

# House Beautiful

WORKING FROM HOME

## JUST THE JOB



It's everybody's dream – to give up the long commute into work, the office politics and the hours of sitting in a stuffy office. *House Beautiful* talks to two women who took the plunge, gave up their day jobs and set up in business from their own homes

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK SCOTT

Imagine just having to walk a few steps from your living room to work. Stressful commuting and office politics would be no more than a distant memory. That dream has come true for the 1.9 million people currently working from home in Britain. And, with last year seeing the trend increase by 20 per cent, an ever-growing number looks set to swell their ranks.

Alan Denbigh from The Telework

Association thinks this is definitely the shape of things to come. 'Telecoms have got better and faster, allowing more people to work from home. Companies are realising how efficient it can be. It saves them money as they don't have to pay for office space.'

Working from home takes careful planning and for most of us it remains a pipe dream. Here, though, we meet two people who have succeeded in turning that dream into a reality.

WORKING FROM HOME:  
PROS, CONS AND FACTS

## PROS

1. There are often fewer distractions than in a hectic office.
2. There can be tax benefits.
3. You may be able to be more flexible about your working hours.

## CONS

- 1 You have to be disciplined and self-motivated.
2. You may feel isolated.
3. You might end up working longer hours than you do at present.
- 4 Finding regular work can be tough.
- 5 You need to have excellent communication links – email, telephone and fax. If not, you could be limiting the amount of work you're able to take on.

## FACTS

1. More people work from home in the UK than in any other EU country apart from Germany.
2. Sixty-five per cent of those who work from home are male.
3. By 2004, it is predicted that home workers will account for ten per cent of the workforce.



**Anne Lise has separate work and living spaces. As she works with colour all day, she has painted her living area white**



## A SPACE OF MY OWN

Anne Lise Kjaer is a trend forecaster. She has three offices in her four-storey home in north London, where she lives with her son Vicente

'As a trend forecaster I look to the future and predict colours, lifestyle trends and design concepts. Companies come to me so they will know what trends and colours to incorporate into future products.

After working as a designer, I started working as a freelance forecasting consultant and went to people's offices, but I felt uncomfortable not having my own space. Ten years ago I decided to set up my own business and started working from home.

As I work with colours all day my house is decorated in white throughout. This really helps me to focus. I've created a tranquil environment, which is very important to me. Most of my communication is done by email, so there aren't many phones ringing. I also have a great view and am near the park.

I'd recommend working from home if you are disciplined enough to get the work done, although some people may feel lonely. I'm not isolated in my job though because the house has three offices, and people come to

work for me here and we all get together to have meetings in the boardroom. My days are also really varied – I'm always going out to meet people and visit exhibitions so I'm not in the office all the time.

Overall, the set-up suits me perfectly. My son and I live on the top two floors. It's very separate and we have our own space. I feel very privileged to be able to work from home. I save at least two hours a day not having to commute and can take my son to school and still be back for nine to start work. Another bonus is that if I didn't run my business from here I wouldn't be able to afford this house.'

## USEFUL CONTACTS

- The Telework Association (0800 616008; [www.tca.org.uk](http://www.tca.org.uk)) is set up to offer advice and support to members. If you join, you'll receive a handbook and will be sent regular copies of the Association's bi-monthly magazine.
- The National Group on Homeworking (0800 174095; [www.gn.apc.org/homeworking](http://www.gn.apc.org/homeworking)) aims to improve home workers' economic status and offers advice on working hours and rights.