Safe Work Practice Sheet 034 REMOTE WORKING	Ref: SWPS 034
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Hazards

• Manual handling
• Slips, trips and falls
• Electrical items
• Work Station / Display Screen Equipment
• Lone working
• Stress and welfare

Person Exposed to Risk

☐ Students ✓ Employees ☐ Public☐ Contractors☐ Visitors

Work Description

Remote working – working from a remote location or home office space

Control Measures

1 Deciding on a location for your work space at home

Consider the following;

• Do you have a suitable space to work from?
• 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 or frayed wires?

2 General considerations when working from home

• Observe good manual handling techniques at all times.
• Place equipment in a position as to minimise twisting or overreaching.
• Have enough working space for the equipment and any other materials needed to carry out the work.

- Keep a clean and tidy workplace to prevent slips, trips and falls.
- Maintain clear access & egress routes.
- Ensure enough space is available around the work area.
- Maintain contact with colleagues and Management/HOS/HOD.
- Wash your hands regularly and wipe down keyboard, mouse, touch screens etc.
- As with general home safety it is recommended that you have a working smoke alarm and fire extinguisher available and a clear escape route. Fire detection and firefighting equipment is the responsibility of the homeowner.
- Take regular breaks or vary work tasks to ensure that you are not working in the same position for long periods of time. Change posture frequently - stand/move at least every 30 minutes.
- Any accident or incident occurring because of working from home activities must be reported to management as soon as possible [DkIT Accident & Incident Reporting Procedures](#).
- Where possible ensure that work equipment is in good condition and positioned in such a way to minimise the risk of Musculoskeletal Disorders injuries or stain.

Position Yourself Well ⚠ **Visit www.BeSMART.ie**

Adjust seat so that:
- the desk is just underneath forearms; hands, wrists and forearms are parallel to the floor;
- your thighs are fully supported on the chair and parallel to the floor; use a footrest if needed;
- your thighs, knees and back of legs are clear of surfaces.

Sit upright and all the way back in the chair.
Sit facing work area.
Shoulders relaxed and head naturally balanced.

Adjust monitor so that:
- the screen is as far away as is comfortable or about an arm's length away;
- the top of screen is at or slightly below eye level.

Avoid twisting the upper body.
Position the keyboard and mouse next to each other and near enough so that elbows are close to the body.

Take breaks and stretch frequently

3 Building your work station

- Ideally, try to use a height-adjustable chair with lumbar support and arm rests.
- Adjust your chair so your feet are flat on the floor, while fully supporting your thighs. If you have an office chair, adjust it accordingly. Otherwise, sit upright and all the way back in the chair. Use a cushion to support a more upright posture if necessary.
- An approximate 90°angle between upper and lower arm is recommended, shoulders should be relaxed and head naturally balanced.
- Adjust the height of your monitor so it is at your eye-level.
- Place your keyboard centred on your work surface.
- Use an independent mouse.
- The most important objects / documents on your work surface should be reachable.
- Make an effort keeping a good posture. Be mindful with your body.
- Take frequent breaks.
- Avoid eye strain.

4 Posture

- Don't slouch.
- Keep your elbows close to your body and keep your wrists straight.
- Keep your shoulders and back relaxed.
- Make sure there is sufficient space under your desk to move your legs freely and remove any obstacles that might prevent this.

5 Take frequent breaks

- Sitting in one place staring at the same screen all day is bad for you. You want to take frequent five minute breaks away from your screen and do some stretching exercises. Regular breaks must be taken. Change posture frequently - stand/move at least every 30 minutes.
- Where possible avoid back-to-back video calls/online meetings so that you are not sitting for long periods of time.

6 Avoid eye strain

- Arrange your work surface and DSE to avoid glare or bright reflections on screen. This will be easier if neither you or the screen is directly facing windows or bright sunlight. Adjust curtains and blinds as necessary.
- Ensure your eyes are tested regularly.

7 Create Boundaries
- Set your working times and communicate these to your colleagues e.g. the hours you work each day when you are available for emails, calls, meetings, video calls etc.
- Turn off notifications on devices outside of these times.

8 Working with DSE/ computer
- Adjust the height of your monitor so it is at your eye-level e.g. use books or material at home if the height needs to be raised.
- Centre your keyboard on your desk/ table.
- Use a mouse separate to the keyboard.
- The most important objects/ documents on your work surface should be within reach.

9 Working with Laptops

- Place laptop on a firm surface – not on your lap.
- Give yourself enough space to work.
- Sit comfortably without slouching or stooping.
- Connect the laptop to a full-size monitor and plug in mouse.
- If not possible, centre your laptop on your work surface. Adjust the height of your laptop so the screen is at your eye-level e.g. use laptop stand or books/materials at home if the height needs to be raised.
- Link up to separate mouse and keyboard.
- Position screen around arm's length away from your face and at the correct height to allow a comfortable neck position. Have your eyes roughly in line with the top of your screen.
- Find a position in which you can keep your wrists straight (neutral, in line with forearms), your shoulders should be relaxed and your back supported and in which you feel comfortable.
- Align the laptop centrally with your body, don't twist round to use it.
- Adjust the laptop screen if necessary, to reduce stretching your neck.

- Position your screen away from direct window light.
- Keep the amount of kit you carry with the laptop to a minimum.
- Carrying a heavy load on one shoulder may strain your back. Swap shoulders to reduce strain.
- Do not use defective equipment.

10 Working with a Smartphone

Simple Set-up

- Keep the number of Apps to a minimum
- Use the same App for several functions e.g. MS Outlook 365 can be used for email, calendar, MS Teams
- Use Apps to set reminders e.g. a specific amount of time before a meeting starts
- Create a folder on your home screen with your most used/needed Apps.
- Use Voice Recognition Technology. Use this to reply to emails or dictate responses and reviews instead of typing.

Typing Time

- Turn on predictive text so you don't have to type the full word to help reduce screen time.

Calls/Meetings

- Position the phone at a comfortable level.
- Use the speaker or a headset instead of holding the phone to your ear.

Reviewing Documents

- Change to landscape view.
- Prop smartphone up to eye level where possible to scroll through the document and make notes.
- Review in short blocks of time taking a break every 10 minutes to stretch and change position.
- Add a note to your signature if you wish to ask people to ignore spelling and grammatical errors during this time.
- Let people know you are working from a smartphone and as a result the same level if productivity is not possible.

Checks & Inspections

If you are using electrical equipment it is recommended that you carry out the following basic checks on a regular basis;

- Electrical equipment is turned off before it is checked.
- Plugs are not damaged.
- Leads, wires or cables do not have damage to the outer covering.
- There are no burn marks or staining that suggests overheating.
- There are no trailing wires.

Information, Instruction & Training

If you have any concerns about the safety of your home working arrangements, you should speak to your manager/HOS/HOD.

This Safe Work Practice Sheet - SWPS Remote Working.

DkIT HR Right to Request and Remote Working Policy

The Health & Safety Authority at www.hsa.ie / HSA Remote Working Guidance.

The HSA eLearning module Occupational Safety and Health when Remote Working

Notify any accidents or incidents that occur via normal reporting channels DkIT Accident and Incident Reporting Procedures

Personal protective equipment required (last resort)

N/A

Initial Risk Rating (without any control measures)

Probability : **2** x Severity **2** = Risk Factor **4**

KEY		
PROBABILITY	**SEVERITY**	**RISK FACTOR**
Probable 3	Critical 3	1-3 Low Risk
Possible 2	Serious 2	4 Medium Risk
Unlikely 1	Minor 1	6-9 High Risk
Risk Factor = Probability x Severity		

Risk Reduction Rating (after controls introduced)

Probability : **1** x Severity **1** = Risk Factor **1**

Risk Assessment Review
As and when process changes

Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Assessment Checklist for Remote Working

Name:		Date:	
Work Activity:		Location:	*Home Office*
Manager:		School / Dept.:	

Work Environment

Controls	Yes	No	N/A	Notes
Place of Work				
Is the place of work suitable for the work to be undertaken?				
Lighting				
Is suitable lighting (for example natural, task lighting) available for the type of work being carried out and the employees' vision? Is additional task lighting required?				
Heating & Ventilation				
Can temperatures be regulated? (For most people an acceptable temperature for office work lies within the range of 18˚C to 23˚C). Is there adequate ventilation in the remote workplace? Ventilation can be regulated naturally (window or door) or mechanically.				
Electricity				
Is the employee aware that they should check and advise their employer of any defects?				

Is electrical equipment provided to employees used correctly, checked for frayed wires, signs of burns or melting, and is unsafe equipment taken out of use? Is there an adequate number of sockets available?				
Safe Access				
Is there safe access to and from the remote workplace?				
Emergency Planning				
Is there a plan in place in case of an emergency?				
Housekeeping				
Is the workstation area clear of trailing cables and other trip hazards? Is the employee made aware to keep the area clear?				
Additional Identified Controls				

Work Station

Controls	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action
Desk and Workstation				
Is there enough knee clearance underneath the workstation? Is there enough space to allow the employee to change position and vary movements? Is the area clutter free so that the employee can focus easily on the task? Is a document holder required to read documents?				
Chair				
Is the chair provided stable, adjustable in height, allows freedom of movement, and provides lower back support? Is the chair set up so that the forearms are level with the desk? Does the chair have a back rest which is adjustable in height and has the employee been advised to sit back in their seat in order to get good lumbar support? Is the chair provided adjustable to allow feet to rest flat on the floor or a footrest supplied? Is a footrest required?				
Display Screen				
Is the screen positioned to avoid glare and reflection (for example, sit at 90 degrees to a window to avoid glare)? Can the screen swivel and tilt easily? Is the screen positioned so that the top of the screen is at eye level or slightly below and avoids sustained bending of the neck? Is the screen free of reflective glare and are reflections liable to cause discomfort?				

Is the screen set up at a comfortable distance (for example, arm length away)?				
Is the image on the screen stable with no flickering?				
Are the characters on the display screen well defined, clearly formed of adequate size and with adequate spacing?				
Has the employee been informed that they should relax their shoulders when viewing the screen?				
Keyboard and Mouse				
Is the laptop or PC connected to an external keyboard and mouse?				
Is a neutral wrist posture maintained when typing (for example, no bending of the wrist)?				
Can the slope angle of the keyboard be adjusted to allow the employee to find a comfortable position?				
Are the mouse and keyboard within easy reach and is space provided in front of the keyboard?				
Are wrist rests required?				
Musculoskeletal				
Has the employee been advised to change posture frequently and to stand and move at least every 30 minutes?				
Has the employee been advised to avoid back-to-back video calls or online meetings so that they do not sit for long periods of time?				
Does the employee get aches, pains, tingling or pins and needles in the hands, arms, shoulders, neck or back area when using the workstation?				
Communication				
Is a headset / speaker or microphone provided?				

Is a headset / speaker or microphone required for communication?				
Manual Handling				
Is the employee required to conduct manual handling while remote working? (If yes, has that employee been trained)?				
Eye Examinations				
Have employees who use DSE been informed of the provisions for eyesight testing and how to avail of eyesight testing? Are eye and eyesight tests provided as needed? Does the employee regularly suffer from blurred or poor vision, sore eyes or headaches while using the display screen equipment?				
Other Considerations				
Has the assessment of workstation including display screen equipment (DSE) and work equipment considered the needs of sensitive workers including those with disabilities? Has the employee been provided with information and training to ensure they can carry out their work safely? Where the employee has more than one remote working location, have additional supports, guidance and training been provided to assist them to set up at other remote working locations?				
Additional Identified Controls				

Consultation, communication and incident reporting

Controls	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action
Consultation and Communication *(Refer to HR Remote Working Policy)*				
Are arrangements in place to consult with employees? Are there arrangements in place for keeping in contact, and is the employee informed of these? Is there an established means of contact for communicating and providing updates (for example, via phone, web or email as required)? Can employees report safety and health issues (for example, health related issues, workload, faulty equipment etc.)? Are arrangements in place to report psychosocial issues (for example, work related stress, difficulties maintaining boundaries between home and work, social isolation, managing change in work, bullying etc.)?				
Incident Reporting *(Refer to DkIT Accident Incident Reporting Procedures / HR Remote Working Policy)*				
Has the employee been advised of the procedures for reporting any work-related incidents, (for example, musculoskeletal discomfort)?				
Additional Identified Controls				