

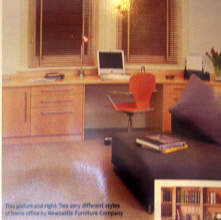
A STYLISH AND INTEGRATED OFFICE SPACE CAN WORK WONDERS ON YOUR HOME, SAYS KATIE EBEN

Labour of love

WHETHER YOU WORK FROM HOME OR JUST want to check your email and surf the net, it's important to have a dedicated space that integrates with the rest of your home. While everyone has different needs, there are basic points to consider – no matter how big or small your home office. Andrew Marshall, Director of Urang, a company which specialises in refurbishment projects, believes positioning is key. 'For one project at a three-storey house in Chelsea, the client chose to have her home office in what would have been the second bedroom,' he recalls. 'It was close to the master bedroom which was useful for checking email at night and also meant the office was private and not part of their main living space.'

Some people, however, prefer to have their workspace at the hub of the house. Jeremy Pearce of Newcastle Furniture Company, makers of bespoke kitchens and study/home office furniture, says they install a lot of home offices in clients' kitchens with prices ranging from £8,000 to £40,000. 'The kitchen has evolved into a kind of "mission control",' explains Pearce. 'More than just a kitchen, it's now a living room with a telly and a sofa. It's the place where the kids do their homework and everyone hangs out – clients want everything on hand.'

Newcastle's Secretaire cupboard is a bespoke piece of furniture that looks like a cupboard or pantry when closed and blends seamlessly with its kitchen ranges, but opens (the doors are hinged and push back into the unit) to reveal a pull-out desk with plenty of storage for paperwork, printers and other gadgetry.



This picture and right. Two very different styles of home office by Newcastle Furniture Company

'We avoid using ready-made office furniture; obviously you need a keyboard and a good chair, but we try to make it homely so that it blends with the rest of the house. We apply the same level of detail to furniture and finishes in a home office as we do in a living or dining room.'

An important detail to consider is lighting, points out Marshall. 'We always use dimmer switches with uplighters and table lamps wherever possible.' He also advises planning the room around your desk: 'Some people like to face a door rather than have their backs to it

and vice versa. You also need to consider the position of computer screens in relation to windows to avoid glare.'

Danny Hardy from Kinleigh, Folkard & Hayward estate agents has noticed a change in the way people are using their homes. 'There's been a shift towards smaller families, meaning buyers are more likely to convert a bedroom into a home office,' he explains. He believes this can increase property value and add sales appeal, but points out it's a good idea to make the chosen room dual-purpose so it can be used as a guest bedroom too.

'We're also seeing a lot of lofts turned into offices,' he says. 'And in Victorian homes, it's quite common to see the rear part of the reception used as a home office. It's often a space that



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