NUFFIELD DEPARTMENT OF
**PRIMARY CARE**
HEALTH SCIENCES

## NDPCHS Hybrid and Remote Working Policy

### 1. Purpose

This policy sets out the principles for hybrid working – a combination of working at the department and at a remote location. It provides guidance for individuals and line managers and outlines the obligations and responsibilities on both sides.

### 2. Scope

The policy applies to employees in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences only. It covers working outside of one of the department spaces on the ROQ or Eagle House, referred to throughout the document as remote working. This includes working from home or at other suitable locations, such as other university/college premises. It is not intended to cover occasions where some off-site working is required by the job role, such as visits to GP practices for clinical trial purposes or for visiting study participants, attending conferences or other work-related travel.

### 3. Background

The Department recognises that for some individuals, remote working can be of benefit in supporting both their work-life balance and their work productivity (eg when quiet uninterrupted time is needed for writing). It can also be helpful for logistical reasons when someone's role requires them to make offsite visits (eg to study participants or trial recruitment sites) that are easier to reach from home.

It is also the case that some roles and activities need to be performed in the office, either because they provide a service across the department and individuals need to be accessible or because they need access to resources that cannot be removed from the office. In addition, most teams will need regular time together in the office in order that they can collaborate and share information effectively with one another.

The People and EDI committee have therefore agreed this policy.

### 4. Informal vs Formal Flexible Working Requests

Like other forms of flexible working, remote working can be agreed formally or informally. The department has generally taken the approach that individual groups/line managers are free to agree regular or ad hoc working arrangements that work for them and their teams. It is envisaged therefore that the majority of requests for hybrid or remote work will be agreed informally, the process for which is outlined below.

Employees with at least 26 weeks' service have a statutory right to request flexible working, and this can include home working arrangements. Forms for this are available on the university Human Resources website: https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/flexible-working-formal-scheme. If a formal request is received in this way, line managers should consult the HR Team before responding.

Where remote working is requested as a reasonable adjustment for a health condition or disability, the HR Team should also be consulted so that we can ensure appropriate advice is obtained from Occupational Health and/or the Staff Disability Advisor.

## 5. Principles

No-one is automatically entitled (or required) to work remotely.

Any formal or informal flexible working request to work remotely will be decided on the grounds of business and operational needs, and in the case of formal requests, within the requirements of the Flexible Working Regulations 2014.

The contractual place of work for all individuals will remain the department. The University does not permit home addresses as the contractual place of work.

The department will not reimburse travel expenses to the office from an individual's home base.

Remote working must not be undertaken in a public place as these are insecure. Where it is approved, remote working should take place in a private residence or University building other than the department, or another suitable workplace (eg an office in a college or GP practice).

Except in the case of work visits for conferences or collaboration meetings, remote working cannot be undertaken overseas, other than in pre-agreed exceptional circumstances for a limited period. There are restrictions on overseas working due to tax and employment laws that vary from country to country. Advice should be sought from the HR Team before agreeing temporary overseas working.

Whilst it is acknowledged that remote working can assist with caring responsibilities, individuals should not be undertaking a caring role during hours that they are reasonably expected to be working. In particular, individuals should not be caring for young children during their working hours.

If agreement between line managers cannot be reached informally, then eligible employees can submit a formal request for flexible working (see paragraph 4 above). The HR Team should be consulted on receipt of such a request. Declined formal requests can be appealed under that process.

## 6. Making and responding to requests and reviewing arrangements

Any decision to permit remote working lies with the line manager and we expect Group Leads to ensure consistency of approach within their group. This means that Group Leads will need to discuss and agree approaches with the line managers in the group, making clear that line managers need to keep their Group Lead informed of requests and changes. Line managers are expected to be reasonable and fair in considering requests and to communicate the reasons for any refusal. Decisions should be consistent across individuals with similar roles.

Factors to be taken into account by line managers may include:

> Business and operational needs, including the nature of the role and its suitability to be performed away from the department

> Suitability of the proposed remote place of work

> Data security

> Integration with the team and communications with colleagues

> Wellbeing, safety and workplace support

Other considerations for discussion include:

Managing the potential isolation of home-working and the impact remote-working could have on factors such as motivation, productivity, team cohesion.

Agreeing what work would be best done remotely and what would be best done in the office

The suitability of the environment: that there is an appropriate space in which to work comfortably and safely; that distractions are limited; that the individual is contactable.

Managing the potential impact on work-life balance and work interfering with home life; working excessive hours etc

Arrangements should be agreed on a trial basis for 3 months initially and reviewed annually (eg as part of PDR discussions) to ensure that they work for all parties.

Agreements to work remotely can be revoked or refused by line managers when there are reasonable grounds to do so (eg changes in project that make remote-working inappropriate for data governance reasons; concerns with work performance etc). Reasonable time will be given for the individual to make appropriate arrangements to allow them to return to their work base.

If someone requests to work remotely as a short-term measure to deal with a domestic emergency, this should be accommodated wherever possible. Department policy is that flexible working, including working remotely, should be one of the first options considered in such a situation. Where the nature of the role makes remote working impossible, then other forms of time off should be made available. Contact the HR Team for advice.

## 7. Responsibilities

### 7.1 Line Managers

Agree hybrid working patterns with individuals and communicate the working patterns of team members with the team.

Line managers should keep a record of any requests made and the resulting decisions.

The group should provide funds where available for the costs of IT and other equipment from research grants.

Maintain contact with employees working remotely as needed, and have regular one-to-ones and PDR's.

Clearly communicate the days when all team members need to be in the office (for scheduling of team meetings etc).

### 7.2 Individuals

When working remotely, an individual must be contactable during their agreed working hours via MS Teams, mobile phone or other agreed method, should their line manager or other team member need to reach them. This should include a back-up means of communication should home internet go down (eg mobile phone).

Individuals must attend the office as needed and agreed with the line manager.

Individuals should expect that their desk/computer in the office might be used by others when they are not in the office.

Information Governance and IT policies for remote working must be followed. Refer to the Department IG106: Mobile and Remote Working Policy for more information about the requirements for working remotely. Further guidance is available here: https://www.phc.ox.ac.uk/intranet/it-support.

Note that the department will not reimburse costs incurred in the home such as heating, broadband, printing, furniture etc.

Individual must ensure that their remote working set up is suitable, free from distractions and compliant with Display Screen Equipment requirements (see below)

### *7.3 Department HR Team*

Provide advice and guidance to line managers.

Assist with formal flexible working requests and ensure that they are handled in compliance with the legislative provision.

Keep this policy up-to-date and published on the department intranet pages.

## 8. Health and Safety

The individuals and their line manager are required to follow the University Health and Safety guidelines on remote working at premises controlled by employees.  This is available at the link below and the relevant section is reproduced at Appendix 1.  All staff members involved in homeworking arrangements must ensure they have familiarised and agreed to the arrangements set out in Appendix 1.

## 9. Sources of further information/guidance

Health and Safety, DSE regulations: https://safety.admin.ox.ac.uk/display-screen-equipment

University Personnel Services guidance on homeworking:

https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/working-from-home#tab-2150251

Home-working and wellbeing guidance for staff:
https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/home-working-and-wellbeing

University guidance on formal requests for flexible working:
https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/flexible-working-formal-scheme

University guidance on informal flexible working:
https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/informal-applications-for-flexible-working

New Ways of Working:
https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/new-ways-of-working

*Policy approved by People and EDI Committee 18 April 2023.  Next review by April 2026*

# Appendix 1

**Remote working at premises controlled by employees**

Certain employees have the discretion to work away from the University, often at home or within colleges, using computing equipment. Departments and institutions with employees who work at these remote workstations must ensure the following:

(a)  Where any individual has been provided with University equipment, it should comply with the requirements of this Policy and should be maintained in a safe condition. "Safe condition" means that the screen must not flicker and the equipment, including the flexes and plugs, must be physically intact.

(b)  All individuals who use computing equipment, which may be their own, must arrange their equipment such that risk from trips over cabling or flexes is minimised.

(c)  If usage is to the extent that the individuals become "users" for the purpose of their employment in locations away from their normal workstation, they must have the risks of using the equipment and the risk control measures explained to them. However, it is not intended that DSE assessors should make visits to remote locations.

(d)  Users will be personally responsible for:

(i)  Arranging their equipment and workstations in accordance with the diagram in Appendix 2 and taking regular short breaks.

(ii)  Arranging a timely repair if their computer screen flickers or their equipment, including the flexes and plugs, become physically damaged.

(iii)  Reporting, without delay, to their line manager any personal discomfort, e.g. tingling sensations or pains in their hands or forearms or necks, thought to be associated with the use of the workstation.

(e)  These points must be emphasized as part of the formal training of these users and training records must be maintained.

(f)  If ill health symptoms are identified, the line manager must refer the individual, without delay, to the Occupational Health Service.

## Appendix 2

Replace with: DSE Homeworking Self-Assessment Worksheet (can't currently open though…):
https://occupationalhealth.admin.ox.ac.uk/article/coronavirus-advice-and-updates
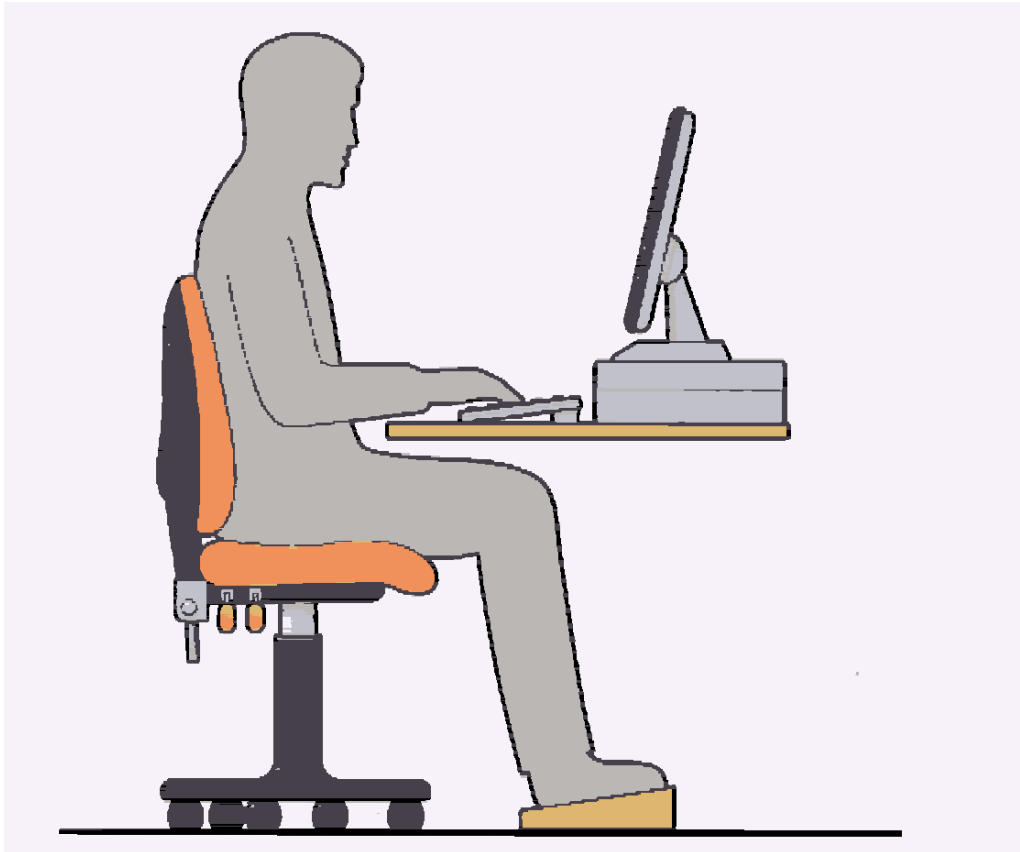


**SEATING AND POSTURE FOR TYPICAL OFFICE TASKS**

1. Seat back independently adjustable for height and for tilt.

2. Good lumbar support.

3. Seat height adjustability.

4. No excess pressure on underside of thighs and backs of knees.

5. Foot support if needed.

6. Space for postural change, no obstacles under desk.

7. Forearms approximately horizontal.

8. Minimal extension, flexion or deviation of wrists.

9. Screen height and angle should allow comfortable head position.

10. Space in front of keyboard to support hands/wrists during pauses in keying