

FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

REMOTE WORKING POLICY

Code HR32

Approval: August 2025

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Cross Reference:

EVH Landlord Safety Manual
HR03 Attendance Management Policy
HR05 Dignity at Work Policy
HR06 Flexible Working Policy

GOV02 Code of Conduct for Staff
GOV03 Data Protection Policy
GOV25 Information Security Policy

EVH Terms & Conditions of Employment
Staff Safety Procedure
Salary & Expenses Procedure



This document can be made available in alternative languages or formats (such as large print, audio etc). Please contact staff as required.

Policy Summary

This policy has been developed to show how Forth Housing Association are supporting staff members to be more flexible and work remotely instead of the office workplace.

Equalities

No equalities issues have been identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Questions and there is therefore no requirement to do a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Privacy

This policy does not have a direct impact on privacy, therefore there is no requirement to do a full Privacy Impact Assessment

Policy Owner

Name: Director

Date of Next Review: August 2028

FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

REMOTE WORKING POLICY

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Remote working is where an employee works away from their employer's main office location for all or part of their working week on a permanent, ad hoc basis or hybrid basis. The practice has been around for a long time but has become increasingly popular and widely used across all sectors.
- 1.2 Remote working can be:
- an original contractual arrangement from when the employee commenced employment,
 - requested by an employee as part of a flexible working statutory entitlement See Flexible Working Policy,
 - a reasonable adjustment,
 - a change in organisational culture to provide employees with choice and utilise the benefits of remote working
 - implemented by Forth Housing Association (FHA), following the necessary consultation and contractual change processes, or
 - used as a mechanism for employee and public safety in the event of a public health emergency or other exceptional external circumstances which would affect business continuity.
- 1.3 There are three main types of remote working:
- **Occasional:** employees have a contractual work base (i.e., office location), but work remotely on an ad hoc basis, through informal arrangements with their team and line manager.
 - **Contractual:** employees that work off-site as defined in their contract of employment for a specified period of their working week.
 - **Hybrid:** employees work between their office base and remotely depending on the needs of the business and the employees' personal circumstances.

2.0 Principles

Forth Housing Association are committed to building a strong culture of agility, empowerment and trust in line with our values. We believe its staff members are its most valuable asset and is committed to attracting and retaining the very best and utilising all talent and experience available. Forth Housing Association understands that it is important for staff members to establish a good work – life balance as many individuals have personal responsibilities outside from work. Remote Working may allow more freedom for employees to organise their employment to fit in with other parts of their life as well as allowing more dedicated focus time away from the office.

The following principles govern the operation of this policy:

- Be clear and understood by all employees
- Be fair, equitable, inclusive and non-discriminatory
- Reflect the needs of a diverse organisation
- Be flexible and adaptable to changing needs
- Embrace and support agile ways of working by allowing staff the opportunity work remotely, without interruptions
- Not to compromise the usual level of service offered to our tenants
- Set out the parameters to ensure the above conditions are met safely whilst not affecting the wellbeing of employees.

3.0 Aim and Objectives

3.1 The aims and objections of the Remote Working Policy are to:

- Ensure our high level of service is maintained at all times.
- Benefit the business from creative solutions, ideas, and projects by allowing staff to do these remotely, without interruptions where required.
- Better meet the demands of our service requirements.
- Promote our culture of inclusion.
- Integrate into and complement our health and wellbeing strategy.
- Support and embed our commitment to our environmental sustainability practices.

3.2 Line managers will discuss with employees how remote working arrangements will work within teams and sections, including any rota for office cover and existing working patterns. Once this is agreed between employees and the appropriate manager confirmation will be provided in writing.

3.3 In consideration of roles suitable for the levels of remote working outlined in the policy, FHA will also pay regard to its commitment to equalities.

4.0 Policy Framework

4.1 Types of Remote Working

4.1.1 Occasional Remote Working

For occasional remote working, an employee normally works their contracted hours from the location specified in their contract of employment. However, on occasion, it may be more effective if an employee has an ad hoc day working remotely. This can be effective when managing certain situations such as:

- Requirement for short period of time off during normal core hours for appointments,
- Project work,
- Adverse weather or other situations that may affect business continuity
- Commuting disruptions,
- An injury where the employee is fit to work but is unable to commute to their contractual work location, or
- Disruptions to dependants' care arrangements in certain circumstances: *We expect you to have regular dependable care arrangements for your children or dependants while working from home. We understand that there may be occasions when you need to have caring responsibility whilst working remotely and this is permissible so long as it doesn't affect the safety of the dependant or the quality of your work, but it cannot be your day-to-day plan to care for them whilst working remotely or from home)*

In all the above situations, work will be carried out effectively and efficiently with the appropriate resources, including an electronic device, e.g., laptop or tablet with appropriate monitor, sufficient broadband speed and functioning phone which all support a safe working environment for remote working staff.

All situations for occasional remote working will be discussed individually with the employee's line manager, and they will consider the request balancing employee and business pressures and provide a decision.

There may be a requirement for service delivery for business continuity reasons for agreed remote working to be cancelled at short notice, FHA will always try to avoid this but remote working staff must be prepared to return to the office if required.

4.1.2 Contractual Remote Working

Contractual remote working can occur through:

- Making a Flexible Working Request: Employees are entitled to request flexible working arrangements from their first day of employment.
- Organisational Culture and Practice: FHA promotes regular remote working for all where it is practical, meets the needs of **FHA**, and individual employees.

4.1.3 Flexible working Request

Employees wishing to request remote working as a contractual arrangement either permanently or for an agreed period of time, can discuss the request with their line manager and follow up with a formal Flexible Working request in writing following FHA's Flexible Working

Policy. The process outlined in the policy will be followed. Any decision to accept or reject the application will be based on FHA's business needs and requirements at the time of the request and, in line with FHA's Flexible Working Policy. Any change to the employee's working arrangement would be regarded as a permanent contractual change and therefore, must be confirmed in writing.

4.1.4 Hybrid Working/ Organisational Culture

Under hybrid working, the Association:

- promotes regular remote working for all where it is practical, meets the needs of the Association, and suits individual employees.
- seeks to embrace the significant benefits remote working can bring such as:
 - efficiency of performance,
 - health and wellbeing of employees, and
 - positive environmental impact through reduced commuting.
- believes that a model of hybrid working best suits the business needs. This means a mixture of remote and onsite working, which brings the most benefits for both business and employees. It allows for continuing face to face social interaction, collaboration, along with enjoying the benefits of remote working. For this reason, remote working can be for between 1-3 days per week (pro-rata).
- supports a culture of hybrid working as a permanent contractual arrangement as long as business and service delivery needs are met and enhanced.
- trusts its employees to fulfil their contractual obligations concerning their job role. Whether an employee is working remotely or, at the office, the expectation on performance standards remains the same.
- appreciates that not all employees would like to work remotely, some employees may prefer to attend the office for their working week. Any employee who wishes to continue to come to their original work location can continue to do so.

Section managers will discuss with employees how remote working arrangements will work within teams and sections, including any rota for office cover and existing working patterns. Once the agreed between employees and the appropriate manager confirmation will be provided in writing. ***(A trial period may be beneficial before confirming permanent contractual changes.)***

Any permanent changes to a work location is a contractual change of employment and agreement will always be sought in the first instance.

4.2 Costs/Allowances

FHA will contribute towards remote working expenses in line with HMRC guidance on costing and allowances.

There may be expenses that can be claimed directly by employees from HMRC. Staff should refer to HMRC website for the most up to date information.

However, FHA will not pay for any additional domestic running costs resulting from an employee choosing to work from home nor will it pay any allowance towards such costs. The employee is expected to have access to a reliable secure broadband connection (at their own cost) with which to access all systems required to deliver the service including telephone system, housing management system, email, shared files, video conferencing etc.

Staff should manage their external visits and meetings when working from home in order to minimise costs to the Association and minimise time associated with travelling. The saving in time and money getting to/from work is a reasonable notional offset to any minimal personal cost of occasionally working remotely.

Work-related travel expenses will be paid at the rate stated in terms and conditions of employment, as commencing from the office base regardless of work location, and as specified in FHA's Expenses policy.

4.3 Trial Periods

A trial period may be implemented prior to confirming permanent contractual changes. Timescales of the trial period will be agreed between employee and line manager.

At the end of a trial period, the arrangement will either be amended or confirmed. The decision at the end of the period will not be a surprise; this will be due to regular communication on the effectiveness of the working arrangement throughout the trial. Any adjustments can be made during the trial and can be put forward by the line manager or by employees.

4.4 Contractual changes

If contractual remote working has been agreed, FHA will write to the employee to confirm the change and any associated terms with the change.

4.5 Communication

Remote working is a form of lone working. This means that there may be a risk that staff members may not have immediate access to another person for assistance or supervision if circumstances require.

To mitigate against this risk, staff that are working from home are required to:

- Keep their work calendar up to date so colleagues know where they are
- Agree a schedule or protocol for keeping in touch with their manager. This would normally be on a daily basis. This is particularly important for ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff, especially staff that live alone
- Be contactable by phone during working hours

4.6 Performance Management

FHA has a culture of trust and respect for all, expecting all employees to fulfil their contractual obligations concerning their job role regardless of location. Performance management will be carried out in the same way as if employees were in the office. As in the office, if the quality or volume of work while working remotely is not at the required standard, this will be addressed via FHA's performance management process initially on an informal basis. Matters will be managed confidentially with individual employees

4.7 Health & Wellbeing

4.7.1 Risk Assessment

A health and safety assessment will be carried out according to FHA's health and safety checklist (Appendix 1), which covers Visual Display Units risks and general precautions for house-holder electrical safety. Domestic electrical supply configurations are out with the control of the employer and are the responsibility of the staff member. Employees will perform their assessment, and their line manager will then validate results during a discussion or remote visit. Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Risk Assessment must be completed by all the employees prior to commencing any periods of working remotely and for each/different remote location they may use from time to time.

Working remotely can bring other wellbeing challenges such as "digital presenteeism (workers feeling like they have to be always available online)" and difficulties with work-life balance such as working longer hours or blurred boundaries between work and home.

FHA will review its practice to ensure that it does not inadvertently encourage or reward “presenteeism”. Advice and training may be provided to staff in managing work-life balance, establishing boundaries and digital wellbeing, with particular reference to remote work.

4.7.2 Sickness

When working remotely, employees should not work if they are unwell. If they are sick and unable to work, our Absence Management Policy applies. Employees should notify their line manager by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable, preferably before the employee is due to begin work

4.8 Technical Support

FHA’s IT infrastructure is capable of supporting remote working and gives employees remote access to all systems, calendars, phones, emails and documents. Employees are required to have their broadband at sufficient speed in place. FHA will, where practical and within reason, provide the appropriate equipment and/or software to allow people to work remotely.

It will be required that employees have the necessary firewall and anti-virus software installed on their remote computers, to protect FHA’s office IT system from any harm.

4.8.1 Cyber Security

Working remotely and remote system access can provide great business benefits but exposes the organisation to new risks that need to be managed. To do this the Association needs to identify and assess the risks and establish policies and procedures that support home or mobile working or remote access to systems that are applicable to users.

What is the risk?

Remote working and remote access extend the transit and storage of information (or operation of systems) outside of the corporate infrastructure, typically over the Internet. Mobile devices may also be used in spaces that are subject to additional risks such as oversight of screens (shoulder surfing), overhearing conversations or the theft/loss of devices.

It is important that all staff and Committee members dealing with Association business follow sound mobile working and remote access practices. To protect the organisation from risk and all users must be aware of the following risks and ensure that they guard against these at all times:

- Loss or theft of the device: Mobile devices are highly vulnerable to being lost or stolen, potentially offering access to sensitive information or systems. They are often used in open view in locations that cannot offer the same level of physical security as your own premises.
- Being overlooked or listening in to conversations: Some users may have to work in public open spaces, or in premises/places where there are other people present, where they are vulnerable to being observed or overheard when working. This can potentially compromise sensitive information or authentication credentials.
- Loss of credentials: If user ID/credentials (such as username, password) are stored with a device used for remote working or remote access and it is lost or stolen, the attacker could use those credentials to compromise services or information stored on (or accessible from) that device.
- Tampering: if the device is left unattended, an attacker may attempt to subvert the security controls on the device through the insertion of malicious software or hardware. This may allow them to monitor all user activity on the device, including authentication credentials.

4.8.2 Maintaining Awareness

All users will be trained on the use of their mobile device for the locations they will be working in. Users will be supported to look after their mobile device and operate it securely by following clear procedures. This will include direction on:

- secure storage and management of user credentials
- incident reporting
- situational/environmental awareness (the risks from being overlooked or overheard by others, etc.)

4.9 Data Protection

When working remotely, data protection can be particularly challenging.

Below are some tips to help deal with this:

- Follow the Association's policies, procedures and guidance
- Do not save documents to your desk top you must access them via the remote desktop link
- Only use technology (hardware or software) that has been approved by the Association as this will provide the best protection for personal data
- As you may be sharing your working space with other family members or members of the public, always consider confidentiality and try to hold conversations where others are less likely to overhear. Where possible position your screen where it is less likely to be overseen.

- At home it is unlikely that you will have confidential waste bins. Always follow the Association's guidance or safely store print outs until you can take them into the office to dispose of them securely
- To avoid the loss or theft of personal data, please put paperwork and devices away at the end of the working day in a secure location, preferably a locked cupboard or room.
- Be extra vigilant about opening web links and attachments in emails or other messages. Don't click on unfamiliar web links or attachments claiming to give you important updates. If you receive any suspicious emails, then please report these to IT Consultant as soon as possible
- Use strong passwords, whether using online storage, a laptop or some other technology, it's important to make your passwords hard to guess.
- Communicate securely, Use the communication facilities provided to you by your organisation where available. In other words, communicate through the remote desktop which links directly to the Association's network.

More information can be found on the Information Commissioners Office website <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/working-from-home/how-do-i-work-from-homesecurely/>

5.0 Monitoring of the Policy

- 5.1** The Staffing Sub Committee will receive an Annual Report which will summarise any requests for remote working requests and/or breaches to this policy.

6.0 Complaints and Appeals

- 6.1** Forth Housing Association welcomes complaints and positive feedback, both of which provide information which helps us to improve our services.
- 6.2** Employees have the right to appeal any decisions made on matters covered by this Policy in accordance with Grievance Procedures outlined in section A14 of VH Terms and Conditions.

7.0 Equal Opportunities

- 7.1** Equality and diversity underpin all our activities and services. When delivering our services, we never discriminate on the basis of sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions. Full details of our Equalities Policy can be found on our website www.forthha.org.uk or can be obtained from our office.

8.0 Data Protection

- 8.1 We recognise the importance of data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation, in protecting the rights of individuals in relation to personal information that we may handle, use and disclose about them, whether on computer or in paper format. We will ensure that our practices in the handling, use and disclosure of personal information as part of the processes and procedures outlined in this policy comply fully with data protection legislation. More information is available from our Data Protection Officer.

9.0 Availability

- 9.1 This policy is available on our website and can be made available in a number of other languages and other formats on request.

9.0 Review

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years by the Staffing Sub Committee and staff are responsible for ensuring that it meets legal and good practice requirements.

APPENDIX 1

HEALTH & SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR REMOTE WORKERS

FHA's health & safety checklist for employees working remotely.

This list is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with section 3.20 of the Health and Safety Manual.

Electrical Equipment

The safety and maintenance of the domestic electrical supply/installation is the responsibility of the householder. FHA will only take maintenance responsibility for any equipment it directly supplies.

Remote location checklist:

- Ensure electrical equipment is turned off when not in use and before performing any checks
- Check plugs are not damaged
- Check domestic electrical supply is suitable for the equipment in use
- Check plugs are correctly wired and that the outer cable covering is gripped at the point it enters the plug or equipment.
- Check outer covers of equipment are sound and have no loose parts or missing screws
- Check all leads and cables routinely against damage to the outer covers
- Check for burn marks or other signs of overheating
- Repair any electrical equipment with the potential to harm
- Check and secure all trailing wires – the best way is to use power outlets nearest to the equipment. Where this is not possible tuck trailing wires securely under desks etc. and out of typical walkways
- Do not have young children unsupervised in any area where you are using electrical equipment

Working with Visual Display Units

FHA's self-assessment tool will be used to ensure workstations are set up appropriately. Complete a DSE risk assessment for each remote location you may use.

Lone Working

Follow lone working guidelines at all times, ensure your location is safe and secure.

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Questions

Forth Housing Association Ltd

Equality Impact Assessment Screening Questions

Remote Working Policy

Will the implementation of this policy have an impact on any of the following protected characteristics?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Age | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Disability | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Gender reassignment | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Marriage and Civil Partnership | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Pregnancy and Maternity | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Race | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Religion or belief | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Sex | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Sexual orientation | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

If you have answered 'Yes' to any of these points, please complete a full Equality Impact Assessment. If you have answered 'No', you need take no further action in completing an Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Questions

Forth Housing Association - Privacy Impact Assessment

Remote Working Policy

1. A substantial change to an existing policy, process or system that involves personal information
Yes ☐ No ☒
2. A new collection of personal information
Yes ☐ No ☒
- 3.. A new way of collecting personal information (for example collecting it online)
Yes ☐ No ☒
4. A change in the way personal information is stored or secured
Yes ☐ No ☒
5. A change to how sensitive information is managed
Yes ☐ No ☒
6. Transferring personal information outside the EEA or using a third-party contractor
Yes ☐ No ☒
7. A decision to keep personal information for longer than you have previously
Yes ☐ No ☒
8. A new use or disclosure of personal information you already hold
Yes ☐ No ☒
9. A change of policy that results in people having less access to information you hold about them
Yes ☐ No ☒
10. Surveillance, tracking or monitoring of movements, behaviour or communications
Yes ☐ No ☒
11. Changes to your premises involving private spaces where clients or customers may disclose their personal information (reception areas, for example)
Yes ☐ No ☒

If you have answered 'Yes' to any of these points, please complete a full Privacy Impact Assessment. If you have answered 'No', you need take no further action in completing a Privacy Impact Assessment.

None of the above are applicable in this case however we do have a change to the workplace location in that a remote place will be the place of work. This is covered in the policy.

