

Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service

POLICY DOCUMENT

Document Details**Document Number:** POL:20:PP:052:01:NIBT**No. of Appendices:** 1**Supersedes Number:** Not Applicable**Document Title:** NIBTS WORKING FROM HOME POLICY**ISSUE DATE:** 27 JANUARY 2021**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 24 FEBRUARY 2021**Document Authorisation****Written By:** Rumy Collins, HR & Training Manager**Signature:** Rumy Collins, HR & Training Manager **Date:** 04 December 2020**Authorised By:** Karin Jackson, Chief Executive**Signature:** Karin Jackson, Chief Executive **Date:** 08 December 2020**CROSS REFERENCES**

This Policy refers to the following documents:

Doc Type	Doc. No.	Title
FORM	DD:2035	Working from Home Risk Assessment
POLICY	PP:023	NIBTS Absence Management Policy and Procedure
FORM	DD:827	Flexible Working Application for Retirement and Employment Break Form
FORM	DD:1962	Home Working – Record Tracking Sheet
POLICY	IP:001	NIBTS Email and Internet Acceptable Use Policy
POLICY	PP:014	NIBTS Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
FORM	DD:1825	Display Screen Equipment Workstation Assessment Form
APP	Appendix 1	Manager's Checklist

Key Change from Previous Revision:

This is a new policy.

1. STATEMENT

This policy is intended to provide guidance and good practice to enable employees to work from home effectively and safely. It is intended to assist both managers and employees in implementing working from home by highlighting areas for consideration and providing practical advice and information.

2. OVERVIEW

To work effectively, any working from home arrangement must primarily meet the business needs of NIBTS, followed by the individual needs of employees, to ultimately ensure the continued delivery of safe and high quality services.

It is accepted that this policy cannot be applied to all roles within NIBTS. Where service needs can accommodate, this policy is applicable to permanent, temporary, full time and part time employees and may on some occasions be extended to Agency Workers. The relevant Senior Manager / Head of Department will determine that working from home arrangements will be viable.

3. RESPONSIBILITY**Employee Responsibilities:**

- Comply with all NIBTS policies and procedures whilst working from home.
- While working from home, maintain the professional manner that would be expected in the workplace at all times.
- Provide appropriate contact details and ensure that they are fully contactable during their working hours.
- Understand that there is no right to work from home, the decision is a management decision based on the needs of the business and can be withdrawn at any time with immediate effect however in most circumstances employees will be provided with 4 weeks' notice.
- Deliver the agreed work objectives set out by the line manager on a timely basis.
- Inform their line manager as soon as possible in the event of an accident or incident occurring whilst working at home. This includes reporting any damaged, lost or stolen equipment and breaches of confidentiality or loss of data.
- Complete FORM:DD:2035 'Working from Home Risk Assessment Form' before commencing a working from home arrangement. Employees will work safely and comply with any control measures identified in the risk assessment. Where any new risks become evident, employees must notify their line manager immediately and review the risk assessment to reduce risk.

- Where relevant complete the NIBTS Display Screen Equipment Awareness e-learning, followed by completion of FORM:DD:1825 'Display Screen Equipment Workstation Assessment Form'.
- Take appropriate rest breaks as they would at work, e.g. 30min break for working 6 or more hours.
- Report any sickness in line with 'NIBTS Absence Management Policy and Procedure' POL:PP:023.
- Take annual leave as they would normally do so if not working from home.
- Flexi-leave, appointments or work outside of normal business hours must be approved as normal by line management. It is not expected that employees availing of regular working from home will be permitted to avail of flexi-leave. Managers are however, encouraged to promote flexible working where possible. Only in exceptional circumstances, if expressly agreed with line management will employees be permitted to accrue flexi when working from home.
- Be familiar with any personal tax and insurance issues relating to working from home and to alert the HMRC and insurance provider when required to do so.
- Report any damage to equipment provided by NIBTS to their line manager and appropriate department e.g. IM&T at the earliest opportunity.
- Be available to attend workplace meetings/ training etc. when they are required or requested to do so.
- Ensure the safe storage of NIBTS equipment and confidential information in line with Information Governance procedures. It is anticipated that employees working from home should be working from electronic files and it will only be in exceptional circumstances that paper files should be taken home. Where paperwork is to be taken home it must have prior written authorisation and must be stored in line with NIBTS information governance procedures.
- Maintain contact with their line manager and colleagues, frequently via face to face meetings or via video conferencing.

Management Responsibilities

- Consider home working as a key enabler to more flexible, responsive working pattern and reducing the need for office space, facilitating social distancing; complying with government guidance to avail of working from home where possible.
- Treat each application to work from home on its own merits and give it reasonable consideration.
- Consider the needs of the individual applying to work from home. Applications from people with disabilities may be considered as being a 'reasonable adjustment' under the Disability Discrimination Act and recommendation from Occupational Health.
- Ensure that regular contact is maintained with all employees working at home through the use of technology, via video conferencing, telephone, face to face meetings and any other method of communication available. Managers must ensure that regular supervision and team meetings are arranged to discuss work related matters but also to avoid remoteness and seclusion for staff working from home.
- Assess the sensitivity and confidentiality of the work to be undertaken from home and ensure that the employee has completed their mandatory Information & Governance training.

- Ensure that FORM:DD:2035 has been carried out by the employee prior to agreement of a home working arrangement and discuss any potential risks with the employee.
- Where relevant ensure employee has completed the NIBTS Display Screen Equipment Awareness e-learning, followed by FORM:DD:1825 and discuss any potential issues with the employee.
- Ensure that incidents or accidents are logged appropriately and at the earliest opportunity.
- Liaise with the IM & T Department before agreeing any working from home arrangements to discuss/agree potential IT equipment/access arrangements, where necessary.
- Liaise with the Human Resources Department where advice or guidance is required.
- Ensure employees are aware of expectations and the required standard of work. In some instances, it may not be appropriate for employees to work from home where there are issues regarding conduct, attendance, disciplinary or performance. In these instances managers should seek advice from the Human Resources Department.
- Ensure employees adhere to their responsibilities regarding health and safety, information governance and confidentiality.
- Ensure that the policy is not used to replace dependant's leave or sickness absence in cases where an employee is unfit for work. However there may be instances where working from home is appropriate for short-term duration to support employees following an injury or due to personal circumstances which are discussed and agreed in advance.

4. POLICY

4.1 Working from Home Circumstances

Working from home may arise through different circumstances:

- In accordance with government guidance in response to COVID-19 and any other public health/government recommendations
- To facilitate social distancing
- Requested by the employee as part of a flexible working arrangement
- Agreed time away from a work base to complete work uninterrupted
- As part of a reasonable accommodation for employees with a disability

These circumstances are not exhaustive as there may be other situations when homeworking options may be explored.

4.2 Application for Working from Home

Aside from government recommendations during health pandemics such as COVID-19 and Occupational Health recommended temporary reasonable adjustments, where employees who are able to work from home will be facilitated to do so by management, the following process applies when an individual wants to apply for working from home:

Step 1: Employee formally applies by filling in FORM:DD:827 Flexible Working Application for Retirement and Employment Break Form’.

Step 2: Employee and line manager meet to discuss the application

The line manager should take into account the following factors when discussing and considering home working applications:

The business need	The work task to be completed at home will fulfil business needs.
The impact on team workload	The absence of the individual from the workplace will not create additional workload for other employees or affect operational effectiveness.
The suitability of the job/work task	Working at home will only be possible where the work can facilitate this.
The suitability of the home work area	The employee’s home, when this is being used as a work base, should be a safe and secure working environment. It is the responsibility of the employee to provide assurance of this through their completion of FORM:DD:2035 ‘Working from Home Risk Assessment Form’. <i>(The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 requires all employers to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees whilst at work. This duty also applies to employees working from home. This also places an obligation on employees working from home to ensure they take reasonable care not to put themselves or others at risk.)</i>
The capability of the employee	The ability to deliver work effectively without supervision. Employees who are subject to either informal or formal conduct, attendance or capability proceedings will not normally be eligible for working from home arrangements, particularly if they require close supervision and coaching by their manager to make the necessary improvements. During pandemics such as COVID-19 these requirements may be waived to ensure compliance with government guidance.
Caring responsibilities	The potential impact of the home environment and caring responsibilities should be considered. NIBTS understands that employees may want to work from home because of caring responsibilities. Employees are expected to discuss any caring responsibilities with their line manager and demonstrate how they can deliver the agreed work objectives. Employees must be able to demonstrate that they can carry out the full duties of their post.
ICT requirements	Due consideration to ICT requirements should be given prior to agreement to working from home and be discussed with the IM & T Department.

Step 3: The manager will inform the employee of their decision in writing within 14 days of the date of the meeting:

- If the request is accepted the manager and employee should decide on clear work objectives and arrangements and any potential issues.
- If the manager declines the request they should give justifiable reasons for this. The final decision will be conveyed in writing.

All documentation on the application should be given to the NIBTS Human Resources Department.

4.3 **Withdrawal of Working from Home Arrangements**

Agreed homeworking arrangements can be withdrawn if it is demonstrated that:

- The business needs are not being met
- The performance of the employee suffers as a result of homeworking
- The effectiveness of the team in which the employee work is compromised
- Government advice on working from home has changed

In most circumstances, if regular homeworking arrangements are to be withdrawn, the employee will be given in writing, a minimum of 4 weeks' notice of this change.

However, if homeworking arrangements are reviewed due to the employee's performance, attendance or conduct, the manager reserves the right to immediately withdraw the homeworking arrangement.

4.4 **Terms and Conditions of Working from Home**

4.4.1 **Security and Confidentiality**

Employees are responsible for ensuring the security and confidentiality of NIBTS property and all NIBTS data, information, files, documents etc. within their possession.

The following principles should be followed:

Devices

- Personal PCs or tablets must not be used for NIBTS work.
- Employees should take all possible precautions to ensure devices such as laptops and telephones, are not lost or misplaced.
- Devices should not be left unattended in vehicles.
- Ensure devices are used in a safe location, where they can be kept in sight, minimising who else can view the screen, particularly if working with sensitive or personal data.
- Laptops should be turned off and stored securely when not in use.

Bringing Documents Home

- Employees should not bring documents home unless it absolutely necessary.
- Documents containing personal or sensitive information should NOT leave NIBTS.
- Employees should seek permission to remove records from their line manager prior to taking them home.
- If employees feel they have to bring documents home to enable them to work, they should use form DD:1962 'Home Working – Record Tracking Sheet' to track the records.
- FORM:DD:1962 should be saved on departmental folders on the G Drive – this will enable other employees in the department to view what records have been removed and by whom.

G Drive

- When possible, documents should be saved into the relevant folder on the G Drive. Saving items to the G Drive ensures they are maintained as a record of business activity, it also allows colleagues to view if appropriate.
- The G Drive is locked down to departments and folders should only be able to be accessed by appropriate employees.
- If new folders are required to be set up on the G Drive for particular employee to access, the IM & T Department should be contacted.

Emails

- Work email accounts must only be used. Information should not be shared via personal email accounts as it is not a safe way to transmit official records or information.
- Before sending an email, employees should ensure that they are sending it to the correct recipient, particularly for emails involving large amounts of personal data or sensitive personal data.
- POL:IP:001 'NIBTS Email and Internet Acceptable Use Policy' applies to employees working from home.

Printing

- In general, staff should not print from home, NIBTS devices are not set up to enable this facility.
- If a need to print from home is identified, the requesting member of staff should liaise with their line manager, the IG Manager and the IM&T Manager to assess the need.
- If it is deemed appropriate and necessary for a member of staff to print from home, IT will make the necessary adjustments to enable printing from the device.
- If documents need to be kept, they should be put in a folder and held securely. When the employee returns to NIBTS, they should bring the documents with them and file them appropriately.

- It may be helpful to clearly initial and date printed documents.
- If a document is no longer required to be retained, it should be disposed of as securely as possible – shredded or burnt. They should **NOT** be put in normal waste or recycling.
- If a document isn't able to be shredded or burnt at home, it should be torn up and held in a secure location. When the employee is next in work, they should bring the document with them and dispose of them in confidential waste.

Freedom of Information and GDPR

- All records created, in any format, are searchable and accessible under the FOI Act, GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Information Governance Related Incidents

- Any cyber or data security incidents that happen whilst employees work from home will be treated in exactly the same way as if they happened in the workplace.
- If an employee knows or suspects an Information Governance related incident has occurred, they should email the Information Governance Manager immediately. The email should be copied to the IT Manager. If possible, the employee should provide a telephone number for the Information Governance Manager to contact them to discuss the incident.

4.4.2 NIBTS Equipment and IT Support

Personal computers and peripherals provided will remain the property of NIBTS and must not be used by other members of the household. These items must be returned should the home worker cease employment with NIBTS or if an employee is placed on precautionary suspension from work during an investigation process. Should an employee fail to return any NIBTS property then withholding of salary payments will be applied and or further action taken as deemed appropriate by NIBTS.

Where equipment is provided, NIBTS will be responsible for the service and maintenance of the supplied equipment. Any concerns regarding NIBTS equipment must be immediately raised with their line manager.

An application for home working may be refused if there is not sufficient funding to accommodate all equipment necessary to effectively perform duties at home.

Employees will be held responsible for the loss or damage to equipment where requirements of the appropriate policies have not been observed. The matter may also be investigated in accordance with the POL:PP:014 'NIBTS Disciplinary Policy and Procedure'.

The IM & T Department can provide telephone and email support to home workers where necessary in regards personal computers and peripherals and connectivity. Any equipment that requires physical repair or complex troubleshooting should be delivered to the IM & T Department.

There may be a requirement for the employee to work from the office when equipment is being repaired. IM & T employees will not be required to visit the employee's home. The employee will be responsible for connecting up the equipment themselves.

Connecting to home broadband is the responsibility of the employee and therefore the employee should contact their home broadband provider for support. Employees will be responsible for any additional or improved broadband costs. Home devices such as printers should not in any circumstance be connected to NIBTS equipment without IM & T department approval.

The IM & T Department cannot provide replacement devices without notice and managers should consider contingency measures in these circumstances. (e.g. returning to the office). NIBTS will not be responsible for the purchasing of any equipment such as chairs or desks. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure they are set up appropriately to work from home.

NIBTS will be responsible for any necessary insurance of equipment supplied by them.

It is the responsibility of the employee to have adequate home buildings and contents insurance.

NIBTS will not accept liability for damage caused to the home or its contents.

The employee must inform their insurers, mortgage lender etc. if they are working from home on a regular basis.

4.4.3 Base and Business Mileage

Whilst working from home, an employee's base remains as defined in their contract of employment. Employees are only permitted to work from their own homes following completion of FORM:DD:2035 'Working from Home Risk Assessment'. Any agreement to work from an alternative location which is not an employee's home must be sought from their line manager and have a FORM:DD:2035 completed for the new location.

In addition, where an employee working from home is doing so using a computer, that employee is required to complete the NIBTS Display Screen Equipment Awareness e-learning, followed by completion of FORM:DD:1825 'Display Screen Equipment Workstation Assessment Form'. Once completed the assessment form should be discussed with the line manager to address any issues of concern.

Employees entitled to claim Business mileage should ensure that home to base return miles are deducted as per normal claiming processes irrespective of whether an employee attends their base or not as part of any journey on that particular day.

Managers should ensure that everyone working from home is aware of the expectations upon them including when employees will be available to work (employees unless requested to do so should not work above their normal daily contracted hours).

Employees may be able to claim tax relief for some of the bills they have to pay because they have to work at home on a regular basis. Employee's cannot claim tax relief if they choose to work from home. Employees can only claim for things to do with their work, for example, business telephone calls for the extra cost of gas and electricity for their work area but not the whole house. Employees cannot claim for things that they use for both private and business use, for example, rent or broadband access.

Employees should seek guidance from HMRC as necessary - claims are made through a [P87 form](#).

5. EQUALITY SCREENING OUTCOME

This policy has been drawn up and reviewed in light of the statutory obligations contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). In line with the statutory duty of equality this policy has been screened against particular criteria. If at any stage of the life of the policy there are any issues within the policy which are perceived by any party as creating adverse impacts on any of the groups under Section 75 that party should bring these to the attention of the Head of HR & Corporate Services

The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for staff, donors and service users. We strive to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and that their rights are respected at all times. We believe that it is important that our policy is understood by all those whose literacy is limited, those who do not speak English as a first language or those who face communication barriers because of a disability. On request it may be possible to make this policy available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio file, audio cassette, Easy Read or in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.

6. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Employees should make themselves familiar with this policy.

Appendix 1: Manager's Checklist

Step	Completed
1. Employee applies for working from home by submitting FORM:DD:827 'Flexible Working Application for Retirement and Employment Break Form'	
2. Manager and employee meet to discuss application and consider Step 2 factors.	
3. Manager liaises with IM & T re: available laptop	
4. Manager inform employee of decision	
5. Employee completes form:DD:2035 'Working from Home Risk Assessment'.	
6. Employee completes Display Screen Equipment Awareness e-learning, followed by completion FORM:1825 'Display Screen Equipment Workstation Assessment Form'.	
7. Employee completes Information Governance e-learning (<i>if they haven't already done so</i>).	
8. Manager and employee set clear communication channels and meetings.	