



Homeworking: here to stay?

Who thought we'd still be here?! It's February 2021, we are about to have the dubious pleasure of marking one year since the UK's first lockdown and, despite the promise of vaccines and Spring being just around the corner, the much-heralded "Return to Normal" still feels a long way away. What does this mean for employers and employees wishing to return to the office?

Over the past year, much of the discussion about office strategy seems to have focused on the opposite ends of the debate. Many people miss the social aspects of being in the office and are desperate to return to office-based working as soon as possible; others have enjoyed the change of pace, dread the prospect of commuting and think remote working is the long-term way forward.

The reality is that everybody is unique and some working environments and routines are better suited to certain people than others. Employers would be wise to take this into account when deciding what to do with their office space in 2021 and beyond – giving employees the freedom to do what works best for them may ultimately be better than a blanket policy for all.

[Raoul Parekh](#) and [Chris Coombes](#) considered this further in their article "Why employers should avoid giving notice on the office lease just yet", published in People Management last month. Click [here](#) to read more.

Our team here at GQ|Littler has written several WFH-related articles over the past year. If this is a topic which you are interested in, you may also want to have a flick through the following articles:

- Do you have employees working overseas during the pandemic (or are you considering a move to the Bahamas yourself?!). Click [here](#) to read our article on the potential tax issues arising from employees working overseas.
- Do you have a homeworking policy in place? If not, [Dan Pollard](#) has created a helpful checklist with the issues you should be looking out for – click [here](#).
- What about data security and confidentiality – these issues don't just disappear when your employees are working at home. Click [here](#) to read [Deborah Margolis'](#) article on this topic.
- Health and safety is especially important in the midst of a pandemic, and employer's obligations to ensure their employees' health and safety extend to employees working at home. [Kate Potts](#) has helpfully written an article explaining this – click [here](#).
- Do you have an employee who has asked for their bespoke, designer Scandi-chic office chair to be expensed in full? [Chris Coombes](#) wrote an article last year looking at what employers need to do vis-à-vis working from home expenses – click [here](#).

- Perhaps you are worried that you are going to become inundated with formal flexible working requests as soon as you begin to encourage employees to return to the office? Click [here](#) to read [Elliott Lauder's](#) article summarising the legal formalities behind flexible working requests.

If you would like advice on any of the issues raised in this article please get in touch with your usual GQ|Littler contact or email [\[email protected\]](#).