Working from Home: Managing Ergonomic Risk

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

11:00 – 11:10	Introduction by Darren Arkins
11:10 – 11:40	Frank Power - Presentation
11:40 – 11:55	Q/A for Frank
11:55 – 12:30	Patricia Murray - Presentation
12:30 – 12:45	Q/A for Patricia
12:45	Wrap up by Darren

H.S.A. Webinar

May 20th 2021

Working from Home: Managing Ergonomic Risk

Frank Power Senior Ergonomist (Inspector)

H.S.A. Webinar

May 20th 2021

Structure of Presentation

- What are Ergonomic risks?

- The Legislation

- Working from home: Issues to consider as part of the Ergonomic risk assessment

- Examples of Research of the prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders

- Survey Results on Working from home in Ireland: Pre Covid and Post Covid

- New Health and Safety Authority (H.S.A.) Working from Home Guidance

- Planned revision and update of EU Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Directive

What are Ergonomic Risks

- **Repetition:** work is repetitive when it requires the same muscle groups to be used over and over again during the working day. Such repetition may not allow sufficient time for recovery and can cause muscle fatigue

- **Non Neutral Awkward Work Posture:** The incorrect positioning of a monitor or a seat at a computer workstation can result in the employee adopting an awkward posture (e.g. bending the neck, raised arms) which may contribute to the onset of an musculoskeletal disorder

- **Work Environment issues:** examples would be poor lighting, no space to set up computer workstation, uncomfortable/non-adjustable seating

- **Static sitting posture over long duration**

The Display Screen Equipment Regulation 2007

Regulation 72 (1) (b) : Employer duties

- *perform an analysis of the workstation in order to evaluate the safety and health conditions to which it gives rise for the employees,*

- *take appropriate measures to remedy any risks found, taking account of the minimum requirements specified in Schedule 4*

The Display Screen Equipment Regulation 2007

Schedule 4 (Minimum Requirements)

Display Screen

Keyboard

Work desk or Work Surface

Work Chair

Environment (Space, Lighting, Reflections and glare, etc.)

Key Points regarding Regulation 72 (1) (b)

- The principal responsibility to provide analysis of employee workstations and the assessment of risk lies with the employer.

- Employees are obliged to co-operate with this process.

- Providing employees with a questionnaire alone to do their own risk assessment (e.g. self-assessment) is a delegation of responsibility and does not constitute risk assessment in line with regulatory requirements

- An assessor, independent of the employee, needs to conduct a risk assessment of an employees workstation.

An Ergonomic risk assessment of a workstation should include the following:

- Brief overview of the tasks completed at the workstation

- Evidence that all aspects detailed in Schedule 4 to the Regulations were taken into account as part of the analysis

- Details of issues that need to be followed up

- Details of an action plan to address outstanding issues, which stipulates who is responsible, what actions will be taken and when they will be completed.

Examples of Working from home issues to consider as part of the Ergonomic risk assessment

- Lack of appropriate adjustable office chair

- Lack of knowledge of the adjustable features in office chairs

- Lack of appropriate office desk/work surface

- Use of laptop without a monitor, laptop stand or docking station

- Lack of space in the home

- Sustained sitting posture with limited opportunity for regular change in posture or opportunity to vary work tasks

The Display Screen Equipment Regulation 2007

- Regulation 72 (1) (c) (Planning work to allow for change in posture)

- Regulation 72 (1) (d) (Providing information)

- Regulation 72 (1) (e) (Providing training)

- Regulation 72 (1) (f) (Review of risk assessment)

- Regulation 73 (Eye and eyesight tests)

Examples of research of the prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders

- Occupational sedentary behaviour specifically has been associated with an increased risk of diabetes and musculoskeletal problems such as neck and shoulder pain (Hallman et al, *Int Arch Occup Environ Health* 2015;88:1031-42. doi:10.1007/s00420-015-1031-4)

- Limited reporting of musculoskeletal disorders (e.g. carpel tunnel syndrome, epicondylitis, etc.) in Ireland; (The Health and Occupational Research Network **(THOR)**

The Health and Occupation Research Network (THOR)

Information Sheet

What is THOR (ROI)?

THOR (ROI) is a Health and Occupation Research network comprising of four surveillance schemes collecting data on work related illness (WRI) in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). WRI data is voluntarily reported online by occupational physicians, chest physicians, dermatologists and general practitioners. As the data is reported anonymously, patients cannot be identified. The data provides valuable information on the types of WRIs, causal agents and the industry sectors they occur in.

Who manages THOR?

While the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) financially supports and promotes THOR (ROI) the University of Manchester administers it. Every year the University of Manchester produces annual reports of the number and type of occupational illness cases reported each year along with a compiled report covering the period from 2005 up to the present year. These annual reports also provide a comparison of WRI's cases in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Summary reports and full reports are available on the HSA's website.

How does the HSA use the data?

Data on WRI's is a valuable and important source of information which helps inform the HSA's policy and work programmes in the area of occupational illness prevention. There is no complete picture of WRI's incidence, so data in THOR can be compared with data from other schemes (Central Statistics Office, Quarterly National Household Survey and Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Occupational Injuries and Illness Benefit Schemes). In particular, the THOR report gives important information on the type of WRI, causative agents and the sectors in which it occurs, giving the HSA the ability to identify trends over a period of time as well as the possibility to identify new and emerging WRIs.

The report is used to inform the HSA's inspection activities in certain sectors. One example of this is in the area of work related stress (WRS). As a result of the relatively large number of reports of WRS in healthcare, the HSA is now actively looking for evidence of WRS risk assessments in healthcare settings such as in A&E departments during its inspections.

Physios report rise in back pain

Julieanne Corr

The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP) says there has been a sharp rise in the number of office workers presenting with back and neck pain, partly caused by inadequate work stations while working from home during the pandemic.

Ann-Marie Ennis, a member of the ISCP and founder of Swords Physiotherapy in north Dublin, said presentations had increased at her clinic by about 50 per cent. "People are working from their sofas, bedrooms and kitchen tables, which is affecting their posture," she said. "A lot of employers do provide office furniture but some homes may not be designed to accommodate it.

"If people want to continue working from home they will have to make more space. People also need to make sure they're not static at their desk all day. Standing desks are a good option, or sitting on a gym ball to work for part of the day is another."

The Hermitage Medical Clinic in south Dublin said self-presentations and referrals for such injuries had increased by approximately 30 per cent in the past year. Yvonne O'Doherty, a senior chartered physiotherapist at the clinic, said some of her patients were even working in their bathrooms.

"Some work from their floor, out in the shed, or even in a caravan," she said. "While it's been great that people have managed to adapt, if you're not on an office chair, you tend to slump. When you slump, you get this uneven loading through the structures in your spine, and that will lead to pain and muscle imbalance. We're seeing lower back pain, neck pain, thoracic pain, headaches and shoulder pain."

O'Doherty believes lack of exercise is also a factor. "A ten-minute walk to the bus stop has become a ten-second walk to the kitchen. You need to be getting up at least every half an hour if you can. Even just doing a few exercises in the chair will help."

Aileen Flynn, head of physio at Blackrock Clinic in south Dublin, also said that the number of patients complaining of back and neck injuries had increased by about 30 per cent. "You hear from lots of people on laptops, which are not designed for us to work on for prolonged periods; eight hours on a laptop is a recipe for disaster," she said. "It encourages our shoulders and head to fall forward."

Theresa Flynn, a senior physiotherapist specialising in ergonomics at St Vincent's Hospital in south Dublin, said it was important that employers ensured their staff had a healthy home-working environment. "Some companies had [home working] systems in place for their staff, while others were a lot slower," she said.

"Your home environment needs to be to the standard of your office environment. There are a lot of challenges to that, particularly when the schools were off, because lot of people needed to be close to their children to supervise them. Now that children are back at school, workers may have more opportunities to set up a suitable workplace."

GETTY

Working at a laptop for a full day is a recipe for disaster

Working from home in Ireland: Pre Covid

- CSO Pilot Survey 2018 – 18% Respondents worked from home 1-2 days a week

- 28% of public sector workers working from home

Working from home in Ireland: Survey October 2020

The top three challenges of working remotely are:

1   loneliness/isolation

2   staying motivated

3   Physical workspace (office set up in the home)

McCarthy, A., Bohle Carbonell, K., Ó Síocháin, T. and Frost, D. (2020). Remote Working during COVID-19: Ireland's National Survey - Phase II Report. Galway, Ireland: NUI Galway Whitaker Institute & Western Development Commission.

Working from home in Ireland: Survey May 2021

- 75% of respondents are working completely remotely since the outbreak of COVID

- 20% are working a mix of remotely and onsite

McCarthy, A., O'Connor, N., Ó Síocháin, T. and Frost, D. (2021). *Remote Working: Ireland's National Survey - Phase III Report.* Galway, Ireland: NUI Galway Whitaker Institute & Western Development Commission

Working from home in Ireland: Survey May 2021

The vast majority (95%) indicated that they would like to continue to work remotely for some or all of the time after the crisis:

32% indicated they would like to work remotely on a daily basis

53% indicated they would like to work remotely several times a week

10% indicated they would like to work remotely several times a month.

McCarthy, A., O'Connor, N., Ó Síocháin, T. and Frost, D. (2021). *Remote Working: Ireland's National Survey - Phase III Report.* Galway, Ireland: NUI Galway Whitaker Institute & Western Development Commission

Working from home in Ireland: Survey May 2021

There was more mixed levels of agreement with the extent to which their organisation is providing them with:

Well-being supports where 67% agreed or strongly agreed while 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Ergonomic and health & safety advice where 54% agreed or strongly agreed while 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

McCarthy, A., O'Connor, N., Ó Síocháin, T. and Frost, D. (2021). *Remote Working: Ireland's National Survey - Phase III Report.* Galway, Ireland: NUI Galway Whitaker Institute & Western Development Commission

Working from home: Other relevant documents

Making Remote Work National Remote Work Strategy (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) 2021

National Competitiveness and Productivity Council Bulletin 21-3 Remote Working: Implications for Competitiveness and Productivity: May 2021

Working from home: H.S.A. Response

Guidance and Advice: Homeworking Guidance

Dedicated Section on the Website

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/Working from home_working/

⚠

Note: Workers are required to work from home under current Level 5 restrictions, unless work is an essential health, social care or other essential service or activity that cannot be done from home.

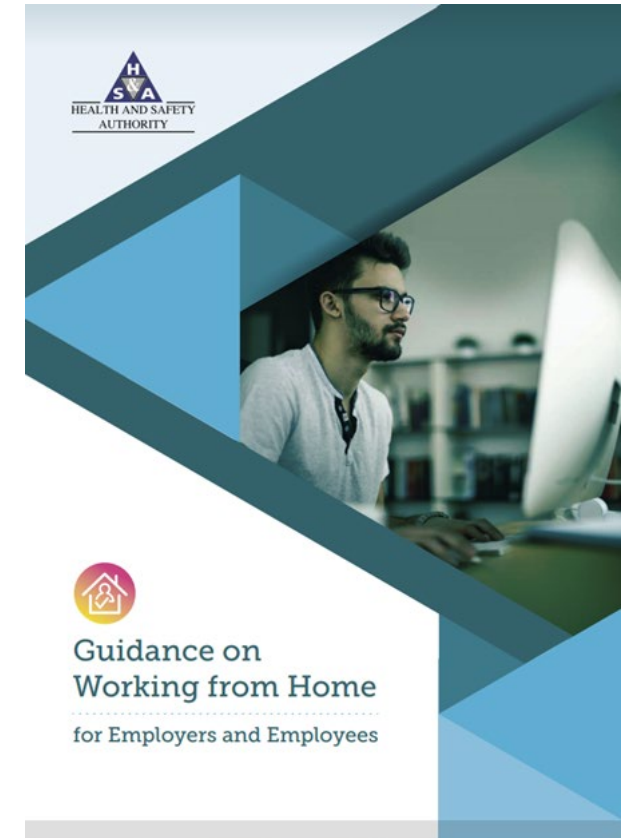| Working from Home | ⬇ |
Ergonomics	⬇
Remote Working Stress	⬇
Further Information	⬇

H.S.A. Working from home Guidance

H.S.A. Working from home Guidance

- 12 Sections

9 Risk assessment

10 Communication

11 Home office environment

12 Further information

Appendix 1: Homeworking risk assessment/checklist

Guidance on Working from Home for Employers and Employees

H.S.A. Working from home Guidance

Five key steps to managing homeworking

Step 1
Develop a homeworking policy

Step 2
Identify and consult with employees who will work from home

Step 3
Identify what equipment and resources are required

Step 4
Use the risk assessment/checklist to assess the home work environment

Step 5
Monitor, review and communicate with the employees regularly

Figure 1- Five key steps to managing homeworking

Guidance on Working from Home for Employers and Employees

Homeworking Risk Assessment / Checklist – 2 Step Process

- Step 1 – Equipment and Resources Required
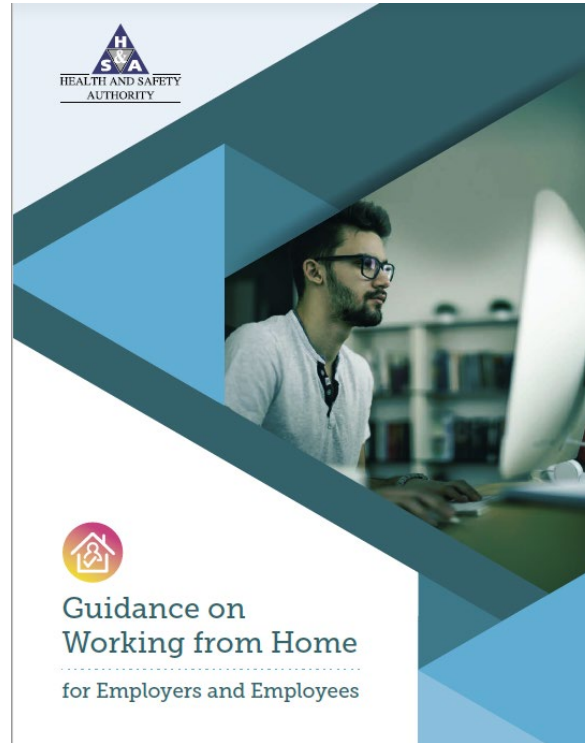
Step 1 – Equipment/resources required

☐ Dedicated Room	☐ Keyboard	☐ Wrist Rest
☐ Workstation	☐ Mouse	☐ Broadband
☐ Chair	☐ Task Lighting	☐ Mobile Phone
☐ Laptop	☐ Docking Station	☐ Printer
☐ Desktop Computer	☐ Document Holder	☐ Headset
☐ Monitor	☐ Foot Rest	

Further information:

Homeworking Risk Assessment / Checklist

- Step 2 - Homeworking risk assessment / checklist

Control	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/ follow up actions
Findings:				

Employee name:		Signature:		Date:	
Assessor name:		Signature:		Date:	
Review date:					

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/supports_for_business/business_and_education_supports/guidance_for_employers_and_employees_working_from_home/guidance_for_employers_and_employees_working_from_home.pdf

The Review and update of the EU Display Screen Equipment Directive

- This Directive and the associated Annex will be revised to take account of modern computer technology and new ways of working

- Expecting that Initial Consultation will start in Q3/Q4 2021

Conclusions

The employer needs to ensure that an assessor, independent of the employee, needs to conduct a risk assessment of an employees workstation in line with regulatory requirements

The employer needs to develop a home working policy

Discourage sustained sitting over long periods; encourage regular movement and task variation, underline the importance of neutral posture and provide appropriate equipment

New Health and Safety Authority (H.S.A.) Working from Home Guidance is available at www.hsa.ie

There will be a revision of the EU Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Directive

Thank you
Questions?

Our Vision:

Healthy, safe and productive lives and enterprises

Health and Safety Authority

Tel: 1890 289 389

International callers
00353 1 614 7000

www.hsa.ie

Working from Home: Managing Psychosocial Hazards

Patricia Murray, Snr Org Psychologist / Inspector

May 19th 2021

•Session outline: scene set

- Psychosocial hazards (and you)

- Context is key: 2020-2021

- What has **changed** and how that impacts us

- What has **stayed the same** and harnessing that

- Solutions from Behavioural Science research and practice
  - what to increase doing
  - what to avoid/decrease doing

- Work Positive (WPCI): a free on-line tool for organizational stress auditing

•What is a psychosocial hazard?

- Occupational Health Science literature - various models
  - Complex
  - Multidimensional
  - Interaction effects
  - Compound effects

- The meeting of …the mind, body and the (work) environment

- Positive psychosocial (work) environments
  - Exposure *linked* to inc satisfaction, performance, wellbeing

- Adverse psychosocial work environments
  - Exposures *linked* to negative health outcomes*

•Psychosocial hazards - *links*

- Complex non-work environment

- Configuration work/leisure: Work-life balance

- Multiplicity matters – many different things pressurising

- So…

- An array of job and non job stressors exist for all

- Clusters exist in certain environments – w/nw

- Trigger co-occurrence patterns exist, for all, differently

- Mental health outcomes are varied: mild to severe

Issues with PSH (stressors)

- Individuals differ

- Gap in the evidence chain: causes……>< … effects

- Mediators and moderators exist

- Home-work boundaries problematic

- 2005 Act not specific re psychosocial

- Section 19 – employers must assess the risks

- Section 20 – must put in place control measures

You

- Context is key: Covid is the context – uncertainty/change

- Work location is second– physical and **psychosocial**

- My session – **psychosocial** only

- Psychological perspective: what has **changed/ stayed the same?**

- **Ie On-line experience V in-person**

- Main issues to **re**-consider for your improved wellbeing*

- Solutions from research and practice
  - Tips for what to do
  - what to avoid doing

•Changed environment

- Location of work –> experience of working: S,E,P,C,B

- Experience of 'home' (and others' exp of you)

- Experience of 'family' and 'friends'……(sentient erosion)

- Experience of 'lifestyle' and 'freedom'

- **New context** -> new sociotechnical 'cues' (habit by cue)

- Organise work from home-> increased schedules/plans

- Emotional work – ie communication tasks more demanding at home. (TWOT)

- Measure contribution? (crude deliverables V holistic outputs)

•The same

- We seek the familiar – purchasing patterns/loyalties. Why?

- We seek social solace/attachmentnorms

- In uncertainty, we follow the 'in-group'

- Our experience is influenced by expectations – marketing research/biases/heuristics (sandwich test)

- Unreliable witnesses to **what** we do and **why** we do it -> prevents accurate self insight

- Mis-report our own wellness - approval bias/stigma/UNC/denial

•Behav. Science says….

Human behaviour is not as predictable as we like to think. We are more complex./

Our behaviour can often be:

- **irrational**

- **biased**

- **context-driven**

- 'Does context activate **your** behaviour'?

If so, how?

Examples

- Smoking

- Drinking

- Cinema (popcorn)

- Supermarket

- Exercise

Joining… the… dots…

- Uncertainty - > we are seeking the certain

- Isolation -> we are in need of others

- Sudden change - > we are confused/re-assessing

- (New) Context -> cues (new) behaviours

- On-line environment: emerging hazards

- Expectations are unreliable now (etw)
  - Both pos and neg expectations effects the experience

•Joining the dots (2)

Least possible effort – eye level is buy level/one click purchase

Reduce effort-reward imbalance – across modalities (gym distance/lift v stair)

Hold on to outdated routines – bring in-class on-line?

Falsely think 'knowing' drives our actions

ignore the power of social norms on us

To reduce uncertainty, increase social and re frame cues…..

• Address the known problems

- Think for **now**, plan for **now**, practice for **now**

- Think: Positive reflection is solution-focused

  - What are the things you repeat daily/weekly
  - How do you feel just before and just after them?
  - Keep some, reduce some, remove one

  - **After a certain amount of 'doing' more is gained by 15 minutes reflection on that, than is gained by adding more 'material'**

•Plan

- Pre-thinking increases learning

    - Schedule your week/month/season
    - Work schedule – by time and by day
    - **'every mental representation of a movement awakes to some degree the actual movement which is its object' (W James)** Mental practice literature

    - Differentiate work from leisure - and week from weekend

•Practice

- Repeat things for two weeks

  - Actively do things – intentionally, with a goal, stated
  - Actively do things – passively enjoy/receive/watch
  - Develop pleasurable set pieces work to leisure, leisure to work – repeat

  - **The mind changes after the body acts**

Solutions

- Solution-focused approach - individual AND organisational

- Focus on choices: **how** you can control some events

- Projects preferable to random acts of doing – creates theme across days/weeks

- Information WITH planning and practicing works ->creates certainties

- Context/place/time/people - > cue behaviours

- Lewin's Field Theory: friction/enablers

- Intention matters: what are our intentions for a ..day/event/task

•Individually

- Review yourself on Friday afternoon, prep yourself Sunday night

- Set weekly goals: review, to ensure that agreed actions happen

- Do some specific interesting new things weekly …and monthly –just do it.

- Reduce negative expectations consciously
  - Communications
    - Information -> 'how to' thinking and doing
      - Talking through …first and last
        - Reduce random acts -> create projects

Lessons learnt so far?

- A new divergence: theory and practice upended
  - Many models outdated as practice has radically shifted

- We think differently about work…how to improve my wellbeing

- Key themes:

- The digital impact on my work and my health?

- Social psychological impact of isolation?

- Communication and how to improve the on-line me

- Missing the unknown – personal consequences, pay attention.

Thank you

For more, visit Workpositive.ie

Questions?

Our Vision:

Healthy, safe and productive lives and enterprises

Health and Safety Authority

Tel: 1890 289 389

International callers
00353 1 614 7000

www.hsa.ie

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

- **Recent pertinent articles**

- https://academic.oup.com/annweh/article/65/4/418/6130809