



Last Updated: 12/01/2020

Brooke Weston Trust – Homeworking Guidance re Covid-19

Introduction

Dear Colleague,

It is time to update this guidance on working from home now we are in a second nation-wide period of school partial closure. When I wrote the original version of this document (it seems like a lifetime ago!), I began by saying how impressed I was with your unswerving commitment and professionalism. Little could any of us imagine how much those qualities would continue to be needed and tested in the months ahead. You have risen to every challenge placed before you so far and I could not be prouder of the job you are doing.

For this lockdown, the government has introduced a number of statutory obligations that mean all schools are required to maintain a level of provision and daily operation that was not the case first time around. These obligations include the ongoing delivery of good quality remote learning and ensuring that some core day-to-day operations continue more fully than before. The updated statutory document is [linked here](#).

As a consequence, many of you are being asked to work from home as you play a vital part in our determined effort to meet these obligations to keep all of our children safe and engaged with learning. I'd like to thank you for everything you are doing and ask you to re-read this updated document which covers what we must all be aware of when working from home.

Health & Safety

As before we would ask you to ensure you have undertaken a brief, sensible and pragmatic review of any health and safety risks you face whilst working from home (See Appendix 1 for a quick risk assessment template). The Trust HR Manager can support you with this if necessary. Working from home places the same health and safety responsibilities on you as working within your school. You must take reasonable care of your own health and safety and report any health and safety concerns to your Line Manager.

If you need some additional information about how to correctly set up a workstation then you can access the online Handsam course, please speak to your school administrator responsible for HR if you are unsure about how to log on and access the course. The January edition of BWT People also contains some helpful information on the best way to set up your workspace.

When using Display Screen Equipment (DSE) regularly, rest breaks should be taken to prevent the onset of fatigue. There is no prescribed frequency or duration of breaks from DSE work, but the amount should be reasonable.

Breaks should be taken before the onset of fatigue when performance is at a maximum and before productivity suffers, the timing of the break is more important than its length. The work break in the context of DSE means a break in the DSE work routine, not a break in work altogether. A break away from your screen could be; making a phone call, working on a paper document, shredding confidential information etc.

Data Protection

It is imperative to remember you have important data protection responsibilities as a BWT employee. It is your responsibility to prevent unauthorised access to Academy data and resources and to act in accordance with the Brooke Weston Trust's policies on data protection, retention and disposal, and confidentiality.

Hard copy documents containing personal, sensitive or Trust data must only be kept at home if they can be securely stored and for the minimum period necessary. If you need some additional information about data protection then you can access the online Handsam course. Please speak to your school administrator responsible for HR if you are unsure about how to log on and access the course.

All staff should also have received and signed the Trust's IT Acceptable Use Policy, available on the Trust website. This further clarifies expectations and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT and is designed to protect you, others and personal data. It is essential to remember that personal data relating to staff or students should never be downloaded and stored on personal devices. Nor should personal or sensitive data be stored on the desktop or local drives of a school issued device. Accessing such data, including SIMS in secondary schools, should be done via secure remote access to school systems.

We have also provided some tips in Appendix 2 about data protection and working from home.

Using your own IT Equipment

If you would typically use a desktop computer in the office we ask you to use your own PC, laptop or tablet to access the relevant schools systems if we can't provide you with additional equipment. We know this is not ideal and are trying our best to avoid anyone having to do this. However, if you really must use your own equipment, I'm sorry to say we cannot be responsible for maintenance, replacement or repair in the event of loss or damage when working for us. At the end of a homeworking period you will be expected to remove any sensitive data relating to your work at the Trust.

Using BWT IT Equipment

If you have been provided with a laptop and/or mobile phone, this will remain the property of the Trust. Please:

- Only use it for the purposes for which we have provided it;
- Take care of it and use it only in accordance with its operating instructions and our policies and procedures;
- Make it available for collection by us or on our behalf whenever requested to do so.

Computers that have been used for Trust work purposes could potentially hold Trust information or a virus so they must be returned to the Trust for inspection and cleansing when requested by a member of the IT team. The Trust is not responsible for personal data stored on work equipment or your personal equipment being used for work purposes.

Once again, we remind you to familiarise yourselves with the Trust's IT Acceptable Use Policy

Communication

Communication will normally be via your work email address. However, as a temporary homeworker we really must insist you provide your Principal with a personal email address and telephone number so that we can contact you in the event of a system failure or shutdown.

You should also have regular keeping in touch communication with your Line Manager at agreed scheduled intervals throughout each week you are homeworking. Line Managers, please ensure you are regularly liaising with employees in your team, to ensure they feel supported and know how to reach you when needed. If you require any further assistance on this point, please speak with your Principal, or the Trust HR Manager.

We are mindful that some people may find working from home causes them to feel isolated or lonely. If this is the case for you at any time, please reach out to your Line Manager or the Trust HR Manager and share your concerns. We are here to help and support you, but we can't help you unless we know. There are ways that we can encourage collaborative working to ensure you stay connected with colleagues during this time. Please see the document "Supporting your Mental Health during the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic" which is included in Appendix 3. Each month we will be circulating the BWT People Bulletin which will continue to focus on resources and strategies for supporting your wellbeing.

Safeguarding

The Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (TPO/STA/14) is being regularly reviewed and updated in light of the pandemic, and therefore staff need to ensure that they are keeping up to date with any relevant changes. The most recent version of the policy is always available on the Trust website under the BWT Policies and Financial Information area.

Employees should also familiarise themselves with any specific school based safeguarding procedures, if you are unsure of what these are in the current situation please ensure you urgently speak with your DSL or your Principal.

Public Health England Advice

It is vitally important that all staff follow Public Health England advice and keep themselves safe by following the restrictions. For an up to date summary on the newest government restrictions, staff are advised to read the [National lockdown: Stay at Home Guidance](#).

Employees also have a responsibility to take care of their own health and safety when they are required to be on school site. This includes looking after the safety of others that may be affected by their actions at work. Each Academy has a detailed Risk Assessment in place, and employees should ensure that they are aware of the contents of this risk assessment and they are abiding by the information set out in this document, to help protect themselves and each other.

Working Arrangements

With the provision of updated [Statutory Guidance](#) for schools, there are now clearer expectations of the work staff will undertake at home. The precise details of your working patterns and what we require from you will inevitably vary depending on the school you work in, the role you undertake, and this does mean that some employees will be required to be on site more than others. We will always try to accommodate working from home arrangements where we can, but we would strongly encourage everyone to liaise with their Principal/Line Manager and to be absolutely clear about what is expected of them.

Appendix 1 – Working from home risk assessment

Use the following simple risk assessment to find out how safe your home working space really is. Take a look at the risks in the first column, answer 'yes' or 'no' as applicable and then make a note of what needs to be done to reduce or remove the risk if necessary.

Risk	Yes/No	Action Required
Desk Area		
Do you have adequate space to work comfortably?		
Is there enough space underneath your desk to stretch your legs?		
Are there trailing electrical cables around your working area that need to be tied up?		
Is your working area warm, well-lit and well-ventilated?		
Display Screen Set-Up		
Is your desk chair set up correctly? Is your lower back supported, are there armrests and are your feet flat on the floor?		
Are your keyboard and mouse clean and within easy reach, without having to stretch?		
Is your display screen level with your eyes so it doesn't cause discomfort to your neck or head?		
Do you switch off equipment when not in use?		
Personal Welfare		
Do you sit with a good posture or are you hunched over the desk?		
Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?		
Is the floor area around your desk clear of boxes, papers and wires?		
Do you know the name and number of a manager who you can get in touch with easily?		
Do you have a system for regularly 'checking in' with your employer if you are not visibly online each day?		
Is your home kept secure whilst you're working there?		
Are important files and laptops kept locked away securely when not in use?		

Appendix 2 – GDR considerations when working from home

Please ensure that before you start working from home you have completed the Handsam online course on GDPR - <https://bwt.handsam.net/site/login> Once this has been completed and you are familiar with your obligations under the regulations, please ensure that you also follow the tips below.

- Data on your computer should only be accessed and viewed by those authorised to do so, this should not be shared with family or housemates
- There should be no access to school systems in public places (on public transport / coffee shop / library)
- Personal devices are not encrypted generally but staff should make sure they are as secure as possible. This includes setting up password protections to access a laptop/computer. If the device is a shared family device then files or folders relating to confidential work should also be password protected.
- Ensure any security features and service updates are applied to the operating system
- Current antivirus software is installed and up to date and regular scans of the home device are carried out
- Taking work home, should mean just that. Documents shouldn't be left in car boots or on passenger seats
- Make sure that any documents you print are not sent to a public printer

Appendix 3 – Supporting your Mental Health during the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic

Coronavirus is causing a lot of uncertainty, and news about the pandemic can feel relentless. This can take its toll on people's mental health, particularly those already living with conditions like anxiety or OCD. We have included information below from the World Health Organisation on how you can protect your mental health and psychological well-being, and we would like to remind you of some of the resources available to you.



Avoid watching, reading or listening to news that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. Seek information mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones

Seek information updates at specific times during the day, one or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can be overwhelming and can cause anyone to feel worried



Get the facts. Gather information at regular intervals from the World Health Organisation, Public Health England or the NHS, in order to help you distinguish facts from fiction

Find opportunities to amplify the voices or positive stories of people who have experienced the new coronavirus (COVID-19) and have recovered or who have supported a loved one through recovery



Maintain familiar routines in your daily life as much as possible, especially if you have children and are confined to home

Stay connected and maintain your social networks. If health authorities have recommended limiting your physical social contact to contain the outbreak, you can stay connected via e-mail, social media, video conference and telephone



Wash your hands - but not excessively. Charity OCD Action says the issue to look out for is the function - for example, is the washing being carried out for the recommended amount of time to reduce the risk of spreading of the virus - or is it being done ritualistically in a specific order to feel "just right"?

Sources of support for employees



All Brooke Weston Staff have free and confidential support available from Health Assured, which can be accessed at any time day or night.

As well as immediate access to a counsellor or legal advisor, Health Assured can also provide you with up to 6 sessions of structured counselling, at no cost.

The service is also available to co-habiting partners, and dependants who are in full time education or who live at home, between the ages of 16 and 24.

Just call **0800 028 0199**

<https://www.who.int/> - World Health Organisation for up to date and factual information on the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england> - Public Health England for up to date and factual information on the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and how public health in England are responding to this

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/> - Education Support, the charity who are dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of education staff in schools. You can call their free confidential helpline on 08000 562 561 if you are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, anxious or depressed

<https://ocdaction.org.uk/> - The UK's largest charity focusing on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). They provide support and information to anybody affected by OCD and be contacted by phone on 0845 390 6263 or via email on support@ocdaction.org.uk

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/> - Mind is the leading mental health charity. This link will take you to their guidance on how to cope with feelings of anxiety if you are worried about coronavirus.