A close up of a sign

Description automatically generated

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**Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

**Information and Temporary homeworking risk assessment (ongoing)**

Table of Contents

[1.0 Introduction 3](#_Toc35571754)

[2.0 Health and safety 3](#_Toc35571755)

[Employer responsibilities 3](#_Toc35571756)

[Employee responsibilities 3](#_Toc35571757)

[3.0 Protect home workers 3](#_Toc35571758)

[Lone working without supervision 3](#_Toc35571759)

[Working with display screen equipment 4](#_Toc35571760)

[Specialised DSE equipment needs 4](#_Toc35571761)

[4.0 Lone working: Protect those working alone 4](#_Toc35571762)

[Overview 4](#_Toc35571763)

[Manage the risks of working alone 4](#_Toc35571764)

[Risks to consider 5](#_Toc35571765)

[5.0 Stress and other health factors 5](#_Toc35571766)

[Stress, mental health and wellbeing 5](#_Toc35571767)

[Keep in touch 5](#_Toc35571768)

[Working alone with a medical condition 5](#_Toc35571769)

[First aid and emergencies 5](#_Toc35571770)

[Monitor lone workers’ health 5](#_Toc35571771)

[6.0 Looking after mental and physical health 5](#_Toc35571772)

[The law 6](#_Toc35571773)

[7.0 Training, supervision and monitoring 6](#_Toc35571774)

[Training 6](#_Toc35571775)

[Supervision 6](#_Toc35571776)

[Monitoring and keeping in touch 7](#_Toc35571777)

[When workers’ first language is not English 7](#_Toc35571778)

[APPENDIX 1: Simple home working checklist to guide the risk assessment 8](#_Toc35571779)

[APPENDIX 2: Temporary home working risk assessment – Safe place, Safe person, Sound information 11](#_Toc35571780)

[Part 1: Risk assessment for coronavirus (COVID-19) 11](#_Toc35571781)

[Part 2. Home working health & safety risk assessment - Briefing record 16](#_Toc35571782)

# Introduction

This guidance has been developed on information provided by:

* ACAS
* The HSE
* CIPD (The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)

# Health and safety[[1]](#footnote-1)

By law, employers are responsible for the health and safety of all employees, including those working from home.

## Employer responsibilities

During the coronavirus pandemic, it's very unlikely that employers can carry out usual health and safety risk assessments at an employee's home.

However, an employer should still check that:

* each employee feels the work they're being asked to do at home can be done safely
* employees have the right equipment to work safely
* managers keep in regular contact with their employees, including making sure they do not feel isolated
* reasonable adjustments are made for an employee who has a disability

Link to ACAS reasonable adjustments webpage:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments>

If changes are needed, employers are responsible for making sure they happen.

## Employee responsibilities

Employees also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety.

Anyone working from home should keep in regular contact with their manager. They should also tell their manager about:

* any health and safety risks
* any homeworking arrangements that need to change

# Protect home workers[[2]](#footnote-2)

As an employer, you have the same health and safety responsibilities for home workers as for any other workers.

When someone is working from home temporarily, as an employer you should consider:

* How will you keep in touch with them?
* What work activity will they be doing?
* Can it be done safely?
* Do you need to put control measures in place to protect them?

## Lone working without supervision

There will always be greater risks for lone workers with no direct supervision or anyone to help them if things go wrong.

Keep in touch with lone workers, including those working from home, and ensure regular contact to make sure they are healthy and safe.

If contact is poor, workers may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned. This can affect stress levels and mental health.

## Working with display screen equipment

There is no increased risk from display screen equipment (DSE) for those working at home temporarily. So, employers do not need to do home workstation assessments.

You could provide workers with advice on completing their own basic assessment at home. A practical workstation checklist (PDF) - Portable Document Format will help but employers do not have to provide this for those working temporarily at home.

Link to DSE Checklist:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>

Other simple steps you can take to reduce the risks from display screen work:

* breaking up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least 5 minutes every hour) or changes in activity
* avoiding awkward, static postures by regularly changing position
* getting up and moving or doing stretching exercises
* avoiding eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time

## Specialised DSE equipment needs

Employers should try to meet those needs where possible.

For some equipment (eg keyboards, mouse, riser) this could mean allowing workers to take this equipment home.

For other larger items (eg ergonomic chairs, height-adjustable desks) encourage workers to try other ways of creating a comfortable working environment (eg supporting cushions).

Our brief guide has more information.

Link to Working with display screen equipment (DSE) A brief guide: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf>

# Lone working: Protect those working alone[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Overview

As an employer, you must manage any health and safety risks before people can work alone.

## Manage the risks of working alone

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, you must manage the risk to lone workers.

Think about who will be involved and which hazards could harm those working alone.

You must:

* train, supervise and monitor lone workers
* keep in touch with them and respond to any incident

When a lone worker will be at someone else’s workplace you must ask that employer about any risks and control measures to make sure they are protected.

## Risks to consider

Risks that particularly affect lone workers include:

* violence
* stress and mental health or wellbeing
* a person’s medical suitability to work alone
* the workplace itself, for example if it's in a rural or isolated area

# Stress and other health factors[[4]](#footnote-4)

## Stress, mental health and wellbeing

Lone working can cause work-related stress and affect people’s mental health.

HSE’s Stress Management Standards include the importance of relationships with, and support from, other workers.

Link to HSE’s Stress Management Standards:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>

Being away from managers and colleagues could make it difficult to get proper support.

## Keep in touch

Put procedures in place that enable direct contact with the lone worker so their manager can recognise signs of stress as early as possible.

If contact is poor, workers may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned. This can affect their performance and potentially their stress levels and mental health.

## Working alone with a medical condition

If you are unsure whether someone’s health condition means they are safe to work alone, get medical advice. Think about both routine work and possible emergencies that may put additional physical and mental burdens on the lone worker.

## First aid and emergencies

Put emergency procedures in place and train lone workers in how to use them.

Your risk assessment may indicate lone workers should:

* carry first aid equipment
* receive first aid training, including how to use first aid on themselves
* have access to adequate first aid facilities

Emergency procedures should include guidance on how and when lone workers should contact their employer, including details of any emergency contact numbers.

## Monitor lone workers’ health

Some lone workers can have specific risks to their health. You should monitor their health and adapt drivers’ work to allow for any specific health needs.

# Looking after mental and physical health [[5]](#footnote-5)

It's likely that employers and employees are experiencing a high level of stress and anxiety at the moment.

If an employee has a mental health issue, it’s important their employer takes it seriously. For example, it’s a good idea to talk to the employee to find out what support they might need at work.

There are many types of mental health issue. An issue can happen suddenly, because of a specific event in someone’s life, or it can build up gradually over time.

Common mental health issues include:

* stress (this is not classed as a medical condition, but it can still have a serious impact on wellbeing)
* depression
* anxiety

Less common ones include:

* bipolar disorder
* schizophrenia

Find out more about supporting mental health in the workplace.

Link: <https://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace>

It's important for employees to take regular breaks.

They should also try to do other things to stay mentally and physically active outside of their working hours. This might include things like cooking, exercise, watching favourite TV programmes or other hobbies. It's a good idea for employers to remind staff about this.

## The law

Employers have a ‘duty of care’. This means they must do all they reasonably can to support their employees’ health, safety and wellbeing. This includes:

* making sure the working environment is safe
* protecting staff from discrimination
* carrying out risk assessments

# Training, supervision and monitoring[[6]](#footnote-6)

## Training

It’s harder for lone workers to get help, so they may need extra training. They should understand any risks in their work and how to control them.

Training is particularly important:

* where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in uncertain situations
* in enabling people to cope with unexpected situations, such as those involving violence

You should set limits on what can be done while working alone. Make sure workers are:

* competent to deal with the requirements of the job
* trained in using any technical solutions
* able to recognise when they should get advice

## Supervision

Base your levels of supervision on your risk assessment – the higher the risk, the more supervision they will need. This will also depend on their ability to identify and handle health and safety issues.

The amount of supervision depends on:

* the risks involved
* their ability to identify and handle health and safety issues

It’s a good idea for a new worker to be supervised at first if they’re:

* being trained
* doing a job with specific risks
* dealing with new situations

## Monitoring and keeping in touch

You must monitor your lone workers and keep in touch with them. Make sure they understand any monitoring system and procedures you use. These may include:

* when supervisors should visit and observe lone workers
* knowing where lone workers are, with pre-agreed intervals of regular contact, using phones, radios, email etc
* other devices for raising the alarm, operated manually or automatically
* a reliable system to ensure a lone worker has returned to their base once they have completed their task

Regularly test these systems and all emergency procedures to ensure lone workers can be contacted if a problem or emergency is identified.

## When workers’ first language is not English

Lone workers from outside the UK may come across unfamiliar risks, in a workplace culture very different from that in their own country.

You must ensure they have received and understood the information, instruction and training they need to work safely.

Find out more on migrant workers.

Link to HSE’s migrant workers website:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/migrantworkers/about.htm>

# APPENDIX 1: Simple home working checklist to guide the risk assessment

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | | | | **Y or N** | **What can be done?** |
| 1.0 | Desk area | | | | |
| 1.1 | Do you have adequate space to work comfortably? | | |  |  |
| 1.2 | Is there enough space underneath your desk to stretch your legs? | | |  |  |
| 1.3 | Are there trailing electrical cables around your working area that need to be tied up? | | |  |  |
| 1.4 | Is your working area warm, well-lit and well-ventilated? | | |  |  |
| 1.5 | Do you need a desk lamp to improve lighting? | | |  |  |
| 1.6 | Is your working area clutter free so that you can focus easily on the task? | | |  |  |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| **Question** | | | | **Y or N** | **What can be done?** |
| 2.0 | Display screen equipment (DSE) | | | | |
| 2.1 | Is your desk chair set up correctly? Is your lower back supported, are there armrests and are your feet flat on the floor? | | |  |  |
| 2.2 | Do you have enough surface space on your desk to work comfortably? | | |  |  |
| 2.3 | Are your keyboard and mouse clean and within easy reach, without having to stretch? | | |  |  |
| 2.4 | Is your display screen clean and positioned so there is no glare from a window or light? | | |  |  |
| 2.5 | Is your display screen level with your eyes so it doesn’t cause discomfort to your neck or head? | | |  |  |
| 2.6 | Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body? | | |  |  |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| **Question** | | | | **Y or N** | **What can be done?** |
| 3.0 | Fire and electrical safety | | | | |
| 3.1 | Are smoke detectors working and checked regularly, e.g. every month? | | |  |  |
| 3.2 | Do you regularly dispose of waste, including papers, to prevent a build- up of fire ‘fuel’? | | |  |  |
| 3.4 | Does any electrical equipment spark or show signs of burns and so needs removing from use? | | |  |  |
| 3.5 | Do any wires look damaged or frayed and so need removing from use? | | |  |  |
| 3.6 | Do you regularly inspect your electrical equipment to check for signs of wear and tear? | | |  |  |
| 3.7 | Do you switch off equipment when not in use? | | |  |  |
| 3.8 | Do you have emergency arrangements in place in case of fire? | | |  |  |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| **Question** | | | | **Y or N** | **What can be done?** |
| 4.0 | Stress and Welfare | | | | |
| 4.1 | Do you take regular breaks away from your workstation? | | |  |  |
| 4.2 | Do you carry out regularly stretches at your desk to avoid stiff or sore muscles? | | |  |  |
| 4.3 | Do you sit with a good posture or are you hunched over the desk? | | |  |  |
| 4.4 | Do you have easy access to first aid equipment if required? | | |  |  |
| 4.5 | If you regularly use a computer, do you have your eyes tested every year? | | |  |  |
| 4.6 | Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body? | | |  |  |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| **Question** | | | | **Y or N** | **What can be done?** |
| 5.0 | Manual Handling | | | | |
| 5.1 | Are all items that you need for work within easy reach? | | |  |  |
| 5.2 | Are heavy items stored on lower shelves to avoid the need for lowering them? | | |  |  |
| 5.3 | Do you know how to correctly pick up, carry and lower heavy items? | | |  |  |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| **Question** | | | | **Y or N** | **What can be done?** |
| 6.0 | Slips, Trip and Falls | | | | |
| 6.1 | Are floor coverings, such as carpets and rugs, secure? | | |  |  |
| 6.2 | Do you frequently carry hot drinks and food upstairs/downstairs and risk tripping? | | |  |  |
| 6.3 | Are stairways and corridors clear of trip hazards? | | |  |  |
| 6.4 | Is the floor area around your desk clear of boxes, papers and wires? | | |  |  |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| **Question** | | | | **Y or N** | **What can be done?** |
| 7.0 | Lone Working | | | | |
| 7.1 | Are you familiar with your employer’s lone working health and safety policy? | | |  |  |
| 7.2 | Do you know the name and number of a manager or supervisor who you can get in touch with easily? | | |  |  |
| 7.3 | Do you have a system for regularly ‘checking in’ with your employer if you are not visibly online each day? | | |  |  |
| 7.4 | Is your home kept secure whilst you’re working there? | | |  |  |
| 7.4 | Are important files and laptops kept locked away securely when not in use? | | |  |  |
| Additional comments | | | | | |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| Date | |  | Assessor |  | |
|  |  | | |  |  |
| Location | |  | | | |
|  | |

| APPENDIX 2: Temporary home working risk assessment – Safe place, Safe person, Sound information | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Part 1: Risk assessment for coronavirus (COVID-19) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Risk assess each hazard and implement the necessary controls as appropriate. Provide awareness briefings to all affected workers and contractors, use the briefing record to capture their names. **Note:** *The assessment has been started – add to the assessment as appropriate.* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Description | |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prepared by *(print)* | |  | | Prepared by *(sign)* | |  | | | Position | |  | | Date |  | |
| Authorised by *(print)* | |  | | Authorised by *(sign)* | |  | | | Position | |  | | Date |  | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Risk  No. | Hazard | | Who might be affected and how? | | Enter either, or/and  *1 - Details of recommended HSE / ACAS / General health and safety risk management controls*  *2 - What we are currently doing* | | Evaluate current control measures.  Do we need to implement additional controls? | | | | Enter either, or/and  *1 - New control measures recommended*  *2 - Why the recommended control measures are not implemented*  *3 - General comments* | By who | | | By when |
| **YES** | **NO** | | **N/A** |
| **1 - SAFE PLACE** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **R1** | ***Fire*** | | **Employees**  A fire may break out due to multiple reasons. | | 1 – A simple home-working checklist has been undertaken by the homeworker which covers fire and electrical safety. The resulting actions will be implemented.  2 – The employees were provided guidance on how to undertake the checklist and on general fire safety precautions and responses.  3 – Where possible, we undertook a remote video assessment of the working space using WhatsApp. | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R2** | ***Display screen equipment***  ***(DSE)*** | | **Employees**  Employees may experience strains to eyes, aches and pains to wrists, shoulders, neck etc. | | 1 – A simple home-working checklist has been undertaken by the temporary homeworker which covers DSE.  2 – The employees were provided guidance on how to undertake the checklist and on general DSE requirements.  3 – Where possible, we undertook a remote video assessment of the working space using WhatsApp. | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R3** | ***Slips, trips and falls*** | | **Employees**  Employees may slip trip or fall due to condition of flooring or the general environment etc. | | 1 – A simple home-working checklist has been undertaken by the temporary homeworker which covers slips, trips and falls.  2 – The employees were provided guidance on how to undertake the checklist and on the risks from slips and trips.  3 – Where possible, we undertook a remote video assessment of the working space using WhatsApp. | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R4** | ***Manual handling*** | | **Employees**  Employees may pull muscles etc. due to lifting awkward or heavy items. | | 1 – A simple home-working checklist has been undertaken by the temporary homeworker which covers manual handling.  2 – The employees were provided guidance on manual handling.  3 – Items provided for work are not considered a hazard. If a risk from manual handling is perceived to be significant a detailed manual handling risk assessment will be undertaken:  <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck5.pdf> | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R5** | *Lone working*  ***Not enough contact, supervision*** | | **Employees**  ***(stress, ill, injury)***  *Employees become stressed, ill or injured due to lack of contact, sickness, or an injury caused by a fall, burn etc.* | | 1 – A routine for regular communications and monitoring is in place. A morning, mid-day, and afternoon (close of play) contact is implemented via mobile or Microsoft teams. | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| Risk  No. | Hazard | | Who might be affected and how? | | Enter either, or/and  *1 - Details of recommended HSE / ACAS / General health and safety risk management controls*  *2 - What we are currently doing* | | Evaluate current control measures.  Do we need to implement additional controls? | | | | Enter either, or/and  *1 – New control measures recommended*  *2 – Why the recommended control measures are not implemented*  *3 – General comments* | By who | | | By when |
| **YES** | **NO** | | **N/A** |
| **2 – SAFE PERSON** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **R6** | *Stress*  ***Lack of or inadequate preparation for homeworking*** | | **Employees *(stress)***  *Employees become stressed due to a failure of the company to consider personal situations, vulnerabilities and dependencies* | | 1 – The Questionnaire- ‘Preparing your organisation for homeworking has been adapted for our workplace’:  <https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/coronavirus/support-materials>  2 – A letter has been sent to employees setting out the position on absence and pay due to CV19:  <https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/coronavirus/support-materials> | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R7** | *Stress*  ***Lack of management control*** | | **Employees *(stress)***  *Employees become stressed due to one or more of the 6 key areas of work design not being properly managed by the company*   1. *Demands* 2. *Control* 3. *Support* 4. *Relationships* 5. *Role* 6. *Change* | | 1 – The HSE 6 Management standards for stress have been reviewed and any control measures and guidance followed:  <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/> | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R8** | *Stress*  ***Lack of a quiet workspace*** | | **Employees *(stress)***  *Employees become stressed due to inability to work effectively due to personal commitments (family, children off school etc.)* | | 1 – Flexible work times have been implemented. A clear understanding has been made over when individuals will work and be contactable. Staff have agreed to communicate clearly, letting their line manager, colleagues and clients know when they will be available and when they won’t. The employee could make good use of computer calendars, and out-of-office and voicemail messages.  2 - Regular rest breaks are encouraged. | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R9** | Coronavirus  (COVID-19) (CV19)  ***Lack of accurate information / a failure to disseminate information*** | | **Employees**  Employees are not aware of the risks from CV19 and become infected due to lack of awareness of control measures. | | 1 – A letter which has been sent to employees reminding them of their responsibilities in relation to the control of infectious diseases:  <https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/coronavirus/support-materials> | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| Risk  No. | Hazard | | Who might be affected and how? | | Enter either, or/and  *1 - Details of recommended HSE / ACAS / General health and safety risk management controls*  *2 - What we are currently doing* | | Evaluate current control measures.  Do we need to implement additional controls? | | | | Enter either, or/and  *1 - New control measures recommended*  *2 - Why the recommended control measures are not implemented*  *3 - General comments* | By who | | | By when |
| **YES** | **NO** | | **N/A** |
| **3 - SOUND INFORMATION** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **R10** | Coronavirus  (COVID-19) (CV19)  ***Lack of accurate information / a failure to disseminate information*** | | **Employees *(including those considered at increased risk)***  Employees are not aware of the risks from CV19 and become infected due to lack of awareness of control measures. | | 1 – We have read the ACAS Homeworking: a guide for employees. We understand homeworking is temporary, and have adopted a risk-based approach to the guidance:  <https://archive.acas.org.uk/media/3905/Homeworking---a-guide-for-employers-and-employees/pdf/Homeworking-a-guide-for-employers-and-employees.pdf> | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |
| **R11** | ***Lack of or inadequate preparation*** | | **Employers, line managers etc. *(stress)***  *Become stressed due to worry over conflicting information they are given.* | | 1 – We have attended the free webinar from ACAS on CV19 in the workplace to help us prepare our workplace:  <https://www.acas.org.uk/webinars>  2 – Government updates and guidance is followed. | |  |  | |  |  |  | | |  |

## Part 2. Home working health & safety risk assessment - Briefing record

If the risk assessment is updated the briefing of the changes must be recorded.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received a health and safety briefing on the topic(s) covered by the above risk assessment | | | | | | | | | | |
| **First name** | **Surname** | **Signature** | **Time** | **Date** |  | **First name** | **Surname** | **Signature** | **Time** | **Date** |
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**Guidance Note** – IMPORTANT: If you feel your health, safety or security is at risk at any time, you must stop work immediately and seek advice.

1. <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/employer/training-supervision-monitoring.htm#trainingsupervision> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/employer/stress-other-factors.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/employer/training-supervision-monitoring.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)