

# The UK Workforce: Changes to Home Working During the Pandemic & What this Means for the Future

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## Abstract

*Using data from a larger study, a theme on 'homeworking' emerged. Data from 437 semi-structured interviews with NHS professionals across a wide range of specialities identified a dominant theme of 'homeworking'. Using this themed data, a short preliminary article has been produced with an infographic guide that is developed as a generic guide, not just for NHS staff. There are considerable benefits relating to the current changes in working patterns, with now many working from home, however there are also challenges and risks associated to these changes, which require further exploration to ensure that the UK workforce is best utilised, yet protected. This article provides an overview of this data, and a helpful hints and tips infographic. A larger, UK-based study is now underway (in NHS and other) to explore the experience of homeworking, and understand its benefits and challenges in more depth to help inform government policymaking decisions in the UK.*

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# Home Working Guide: Protecting Mental & Physical Health

Designed by TEC Cymru 2021

## UK Government Aims

Following changes in working patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government is aiming to support the long-term shift to home working for its workforce.



## Benefits & Challenges of Home Working

- ✓ Improved work/life balance
- ✓ Less cost, travel, parking & carbon footprint
- ✓ Easier childcare arrangements
- ✓ Improved flexibility
- ✓ Sometimes less stress & anxiety
- ✗ Limited socialisation
- ✗ Difficulties separating work & life
- ✗ Difficulties in home working set up and obtaining devices

## Tax Relief for Home Working

You may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you have to work at home on a regular basis, either for all or part of the week. This includes if you have to work from home because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

[www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home](http://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home)

## Mental Health & Well-being

Important steps to get the best out of home working & protect your health and well-being.

### Maintain a positive work/life balance

- Stick to similar work patterns as you would at the workplace. Work similar hours, and take similar breaks.
- Look after your own well-being so you can continue to support your team and do your job to your best ability.

### Check in with colleagues regularly

- Have regular virtual or telephone check-ins with colleagues and chat about everyday matters as you would do in person.

### Establish new ways of working with your team

- Learn new ways to communicate and collaborate.
- Learn new ways how to support each other as a colleagues.

**BUT if you feel isolated or lonely, always reach out to your colleagues, friends or family and get the support you need.**

“Make sure to take regular breaks, get some fresh air and communicate with friends and colleagues throughout your day”

Consultant Psychiatrist  
Prof. Alka Ahuja  
Aneurin Bevan UHB

## Protect the Back, Neck & Shoulders

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, and an increase in home working patterns, spinal surgeons are reporting an increase in younger patients presenting with more back, neck and shoulder problems.

“Maintaining good posture with sufficient support for your spine is essential”

Spinal Surgeon  
Sashin Ahuja  
Cardiff & Vale UHB

## Preparing a Home Working Space



### Home Set up:

- Position devices appropriately so that neck, upper back and shoulders are not over strained.
- Avoid sitting in one place for too long to stop joints getting stiff.
- Keep a good posture whilst sitting.
- Invest in a good chair that supports your neck, back, shoulders and legs.
- Keep equipment at arm's length.
- Keep your feet firmly on the floor.
- Take regular breaks to move about and stretch.

### Recommendations:

- The use of 'sit and stand' desks can be used and have been found to be beneficial.



“A good posture should be combined with an efficient work set up”

Spinal Surgeon  
Sashin Ahuja  
Cardiff & Vale UHB

## Top Hints & Tips

- 1** On work days, maintain a good routine
  - Get out of bed ✓
  - Get dressed up ✓
  - Enjoy a healthy breakfast ✓
- 2** Make a list of tasks to be do each day
- 3** Get regular exercise e.g. take a daily walk
- 4** Stay connected with colleagues, friends & family
- 5** Take a break from social media & mute news updates if feeling bombarded
- 6** Follow a healthy & balanced diet & avoid over drinking (alcohol)