

## Fact Sheet

# Work-Life Balance: Homeworking

Work is becoming more flexible and less centralised. Technology is playing a significant role in this development and will continue to change our working and social lives. We are moving towards the contingent, knowledge based workforce.

More and more people will work from home or remotely instead of the central office location.

This fact sheet examines the issues to address when implementing an effective homeworking policy.



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## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HOMEWORKING?

Homeworking is the practice of enabling employees to work from home or a chosen location rather than at the employers office. It is sometimes referred to as teleworking or telecommuting.

### Different homeworking arrangements may be:

- ◇ Working the full contracted hours from home as the principal location.
- ◇ Regularly working part of the total working hours at home and part at the office.
- ◇ Ad hoc arrangements for undertaking specific projects at home.
- ◇ Working from home as a base where the employee's work takes them to different sites and they have an office base at home.

### The benefits gained are diverse and include:

- ◇ Raised productivity through focused work in adaptable schedules.
- ◇ Reduced cost of office accommodation, parking bays etc.
- ◇ Less stress and time saved in commuting.
- ◇ Ability to recruit skilled people from a wider population.
- ◇ Environmentally friendly.

## ATTITUDE AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Deciding whether or not homeworking is appropriate requires consideration of the job itself, the way it is managed and the circumstances of the potential homeworker.

- ◇ Are you clear about your objective for introducing a homeworking initiative?
- ◇ Is your organisation knowledge based or production focused?
- ◇ Will you invest in the tools, training and techniques to facilitate homeworking?
- ◇ Do you have an open culture and proactive managers?
- ◇ Can you establish clear links between staff, functions and time?
- ◇ Are you prepared for initial disruption while the new way of working is established?
- ◇ How much discretion do employees have in performing their responsibilities?
- ◇ Is the function relatively autonomous or closely integrated with other employees?
- ◇ What reporting and communication systems are involved?
- ◇ What contact with customers is involved?

Homeworking means changes in the way managers manage, potential homeworkers operate and integrate with office based staff. Understanding what this means in your organisation is critical to its success.

## WHAT OTHER PREPARATION IS INVOLVED?

Having established that the job function is suitable for homeworking, managers will want to ensure the right level of quality and output is produced. This can be achieved by:

- ◇ Ensuring arrangements agreed with employees are unambiguous.
- ◇ Checking that there is sufficient space and suitable facilities at home.
- ◇ Considering how duties may be easily defined by measurable tasks, projects or objectives.
- ◇ Considering changes to existing work methods and the impact on related jobs.
- ◇ Providing support to managers and homeworkers, including specialised training.
- ◇ Setting up adequate monitoring and review procedures.
- ◇ Determining related matters of access to additional hours, overtime, time-off arrangements etc.
- ◇ Evaluating the most appropriate hardware and software solutions.
- ◇ Setting up communication channels to ensure collection and delivery of work, regular updating and distribution of materials.

Clear communication systems with homeworkers are as important as for the typical worker. Don't underestimate how different these issues are from traditional, face to face, management. Successful homeworking is usually backed up with training and support.