



HSE Blended Working Policy for the Public Health Service

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Health Service Executive (HSE) is committed to facilitating blended working arrangements for public health service employees whose roles can be performed remotely. The term blended working refers to a combination of working from the employer's work premises and working remotely¹. There are a number of drivers for the introduction of blended working arrangements in the public health service². These drivers including supporting Government policies and commitments in the *National Remote Working Strategy, Our Rural Future, the Climate Action Plan and the National Planning Framework*.

1.2 This is an overarching Blended Working Policy for the HSE and Section 38 organisations. HSE management and each Section 38 employer must identify which roles are suitable for remote working and determine how the implementation of blended working arrangements will align with the business/service needs of the organisation/division/unit.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Blended working can promote a diverse, innovative and progressive work environment that offers flexibility and enhances work-life balance. It is also important to acknowledge that many roles across all staff categories within the public health service require employees to work on-site and are not suitable for remote working³. The delivery of efficient, high-quality public health and social services must never be compromised in order to facilitate blended working. The identification of roles that are suitable for remote working and a fair and transparent decision-making process is crucial to implementing blended working effectively within the public health service. Management in each HSE area/division/unit and each Section 38 organisation are required to identify eligibility criteria (based on the criteria set out in

¹ The term "working remotely" in this document refers to the employee's place of residence.

² Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment information on remote working is available [here](#).

³ The role suitability identification exercise (see page 7) should be reviewed periodically as new technology or work processes may change a role's suitability for blended working.

section 6) and implement an application and decision-making process for blended working applications (see section 7) in line with this Policy.

2.2 While blended working is mutually advantageous for employers and employees, access to blended working will not be an automatic entitlement, nor will an employee be entitled to retain a blended working arrangement where, following review, a decision is made to terminate a blended working arrangement. The ability to successfully meet the needs of the business/service while working remotely must be the foremost consideration for health service managers in determining the suitability of blended working, as this will be the key to the approval of any blended working arrangement. Blended working presents an opportunity to meet business needs in a new way of working, to enhance service delivery, underpin business continuity and improve the performance of organisations, provided the role being performed is suitable to be carried out remotely. It is also recognised that some employees wish to continue working their full contracted hours at the employer's work premises and there is no requirement on employees to avail of blended working arrangements regardless of the nature of their role.

2.3 This policy sets out a procedure for public health service employees to apply for blended working arrangements. Section 38 employers are responsible for implementing this policy and procedure within their organisation and putting in place the appropriate administrative arrangements for processing applications and management decision-making.

3. Key Principles

3.1 The following key principles inform this policy and the approach of public health service employers to blended working:

- a) Blended working arrangements must align with business/service needs and support the delivery of efficient, high-quality health and social services.
- b) Senior management will encourage and facilitate blended working where practical based on a role identification exercise and determination of eligibility criteria to be undertaken within each organisation/division/unit.

- c) Management will inform employees of the outcome of the role identification exercise and eligibility criteria.
- d) Blended working applications will be dealt with in a fair, consistent, transparent and timely manner.
- e) Employees who are granted blended working arrangements will generally have no automatic right to a dedicated workstation, or single occupancy office at the employer's work premises but will have a suitable work space available to them when required to attend. The employee should be advised of the specific arrangements that will apply in relation to allocation of desks/offices prior to confirmation of their blended working application (if approved).
- f) The approval of any blended working arrangement is at the discretion of management. Blended working agreements should include an initial trial period. In general, the trial period should last no less than three months and no more than six months.
- g) An employee may submit a Blended Working Application for consideration no more than once every 12 months unless their role and/or unit changes or there have been significant changes to their proposed home work station.
- h) Employees must be in a position to carry out all the responsibilities of their role while working remotely under a blended working arrangement. Blended working must not be used as a substitute for annual leave or sick leave. While blended working may have benefits for persons with caring responsibilities, any caring responsibilities must take place outside of working time. The introduction of blended working will not reduce the availability of current flexible working options such as part-time working under the Flexible Working Agreement, the Shorter Working Year Scheme, parental leave and carer's leave.

4. Scope

4.1 This policy applies to all public health service employees in the HSE and Section 38 organisations. It applies to full-time and part-time employees.

4.2 With the exception of employees who reside in Northern Ireland⁴, remote working outside of the State will not be facilitated.

4.3 In the interest of a fair decision-making process, no employee can have automatic access to a blended working arrangement on the basis that they have previously worked remotely. It is important to acknowledge that the number of employees and/or the percentage of time employees are approved to work on a blended basis at any one time may be limited based on business needs. To ensure fairness and equity to all employees on an ongoing basis, blended working will not be indefinitely guaranteed to any employee, as rotating may be required in order to support business needs, employee mobility and career development.

5. Glossary of terms and definitions

5.1 The term remote work refers to the broad concept of an arrangement where an employee works at an alternative approved worksite to the employer's work premises (in most cases the employer's work premises will be the workplace/site).

5.2 The term blended working refers to working arrangements that involve a combination of working from the employer's work premises and working remotely⁵, based on an agreement between the employee and the manager, and approved through the application process.

5.2 The employer's work premises will continue to be the primary work place for all employees, and there will be a requirement to attend on-site:

- on specific days each week agreed with the manager; and/or
- an agreed percentage of days per week or month as agreed with the manager; and/or

⁴ Specialist advice should be sought in respect of applications from employees who reside in Northern Ireland to take account of the tax, social security and legal implications. See section 6.3 of this Policy.

⁵ The term "working remotely" in this document refers to the employee's place of residence.

- on days as and when required by the manager, for example for collaboration, meetings, training and key events. The employee should be given an appropriate period of notice in such cases.

In general, no employee should work 100% remotely.

6. Eligibility Criteria

6.1 All of the following criteria must be satisfied for any blended working arrangement to be approved, none of which may be excluded from consideration:

- (a) Business needs and role suitability
- (b) Employee suitability
- (c) Designated workstation requirements

a) Business Needs and Role Suitability

Supporting business needs in order to deliver efficient, high-quality services is of paramount importance. Productivity standards and performance levels cannot be compromised to facilitate blended working. Managers should strike the balance between striving to be more flexible and facilitating blended working where practical, while enabling onsite interaction, collaboration and support as required in order to sustain high levels of productivity and performance at an individual, team and organisational level. The number of employees, and/or the percentage of time, approved to work on a blended basis may be limited based on the assessed impact on business needs.

Managers should consider issues such as:

- the ability to meet the business needs of the organisation/division/unit,
- the ability to maintain the required level of service quality and productivity,
- team performance and team collaboration,
- operational issues,
- costs,
- office capacity, and

- the extent of blended working arrangements available in the organisation/division/unit.

It is important to acknowledge that not all roles will be suitable for blended working. Managers⁶ are required to conduct a **role suitability identification exercise**, taking the following into consideration:

- requirements to access particular technologies/equipment/data accessible only on-site,
- requirements for client-facing service delivery at the employer's work premises or other locations (e.g. client's home),
- performance of tasks that have a high degree of manual work,
- performance of support tasks that must be provided on-site, and
- performance of tasks that are more efficiently carried out on-site.

Managers should advise employees of the outcome of the role identification exercise. Managers should also be cognisant of the need to review the exercise periodically, as new technology or work processes may change a role's suitability for blended working.

(b) Employee Suitability

Each application should be considered on its own merits, noting that access to blended working should, as far as practical, be an option for all staff whose roles are deemed suitable for remote working and that issues arising for individuals should be managed as appropriate and on an ongoing basis, whether in the workplace or remotely.

An assessment of individual suitability may include, but is not limited to, confirmation of the following:

- performance standards have been achieved in line with existing HR processes,

⁶ It is up to each HSE area/division/unit and Section 38 employer to decide the appropriate level/grade of management for undertaking this exercise.

- satisfactory attendance and compliance with the organisation's Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure, and
- the employee is not subject to an ongoing disciplinary process or have a live record of disciplinary action on file.

Probationary employees may be considered eligible for blended working on a case-by-case basis taking into account the general criteria and specific further factors relevant in the context of probationers. Management may require that new employees attend the office during their probationary period:

- to assist with adapting to their new role and work environment
- to facilitate ongoing engagement with managers and with team members
- to facilitate team bonding and collaboration
- to facilitate face-to-face meetings and training where required and/or
- to assist with the assessment of the probationer's performance during the probationary period

Managers will need to determine on a case-by-case basis how much attendance is required at the employer's work premises, taking into consideration the varying needs of new recruits and recently promoted employees. In some cases, full-time attendance at the employer's work premise for the entire probationary period may be required. In other cases, attendance for a set period may be appropriate, or for a specified work pattern. In any event, managers must ensure that they are able to assess probationary performance accurately.

As with any other situation, blended working arrangements are subject to review and may be withdrawn where appropriate, for example, where the manager needs attendance at the work premises to assist with the assessment of performance and provide appropriate on-site supports. Managers should engage with employees in advance and give a reasonable period of notice (see section 11 – Termination of Arrangements).

(c) Designated Workstation Requirements

All parties must ensure that they comply with all relevant health and safety obligations in line with the legislative requirements.

The employee must:

- complete the organisation's Application Form and Declaration (the HSE form is available at this link [here](#),
- identify a single designated remote workstation which is suitable for the performance of the employee's duties and meets the health and safety requirements as set out in the legislation and relevant guidance,
- agree to a risk assessment conducted by the employer,
- agree to make no subsequent substantive changes to the workstation without authorisation from the employer,
- confirm that they are able to connect to a work computer via their own reliable broadband connection, and
- confirm that the workstation allows compliance with data security and applicable confidentiality standards.

6.2 Employees who are granted a blended working arrangement will generally have no automatic right to a dedicated workstation or single occupancy office at the employer's work premises but will have a suitable work space available to them when required to attend. The employee should be advised of the specific arrangements that will apply in relation to allocation of desks/offices prior to confirmation of their blended working application (if approved).

6.3 With the exception of employees who reside in Northern Ireland, remote working outside of the State will not be facilitated. It should be noted that in respect of employees residing in Northern Ireland, in some situations taxing rights on their employment income may arise there. In this scenario, such employees may be exposed to double taxation. Credit/relief for any double taxation may be available under the terms of the Ireland/UK Double Tax Treaty. There may also be

implications for the payment of PRSI or National Insurance contributions. This area is complex with the individual facts and circumstances of each case having different implications so each Department or Office, or any employee affected, can seek advice from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners as to specific tax treatments, where required. The Department of Social Protection gives advice on PRSI matters. HSE managers should consult the HSE Finance / Tax Unit in relation to tax and PRSI issues pertaining to HSE employees and engage specialist advice on potential employment legislation implications if individual cases arise. Section 38 employers should obtain their own specialist advice if individual cases arise within their organisation.

7. Application and Decision Making Process

7.1 Organisations must adopt an application and decision-making process to ensure a consistent approach to blended working applications. The application and decision-making process must facilitate the transparent and consistent consideration of applications using the eligibility criteria determined by management and provide for a right of appeal under the organisation's Grievance Procedure. The HSE Blended Working Application Form and Declaration is at this link <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/hr-forms/>. Section 38 organisations should have an equivalent form for their employees which reflect their administrative arrangements. As outlined in section 6, all of the following criteria must be satisfied for any blended working arrangement to be approved, none of which may be excluded from consideration:-

- (a) Business needs and role suitability
- (b) Employee suitability
- (c) Designated workstation requirements

7.2 All applications are subject to an evaluation process, based on eligibility criteria, which take into account the specific needs of the organisation/department/unit. Blended working is not an automatic entitlement, regardless of any previous remote working arrangement. An employee may submit a blended working application for consideration no more than once every 12 months,

unless their role and/or unit changes or there have been significant changes to their proposed home workstation. The approval of any blended working arrangement is at the discretion of management, following the process outlined below.

7.3 Each HSE area/division/unit and Section 38 employer must determine the management level at which decision-makers will be designated. The stages of the application and decision-making process should generally include the following:

- i. The employee should read the Blended Working Policy and be familiar with its provisions.
- ii. The employee should have an initial discussion with their supervisor/line manager to discuss the suitability of a blended working arrangement, including the pre-determined eligibility criteria, the proposed blended working pattern and the impact on the team. The employee may be given feedback by their manager in relation to any areas where the eligibility criteria have not been met, giving the applicant the opportunity to rectify these areas before submitting their application.
- iii. If the employee wishes to proceed, they should complete the Blended Working Application Form and Declaration.
- iv. The employee should submit their completed Blended Working Application Form and Declaration for assessment by the manager who is the designated decision-maker.
- v. The manager who is the decision-maker should consider the application and make a decision whether to provisionally approve, or refuse, the application.
- vi. The decision-maker should record their decision on the application form which will be relayed to the applicant in writing.
- vii. Where an application has been refused, the reasons for refusal should be clearly communicated to the applicant in writing. The written confirmation of refusal should also inform the unsuccessful applicant of the option to appeal the decision under the organisation's Grievance Procedure.

7.4 Any approval provided is provisional pending the following steps:

- Assessment of the employee’s work environment and designated workstation by a ‘competent person’ within a reasonable timeframe. A competent person is someone with sufficient training, experience and knowledge who can carry out the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessment of an employee’s workstation. The risk assessment will identify possible issues that could cause injury or ill-health. Having suitable controls in place through the provision of appropriate equipment, training and good communication will help reduce future problems. The assessment can be done online, for example through the use of video calls ideally with a smartphone, so that the employee can move freely around the specific work location so as to help the assessor identify and direct the employee to areas that need to be assessed. It is not necessary to keep a digital file/record of this assessment. The assessor must document on the risk assessment any specific issues identified at an employee’s home workspace and agree on corrective actions with the employee.
- In the HSE the competent person/assessor for workstation assessments is normally a manager who has successfully completed the HSEland online assessor module titled “Display Screen Equipment: Assessors Module” and the general risk assessment training also available on HSElandD titled “Managing Health and Safety in the Healthcare Setting”.
- In some cases, for example where the DSE user has an existing musculoskeletal condition or there are specific/unusual ergonomic needs, a specialist assessment by a qualified ergonomist may be required. In the HSE procurement of the services of an ergonomist is approved, funded and managed locally⁷.

⁷ Further information on the public procurement process is available from the Office of Government Procurement website [HERE](#).

Information on HSE DSE risk assessment can be found at the following links⁸:

- <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/health-and-safety/office-safety-and-display-screen-equipment/>
- <https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/staff/dse-risk-assessment-guidance.pdf>

See also **Appendix A** of this Policy.

7.5 Formal sign-off and written approval of the blended working arrangement following the DSE assessment and where the designated workstation meets the required health and safety standards.

7.6 The approval of any blended working arrangement is at the discretion of management. Blended working agreements should include an initial trial period. In general, the trial period should last no less than three months and no more than six months.

7.7 An employee may submit a Blended Working Application for consideration no more than once every 12 months unless their role and/or unit changes or there have been significant changes to their proposed home work station.

The requirements of any application process may be subject to change in light of legislation related to the right to request remote working.

8 Appeal of refusal

8.1 Where an application is refused, the reasons for refusal should be clearly communicated to the employee in writing. The employee should also be informed of their right to appeal the decision under the organisation's Grievance Procedure as set out below.

⁸ The HSE National Health & Safety Function (NHSF) will update this information as appropriate.

8.2 Before initiating the formal stages of the Grievance Procedure, the employee should have an informal discussion with their line manager under the informal stage of the Grievance Procedure to discuss the reasons for refusal and to explore if there is an opportunity to resolve any issues identified. If the issues can be resolved, the employee can submit a request to the decision-maker to re-assess the application and the decision may be amended at this stage. If the issues cannot be resolved, the employee can invoke the formal stages of the Grievance Procedure if they still do not accept the outcome.

8.4 The employee's appeal under the formal stages of the Grievance Procedure should set out the grounds of the appeal. The appeal will be undertaken by a manager at a higher level who was not involved in the original decision-making process. All records relating to the application and original decision should be made available to the manager conducting the appeal.

8.5 The outcome of the appeal should be communicated in writing to the employee and may:

- affirm the decision to refuse the application, or
- recommend that the original decision be reconsidered by the decision-maker, taking into account any issues identified.

8.6 The blending working arrangement will be terminated upon expiry of the notice period pending the final outcome of the Grievance Procedure if the appeal process is still ongoing on the expiry date.

9. Trial period and Continuing Assessment of Suitability

9.1 Blended working arrangements are not an entitlement or term of employment. Such arrangements are not guaranteed on a permanent basis. Rotation of blended working opportunities among employees may be required in order to support employee mobility and career development.

9.2 A blended working arrangement should, in the first instance, be granted for a trial period (in general, no less than three months and no more than six months). The trial period is an opportunity for the employee and the manager to keep in regular contact, to evaluate the success, and ongoing suitability, of the arrangement.

9.3 After the trial period, the suitability of the arrangement should continue to be assessed. Where performance issues arise, the manager should discuss the issues with the employee as soon as practical, and give them the opportunity to rectify the issue. A record should be kept of such discussions and the agreed outcome.

9.4 A formal review of the blended working arrangements should also take place as part of the existing performance management processes. The manager and the organisation will need to assess whether the blended working arrangement continues to suit the business/service needs of the organisation/division/unit.

9.5 Employees must be in a position to carry out all the responsibilities of their role when availing of remote blended working. Blended working must not be used as a substitute for annual leave or sick leave. While blended working may have benefits for persons with caring responsibilities, any caring responsibilities must take place outside of working time.

10. Managing Blended Working Arrangements

10.1 In order to ensure that blended working arrangements are effective, managers should do the following:

- Comply with the requirements of the [HSE Policy and Guidance on Lone Working](#).
- Put measures in place to ensure equitable treatment for employees, whether working from the employer's work premises or remotely, including access to suitable virtual communication platforms.

- Promote a positive, open and inclusive working environment where individuals and teams feel valued and supported.
- Maintain close and regular contact with their employees to maximise engagements at an individual and team level and seek to offer support as and when required.
- Ensure that employees are aware that they are subject to the terms and conditions of their contract of employment while working remotely and this documentation is up-to-date.
- Ensure that employees who are granted blended working arrangement are aware that they continue to be comprehended by the organisation's policies and procedures while working remotely.
- Promote a culture that supports a healthy work-life balance in line with the **HSE Right to Disconnect Policy for Public Health Service Employees** [here](#).
- Ensure that employees who are granted blended working arrangements are suitably equipped to effectively carry out their role remotely through relevant training and supports.
- Ensure that risk assessments are reviewed periodically.
- Be alert to the health and wellbeing of employees and remind employees of the organisational supports that are available.
- Check in regularly with their staff and utilise the online tools designed to help teams communicate and work as a group. There are a number of options available for audio and video conferencing and managers should avail of those approved by their organisation.

11. Termination of Arrangements

11.1 Blended working arrangements may be terminated by the employee or management following review on reasonable notice. For example, blended working arrangements may be terminated by management due to business needs, addressing performance issues (e.g. where an employee may benefit from a more

structured work environment while on-site), technical issues such as poor broadband connectivity, health and safety risks, or where other eligibility criteria are no longer met. Arrangements may also be terminated due to the employee declaration no longer being honoured. The relevant manager should discuss the reason(s) behind any decision to terminate the blended working arrangement, and confirm the decision in writing. If an employee is dissatisfied with this decision, they may refer the matter under the Grievance Procedure.

11.2 Alternatively, an employee's circumstances may change, requiring them to return to working in an office-based environment. In most cases, reasonable notice will be one month.

11.3 In exceptional cases, shorter or longer notice may be given at the discretion of management.

12. Provision of Equipment

12.1 Employees availing of blended working in the home should, as far as is reasonably practicable and in line with funding availability, be equipped with a mobile device (e.g. laptop), keyboard/mouse, monitor and such ancillary peripherals (e.g. mobile phone) as are locally agreed as essential for the execution of official duties.

12.2 In general, printers will not be provided for data protection reasons. Any equipment provided by the employer must be returned on termination of the blended working agreement.

12.3 All equipment provided is the property of the organisation and appropriate care should be taken when in possession of it. Any equipment provided must be returned on termination of the blended working arrangement, or when requested by management in line with the organisation's normal arrangements.

12.4 Management reserves the right to assess the workstation to ensure compliance with health and safety standards.

13 Expenses

13.1 Public health service employees will **not** be entitled to a daily allowance in respect of working from home. Employees availing of blended working arrangements may make claims directly to the Revenue Commissioners in respect of tax relief for certain costs when working from home. The application can be made 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 eWorking and tax are available [here](#).

13.2 No expenses will be paid or reimbursed in respect of costs accruing to an employee who makes changes to their home, or purchases equipment in order to avail of a blended working opportunity.

13.3 Travel and subsistence will not be payable for attending the main work premises during a blended working arrangement. The normal travel and subsistence rules will continue to apply.

14. Insurance/State Indemnity

14.1 Under the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2000 and subsequent orders, the management of personal injury and third party claims against Delegated State authorities (DSAs) and of the underlying risks was delegated to the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). When performing these functions, the NTMA is known as the State Claims Agency (SCA).

14.2 State indemnity as operated by the State Claims Agency will apply to claims which occur in the home where there is negligence on the part of the employer(s), its servants and/or agents for claims for personal injury and/or third-party property damage as a result of their activities on the part of their organisation. State indemnity will not cover the homeworker for injuries/damage which were not related to their employment.

14.3 The State Claims Agency has advised that where a formalised blended working arrangement has been agreed between employer and employee, and where the employee has home insurance, it is recommended that the employee notify their own insurers of their blended working arrangements. Where employees have home insurance it is unlikely that cover will be provided for equipment provided by the employer, as these are unlikely to be considered 'household goods'. State indemnity will apply if there is negligence on the part of the employer, however the employee (not the employer) will retain responsibility for the physical property. Similarly with home insurance policy, cover is for domestic use of the person's place of residence, not business use.

14.4 State indemnity⁹ will apply in the event that the employer fails to assess and ensure the replacement of unsuitable equipment. No State indemnity cover will be provided for damaged or stolen goods. It is stated in the Public Financial Procedures guidance that the State should self-insure these risks and that position does not change when work is undertaken in the home environment.

14.5 The requirement to regularly inspect office equipment and ensure they are stored in an appropriate manner should be communicated to employees. Each organisation/division/unit should put appropriate procedures and processes in place to respond to any reports from employees of defective equipment.

14.6 Employees should **not** hold in-person work meetings in their home. While working from home, an employee is only allowed to participate in virtual/online meetings. Managers may require employees to attend the work premises for the purpose of attending in-person meetings.

⁹ Queries in relation to State Indemnity should be directed to stateclaims@ntma.ie

15. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

15.1 The health and safety of all employees is of paramount importance. Both the employer and employee have responsibilities in this area. 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 of their employees. This applies regardless of where the work is being carried out, whether it is at the employer's premises or at the employee's home. Obligations under the Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act 2005 are of great importance when considering and implementing any blended working arrangement, whether at application stage, or on an ongoing basis. Employers have an obligation to provide a safe place of work and safe systems of work. Employees have a personal responsibility to manage their own health, both physical and mental. All employees must comply fully with the obligations contained in the Act.

15.2 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, including those who are working from home. This covers (non-exhaustively) the completion of risk assessments, the provision of supervision, education and training and the implementation of sufficient control measures to protect employees who are working remotely. Information on the HSE's safety management policy and key systems and structures can be found in the [Corporate Safety Statement](#) (CSS) and the Integrated Risk Management Framework, as well as local Site or Service Safety Statements (SSSS) and topic-specific Safety Policies¹⁰. For further information see:

- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing/>
- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/qavd/riskmanagement/risk-management-documentation/hse%20integrated%20risk%20management%20policy%202017.html>

¹⁰ Section 38 organisations should refer to their health and safety policies and related documents.

15.3 Decisions on control measures must be based on risk assessment. Further HSE guidance on the risk assessment process can be found at the following link:

- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing/healthsafetyand%20wellbeing/safetystatementsandriskassessments.html>

15.4 Key roles and responsibilities are detailed in the HSE Corporate Safety Statement and Site or Service Safety Statement.

15.5 The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 places specific duties on both managers and employees. In the context of home working, these duties are summarised below:

15.6 Managers' responsibilities include:

- Managing and conducting all work activities to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees
- Assessing risks and implementing appropriate control measures, paying due regard to employees in sensitive risk groups
- Providing safe systems of work that are planned, organised, and maintained
- Providing safe equipment where necessary
- Providing information, instruction, training and supervision regarding safety and health to employees

15.7 Employees' responsibilities include:

- Cooperating with their manager and following their instructions
- Protecting themselves and others from harm during the course of their work, e.g. taking care of any work equipment provided and reporting any defects immediately to their manager
- Reporting any injury arising from work activity to their manager in line with HSE Incident Management Framework, 2020¹¹
- Following procedures that have been put in place by their manager.

¹¹ Section 38 organisations should refer to their equivalent policies and procedures.

15.8 The HSE website provides guidance to employees on how to minimise risks and improve comfort and productivity while working from home:

- <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/coronavirus/working-from-home/setting-up-your-work-space-at-home.html>
- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing/healthsafetyand%20wellbeing/safetystatementsandriskassessments.html>

16. Terms and Conditions

16.1 There will be no change to terms and conditions of employment as part of a blended working arrangement, save that the employee will be allowed to work remotely on specific days, unless otherwise notified by management. Any necessary variation to an employee's existing terms and conditions should be identified and discussed with the employee prior to signing off on the blended working arrangement and specified in writing.

17. Workplace Health and Wellbeing Supports

17.1 Employees should be informed of the specific supports that can be accessed internally within their organisation or other arrangements that may apply. Employees should also be advised that they can contact their relevant trade union/staff association for advice and support.

Each Section 38 employer will inform their employees of the services that are available within their organisation and how these can be accessed.

In the case of HSE employees the following services are available:

17.2 HSE National Health and Safety Function (NHSF).

Log your request at: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefitservices/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-helpdesk.html> or go to:

<http://pndchssdweb02.healthirl.net/Health.WebAccess/ss> Alternatively contact the National Health & Safety Helpdesk Tel: 1800 420420 Monday to Friday between 10.30-12.00 and 14.00-15.30.

17.3 HSE Occupational Health Services

Occupational Health Services aim to promote and maintain the physical, mental and social wellbeing of employees. Occupational Health (OH) provides a confidential independent advisory service. The emphasis of the service is on the protection of employees from the possible adverse effects of work related activity and on health promotion.

Employees or managers seeking support or advice can access further information from:

<https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-services/occupational-health/>

17.4 HSE Employee Assistance Programme

The HSE Employee Assistance Programme provides a confidential counselling support and referral service for all staff with personal or work-related issues. No information about the employee's issue will be given to anyone without their written consent. The service is provided by trained and experienced counsellors who are professionally qualified and bound by the codes of conduct of the professional bodies to which they belong. Contact details for the EAP in each area are available online or from the relevant Human Resources Department.

Employees do not need to contact HR or their line manager to use the service.

Employees can phone or email the EAP contact for their area to arrange a consultation with a counsellor. This is known as self-referral. A manager can make a referral for an employee, with the employee's agreement, if they have concerns for the employee's wellbeing.

<https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-services/benefits/counselling.html>

18. Roles and Responsibilities

18.1 HSE CEO

The HSE CEO has responsibility for:

- Ensuring that governance arrangements are in place in order that legislative and organisational obligations are met in relation to the Blended Working Policy. The HSE CEO may delegate accountability for coordinating and monitoring implementation of this policy and any associated procedures to senior managers such as the HSE National Directors, Assistant National Directors, Hospital Group Chief Executive Officers and Chief Officers of Community Health Organisations.

18.2 *HSE National Directors (NDs), Chief Officers (COs) of Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs), Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Hospital Groups (HGs) and Section 38 Intellectual Disability/Social Care Agencies*

HSE National Directors, Chief Officers of the CHOs and Chief Executive Officers of the Hospital Groups and Section 38 Intellectual Disability/Social Care Agencies are responsible for:

- Overseeing the development, provision and communication of resources and supports locally to assist the implementation of this policy, in conjunction with appropriate personnel. This includes the identification and resourcing of appropriate personnel and ensuring training and instruction to staff.
- Endorsing and supporting local implementation of the policy.
- Be progressive when considering and assessing the types of roles suited to blended working and embrace the use of new and innovative technologies so as to facilitate blended working, where possible.

- Encourage and facilitate blended working, where practical, while always ensuring no diminution of business and service delivery as a result of blended working arrangements.
- Consider the overall objectives for the organisation when implementing blended working arrangements.
- Consider what type of blended working arrangements are best suited to meet those objectives and the appropriate steps that are necessary to achieve them.
- Undertake appropriate strategic planning to determine how the implementation of blended working arrangements will align with the business needs of the organisation.
- Consider how the benefits of remote working can be harnessed while ensuring adequate facilitation of collaboration, team-building and engagement with colleagues and stakeholders.
- Carry out the necessary internal consultation and assessment in order to determine the extent to which blended working can be facilitated in various teams, having regard to service needs and required attendance patterns.
- Ensure that a role identification exercise is undertaken and eligibility criteria devised to determine suitability of applicants for blended working arrangements in line with this Policy.
- Consider the technology requirements and put in place the technology infrastructure and digital literacy to support a productive blended working environment.
- Plan how office space can be best utilised to facilitate collaboration and communication among blended teams.
- Develop management capability and capacity through the relevant training and supports to ensure managers are suitably equipped to successfully manage distributed teams and to assess the continued suitability of blended working for individuals and teams.
- Ensure cooperation with monitoring and reporting requirements as may be required.

18.3 Line Managers

Line managers at all levels are responsible for the following:

- Actively foster a workplace culture which facilitates employees to avail of blended working where appropriate and in line with the provisions of this policy.
- Confirm the roles that have been deemed suited to blended working arrangements under the role identification exercise and the eligibility criteria.
- Communicate the Blended Working Policy and application process to employees.
- Deal with applications in a timely manner.
- Base decisions around access to blended working on objective and clearly-defined eligibility criteria to determine whether blended working is appropriate in any specific case.
- Conduct a risk assessment of the proposed workstation and work environment. The Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment must be undertaken by a competent assessor. In the HSE this is normally a manager¹² who has successfully completed the HSElandD online assessor module and the general risk assessment training also available on HSElandD.
- Ensure that risk assessments are reviewed periodically.
- Ensure an employee who has been refused access to blended working is provided with adequate reasons and informed that they may invoke the Grievance Procedure if they wish to appeal the decision.
- Review blended working arrangements periodically to determine whether the arrangements are meeting the business needs of the organisation/division/unit.

¹² In some cases, for example, where the DSE user has an existing musculoskeletal condition, or there are specific/unusual ergonomic needs, a specialist assessment by a qualified ergonomist may be required. Further information on the public procurement process is available from the Office of Government Procurement website [HERE](#).

- Maintain close and regular contact with their employees to maximise engagements at an individual and team level and seek to offer support as and when required.
- Put measures in place to promote good communication and ensure equitable treatment for employees whether working from the employer's work premises or remotely, including access to suitable communication platforms.
- Provide opportunities for peer support and networking amongst employees while working on-site and remotely.
- Maintain appropriate records in relation to the number and job title/grade of employees who are granted blended working arrangements and the proportion of working hours to be carried out remotely¹³.
- Ensure that employees who are granted blended working arrangements are aware that they continue to be comprehended by the organisation's policies and procedures while working remotely.
- Promote a culture that supports a healthy work-life balance in line with the **HSE Right to Disconnect Policy for Public Health Service Employees** [here](#)
- Be alert to the health and wellbeing of employees and remind employees of the organisational supports that are available.

18.4 *Employees*

Employees whose blended working application is approved have responsibilities which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that they maintain a safe environment while working from home in accordance with their obligations under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.
- Remain contactable during working hours and productive in their work and maintain regular contact with their line manager while working remotely.

¹³ Further details on data to be provided to meet national reporting requirements will be issued to HSE managers and Section 38 employers when available.

- Adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures and comply with confidentiality requirements in the normal manner.
- Participate in online/teleconference meetings as required.
- Protect themselves and others from harm during the course of their work, for example, take care of any equipment provided and report any issues without delay in the normal manner.
- Be available and contactable to their colleagues and line manager throughout the working day.
- Co-operate with work priorities and timelines and request support or assistance if required.
- Comply with the organisation's arrangements for recording working hours and rest breaks.
- Comply with the organisation's Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure if unfit to work due to illness or injury.

19. Review of Blended Working Arrangements

19.1 Each organisation/department will carry out regular reviews of its blended working arrangements to ensure:

- The arrangements are consistently meeting the business/service needs of the organisation
- The policy is applied in an equitable and consistent manner in line with the provisions of this policy
- There is no discrimination under the Employment Equality Acts, or other employment provisions
- The arrangements do not have a negative impact on team productivity and performance and on the organisation in general
- Appropriate reporting on the number of employees availing of blended working arrangements.

20. Implementation Plan

20.1 This policy will be made available to all employees via distribution of a HR Circular to senior managers.

20.2 This policy will be made available to all employees via the HSE's internet site (www.hse.ie)

20.3 A global broadcast will be sent to all HSE employees notifying them of the release of this document.

20.4 This policy will be communicated to new employees as part of their induction process.

20.5 This policy will be reinforced on a periodic basis through team meetings and one-to-one engagements with employees.

20.6 This policy will be incorporated into training programmes for line managers.

21. Monitoring

21.1 Each public health service employer is responsible for putting appropriate arrangements in place for monitoring compliance with the provisions in this policy.

21.2 The National Director of Human Resources is responsible for the revision and updating of this policy document. The policy will be reviewed after 3 years or more frequently as required in consultation with the health service unions/staff associations at national level.

21.3 Contact details for further information:

National Employee Relations Services
Human Resources Division
Health Service Executive
63-64 Adelaide Road
Dublin 2 D02 FR50
Telephone: 01-6626966 Email: info.t@hse.ie

Appendix A HSE Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Risk Assessments

In the HSE the following procedure must be completed to ensure that appropriate Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessments are undertaken.

To allow managers/DSE assessors to develop the necessary competencies to confidently undertake a basic DSE risk assessment, the following modules available on HSELand¹⁴ must be completed:

- The DSE User Awareness module and assessment (approximately 40 minutes to complete)
- The DSE Assessor module and assessment (approximately 60 minutes to complete)
- The Managing Health and Safety in the Healthcare Setting training programme (approximately 60 minutes to complete)

Following completion of the training, the line manager/DSE Assessor must:

Identify those employees (commonly known as DSE users) to which the regulations apply; they are employees who:

- have no choice but to use the DSE to carry their work, or
- normally use the DSE for continuous periods of more than one hour per day, or
- an employee who generally uses DSE on a daily basis.

Conduct the DSE risk assessment of the employee's workstation by consulting and observing the employee and risk assessment checklist. Responsibility is on the relevant line manager to undertake the DSE analysis/risk assessment as the manager is best placed to determine and agree any necessary controls. However, there may be situations where the line manager is not in a position to undertake these assessments and it may be considered acceptable in such cases for a competent person to undertake these assessments on their behalf. In all instances

¹⁴ <https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login>

the line manager retains full responsibility for the appropriate implementation of any control measures identified.

Following risk assessment, should an employee experience medical issues related to their work/workstation it is recommended that they are referred to their local Occupational Health Service for medical review with a copy of the completed risk assessment.

Ensure that the provision of an appropriate eye and eyesight test is made available to every DSE employee.

A copy of the completed risk assessment should be given to the employee for their records and ensure all outstanding actions are addressed. Ensure records of training and assessments are maintained and available for audit purposes.

Information on HSE DSE risk assessment can be found at the following links:

- <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/health-and-safety/office-safety-and-display-screen-equipment/>
- <https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/staff/dse-risk-assessment-guidance.pdf>