



FAQ's for Employers in relation to Home-Working on a temporary basis

What are the key duties of employers under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act?

Employers have specific duties to ensure the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees. These duties include the employee's workspace where employees are required to work from home.

Key duties that apply to the work activity and workspace 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 safe equipment including personal protective equipment, where necessary,
- providing information, instruction, training and supervision regarding safety and health to employees, and
- having plans in place for emergencies.

What duties do employees have under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act?

If you are an employee working from home, you have a responsibility to take reasonable care of yourself and other people who may be affected by the work you are doing.

Employees must:

- cooperate with their employer and follow their instructions,
- protect themselves and others from harm during the course of their work, e.g. take care of any equipment provided and report any defects immediately to the employer,

- report any injury arising from work activity to their employer immediately, and
- follow procedures that have been put in place by their employer.

What responsibilities do I have as an employer in relation to home workers?

Responsibility for health and safety at work rests with the employer whether or not that work is being done at the worker's home.

Employers need to consult with their employees to assure themselves:

- that the employee is aware of any specific risks regarding working from home,
- that the work activity and the temporary workspace are suitable,
- that they provide suitable equipment to enable the work to be done, and
- that there is a pre-arranged means of contact.

What equipment must I provide for my employees to enable them to work from home?

Equipment already in use in the workplace e.g. laptop, mouse, monitor, keyboard and headset could be used for temporary home-working. If the employer provides any equipment, it must be in good condition and suitable for the work activity.

Note: Suitable equipment already available in the employee's home can be considered for temporary work from there.



What questions do I need to ask employees in relation to their temporary home work space?

As an employer, you must determine whether the temporary home workspace is suitable for the work you want the employee to do.

Examples of questions you could ask about the temporary workspace include the following:

- Do you have a suitable space to work from temporarily?
- Can you access the workspace easily and safely?
- Is there adequate light, ventilation and heat to allow you to work comfortably?
- Is there enough space to allow you to work without twisting, bending or sitting/standing awkwardly?
- Is there enough workspace to accommodate the equipment or other materials needed for the activity?
- Is the floor clear and dry, e.g., kept clear of electrical cables or anything else you could trip over / slip on?
- Is the workspace free of clutter?
- Are electrical sockets, plugs and cords in good condition e.g. no charring, exposed wiring or frayed cables?

As an employer what do I need to consider when preparing vulnerable workers, those with disabilities, or sensitive risk workers to temporarily work from home? (e.g. pregnant employees, young persons and those with mobility needs)

In requesting an employee from a sensitive risk group to work from home, the employer should consider the suitability of the person to the work in the context of their home working space. It is essential that work tasks and working conditions do not adversely affect the health of employees with a disability, pregnant employees, and young workers.

The employer should consider the following in relation to the employee's work and workspace:

- safe access to the workspace
- the equipment necessary to complete the work
- sufficient workspace
- adequate lighting, heat and ventilation to allow comfortable working
- adequate breaks
- regular contact
- emergency contacts and procedures

Further information on Sensitive Risk Groups can be found here:

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Sensitive_Risk_Groups/

What do I need to consider where employees are using computers and digital technology when home working?

Employees should be given information on issues associated with the work to be undertaken at home. For temporary home working the following should be considered:

- varying work tasks to ensure that employees are not working in the same position for long periods of time.
- advising employees to review where the screen is located e.g. situated away from window so as not to cause glare
- placing equipment so as to minimise twisting or overreaching
- having enough work space for the equipment and any other materials needed to carry out the work
- encouraging employees to take regular breaks and to stand and move for one minute every hour

For further information use our 'Position Yourself Well' guidance which can be given to employees working from home on a temporary basis.

https://www.besmart.ie/fs/doc/handout_cutout_f_or_web.pdf



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What other general supports and means of communication do I need to put in place for home workers?

Working from home can result in employees feeling isolated, working longer hours and blurring the lines between work and family life. It is important that employees know they have support at all times during working hours.

Employers should consider the following:

- ensuring all contact details for employees are on file and agree means of contact
- arranging regular updates via phone, web or email with each employee
- providing employees with emergency contact numbers
- arranging IT support in the event of technical problems where relevant
- providing employees with information detailing when it is important for them to contact their employer
- making sure work is organised in such a way that the employee takes regular breaks and can separate his/her work life and daily life
- providing employees with regular feedback on their work
- encouraging employees to maintain contact with colleagues

Need Further Advice?

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