

## Home-Working Policy for Methodist Council Employees

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft Resolution</b>	54/1. The Council receives this report.  54/2. The Council adopts the revised Home-Working Policy for Methodist Council employees.
<b>Alternative Options to Consider, if Any</b>	None proposed.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	The existing Home-working Policy has been reviewed to take account of changes in information technology and working practices since its introduction.
<b>Main Points</b>	The facilities and equipment available to home-workers have been reviewed, along with the risk assessment process for recruiting to posts designated as home-based.
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	The revised policy has been drawn up following an evaluation of the existing arrangements and how they have operated in practice since the introduction of the policy in April 2010, reflecting changes in information technology and improvements in the procurement process for equipment and services applicable to home-workers.
<b>Consultations</b>	With the Staff Association, existing home-workers, and managers in the Connexional Team.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Personnel</b>	The policy sits within the framework of existing Development and Personnel Policies for staff.
<b>Legal</b>	The policy accords with relevant health and safety legislation.
<b>Wider Connexional</b>	Applicable to Methodist Council staff employed under formal home-working contracts only.
<b>Risk</b>	The proposals have been drawn up to take account of good practice in the context of the health and wellbeing of staff.

## **Home-Working Policy for Methodist Council Employees**

### **Introduction**

The home-working policy was introduced in 2010 when a small number of staff were contractually designated as home-workers. Since that time the number of home-workers employed by the Methodist Council has grown, due mainly to the establishment of the Learning Network. Given the changes in information technology since its introduction and the improvements in centralised procurement, it was considered timely to review the policy.

The policy has never applied to staff who work from home on an informal or non-contractual basis. This will continue to be the case with the revised policy.

### **Key changes to the Policy**

Since the introduction of the policy six years ago, the establishment of a central procurement function in the Connexional Team has meant that clearer and more cost effective arrangements are now in place for the purchasing of office furniture, stationery supplies and Portable Appliance Testing. These developments have been reflected in the revised policy, along with improvements to the risk assessment process designed to ensure that the individual's home is suitable for home working.

Another area of change has been the increase in broadband speeds available under domestic internet contracts, and the growing reliance on web based technology for day to day work, not only in the Connexional Team but society in general. In light of these changes the revised policy specifies a minimum broadband speed which home-workers must have (subject to this being available in the area where they live), and the provision that mandatory broadband speeds under the policy may be reviewed and increased as technology further develops.

The old policy provided for reimbursement of 30% of the monthly cost of the home-worker's domestic broadband contract to reflect the requirement that they have this at a suitably high speed. Since the introduction of the policy broadband has become a standard utility and is generally available at high speed without additional cost. Therefore, it is considered that it is no longer necessary or appropriate to provide this reimbursement - the majority of homes will have this as a matter of course, and contracts are not priced according to usage. However, in light of the fact that existing home-workers have received this reimbursement for some considerable time it is proposed that these payments continue for existing staff, frozen at their current level. This arrangement would apply until the individual ceases to work under a home-working contract. The cost of this protection is not significant and can be met from existing budgets.

### **Consultation and implementation**

The policy has been drawn up following extensive discussions with home-workers, their managers and also with the Staff Association.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**54/1. The Council receives this report.**

**54/2. The Council adopts the revised Home-Working Policy for Methodist Council employees.**

## HOME-WORKING POLICY

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#### HOME-WORKING HEALTH & SAFETY & SECURITY CHECKLIST

## **1. Policy statement**

The Methodist Council recognises that home-working may be the most appropriate arrangement for employees fulfilling certain posts, and therefore supports home-working when there is a clear case of business efficiency. This policy applies to lay staff employed by the Methodist Council. 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.

This policy does not apply to posts where the post holder 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 home-working 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 home-working).

## **2. Definition of Home-working**

Home-working 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 home-working for the purposes of this policy, although some of its principles would apply: for more details see section 20 below.)

### **Home-working may operate in a number of ways:**

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**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.**

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## **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 home-working 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 offered 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 Development and Personnel for approval. Development and Personnel and the Line Manager will decide, in consultation with the home-worker, what arrangements and/or adaptations must be made to ensure that the Health and Safety policy is satisfied. Unless a safe

environment is provided and maintained in accordance with legislative requirements and HSE advice, home-working will not be permitted and the home-based 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. In addition, the prospective home-worker will be required to state that they have home insurance in place which provides cover for the premises to be used for home-working.

All necessary arrangements for health and safety must have been agreed, and so far as is reasonably possible, be 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 or use 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.

Home-working 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 home-working 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 will be provided by the Methodist Council. Home-workers are not allowed to use any existing equipment they own for these purposes, but must use that supplied by the Methodist Council. 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 home-working 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 anybody with an interest in the property, including any loan providers, 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 home-based the suitability of the applicant's home for home-working 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 Development and Personnel and 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 the findings of the risk

assessment will be discussed with the Development and Personnel Office before the Chair of the Interview Panel makes a final selection decision. The decision of the Interview Panel Chair is final and there is no right of appeal.

Each staff member has a statutory responsibility for their own safety. The Methodist Council will arrange and 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. This will be carried out by an approved electrical contractor appointed by the Methodist Council, as soon as is reasonably practical after an offer of employment has been made. 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 (eg on VDU use, reporting problems etc) where this has not previously been provided. All home-based staff are required successfully to complete the on-line corporate health and safety course provided to all Connexional Team staff.

If home-workers wish to change the room in their home, or the property, 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. An inventory of all equipment provided will be held by the Methodist Council.

Any equipment provided by the Methodist Council should be mainly used 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 home-worker 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 Internal Services Manager 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. 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. PAT testing will be carried out by the Methodist Council's approved contractor.

## **8. Use of ICT facilities**

Home-workers will be granted remote access of ICT facilities such as the Connexional Team intranet site and email system. The exact nature of the ICT facilities to be provided to home-workers will be agreed with the Line Manager before the commencement of home-based working, in consultation with the IT Team if necessary. All home-workers are required to use a Methodist Council email account for their work.

The Methodist Council will provide the following ICT equipment for all home-workers, which must only be used for Council business:

- A personal computer or laptop
- A printer/scanner
- A mobile telephone (if the work undertaken requires it)

All home-workers are required to provide a high speed broadband connection. ('High speed' is defined at August 2015 as at least 50 Mb, and the Methodist Council reserves the right to alter this definition as technology develops). The Methodist Council will not contribute to the cost of this provision. If a high speed broadband connection (as defined by the Methodist Council from time to time) is not available due to the location of the home-worker's accommodation, the highest possible connection speed available in that geographical area must be provided.

If a home-worker uses their own technology devices for their Methodist Council work they must ensure that they utilise all appropriate security. Should there be a security breach when using their own device they will be liable for any consequences, financial or otherwise.

## **9. Salaries**

Home-workers will be eligible for London Allowance if their post works wholly or mainly in a geographical area which attracts London Allowance. This will apply regardless of whether they are based wholly or partly at home, subject to the outcome of the Pay and Grading Review (due to be implemented September 2016).

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

## **10. Reporting of sickness absence**

Home-workers 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.

## **11. Planning, Development and Review (PDR) Cycle**

All home-workers 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.

## **12. Stationery Supplies**

Home workers will be provided with a facility to purchase stationary supplies using Methodist Council nominated suppliers. They are required to use this facility for all their stationery and equipment purchases. If the supplies required are not available through the nominated supplier they must discuss their needs with their Line Manager.

## **13. Hours of work**

Home-workers will be expected to fulfil their 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 are required to complete a standard time sheet for submission to their Line Manager via the Cascade system, unless separate arrangements have been notified to them by this person. 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 permissible to care for dependants whilst home-working.

## **14. 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 (unless local arrangements have been agreed, for example in light of the geographical location of 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 and Expenses 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.

## **15. Facilities in the Methodist Council's offices available to home-workers**

Home-workers 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 home-workers or part-time staff, or desks temporarily vacant whilst a staff member is on leave.

Home-workers will continue to receive support from any administrative staff allocated to



their cluster or elsewhere if available, but they are expected to carry out their own administration.

#### 16. Staff Members' Responsibilities/Methodist Council's responsibilities

Actions to be taken prior to the offer of employment being made

Methodist Council Responsibilities	Staff Members' Responsibilities
As part of the pre-employment screening process, to send the prospective home-worker this policy.	To read the Home-working Policy and complete the risk assessment in an accurate and timely fashion.
To consider the initial risk assessment made by the home-worker of the area to be designated as the home office, and determine what health and safety measures should be put in place.	N/A
Consider any health condition notified by the staff member which may be affected by home-working, and take appropriate action.	To notify the Development and Personnel Office of any health condition which may be affected by home-working via the Risk Assessment proforma or medical questionnaire, as appropriate.
To ensure the home-worker 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 consider the above information, and that contained in the risk assessment and health questionnaire in deciding whether the Methodist Council is able to make an offer of employment.	To respond to any offer of employment.

Actions to be taken after the offer of employment has been made

Methodist Council Responsibilities	Staff Members' Responsibilities
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 home working area.
To provide the following office furniture (if required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table</li> <li>• Chair</li> <li>• Storage</li> </ul>	To report any faults with this furniture to the line manager.
To consider requests from the home-worker to change the room designated as a home	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, which is for business use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC or laptop</li> <li>• Printer/scanner</li> <li>• Mobile phone (if the work undertaken requires it)</li> </ul>	To maintain such equipment in good working order, and report any faults to the line manager.
To specify the broadband speed that employees are required to have installed in their home, reviewing this in light of changes in technology.	To install high speed broadband in the home office as defined by the Methodist Council (unless only a lower speed is available in the area).
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 home-based office in a different place.
If the employee wishes to become office based 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 home-working, and take appropriate action.	Notify the Line Manager of any health condition which may be affected by working from home.
To act on information received from the home-worker about any injury or illness which the staff member 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.

### **17. Reimbursement of home-working expenses**

The Methodist Council will not reimburse the cost of providing insurance cover (Buildings/Contents Policy) for home-working, or make a contribution to the cost of providing broadband.

### **18. Movement of home**

Home-workers 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**

A home-working 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 home-working arrangements**

As noted at section two 'Definition of Home-working', informal (ie non-contractual) 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 ensure that their home working environment is safe, secure and properly maintained, and if this is not the case to make any modifications required, at their own expense.
- b) to provide a suitable Personal Computer or Laptop, Broadband router, Printer (if required) and telephone (if not provided with a mobile telephone as part of their work) at their own expense;
- e) to ensure that (any required) written permission is obtained from their landlord/mortgage provider and insurance provider to home-working, 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.

**HOME-WORKING HEALTH AND SAFETY AND SECURITY RISK ASSESSMENT**

Applicants for posts:

This form is to be completed by the applicant for a post designated as home-worker. It will be used in the selection process and if the proposed home-working environment is not considered suitable an offer of employment may not be made, or may be withdrawn. Applicants must answer this questionnaire truthfully and to the best of their knowledge.

Existing home-workers:

This form is to be completed as required by the Methodist Council, for example if the home-worker is seeking permission to designate a different part of their home as their working environment from the area previously notified, or if they are intending to move. Employees must answer this questionnaire truthfully and to the best of their knowledge. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action.

Name:	
Address:	
Date of completion of assessment:	
Days per week spent home working:	

Please complete this form as fully as possible. If you are applying for a post which is designated as home-based this form will be used to consider the suitability of your home for home-working. If your home is not considered to be suitable this may mean that it will not be possible to proceed with your application. For existing staff, the form should be passed to your line manager who will use it to review the risk assessment and decide whether you may be offered a contract to be home-based.

Where you answer 'No' please set out the actions you intend to take to fulfil the requirement in the 'Action Required' column. This will form the basis of your action plan to ensure that your working environment at home is a safe and healthy place.

Fire	Yes	No	Action Required
Is the work area tidy and free of obstacles?			
Are waste materials regularly disposed of?			
Are exit routes clear?			
Do you have an escape plan in the event of fire or other incident?			
Is a smoke alarm fitted? (This must be tested weekly and the battery replaced annually.)			

Electrical Equipment (other than equipment to be supplied by the Methodist Council)	Yes	No	Action Required
Is there any apparent damage to equipment or wires?			
Is there any evidence of overheating, for example discolouration? Is there any obvious damage to leads or plugs?			
Are the cables secure in all plugs?			

Slips, Trips and Falls	Yes	No	Action Required
Are floor coverings sound, and without defects?			
Are walkways clear of tripping hazards eg trailing cables?			
When seated at your desk can you move your legs and upper body together without twisting?			

Working Environment	Yes	No	Action Required
Is the temperature adequate?			
Is the ventilation adequate?			
Do you have adequate lighting, including any necessary task lighting?			
Do you have adequate, self-contained space in which to accommodate a home office and equipment securely?			

Display Screen Equipment	Yes	No	Action Required
Does your home office environment comply with the HSE guidance on DSE? See <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf">www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf</a> (Give specific attention to appropriate office furniture - desk, chair, storage, VDU equipment.)			

Well being	Yes	No	Comments
Do you suffer any discomfort or ill health, which may affect your ability to work safely at home?			
Are there any aspects of your home-working conditions which you believe may cause you physical or mental discomfort?			

Security	Yes	No	Comments
Are all exit doors secured?			
Accessible windows secured by key operated window locks or other devices?			
Can any laptop and confidential files be locked away when not in use?			

Financial Considerations	Yes	No	Comments
Have you notified your mortgage lender or landlord, and received permission?			
Have you notified your insurer?			

Equipment to be provided by the Methodist Council as a result of this Risk Assessment

Item

Any other comments regarding your working environment which your line manager should be aware of:

DECLARATION BY STAFF MEMBER:

1. I have carried out this risk assessment.
2. This risk assessment is an accurate reflection of the risks I have identified in my home-working environment, to the best of my knowledge.
3. I agree to keep this risk assessment up to date by annual review, and will inform my line manager of any changes which take place to my working conditions at home.
4. I agree to action all the points where I answered 'No' in the above tables in order to ensure that my home workspace is a safe and healthy place.
5. I confirm that I have obtained permission from my insurer to work from home and have appropriate cover in place.

Signed: ..... (Employee)

Print Name: ..... Date: .....

Signed: ..... (Line Manager/Development and Personnel)

Print Name: ..... Date: .....