

 Kingston GP Chambers Kingston Training Hub Clinical Services Practice Support Services Kingston Education Centre	Staff Home Working Policy		Reviewed	July 2022
			Revised	
	Adopted	October 2020	Next review	July 2024

Staff Home Working Policy

Introduction

Kingston GP Chambers (KGPC) is committed to adopting modern flexible working practices where appropriate to do so, and acknowledges the benefits of this to both the practice and to employees.

This policy outlines how requests for home working will be considered, how KGPC will manage the health and safety of employees whilst they are working from home, and ensure that employees are clear about their responsibilities.

The exceptions to this policy resulting from KGPC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic are detailed in the final section.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff. In order for the policy to be effective, it is essential that employees and those involved in the management of employees are aware of the policy and procedure and adhere to it.

Core principles

- Home working arrangements must be agreed in advance by an employee's line manager.
- Requests for home working will be considered in all cases; however, it is not an automatic right. There will be some circumstances where working from home is not a viable option or where operational needs necessitate a different approach. The decision to agree to home working will take into account the employee's role, along with team and business needs.
- Whilst home working, employees must take responsibility for their work during working hours; the system is reliant on there being trust between managers and employees. It is reasonably expected employees will be in regular contact with their line manager and other colleagues. Any breach of trust will be treated very seriously and may be regarded as misconduct. Appropriate action may follow under the Disciplinary Policy. If misconduct is found, the agreement to work at home may be withdrawn.

Practical arrangements

Location

The location that an employee may work from when working away from the office must be agreed with their line manager. This will usually be the employee's own home, but may in exceptional circumstances be an alternative location (e.g. a relative's home). Once agreed, the employee must only work from this location. Employees are not permitted to work from a public location (e.g. a café).

Equipment

Home working will only be agreed if equipment is available to enable the staff member to carry-out the work expected from home. This may involve KGPC supplying equipment, or employees using personal equipment. Where personal equipment is used, KGPC must ensure that its use is safe and does not compromise data security (e.g. patient data must not be saved to personal computers). Where equipment is not available to enable home working, the request will be refused.

Any equipment supplied by KGPC for the purpose of home working will remain the property of KGPC. It must be stored securely and handled appropriately, and must be returned to the KGPC office on request.

Health and safety

The work that employees will carry-out from home will be paper/computer based and as such will generally be low risk; however, KGPC must ensure that health and safety requirements can be met by employees working from home. Employees must take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and follow all health and safety arrangements and procedures.

A home working risk assessment must be completed and any actions identified must be completed before an employee is permitted to work from home (see [Appendix A](#) for risk assessment template).

Security

Employees will be responsible for ensuring the security of all equipment, documents and information; and must take all necessary steps to ensure that private and confidential material is kept secure at all times. In particular, employees are required to:

- Where possible, work in a location where their computer screen cannot be seen by other household members.
- Lock their computer terminal whenever it is left unattended.
- Store confidential papers securely when not in use.
- Ensure the secure disposal of any confidential papers (e.g. by using a shredder). Where means of securely disposing of paperwork are not available, employees must store the paperwork securely until such time that they can bring it to the KGPC office for disposal.
- Comply with all KGPC data security policies (including Information Security, Data Protection and GDPR).
- Report any data security breach to the General Manager (Penny Williams) and Data Officer (Chris Warren) immediately.

Additional household expenses

It is anticipated that, in the majority of cases, the costs of working from home will be offset by the savings in the cost and time of commuting to work and the benefits of an improved work/life balance. Therefore, any costs incurred by employees from working at home will not be met by KGPC.

Employee attendance, supervision and performance

Attendance and availability for work

- Employees must be available and able to work on their contracted days and hours whether they are in the office or working from home, unless absence is for an authorised form of leave or sickness. Any variation to this arrangement can only be made by prior agreement with the manager.
- With the exception of those who have permission to work from home for a health reason, employees must be available to come to the KGPC office on a working from home day should a need arise. This may include situations when the employee is unable to connect to the business systems, or if they are asked to do so by their manager e.g. in the event of sickness of a colleague, inadequate cover, emergency or service need.
- Where an employee is asked to attend the practice building at short notice, managers should endeavour to make the call at a time that enables the employee to arrive at their normal starting time. Where this is not possible, the employee's travelling time will be considered as part of their working day.
- Except for where otherwise agreed, staff are expected to work in the same way, whether they are in the office or working from home. For example, if they would usually be available to answer the telephone, respond to emails etc. during the hours the office is open, they will be expected to do this when working from home.

Performance

When working from home employees will be subject to KGPC's normal rules, procedures and expected standards of conduct and performance. Contractual obligations, duties and responsibilities remain in place, as do all workplace policies.

Where their manager considers that home working adversely impacts an employee's performance, permission to work from home will be reviewed and may be withdrawn.

Supervision

Supervision arrangements will be set out by the employee's manager when making home working arrangements. These may include regular telephone or email communication with the employee and/or a requirement for the employee to account for the work they have completed whilst working from home.

Absences

Sickness and other related absences

Where an employee is due to work from home but is unable to work due to sickness or another type of absence such as but not limited to; dependent care, bereavement or compassionate leave, they must on the first day of absence, contact their manager at the earliest opportunity. It is expected the employee will keep their line manager updated on each day of their absence unless otherwise instructed.

In general, working from home is not to be used as a substitute for working in the office on days when the employee feels too unwell to make the journey into the office.

COVID-19 exceptions

The COVID-19 pandemic has made home working necessary for some employees. In some cases this will be short-term (e.g. for the duration of the self-isolation period where the employee or a member of their household has COVID symptoms), for others this will be required longer-term (e.g. for those in “high risk” groups who have been advised to stay at home “shielding”).

The impact of COVID in relation to home working arrangements may be:

- Some employees needing to work from home whose role would not normally be suitable for home working (e.g. roles involving face to face patient contact)
- Employees having to work from home long-term (until it is safe for them to leave home)
- Employees having to start working from home at short notice (e.g. when a family member develops symptoms overnight)

KGPC accepts that we will need to take a flexible approach to implementing this policy in order to adapt to the challenges presented by COVID-19. This may include:

- Agreeing to home working arrangements at short notice
- Adapting the employee’s job description to facilitate home working, including removing any tasks which cannot be performed remotely, and substituting these with alternative tasks. Any changes to the employee’s job role will be discussed with them, and additional training and support will be provided where necessary
- Agreeing to employees using personal IT equipment rather than equipment supplied by KGPC (only where data security risks can be adequately managed)
- Agreeing to changes in the employee’s working times if necessary

Where an employee needs to work from home at short notice due to COVID-19, a home working risk assessment should be completed as soon as practicably possible (see [Appendix A](#)). Where the risk assessment identifies health and safety risks which cannot be managed, the employee will not be permitted to work from home, and must take sickness absence until such time that they are able to return to work from KGPC offices.

Appendix A

Home working risk assessment

This risk assessment should be completed by the member of staff concerned and returned to their line manager. The answers given should be reviewed by the line manager and discussed with the staff member concerned where necessary.

Any areas requiring action should be discussed with the staff member, and actions should be agreed and documented.

Date		Staff member	
-------------	--	---------------------	--

Location of Assessment	
-------------------------------	--

Risk	Yes/No	Action Required
Desk Area		
Do you have adequate space to work comfortably?		
Is there enough space underneath your desk to stretch your legs?		
Are there trailing electrical cables around your working area that need to be tied up?		
Is your working area warm, well-lit and well-ventilated?		
Do you need a desk lamp to improve lighting?		
Is your working area clutter free so that you can focus easily on the task?		
Display Screens Set-Up		
Is your desk chair set up correctly? Is your lower back supported, are there armrests and are your feet flat on the floor?		

Do you have enough surface space on your desk to work comfortably?		
Are your keyboard and mouse clean and within easy reach, without having to stretch?		
Is your display screen clean and positioned so there is no glare from a window or light?		
Is your display screen level with your eyes so it doesn't cause discomfort to your neck or head?		
Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?		

Fire and Electrical Safety

Are smoke detectors working and checked regularly, e.g. every month?		
Do you regularly dispose of waste, including papers, to prevent a build-up of fire 'fuel'?		
Does any electrical equipment spark or show signs of burns and so needs removing from use?		
Do any wires look damaged or frayed and so need removing from use?		
Do you regularly inspect your electrical equipment to check for signs of wear and tear?		
Do you switch off equipment when not in use?		
Do you have emergency arrangements in place in case of fire?		

Stress and Welfare

Do you take regular breaks away from your workstation?		
Do you carry out regularly stretches at your desk to avoid stiff or sore muscles?		
Do you sit with a good posture or are you hunched over the desk?		
Do you have easy access to first aid equipment if required?		
If you regularly use a computer, do you have your eyes tested every year?		

Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?		
---	--	--

Manual Handling		
------------------------	--	--

Are all items that you need for work within easy reach?		
Are heavy items stored on lower shelves to avoid the need for lowering them?		
Do you know how to correctly pick up, carry and lower heavy items?		

Slips, Trip and Falls		
------------------------------	--	--

Are floor coverings, such as carpets and rugs, secure?		
Do you frequently carry hot drinks and food upstairs/downstairs and risk tripping?		
Are stairways and corridors clear of trip hazards?		
Is the floor area around your desk clear of boxes, papers and wires?		

Lone Working		
---------------------	--	--

Are you familiar with your employer's lone working health and safety policy?		
Do you know the name and number of a manager or supervisor who you can get in touch with easily?		
Do you have a system for regularly 'checking in' with your employer if you are not visibly online each day?		
Is your home kept secure whilst you're working there?		
Are important files and laptops kept locked away securely when not in use?		

Date Actions Complete	
------------------------------	--

Staff member cleared for home working (Manager signature)	
--	--

