Guideline Document

Ref: GD:011:00	**COVID 19 Home Working**			
Issue date:	April 2020	**Revised Date:**		**Version No:**	1
Authors(s):	National Health & Safety Function			
Consultation With:				
Responsibility for Implementation:	All HSE Line Managers and employees			
Note:	The Government has announced a number of protective measures to protect citizens by delaying the spread of COVID-19. In order to comply with this requirement, the HSE has issued the following circulars to all employees *'HR Circular 014/2020: Social Distancing in the Health Sector' and 'HR Circular 017/2020: update re social Distancing in the Health Sector' and HR Circular 019 2020 - Essential service under new Public Health Guidelines COVID-19'* All managers must check HSE.ie daily to keep informed of up to date information and advice Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 (Act, 2005) employers have duty to ensure the safety, health and welfare of employees. These duties extend to when employees are required to work from home. Employees also have reciprocal duties under the Act, 2005. These are summarised in Section 4.0			

COVID-19

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1.0 Introduction:

During this phase of COVID 19 pandemic many employees have been asked to work from home on a temporary basis. Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 the HSE has a duty to ensure the safety health and welfare of our employees.

2.0 Purpose:

This guideline has been developed to support managers and employees to comply with their legal obligations in relation to staff working from home during this Covid-19 pandemic.

3.0 Scope:

This guideline applies to:
- All managers in the HSE who have staff working from home and
- All employees working from home during this pandemic.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities:

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 places specific duties on both managers and employees. In the context of home working these duties are summarised below:

Mangers Responsibilities include:

- managing and conducting all work activities to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees
- providing safe systems of work that are planned, organised, and maintained, assessing risks and implementing appropriate control measures
- providing information, instruction, training and supervision regarding safety and health to employees, and
- having plans in place for emergencies.

Employee Responsibilities include:

- cooperating with their manager and following their instructions
- protecting themselves and others from harm during the course of their work, e.g. taking care of any work equipment provided and reporting any defects immediately to their manager
- reporting any injury arising from work activity to their manager in line with HSE Incident Management Framework , 2018 , and
- following procedures that have been put in place by their manager.

5.0 Risk Factors associated with Home Working

The main risk factors which need to be considered when staff are working from home include:
- work environment
- work equipment
- staff wellbeing
- incident management

In addition, consideration may need to be given to the security of data.

5.1 Work Environment

As a minimum, there should be enough room for work to be carried out, including space for the workstation, other equipment (e.g. printers) and storage of materials. Ideally the staff member should identify a dedicated area which keeps domestic interruptions to a minimum and reduces risks to other people at home (e.g. young children), has safe access, adequate lighting, is free from trailing leads/cables and good standards of housekeeping are maintained.

5.2 Work Equipment (to include use of Display Screen Equipment)

Staff working from home must be provided with the necessary equipment to carry out work activities. This may include the use of laptops, monitors, keyboard, telephone headsets etc.

Staff working with display screen equipment (i.e. laptop / pc) must ensure they have completed the HSELanD DSE User Awareness Module and be provided with information on how to set up their workstation safely at home (Refer to guidance *GD: 010: Working from home during COVID-19 Workstation Setup*). The objective is to try to achieve a similar ergonomic set-up to that achieved at work. Ensuring the work desk/work station is set-up correctly will facilitate good posture and reduce the likelihood of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDS) and Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULDs) and Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs).

Staff should be encouraged to stand up and stretch and take regular breaks away from their laptops / PCs and do other work related duties e.g. teleconferencing / standing up while taking phone calls.

Staff should be provided with details on how to access support in dealing with information technology systems failures, software problems and equipment failures.

5.3 Staff Wellbeing

5.3.1 Communication

Risks associated with home working extend beyond the physical work environment, staff may feel isolated, fatigued and or stressed. It is therefore important to have a formal, agreed and scheduled communication system in place e.g. use of scheduled teleconferences which encourages and allows staff to raise any concerns they may have.
Staff should also be encouraged to keep in regular contact with other colleagues and know that support is available for them.

5.3.2 Supervision

When staff are working from home, it is important that they have clear role clarification and know what is expected of them. Having an agreed check in with staff will provide an opportunity for updates on work related information and feedback.

5.3.3 Work life Balance

Taking regular breaks and exercise and practising good self-care can help with maintaining a healthy work life balance. Staff should be encouraged to set scheduled breaks and eat away from their workstation, exercise and eat healthily during this period. (Ref Good Practice Psychosocial wellbeing tips)

5.4 Incident Management

Staff working from home should be advised of what to do in the event an incident or become unwell while working from home. All incidents must be reported and managed in line with the HSE Incident Management Framework, 2018.

5.5 Data Security

In line with HSE policy all data must be processed and controlled in line with the principles of the GDPR and relevant Irish legislation, for further information please refer to *HSE Data Protection Policy, 2019*.

6.0 Risk Assessment:

Section 19, of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 requires the employer to identify the hazards at the place of work and to assess the risk presented by those hazards.

The assessment needs to take account of the specific work environment and needs of each employee.

In normal circumstances, employees should only be permitted to work from home where it is orgnaisational policy and where the manger has conducted a risk assessment to ensure employees have a safe work environment and suitable work equipment prior to the employee starting to work from home.

To assist in assessing the home working arrangements the risk assessment in Appendix 1 must be completed in consultation with each employee over the telephone.

7.0 Support and guidance:

GD: 010 Working from home during COVID-19 Workstation Setup, available at www.hse.ie

Minding your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak, available at
https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html

For further health and safety advice or support during the covid-19 pandemic,
Please contact the HSE health and safety helpdesk by visiting
www.hse.ie/safetyandwellbeing or alternatively phone 1850 420 420

8.0 References:

HSA (2020) FAQ's for Employers and Employees in relation to Home-Working on a temporary basis (COVID 19) available at
https://www.hsa.ie/eng/news_events_media/news/news_and_articles/faq%E2%80%99s_for_employers_and_employees_in_relation_to_home-working_on_a_temporary_basis_covid-19_.html

Health and Safety Executive (2020) Protect home workers available at
https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm

IOSH (Dec 2014) Home Office, Mobile Office Managing Remote Working
https://www.iosh.com/media/1507/iosh-home-office-mobile-office-full-report-2014.pdf

Appendix 1

	Health & Safety Risk Assessment Form	

Ref: CF:050:00	RE: Home Working Risk Assessment Form			
Issue date:	April 2020	**Revised date:**	**Version No**	2
Author(s):	National Health & Safety Function			
Part A	Home Working Risk Assessment Form			

Division		**Source of Risk**	
HG/CHO/NAS/Function		**Primary Impact Category**	
Hospital Site/Service		**Risk Type:**	
Dept/Service Site		**Name of Risk Owner**	
Date of Assessment		**Signature of Risk Owner**	
Unique ID No		**Risk Co-Ordinator**	
		Risk Assessor (s)	
Home Worker's name:			
Name of Line Manager:			
Note	The Line Manager, in consultation with the employee must carry out the risk assessment for Home Working over the telephone. Please ensure the following: 1. The DSE User(employee) has completed the DSE User Awareness module on HSElanD prior to this assessment 2. You use the comment section to document where the employee advises that adjustments to the work environment have been implemented 3. Actions that cannot be resolved during the assessment are documented on **Part B** of risk assessment form 4. Provide the employee with a copy of this risk assessment once completed **It the responsibility of the Line Manager to ensure any remedial actions identified are implemented**		

	Work Environment and Work Equipment	Yes	No	Comments
1	Do you have access to a suitable temporary work space?	☐	☐	
2	Do you have safe and easy access to the work space?	☐	☐	
3	Is there adequate heat, lighting and ventilation to allow you work comfortably?	☐	☐	
4	Is there adequate space to work without twisting, bending, or sitting / standing awkwardly?	☐	☐	
5	Is the work space large enough to accommodate work equipment?	☐	☐	
6	Is the floor free from trailing cables etc. to prevent slip, trips or falls?	☐	☐	
7	Are electrical sockets, plugs and cables in good repair?	☐	☐	
8	Do you have access to a private work area and freedom from disturbances?	☐	☐	
9	Are you aware of how to set up work station correctly? Refer to guidance GD:010 Working from home during COVID-19 Workstation Setup	☐	☐	
10	Have you completed the HSELanD DSE User Awareness Module?	☐	☐	
11	Do you have an escape plan in the event of fire?	☐	☐	
12	Is your temporary workplace fitted with a smoke detector or fire alarm that is regularly checked?	☐	☐	

	Staff Wellbeing	Yes	No	
13	Are you aware of the agreed formal communication system in place?	☐	☐	
14	Are you aware of the supports available to you?	☐	☐	
15	Are you taking scheduled breaks while working from home in order to maintain a healthy work life balance?	☐	☐	
16	Are you aware of how to access supports in the event of systems / ICT failure?	☐	☐	
17	Are you checking HSE.ie for daily updates re: COVID 19?	☐	☐	
Note: staff are encouraged to raise any concerns with their managers to avoid feelings of isolation, fatigue and or stress				

	Incident Management	Yes	No	
19	Are you aware of the arrangements for reporting incidents to the Line Manager?	☐	☐	

Part B	Home Working Risk Assessment Form			
HAZARD & RISK DESCRIPTION	**EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES**	**ADDITIONAL CONTROLS REQUIRED**	**ACTION OWNER**	**DUE DATE**

INITIAL RISK			RISK STATUS		
Likelihood	**Impact**	**Initial Risk Rating**	**Open**	**Monitor**	**Closed**

Appendix 2 Summary of Key Tips for Home Working

HEALTHY WORKING AT HOME

the healthy work company

MONITORING AS A MANAGER Think about the nature of the job, the individual and your culture. Establish whether you need to measure and monitor hours, or output or both.

ROUTINE Start and close the day with a routine. Get dressed, go for a walk, prioritise your jobs.

COMMUNICATE Managers don't be too task focused, ask how someone is and be really interested in the answer. Life is messy (especially right now) and we need to embrace this.

WORKSTATION You may not have the perfect work place or equipment, but get a supportive chair, or consider a stand-up desk. Get up regularly (every 25 minutes) to stretch.

FOOD Think about food prep for the week. Can you batch cook on Sunday? Have healthy snacks in otherwise you will eat the chocolate!

WORK ENVIRONMENT Find a space away from the main home area if possible and definitely not in your bedroom A plant helps.

FRESH AIR Get out at least once, ideally twice a day for a walk, run or cycle.

REGULAR BREAKS & EXERCISE Every 25 minutes get up and stretch, breathe, go outside, go up and down the stairs anything to move your poor sedentary body! Remind yourself by drinking a lot of water (so you have to get up!) or setting an alarm.

SOCIALISATION This is the big one. We all need to talk to others. If physical contact isn't possible, use technology like Zoom or Skype (do this rather than phone - it is easier to see how someone is).

MINIMISE DISTRACTION We produce much better work when we are focused on one thing. Move your phone out of the way, get rid of all the apps which distract you. Get that big thing done early in the morning.