National Cyber Security Centre

Home working:
Managing the cyber risks

Working from home is not new to many of us, but the coronavirus (COVID 19) means organisations are using home working on a greater scale, and for longer periods. This page will help organisations introducing (or scaling up) home working. It also provides advice on spotting COVID-19 scam emails.

Cyber criminals are preying on fears of COVID-19 and sending scam emails. These may claim to have a cure for the virus, offer a financial reward, or might encourage you to donate. If clicked, you're sent to a dodgy website which could download viruses onto your device, or steal your passwords.

Don't click on any such links. For genuine information about the virus, please use trusted resources such as the **Public Health England** or **NHS** websites.

If you' ve already clicked, don't panic:

- open your antivirus software and run a full scan, following any instructions
- if you've been tricked into providing your password, you should change your passwords on all your other accounts
- if you're using a work device, contact your IT department and let them know
- if you have lost money, you need to report it as a crime to Action Fraud (you can do this by visiting **www.actionfraud.police.uk**)

1. Setting up user accounts & accesses

Set strong passwords for user accounts; use NCSC guidance on passwords and review your password policy. Implement two-factor authentication (2FA) where available.

2. Preparing for home working

Think about whether you need **new** services, or to just **extend** existing services so teams can still collaborate. NCSC guidance on implementing Software as a Service (SaaS) can help you choose and roll out a range of popular services. In addition:

- Consider producing 'How do I?' guides for new services so that your help desk staff aren't overwhelmed with requests for help.
- Devices are more likely to be stolen (or lost) when home working. Ensure devices encrypt data whilst at rest. Most modern devices have encryption built in, but may need to be turned on and configured.
- Use mobile device management (MDM) software to set up devices with a standard configuration in case the device needs to be remotely locked, or have data erased from it.
- Make sure staff know how to report any problems, or raise support calls. This is especially important for security issues.
- Staff feeling more exposed to cyber threats when home working should work through the NCSC's Top Tips for Staff e-learning package.

3. Controlling access to corporate systems

Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) allow home workers to securely access your organisation's IT resources (such as email). If you've not used one before, refer to the NCSC's VPN Guidance, which covers everything from choosing a VPN to the advice you give to staff.

If you already use a VPN, make sure it's fully patched. You may need extra licenses, capacity or bandwidth if you're supporting more home workers.

4. Helping staff to look after devices

Whether using their own device or the organisation's, ensure staff understand the risks of using them outside the office. When not in use, staff should keep devices somewhere safe.

Make sure they know what to do (and who to call) if devices are lost or stolen. Encourage users to report any losses as soon as they can.

Ensure staff understand how to keep software and devices up-to-date, and that they apply updates promptly.

5. Using removable media safely

USB drives may contain sensitive data, are easily lost, and can introduce malware into your systems. To reduce the likelihood of infection you can:

- disable removable media using MDM settings
- use antivirus tools where appropriate
- only permit the use of sanctioned products
- protect data at rest (encrypt) on removable media
- encourage alternative means of file transfer (such as online tools).