

Temporary Homeworking Guidelines

Note: These guidelines are for use during the present coronavirus emergency. It is stressed throughout the guidelines that these are temporary and only apply during the present crisis and in line with organisational decisions, national guidance and local restrictions.

The Temporary Guidelines

These guidelines are temporary and only apply during the present coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency. It supersedes for this time any other homeworking policy. It applies to those who have to work from home during this crisis either because of Government guidance or because WMG Academy has made the decision to ask employees to work from home to prevent the spread of infection and safeguard the health and safety of its students and employees.

They set out the main considerations that WMG Academy and its employees should consider during this temporary period of homeworking.

Terms and Conditions

An employee's current terms and conditions, including pay (as set out in their offer letter or pay award letter dated December 2020, whichever is most recent), with WMG Academy will continue to apply during the coronavirus crisis and the subsequent arrangements for the employee to work at home when working at home is mandated by the UK Government. Where an employee continues to work from home outside of those times identified by the government, they should refer to the Isolation Pay Statement (Appendix G) for details about pay and working patterns.

Employees are still expected to work in accordance with all other operational policies, including Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Data Protection.

Employee Selection for Home Working

The current UK Government guidance makes it clear that working from home is only encouraged where employees are able to effectively discharge their usual duties. As the restrictions associated with local lockdowns or any further national lockdown are enforced, the Academy will continually review arrangements for home working.

Any decisions to ask staff to work from home will be made inline with the most up-to-date national and local guidance, as well the Academy's risk assessment and contingency plans and any individual employee risk assessments.

Employees who are told to remain at home and self-isolate, either because they are themselves symptomatic or they have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, should follow these guidelines for home working. They should also refer to Appendix G for more information regarding pay whilst isolating.

Staff Absence

The current Staff Absence Policy will continue to apply. Should an employee fall sick, they must notify their Line Manager by telephone or email as close to 7.30am as possible on the first day of absence. Any contact by the employee should state the nature of the illness and the expected return to work date where known.

Employees must keep their Line Manager informed throughout their period of sickness absence. The form of contact and frequency will be agreed between the employee and their Line Manager and a record of this contact must be kept. Failure to follow this notification procedure will result in the absence being treated as unauthorised.

Keeping in Touch and Performance Management

During this temporary arrangement, the employee's main place of work will be his or her home. Nevertheless, they will still need to keep in touch with their Line Manager, with whom they will agree a work schedule to be followed by the employee on a daily and/or weekly basis.

Colleagues may need to contact each other for work updates. The employee is expected, therefore, to be available at agreed times. It is anticipated that employees will follow their normal working patterns, however this may be tailored to suit the current situation in agreement with their Line Manager. The employee should ensure that he or she checks their emails regularly and that any problems should be communicated to the Line Manager immediately.

Line managers are encouraged to regularly monitor the performance of employees who are working at home to ensure the arrangements in place are effective. In some cases, the Line Manager may escalate their concerns to the Associate or Executive Principals who will establish interventions to ensure performance objectives are met. Similarly, Line Managers should record these conversations and report their concerns for employee welfare to the Executive Principal.

Working Hours

It is anticipated that employees will follow their normal working patterns, however this may be tailored to suit the current situation in agreement with their Line Manager. It will be up to the employee to manage their time to ensure that the work is completed. Any changes to working patterns should have no detrimental impact on business needs.

Employees are actively encouraged to plan their time effectively, ensuring that a rest period of 20 minutes is taken for every 6 hours worked. The Academy encourages employees to ensure they remain properly hydrated throughout their working day.

Costs of Homeworking

The costs of electricity, water, heating, telephone, broadband and other utilities will not be covered by WMG Academy. These costs will remain the employee's responsibility. However, should additional phone charges be incurred due to calls being made on WMG Academy's behalf, WMG Academy will contribute towards the added costs provided they have been agreed in advance with their Line Manager. Itemised billing is required and this will be paid via an expenses claim form.

Equipment

WMG Academy will ensure that homeworkers have the necessary IT equipment and access to the necessary sites.

Personal equipment that an employee uses for work purposes at home remains their responsibility and WMG Academy is not liable for any loss, damage, repair or replacement of any personal equipment. If an item of equipment is deemed necessary for work, the employee should contact their line manager. All equipment used by the homeworker must be safe and fit for purpose.

For data protection, the use of printed documents is discouraged for employees working from home. With this in mind, the need for printing facilities should be greatly reduced, however employees should contact the IT and Facilities Manager should the need for printing facilities arise.

WMG Academy approves the use of video conferencing software. It is recommended that employees use Google Meet, available through RM Unify, but it is acknowledged that meetings with external partners may require the use of other software, including Zoom, MS Teams or Skype. Employees are encouraged to consult with the IT and Facilities Manager in advance of these meetings to ensure external video conferencing software is supported by Academy devices.

Health & Safety and Accident Reporting Procedure

The employee should ensure their home working area is free from hazards that could be a foreseeable cause of slips and trips, for example trailing power supply and computer cables. Employees are encouraged to seek advice from the IT and Facilities Manager if they need support establishing a safe home working area.

Any accident that occurs during an employees working time should be reported to their Line Manager and the IT and Facilities Manager.

Data Protection

Data protection is everybody's responsibility and employees must always keep WMG Academy's data and materials safe and secure, ensuring reasonable precautions are being taken to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Data Protection policy. Employees should take extra care to ensure other members of their household, or visitors to their household, do not have access to Academy data.

Employees should seek advice from the Data Protection Officer should they need support managing data protection whilst working from home.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains the responsibility of every employee. If the employee has any concerns relating to the welfare of a student whilst engaging in remote learning, this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their deputy via the normal channel of CPOMS. Employees are instructed to use only WMG Academy approved online platforms. Social media must not be used to engage with students of any age.

Business Behaviours and Professional Integrity

The Academy expects employees to continue to abide by the same policies and procedures as they would when working onsite. This includes ensuring that employees are professionally dressed when taking part in video conference meetings or lessons and ensuring that their work space is professional and appropriate.

Any breakdown in trust between the Academy and any employee will be dealt with in line with the Academy's usual operating procedures. This could include the Capability, Grievance or Disciplinary policies.

Other Practical Considerations

Keeping domestic and working life separate is not always easy when working from home and the employee needs to think about how he or she will manage to persuade those who live with them not to interrupt while they are working. They also need to ensure that no-one else can have access to their computer or work files. Breach of security will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to dismissal.

The Academy acknowledges that some employees will not be able to work from home. This may be because they live in shared accommodation or for other environmental factors. With this in mind, employees are encouraged to find alternative locations, such as a relative's home, or request to work onsite. Due to the potential need to return to onsite working at short notice, employees are discouraged from working from abroad or in locations where the ability to travel to has been restricted.

Employees should also check with their insurer that any equipment etc will be covered by household insurance. If it is not, then they must inform WMG Academy so that proper arrangements can be made. If the employee does not inform WMG Academy then should thefts or damages occur, the employee may be held personally liable for replacing any stolen or damaged equipment.

End of the Temporary Arrangements

As has been emphasised throughout these guidelines, these arrangements for employees working from home are temporary to cover the present coronavirus emergency. All such arrangements remain at the discretion of WMG Academy in line with direction from the UK Government.

WMG Academy will keep employees updated of developments and of the arrangements once the risk of infection has deemed to have passed and, therefore, of the end of these temporary guidelines, including when employees can return to their work in the Academy.

There may be the need over the coming months to return to home working arrangements. If this is the case, the Academy will review these guidelines and disseminate to staff as appropriate.

Kate Tague
Executive Principal

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