



The Societas Trust

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY ADDENDUM COVID 19 AND HOMEWORKING

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Legislation
3. Environment
4. Equipment – Furniture IT Hardware and Software
5. Display Screen Equipment including Optical Health
6. Confidentiality, Security of Information and Data Protection
7. Insurance Cover
8. Lone Working – Communication
9. Employee Responsibilities
10. Looking after Mental and Physical Health
11. Monitoring and Review
12. Risk Assessment

1. Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to a shift in working practices from individuals working in a school-based environment to many working from home.

This Addendum makes particular reference to the impact Covid-19 has on the existing sections of the Health and Safety Policy together with additional sections related to home working.

Other relevant policies include:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Supporting Attendance Policy
- Information Security Policy
- GDPR Data Protection Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Societas Reset and Recovery Policy
- Live Streaming Policy
- Remote Learning Policy for each Setting

The Societas Trust (“the Trust” and “the Employer”) has set out below the guidance that will be given in enabling employees to work from home during the pandemic when advised to do so either for their own or for other people’s safety.

Covid-19 has made many some employees temporary/ had hoc home workers during lockdown due to shielding advice etc., and, as such, is considered an agreement in principle between the employer and the employee. In these circumstances, the Trust supports a reciprocal arrangement between it, as the employer, and its employees, which is practical, flexible and sensitive to each other’s situation.

As part of this arrangement, Staff who are advised to work from home for any extended period (more than 10 consecutive working days) will also be encouraged to conduct a self-assessment to ensure that they are protected as far as possible against the following:

- Eyestrain and visual fatigue
- musculoskeletal disorders
- work related stress and anxiety
- work related fatigue and presenteeism (working longer hours whilst ill)
- increase in sickness
- overall reduction in morale.

The self-assessment will help to identify any reasonable adjustments to the environment that may be required, and any training on safe working practices, to prevent any health issues.

Communication practices have also been developed to ensure that employees do not feel isolated when working from home.

2. Legislation

The Trust recognises that by law, as the employer, they are responsible for the health and safety of all employees, including those working from home. Employees working from home are still covered by the law on working hours. An employee’s pay and other terms and conditions of their employment stay the same, apart from being advised to work from home on a temporary basis. It is however also recognised that, due to the circumstances of staff only

being advised to work from home either for their own or for other people's safety, that they have a shared responsibility to ensure their own health and safety whilst working from home.

The following legislation applies to this Addendum:

- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002
- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Management of Health and Safety Regulations (1999)
- Health and Safety Display Screen Equipment Regulations (1992)

3. Environment

When working from home, staff should ideally ensure that the intended working space is suitable and functional, and, where possible, be a designated work area free from other household distractions. This includes consideration relating to physical space, lighting, and heating, electrical and fire risk and an appropriate level of privacy when required.

4. Equipment

It's important for employees to have the right equipment and technology needed to work from home effectively if appropriate to their role; and, where this is the case, staff may request assistance with access to suitable equipment, if required. Suitable display screen equipment may include personal computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones. Staff may also request technical assistance in setting up new equipment or technology if required as part of their role. This can also help avoid extra stress.

Sanitisation of Equipment:

When equipment is returned to school, staff should follow the cleaning guidelines as laid out in the Reset and Recovery Policy.

5. Display Screen Equipment and Working Position

The Trust recognises that, as an Employer, it has to comply with the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002 – please see the main section of the Health and Safety Policy – Section 39 – The Use of VDU's.

These Regulations also apply to employees who work from home and/or use Display Screen Equipment daily for **an hour or more at a time**, which includes PC's laptops, tablets and smartphones.

Optical Health:

With extended use of Display Screen Equipment through an increase in virtual meetings it is important that staff take regular screen breaks deploying the 20-20-20 rule. This applies to members of staff working in school and at home. Ensure that the screen is at a suitable distance to information on screen can be read without straining eyes. There should be appropriate lighting and the screen should be positioned so as to avoid reflections and glare.

The care of optical health and seating is addressed within the self-assessment in section 10 of this addendum.

5. Confidentiality, Security and Data Protection

GDPR Policies, Information Security Policy and Live Streaming Policy still apply whilst working from home. Employees are reminded that they have to ensure the physical and electronic security of all information pertaining to the Setting and the Trust, and it is still their responsibility to do this whilst working from home. Consideration should also be given to Cyber Security and Data Protection.

6. Checking Insurance Cover

Whilst employees are covered to work from home under the Trust's policy, they should check there are no issues with them working from home on a temporary basis/ ad hoc with their own home insurer, mortgage provider or landlord.

8. Lone Working (Physical Aspects of Working from home – communication and isolation)

Communication:

The Trust recognises the importance of employers and employees keeping in touch to avoid feelings of isolation. Arrangements are made on how and when communication takes place, and, where possible, contact will be made with team members throughout the working day, endeavoring to recreate the usual social bonds where possible. Where necessary, checks are made that employees have the right equipment to keep in contact and have had training on such packages as Microsoft Teams to facilitate both group and one to one meetings.

Remote meetings:

The Trust and its settings use Microsoft Teams for online meetings and, where possible, online meetings are scheduled as far in advance as possible, with a clear agenda, timeframe, breaks, and sufficient time in between meetings to reduce the risk of virtual connectivity fatigue – i.e. the constant and continuous interaction with technology.

Managers are flexible in terms of those who find attending remote meetings difficult at certain times in the day, for example because of caring responsibilities or other disruptions.

For those employees who are working from home, and specifically who live on their own, the Trust will endeavor to signpost them to support with any feelings of loneliness and isolation if requested.

One-to-one meetings:

Managers will also endeavor to hold one to one-to-one meetings, where necessary, to ensure they are kept informed of how the employee is managing with working from home, and any difficulties can be addressed.

Emails are regularly used to update all stakeholders on Covid-19 developments and events.

9. Employee responsibilities

The Trust advises its employees that it is also their responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety both at work and whilst working from home. Anyone working from home should also keep in regular contact with their line-manager. They should also inform their line manager about:

- any physical or mental health and safety risks
- any working arrangements that may need to change, for example because of caring responsibilities

10. Looking after mental and physical health

While working at home during the coronavirus pandemic, employees are encouraged to seek support with implementing strategies to protect against:

- stress, anxiety, loneliness or other mental health issues
- feeling unhealthy as they're not able to take their usual exercise
- finding it harder to switch off from work
- working longer hours
- strive to achieve a healthy sleeping pattern
- feeling pressure to work while ill ('presenteeism')
- physical pain because they do not have the right working equipment, for example musculoskeletal problems caused by an unsuitable chair and desk at home

Strategies may include:

- trying to do regular exercise away from the work space
- take regular screen breaks deploying the 20-20-20 rule – ensure you are able to read information on the screen without straining eyes
- position the screen to avoid reflections and glare
- ensure morning and afternoon breaks are built into the routine together with formal lunch breaks
- maintain a daily routine and switch off work equipment at the end of the working day
- clearly distinguish a boundary between working times and household activities
- Maintain good posture when seated
- Adjust work chairs, screens, keyboard, mouse as needed
- manage their work-life balance, for example by having clear start and finish times
- have the necessary equipment and information to work safely
- Protect their vision by following the 20-20-20 rule
- It is important to remember that everyone's experience will be different and employees with disabilities may need to make reasonable adjustments working from home

11. Monitoring and Review

This addendum will be regularly monitored in line with the Policy Review Schedule, the Covid 19 Reset and Recovery Policy and Health and Safety Updates.

12. Self-Assessments

Employees who are advised to work from home for an extended period (i.e. more than 10 consecutive working days) are also encouraged to complete a self-assessment to help guide them on working safely at home. (Please see the Self- assessment at the end of this document).



Working from home (During Covid-19) Self-Assessment

Name of Setting		
Name of Employee:	Job title:	
Reviewed By:	Job title:	
Date of assessment:	Review interval:	Date of next review:

How often do you work from home?
What are your hours of work?

Area for concern	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No/ NA	If Not, what needs to be done and by whom?	Deadline
General procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The employee is medically fit and suitable to work from home. There are adequate channels of communication in an emergency. Home-working arrangements are recorded. Staff clearly understand their responsibilities. Staff are aware of the relevant policies and procedures. High-risk tasks, such as conducting meetings with parents or members of the public, are avoided whilst the worker is alone. 			

Area for concern	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No/ NA	If Not, what needs to be done and by whom?	Deadline
Working from home	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work area has a suitable room temperature • The work area is well ventilated. • There is suitable lighting • The space available is adequate for the tasks carried out • The space is free from excessive noise levels • Access to water is readily available. <p>Electrical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All electronic devices are routinely checked • Electrical equipment is PAT tested • There is sufficient number of sockets available for equipment • All wires and cables are safely routed and not trailing across the floor • The correct chargers in use for the equipment being charged (mobile phones, laptops, tablets) <p>Fire and Emergency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A suitable escape route is available free from obstruction • There is suitable first aid provision • Keys to locked doors and windows are easily available in the event of emergency • Arrangements for reporting accidents have been made clear <p>Personal Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities and arrangements are in place to contact someone or raise the alarm if you are a lone worker 			

Area for concern	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No/ NA	If Not, what needs to be done and by whom?	Deadline
Equipment	<p>Work Surface</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is sufficient space on a flat work surface for papers, printers, PC's, laptops • The work surface is of a suitable height • The work surface is free from glare or reflections <p>Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair has an adjustable height and back tilt and can be adjusted for comfort so feet are flat on the floor and the small of back is supported. • The chair has castors and glides suitably • The chair swivels • Forearms are horizontal <p>Display Screen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The screen is set at the right height – top of screen level with eyes • The screen image is stable and flicker free • The screen can be tilted • The screen has an adjustable brightness/contrast and is free from glare and reflection <p>Keyboard and DSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The keyboard is separate from the screen? • If using a laptop for more than three hours, there is a separate keyboard available • There is a mouse available for alternative use when using a touchpad • There is enough space for hands to rest (5- 10cm) 			

Area for concern	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No/ NA	If Not, what needs to be done and by whom?	Deadline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The keyboard is aligned to the screen • There is support for wrist and forearm <p>Optical Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable eye test has been performed in the last two years • Glasses for DSE work are being worn • The employee is free from headache, fatigue and any other eye problems • The 20-20-20 practice is undertaken • The member of staff takes regular screen breaks <p>Muscu-skeletal Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff member is free from pain or numbness in the wrists, arms, shoulders, neck and back <p>Telephonic Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff member working from home is responsible for ensuring they have access to a telephone and a strong broadband connection available. • In the event of broadband or telephone connections not working contact can be made to the IT Technician and if there is a delay they may be asked to work on the school premises if appropriate until the issue is fixed 			

Area for concern	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No/ NA	If Not, what needs to be done and by whom?	Deadline
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The member of staff has regular catch ups with the line manager • There are regular team meetings • There are regular updates relating to rules, procedures, information • There are people the staff member can talk to if they feel they are being impacted by homeworking or facing challenges from homeworking • The staff member who is working from home contacts colleagues who they work closely with once a day or intervals as deemed necessary. • Staff have access to the necessary files and information that are needed for them to complete their work. 			

Area for concern	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No/ NA	If Not, what needs to be done and by whom?	Deadline
Sickness/injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff member working from home contacts their line manager if they become injured or ill. • All relevant risk assessments are reviewed before completing work. • The staff member working from home does not have any pre-existing illnesses or injuries that may affect their health or work whilst completing tasks. • Members of staff are not expected to work if they feel unwell. • The staff member working from home has a fully charged phone on their person at all times, with the relevant contact details of the school saved on it. • If staff members need to report sickness or absence when they are due to be home working, they adhere to the usual procedures outlined in the school's Supporting Attendance Policy • The Staff member adheres to The Covid-19 Reset and Recovery Policy 			
Data protection And Information Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff member is advised of their responsibility for the safety of the equipment and information in their possession at all times. • The appropriate security measures are in place. • Data is collected, processed, transported, and used in accordance with the school's Data Protection. • Staff members are not permitted to let their family members or friends use any school equipment which contains sensitive data. • Paper documents containing personal data are not left unattended or accessible to other people, including staff members' families, and are kept in a locked cupboard when not in use 			

Area for concern	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No/ NA	If Not, what needs to be done and by whom?	Deadline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All electronic devices used in transferring data between the school and staff members' homes are password-protected to secure information in case of theft. Staff members and governors are not permitted to use their personal laptops or devices for school purposes. Emails containing sensitive or confidential information are password-protected if there are unsecure servers between the sender and recipient. 			
Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff members are advised to ensure that they have their own domestic insurance policies in places for household contents and buildings. 			