An Roinn Caiteachais
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public
Expenditure and Reform

Working from Home during COVID-19

Guidance for Civil Service Organisations

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Contents

1. Introduction

The very sudden restriction of movement due to the COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a large proportion of employees in Civil Service organisations working from home and in new priority and critical areas arising from the crisis. Business continuity planning is a key factor in ensuring that business can continue to be delivered in the event of a resurgence of the pandemic.

Recovery of the wider economy is a priority for the Public Service. Individual Civil Service employers should support workers who need to attend their employer's work premises by enabling as many employees to remain working in their home so long as is necessary to address the health and safety risks of the pandemic.

The potential to amend and/or revoke measures in response to future waves of COVID-19 will continue to impact our workplaces. This means the Civil Service needs to continue to be as flexible as possible in the new ways of working in order to ensure that the Civil Service can be agile and resilient against any future waves.

The purpose of these guidelines is to support the health and wellbeing of all employees; to ensure that good practice is followed by all employees when working from home (full-time or blended basis), and to support the regular and effective delivery of the services of Civil Service organisations.

Important note

Employers should make employees aware that any remote or home-based working arrangements that have been implemented due to COVID-19 apply so long as necessary to address the health and safety risks of COVID-19; and that any longer-term/future access to remote working will be dealt with by way of a Remote Working Policy.

These guidelines have been drafted for use by HR in the first instance, with the intention that the content be communicated to all employees as appropriate. For this reason, this document has been formatted with easy 'pull-out' appendices outlining the roles and responsibilities of individual employees and people managers (i.e. those responsible for managing employees) respectively; and HR should ensure that all employees are made aware of the relevant remote working provisions.

It should be noted that these guidelines are not exhaustive, and organisations may need to consider their own needs and tailor the guidance as appropriate. This guidance will be subject to review on a regular basis, and will be updated as we move through the current working arrangements.

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2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 ROLE OF HR

HR plays an integral part in organisational business continuity by aiding the transition from working in an office environment to working from home. This includes supporting both people managers and employees regarding health and wellbeing; performance management; training needs; and other supports as necessary.

The role of HR is a vital connection for people during this pandemic. HR are there to provide support and assistance, to help employees to navigate their way through these unsettling times, and, crucially, to provide direction to people managers on how to adapt to the new circumstances. HR should:

➢ implement relevant advice provided by, for example: FAQs, Public Health, Transport Authority, Health and Safety etc.; communicate that advice regularly to employees, providing updates and guidance as required;

➢ support new employees into this new working-from-home environment, where applicable, through effective and appropriate induction programmes, while also maintaining ongoing contact with them;

➢ inform employees of the supports available through OneLearning and Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) as well as those developed locally;

➢ remind employees of the requirement to adhere to policies and procedures that continue to apply while working from home; and

➢ inform employees that they continue to have a responsibility to engage with HR if and when required.

2.2 ROLE OF PEOPLE MANAGERS

In the significantly changed working environment, the role of people managers is more important than ever before. People managers at all levels must continue to lead, engage with and manage the performance and development of their teams. A significant number of people managers are working and managing their teams remotely whether working from home, in an office setting or a combination of both. This distributed leadership environment is very new to many people managers and employees and will require a different approach to the role.

The Role of the People Manager is available at Appendix A.

People managers are expected to take a proactive approach in adapting to this new working environment, utilising the supports and guidance available to them so that they can continue

to effectively carry out their management function. People managers will continue to be supported by HR and should seek support from their own HR as required.

2.3 ROLE OF EMPLOYEES

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they maintain as safe a working environment as practicable while working from home. It is recognised that some may have to work in less than ideal home working environments in the short term in order to comply with COVID-19 requirements. They are expected to remain engaged and productive in their work. While employers and people managers have a role to play, employee engagement is key to successful home-working arrangements.

Employee Guide – Working from Home is available at Appendix B.

3. Health & Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of all employees is paramount, particularly throughout the pandemic. Any decisions on how the Civil Service does business and how it reimagines the concept of the workplace at this time must be driven by the principles underlying the public health guidance. HR and people managers should be aware of issues that may be impacting employees in the current environment such as the feeling of isolation, maintaining a work-life balance etc. Supports should be provided as required. In circumstances where HR or people managers cannot provide the appropriate supports, the employee should be made aware of other supports available to them.

The Role of the People Manager at Appendix A includes information on how People Managers can support the health and wellbeing of individuals.

3.1 PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING FOR EMPLOYEES WORKING FROM HOME

Employers should;

➤ Review and/or develop mental and physical wellbeing strategies in their organisation, being mindful of the need for these programmes to be delivered remotely;

➤ Utilise supports such as Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) and develop other supports including online Learning & Development (L&D) training for employees, people managers and senior leaders (resilience, etc.). The Health and Wellbeing Framework, currently under development in CSHRD, will be a useful support when rolled out; and

> ➢ Remind employees that the CSEAS is available to them. The CSEAS provides helpful advice around self-care, managing working from home, childcare responsibilities, managing your wellbeing, etc. Video support is available on YouTube for all employees.

4. Health, Safety and Welfare at Work

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of their employees. The responsibility for employees' health and safety at work rests with the employer, whether or not that work is being done at the employer's premises or the employee's home.

Employees have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by the work they are doing.

Helpful guidelines for employees regarding health and safety at work are included in:
- *Appendix B – Guide for Employees Working from Home*
- *Appendix C – Working from Home - Checklist for Employees.*

Extract - HSA Guidelines

4.1 KEY DUTIES OF EMPLOYERS UNDER THE SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE AT WORK ACT 2005

Employers have specific duties to ensure the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees. These duties include the workspace, where employees are required to work from home.

Key duties that apply to the work activity and workspace include:

- managing and conducting all work activities to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees,
- providing safe systems of work that are planned, organised, and maintained,
- assessing risks and implementing appropriate control measures,
- providing safe equipment including personal protective equipment, where necessary,
- providing information, instruction, training and supervision regarding safety and health to employees, and having plans in place for emergencies.

REF:HTTPS://WWW.HSA.IE/ENG/TOPICS/COVID-19/COVID-19_FAQS_FOR_EMPLOYERS_AND_EMPLOYEES_IN_RELATION_TO_HOME-WORKING_ON_A_TEMPORARY_BASIS/FAQS_FOR_EMPLOYERS_AND_EMPLOYEES_IN_RELATION_TO_HOME-WORKING_ON_A_TEMPORARY_BASIS_COVID-19_.HTML

4.2 DIGNITY AT WORK

The Civil Service is committed to protecting dignity and respect across the organisation, whether this be in the employer's work premises or when working from home and working remotely in any location. The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 place an obligation on employers to prevent harassment in the workplace. Every employee should be aware that all forms of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment are unacceptable, and every employee has a duty to behave in a courteous and respectful manner. This continues to apply when working from home and working remotely in any location.

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, employers have a duty to prevent any improper conduct or behaviour which is likely to put the safety, health and welfare of employees at risk, and are required to deal with complaints appropriately.

Both employer and employee should be aware that there are supports available to them such as the Mediation Service, which is accessible to all Public Service employees.

5. Onboarding and Induction

An effective induction process is essential for ensuring new employees successfully adapt to the social and professional expectations of their new role, enabling them to carry out their work comfortably. Consideration should be given to employees who commence a new role within the organisation (for example, promotion or transfer) as this may require the employee to join a new team and take on new tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, it is important for employers and people managers to create and implement an onboarding and induction process that meets the requirements of employees joining a new role remotely. HR should adapt standard HR induction programmes so that they can be delivered remotely and should maintain contact with new employees to offer any additional supports that may be required.

The Role of the People Manager available at Appendix A sets out their roles in relation to onboarding and induction.

6. Supports

6.1 CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

It is recognised that many employees are currently having to balance work responsibilities with personal caring responsibilities (children, elders, other dependents) during this time. At all times both employers and employees should be as flexible as possible in addressing these

challenges. The *Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19* provides guidance in relation to this.

Where employees are unable to work their standard working hours, arrangements should be agreed between the employee and their manager to accommodate this. This may include agreed common contact times which take account of responsibilities in the home.

It is recognised that balancing work and personal caring responsibilities can be stressful. Both people managers and employees are therefore strongly encouraged to be mindful of their own mental health and wellbeing (See Section 3 – Health & Wellbeing).

It is acknowledged that, due to the circumstances of COVID-19, some employees have had to balance work with their caring responsibilities. However, it is expected that as schools and caring facilities reopen employees will make appropriate caring arrangements compatible with their required working hours as normal.

6.2 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

OneLearning has been developing an L&D strategy to support the move to remote and home-based working. Priority learning interventions have been identified within the existing OneLearning catalogue, and adjustments are being made to the content of these courses to ensure they address remote-working requirements.

A range of videos are available to employees and people managers to support successful home working which can be accessed via the OneLearning Learning Management System (LMS). Employees without access to governmental networks can access the following videos on YouTube:

Tips for Effective Video Conferencing are available at Appendix D.

➢ Organising and Chairing Effective Virtual Meetings
➢ Tips for Effective Virtual Meetings
➢ Remote Working during COVID-19
➢ Remote Working for Managers during COVID-19
➢ Wellbeing for Workers Providing Essential Services

New content is also being developed in response to COVID-19 which includes:

➢ Mandatory induction training as per the *Return to Work Safely Protocol*;
➢ Leadership training, up to and including Senior Public Service (SPS) members. This training will take account of the new ways of working to effectively respond to the immediate and long-term impact of COVID-19; and
➢ Pre-retirement courses.

Organisations may contact OneLearning directly regarding any urgent needs for hosting content on the LMS.

6.3 CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE (CSEAS)

The CSEAS is a free and confidential service providing support to civil servants at times of personal and/or work-related difficulties. As the nature and environment of work rapidly evolves due to COVID-19, the CSEAS is available to assist employees in managing and coping with change and uncertainty. Services remain open and available to employers and employees during this time, and may be accessed by phone, email or through the website (https://www.cseas.per.gov.ie).

To meet the additional challenges and demands placed on civil servants due to COVID-19, helpdesk hours have been extended. An Employee Assistance Officer (EAO) is available by phone: 0761 000 030 and email: cseas@per.gov.ie, Monday - Friday: 9.00am - 8.00pm and Saturday – Sunday: 12.00noon to 4.00pm. Health and Wellbeing initiatives are also being communicated to civil servants through Departments' HR, Departmental intranet sites and Departmental Newsletters/Magazines.

The CSEAS website has a COVID-19 webpage providing information, articles, tips, videos and links to other supports. This webpage is specifically tailored to meet the various needs of a civil servant whether working in the office or remotely. In addition to the on-duty helpdesk, EAOs may be contacted during office hours. Individual EAOs' contact details can be found on the CSEAS website.

A useful list of supports is set out in Appendix E – Glossary of Supports.

6.4 TECHNOLOGY

Organisations should implement technology solutions which take into consideration their specific business, technical requirements and local related policies with the aim of enabling staff to work from home effectively. Consideration should be given to issues such as acceptable usage of IT, internet content policy, security and data protection policy as well as budget/spend.

Connecting with the organisation's network from home brings risks and challenges. Organisations should take into consideration the following issues in relation to decisions around technical equipment:

➢ Types of devices to use (for example, personal device or departmental device, official laptop/hybrid used as the desktop with docking station);

➢ Immediate access to technical support via helpdesk, phone number etc.;

➢ Security/firewall etc.;

➢ Methods and contingencies for fixing devices used for work; and

➢ Cost of equipment.

Employees should be reminded of their responsibility to take necessary precautions to safeguard the equipment and ensure that the appropriate policies are followed in relation to security, personal data and work use.

6.5 PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT

Employers may receive requests from employees to bring office equipment home. Consideration should be given to facilitating these requests where possible, having regard to business need, sustainable costs and practical matters. Removal of equipment from the office should be documented in the asset register thereby ensuring an appropriate audit trail.

Employers should give particular consideration to the needs of employees who have a disability or who are sensitive to risk (for example, pregnant, mobility needs), and provide reasonable accommodation where appropriate and as far as practicable.

6.6 EXPENSES

Employers should not pay a daily allowance (i.e. €3.20) to their employees in respect of working from home. It is open to employees to make claims directly from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners in respect of actual costs incurred in working from home at the end of the relevant tax year, in accordance with the relevant tax laws. Any claim made in this regard is solely a matter for the individual concerned. Further details on how to claim expenses on tax returns are available at: https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tdm/income-tax-capital-gains-tax-corporation-tax/part-05/05-02-13.pdf

7. Organisational Culture

Employers should strive to maintain their organisation's vision and values, even where a large proportion of their workforce is now working from home. As the opportunities for face-to-face social interactions are now severely limited, efforts should be made to foster a sense of common goals and values amongst all employees.

Employers should:

➢ adopt a culture of agility that is responsive to the evolving needs of the new work environment;

➢ use innovative methods to promote and facilitate social interaction between colleagues, for example, Social Clubs, online events and weekly newsletters etc.;

➢ encourage employees to maintain regular contact with their colleagues whilst working from home. In particular, people managers must communicate frequently with their teams to support employee wellbeing and to manage work effectively;

➢ provide adequate supports, for example, appropriate training to allow employees to successfully carry out their work;

➢ promote access to Disability Liaison Officer and CSEAS to help employees manage personal difficulties that may arise while working from home; and

➢ provide regular updates to employees in line with public health advice and their own organisation's business continuity plan.

 Leadership at all levels should:

➢ strive to improve and enhance a culture of innovative thinking and distributed leadership;

➢ endorse a culture of change with clear, frequent communication of the expectations, values and goals of the organisation; and

➢ drive innovative solutions should be adopted to facilitate continued delivery of service and support positive working relationships in the new working environment.

8. Terms and Conditions

During this temporary arrangement the employee's terms and conditions of employment remain the same when working from home.

Employees are expected to fulfil their usual standard weekly hours, however where flexibility is required around start/finish times, engagement with line management should take place. Employees and managers have a responsibility to ensure they operate within the requirements of the Organisation of Working Time Act (OWTA) taking adequate breaks and not working excessive hours. The normal operation of flexi-time or equivalent attendance management rules, including any flexi-time accruals and deficits, continues to be temporarily suspended during the period of COVID-19 to facilitate the required new ways of working across the public service. This does not preclude organisations from using clocking in and out arrangements that apply including those working at home.

All leave entitlements remain the same. People managers should ensure that their team members are availing of annual leave in a way that supports wellbeing, and also ensures that their team is supported to take their statutory minimum entitlement. Employers should facilitate requests for annual leave where possible so that once the crisis passes, organisations can meet increased business demand without having to cater to a large volume of annual leave requests.

Sick leave arrangements including pay thresholds remain the same. Employees who become ill while working from home should report that they are ill through the normal sick leave procedures (i.e. their manager). Guidance regarding COVID-19 related absences are set out in the *Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19*.

The working-from-home arrangement is temporary in nature to address the health and safety risks associated with the current pandemic and no employee will have an automatic entitlement to remote working.

9. Security, Confidentiality, Secrecy and Standards of Behaviour

Employees working from home are responsible for both the security of any official devices issued to them and the information stored on these devices. The same responsibilities apply to employees enabled to work from home using their own device. The following protocols apply:

- ➢ Storing of work related documents – these should be locked away (See Section 10);
- ➢ Business calls should be conducted in a confidential setting;
- ➢ E-Filing – maintain security by password-protecting sensitive/confidential documents, and devices such as laptops should be shut down when not in use;
- ➢ Screens should be locked when the employee is away from the device at any time;
- ➢ Use of IT equipment – Organisational IT equipment should be used in line with relevant organisational policies;
- ➢ Freedom of Information (FOI) – all records on computers/laptops etc., including instant messaging conversations are encompassed under the FOI Acts;
- ➢ Standards of Behaviour – employees working from home are governed by the same standards of behaviour as when in the office environment – respect, dignity, conduct, professionalism etc.*; and
- ➢ Disclosure of information - employees remain subject to obligations in respect of confidentiality and the requirement under the Official Secrets Act 1963 to avoid improper disclosure of information gained in the course of their official work.

10. Data Protection

Employers and employees should be aware that their obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 are not confined to the

employer's work premises. They also apply when working from home and working remotely in any location.

Organisations should be alive to the risks associated with employees processing personal data while carrying out their duties remotely. Organisations should ensure the arrangements for remote working do not conflict with the organisation's data protection policies and take any additional measures necessary to ensure the security of confidential, personal and sensitive data during remote working

Employers and employees must be mindful of the principles of the GDPR:

- o Lawfulness, fairness and transparency;
- o Purpose limitation;
- o Data minimisation;
- o Accuracy;
- o Storage limitation;
- o Integrity and confidentiality; and
- o Accountability.

Employers and employees who are processing personal data must have a legal basis to do so - Article 6 and Article 9 (special category data) of the GDPR refers.

Obligations under Data Sharing and Governance Act 2019 and the National Archives Act 1986 continue to apply.

Helpful resources include your organisation's Data Protection Officer and the Data Protection Commission website - in particular their guidance on Protecting Personal Data when Working Remotely. The following documents issued to HR from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in February, 2020;

- ➢ Data Protection for HR in the Civil Service - Guidelines for HR Units in the civil service; and
- ➢ Civil Service Human Resources Personal Data Records Retention Schedule.

11. Legal Requirements

Employers should be mindful of the various legislative requirements which place certain obligations on employers, regardless of whether business is conducted at the employer's

premises, the employee's home or another location where the employee is engaging in remote working, for example:

➢ Data Protection obligations;
➢ Health, safety and welfare at work requirements;
➢ Employee Equality Acts;
➢ Obligations under the Organisation of Working Time Act:
  o Rest periods;
  o Annual Leave entitlements; and
  o Excessive hours.

It is also important to remind employees to be mindful that they are bound by the usual policies in place when working from home, in particular:

➢ Official Secrets legislation/requirements;
➢ ICT acceptable usage policy;
➢ Internet content policy;
➢ Data Protection and Governance Acts;
➢ Freedom of Information Acts;
➢ HR Code of Conduct, etc.;
➢ Data Protection Policies;
➢ Disciplinary Code, Circular 19/2016;
➢ Policies regarding Diversity and Equality including but not limited to: Circular 42 of 2001, Gender Equality Policy for Civil Servants and Circular 24 of 2002, Diversity in the Civil Service; and
➢ Grievance procedure as set out in Circular 11/2001.

This list is not exhaustive, details of relevant policies can be found at https://hr.per.gov.ie/.

12. Review Mechanism

These guidelines will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to adapt to any changes to public health advice and with a view to informing a Remote Working Policy post COVID-19.

Appendix A – Role of the People Manager

Leading and Managing Teams

People managers at all levels should:

➢ Promote a positive, open and inclusive working environment where individuals and teams feel valued and supported.

➢ Be open to new ways of working - discuss and agree flexibility around work times with their teams and managers (for example, to accommodate caring responsibilities, travelling arrangements).

➢ Examine and reimagine the roles of their teams. Consider if new ways of working have emerged during the crisis that have enhanced productivity and could be embedded on a permanent basis.

➢ Actively foster innovation - encourage their teams to share ideas, use their initiative, take informed risks and develop their confidence to make decisions.

➢ Empower their team members to take responsibility for their work and give them the authority to do so.

➢ Help their teams to avoid burnout and overworking by encouraging a healthy routine around the hours they work, for example, take tea breaks and a lunch break each day and set their start time and end time – allowing flexibility around other responsibilities where needed.

➢ Ensure all team members including themselves are not working excessively long hours and understand their rights under the Organisation of Working Time Act, including their right to uninterrupted rest breaks.

➢ Act as a role-model and support a healthy work–life balance. Lead by example, for example, by taking leave, rest breaks, and actively participating in remote social events.

Maximise individual and team productivity and performance

People managers at all levels should:

➢ Proactively manage, motivate and support individual and team performances. Continued engagement between people managers and their employees is a key element of the management of performance, including employees on probation. Continue to use support tools (for example, ePMDS, eProbation, Leads) recognising that these are in place to support effective people manager/employee engagement – not to replace direct engagement and conversation.

➢ Set clear work priorities, objectives and expectations. Focus on what employees should be accomplishing by emphasising objectives and outcomes over processes – be flexible. People managers should consider how they can best support employees in achieving their agreed objectives in the short term while at the same time developing their skills and capability in the longer term.

➢ Trust teams to get on with their work but provide them with ongoing support and supervision.

➢ Ensure as far as is practicable that team members have access to the relevant tools, systems and equipment to perform their jobs and help them adjust to new ways of working.

➢ Review their own and their team members' individual learning needs in light of remote working and changing job requirements.

➢ Encourage team development as far as is practicable including exploring innovative development methods

➢ Enhance opportunities for recognition to motivate the individual team member and encourage similar behaviour from their team members.

➢ Leave space to discuss career development.

➢ Address performance issues appropriately and without delay, seeking HR advice as required.

Engaging employees and communicating effectively

People managers at all levels should:

➢ Maintain close and regular contact with their team members to maximise engagement at an individual and team level and seek to offer support as and when required.

➢ Keep teams informed of ongoing developments by regularly communicating relevant organisational and team information.

➢ Stay in touch with their own manager, teams and colleagues for both work and social engagements.

➢ Hold regular online team meetings to share updates, discuss the work programme, agree ways of working, and support each other.

➢ Hold frequent one-to-one conversations to discuss outputs, progress and development options.

➢ Acknowledge that virtual communications are different — and won't be perfect — but should still be professional and respectful of others. People managers should actively instigate contact with their team members to promote involvement and engagement and should encourage people managers within their teams to do likewise.

➢ Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport, reduces feelings of isolation and eases communication between people working from home.

➢ Look after the health and wellbeing of the individuals on your team – keep a look out for any signs of anxiety or distress caused by the current circumstances.

➢ Remind team members of existing health and wellbeing supports, for example CSEAS, organisational wellbeing programmes.

Onboarding and Induction

People managers at all levels should:

➢ Ensure as far as practicable new employees have the equipment and access required to carry out their role effectively.

➢ Have a one to one discussion with new employees to welcome them to your team, set out business objectives and work expectations and to explore development needs

➢ Use video conferencing where possible to introduce new employees to their team members and colleagues.

➢ Arrange for key team members to introduce themselves and welcome the new employee, ideally one-to-one or in a small-group setting.

➢ Give new employees the opportunity to attend team meetings as quickly as possible so that they can form an understanding of the organisation's culture and the interaction between roles/divisions/units.

➢ Adopt innovative solutions to facilitate the delivery of information, training, and/ other supports that would traditionally have been provided in person by IT, HR or people managers to assist employees with reaching the expected standard of performance

➢ Set objectives and carry out the probationary process without delay to ensure performance expectations are clearly communicated to the new employee from the outset. The same principles of performance management apply, even when probationary reviews are taking place remotely. Consult local HR without delay in the event of probationary difficulties.

➢ Schedule regular video conferencing/phone calls with new employees. Use this time to check how the employee is settling in, encourage and answer any questions they may have and discuss progress with assigned tasks in order to identify any support they may need.

➢ Encourage team colleagues to pro-actively engage with the new member of the team to ensure that they are actively involved in social and work initiatives.

➢ Encourage new employees to take part in any upcoming online social events and networking opportunities arranged by the organisation that will give the employee an opportunity to get to know their colleagues.

Appendix B – Employee Guide - Working from Home

Working from home will be a new experience for many of us, in particular sustaining this for an extended period. All employees play a role in supporting each other in transitioning to this new way of working, and this guidance should help us all in this interim period. We should all be aware of the importance of communicating and staying connected with each other during this time and be proactive in maintaining effective communications. Practical considerations include:

Your working day:
- ✓ Comply with your organisation's arrangements for recording hours.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy daily routine as far as possible. Keep set times for your breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Eat nutritious meals and drink plenty of water. Build time in your schedule to exercise.
- ✓ Ensure you take your normal breaks away from your work area and take a short walk, if possible.
- ✓ Aim to stand and move for at least one minute in every hour.
- ✓ Try to vary work tasks to ensure that you are not working in the same position for long periods of time.
- ✓ Be mindful of your phone usage while working to avoid distractions from social media notifications. This allows you to stay focussed on the task at hand.
- ✓ Avoid eye fatigue by resting your eyes periodically.
- ✓ Set boundaries – be mindful of your working hours.
- ✓ Ensure your manager is aware if you are unable to work on a given day for example, due to scheduled leave, illness etc. Normal procedures regarding notice continue to apply.
- ✓ Protect yourself and others from harm during the course of your work, for example, take care of any equipment provided and report any issues appropriately.
- ✓ Notify HR if you have a disability or are sensitive to risk (for example, pregnant, mobility needs) and have specific workspace or equipment needs/concerns.

Staying connected:
- ✓ You may be working alone for a long period in the day, so having the mechanisms and structures to stay connected with colleagues will be very important not only from a work and delivery perspective, but also an individual and team perspective.

✓ Everyone should continue to be available and contactable to their teams and managers during the working day bearing in mind the work patterns of team members.

✓ Communications at a team level should continue, maximising the use of the technology available.

✓ Meetings should be arranged using available technology with colleagues expected to participate in the same way, albeit remotely.

✓ Where access is possible, please ensure you are saving your relevant files in a shared location so the wider team can access as required.

Planning & prioritising:

✓ While work and tasks will continue to be assigned in the normal way (i.e. through your manager, colleagues, inboxes etc.), working without face-to-face contact will require more self-discipline, organisation and clearer two-way communication.

✓ Ensure you are clear on what your priorities are and any deadlines you may be working to.

✓ Please speak to your direct manager on an ongoing basis and don't delay in asking for clarification, support or assistance on your work if you need it.

Appendix C – Working from Home – Sample Checklist

Working Environment

As far as practicable
- Ensure there is sufficient space to work comfortably
- Ensure you can access the workspace easily and safely
- Ensure workspace is kept in a safe condition
- Ensure adequate lighting, heating and ventilation is provided at the workspace
- Ensure there are no trips and/or hazards (e.g. cables, electrical wires)
- Ensure electrical sockets, plugs and cords are in good condition (for example, no charring, exposed wiring or frayed cables)
- Ensure where possible there is sufficient privacy and freedom from disturbances
- Do not place laptop/monitor in a position that may result in a glare on the screen
- Report any injury arising from work activity to your manager/ HR/ Facilities Management immediately
- Keep flammable materials (e.g. paper) and ignition sources (cigarettes) to a minimum
- Ensure smoke detectors/fire alarms are present and in working order

Ergonomics

Where possible
- When seated, feet should be flat on the floor, thighs parallel to the floor and lower legs approximately vertical
- Sit upright whilst using laptop/computer
- Use an upright chair that fits and supports the small of your back
- Position screen level with, or slightly lower than, your eyes and therefore avoiding bending the neck for sustained periods of time
- The screen should be positioned at approximately an arm's length away from your seated position
- Space should be allowed in front of the keyboard to provide support for the hands and arms

Security/ Confidentiality

- Laptops/Computers or other work devices should not be left unlocked when employee leaves their workspace
- Business calls should be made/taken in a private space

If you are concerned about or identify any specific risks, these should be flagged and discussed with your manager in the first instance.

Appendix D – Tips for the Effective Use of Video Conferencing

Working from home has resulted in most communications now being carried out via video conferencing. The following are general tips and associated risks in the use of video conferencing.

➢ Appropriate internet connectivity speed for specific tasks will be required e.g. audio/video conferencing, collaboration, etc.

➢ Be aware of contention on the line within the house

➢ Turn off smart speakers (especially for phone and video calls)

➢ Be aware of background and surroundings if on video calls

➢ If getting an echo on call reset (unplug and plug back in) headset/microphone

➢ Mute microphones if on video conference calls when not talking

➢ Turn off internal microphone on laptop or hybrid if using an external speaker as it may lead to echoes

➢ Use a headset if possible as it reduces speaker and microphone issues

➢ Ensure all devices are secured at all times including at home and travelling to/from work

➢ Be mindful when using video conferencing for conversations on matters of a highly confidential nature

Appendix E – Glossary of Supports

As detailed in the above guidance, a number of supports are available to employers and employees to help navigate their way through the challenges of working from home during COVID-19. For ease of reference, these links are listed again below as a handy 'pull-out' guide that can be circulated to all employees and people managers.

Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19

OneLearning Online Supports

➢ Organising and Chairing Effective Virtual Meetings

➢ Tips for Effective Virtual Meetings

➢ Remote Working during COVID-19

➢ Remote Working for Managers during COVID-19

➢ Wellbeing for Workers Providing Essential Services

Civil Service Employee Assistance Service

The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) provides helpful advice around self-care, managing working from home and childcare responsibilities, managing your wellbeing, etc. Link to CSEAS' COVID-19 response https://www.cseas.per.gov.ie/coronavirus-covid19-support/.

Mediation Service

The Mediation Service provides a voluntary confidential process that allows parties resolve their conflict in a mutually agreeable way with the help of a neutral third party, a Mediator. The Mediator does not impose a solution but rather works with all parties to create their own solution.

Disability Liaison Officer

Departments and Offices are required to appoint a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) to assist and support staff with disabilities and their managers by the provision of necessary information, appropriate contacts, guidance, suggestions and advice.

Departmental DLO contact details: [Insert DLO details]

Data Protection

Data Protection Commission – www.dataprotection.ie

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) - Protecting Personal Data when Working Remotely.

The Data Protection Officer advises on and monitors compliance with the laws protecting individuals' personal data within an organisation. The designation, position and tasks of a DPO within an organisation are described in Articles 37, 38 and 39 of the GDPR.

The Data Protection Commission's guidance relating to video calls can be accessed here.

Departmental Data Protection Officer (DPO) contact details: [Insert DPO details]