



REMOTE / HOME WORKING POLICY

All the Co-operative's Policies and Procedures are available in large print, braille, audio or other languages on request.

Please ask a member of staff if you would like a version in a different format.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST	
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Approved by Director:	MARCH 2026
Effective From:	MARCH 2026
Date of Next Review:	MARCH 2031
Diversity compliant:	YES
Equality Impact Assessment:	LOW
Data Protection compliant:	YES
Health & Safety compliant:	YES
Procedure implemented:	YES
SDM system changes made:	N/A
Training Completed:	
Posted on Sharepoint:	
Posted on website:	

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Remote / Home working (Remote Working) is where an employee works away from their employer's location for all or part of their working week on a permanent, or ad hoc basis. The practice has been around for a long time but has become increasingly popular and widely used across all sectors.
- 1.2 The Co-operative wants to support staff to do their best work, have a good work life balance, work flexibly whilst staying connected and getting the job done.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to set out a framework for building on the positive lessons learned while working from home during the pandemic whilst looking at how the office space can support everyone to stay connected and work in the best way.
- 1.4 Remote / Home working won't work for or be available to everyone. It will depend on nature of your role and the job you are undertaking, the level of supervision you need in your role, any minimum levels of physical cover required as well as the technology and environment you have available to you.
- 1.5 Remote working can be:
 - an original contractual arrangement from when the employee commenced employment;
 - requested by an employee as part of a flexible working statutory entitlement (see Flexible Working Policy),
 - a reasonable adjustment,
 - a change in organisational culture to provide employees with choice and utilise the benefits of remote working,
 - implemented by the Co-operative, following the necessary consultation and contractual change processes,
 - used as a mechanism for employee and public safety in the event of a public health emergency or other exceptional external circumstances.
- 1.6 There are two types of remote working:
 - **Occasional:** employees have a contractual work base (i.e. office location), but work remotely on an ad hoc basis, through informal arrangements with their team and line manager.
 - **Contractual:** employees that work off-site as defined in their contract of employment for a specified period of their working week.
- 1.8 The Co-operative does not currently consider any of its employees to be contractual "homeworkers". This policy enables us to permit certain employees to work from home on occasions due to business or personal circumstances.

The procedures outlined within this policy therefore are relevant for occasional / homeworking where employees may be permitted to work from home. We recognise the flexibility and benefits it can bring to both the employer and the employee.

The Policy also considers potential contractual arrangements (Appendix 1), should this practice be permitted in the future.

2.0 POLICY PRINCIPLES

2.1 The Co-operative's Remote Working Policy aims to:

- Benefit the business from timeous high-quality reports, policies and projects by giving appropriate staff the opportunity to do normal office-type work at home, without interruptions;
- Ensure our high level of service is maintained at all times;
- Better meet the demands of our service requirements;
- Promote our culture of inclusion;
- Integrate into and complement our health and wellbeing strategy;
- Support and embed our commitment to our environmental sustainability practices;
- Set out the parameters to ensure the above conditions are met.

3.0 OCCASIONAL REMOTE WORKING

3.1 For occasional remote working, an employee works their contracted hours from the location specified in their contract of employment. However, on occasion, it may be more effective if an employee has an ad hoc day working remotely at the Line Manager's discretion. This can be effective when managing certain situations such as:

- Disruptions to dependants care arrangements;
- Project work;
- Adverse weather;
- Commuting disruptions;
- An injury where the employee is fit to work but is unable to commute to their contractual work location;
- Requested by employer due to unforeseen circumstances e.g. Pandemic.

3.2 In all the above situations, work will be carried out effectively and efficiently with the appropriate resources, including an electronic device, e.g. laptop or tablet with sufficient broadband speed and functioning phone.

3.3 All situations for occasional remote working will be discussed individually with the employee's line manager, and they will consider the request balancing employee and business pressures and provide a decision. The line manager will discuss with employees how remote working arrangements will work including any rota for office cover and existing working patterns.

3.4 In addition, if staff have permission to work at home this will not apply when they are required to cover for another colleague(s) who is absent on holiday, sick leave etc. In this instance flexibility is required from the employee to ensure there is adequate cover in the office. The Co-operative reserves the right to withdraw the home working arrangement for business reasons at any time, and with immediate effect should this approach not be supported.

- 3.5 Due to staffing cover it is not permitted for a member of staff that does not normally work from home do so as they feel unwell. This would be treated as sick leave (see Sickness Absence Policy) unless under exceptional circumstances working from home has been given prior approval from your Line Manager.
- 3.6 Due to the joint staffing arrangement with Forgewood Housing Co-operative some staff may be expected to have presence in another office to ensure there is a reasonable office cover. It is accepted that those staff working from the office may be out undertaking their duties. This representation from all staff is also an important part of ensuring that health and safety is maintained in the office, for example minimising lone working and ensuring sufficient cover at all times.

4.0 WORKING HOURS AND KEEPING IN TOUCH

- 4.1 We want to empower you to flex the times you work so you can balance your home life around the needs of your role. We trust you to manage your own time and make sure you do the hours you are contracted to do. However, there are some important things we would like you to be aware of: -
- You should expect to make yourself available to others during reasonable working hours when you are needed by your team.
 - We may ask you to be available at certain times to meet the needs of the business, to physically be in the office to collaborate or attend training. We will endeavour to provide a minimum of 24 hours' notice, however, emergency situations may require your attendance at the office with no notice.
 - Flexing your working times should not result in extra work for other members of the team or compromise the objectives of your team.
 - If you choose to work late during unsociable hours, please be courteous and respectful to your colleagues. Your colleagues are not expected to respond during unsociable hours.
 - You won't be entitled to any overpayments or overtime if you choose to work unsociable hours or more hours than you are contracted to do.
 - We know that working in this way can help you balance your home and work life. However remote working is not suited as a way of managing emergency leave or for long term childcare if it has a significant impact on your ability to carry out your day to day role.

5.0. MANAGEMENT APPROVAL

- 5.1 Each request for home working must be individually discussed with and approved by a management team member, who will assess each request against the requirements set out by this policy.

6.0 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The Co-operative has a culture of trust and respect for all. Performance Management will be carried out in the same way as if employees were in the office. As in the office, if the quality or volume of work while working remotely is not at the required standard, this will be addressed via the Co-operative's performance management process initially on an informal basis. Matters will be managed confidentially with individual employees.

7.0 HEALTH & SAFETY

- 7.1 **Only employees who have had a Risk Assessment carried out will be eligible.** An employee will only be permitted to work from home where the management team member is satisfied with the individual's knowledge of safe working practices.
- 7.2 A health and safety assessment will be carried out according to the Co-operative's health and safety checklist (Appendix 2), which covers VDU risks and general precautions for house-holder electrical safety. Domestic electrical supply configurations are out with the control of the employer and are the responsibility of the staff member. Employees will perform their assessment, and their line manager will then validate results during a discussion or remote visit. The employees will be expected to report any changes that may affect the arrangements in the future (in which case another assessment may be necessary).
- 7.3 Prior to permitting an employee to work from home, the employee will be given a copy of the HSE guidance note INDG 226 (Appendix 2) and this Policy on Homeworking and will sign a statement confirming that he/she has read both documents and will take all reasonable precautions to ensure his/her safety and that of any others who may be affected by their work (e.g. children in the home). Such statements will be filed by the Health & Safety Administrator (HSA).
- An employee will only be permitted to take home equipment that has been subject to a suitable and valid inspection and test regime (e.g. PAT).
 - No employee will be permitted to hold any meetings within their home apart from telephone or video conferencing.
 - Any accident/incident/near miss occurring during the time an employee is working from home will be reported without delay to the Health & Safety Administrator /Line Manager, who will deal with the situation as appropriate.

8.0 TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- 8.1 The Co-operative's IT infrastructure is capable of supporting this form of remote working with remote access to calendars, emails and documents. Staff who seek approval to work from home would be required to use the Co-operative's computer equipment and have their own home broadband at sufficient speed in place.
- 8.2 Employees can then log into the Co-operative network using the remote access software set up by the Data Protection and Compliance Officer and IT consultants.
- 8.3 The Co-operative will, where practical, provide the appropriate equipment and/or software to allow people to work remotely. The employer would not pay for installation of landline telephones or the bills, as employees would be able to use the Co-operative's mobile devices provided to them.

- 8.4 Where the office has been affected by a disaster, staff may use their own or the office IT equipment, only if basic firewall and anti-virus software has been installed on their home computers, to protect the Co-operative's office IT systems from any harm. [See PM](#)

9.0 COSTS/ALLOWANCES

- 9.1 Employees who, on occasion, work remotely will not have expenses approved for items such as for paper/ink/subsistence/internet service/wear and tear on equipment. It is considered that the saving in time and money getting to/from work is a reasonable notional offset to any minimal personal cost of occasionally working remotely.
- 9.2 Any costs for Wi-Fi, heating, lighting and electricity and commuting costs to your designated place of work will always be a personal expense in line with HMRC guidelines. There may be expenses that can be claimed directly by employees from HMRC. Please refer to HMRC website for the most up to date information.
- 9.3 We would advise that you check that there isn't anything that would prevent you working from home, for example in your mortgage agreement, lease or insurance. You should also get confirmation of cover from your home insurer should work equipment cause any damage to your home.

10.0 BREACHES OF THE REMOTE / HOME WORKING POLICY

Remote working is a privilege not a right. Managers reserves the right to withdraw the home working arrangement for business reasons at any time, and with immediate effect where standards have fallen; behaviours are a concern; performance is a concern; or any other matter is of concern. Possible reasons for this may be:-

- Inability to work from home safely and effectively due to equipment/space/connection issues;
- A sustained reduction in performance including customer satisfaction;
- Distractions with either dependents or other non- work related issues that stop employees being fully engaged in work activities for a sustained period.

11.0 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

Your obligation around Data Protection must be adhered to at all times and you should ensure that you familiarise yourself with the Co-operative's Data Protection Policy, IT Policy and any other relevant policies. When working from home you should ensure you take the appropriate measures to protect confidentiality and sensitive data at all times.

You must report any actual breach of security, confidentiality or data protection to your Line Manager.

12.0 EQUALITIES

The Co-operative is committed to tackling discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status, racial grounds, or grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin, or of other personal attributes, including religious beliefs or opinions and to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

We seek to embrace diversity, promote equal opportunities for all and eliminate any unlawful discrimination in all areas of our work.

13.0 POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis or earlier to ensure our aims are being met.

Appendix 1

1.0 Contractual Remote Working (For information only)

1.1 Contractual remote working could occur in the following circumstances:

- Making a Flexible Working Request: An employee with the required continuous service can request via their statutory entitlement to request Flexible Working;
- Organisational Culture and Practice: The Co-operative will consider contractual remote working where it is practical and meets the needs of the Co-operative.

2.0 Flexible Working Request

2.1 Employees wishing to request remote working as a contractual arrangement can discuss the request with their line manager and follow up with a formal request in writing by following the Co-operative's Flexible Working Policy. The process outlined in the policy will be followed.

2.2 Any decision to accept or reject the application will be based on the Co-operative's business needs and requirements at the time of the request and, in line with our Flexible Working Policy. Any change to the employee's working arrangement would be regarded as a permanent contractual change and therefore, must be confirmed in writing. Due to the change being permanent, a 3-6 month (depending on the nature of the role) trial period will take place first before any permanent change takes effect.

3.0 Organisational Culture

3.1 The Co-operative acknowledges the benefits remote working can bring providing services delivery is not diminished, such as:

- the efficiency of performance,
- health and wellbeing of employees;
- the positive environmental impact through reduced commuting.

3.2 The Co-operative may support a culture of remote working as a permanent contractual arrangement in the future as long as business and service delivery needs are met and enhanced. The Co-operative trusts its employees to fulfil their contractual obligations concerning their job role. Whether an employee is working remotely or, at the Co-operative's business premise locations, the expectation on performance standards would remain the same.

3.3 The Co-operative believes a model of blended working is best and therefore will not consider requests for full time remote working. This means a mixture of remote and onsite working, which brings the most benefits for both business and employees. It allows for continuing face to face social interaction, collaboration, along with enjoying the benefits of remote working.

3.4 The Co-operative appreciates that not all employees will request to work remotely as they may prefer to attend the office for their working week.

3.5 Management will discuss with employees how remote working arrangements will work within the offices, including any rota for office cover and existing working patterns. Once the agreed between employees and the appropriate manager, confirmation will be provided in writing. A trial period of 3 months will be set before confirming permanent contractual changes.

3.6 Any permanent changes to a work location is a contractual change of employment and agreement will always be sought in the first instance.

4.0 Trial Periods

4.1 At the end of a trial period, the arrangement will either be amended or confirmed. The decision at the end of the period will not be a surprise, this will be due to regular communication on the effectiveness of the working arrangement throughout the trial. Any adjustments can be made during the trial and can be put forward by the line manager or by employees.

5.0 Contractual changes

5.1 If contractual remote working has been agreed, the Co-operative will write to the employee to confirm the change and any associated terms with the change.

6.0 Costs/Allowances

6.1 There may be expenses that can be claimed directly by employees from HMRC. Please refer to HMRC website for the most up to date information.

7.0 Travel Expenses

7.1 Work-related travel expenses will be paid at the rate stated in your terms and conditions of employment, and as specified in the Co-operative's Expenses policy.

8.0 Performance Management

8.1 The Co-operative has a culture of trust and respect for all. Performance Management will be carried out in the same way as if employees were in the office. As in the office, if the quality or volume of work while working remotely is not at the required standard, this will be addressed via the Co-operative's performance management process initially on an informal basis. Matters will be managed confidentially with individual employees.

9.0 Health & Safety

9.1 A health and safety assessment will be carried out according to the Co-operative's health and safety checklist (Appendix 2), which covers VDU risks and general precautions for householder electrical safety. Domestic electrical supply configurations are outwith the control of the employer and are the responsibility of the staff member. Employees will perform their assessment, and their line manager will then validate results during a discussion or remote visit. The employees will be expected to report any changes that may affect the arrangements in the future (in which case another assessment may be necessary).

10.0 Technical Support

- 10.1 The Co-operative's IT infrastructure is capable of supporting this form of remote working with remote access to calendars, emails and documents. Staff who seek approval to work from home would be required to use the Co-operative's computer equipment and have their own home broadband at sufficient speed in place.
- 10.2 Employees can then log into the Co-operative network using the remote access software set up by the Data Protection and Compliance Officer and IT consultants.
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- 10.4 Where the office has been affected by a disaster, staff may use their own or the office IT equipment, only if basic firewall and anti-virus software has been installed on their home computers, to protect the Co-operative's office IT systems from any harm.

Appendix 2

The Co-operative's health & safety checklist for employees working remotely. This list is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with **section 3.20 of the Health and Safety Manual.**

Electrical Equipment

The safety and maintenance of the domestic electrical supply/installation is the responsibility of the house-holder. The Co-operative will only take maintenance responsibility for any equipment it directly supplies.

House-holder checklist:

- Ensure electrical equipment is turned off when not in use and before performing any checks;
- Check plugs are not damaged;
- Check domestic electrical supply is suitable for the equipment in use;
- Check plugs are correctly wired and that the outer cable covering is gripped at the point it enters the plug or equipment;
- Check outer covers of equipment are sound and have no loose parts or missing screws;
- Check all leads and cables routinely against damage to the outer covers;
- Check for burn marks or other signs of overheating;
- Repair any electrical equipment with the potential to harm;
- Check and secure all trailing wires – the best way is to use power outlets nearest to the equipment. Where this is not possible tuck trailing wires securely under desks etc. and out of typical walkways;
- Do not have young children unsupervised in any area where you are using electrical equipment.

Working with VDU's

The Co-operatives self-assessment tool will be used to ensure workstations are set up appropriately.