# WORKING FROM HOME/ REMOTE WORKING & HYBRID WORKING GUIDANCE

2021

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC London

## Background

The 2020/2021 global coronavirus pandemic forced us to adapt our ways of working. Some members of staff had already incorporated a degree of home working into their working pattern, most commonly as the result of a formal request under the statutory right to request flexible working. However for most staff this was the first time they had worked from home on a regular basis and while we recognise the challenges this brought we think most staff would agree that it also showed us the possibilities of working in a more flexible way.

As restrictions on daily life are eased to the point where it will be possible for staff to return to their normal place of work our expectation is that going forward we will see an increase in what we have termed Hybrid Working. Hybrid working is where a role encompasses some duties that are most appropriately and effectively carried out on site and some duties that would be most appropriately and effectively carried out remotely.

This guidance is intended to be used as a framework when agreeing a hybrid working solution and as a framework when considering requests to work remotely made through a formal flexible working request.

### Hybrid working arrangements

1. Certain roles require an onsite presence and cannot be carried out remotely but we believe that most professional service roles are suitable for a hybrid way of working and managers are encouraged to adopt this approach. Hybrid working arrangements should be discussed and agreed between an individual and their line manager taking into account the context of the role as part of a wider team. The blend between onsite and home/remote working needs to be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of the role. For example student facing roles will see increased activity at certain times of the academic year and may necessitate more onsite working at these times. Another example is that in a small team there may be a need to adapt home/remote working days to cover for a colleague's annual leave.
2. Hybrid working arrangements are agreed locally at a departmental level and do not constitute a permanent contractual change. No-one has a right to hybrid working or to particular days or times of year to work from home/remotely.

### Remote working resulting from a formal request under the Flexible Working Policy

3. The right to apply to work flexibly is a statutory right protected in law. Flexible working requests can take many forms such as a change in working hours or working pattern but can also include requests to work remotely on a formalised basis. Formal flexible working requests should be managed under the RCMs "Right to Work Flexibly Procedure".
4. Changes approved as a result of a formal flexible working request do constitute a permanent contractual change.

## Benefits and potential disadvantages of remote working

5. Working remotely has advantages for both the member of staff and employer as well as some potential drawbacks.

6. In terms of achieving an optimal work/life balance, staff may find that they benefit from a reduction in commuting times and transport costs. Working from home may offer greater flexibility to work at times that suit the member of staff. Working from home may mean fewer interruptions and distractions allowing certain tasks to be completed more efficiently. Employers may be able to save space through remote working as less office space may be needed.

7. Remote working can be beneficial to the work/life balance of staff but it is important to set clear boundaries or staff may be tempted to work long hours and may find that they don't have a clear divide between work and home. Reduced daily contact with colleagues may impact effective relationship and team building and it is important to maintain effective channels of communication. Consideration should be given to working patterns when scheduling team meetings, team building activities and training opportunities to ensure everyone is included. Employers may feel that it more challenging to manage performance and work output when an individual is working from home.

## Factors to consider

You may want to consider:

- Does this role have a student or staff facing element, how will remote working impact on service delivery both generally and specifically on the days worked at home?
- Which other departments does this role regularly interact with, what is the most effective means of interacting/ collaborating?
- Does this role have line management responsibilities?
- What commitments does this role have in terms of attendance at committees or college meetings?
- Are there any technology requirements such as specialist software or equipment?
- How does the proposed split work within the context of the wider team, how will the role holder maintain team working, collaborate and be an active part of the wider college community?
- What are the performance outcomes and how will they be measured?
- What clear expectations and boundaries do you need to set as a team in relation to methods of contact, scheduling team meetings etc?

Important points to bear in mind:

- If a member of your team has a formal flexible working arrangement in place you should do all you can to accommodate these arrangements
- Working from home should not be used as a means of providing childcare or fulfilling other caring responsibilities
- Meetings must not be arranged to take place in the member of staff's home
- All staff working from home must be made aware of the potential hazards of working from home and a risk assessment must be undertaken by the manager.
- Clear guidelines must be provided on what work is expected of the member of staff and regular meetings should take place to assess performance and output
- A good starting point for considering working would be a split of 3 days per week working onsite and two days per week working remotely and then considering whether this would work for that role.

### Types of roles at the RCM

| Type | Role requirements | The RCM will: |
|---|---|---|
| **Onsite roles** | Roles where a physical presence on site is necessary to be able to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the role | Provide a desk or working space<br><br>Ensure access to a desktop PC or laptop |

| Type | Role requirements | The RCM will: |
|---|---|---|
| **Hybrid roles** | The scope of the duties and responsibilities of the role mean that some onsite presence is required for interaction with students or colleagues or to use technology available onsite, some elements of the role are most appropriately and effectively undertaken remotely such as research or project work | Ensure access to a laptop compatible desk or working space when onsite<br><br>Provide an RCM laptop (when available) |
| **Remote roles** | Where the nature of the role is such that a regular physical presence on site is not a requirement and the role would be most effectively undertaken remotely. May be required to attend site periodically for meetings. | Provide an RCM laptop (when available)<br><br>Hot desks available on campus when required |

## Communication

8. Staff working from home must be contactable during working hours, which will be clearly defined and agreed. Staff are expected to be contactable through an RCM email and Microsoft Teams for internal calls. An appropriate contact telephone number may be communicated to external contacts.

## Requirement to attend site

9. Where remote working is part of a hybrid arrangement reasonable flexibility will be expected. Staff who work from home on specified days as part of their contract of employment may, on occasion, be required to attend work at the RCM on a day which would normally be a working at home day, for example to attend an important meeting, to cover for absent colleagues or for staff development. A flexible approach will be required to ensure the success of the home-working arrangements for all relevant parties.

## Location

10. When working remotely a member of staff's normal place of work remains the RCM. Although requests to work from home or remotely from another location will be considered on a case-by-case basis it is highly unlikely that the RCM would be able to accommodate requests to work overseas due to employment legislation and tax implications.

## Health and safety

11. The RCM "Health and Safety at Work" Policy remains applicable to staff working at home. This is available on the Intranet.
12. Staff will be required to carry out a workstation/risk assessment on their home workstation/work area and to take any necessary corrective actions. Failure to carry this out may result in the opportunity of working from home to be removed.
13. It is the responsibility of the member of staff to care for their own Health and Safety and make the RCM aware of any issues that may have an impact on this. Accidents to staff sustained while working at home must be reported in the same way as if office based.
14. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their staff including when working from home. Useful general information can be found in the HSE website:

- Health and safety made simple: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/manage.htm
- Display screen equipment assessment: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf
- Five steps to risk assessment: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf

15. It is also important for managers to ensure staff working from home are not working in excess of 48 hours per week in line with the Working Time Regulations (unless they have chosen to opt out) and that they are having breaks from work at the appropriate times.

## Equipment and expenses

16. The RCM may provide a laptop computer to facilitate home working. Additional IT equipment (such as monitor, keyboard or mouse) or furniture for the home-working environment will not be provided. Staff are expected to use Microsoft Teams for internal calls.
17. Any equipment provided by the RCM remains the property of the RCM and must be returned at the conclusion of the contract of employment.
18. Staff are responsible for ensuring that they have suitable broadband services at home and are expected to cover the cost of broadband services and any increase in domestic bills such as heating and electricity.
19. When working from home the Royal College of Music remains the 'normal place of work'.
20. If the RCM provides a member of staff with equipment, such as a laptop or a printer, to facilitate working from home; it has a duty to ensure that:
    - the equipment provided is relevant for the job
    - the member of staff is properly trained to use the equipment
    - the equipment is checked regularly and maintained so that it does not cause harm to the home-worker or others.
    - the domestic electrical systems are adequate for the equipment
    - leads, wire cables, plugs and sockets must be safe and not damaged
    - no leads are trailing, potentially causing a hazard.

## Reasonable adjustments

21. In accordance with the Equality Act (2010) as an employer the RCM must make reasonable adjustments to make sure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs.
22. Where reasonable adjustments take the form of equipment (for example, a specialist keyboard or mouse, a sit-standing desk, an ergonomic chair) these arrangements will be made by HR on the advice of a workstation assessment carried out by the Health and Safety Manager and/or the recommendations of Occupational Health. Reasonable adjustments for a home working environment will be discussed and agreed on a case-by-case basis taking into account the requirements of both a home and office based environment.
23. Home working itself may be considered a reasonable adjustment for some disabilities or health conditions. Home working may also prove effective for individuals who may not consider themselves to be disabled but who are neurodiverse. Neurodiversity includes Attention Deficit Disorders, Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia. For someone who is neurodiverse adjustments to where they work, when they work and the way they are managed may help the individual in being more effective, productive and engaged.

## Insurance

24. College insurance

- The College's insurance takes into account the fact that staff may be able to work from home.
- The College has Employers' Liability Insurance which covers its legal liability for personal injury to staff while acting in the course of their employment. This cover extends to situations where the member of staff is working at or from home
- The College has Public Liability Insurance which covers the legal liability of the College and its staff for injury and/or property damage to third parties caused whilst on College business. This cover extends to situations where the member of staff is working at or from home
- Incidents which may result in claims against the College's insurance cover must be reported to the line manager of the member of staff. Major incidents must be reported immediately by telephone to the line manager of the member of staff or as soon as is reasonably possible if the incident occurs outside office hours.

25. Home insurance

- Members of staff are advised to contact their own home insurers to make the company aware that they are working from home, if on an on-going basis. This may have an impact on the home insurance. It is likely that it will be the individuals' responsibility to arrange and pay for appropriate personal home insurance cover.

## Security and data protection

26. Members of staff should be aware of the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

27. It is not recommended that paper documentation be taken home however where this is necessary it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure any documents taken home are covered on their own home insurance. Where sensitive information is taken home it is the member of staff's responsibility to ensure documents are stored securely.

28. To ensure the device you are using is protected you should make sure you install updates, if you have an RCM laptop you will be automatically notified but if you are using your own device you may need to check for updates periodically. If you are using your own device you should ensure you have antivirus software installed.

29. Whether working onsite or from home it is very important to be vigilant about phishing. Phishing is a method of trying to gather personal information using deceptive emails and websites, the RCM has seen a significant increase in phishing attacks. If you are unsure about whether a website is genuine or you have received a suspicious email do not click on any links or open any attachments but instead contact the ICT team for advice.

30. Any laptop or PC must be password protected and turned off when not in use. Where the RCM provides a laptop of other equipment the device must not be used by anyone who is not both a member of staff of the College and specifically authorised to use the device in question.

## Performance management

31. The manager and member of staff should agree the intended work output which is to be achieved during periods of working from home. This may take the form of specific pieces of work or general levels of productivity.

32. Regular meetings should take place to assess performance and output.

## Reviewing arrangements

33. Moving to a new way of working with home working becoming commonplace is quite a shift in our ways of working. Arrangements may initially take a few months to establish and should be continually reviewed to ensure they continue to be the most appropriate.

## Changes to informal working from home arrangements

34. Hybrid working arrangements should best meet the needs of the College and as such there may be a need to review and amend these arrangements from time to time. Examples would be where a team member is absent and their role needs to be covered, during peak workloads or where the job itself has changed. Hybrid working is an informal arrangement and such changes should be discussed and agreed but remain at the discretion of the line manager or head of department with reasonable notice given.

## Termination of or change to a working from home contractual provision

35. The RCM reserves the right to terminate a contractual home-working agreement if the needs of the RCM change or if the member of staff's section is adversely affected or if there are concerns arising from an assessment of the member of staff's performance whilst working at home. The member of staff will be fully consulted before a decision to terminate is reached. Termination will be subject to four weeks' notice.

36. If a member of staff wishes to terminate a contractual home-working agreement, they will be required to give four weeks' notice.

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