

Annex A - Homeworking

- A1 Many small businesses are started by people working in their own homes, and technological innovations are likely to increase the incidence of homeworking. This will be particularly important in rural areas where modern communications permit businesses to be located without any major disadvantage.
- A2 Homeworking does not necessarily require planning permission. Permission is not normally required where the use of part of a dwellinghouse for business purposes does not change the overall character of the property's use as a single dwelling, for example, the use by a householder of a room as an office or the provision of a childminding service.
- A3 With regard to this latter example, the Department considers that persons who wish to use their homes for childminding will not normally require planning permission where the number of children does not exceed six. This is based on the maximum number of children between the ages of 0-12 years (including their own children) that childminders registered by Health & Social Services can care for.
- A4 Those considering working from home are advised to seek the advice of the Department at an early stage. Homeworking is likely to be ancillary to the residential use if:
- work is carried out primarily by persons living in the residential unit;
 - the business use is clearly secondary to the main use of the property as a dwelling house;
 - the use is carried out totally within the building;
 - there will be no loss of amenity for neighbouring residents, for example, from noise, advertising, impact on visual amenity or traffic generation; and
 - the use is not one which by its nature would attract more than occasional visitors.
- A5 Where the business activity increases and the non-residential use of the property ceases to be ancillary to its use as a single dwelling, a material change of use for which planning permission is required is likely to have taken place. The likelihood of there having been such a material change of use may be indicated where the following have occurred:
- a significant alteration to the appearance of the dwelling;
 - a significant increase in the volume of visitors or traffic;
 - a significant increase in noise, fumes or smell;
 - the installation of special machinery or equipment not normally found in a dwelling; and
 - the laying out of rooms in such a way that they could not easily revert to residential use at the end of the working day.