in front of the user?
- Is the monitor positioned at an appropriate height, with the top of the screen approximately at eye level?
- Can the screen be adjusted easily for tilt and swivel?
- Is the display image clear, stable, and easy to read?

7. Working Environment

- Are there any manual handling risks associated with working from home?
- Is the work area free from trip hazards, including trailing cables and leads?
- Does access to the workspace require the use of a loft ladder or other unsuitable access arrangements?

- Are there any difficulties in moving or carrying heavy or bulky items within the home?
- Is the lighting within the work area adequate?
- Can glare, reflections, or strong light sources be minimised or controlled?
- Are temperature and ventilation levels suitable and free from excessive draughts?
- Is the workspace reasonably free from excessive or distracting noise?
- Will home working involve significant telephone use?
- Will a mobile phone or landline be used for work purposes?
- Is there any visible damage to electrical plugs, sockets, cables, or leads?
- Is there any evidence of overheating of electrical equipment?
- Are combustible materials kept away from heat or electrical sources?
- Is a working smoke alarm fitted within the property?
- Does the employee understand the appropriate action to take in the event of a fire?

8. Information Technology (IT) Equipment

- Is there access to a suitable broadband internet connection?
- Is the Wi-Fi signal reliable, or is a direct cable connection to the router available where necessary?