

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR APPLICANTS FOR POSTS WHICH ARE DESIGNATED AS HOME BASED

The post you are applying for is designated as home based. This means that the successful candidate will work from home for either a percentage of, or all their time, excluding visits or business trips.

As part of our recruitment process we need to assure ourselves that the successful candidate is able to work from home. This means that they have suitable facilities for a home office appropriate to the needs of their role. We do this by asking successful candidate to complete a risk assessment of his/ her proposed homeworking environment. This enables us to identify any particular issues or obstacles to successful homeworking, and to develop an action plan about how to address them. In rare cases, where we consider the homeworking environment to be unsuitable to effective working, we may not be able to proceed with the offer of a post, even if you were considered to be the best candidate. However, we would wish to stress that this is very rare, and most arrangements are very successful.

The Risk Assessment form will be sent to the successful candidate and the post will be offered subject to the provision of a satisfactory homeworking environment.

Please find attached the Homeworking Policy. If appointed, this will form part of the terms and conditions under which you will work, and will be incorporated into your contract of employment. Please familiarize yourself with our overall approach and the provisions of the policy.

If you have any queries or concerns about this process please contact me:

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Tony Tidey

Wellbeing Officer – Development and Personnel Office

THE METHODIST COUNCIL

HOMWORKING POLICY

1. Policy statement

The Methodist Council recognises that homeworking may be the most appropriate arrangement for employees fulfilling certain posts, particularly those not part of an integral work group. Developments in information technology now mean that certain office functions can be carried out remotely, without any reduction in effectiveness. The Methodist Council therefore supports homeworking when there is a clear case of business efficiency. This policy applies to lay staff employed in the Connexional Team. It also applies to staff members who are employed by the Methodist Council but are not part of the Connexional Team. For the avoidance of doubt, this policy does not apply to ordained ministers who are stationed in the Connexional Team or in a post under the control of the Methodist Council

This policy applies to posts formally designated as home based as expressed in contracts of employment, on the basis of business or operational need. Such contracts are established on the basis of business need, and are appointed to on the explicit understanding that the postholder will be based at home from the commencement of the contract of employment.

This policy does not apply to posts where the postholder has sought and obtained permission to work from home, either at the commencement or during the contract of employment, on the basis of their personal circumstances or their right to request homeworking under flexible working legislation. Such posts are not formally designated as home based and this procedure is not applicable to any staff member working under any such arrangement (see Section Two below for a definition of homeworking).

Our Development and Personnel Policy Framework is drawn up within the context of the Methodist Church's core values and evident behaviours. These inform and guide our approach as an employer. These are available on the Methodist Church website. The core values which specifically impact upon this policy are: trust, honesty and openness; personal and professional integrity, and equality, fairness and justice. Our evident behaviours embody the principles of good progress towards excellence, good planning of work and good stewardship of time. The Homeworking Policy is written within the context of these values and behaviours and forms part of the Church's Wellbeing Strategy.

2. Definition of homeworking

Homeworking is defined as the staff member's post being formally defined as working from his/her home instead of travelling into a separate fixed workplace. (This is separate to informal arrangements whereby an employee may work from home on an occasional basis to complete specific pieces of work. These informal arrangements are outside the scope of this policy. Equally, arrangements agreed with individuals to work from home on a full or part time basis in order to accommodate their personal circumstances are not covered by the definition of homeworking for the purposes of this policy, although some of its principles would apply: for more details see section 20 below).

Homeworking may operate in a number of ways:

Working at home 100% of the time;

Working at home for a percentage of the time and making outside visits for the balance;

Working at home for a percentage of the time and working in the office for the balance.

3. Legal requirements

The Methodist Council is required under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its staff members. This includes work that may be undertaken from the home environment.

In every homeworking situation arrangements must be in place to ensure that there is effective communication, planning and co-ordination of health and safety matters.

4. General Responsibilities of the Methodist Council

Once a member of staff has been recruited to a post which is designated as home based and before they have taken up that post, a risk assessment of the home environment and work practices at home must be undertaken and recorded. This will be carried out by the staff member, who will submit it to the Line Manager for approval. The Line Manager will decide, in consultation with the homeworker, what arrangements and/or adaptations must be made to ensure health and safety. Unless a safe environment is provided and maintained in accordance with legislative requirements and HSE advice, homeworking will not be permitted and the homebased post may need to be offered to another applicant. The suitability of the accommodation for home based working will be considered by means of a risk assessment of premises and work arrangements and the ability to accommodate the required equipment and furniture.

All necessary arrangements for health and safety must have been agreed and implemented before the staff member takes up their post. This will include the provision of furniture and/or equipment by the Methodist Council if necessary, taking into account the facilities existing in the individual's home. The Methodist Council reserves the right to provide or not provide whatever furniture or equipment it considers necessary for the safe working of the staff member. If the staff member refuses to accept any of the furniture or equipment required by the Methodist Council s/he will not be allowed to take up the home based post. It is not the responsibility of the Methodist Council to provide furniture for staff in more than one location except in exceptional circumstances.

Homeworking arrangements must be monitored by the Line Manager to ensure they have been implemented effectively, and that they continue to be suitable.

Participants in this homeworking policy are required to co-operate with reasonable safety measures in the room set aside for the Methodist Council's work. A fire extinguisher, first aid kit and smoke alarm must be provided by the homeworker, at the Methodist Council's expense. Any accidents occurring while working on the Methodist Council's business must be recorded following the agreed procedure, including being reported to the line manager. The member of staff should consult a medical practitioner if they are concerned about the injury.

5. Place of work

It will be a condition of homeworking that staff members are based at a named location which will normally be their main private residence. If they are partially home-based, their work location will also be a named Methodist Council or Church premises. Before staff members begin home working, they must inform anyone with an interest in the property of their intentions, to ensure that there are no terms and conditions to prevent them from working at home.

6. Risk assessments

As noted above, the suitability of the accommodation will be assessed by the staff member and submitted for approval to the line manager. In recruitment to posts which are designated as homebased the suitability of the applicant's home for homeworking will be considered as part of the selection process. The assessment form at Appendix A must be used. The risk assessment will consider the suitability of the accommodation, facilities and work arrangements. The detailed findings will be recorded by the staff member and reviewed by the Line Manager, so that any actions for improvement or modification can be implemented by the staff member.

If there is any doubt about the suitability of the accommodation this will be discussed with the Development and Personnel Office before the Line Manager makes a final decision. The decision of the Wellbeing Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

Each staff member has a statutory responsibility for their own safety. The Methodist Council will pay for electrical testing of the electrical circuitry of the area used for home-based working if this is deemed necessary as a result of the risk assessment. If there is a need to provide extra sockets, rewire the accommodation or repair existing heating systems, this will be the responsibility of the staff member and a refusal to do so will mean the appointment of the individual to a home based working arrangement will not be permitted.

Health and safety information and training will be given to the staff member (e.g. on VDU use, reporting problems etc) where this has not previously been provided.

If home workers wish to change the room in their home which they use as an office, they should first notify their Line Manager. The Line Manager will then decide on the suitability of the proposed new office. All expenses of re-siting shall be borne by the employee.

7. Maintenance of furniture and equipment and safety standards

The Methodist Council will provide a table, chair and storage facilities so that files can be secured if those available in the premises are not considered to be suitable. Staff members will be required to sign an inventory of the equipment received.

Any equipment provided by the Methodist Council, including hardware and software, must be used mainly by the Methodist Council's employees for Methodist Council purposes, and priority given to this. The member of staff is responsible for storing the equipment, and maintaining it in good order for return to the Methodist Council when staff cease to be home-based, or cease to be employed by the Methodist Council for whatever reason. The Methodist Council is responsible for the maintenance and repair of any equipment it provides. It may however delegate this responsibility to the homeworker for reasons of practicality. Software supplied by the Methodist Council must not be removed, nor disabled, and no new software must be loaded

without the written authorisation of the Administration & Technology Co-ordinator in the Connexional Team.

The staff member is responsible for the care of any furniture and equipment that is provided by the Methodist Council, and for the working environment. He/she must ensure that their Buildings and House Contents Insurance is adequate and comprehensive, and must ensure that they notify their insurer that they are working from home. The staff member shall provide proof of adequate insurance cover to their Line Manager. Staff members must check their furniture and equipment regularly for signs of damage etc and report any problems immediately to their Line Manager.

The Methodist Council may require periodic access to the staff member's home for inspection, servicing, repair and replacement of any furniture and equipment it has provided, on reasonable notice. PAT testing of the electrical equipment provided by the Methodist Council may be carried out by the Methodist Council at least every five years and supplemented with regular visual checks by the staff member. The electrical circuitry of the area used for home-based working must be tested every five years and any necessary repairs paid for by the staff member. It is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that PAT testing and the other electrical tests referred to above are carried out. Reimbursement of any costs incurred by the staff member for PAT testing will be made by the Methodist Council.

Equipment provided by the Methodist Council must not be used for personal purposes.

8. Salaries

Homeworkers staff members will be eligible for London Allowance if their post works in a geographical area which attracts London Allowance. This will apply regardless of whether they are based wholly or partly at home.

Staff members who are home-based will continue to be employed by the Methodist Council and are not eligible for self-employed status.

9. Reporting of sickness absence

Home workers staff will be required to comply with the full terms of the Sickness Absence Policy. This means that the reporting of absence on account of sickness must take place in the same way as for office based staff.

10. Planning, Development and Review (PDR) Cycle

All homeworkers staff will be required to participate in the PDR cycle and these may take place at an office location of the Methodist Council, and of the Council's choosing. Staff must also participate in performance management activities such as target setting and monitoring of work outputs.

11. Stationary Supplies

Home workers should make arrangements to order stationary and other equipment supplies through mechanisms agreed with their line manager, using existing Methodist Council supplies and contracts where these exist. Where these do not exist, or items are not available (such as specific printer cartridges) home workers must purchase their own supplies, with the line

manager's prior approval. Appropriate reimbursement will be made. Supplies provided by the Methodist Council may not be used for personal purposes.

12. Hours of work

Homeworkers will be expected to fulfil their weekly contractual hours of employment with the Methodist Council, and if they work flexitime, the normal procedures will apply unless staff members, for good reason, agree individual working arrangements with their Line Manager. All home-based staff may be required to complete a standard monthly time sheet for submission to their Line Manager. During working hours, staff members will be expected to be available for contact by their line manager, church colleagues and any members of their client-base or work group. Equally, staff members with childcare and other caring responsibilities are required to make appropriate arrangements for the care of dependants whilst working from home. It is not possible to care for dependants whilst homeworking.

13. Travel to the office

a. Staff based at home 100% of their working week

Staff members in this category will be deemed to commence their business mileage or public transport travel expenses when they carry out business travel from their home. This will include visits to Methodist Council offices for meetings, training courses etc. Expenses which may be claimed are set out in the Travel Policy, which is available on the intranet.

b. Staff based at home for only part of their working week

Where a staff member's official base is a Methodist Council premises for a proportion of the week (for example 3 days based at home/2 days based in an office), there will be no reimbursement of home to office expenses for those days on which they are designated to be based away from home. In these circumstances business mileage or other travel costs may be claimed from their Methodist Council place of work.

Business mileage/travel expenses will be payable at the appropriate rate, and will attract the normal deductions.

14. Facilities in the Methodist Council's offices available to homeworkers

Homeworkers visiting any Methodist Council offices may have facilities made available to them for research and meetings but a workstation or desk will not be provided unless they are only working from home for a part of their total contracted hours. If this is the case, they may be required to share a desk with other homeworkers or part-time staff, or desks temporarily vacant whilst a staff member is on leave.

Homeworkers staff will continue to receive support from administrative staff allocated to their cluster or elsewhere if available, but they are expected to produce their own word processing.

15. Staff Members' Responsibilities/Methodist Council's responsibilities

Methodist Council Responsibilities	Staff Members' Responsibilities
To consider the initial risk assessment made by the homeworker of the area to be designated as the home office, and determine what health and safety measures should be put in place..	To make the initial risk assessment of the area which is to be the home office.
To pay for PAT electrical testing if required.	To pay for implementation of the recommendations of the PAT test, and for on-going wear and tear to the electrical system in the homeworking area.
To provide the following office furniture (if required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table • Chair • Storage 	To report any faults with this furniture to the line manager.
To consider requests from the homeworker to change the room designated as a home office.	To make requests for a change of office location if wished.
Maintenance of equipment and furniture provided by the Methodist Council.	To return equipment and furniture provided at the end of the contract.
To repair/replace equipment and furniture provided by the Methodist Council as required.	To keep equipment and furniture in good order, both own and that provided by the Methodist Council, and to report signs of damage to such equipment.
Periodic access to the work area for testing and inspection.	To allow access for testing and inspection.
To provide the following ICT equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PC or laptop • Broadband router (if not in place) • Printer • Mobile phone (if required) 	To maintain such equipment in good working order, and report any faults to the line manager.
To reimburse the cost of broadband and business calls made from a land line.	To make regular claims for re-imbusement.
If the employee wishes to move home, to consider any requests for relocation of the home office.	If moving home, to make a request to have a homebased office in a different place.
If the employee wishes to become office rather than home based, to consider such requests.	If wishing to become office based, to make such a request to the line manager.
Consider any health condition notified by the staff member which may be affected by homeworking, and take appropriate action.	Notify the Methodist Council of any health condition which may be affected by working from home;
To ensure the homeworker has in place the necessary permission to work from home from their landlord/mortgage provider, and has appropriate insurance in place.	Obtain written confirmation from his/her landlord/mortgage provider that they are aware of his/her intentions to work from home, and confirmation of insurance being in place.
To act on information received from the homeworker about any injury or illness which the staff members believes is attributable to working from home.	Inform the Line Manager of any injury or illness which occurs that is directly attributed to work;

To ensure that the Methodist Council's Sickness Absence Policy is applied sensitively and fairly.	Comply with the Methodist Council's Sickness Absence Policy with respect to the reporting of sickness, and all other relevant policies and procedures.
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16. Use of ICT facilities

Homeworkers may be granted remote access of ICT facilities such as the Methodist Church House intranet site and email system. The exact nature of the ICT facilities to be provided to homeworkers will be agreed with the Line Manager before the commencement of home based working, in consultation with the Administration & Technology Co-ordinator if necessary. If usage of the Methodist Church email account is not granted, homeworkers must not use their personal email accounts for Methodist Council business, but must create an email account the name of which must be agreed with their line manager.

It will not be expected that access to key Methodist Council ICT systems such as financial or accounting systems will be agreed due to the data security implications of remote access.

The Methodist Council will provide the following ICT equipment for all homeworkers:

- A personal computer or laptop
- A broadband router (if the homeworker does not already have one)
- A printer
- A mobile telephone (if one is required)
- Office furniture (if that available to the homeworker is not considered suitable)

17. Reimbursement of homeworking expenses

The Methodist Council will reimburse the following expenses incurred by homeworkers:

- The cost of a broadband internet access account
- The cost of business telephone calls made from a home telephone.

18. Movement of home

Homeworkers should not move their main private residence without informing the Methodist Council. The Line Manager will decide whether the proposed new home location is acceptable to the Methodist Council, using the criteria of effective service delivery. If staff relocate to an area not acceptable to the Methodist Council, their home-based working arrangements will be terminated and there will be no right of appeal. This may mean that either they will work in designated office premises chosen by the Methodist Council, or if this is not possible their employment will be terminated. Where staff members move home to an acceptable location they must make arrangements for the safe removal and reinstallation of any equipment belonging to the Methodist Council. These arrangements must be approved by the Line Manager. The expenses of moving the furniture and equipment will not be borne by the Council.

19. Terms of contract

Homeworkers who wish to become office-based, may apply to the Methodist Council to change their terms and conditions of employment. Consideration will be given to reasonable requests, but any change to office-based working will depend on the availability of accommodation and the cost of relocating furniture and equipment. A homeworking contract is a permanent contractual arrangement, and the Methodist Council is under no obligation to agree to any request for a staff member to become office based.

20. Informal homeworking arrangements

As noted at section two 'Definition of Homeworking', informal arrangements are outside the scope of this formal scheme. However, all staff members who work under an informal arrangement are required to abide by the following provisions:

- a) To carry out an initial risk assessment of the premises, furniture, equipment and electrical system to be used for homeworking, and provide this to their line manager and Wellbeing Officer for comment and approval;
- b) To make any modifications required by the risk assessment to the premises, furniture, equipment and electrical system of the room in which homeworking is to take place, at their own expense;
- c) To maintain the premises, furniture, equipment and electrical system in good working order, making any necessary repairs or replacements as required and at their own expense;
- d) To provide a suitable Personal Computer or Laptop, Broadband router, Printer and telephone at their own expense;
- e) To ensure that written permission is obtained from their landlord/mortgage provider and insurance provider to homeworking, and meet any associated costs themselves;
- f) To notify the line manager of any health condition that may be affected by working from home, and report any accidents which take place whilst working from home;
- g) To comply with all relevant Methodist Council policies whilst working from home, including the reporting of sickness absence, PDR processes and timekeeping/flexi leave requirements; and
- h) To ensure that whilst they are working from home they do not have responsibility for child or elder care.