**Working from Home and Use of Equipment**

**Background**

Since the introduction of lockdown measures in March, a significant proportion of the Council’s workforce has been working from home. Although more staff are returning to the Council’s offices as restrictions are eased in line with the Scottish Government’s [Route Map](https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map/), many continue to work from their home.

During this period of temporary home working, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [advises](https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/home-working.htm) that there is no increased risk from Display Screen Equipment (DSE) work for those working at home temporarily during this period. They therefore advise that there is no requirement on employers to carry out home workstation assessments unless such work is adversely affecting the health and welfare of an employee; in these circumstances an assessment is required to identify appropriate steps. Throughout the period, the Council has worked to [promote](https://aberdeencitycouncilo365.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Isla's-top-tips-on-working-from-home.aspx) top tips, advice and best practice to promote the safety and wellbeing of staff and to help them operate as effectively as possible.

During the temporary working from home arrangements, it is important that line managers continue to have regular discussions with their employees regarding these arrangements. To assist managers, a recent survey was carried out wherein staff working from home shared their thoughts on working from home as well as whether their current set up allowed them to work safely. The results of this survey for each cluster have been shared with the relevant Chief Officers. The results have informed the Chief Officers of staff within their cluster who have suggested they may need additional support to continue working from home during this temporary period. It is important that line managers follow this up with conversations with the relevant members of staff.

Usually a staff member’s concern can be addressed by taking steps as suggested in the Council’s [guidance](https://aberdeencitycouncilo365.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Isla's-top-tips-on-working-from-home.aspx). Where, however, after following such steps there is still an apparent adverse effect to the health, safety or welfare of the employee within current arrangements, the line manager should take further appropriate steps. Given the temporary nature of the current arrangements, it is important that the manager seeks to identify what is *essential* to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the employee as opposed to what is *desirable*.

The arrangements for each staff member should be looked at on a case by case basis by the line manager. Where the manager takes the view that additional equipment may be required, notwithstanding the recommended steps in the Council’s guidance, they should verify this with the Corporate Health and Safety Team (CHST). The checklist below sets out mitigating steps that should be taken within each request and provides an indicative position as to whether or not the relevant piece of equipment would qualify as a reasonable and essential measure to support the health, safety and welfare of employees.

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Please note that, where various mitigations below are utilised/exhausted and the issue nonetheless persists, the below will lead onto an MS Form link to instigate the escalation required for approval for equipment from the relevant Chief Officer; as well as a call-back to the manager from a member of our Health and Safety team to provide any necessary support.

**Line Managers should run through this checklist with employees where a physical issue from working at home persists:**

Section 1 – to be completed in all cases

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Yes | No |
| 1 | We have identified a health issue which affects the employee, e.g. back pain by them continuing to work from home currently (if this is related to mental health, please use the [mental health checklist](https://peopleanytime.aberdeencity.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Managers-Guide-to-Supporting-Mental-Health.pdf)) |  |  |
| 2 | The employee has followed all of the set up guidance for the equipment they currently have which might [improve their current workspace](https://peopleanytime.aberdeencity.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-for-employees/getting-the-most-out-of-working-from-home/working-from-home-safely-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/). This has not resulted in any improvement |  |  |
| 3 | We have explored the People Anytime [Working from Home](https://peopleanytime.aberdeencity.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-for-employees/getting-the-most-out-of-working-from-home/) pages and using online tools, such as ‘read aloud’ and ‘dictate’ for support. This has not resulted in any improvement |  |  |
| 4 | We have explored the requirement to take regular breaks from their workstation, e.g. break every 30 minutes for a period of between 30 seconds to 1 minute and employee changing position at this time to prevent maintaining a static position |  |  |
| 5 | The employee has had explained to them that there is no increased risk from DSE work for those working at home temporarily |  |  |
| 7 | Does the employee require the equipment to assist with pain/discomfort or an existing medically diagnosed disability? | ☐ |  |
| 9 | We have explored taking regular exercise to improve their general health |  |  |
| 10 | We have agreed that the employee should be able to continue working from home if they were able to access additional equipment |  |  |
| If yes to all the above questions, and in respect to question 10, if required please also complete section 2 | | | |

**Section 2 – Request for equipment**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Does the employee normally use the requested equipment in their role? |  |  |
| 2 | Do you and the employee agree that the equipment would resolve the employee’s health safety and/or welfare issue(s) highlighted while working from home? |  |  |

If you have explored all of the above items on this checklist and you have determined that there is still a requirement for the employee to receive items of office equipment, please select the equipment required on the [online form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=aw-pJD2_E02ip4k2nOs161i2fU2WKGNIrDtwdGNrejJUQkY5RjNPODJINkNUVFZYWjRaSDRSOElBMCQlQCN0PWcu) and upload this checklist for consideration.