



Working from Home Guideline

1. Guiding Principles

This guideline provides direction on working from home arrangements, where these are proposed to support organisational or employee needs. Under the [Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984](#), and the [Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996](#), WA Country Health Service (WACHS) has a duty of care to provide a safe working environment. WACHS is committed to ensuring the safety of employees and others in the workplace.

This guideline is to be read in conjunction with the [Working from Home Policy](#).

2. Guideline

Employees and managers are encouraged to discuss a proposed working from home arrangement before any arrangements are progressed. Working from home arrangements require careful consideration of:

- the operational requirements of the work unit;
- the type of work an employee does;
- the employee's circumstances;
- the impact on the workplace (including client service/patient care); and
- applicable technical and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) requirements.

Typically, appropriate tasks for working from home are those that can be completed without face-to-face contact and undertaken with minimal supervision.

Working from home arrangements are not recommended for employees that are providing full-time care to a sick family member or caring for a young child. If the employee is required to undertake these responsibilities, they should seek advice from their Human Resources (HR) teams regarding appropriate leave to be taken. If the employee has some working from home capacity, the working from home agreement may provide for flexibility in working hours subject to agreement.

All employee requests for a working from home arrangement must be made in writing to their line manager, for approval by the Authorising Officer. Authorising officers should mutually agree on the process of how working from home arrangements will be approved.

Business continuity procedures may outline circumstances where working from home may be required.

2.1 Assessing a Working from Home (WfH) Arrangement

A request for a working from home arrangement is to be assessed by the manager, in consultation with the employee. If an employee changes position during the term of the agreement, the arrangement will need to be confirmed with the new manager.

Managers should contact local HR if they require advice regarding a request for a working from home arrangement.

A flexible approach should be adopted regarding the negotiation of a request for a working from home arrangement to assist both parties to reach an agreed outcome. The principles of procedural fairness shall apply when making decisions about requests to work from home.

Decisions must:

- ensure service delivery needs take priority when considering arrangements;
- be made on a case by case basis, following an assessment of the merits of the arrangement;
- consider organisational (e.g. type of role, tasks, financial and work unit) and employee needs;
- be renegotiated where an employee changes position;
- be impartial, transparent and capable of review;
- comply with the employee's industrial instrument;
- comply with applicable OSH requirements ensuring the employee can safely carry out their work in their home; and
- comply with applicable technical and software requirements.

Employees who request working from home arrangements often do so due to personal circumstances. Employees are required to provide sufficient information to allow a decision to be made for a working from home arrangement. Appropriate confidentiality is to be maintained for discussions between the manager and employee regarding working from home.

In addition, when making a decision, staff and managers should be aware that:

- a decision to support working from home does not provide for the employee's primary place of work to be moved from the employee's headquarters/work base to the employee's home;
- working from home is not an entitlement, or an obligation;
- working from home arrangements are not to be used as an alternative to dependent care;
- the employee is responsible for the establishment, equipment and on-costs associated with the working from home arrangement, including internet access.

All working from home arrangements are to be authorised by the line manager and approved by the Authorised Officer. For non-urgent cases, the sample Working from Home Agreement ([Appendix A](#)) can be utilised. The OSH Assessment form ([Appendix B](#)) must be submitted in all circumstances.

For employee-initiated requests, Authorised Officers must give a formal written response to a request within 10 working days. The response must indicate whether the request has been approved or otherwise and provide clear and transparent reasons to support their decision. If a decision is made to reject a request for working from home the reason/s for this decision must be explained to the employee.

For employer-initiated requests, managers must clearly outline why the employer requires the employee to work from home. The primary reason an employee will be asked to work from home is to protect the employee and/or other employees from risk. If an employee refuses a request to work from home the manager will need to contact Human Resources for assistance.

2.2 Documenting a WfH Arrangement

An approved working from home arrangement is to be documented in the form of a Working from Home Agreement (sample document at [Appendix A](#)) between the manager and the employee.

Agreements are required to detail:

- the agreed working terms, start and finish date, and communication requirements
- confirmation that service delivery needs must take precedence during the term of the agreement;
- the term of the agreed arrangement;
- OSH requirements relevant to working from home have been met, including the ability to safely respond to emergencies, a means of communication available and arrangements for regular contact to be made, having access to adequate first aid facilities and having undertaken a Working from Home OSH Assessment ([Appendix B](#)).

The agreement should be signed and dated by both the manager and employee and a copy retained by each party.

In urgent situations, where a full written agreement cannot be achieved, the above may be met through an email exchange to ensure the arrangements are documented.

2.3 Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency situation (i.e. pandemics, natural disasters) the minimum requirement to ensure a safe environment is the completion of the Working from Home Occupational Safety and Health Assessment, and a written agreement to the arrangement. This may be via the use of the Working from Home Agreement (sample document at [Appendix A](#)), email exchange or other documented agreement.

WACHS staff may request to work from home in an emergency situation because they need to isolate or quarantine as a result of potential exposure to a known source of infection. Staff may access the following;

- personal leave, where the employee is unwell or unable to undertake normal duties;
- special leave entitlements (e.g. COVID-19 leave) where appropriate; or
- work from home arrangements where the employee is required to isolate/quarantine but is well and where the line manager determines it is appropriate.

Vulnerable employees should not work in group residential settings unless there is ability to mitigate the risk. Any staff member that is considered a vulnerable person and has concerns regarding the emergency situation should meet with their line manager to;

- discuss and assess their workplace risk of exposure, including precautionary measures (e.g. PPE training);

- discuss and assess if it's possible to be redeployed to other areas or services within the workplace to alleviate concerns;
- discuss what leave types are available, if the staff member is not to attend work;
- discuss and assess if the nature of their work can be performed remotely, without impact to WACHS service continuity;
- vulnerable employees are not automatically approved to work from home; a request must be made in writing (e.g. email, formal agreement or letter) with approval from line manager.
 - where an employee's request to work from home is unable to be approved (e.g. required to provide direct/routine face-to-face care or support essential services that cannot be undertaken remotely) the employee is to be offered direct support through Employee Assistance Program providers or HR.

2.4 Agreed Working Hours

Staff members may work their prescribed hours of duty with flexible commencement and finishing times in accordance with their industrial instrument and approved flexible working arrangements, and to meet operational requirements.

Where staff need to work outside of the span of hours of the relevant industrial agreement, arrangements must be documented and approved by the line manager. In approving the request, the line manager will take into consideration whether the arrangement will compromise operational needs. Staff will maintain [timesheets](#) in accordance with the [Employee Record of Attendance Policy](#).

3. Definitions

Authorised Officer	Employees with authority afforded to them under the WA Country Health Authorisations and Delegations Schedule to approve working from home requests.
Employee	An employee of WACHS engaged in accordance with section 140 of the Health Services Act 2016 (WA) .
Working from Home	A formal work arrangement in which an employee works from home for a period agreed with the employer. Typically, appropriate tasks for working from home are those that can be completed without face-to-face contact and undertaken with minimal supervision.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- working collaboratively with the employee where a working from home arrangement request is received
- assessing individual requests on their merits including implications for other employees and service delivery needs
- considering working from home arrangements as a possible work arrangement for employees whilst meeting operational requirements
- ensuring employees working from home can participate in career development opportunities as appropriate

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- initiating (at least) six monthly agreement reviews with the employee
- ensuring staff who have previously been approved to work from home complete the necessary review process and is approved to continue
- considering the best technical solutions for remote video conferencing and working from home
- ensuring staff are working reasonable work hours to avoid fatigue;
- setting up regular check-ins with individual team members working from home to ensure they are adequately supported
- complying with the requirements of the appropriate industrial instrument;
- ensuring working from home employees comply with the applicable OSH and technology and software requirements
- ensuring that approved arrangements do not impinge on organisational outcomes, employee or patient safety.

Employees are responsible for:

- working collaboratively with the manager when requesting a working from home arrangement and considering alternatives that may be offered
- completing a Working from Home Agreement, or if in an emergency situation, have an approved written request, with a completed OSH assessment
- recognising service delivery needs are the priority during the life of an approved working from home arrangement
- carrying out the agreed duties and communication protocols as specified in the agreement
- attending workplace meetings where reasonable notice is provided
- dressing appropriately for video conferencing meetings as per the [Dress Code Policy](#)
- being at a suitable location (e.g. home) during business hours
- providing their contact details and ensuring they are contactable during their agreed working hours
- being available if required to return to the workplace to undertake urgent duties withing the organisation
- maintaining a safe working environment and contacting the OSH department for advice as necessary
- complying with obligations under the WA Health [MP 0124/19 Code of Conduct Policy](#) and all other workplace policies and procedures
- being mindful of confidentiality and continue to safeguard sensitive information
- complying with applicable OSH and technology and software requirements
- taking reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work in the home
- participating in agreement reviews with their manager every six months, or more frequently as agreed with the manager.

Authorising Officers are responsible for:

- reviewing applications on their merit and determining whether application is approved or not
- providing feedback on why an application is not approved.

5. Compliance

Guidelines are designed to provide staff with evidence-based recommendations to support appropriate actions in specific settings and circumstances. As such, WACHS guidelines should be followed in the first instance.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

All WACHS corporate records must be stored in the approved Electronic Documents and Records Management System as per the [Records Management Policy](#).

7. Evaluation

Evaluation and review of this policy and guideline is to be carried out by WACHS People, Capability and Culture Directorate every two years (or earlier if required).

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#) – 1.1c, 1.1e, 1.3, 1.5, 1.10

9. Legislation

[Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984](#) (WA)

[Occupational Safety and Health Regulation 1996](#) (WA)

[Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA)

[Industrial Relations Act 1979](#) (WA)

10. References

Nil

11. Related Forms

Sample Working From Home - Agreement Template ([Appendix A](#))

Working from Home - OSH Assessment ([Appendix B](#))

12. Related Policy Documents

WACHS [Working from Home Policy](#)

WACHS [Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#)

WACHS [Employee Record of Attendance Policy](#)

WACHS [Dress Code Policy](#)

13. Related WA Health System Policies

MP 0124/19 [Code of Conduct Policy](#)

14. Policy Framework

[Employment Policy Framework](#)
[Information and Communications Technology](#)
[Integrity Policy Framework](#)

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on request for a person with a disability**

Contact:	A / Work Health and Safety Manager		
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Appendix A - Working from Home Agreement

Working from Home Agreement

Between

Name of employee

Position title and work unit

and

Delegated authority's name

Position title and work unit

The purpose of this agreement is to detail the working from arrangements agreed between the above parties.

The terms of this agreement are based on the WACHS Working from Home Policy (copy attached).

Agreed working from home arrangements are as follows:

Commencement date: _____ **Review date:** _____

Details:

(Note: please outline of the employee's role and responsibilities under the arrangement, including communication and supervision requirements, if applicable).

Additional Comments:

We have read and understand the arrangements detailed in this agreement and the WACHS Working from Home Policy. We confirm that this working arrangement does not compromise service delivery which we understand takes precedence.

We acknowledge that this agreement must be reviewed on at least a six monthly basis (or earlier if the circumstances change for either the employee or employer) ensuring consideration is given to the operational effectiveness of the agreement including impacts on the organisation, the work unit and the individual employee.

We confirm the employee or employer may withdraw from this agreement upon providing **[insert agreed notice period]** written notice to the other party.

We confirm relevant HSS/ICT forms have been completed and submitted to give effect to this arrangement.

We confirm the Working from Home OSH Assessment has been completed and any identified actions completed.

Employee's signature: _____

Date: _____

Delegated authority's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – Working from Home Occupational Safety and Health Assessment

Employee name _____

Department _____

Address of working from home location _____

Workspace within location (e.g. study) _____

Date of assessment _____

The line manager will review the recommended actions, equipment requirements and any other issues and discuss these with the employee.

The employee is responsible for notifying their line manager of any significant changes to the working from home environment (e.g. a house or office move, renovation). These may require reassessment.

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A	Comment / Recommended Action
Environment				
Is the field of vision free of direct reflections from the screen, keyboard, desk, paper etc.?				
Is the field of vision free of glare from lights, windows etc.?				
Can the room climate be artificially controlled? (i.e. by air conditioning or heaters)				
Is the room appropriately ventilated?				
Noise				
Is the ambient noise level appropriate for the duties?				
Is the location or levels of equipment noise satisfactory for the room?				
Workspace				
Is the workspace clean and well maintained?				
Does the layout of the workspace allow for easy access to furniture and equipment?				
Is the electronic equipment sufficiently ventilated?				

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Criteria	Yes	No	N/A	Comment / Recommended Action
Workstation				
Does the office chair meet Australian Standards? (chairs manufactured to AS will have this labelled on them)				
Is the chair appropriate for the duties?				
Are there sufficient work surfaces of adequate sizes to accommodate the mouse and keyboard?				
Does the desk allow the employee to adopt acceptable postures (consider knee space, height, depth)				
Is the desk sufficiently robust enough to support the equipment?				
Does the employee understand the correct principles of workstation set up?				
Is the screen height appropriate?				
Is the screen distance appropriate?				
Is the existing keyboard and mouse suitable for use?				
Safety				
Have hazards that could be of a slip, trip or fall nature been attended to i.e. floor coverings, mats?				
Do the electrical connections appear to be in good repair?				
Is an RCD installed?				
Are there sufficient power points?				
Emergency Preparedness				
Are there fire protection measures appropriate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoke alarm installed and tested? Home office fire escape plan in place? 				
Is there an appropriate exit in the case of emergency?				
Is there a first aid kit / first aid resources available?				
Process for ensuring emergency communications available and to ensure regular contact with line manager.				

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Line manager to complete

I have reviewed the requirements identified above and have discussed and documented this with the employee.

Line manager name _____

Position title _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Employee to complete

I understand that I am responsible for complying with the WACHS Working from Home policy, maintaining a safe working environment and contacting the OSH department for advice as necessary.

I have discussed the requirements identified above with my line manager.

The recommended actions have been addressed and required equipment supplied and/or rectified. I understand that I am responsible for notifying my line manager of any significant changes to the working from home environment.

Employee name _____

Position title _____

Signature _____

Date _____