



Working from Home

Aims and Objectives

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.

Background

This policy provides a framework for working from home where this is both feasible and desirable. Any arrangement for working from home should be voluntary on the part of the employee and at the discretion of the manager. It is critical that any arrangement does not impact detrimentally on the quality and continuity of service provision in all of the functions and activities of York Childcare. The key to success is mutual understanding and trust, leading towards mutual benefit.

General Principles

The policy recognises that for the majority of employees, working from home will be on an occasional basis and with prior agreement from the manager. A Flexible Working Request must be submitted if permanent working from home or Hybrid Working (where an employee splits their contractual hours between being office based and working from home) is being requested.

Provided that it fits in with the needs of the service, the opportunity to work from home is intended to provide flexibility and support to employees.

It is acknowledged that not all jobs are suitable for working from home, and for those which are suitable, employees may not want to work at home. If suitable ICT equipment is not available or, where key health and safety requirements cannot be met, requests may not be approved.

Procedures

The prospect of working from home may be raised by managers or employees.

Employees who consider that working from home is an option should discuss this with their line manager.

YC will:

- consider which roles and tasks can be done from home – this might involve doing things differently and not assuming a role cannot be based at home
- support employees to adjust to remote working
- consider individual employees' needs, for example anyone with childcare responsibilities, a long-term health condition or a disability
- talk to employees about how they might improve working from home arrangements



- write down the arrangements that have been agreed

Health and safety

By law, YC is responsible for the health and safety of all employees, including those working from home.

Employees and managers need to understand and comply with YC's policy regarding health and safety requirements for working from home and complete a 'Self Assessment Checklist' prior to commencing any working from home arrangements. The checklist should be completed initially on the set up of working from home and thereafter if there is a change in circumstances. The line manager and employee should review this form at least once a year in supervision meetings. Any accident or ill health directly related to the working from home arrangements, should also be reported and reviewed.

Confidentiality

It is the responsibility of the employee and manager to ensure the confidentiality of information whilst the employee is working from home. Consideration should be given to the availability of lockable storage cabinets, or other suitable equipment due to the risk of other members of the household/visitors gaining unauthorised access to confidential information.

Reference should be made to the IT Policy and Data Protection Policy.

In order to maintain confidentiality and data security, equipment (laptops etc) and documents must be stored securely at home and not be left in employees' vehicles when unattended.

Financial Considerations

It is considered that working from home is mutually beneficial and that the costs and benefits of working from home will cancel each other out. Consequently, a working from home allowance will not be paid. (Employees can claim tax relief where they have no office base and that 'home' is specified on their contract of employment as their work base).

Insurance Implications

In general, working from home should not give rise to any special difficulties from a risk management or insurance point of view. The guiding principle is that good practice should reduce or eliminate the possibility of injury or loss to employees, to YC or others. Insurance by itself does not prevent injury or loss, and good risk management techniques are required.

Employees and managers must adhere to this working from home policy and associated guidelines in order to maintain the validity of insurance provision.

- Liability insurance protects the organisation and its employees jointly for accidental death, injury and loss of property where YC has been negligent. This insurance will operate in respect of employees who are working at home with



- the knowledge and consent of their manager, subject to the appropriate risk, health and safety assessments and training and support being in place.
- Personal accident insurance will apply to employees working at home including whilst travelling on YC business. (This does not include commuting to work from home unless the home has been formally designated as the permanent work base, in which case all journeys will be made whilst on duty.)
 - Property insurance cover is provided by YC. This will only apply to all items provided for use by the employee working at home with the knowledge and consent of their manager. The employee has a duty and responsibility to look after YC's property. There is no insurance cover for theft if there is no forcible entry to the property and only laptops or computers are covered in this instance. Losses arising from unattended vehicles are not covered
 - Employees' own insurance policies are unlikely to be affected by working from home. However, employees are advised to consider whether they need to inform their insurers or inform others such as their landlord, mortgage company or loan company of the working from home arrangements, within the terms of any agreements. If in doubt the employee should let the insurance company know, as nondisclosure may sometimes invalidate any policy

YC responsibilities

YC aims to carry out usual health and safety risk assessments at an employee's home, where practical to ensure that:

- each employee feels the work they are being asked to do at home can be done safely
- employees have the right equipment to work safely
- managers keep in regular contact with their employees, including making sure they do not feel isolated
- reasonable adjustments are made for an employee who has a disability
- If changes are needed, YC is responsible for making sure they happen

Employee responsibilities

Employees also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety.

Anyone working from home should keep in regular contact with their manager. They should also tell their manager about:

- any health and safety risks
- any homeworking arrangements that need to change

Wellbeing

YC acknowledges that home working may support improved wellbeing through reducing commuting time, providing employees with more autonomy around their schedules and extra time for health and wellbeing activities. Working from home may however bring



with its specific challenges around work-life balance and managing the boundaries between work and home, in recognition of this, YC will:

- Provide support to employees on managing work-life balance whilst working in a hybrid way.
- Offer training on digital wellbeing and having healthy habits in relation to technology use, including helping employees to mindfully disconnect.
- Helping managers to understand the potential wellbeing implications of hybrid working and equipping them to have appropriate wellbeing conversations.
- Ongoing mental health support and information for all employees.
- Ensuring managers are aware of potential signs and symptoms of poor wellbeing or mental health, as these may be weaker whilst employees are working in a remote or hybrid way.

Technology and equipment

YC recognises that technology plays a critical role in home working and that employees need to be able to work seamlessly between workplace and home, and there needs to be ease of connectivity between people in the office and those working remotely.

YC is committed to:

- Supporting employees in fully using available technology, as well as using them in a way that supports health and wellbeing.
- Reviewing systems and equipment available in offices and provided by individuals in order to assess whether it will appropriately support hybrid forms of working.
- Providing a mix of recommended tools (with implementation support) to enable meetings and collaboration.
- Putting in place appropriate security measures to ensure system and data integrity.

In addition to technology, considering what other equipment will support effective and healthy remote working, including the provision of office furniture or mobile devices.

Checking how systems are working

YC will regularly assess how its systems and any working from home arrangements are working and make any improvements deemed necessary. This can help to smooth any difficulties experienced by employees, managers or colleagues.

This might include looking at:

- if IT systems can handle the number of staff working from home
- the level of IT support for homeworkers
- extra equipment that could be posted or collected, for example headsets or stationery



Setting clear expectations

YC, Head Office and Nursery managers will ensure that any employee working from home understands what is expected of them. This will include agreeing:

- when employees will be available to work
- how they will keep in touch
- how work-life balance will be managed, for example taking regular breaks and switching off from work at the end of the day
- rules around storing information and data protection
- how performance will be managed and measured, taking into account people's circumstances where necessary
- who employees should contact if they have any problems or their circumstances change

YC recognises that some employees may find it hard to motivate and organise themselves when working from home and will ensure full support is given. In the event of this arising, the manager and employee should talk about practical steps that might help.

Performance management

When employees are working remotely or more flexibly, their performance may be harder to observe. Managers will need to adjust to assessing performance through outcomes, contribution and value. Managers will not be able to monitor every aspect of an employee's work when they are working remotely, nor should this normally be necessary. YC will ensure that:

- Managers are equipped to manage performance based upon outcomes, objectives and results.
- Managers have 121 time with team members on a regular basis to discuss performance and update objectives.
- Have mechanisms in place to identify and reward great performance, as well as address poor performance with hybrid workers.

Keeping in touch

YC will ensure that it keeps in touch with all employees regularly. This will include regular communication between:

- individual employees and their managers
- employees who need to work together
- team members

This may involve new ways of working, for example using video or conference calling technology. YC expects all employees to embrace any new ways of working that are deemed appropriate or essential.



Communication

In order for home working to be effective, it is crucial that effective communication takes place and is the responsibility of everyone in the team. When meetings need to be held, discussions will take place in advance to agree whether they will be held face to face or online. If it is not possible for all attendees to attend in person, the meeting will be held on line to ensure that each attendee has a consistent experience of the meeting. Teams are encouraged to establish their own principles for communication, YC expects that this will include how often to meet physically, what technology to use for meetings and how to ensure that communication is inclusive of everyone.

Inclusion and fairness

YC will ensure that in a remote working environment, ongoing access to development and career conversations for all employees and make sure there is a fair allocation of work and opportunities. YC will:

- Identify where any inclusion risks may arise if employees move to hybrid working and how these can be mitigated.
- Ensure that employees who are unable to work in a hybrid way because of the work that they undertake, are aware of other forms of flexible working that may be suitable for them.
- Take steps to ensure equality of experience between employees in the office and employees at home.

Pay and terms and conditions of employment

Employees usual terms and conditions apply, apart from having to work from home. YC is committed to ensuring that staff working from home follow the law on working hours.

Working from home and childcare

Employees who are looking after children should talk to YC regarding their situation. YC will endeavour to agree a more flexible homeworking arrangement.

Examples of this could include:

- working different hours
- agreeing that the employee may not be able to work a full day or a full week
- reducing work targets
- being flexible about deadlines where possible

The same approach may be needed if an employee is caring for someone else, for example an older relative or someone who is ill.



Employee lifecycle

Increased flexible working, and home working in particular, affects all aspects of the employee lifecycle. YC will ensure that each stage of the employee lifecycle within the organisation is reviewed in order to identify where amendments need to be made in order to enable effective home working. YC will consider:

- Including the availability of home working in recruitment activities to support talent acquisition.
- Induction processes for home workers, including assimilating company culture and values and building a relationship with other hybrid team members.
- Provision of learning and development activities in workplaces and supporting long term career development.
- Amendments to performance management systems or processes.
- Reward and recognition strategies, with particular reference to ensuring that reward and recognition is fair and not biased towards those spending more time in the office.
- The inclusion and diversity aspects of home working and in particular considering how home working might both support inclusion initiatives but also the risks that some may be excluded through remote working.