



# Home working Policy

Approved HODs Health and Safety Group Meeting 24 April 2008

## CONTENTS

<b>Sections</b>	<b>Page</b>
1 Introduction	1
2 The Job - Suitability for Home Working	1
3 Home Premises and Equipment	2
4 Working Arrangements	3
5 Staff Responsibilities and Security	4
6 Occasional Home working	5
7 Terms and Conditions	5
8 Review of Home Working Agreement	5
<b>Appendices</b>	
A Health and Safety Matters	6
B A Brief Guide to Home Working	11
C The Use of ICT Facilities at Home	12
D Home Working Agreement	14

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The requirements of the Service are a crucial factor in determining whether or not groups or individual staff can participate in home working on occasional or on a more regular basis. As an equal opportunities employer, and to comply with legislation, Great Yarmouth Borough Council provides flexible working arrangements and managers are encouraged to respond positively whenever possible to requests for varied working arrangements. However, there is no automatic entitlement to home working arrangements and the efficiency and effectiveness of the service as assessed by the line manager will be paramount in reaching a decision. The appropriate Service Unit Manager will take the final decision as to whether home working for any period is approved.
- 1.2 Home working is a flexible working option, which can bring benefits to all. Possible advantages for the Council include a reduction in costs from recruitment and retention benefits, greater flexibility and reduced absenteeism. Possible advantages for staff are the saving on commuting time and increased flexibility. Home working may be a particularly suitable option for disabled staff with mobility problems.
- 1.3 This Policy is designed to give guidance to managers who have received requests from staff to work from home. Staff engaged in home working will be required to sign to confirm that they agree to comply with the terms of this policy.
- 1.4 Staff may request to work from home for the whole of their working time although it is envisaged that it is more likely that home workers will work partly from home and partly from the office, or on an occasional basis so that they have access to the corporate data network.
- 1.5 Occasional Home working may be appropriate in certain circumstances: For clarification please refer to section 6.

## 2 THE JOB - SUITABILITY FOR HOME WORKING

- 2.1 When considering if a job is suitable for home working the following points should be taken into account:
  - There should be no adverse affects on the level and quality of service.
  - There should be clear objectives and measurable outputs (e.g. the production of reports).
  - The work must be able to be done without face-to-face contact or direct supervision and carried out at times when he/she does not need to be accessible in person or available for meetings at short notice.
  - If in a supervisory role would it be possible to supervise staff if and when he/she works from home?
  - There should be no increase in workload for colleagues as a result of working from home.

### 3 HOME PREMISES AND EQUIPMENT

3.1 Managers must be satisfied that both the staff and their home situation are suitable for working from home. Consideration must be given to the following:

- **Location** – The staff home must be within reasonable daily travelling distance of the office base and (if appropriate) of the geographical area that the employee would cover in the course of his/her work
- **Health and Safety** – Those who work from home have the same duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act as other staff. Work must be able to be done safely and equipment and information must be safely and securely stored. Health and Safety assessments must be carried out to home premises. Appendix A gives advice on how to conduct a risk assessment and points to the relevant Health and Safety legislation that must be considered when risk assessments are carried out. Staff must confirm that they will notify the Council if any changes occur following the assessment. All reasonable steps to ensure that working conditions continue to comply with Health and Safety requirements must be undertaken.
- **Equipment** – Staff must agree to take all reasonable steps to ensure that any Council owned equipment in their possession is kept safe and secure and operates within the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Any Council owned equipment must only be used for work purposes, and in accordance with Health and Safety requirements all electrical equipment owned by the Council must be inspected regularly by a Council appointed qualified person. Where the staff are using their own equipment they must ensure that it is operating correctly, safe to use and that any information stored will not contravene the Data Protection Act or enable others access to unauthorised Council information.
- **Telephones** – If it is necessary to use the home telephone for work purposes reimbursement will be made for business calls subject to the provision of accurate records (see also 4.6).
- **Mortgages and Tenancy Agreements** – Formal notification to mortgage lenders, or landlords, to obtain their agreement to the partial use of premises for work may be required. Please check with relevant parties to find out if this affects you.
- **Insurance** – The insurance liability cover for staff who want to work at home is as follows:
  - **EMPLOYERS LIABILITY** – The Council's policy covers staff members for normal business working but not if the member of staff was injured due to a fault within the home environment e.g., tripped over a wire and fell down stairs. Risk assessments must be carried out before home working commences.

- PERSONAL ACCIDENT – The Council’s policy covers staff members for normal business activities so would not cover the complete home environment.
- COMPUTER EQUIPMENT– All computer equipment owned by the Council is covered by the Council’s insurance providing that it is maintained and kept safe. ALL equipment must be kept in a safe environment and laptops must not be left in unattended vehicles.
- PUBLIC LIABILITY – Members of the public who need to visit staff in their own homes will NOT be covered by the Council’s policy, and therefore any meetings arranged must take place in the Council offices or in another suitable place. Any member of staff visiting another member of staff working within their home will be covered in the normal way
- HOME INSURANCE – Members of staff wishing to work from home must notify their insurance company as they may need to pay an increased premium as their home is being used for home and business activities
- **Inland Revenue** – As staff are working from home by their own choice or convenience there are no allowances granted to cover the costs of heating, lighting, cleaning and generally maintaining that part of the home as far as far as the Council is concerned. You may however, be entitled to tax benefit in respect of heating, lighting, etc expenses incurred while working at home. Staff will therefore need to either, write to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) with the details, use the HMRC website or telephone to request a form. If considered appropriate the staff member’s tax code will be adjusted accordingly. .
- **Data Protection** - Staff will be required to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 as set out in the Council’s Data Protection Policy. Staff working at home must have received full training/guidance in data protection.
- **Disruption** - Home workers are expected to inform family and friends regarding their home working arrangements in order to ensure minimal disruption.

#### 4 WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 When flexible working from home arrangements commences the employee should identify and propose solutions to any problems that emerge in consultation with his/her manager. Indeed, adjustment to working in a non-office environment and a new daily work routine requires reflection and planning by staff, colleagues and managers. Management support is vital to enable the effective transition to new working practices.
- 4.2 Staff will be required to be available for contact, and to make contact, at least once during ‘core’ time for each working day that they are working from home. The precise time and manner of the contact should be agreed with the managers

concerned.

- 4.3 Arrangements will need to be made for the safe delivery and collection of work. Staff must never leave work in their car when they are not in the car themselves. The staff member will also need to visit the office base regularly for certain things such as team or other meetings. Wherever possible these should be planned in advance although it may sometimes be necessary for a staff member to visit the office at short notice. If a staff member is required to make more than one return journey to the office per day subsequent visits will qualify for mileage allowance. There may also be times when managers will need to visit staff at home for example to discuss aspects of current work or to carry out checks to ensure that the work arrangements are satisfactory.
- 4.4 Staff will be required to record their working time on their time sheets, on a daily basis as at present.
- 4.5 Arrangements for sickness and absence monitoring will be necessary and will rely to an even greater extent on staff and managers recording absences caused by sickness.
- 4.6 With personal security in mind if a staff member's work involves contact with others they should be advised to bear the following points in mind:
- They should not meet representatives from other agencies or clients at their home and any meetings should take place on Council premises.
  - They should not give their address and telephone number to people not employed by Great Yarmouth Borough Council. Likewise, no other staff will be authorised to give the address and telephone number to others. If a contact number is required then the office telephone number or their office mobile number should be given. If the Service Unit Manager considers it to be appropriate then a mobile phone will be supplied to the home worker for communication with external clients/customers.
- 4.7 Home working can provide the flexibility to balance the demands of home and work. However, there is an expectation that if staff work from home then child-care arrangements will have been made in respect of any dependant children.

## **5 STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES AND SECURITY**

- 5.1 Staff must not use their own computer equipment for storing any personal data (names, addresses or any means of identification of individuals) concerning Members, staff, customers or any other persons dealing with the Council.
- 5.2 Staff are required to take all reasonable steps to protect confidential Council information while working at home. Managers should ensure that they are aware of issues concerning protection of sensitive and confidential data, protection of data from accidental loss and the risks from pc viruses. Together with other legislation relating to working in local government, data protection and similar legislation will apply to work carried out in the home or held on laptop computers. Paper records must be stored in a lockable safe or cabinet and must be

disposed of securely. Access to information by family, or other people in the home, must be prevented. Close attention needs to be given to current policies with respect to security and integrity of software and information.

- 5.3 Appendix C entitled The Use of ICT Facilities at Home sets out the obligations of the home worker with regard to computer security.

## **6 OCCASIONAL HOME WORKING**

- 6.1 Occasional home working may be appropriate for most staff particularly in the following circumstances:

- To allow you the opportunity to work more effectively on a particular piece of work where concentration is important and to avoid the interruptions that are part of the office environment.
- To provide a solution to a temporary problem where you may be unable to travel to the office, for example: following an illness, or after an operation when, subject to medical advice, home working could aid a phased return to work.

- 6.3 Where you feel that it might be necessary or advantageous for work purposes to work from home from time to time on an ad hoc basis, you should obtain agreement in advance on each separate occasion from your line manager, and agree the deliverables to be met. Your line manager has the right to refuse the request for operational or practical reasons.

- 6.4 The Home Working Agreement must be signed before any occasional home working commences to ensure that both the staff member and the Council are covered in the same way as for a staff member regularly undertaking home working.

## **7 HOME WORKING AGREEMENT**

- 7.1 The Home Working Agreement must be completed and signed in full before any home working can take place.

## **8 REVIEW OF HOME WORKING AGREEMENT**

- 8.1 The agreement should be reviewed at six monthly intervals or more frequently if needed to ensure that the arrangement continues to operate satisfactorily. There is provision for the home working agreement to be terminated by either side on the expiry of one month's notice and thereafter for office based working to resume.
- 8.2 Any abuse of the home working arrangement will lead to the termination of the agreement and also possibly to disciplinary action depending on the circumstances.

## **Appendix A**

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

Most of the Regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work Act apply to home workers as well as to staff working at an employer's workplace. Risk Assessments should be undertaken covering all working activities. Records should be kept when the risks are significant, and not trivial. Completing a risk assessment requires a critical look at the work and workplace and deciding whether enough steps have been taken to prevent harm to workers or to anyone else who may be affected by their work. A **risk** is the chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by a hazard. A **hazard** is anything that might cause harm.

It is the employer's duty to undertake the assessment, and in the vast majority of cases this means the manager is responsible. However, in practice the risks can be checked by the home worker, provided the manager is satisfied that the assessment will be done responsibly and a suitable record is produced and returned to the manager (see attached checklist).

#### **Risk Assessment – How?**

##### **Step 1**

Identify the hazards – It is the employer's duty to look at what may cause harm to their home workers though home workers can help in identifying the hazards for their employer. Hazards which exist in the home which are not work related need not be considered. The home worker shares the responsibility to ensure work materials do not present a risk to other people in the home but who are not at work.

##### **Step 2**

Decide who might be harmed and how – Look at who may be affected by the work done at home and how they may be affected, this may include the home worker, and members of the household, including children or visitors.

##### **Step 3**

Assess the risks and take appropriate action – If a hazard is found that may present risks to the home worker or anyone's health or safety in the home, the employer needs assurance that steps have been taken to eliminate, or reduce those risks as far as possible.

##### **Step 4**

Record the findings – This is a legal requirement and a vital reference document in case anyone gets hurt. Note down any steps that have to be taken and give a copy to the home worker; they are in control when working at home and need to ensure that they follow the advice.

**Step 5**

**Check the risks from time to time and take steps if needed** – Review the risk assessment from time to time, especially if there is a change in working procedures. Take into account any new hazards and remove items that are redundant.

The legislation listed below, and its implications, must be taken into account.

**The Working Time Regulations 1998 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), as amended**

These contain a mixture of Health and Safety and Employment Law requirements. The H.S.E. enforces the provisions relating to maximum working weeks, night work, health assessments, patterns of work and record keeping. Managers will need to consider these requirements when agreeing working arrangements with staff working wholly or partly from home and include any relevant factors in the Risk Assessment.

**Health and Safety (Display Screen Regulations) 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments)**

When working with computers at home it is important for home workers to adjust their workstation to a comfortable position and take occasional breaks from work. This will prevent undue tiredness

**The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended)**

If the work involves lifting, handling, moving, etc. consideration needs to be given to eliminating all unnecessary handling or minimising the risks by suitable means such as providing lifting aids and training.

**Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998**

Any equipment provided must be suitable for the work involved and the conditions it is used under. The home worker should be trained in its use and arrangements made for the equipment to be properly and regularly maintained.

**Electricity at Work Regulations 1989**

Any electrical equipment provided to the home worker must be maintained and checked by the employer. Domestic electrical systems are the responsibility of the employee but it would be advisable for employers to satisfy themselves that the electrical system is adequate and suitable for the equipment provided.

**Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992 (as amended)**

Appropriate equipment must be provided as required.

### **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995**

The home worker must be made aware of the Council's accident reporting procedures and be required to comply with them.

### **The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments)**

Issues dealt with in these regulations such as cleanliness, lighting, heating etc. will be beyond the control of employers and will, therefore, be the responsibility of the employee.

### **Control of Substances hazardous to Health Regulations (2002) (COSHH)**

Hopefully any substances supplied to the home worker will already have been assessed and only non-hazardous products provided. Substances that do attract these regulations must be accompanied by the appropriate control measures e.g. personal protective equipment, extraction ventilation, and safety data sheets.

The Council is only responsible for substances and materials it provides to the home worker. An easy way of identifying hazardous substances is by looking for hazard warnings on labels.

**Checklist of points that need to be taken into account:** **Yes No Refer**

**Computer work:**

- |   |  |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ✓ | Is the screen clear and readable, and without flicker?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is the screen free from glare and reflections?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Are the 'brightness' and 'contrast' controls properly adjusted?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is background lighting adequate and suitable?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is the keyboard placed in the right position?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is the screen and computer clean?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Has the chair been adjusted to the right height?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is the screen placed at the right angle on the desk?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is there enough leg room to allow free movement and comfortable posture?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is there enough space in general so that the home worker can move freely between the work on the desk , the pc, the printer or other equipment ? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Work surface, floors and general matters:**

- |   |   |                          |                          |                          |
|---|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ✓ | Is adequate space available to work efficiently and safely?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Are trailing leads and other temporary hazards removed before work starts?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is there a problem with trailing cables?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is there adequate lighting?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is there arrangements for first aid?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Have the storage arrangements secure and manual handling Issues addressed?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is the electrical supply adequate for the demands of the iT Equipment required for use, including adequate number of Sockets for the equipment to be used and effective circuit breaker/s | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is the temperature adequate for the type of work?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Are adequate arrangements made for likely visitors or other occupiers who might be affected by the work?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Are arrangements made for contacting the office?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Is the manager aware of and satisfied with the home working arrangements?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Has the home worker been advised to report, in the normal way, incidents?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Has the manager and member of staff each got a copy of this Assessment checklist?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Have any matters relating to new or expectant mothers been properly considered?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Has the staff member got adequate insurance cover?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ | Are there adequate arrangements for fire, emergency evacuation, e.g. smoke detectors?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

✓ Is there any other matter, not already covered by the checklist or guidance,  
Requiring attention? Please specify  
.....  
.....  
.....

Manager's Signature ..... Date .....

Home worker's Signature ..... Date .....

## Appendix B

### A BRIEF GUIDE TO HOME WORKING

If you are considering home working, regardless of how long, the following points may help you decide whether home working may be appropriate for you.

- Is my job suitable for home working? A discussion should be held with your line manager to ascertain the suitability of your duties for home working.
- Home premises and Equipment: You must be able to satisfy your line manager that due consideration has been taken that your home location and environment is suitable for working from home e.g.: Location, Equipment, Telephones, Mortgages and Tenancy Agreements, Insurance, Inland Revenue and Data Protection issues.
- Responsibility and Security: You will be responsible for protecting confidential Council information whilst in your home environment.
- Management Support: Training and development needs will be regularly reviewed through the normal performance management process. A transition support plan must be discussed and agreed with your line manager.
- Terms and Conditions: Although in line with office-based staff there are some additional conditions: please refer to Appendix B of the Home Working.
- Review of Home Working Agreement: Six monthly reviews or more frequently if needed, to ensure that the arrangement continues to operate satisfactorily. Any abuse of the arrangement will lead to the termination of the agreement and possibly to disciplinary action.

## APPENDIX C THE USE OF ICT FACILITIES AT HOME

Great Yarmouth Borough Council's IT Security Policy <sup>1</sup> aims to ensure that all of the Council's assets, people, programs, data and equipment are adequately protected. In particular, the policy is required to ensure that computer based information is stored and used in a safe and secure manner.

The IT Security Policy applies to members, staff and agents. It also applies to volunteers and others acting on behalf of the Council. A copy of the IT Security Policy is available to all computer users.

There are Health and Safety issues concerning the safe use of computer equipment. In particular, the constant use of computer screens and keyboards could produce health and safety problems particularly if the equipment is not positioned correctly. Badly positioned screens and keyboards could cause problems such as:

- Eyestrain
- Neck and back pain
- Hand, wrist and elbow pain
- Stress
- Tension headaches, dizziness, nausea, tension and irritability

The HSE Guide on the 'I' Drive 'Working with VDUs' gives more detailed advice..

The following items concerning the use of ICT facilities at Home are of particular relevance to home workers:

1. As most home working arrangements are at the request of the staff member it is not expected to provide additional equipment, but where it is necessary, appropriate information and communication equipment will be provided and the Council will be responsible for installation, maintenance and repair. Home workers must take reasonable care of such equipment. In accordance with Health and Safety requirements all electrical equipment must be inspected regularly by a Council appointed qualified person. Members must agree to take all reasonable steps to ensure the equipment in their possession is kept safe and secure and operates within the requirements of the Data Protection Act.
2. The employee must have a suitable Broadband link if required to access emails etc and it is expected that the cost of this will be paid by the employee.
3. Where home workers use their own equipment for council business they must also ensure that the requirements of the Data Protection Act are adhered to.
4. Any Council equipment supplied is for business use only. Private use is not allowed on Council supplied equipment.

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<sup>1</sup> Found on 'I' Drive\ Data Quality\Internet Security Policy

5. No one other than the home worker, or a Council official acting in an appropriate capacity, is allowed to use any equipment supplied by the Council.
6. No modifications of any equipment supplied are allowed and neither is the attachment or connection of other equipment unless explicitly authorised by ICT. No software should be loaded on to Council equipment by anyone other than ICT.
7. Any Council equipment supplied will be covered by the Council's insurance.
8. The following instructions concerning any connection of equipment located in the home workers home to the Council's central computing facilities must be followed explicitly. In particular:
  - Such links will only be used in accordance with the Council's policies.
  - Such links will be disconnected immediately once this use has been completed.
  - All directions given in respect of security in other Council guidance must be considered critical to using the equipment and any violation will be considered a serious disciplinary matter.
9. The home worker will ensure that they are aware of the contents of all other guidance given by the Council in respect of the use of computer equipment.
10. All Council owned equipment will be returned to the Council when the home working arrangement ceases.
11. **Internet use:** Staff are encouraged to use the Internet for suitable business purposes which support the strategic objectives of the organisation while at work for the Council. This must be consistent with the Council's standards of business conduct and done as part of the normal execution of an employee's job responsibilities.
12. Staff should be aware that the use of Council's Internet facility is monitored and abuse or unauthorised use of this facility may lead to disciplinary action being taken.
13. The ICT team currently operates a helpdesk that provides information and technical support on computer and telephone related issues. Home workers may contact the helpdesk by calling 01493 846333 (between the hours of 8.30 to 5.00 Monday to Thursday, and 8.30 to 4.30 on Friday). Alternatively you may contact the helpdesk using email ([helpdesk@great-yarmouth.gov.uk](mailto:helpdesk@great-yarmouth.gov.uk)). The helpdesk service is not available to help you with your own computer equipment..

**APPENDIX D  
GREAT YARMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL  
HOME WORKING - AGREEMENT**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TEAM:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SERVICE UNIT:** \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that I have:

1. Read and understand the Home working Policy of Great Yarmouth Borough Council and I agree to comply with the terms of this Scheme.
2. Agreed the pattern for working at home with my line manager, including occasional home working.
3. Agreed to come into the office for meetings, or to discuss tasks and agree programmes.
4. Agreed to contact my manager if I am ill and unable to work whilst working at home
5. Agreed not to use my own computer to store any sensitive personal data (names, addresses or any means of identification of individuals) concerning Members, staff, customers or any other persons dealing with the Council. I will take all reasonable steps to protect confidential Council information.
6. A safe working location at home and adequate measures have been taken to meet current health and safety regulations. A risk assessment has been carried out and the Health and Safety Checklist completed and I will notify my manager if any changes occur following this assessment.
7. Been/not been\* supplied with equipment by the Council to carry out my tasks and, where supplied, will return this equipment should the home working arrangements cease. (\*Delete as applicable)

Signed (Employee).....

Date.....

Approved by ..... (Service Unit Manager)

Date .....

Note: This agreement will be reviewed at six monthly intervals or more frequently if required.

Employee to return one signed copy of this document to Human Resources, Town Hall, Hall Plain, Great Yarmouth.