

# Step into my office

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< PHOTOS (I've got x 2 from Claire – as supplied) >

**Whilst the roads in rush hour may not seem any less congested up and down the country, a quiet revolution is afoot... a boom of UK freelancing and start-up ventures have been emerging - and much of it is taking place at the bottom of gardens around the UK.**

Here at *Coconut*, we couldn't resist the urge to investigate – and we've realised that there are a lot of you out there!

According to TUC data released just last year (that's Trades Union Congress, not the biscuit), more than 4 million British people now spend at least half of their working week at home. What's more, 2016 figures from the Office for National Statistics suggest that the number of people working from home (full-time) has grown to 1.5million.

Why? No commute time. No workspace rental charges. Relaxed, private and convenient. Instant access to biscuits, cats and – let's be real - last night's episode of *Strictly...* or *Great British Bake Off*.

What's more, homeworking habits are not confined to the dining room table, or in the spare room repurposed into a makeshift office. Homeworkers are sewing, writing, accounting, silversmithing, training and advising from their purpose-built sheds, re-fitted summerhouses, and spruced up caravans.

Gone are the days where all employed workers making their way to either an office or a factory floor, and this can only be a good thing.

In the first of three outings, we meet a freelancer or self-employed business owner, and ask them to let us have a peek at their workspace.

We kick off this month with Maidenhead-based freelance writer and editor **Claire Winter**.

**So, let's cut straight to the chase. How did you end up working from a log cabin?**

I love #shedlife (aka having a #shoffice) and my 'shedquarters'. I have worked from home since my twins were one (they are now 11!). I used to be the editor of the *Families* magazine that covered half of Berkshire. I had a virtual team that worked for me part-time and having a separate space to work from the house was vital for my productivity. Having a separate space away from the chaos of two small people (my twins could create a tsunami of mess in about five minutes) meant I could get my work done easily.

**Your cabin looks beautiful! How much did you spend to convert it into a suitable working space?**

The cost of building the office was around £5k, and we had to pay for a concrete base to be put down for the log cabin to be built on. I also paid the builder to paint the cabin inside and out. The office is painted teal, which is my main brand colour.

The interior is furnished with a mix of Ikea office furniture and other quirky bits of vintage furniture from second-hand shops. I also have a phone line and Wi-Fi installed, and a deck where I can sit and enjoy an afternoon cup of tea.

Lastly, I took the liberty of investing in some insulation for the winter months, as it can be chilly!

### **What keeps you ‘attracted’ to working in this way?**

The positives of having a home office are the short commute. I love walking through my garden to get to work. I also get a good work/life balance as a result of being able to work at home. I get to be with my kids more, as I can take them to school and fit in fine with the timings of their after school activities. Plus, I can go for a daily run or walk.

### **Any drawbacks of working at home, full-time?**

The downside of working from the shedquarters is you can end up working all the time. For example, when I was the editor of *Families*, I often felt compelled to work at the weekends and spent many late nights proofreading.

I also find that working from home can mean my husband and kids think I am available to run errands, pick them up, do the food shopping and all the washing! You can also get lonely, so it's vital to find some fellow freelancers to meet up with regularly. Attending networking events and using co-working spaces can also help combat the loneliness. Part of what keeps me ‘social’ is that I teach Nordic walking classes twice a week, which I love doing.

### **What do you love most about your homeworking life?**

I think *freedom* is the thing I have gained most from having a home office. The freedom to have a creative job working as a trainer, content creator, copywriter, and journalist. Plus, the ability to choose my working hours of course.

I can go for a run or meet a friend for coffee and make up the time in the evening - or get up early, and work for few hours before the rest of my family gets up. In short, I would highly recommend #shoffice life!