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## What if Covid-19 means working from home

Concerns about Coronavirus (Covid-19) has bought to the attention of many to consider working from home may have to be a reality for many. While there have always been home based employees (such as regional sales people, outworkers and even call centre workers) it only arises for some as part of a flexible working application where due to family or other reasons, it is the most suitable way to manage a particular situation.

Covid-19 means employers and employees may have to consider the working from home option on a temporary basis. Primarily as a means to sustain key activities if it is determined the workplace may not be a safe place to work due to there not being reasonable ways to mitigate the risks of sharing a workspace.

Obviously in considering offering the option to employees, work has to be actually able to be carried out remotely. While this may suit some workers such as some office workers, it will not be feasible for others such as factory or site workers and those in front-line roles with customers, clients and patients.

In a normal working from home situation there are usually some standard rules and procedures around what is involved. Trying to put these in place may not altogether prove workable if a decision has to be made quickly. However, it will be important the employer gets acceptance of terms and conditions applicable to each employee’s situation from them. These could include:

* The employer having the right to withdraw approval at its sole discretion for any reason including cost, health and safety, communication difficulties or more satisfactory alternatives
* There is suitable electronic or other equipment (the employer or employee’s property) to allow working from home
* Adequate security is possible over information, systems and privacy
* Agreed reimbursement arrangements for use of phone, power and internet access
  + The employee taking responsible for organising a work area that is suitably set up to ensure that they can work safely. Proof of this may be requested (e.g. a photo) and a site visit may be made.
  + All policies and rules applying to working in the employer’s office applying to working from home
  + The employee is bound when working from home to:
* Be available at times set out in any working from home agreement as regards hours and days of work (including taking time off when on designated holidays or leave)
* Not hold business related meetings with other people at their home (unless approved in advance by the employer)
* Ensure necessary child-care arrangements are in place and working from home is not a substitute for childcare

Using a Flexible Working Application Form and the above checklist should enable the employer and employee to determine how realistic working from home may be and agree on procedures.

*For more information on this or advice on any other employment and organisational development matters contact Advicewise People Ltd 0800 692 384 (Consultants: Philip Kotze / Anthony Dentice / Cezanne Powell / Kenneth Hannon)*