

# Working from home compliance checklist for SME employers



Whether your team works from home, in the office, or both, your responsibilities for your employees' health and safety are the same.

If you're a manager or employer in an SME, this checklist will help you meet legal health and safety duties for employees who work from home and respond appropriately to issues raised.

## Workspace and environment

Do all remote workers have:

- Stable desks or tables suitable for regular work?
- Chairs that are stable and comfortable?
- Workspaces that are well lit and ventilated?
- Noise levels allow them to work safely and comfortably?
- Window coverings, such as blinds or curtains?
- Sufficient space to move safely?
- A work area free of trip hazards such as trailing cables and clutter?
- Electrical equipment in safe and in good condition?
- Clear guidance on how to report faulty equipment

## Fire safety and first aid

Do all remote workers have:

- Working smoke alarms in their home (one per floor)?
- Clear exit routes from their work areas?
- Clear guidance on what to do and who to contact in an emergency situation
- Clear guidance on what counts as and how to report work-related incidents and accidents?
- Access to basic first aid supplies?

## Display Screen Equipment (DSE) set-up

Do all remote workers have:

- A chair that provides adequate back support and has adjustable seat height and back support?
- A screen positioned directly in front of them and at a comfortable viewing distance?
- The top of their screen roughly at eye level? This can be achieved by using a monitor or laptop stand.
- A separate keyboard and mouse for regular laptop work, positioned so arms feel relaxed?
- Enough space available for all equipment and to rest the wrists and forearms?
- A screen that is clear, stable and free from excessive glare?
- A footrest or the ability to lay their feet flat on the floor while working?
- The ability to take regular breaks?

### **You must also:**

- Check that, if a remote employee is using a separate screen or monitor, it can tilt and swivel.
- Fund eye tests for all employees who use display screen equipment - whether they work from home or in office - and make sure that all employees are aware of this entitlement. It is recommended this happens every two years.
- Make sure that any reported aches, pains or discomfort are addressed.

## Working with paper documents and other devices

You should provide safety advice for remote workers who work with paper documents, hand-write or draw, or use smart phones or tablets for work.

When working with paper documents, employees should:

- Have the option of using document holders.
- Avoid twisting or reaching.
- Have adequate lighting.

For extended handwriting or drawing, employees should:

- Be able to maintain neutral wrist posture.
- Have their forearms supported.
- Be able to take regular breaks.

When using smartphones and tablets, employees should:

- Avoid prolonged unsupported use.
- Raise devices where possible.
- Avoid cradling phones between the shoulder and ear.

## Staying connected, lone working and wellbeing

Employees who work from home are considered [lone workers](#), as they are working without direct supervision or immediate support.

Under health and safety law, you must assess any risks associated with lone working and take reasonable steps to manage them. This includes mental health risks.

You should take reasonable steps to make sure that remote workers have:

- Regular contact with their manager and team
- A clear process for raising issues and concerns
- Clear guidance on working hours and expectations
- A manageable workload
- Clear boundaries around out-of-hours contact

You should also make sure that any signs of stress, isolation or [burnout](#) are identified, recorded and addressed.

Any lone working and wellbeing risks should be considered as part of your overall risk assessment process and reviewed where working arrangements change.

## Other important considerations

You should also make sure that:

- Reasonable adjustments have been considered where relevant.
- [Health and safety guidance and training](#) have been provided where needed.
- Any employees who work from home and use display screen equipment have completed a [DSE assessment at home](#) and for [all other working locations](#).
- Any employees who work from home have completed [working from home risk assessment](#).
- Home working risk assessments and DSE assessments are reviewed regularly and when:
  - Working arrangements change
  - The employee moves home
  - New equipment is introduced
  - Discomfort or incidents are reported

# Legal and best practice guidance



## What counts as a work-related incident or accident at home?

An incident is work-related **if it arises out of or in connection with the work being carried out.**

Examples may include:

- Tripping over or almost tripping over work equipment during working hours
- Injury or risk of injury caused by faulty employer-provided equipment
- Musculoskeletal pain or risk of musculoskeletal pain linked to prolonged screen use

Incidents unrelated to work activities, such as personal domestic tasks, would not usually be considered work-related.

## Equipment provision for remote workers – what is legally required?

Under the [DSE Regulations](#) provided by the HSE, all employers who regularly use display screen equipment must assess risks and reduce them so far as is reasonably practicable.

There is no requirement to automatically provide full office furniture or equipment for every home worker. But, if a risk assessment identifies that equipment is necessary to reduce risk, **you must take reasonable steps to address it.**

Options may include:

- Providing equipment
- Reimbursing reasonable purchases
- Allowing access to an office workspace
- Adjusting duties

If risks remain significant and cannot be controlled, continued home working may not be suitable.

The same rules apply for things like first aid supplies and smoke alarms.

## What counts as “regular breaks”?

Under the [Working Time Regulations 1998](#), workers over 18 are entitled to one uninterrupted 20-minute rest break when working more than six hours.

For screen work, the HSE advises short, frequent breaks rather than long infrequent ones.

Many experts recommend the 20-20-20 rule to reduce eye strain. This means looking 20 feet away from your screen for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.

If an employee says they **cannot** take breaks:

- Review workload and task design
- Adjust expectations
- Ensure legal rest breaks are possible

## What are the legal requirements surrounding eye tests?

All DSE users are entitled to:

- An eye test on request
- Further tests at intervals recommended by the optician
- Basic corrective appliances (such as glasses) where required for DSE work

**You must have a clear process for requesting and funding eye tests for all employees** - including those who work from home.

## Are we legally required to provide health and safety and DSE training for remote workers?

**All employers must provide [adequate information and instruction](#) on DSE set-ups and health and safety training** - even for employees who work from home.

Employees should understand:

- How to set up their workstation
- The importance of posture and breaks
- How to report discomfort
- Safe use of employer-provided equipment

Formal classroom training is not always required or convenient for home workers, but guidance must still be clear and accessible. [Online training is often considered an affordable and effective option.](#)

## What are “Reasonable adjustments”?

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), **employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities or medical conditions where workplace arrangements put them at a disadvantage.**

Adjustments may include:

- Specialist equipment
- Modified duties
- Adjusted working hours
- Additional support

These should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## What defines a manageable workload?

**Legally, there is no fixed number of tasks or hours that defines manageable.** But here are some signs that an employee’s workload may not be manageable.

- Regularly working beyond contracted hours
- Skipping breaks
- Increased sickness absence
- Repeated complaints of being overwhelmed
- Reduced performance or concentration
- Withdrawal or isolation in remote settings

Remote workers especially can sometimes appear “fine” because they’re not physically visible. That makes regular check-ins even more important.

If there is any evidence that workload is contributing to stress or ill health, **you must take reasonable steps to help reduce that risk.** This could include:

- Adjusting deadlines
- Redistributing work
- Providing additional support
- Reviewing staffing levels
- Clarifying priorities

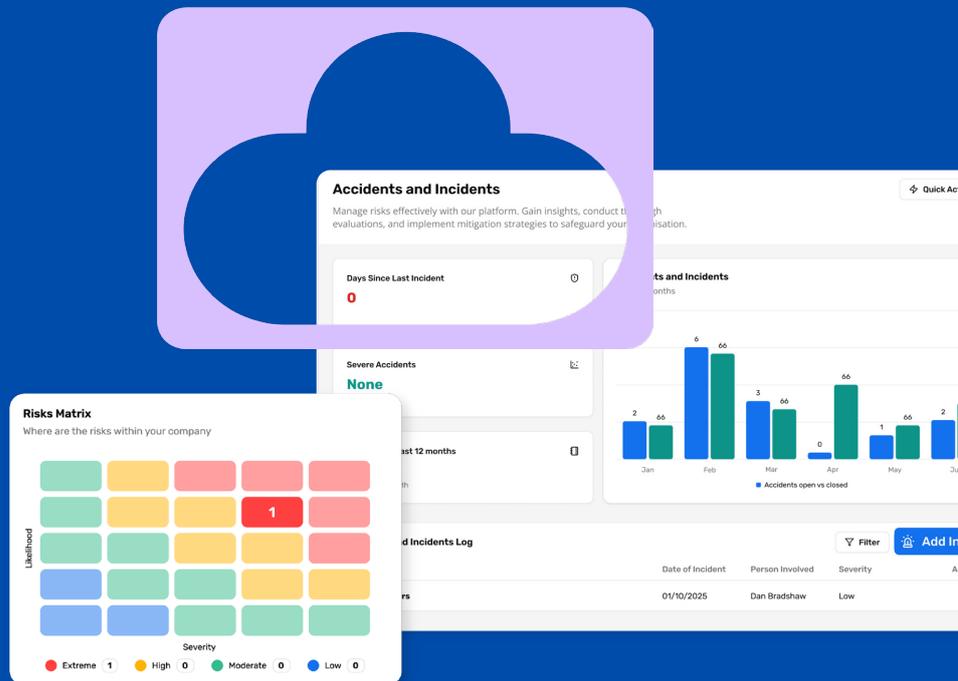
# A final reminder

Health and safety documents should be stored securely, kept up to date and be easy to access when you need them.

Breathe's Health and Safety module lets you create risk assessments, store policies and log incidents all in one secure place, with permission-controlled access. Because it connects with your employee records, you can see everything in context, from completed assessments to absence and contracts.



**Explore Breathe Health and Safety**



*This resource was created in partnership with health and safety experts at [Omny Group](#). It is intended as general guidance only and designed for low-risk small to medium sized businesses. For tailored legal advice and support, you can get in touch with the [Omny Health & Safety team here](#).*