

21 Managing Staff Remotely

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Introduction

1. This chapter sets out the Defence procedures and guidance on the health and safety issues related to Defence personnel habitually working at locations that are remote from their management Chain of Command and parent organisation, whether it be working on the move, working from home or working from satellite locations.
2. Modern technology allows people to balance home life commitments with work commitments and for Defence to be flexible in meeting its business needs, this has resulted in more people working remotely from their management Chain of Command and their peers. This change in working patterns brings benefits to the business and Defence personnel but has the potential to introduce additional hazards that need to be managed. When business resilience plans conclude working from an office or base is not possible, working from home or another remote location may temporarily become the default working practice.
3. The employer owes a duty of care to personnel regularly working at locations that are remote from the parent organisation (e.g. home or a workplace based at another site) and have restricted contact with their management or peers.
4. Flexible working patterns that require personnel to be managed remotely are often referred to as: working from home, homeworking, telecommuting, teleworking, e-commuting, e-work, remote working, mobile working etc.
5. Further information and guidance on flexible working patterns and other associated information (e.g. security, working patterns, flexible working requests) can be found within Service Personnel Policy – Service Conditions documents (for Service personnel), and Policy, Rules & Guidance (PRG) documents (for civilian personnel), Defence Instructions and Notices (DINs), Defence Advice Notices (DAN), site instructions etc. which are available on the Defence Intranet.

Roles and Responsibilities

Managers

6. Managers have the same responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety of Defence personnel irrespective of the location at which they work (at home or other locations) and should ensure that appropriate furniture, equipment and services are provided to those who work remotely. This chapter shall be applied equally for managing Defence personnel working remotely as to those working within the parent organisation's main location.

7. Managers must ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out and recorded for the working conditions and activities at the remote workplace and shall ensure that those working at satellite locations are not placed at greater risk compared to those working at the parent organisation's premises. The findings of the risk assessments and any necessary control measures to be implemented (e.g. the provision and use of appropriate furniture, special equipment, supplies, services such as primary health care / medical insurance for overseas activities) shall be explained and copied to personnel. The manager must be satisfied that the control measures are understood. Arrangements, appropriate to the residual risk, shall be put in place to provide assurance that effective control measures are being complied with and are monitored. Local Health and Safety Advisers (at parent organisation and host location) should be consulted to provide help and guidance on the best way to manage assessments, assist with training and provide advice on specific issues. Where any Infectious Disease may affect your work activities or working environment risk assessment should be reviewed in line with Defence Guidance (example Covid-19).

8. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that remote workers continue to feel involved in the business of the organisation with regular contact with management and peers. Regular contact is essential to maintain knowledge of organisational developments and personal development whilst minimising the likelihood of little or no contact leading to social isolation (stress and depression).

9. Managers shall ensure that periodic health and safety inspections of the workplace are carried out, this duty should include remote locations regularly occupied by Defence personnel in the course of their duty to monitor working practices and provide assurance that the workplace and work equipment is maintained in a safe condition. Where possible a formal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be in place for Defence personnel based at another Government department or Defence establishment, or in commercial premises, detailing who has what responsibility to ensure suitable reporting takes place and that any problems can be addressed effectively¹.

10. Arrangements shall be put in place to monitor the safety and wellbeing of Defence personnel who have a formal homeworking agreement where the majority of their work is conducted away from the office, their manager must review risk

¹ See DSA01-2 Chapter 13 – Duty of Care of Heads of Establishments

assessments and ensure that the workplace remains safe and that security requirements are being maintained.

11. As the control that can be exercised over Defence personnel working from home and / or other sites is limited, those individuals have a more prominent role in the management of their health and safety than they would for office-based staff. Managers should take this into account before agreeing that individuals are permitted to work remotely.

All Personnel

12. Defence personnel operating a flexible way of working arrangement have the same duties under HSWA as all other employees and are required:

- a. to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of anyone else who might be affected by their acts or omissions;
- b. to co-operate with their management as necessary to allow it to comply with statutory obligations; and
- c. not deliberately or recklessly interfere with, or misuse, anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

13. Personnel lodging in a satellite office or workplace must ensure that they comply with all host organisation health and safety arrangements; and co-operate with their managers and bring to their attention any concerns that they may have about workplace health and safety issues.

14. To minimise the potential for viral or bacterial contamination (colds, flu, etc.), official equipment should be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition, this should be achieved locally via the local office procedures for cleaning. However, it may be necessary for Defence personnel to use cleaning equipment themselves where workstations are shared or for homeworkers, etc. and the provision of antiseptic wipes or similar supplies may be required.

15. When working from home, Defence personnel shall also ensure that they and other persons, who may be affected, including other residents and visitors, do not interfere with, and are not endangered by, work activities undertaken using MOD provided equipment. MOD equipment provided for homeworkers to undertake their work flexibly is to be used for that purpose only and shall not be used by family members or other residents or visitors to the home.

Information, Instruction and Training

16. For Defence personnel working remotely from their management, enhanced training will often be needed in many aspects of work. This should include health and safety training, particularly in understanding good DSE workstation set-up, safe practices for manual handling, risk assessment and personal safety issues e.g. lone working. The 'softer aspects' of working remotely or in isolation also need to be addressed, for example being self-disciplined, planning the day, managing time,

communicating with managers and peers; without training and support all are issues that could lead to increased work-related stress problems.

17. Training methods should also be considered; it could be difficult for those with caring commitments to attend full-time training courses, so the availability of suitable on-line or e-courses may need to be sought (e.g. Civil Service Learning or Defence Academy). It may be more practical to train Defence personnel who work remotely to conduct their own risk assessments, workstation assessments, manual handling assessments etc. so that they become the competent assessor. Such assessments should be presented to the individual's manager for agreement and action in the same way as those of an office-based worker.

Risk Assessment

18. The required risk assessments should consider all aspects of the work environment as well as the activities but limited to the immediate work area, furniture and equipment and the way it will be installed, used, maintained and disposed.

19. If the business need requires Defence personnel to work from multiple locations, the risk assessment must identify suitable equipment and provision of manual handling requirements including any ancillary equipment e.g. when frequently using a laptop at a location, a docking station may be required linked to a full-size separate monitor, keyboard and mouse.

20. Where the workplace is located in domestic premises, the risk assessment should not include normal household areas or functions (e.g. kitchens and making refreshments). It shall however include safe access and egress, the potential of harm to any other residents, family and visitors both social and official as well as any hazard posed by pets to official visitors or within the designated work area.

21. Defence personnel working at home are not expected to be carrying out hazardous processes or using specialist equipment that would require provision of firefighting equipment or first aid equipment. Before managers agree to remote working on anything other than 'low risk' activities, a formal risk assessment should be completed, and any necessary control measures implemented.

Retention of Records

22. Risk assessments and associated documents should be retained in accordance with the requirements of JSP 375, Volume 1, Chapter 39 (Retention of Records).

Related Documents

23. The following documents should be consulted in conjunction with this chapter:

- a. JSP 375, Volume 1;
 - (1) Chapter 02 – Office & General Workplace Safety;
 - (2) Chapter 04 – Workplace Inspections;

- (3) Chapter 08 – Risk Assessment;
 - (4) Chapter 10 – Manual Handling;
 - (5) Chapter 12 – Working with Display Screen Equipment;
 - (6) Chapter 17 – Stress in the Workplace;
 - (7) Chapter 18 – Lone Working;
 - (8) Chapter 23 – Electrical Safety; and
 - (9) Chapter 39 – Retention of Records.
- b. Other MOD Publications;
- (1) DSA01.1 – Defence Policy for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection;
 - (2) DSA01.2 Chapter 2 – Requirement for Safety and Environmental Management Systems in Defence;
 - (3) DSA01.2 Chapter 4 – Risk Management in Health, Safety & Environmental Protection;
 - (4) DSA01.2 Chapter 12 – Duty of Care of Heads of Establishments
 - (5) Service Personnel Policy – Service Conditions documents; and
 - (6) Policy, Rules & Guidance documents (civilian personnel).
- c. Legislation and Guidance;
- (1) [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations;](#)
 - (2) [HSE L24 – Workplace health, safety and welfare;](#)
 - (3) [HSE L26 – Work with display screen equipment;](#)
 - (4) [HSE L23 Manual Handling Operations Regulations & Approved Code of Practice;](#)
 - (5) [INDG226 – Homeworking;](#)
 - (6) [INDG 73 – Protecting Lone Workers.](#)