

# NDPH FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Wherever possible, the Nuffield Department of Population Health (NDPH) supports flexible working (including homeworking) to help staff work effectively and manage the balance of their lives between work and home. Requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the need to balance requests with the specific requirements of different teams and the operational needs of the Department.

NDPH follows the [University's policy on flexible working](#). This document provides guidance on the specific processes for NDPH employees. From 1 April 2019, flexible working arrangements need to be agreed in line with the NDPH Flexible Working Policy before they are implemented. A simplified process will apply in situations aiming to make official homeworking agreements that existed before the introduction of this policy, and the Human Resources Team (HR) will contact Heads of Group to organise this.

There are a variety of options for flexible working. These include part-time working, compressed hours, term-time working, staggered hours (for example, starting early in the day and finishing earlier), temporarily adjusting hours, and working from home (either on a regular or an ad hoc basis). Employees may wish to request a temporary or a permanent change to their working arrangements, or to consider other options for balancing work and home life, such as carers' leave, parental leave or a career break. More information on the range of options is available on the [University website](#).

NDPH is the main place of work for most employees, and employees are expected to carry out their work in the Department, and be in the Department during core hours (10am-4pm, Monday-Friday) unless a separate working arrangement has been specifically agreed.

This policy has been agreed by the NDPH Flexible Working Review Group. The current membership is shown on the NDPH Intranet.

HR process and monitor requests for flexible working, report the figures to the Flexible Working Review Group, and bring to their attention any cases that require the Group's input. The Group meet as required, at least twice per year, and are responsible for reviewing this policy and making decisions in specific cases, as required.

## 2. Eligibility for flexible working (including homeworking)

Under the provisions of the Flexible Working Regulations 2014 (set out in Section 9 of the Children and Families Act 2014), all eligible employees have the right to ask their employer for a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment to work flexibly.

To be eligible to make a request for flexible working an individual must:

- be an employee, not a casual or an agency worker;
- have worked for the University continuously for 26 weeks at the date on which the application is made;
- not have made another application to work flexibly during the previous 12 months.

There are some additional requirements for homeworking:

- the role should be performed just as well away from the Department as it would be if the staff member was in the Department;
- appropriate information security/ governance processes and training should be in place;
- the work should have clearly defined objectives that can be easily monitored by the line manager (for example report-writing);
- the individual can be contacted whilst working from home;
- the arrangements should not create additional work for other team members;
- the arrangements should not make it unreasonably difficult to arrange meetings;
- the staff member must not care for children or relatives whilst working from home ;
- the line manager must be satisfied that work performance is satisfactory and will not be affected;
- the agreement should be voluntary and reversible at the Department's or staff member's request.

### 3. Process to make a flexible working request

The member of staff should initiate the process by arranging an **informal meeting** with their line manager to discuss their proposal for flexible working. The employee should state the requested pattern of work, the reasons for the request, and how the proposed working pattern will fit with the needs of the team and the Department. For homeworking arrangements, please also see sections 4 to 6 of this document.

The full process is outlined below:

Stage	Description	Timescales
1	<b>Informal meeting</b> between employee and line manager. -If the request for flexible work can be accommodated, please inform HR using the <a href="#">Pro-forma record of informal agreement</a> . Please go to stage 14. -If the request cannot be accommodated at this stage, or the request is <b>for formal homeworking</b> (see section 4), please go to stage 2.	
2	<b>Formal application:</b> Complete the <a href="#">University's flexible working application form</a> and, for formal homeworking requests, also the homeworking risk assessment ( <a href="#">available on the HR pages of the intranet</a> ) and send to <a href="#">Felicity Polden</a> in HR.	Day 0 (receipt of application by HR)
3	HR will send a confirmation of receipt of the application to the employee.  HR will liaise with the line manager to discuss how the application might be accommodated.	
4	Additional informal meetings between HR, the employee and the line manager may take place in order to gather any required additional information.	
5	If the line manager is able to accommodate the formal request, HR will notify the employee and move to stage 14.	
6	If the line manager is not able to support the request, HR will arrange a <b>formal meeting</b> between the employee and line manager to discuss how the application might be accommodated. (Employees have the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a trade union representative or by a colleague from within the University).	28 days from receipt of the application
7	If necessary, HR will seek advice from the NDPH Flexible Working Review Group.	
8	HR will notify the employee of the Department's decision from the formal meeting.	14 days from the formal meeting
9	-If the request for homeworking is approved, please see stage 14	
10	-If the request for homeworking is not approved, the employee can <b>appeal</b> , by writing to <a href="#">Felicity Polden</a> in HR, setting out the grounds for the appeal.	14 days from receipt of the decision letter
11	HR will arrange a <b>meeting to discuss the appeal</b> . (Employees have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a trade union representative or by a colleague from within the University.)	14 days from receipt of the appeal
12	HR will notify the employee of the Department's decision following the appeal meeting.	14 days from the appeal meeting
13	-If the request for homeworking is approved, please see stage 14	
14	Flexible working approvals need written confirmation from HR (which will include contractual changes if relevant) before they can start. For homeworking, approvals will be subject to H&S and Information Governance conditions, which must also be satisfied before the arrangement can start. Homeworking agreements will normally include a trial period.	

The Flexible Working Regulations 2014 require that the consideration process should normally be completed within three months of first receiving the flexible working request, including the appeal stage. In some cases, particularly where applications need to be considered by the NDPH Flexible Working Review Group, the process may require an extension of the timescales. Any extensions will be agreed with the employee and recorded in writing.

All requests are considered seriously. Requests will be accommodated, wherever possible, but they may be refused if there is a clear reason, such as:

- the burden of additional costs;
- a detrimental effect on the ability to meet the needs of stakeholders, eg funders, collaborators or other Departmental staff;
- an inability to re-organise work among existing staff;
- an inability to recruit additional staff;
- a detrimental impact on quality;
- a detrimental impact on performance (of the individual or the NDPH);
- insufficiency of work during the periods the staff member proposes to work;
- planned structural changes.

#### 4. Types of homeworking arrangements

NDPH has three types of homeworking arrangements:

Homeworking type	Description	Examples	Process	Arrangement
One-off informal	One-off arrangements to work on a specific task, normally for a single day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a specific document</li> <li>• Deal with a domestic emergency</li> <li>• Travel or bad weather disruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request by email to the line manager</li> <li>• Approved by Head of Group or delegated person</li> </ul>	Work on non-confidential information only, unless VPN is already available
Short-term informal	One-off arrangement to work from home during a period of several weeks (usually 2-12 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken leg but signed by doctor to work from home</li> <li>• Trial homeworking arrangement *</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request by email to the line manager</li> <li>• Approved by Head of Group or delegated person, and by HR</li> </ul>	VPN may be required if access to confidential information is needed
Formal	Agreement to work from home on a regular basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either frequent homeworking or regular pattern (eg every second Monday)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal request for flexible working to HR (see section 3)</li> <li>• Request made on the <a href="#">University Form</a> and approved by Head of Group and HR (and the Flexible Working Review Group if required).</li> <li>• Change of contract from HR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represents a contractual change</li> <li>• Reviewed at least annually, as part of the PDR process</li> <li>• VPN access normally required</li> </ul>

\* It is expected that, following the approval of a formal request for homeworking, an informal short trial period will be arranged before the arrangement is formalised. The usual trial period is three months.

#### 5. Practical arrangements specific to homeworking

All the arrangements below are relevant to both formal and informal homeworking, unless otherwise specified.

Formal homeworking arrangements cannot start until a change of contract has been provided and the conditions of the homeworking risk assessment and Information Governance are satisfied.

A simplified process will apply in situations aiming to make official homeworking agreements that existed before the introduction of this policy, and HR will contact Heads of Group to organise this.

## **A. Working hours**

Employees must complete their contractual working hours. The pattern of work should be agreed with the line manager before any homeworking commences. Any changes in working hours will require a separate request for flexible working.

## **B. Availability**

The employee must be contactable by email and by phone during the agreed working hours. NDPH may make home visits if required for health and safety purposes. These will take place during working hours and will be arranged in advance.

Employees will normally arrange meetings with other staff on the days that they are physically present in the Department. If the meetings cannot be arranged on those days, employees may need to attend NDPH during their homeworking days.

Normal holiday and sick leave notification and recording arrangements must be followed. (For details, please see the [HR pages of the NDPH intranet](#)).

## **C. Health and safety**

Employees should take appropriate breaks, which should be incorporated in the agreed work pattern. Employees must comply with the [Working Time Regulations](#).

NDPH has no obligation in respect of cleanliness, space, heating, lighting, ventilation or means of escape for parts of homes used for work.

For informal homeworking arrangements individuals will be responsible for their own health and safety at home; however, a homeworking risk assessment needs to be carried out before a formal homeworking arrangement can start. The [homeworking risk assessment](#) should be completed and included with the [flexible working application form](#). If the home workplace requires any changes for it to be suitable for work, NDPH and the employee will be responsible for making such changes, and NDPH will have to provide the necessary ergonomic devices (eg mouse, chair, ergonomic keyboard). In some cases, it may be necessary for the employee to provide a photograph of their workstation as part of the risk assessment.

The risk assessment should be repeated on an annual basis.

If the employee moves home, they will need to inform their line manager a new risk assessment will need to be carried out.

Employees should report work-related accidents and near misses at home in the usual way, by contacting the Richard Doll Building reception on 01865 743743, [reception.rdb@ndph.ox.ac.uk](mailto:reception.rdb@ndph.ox.ac.uk), and completing an incident/accident report.

## **D. Workplace**

The space should be safe and secure and free of distractions.

Where NDPH is the main place of work, unless required for health and safety reasons (see above), the employee will need to provide and pay for any necessary equipment and consumables. This includes furniture, a phone, a phone line, broadband, a printer, a fire extinguisher, paper, heating and lighting. Any other additional costs associated with homeworking will also be borne by the employee, except in exceptional circumstances.

If the employee plans to work abroad for any period of time (except whilst attending a conference), they will need to make a new flexible working request. There are complex additional issues related to working abroad, including tax and social security implications, and working should not be carried out abroad without previous agreement from HR.

## **E. Caring**

Homeworking is not a substitute for suitable care arrangements. When an employee is working, dependants must be looked after by someone other than the employee. The employee may need to make suitable care arrangements to cover the time when the employee is working. The [MyFamilyCare scheme](#) provides access to emergency back-up childcare and adultcare, a 'speak to an expert' phone line and a wide range of guides and webinars that may be useful for carers.

## **F. IT and information governance**

NDPH's usual practices and procedures will continue to apply under any homeworking arrangement. This includes the Department's [information governance policies and procedures](#), as well as the [University's data protection](#) and [information security policies](#).

Confidential data can only be accessed either via VPN (set up by the NDPH IT Team on an NDPH laptop); an NDPH virtual desktop (also set up by the NDPH IT team, on the employee's own compute for viewing confidential data, without downloading it); or from a computer in the Department. If using their own computer (only non-confidential work, or NDPH virtual desktop), employees must ensure that an anti-virus has been installed, and that the computer has its own username and password that is not shared with other family members. Staff must not download any confidential information onto their own personal laptops (even if they have security or NDPH virtual desktop set up on the laptop), or use OwnCloud or similar systems to transfer confidential information. IT Support will not be able to assist with any IT issues associated with non-NDPH equipment.

Where appropriate to NDPH's needs, NDPH may provide suitable IT equipment that is required to undertake those duties agreed to be undertaken at home. NDPH will be responsible for servicing and maintaining this equipment, and IT Support will be available in these circumstances. Please note that IT Support will not be making home visits; the homeworker will be expected to transport the equipment back and forth to the department for servicing and maintenance. Any equipment purchased by NDPH should be used solely for NDPH work, and it will remain the property of NDPH. NDPH laptops should be made available at all times for PAT tests, upgrades or any other required maintenance or inspection.

## **G. Performance**

The line manager and the employee will agree in advance how the work to be carried out from home will be monitored and measured.

## **H. Insurance**

Employees continue to be covered by the University's liability policies for accident or injury where it can be established that the University is legally liable for the damages arising from the accident or injury.

However, the employee is responsible for informing their insurers and their landlord or mortgage company that they are using their residence as a place of work and of the nature of the work. They are also responsible for checking whether their home insurance policy is affected by homeworking, and will need to confirm that NDPH equipment is covered by a valid insurance policy. NDPH will not cover any increased insurance costs.

## **I. Taxation**

As per section 6.D. above, in exceptional circumstances, NDPH may agree to meet some costs associated with homeworking. Any implications of homeworking on tax are the responsibility of the employee. To find out more, see [HMRC's guidance](#).

## **J. Other**

The employee should adhere to the same policies and levels of professionalism/ standards of behaviour that are expected from them when working in the Department.

Parking permit allocation may be reviewed if a homeworking arrangement is agreed.

## 6. Guidance documents:

- [Information governance policies and procedures](#)
- [University's data protection](#)
- [University's information governance policies](#)
- [Laptop use guidance](#)

## 7. Useful links:

- [University's policy on flexible working](#)
- [Pro-forma record of informal agreement](#)
- [Flexible working formal request form](#)
- [MyFamilyCare scheme](#)
- [Working Time Regulations](#)
- [DSE self-assessment](#)
- [Homeworking risk assessment](#)