

# Teesdale Community Resources

## Working from Home Policy

### Introduction

With the current Coronavirus restrictions home working is a viable option for both the organisation and the individual member of staff.

### Purpose or aim

The purpose of this policy is to set out the criteria and arrangements for home working and to provide a framework for a consistent approach.

### Home environment and facilities

When TCR staff are working from home they must always act in a professional way during working hours. This includes satisfying all TCR policies and reasonable management instructions.

The focus of staff attention during working times should be on work matters.

All TCR staff permitted to work from home must attend to their own health and safety. The requirements of the TCR Lone Working Policy should be followed.

Face to face (in person) meetings involving internal or external customers or partners should not take place at the home of staff.

### Associated costs and liabilities for home working

- TCR does not accept any liability for costs or other issues relating to home working except where these are specifically identified in this policy.
- It is the responsibility of staff to confirm their own insurance provisions are appropriate to their needs.
- Staff planning to work from home under any circumstances are responsible for informing their own insurance company as this may affect their domestic insurance.
- Similarly, a mortgage provider may need to be advised. Staff living in council or private rented accommodation may need to notify their landlord and examine the terms of their lease.
- TCR accepts that it is liable for accidents caused by the authorised use of TCR equipment when used at home in accordance with any instructions.
- If the area being used for home working is also used by other occupants of the property there may be no implications for Council Tax.
- If the area is solely used for business and not available to other occupants at other times, then there may be a change of definition and staff should check their individual circumstances with their local council.
- Currently staff are not permitted to work from home routinely without the permission of the managers. Management and Board of Trustees may review this in the future, where a further working from home policy will be implemented.

- If a member of staff temporarily cannot work from home, they must contact their manager immediately and agree a temporary alternative place of work.
- TCR will endeavour to provide and maintain any equipment, to an appropriate standard to facilitate working from home. Any damage or significant “wear and tear” to equipment provided by TCR must be reported to the CEO at the earliest opportunity.
- TCR will ensure that sufficient management arrangements are in place to support staff working from home. This will include ensuring staff are not isolated, and that regular supervision and team meeting arrangements are in place.
- TCR will ensure that regular conversation takes place to review the home working arrangements.
- TCR CEO and Board of Trustees will: Ensure that home working is only approved and supported when an acceptable business case has been made for it. They will also determine the provision of removal of home working and review home working arrangements.
- This policy will be measured against the requirements of employment legislation, Government advice and best practice.
- Considerations will be made by the CEO and Board of Trustees to reimburse staff for any out of pocket expenses they incur whilst working from home due to the Coronavirus situation. Staff who wish to request such consideration must apply via email to the CEO, providing any necessary receipts or statements.

## **Health and Safety**

Teesdale Community Resources recognises that they have the same health and safety responsibilities for home workers as for any other workers.

### **Home and lone working without direct supervision – health and wellbeing**

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

Keeping in touch with those working from home and maintaining regular contact ensures staff are healthy and safe. Home working can cause work-related stress and affect people’s mental health.

Being away from managers and colleagues could make it difficult to get proper support and if contact is poor, staff may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned. This can affect stress levels and mental health.

TCR will:

- Keep in regular contact with all staff, via email, phone and through online platforms.
- Maintain weekly team meetings via an online platform such as Microsoft Teams
- Provide case supervision and support to individual team members.
- Provide general supervision via online platforms or by phone to individual staff members.
- Promote an environment of keeping in touch, team spirit and open/honest discussions.
- Support staff to maintain a work, life balance by encouraging staff to keep to normal working hours and appropriately switching off at the end of each day.
- Encourage staff to work at a pace which feels comfortable to them, such as allowing reasonable time in-between calls with carers to allow time to gather thoughts, document the conversation and speak with colleagues as necessary.

### **Working with display screen equipment**

For those people who are working at home on a long-term basis, the risks associated with using display screen equipment must be controlled. This includes doing home workstation assessments.

**However, there is no increased risk from DSE work for those working at home temporarily. So, in that situation employers do not need to do home workstation assessments.**

As good practice, TCR will provide all staff with a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment and encourage staff to use it.

There are some steps that staff 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 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**

TCR will try to meet specialised DSE equipment needs to staff working from home where possible.

TCR permit staff who are working from home on a temporary basis to take equipment home from the office e.g. chair, keyboards, mouse, risers, etc.

Staff are encouraged to try to find ways of creating a comfortable working environment (e.g. supporting cushions).

### **Confidentiality and GDPR**

- Confidential and Sensitive material must not be circulated electronically outside of TCR framework.
- All staff to be aware of where they are having conversations within their homes e.g. are there other people around that could hear?
- If customers/partners know that staff are working from home, staff are to reassure them that the conversation is still private and they can speak freely.
- Staff to be aware of the positioning of their computer/laptop screen and sit somewhere where the screen is not visible through a window for example.

TCR staff will observe the following:

- To not leave any documents with sensitive information visible within the house. If you do not have anywhere to lock documents away, keep these in a bag away from other people and general view as minimum.
- If a data security breach is identified, such as a suspected computer hack, people seeing information that they should not, loss of physical documents etc., staff must inform the CEO immediately.

### **Staff Pay/Reporting Sickness and Annual Leave**

- TCR Staff working from home due to the Coronavirus situation will be paid as normal in accordance with their contract of employment.

- Staff needing to self-isolate for 14 days because they or a member of their household is suspected of contracting coronavirus and they are well enough to carry out work from home, will be paid as normal in accordance with their contract of employment.
- If a staff member becomes ill whilst working from home, they are to follow TCR usual sickness absence reporting. If a staff member is not well enough to make a call, they will need to ask someone to do this for them.
- TCR's usual sickness absence entitlements apply to any staff absent from work due to sickness. The government have confirmed that there will be no waiting days for any certified sickness connected to Coronavirus for Statutory Sick pay. Staff may be asked to produce a doctor's note if they are unfit for work. For Coronavirus sickness, SSP will be paid from day one of staff absence. Staff may be asked to obtain a fit for work note from their GP before returning to work.
- Staff can talk to their Line Manager about the use of annual leave and toil if working from home becomes impractical with other family members present and or family/household circumstances. TCR will consider reasonable requests to work flexible hours if they are also providing care or have a parental role to a member of the household

### General

- The Government will be continuously monitoring the guidance and advice it provides. TCR will follow this guidance as it emerges.
- TCR CEO will keep all staff updated as information is received.

**Signed:**



**Date:**

24/4/2021

**Date of Review:**