

# Home Working and Young Workers

While the world battles Covid-19, everyone who can is now having to work from home. For young workers and their managers this may present additional considerations and challenges to be overcome.

## Workstation and DSE

The HSE have advised that for those working from home temporarily home workstation assessments are not needed. Advice could be provided for home workers on completing their own basic assessment at home.

Younger workers could well be living at home or in shared accommodation so are more likely to have to work where they can, as opposed to choosing where would be the most suitable place. As a result their workspace may have distractions and not allow for the ideal IT set-up. Things to consider:

- Does the employee have the correct IT kit, for example screen, mouse?
- Does the employee have a desk or makeshift desk? Is space for a desk set-up available? Can a kitchen table be used, for example, if a desk isn't available?
- Can the employee work comfortably? Will using cushions make the seating more comfortable?
- Does the employee know how to get help with IT or kit issues?
- Breaks should be taken from DSE work (a minimum of 5 minutes each hour).
- The employee should change position regularly, get-up and stretch.
- If an employee doesn't have the correct work equipment, breaks should be taken every 25 minutes to stretch.



## Work

Younger workers who are less experienced in their roles will need additional support. This may be both in terms of their existing work and to help maintain their motivation over extended timescales when working from home. A lack of support in times of increased pressure or changed work situations could exacerbate stress and anxiety.

- Can the planned work be completed safely; are control measures needed?
- Speak to employees and find out if they have concerns about their work while based at home and address these as soon as possible.
- Encourage employees to let you know if they have any queries, questions or worries.
- Make sure they have access to and are familiar with procedures, processes etc.
- Encourage interaction between team members. Would it be helpful for a more senior employee to mentor a younger team member?
- Are they motivated? New or different work may help with motivation and prove to be a positive distraction.
- Discuss and agree daily aims and goals.
- Make frequent contact.
- Use online meetings, video calling and training.
- Think about your tone and wording.
- Listen carefully to their tone of voice, are they feeling stressed or anxious?



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## Wellbeing

- Regularly check that your employees are ok, keeping in place lines of communication and detecting if they are becoming stressed or feeling down.
- Support communication between team members.
- Encourage employees to:
  - define work and rest time
  - set up a designated workspace
  - get dressed
  - write a daily to-do list
  - contribute regularly to team chats/group emails and encourage 'non-work' conversations.
  - ask for support when needed.
- Put in place an emergency point of contact, where they can get help if they need it.
- If an employee is ill, they should take time off.
- Encourage employees to do some sort of exercise at lunch time even if its walking round the kitchen or stretching.
- While there is a degree of confinement, encourage employees to find something they enjoy doing, which is within the restrictions.



## Stress and anxiety

- Offer confidential support if an employee is feeling anxious or stressed.
- All employers have a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees. In the current climate there is possibly little which can be done to alleviate their feelings of anxiety, but by being there and listening you may help them.
- Be mindful that an employee may have a family member who is ill, or a family member who is classed as vulnerable.
- Promote wellbeing and a culture which encourages staff to make this their priority.
- Know where to get further help or where to direct an employee to.

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