Extract of email sent to all staff on 18 May 2020

IT **Guidance**

Safety guidance

We appreciate not everyone will have a dedicated work space at home where you can use your work-issued notebook computer. However, for colleagues who have been assigned an HP Notebook, please consider the guidance below to ensure it doesn't overheat, which can cause damage to it, and increase the risk of personal injury or property damage.

- only use the HP charger you were supplied with your device or (if applicable) the replacement supplied by DS ICT or iTECS
- make sure there is adequate ventilation - keep the laptop upright and on a sturdy, level surface such as a such as a desk or tray
- provide at least 15.25 cm (6 in) of clearance around each air vent
- do not allow another hard surface, such as a wall, or a soft surface, such as pillows or clothing, to block airflow
- do not allow the AC adapter to contact the skin or a soft surface whilst it is powered on

If SG/DS IT equipment becomes faulty for any reason, report this using our service desk portal or our mailbox. It must not be sent for repair to anywhere other than DS ICT or iTECS.

Working from home

A home-worker is any colleague who, with the agreement of their manager, works in their home on an occasional, regular or permanent basis. The considerations below should be made when home-working.

Health and safety while working from home

Managers are responsible for:

- taking into account health and safety issues when considering requests for home-working
- supporting the purchase of necessary additional equipment
- seeking advice from the occupational health and safety branch (OHSB) where problems arise
- working with Information and Technology Services (iTECS) regarding any specialist equipment needs and to check compatibility of home equipment or set up connections

Colleagues are responsible for:

- completing the online display screen equipment (DSE) training and self assessment
- reviewing their work area and replicating the office environment as far as reasonably practical applying best practice for home-working
- reporting to their manager any health and safety concerns or discomfort experienced while working at home
- reporting all accidents, incidents and near misses while working at home, using the accident reporting form

Health and safety liaison officers (HSLOs) are responsible for:

- assisting with any display screen equipment (DSE) queries and providing best practice guidance
- providing home-workers with health and safety advice

The occupational health and safety branch (OHSB) is responsible for:

- providing professional advice on the health and safety implications of home-working

Equipment for home-workers

Equipment used at home must meet the minimum standards specified in the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992, as amended in 2002. It is likely that adequate equipment (for example suitable chairs) will be available in many houses, but some home-

workers may need additional equipment such as a laptop stand, separate keyboard and mouse or footrest.

Possible hazards of working at home include:

- manual handling – carrying laptops and documents
- musculoskeletal/postural issues

New and expectant mothers

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires the Scottish Government to assess risks to home-workers who are new or expectant mothers. The risks include those to the unborn child and to the child of a mother who is breastfeeding, as well as the mother herself.

Help and support

Read some practical advice on working from home including reviewing any risks, organising your home workspace and maintaining a healthy wellbeing.

If you have further queries around working from home you can email occupational health and safety.

Your safety and health whilst working from home

In the case of 'emergency' homeworking (such as in response to the current Coronavirus outbreak) flexibility will be needed in applying certain 'business as usual' requirements, especially when employees aren't used to homeworking. Things may not be perfect. Employees should use their judgement, given the circumstances, but still ensuring the health and safety of themselves and others. For the majority of people working at home, or in other compromised environments, is not significantly hazardous and will not cause harm as long as you work sensibly, move regularly and keep in touch with your team. The following is intended as a useful collection of hints and tips for all.

Reviewing the risks

When you are required to work from home, you need to ensure the equipment you use and the area you're working in is suitable for your needs and isn't likely to cause you any significant health and safety issues. If you don't normally work from home, the most important thing is to find ways to work comfortably and ensure you change your posture regularly. In the current circumstances you should take a proportional approach to any risk assessments and specialist equipment that you require (e.g. adjustable chair) in line with your organisational or local arrangements for provision of IT and Furniture etc.

If you have any pre-existing conditions you may need to ensure any workplace adjustments can be accommodated at home if they are not already. This should be discussed with your manager.

Organising yourself and your home workspace
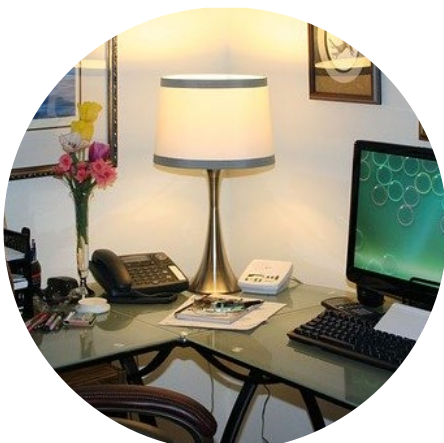
- Try to have a dedicated work area in your home, even if it just a space in the corner of a room, to reduce impact on your personal life.
- The most ideal situation would be a space you can put your laptop on a laptop stand, use a separate keyboard and mouse and work with a neutral posture.
- If you haven't got a desk or surface to put a laptop stand, put the laptop in your lap and sit right back into a chair so you get back support.

- Push the screen angle back and try not to bend your head forward. At least in this position your back is supported, your shoulders are down and relaxed. You should try if you can to move your eyes down, rather than moving your whole neck, to help alleviate any pressure on your neck.
- Get up every 15 minutes to stretch your back out and give your neck a rest from looking down too much
- Keep an 'action' or 'to do' list to help you stay organised – prioritising the jobs you need to do first – to give intention to do the work and concentrate your mind.
- Keep your Outlook calendar up to date, which will help people know when best to contact you.
- Try different ways of working and experiment, for example you can block out sections of time in your calendar to work on a particular piece of work and not answer phones or emails during this time to avoid distractions.
- Even though you are at home, try and structure your day as you would if you were working from your usual workplace. This includes taking regular breaks and making time for lunch.

Looking after your mental health

Keeping in touch with your manager and colleagues is essential. If you're working alone for long periods, and rarely see other members of your team, you may experience feelings of isolation, which is quite normal.
If you are feeling emotional, overwhelmed, or stressed, there will always be somebody who can help, the most important thing is knowing when to ask for help, whether that's from a colleague or someone else. Being self-aware, and able to recognise how you are feeling, is essential for us to know when to implement strategies to make ourselves feel better.

Use any networks available to you, or the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) or the [Charity For Civil Servants](#) for advice and support. [Mind](#) has produced an excellent resource specifically for Coronavirus and staying at home and indoors.

Looking after your physical health

If you are able to try some gentle desk [exercises](#). Some home exercises guidance is available via the [NHS](#) and some guidance from the [BBC](#) on working from home during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Keep well hydrated, change your posture frequently and take regular short breaks (at least 5 minutes per hour) and have a walk around and get some fresh air if you can.

Finding your productive time

We are all productive at different times of the day. Some of us are "morning people" and others are more productive in the afternoon and evenings and this can also change from day to day depending upon various circumstances.

Try and work when you are feeling most productive. When you feel you are slowing down and can't concentrate, have a break or do some kind of short exercise, if you are able, to help get you going again If you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, make a point of calling someone to talk to. A quick conversation can often put us in the much better mood to carry on with the rest of the day

Information for line managers

Communicating with your team.

It's often difficult for managers to gauge the mood of team members when not seeing them on a face to face daily basis, including recognising any health and safety issues.

If we don't talk on a regular basis we are leaving the majority of our communication open to assuming someone is coping. So it's beneficial for team members to talk regularly to each other and not rely on email as the main form of communication. You could:

- Hold short weekly teleconferences to have a catch up.
- Ask how everyone is and whether they need help with any part of their role.
- Share news, share progress, share difficulties
- Use Skype messages for asking questions or seeing if someone is okay without filling up their inbox.
- Consider setting up a team WhatsApp group so you can all communicate with each other at the same time. You can also use this for sending photos or messages to lighten the mood.