

Line manager guidance

Context

- Coronavirus has led to significant changes to our ways of working across the organisation
- These changes have readjusted work priorities and team dynamics
- Coming out of lockdown will lead to another period of change
- While the organisation-wide shift to remote working has created opportunities, it has also led to challenges
- This guidance provides support for managers during this period of continual change

Living our values through change

You recognise the value that each person brings and promote inclusion within the team



You connect with other managers across the organisation

You co-create with your team, recognising the importance of collaboration

You create a culture of development within your team



You share with your team your priorities and are transparent about decision making processes

You seek support for yourself when needed

You show your team that you trust them

You give and receive constructive and honest feedback



You are open about individual and team failures and celebrate successes

You identify skill gaps and promote a culture of learning

You are open to new ways of working and learning new skills

You act with integrity and take ownership of your decisions



You don't shy away from challenging conversations

You demonstrate a commitment to your own and others' wellbeing

You encourage your team to be the best they can be

You adapt to change where it is needed



You listen and act upon your team's needs

You are solution focussed and open to change

Opportunities

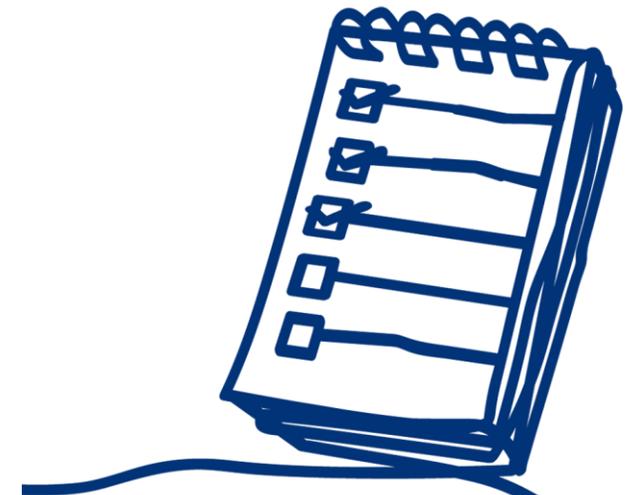
- Flexible working promotes better work/life balance
- MS Teams encourages collaborative working
- Workplace wellbeing at core of major decisions
- Emphasis on connecting within teams at a social level e.g. virtual lunches & quizzes
- More focussed work
- Inclusion of all staff regardless of location
- Digital collaboration
- IT skill development and improvements

Challenges

- Remaining connected as a team
- Supporting the wellbeing of your team remotely
- Understanding individual needs
- Having challenging conversations virtually
- Prioritising work and managing workload of team
- Guiding your team through change when you are also adapting to change
- Understanding new processes and procedures e.g. furlough
- Maintaining engagement and motivation

This document will provide guidance on:

1. You as a line manager
2. Managing a remote team
3. Process and procedure
4. Workplace wellbeing and inclusivity



You as a line manager

Role modelling through change

Lead by example: demonstrate the actions and behaviours you expect of your team in a changing environment. For instance, if you are encouraging your team to take regular breaks away from their desk, make sure you are doing the same.

Walk the talk: be accountable for congruency between your actions and words. If you say you are going to do something, carry it through. If it cannot be achieved, be transparent about why.

Be authentic: be open about your weaknesses and celebrate your strengths. Demonstrating self-awareness will build trust amongst your team. It's okay to struggle with change but be open about these challenges with your team, you might want to problem solve together.

Trust your team: in an agile environment you might not physically see your team for long periods of time. Trust your team to work independently and coach them through challenges rather than tell. The [GROW model](#) is a good framework to use.

Managing your own stress

Managing the stress of a team can be difficult at the best of times but is particularly challenging during periods of change. It's important to think about how you are managing your own stress, not just the stress of your team.



Block out protected time: stress often stems from not having enough time to get everything done. Protect time in your diary for concentrated work.



Identify your stress triggers: spend time working out what is a source of stress and think of ways you can either avoid these situations or prepare yourself for them.

Build a support network: share experiences with other managers and exchange best practice, tips and advice. Sign up to the buddy programme [here](#).



Talk to your manager: don't forget your manager is there to support you, share your challenges and see how they can help.



Developing as a manager

Amidst all the change, there are opportunities to develop your skills as a manager:

Learning Library – explore the new ‘Supporting Managers’ section with resources on managing through change, employee support and more. Feel free to share any further resources in the Team's chat section.

Elearning – new manager-focused courses have been added, reviewing useful leadership, team management and personal development skills. Access through:

Online Courses – many free online courses are available through Open University and other outlets. Use this time to pursue a passion! (Read our summary of them [here](#).)

Learning Networks – connect with fellow managers from your Management Essentials Programme or LDP. Use these connections to share experiences, reflect on learning you've implemented and explore good practice. Our greatest resource is always each other!

Agile working support

Agile working good practice guidance:

- [Practicalities of working remotely guide](#)
- [Agile Working Guidelines](#)
- [How to lead an effective virtual meeting](#)



HR are offering 30 minute 121 calls to support you with:

- Team operations: absence management and performance
- Team development: supporting the development of your team when managing remotely and project management
- Team wellbeing: supporting the wellbeing and engagement of your team in a new way of working

Email _____ with subject line '121 call advice request' to schedule a call

For IT support email _____

Seeking support for yourself

Don't forget to support yourself, it will help you support your team:

Reflective practice – book a session to work through any work-related issues. You might want to attend a session with a colleague to work through common challenges. To book email _____

EAP – confidential counselling and legal/information service. EAP also offers support for managers, ask for management advice when calling to be directed to the right service.
www.healthassuredeap.co.uk Username: _____ or call 0800 030 5182

SilverCloud - online CBT-based support platform. _____,
PIN: _____

Manager buddy network – we are launching a new buddy network for managers to connect across the organisation and share best practice. Sign up [here](#) and you will be matched with a manager in a different team.

Managing your team through change

Some of the changes you may have experienced:

- Managing a remote/dispersed team
- Accommodating work/life balance needs of team
- Reduced capacity of team
- Changing mental and physical support needs of team
- Shifting social dynamics of team
- Changing external environment

Managing remotely: Communication

- **Schedule regular check-ins:** regular meetings as a team and with individuals will help provide clarity on tasks, reduce email traffic and encourage engagement. Remember to check-in not check-up!
- **Continue to hold 121s virtually via Teams:** make sure to ask how the individual is doing, how they're adapting to any changes and whether they want to review/go through their WAP
- **Create opportunities for informal communication:** positive relationships are key to a high performing team, invest in getting to know your colleagues by talking about non-work related things through virtual team socials
- **Communicate updates and changes in a timely manner:** keep your team in the loop about any changes as soon as possible, this will help build trust
- **Establish communication preferences:** everyone will have their own communication preference, discuss how the individual would like to be contacted (e.g. phone, Teams, email)

Managing remotely: Readjusting work priorities

Periods of change often shift work objectives and timelines. Work with your team to re-establish your team vision and objectives, communicating how their work is affected.



1. Create a common vision with your team. What do you want to achieve and by when?

2. How are you going to achieve that vision? Setting team goals and sharing action plans will help everyone understand how their work fits into the bigger picture.



3. Break down team goals into individual objectives, sharing desired outcomes and a timeframe for completion

4. Check-in weekly as team and review priorities. You might want to do this at both a team and individual level.



Prioritisation and workload

As priorities change, some tasks will need to be prioritised over others and new pieces of work may crop up. Workload will need to be considered, as people take on new tasks you will need to be clear what is de-prioritised as a result.

1. **Objective setting:** when setting objectives for your team, try communicating the order of priority of each task and clear deadlines. It sounds simple but leads to much greater clarity and effectivity.
2. **Online project boards:** you can create project boards on MS Teams and align responsibilities. Do this by creating a tab at the top of your page and click add 'planner'. You can then make to do, doing and done buckets and move tasks between.
3. **Sprints:** try encouraging team sprints – short time boxed periods of time where a team works to complete a piece of work. Having a shared understanding of priorities will help you move together towards a common goal.

Take a look at the [prioritisation toolkit](#) for more ideas...

Flexible working

8am-8pm rule

Make sure your team are aware that MET have relaxed the no emails before 8am or after 8pm so people can work in a way that suits them. Agree with your team how you will make this work – think about sharing working hours and when you schedule team meetings to make sure everyone can attend.

Setting boundaries

Working remotely may feel you are always available, be clear with your team when and how you can be contacted and communicate when you are logging off for the day.

Returning to the office

As we start returning to the office, we will all need to be more flexible in our ways of working. As a line manager, ensure to understand the travel needs of your team and discuss any potential anxieties. We will not be forcing people to the office where they feel concerned for their safety so ensure flexibility in your approach and consider staggered start times

See Mind's [Flexible Working Policy](#) for more information

Flexible working: parents and carers

As we're working remotely, we'll all need to be more flexible in how we work. Talk with your team members to understand their individual needs, particularly if they have caring responsibilities, and come up with a solution together that works for you and the team.

Parents and carers

Colleagues with caring responsibilities may need to work more flexibly to look after their dependents. Options for parents and carers are:

- 15 days carers leave which can be taken as days or hours. For some, working shorter days and then agreeing to record the unworked hours as carers leave is a helpful way of balancing work life balance.
- Annual leave
- TOIL
- Unpaid leave

NB: As a Line Manager you will need to log carers leave on i-mind. Agree this practice moving forward and log the leave under the absence screen → special leave → time off for dependants

Flexible working: parents and carers

We do have some new ideas we would like line managers to consider when supporting staff with caring responsibilities:

- Consider agreeing a work schedule that incorporates weekend working. For some this may be a solution to making up hours taken for childcare during the week. Careful monitoring of hours worked will be key in ensuring workplace wellbeing.
- Consider staff priorities. In situations where time is limited, consider agreeing to either not attend every routine meetings (e.g. QST / ERT) or only attend part of the meeting
- Consider agreeing a pay sacrifice. This is where a member of staff agrees to reduce their working weekly hours for a period of time. Salary can be calculated for the remainder of financial year to ensure minimum disruption to pay.
- Where financially viable for employee, consider a temporary reduction of hours

Challenging conversations: managing conflict

Working in a remote environment may make challenging conversations feel even more difficult, particularly if they relate to performance or conflict.

Give your team member notice that the conversation will be happening so they have time to process their thoughts and prepare too. You can also reach out to HR who can coach you before the conversation if helpful.

Take time to work out how you are going to make the conversation constructive and solution orientated, you might want to use the below as preparation for the conversation. More information can be found on [further down this document](#).

- How does this issue or situation make you feel?
- Why does this topic or issue matter?
- What are the implications if things don't change?
- What is your part in the issue?
- What do you want to happen as a result of the conversation?
- Invite their perspective

Offer to have a catch up following the call, in a remote environment the individual may not have a support network around them.

Challenging conversations: mental health

Periods of change may impact people's wellbeing and mental health problems may resurface or develop as a result. This may be challenging for you as a manager and you may not know how best to support your team member.

Possible signs that someone is struggling:

- Looking tired and lacking motivation
- Changes in their work output
- Absences from work
- Uncharacteristic behaviour e.g. outbursts of emotion or seeming vacant

What to do if you are concerned:

- Ask the individual how they are doing. You may want to mention the signs you have noticed and ask them if everything is okay.
- Reassure them that you are there to support them & ask if there's anything you can do to help
- Signpost to wellbeing support (see final slides)

If you are concerned for their safety or are unsure what to do, contact _____ for support. Familiarise yourself with [Mind's Crisis Plan](#).

Challenging conversations: bereavement

Members of your team may be dealing with the passing of a loved one. This may be particularly challenging if they have died of coronavirus and/or are unable to be with family and friends or attend the funeral as a result of the pandemic.

- The most important thing you can do is show empathy, tell the individual that you are sorry for their loss
- Let them know that they can take time off to grieve (up to 5 days paid leave plus a day for the funeral, 10 days paid leave for parents who have lost child)
- Reassure them that you are there for them and will support their return to work
- You may have to adjust their priorities and workload when they return as they may not be able to be as productive, this is normal and will take time
- The individual may welcome more check-ins and conversations with you, ask them if this is something they would like
- Signpost to support available, people may benefit from reflective practice, counselling through EAP or the Grief and Loss module offered through SilverCloud
- See this [bereavement support guide](#) for more advice contact HR for further support

Resetting team dynamics

Changes to the way you work as a team may alter team dynamics, particularly if people have been furloughed or are working different hours to balance caring responsibilities. You will need to think about how you reset these dynamics and make sure everyone feels included.

Furlough

If members of your team have been furloughed, it's especially important to consider team dynamics during the period of reduced capacity and when members of staff start returning to work. Be patient and open as your team adjusts, builds relationships and resets working dynamics. See [line manager furlough support pack](#) for more guidance.

Staying in touch and relationship building

Positive working relationships are key to performance and productivity. Talk to your team about how they would like to stay in touch as a team (remember this may change) and what would be helpful for them.

Team building

You will probably have started thinking about virtual team building activities and away days. Zoom breakout rooms and polls are a great way to encourage engagement in larger groups, [here](#) are some ideas for virtual ice breakers and team building.

Changing external environment: where are we heading?

In a very short space of time, the coronavirus outbreak has changed the way we work as an organisation. As we consider what the new normal might look like at an organisational level, it's important to consider team learnings and what you started doing, stopped doing and would like to continue in the future. Below is a framework to support this group reflection.

	What did we start doing during lockdown?	What did we stop during lockdown?	What would we like to continue post covid-19?
Behaviours			
Processes			
Cross organisational working			
Team working			
Wellbeing			

Click [here](#) for the full exercise

Process and procedure

Sickness absence

The coronavirus outbreak may affect both our physical and mental health. As a manager it's important you are aware of the physical risks of the virus but also the heightened anxiety people may be feeling (yourself included) about a global health pandemic. Below is a reminder of the sickness process:

1. A member of your team calls you to say they are unwell and not able to work
2. Ask them what's wrong and what you can do to support them
3. If it seems they will be off for a while, ask them how/if they would like you to stay in contact with them
4. If they think they have coronavirus, see guidance [here](#) for more information. Make sure to also log this in i-Mind
5. If they are off for more than 7 days, they will need to send a doctors note to HR (via email)
6. When the individual returns to work, set aside time on their first day back to find out how they are doing and whether they are well enough to be back at work already. If they are, catch them up on work progress and objectives. Template can be found [here](#).

For absences of less than 20 days see the [short term sickness policy](#) and for more than 21 days, see the [long term sickness policy](#).

If you have any questions or need support, email _____

Performance management

There may be many reasons for a member of staff underperforming at work. Addressing the issues informally first is the best way of identifying what the challenges are; a formal performance management should only be considered after an informal approach has been taken.

What do I do if I think someone is underperforming?

- Talk to them, ask them if everything is okay and how they are finding work
- Ask how they are finding their current workload and whether they are able to prioritise key pieces of work
- Remind them of the wellbeing support tools available if they are struggling, this is a challenging time and people may need additional support

Revisit objectives

- Make sure you have set objectives and have reviewed them in light of coronavirus
- Revisit objectives with the individual and make sure they are clearly laid out and prioritised
- Discuss the objectives with your team member and adjust them accordingly
- Break the objectives down into weekly tasks and check in every week to monitor progress and offer support

What if performance remains an issue?

- You may then need to consider a more formal path, first line of support will be _____

Homeworking requests

As people adjust to remote working and appreciate the flexibility of working from home, there may be an increase in the number of people requesting to be a permanent homeworker.

What needs to be considered before processing the request?

By the line manager	By the individual
Can the role be reasonably and effectively performed from home?	Being a homeworker when everyone is working remotely is a very different experience to when the majority of people are working in the office, have you spoken to a permanent homeworker to find out more about their experience?
How often would you require the individual to be in the office and for what?	How will you make sure you stay well, you maintain positive relationships with colleagues and you perform well at work?
Does your team have the budget to cover travel costs?	How will you manage your time without the structure that an office based role brings?
How will your team work in a way that is inclusive of homeworkers?	What will you put in place to separate your home life from your work life.

What does the process look like?

The transfer will need to be approved by your Head of Department and HR before it can be processed.

Reasonable adjustments

Not everyone will be set up to work from home and have adequate equipment to support their physical health. If someone in your team requires equipment, they may be able to request reasonable adjustments.

DSE assessment

- All staff should complete the [DSE assessment form](#) located at the end of the document for advice. This is to be forwarded to facilities who will let IT know if any hardware is required.
- No IT equipment or facilities equipment can be bought outside of these assessments, so please do ensure they are completed.
- Any questions please contact [Facilities](#) or [IT Helpdesk](#)

What if I require a new chair?

In first instance, chairs will only be provided to those who have one of the following: a verified health conditions, no reasonable alternative, an occupational health referral or reasons covered in the Equality Act. Each request will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Recruiting remotely

Now things are starting to settle back down we have also restarted the recruitment process – however, all recruitment needs to be supported by a business case and approved by HR and Finance colleagues. This means there's a longer lead time before recruiting as you'll need to leave a week for this process.

Initial steps:

1. Recruitment requests should be uploaded by the recruiting manager to the Blue Octopus system. For advice on how to use the Blue Octopus system, please contact [\[redacted\]](#)
2. The HR and Finance Business Partners will then approve the vacancy
3. Final sign off will then be reviewed and checked by the Associate Director of Resources.

Recruiting remotely

Once requests have been approved, you'll need to think about how you are going to recruit new staff remotely. HR will be there to support you through the process but here is a checklist with what will need to be considered during the process:

- Before scheduling remote interviews, make sure you have booked Zoom (via Outlook and the Zoom website). There is flexibility to interview internal candidates via Teams.
- Consider the length of interviews, virtual meetings are tiring and may not need to be as long. Don't forget to take breaks during the interview itself.
- You may want to ask candidates to prepare a presentation for the interview, this works well with screen sharing
- Many people may have not experienced virtual interviews. Therefore, it is useful to think about how to make the candidate feel at ease. A good approach would be to ask ice breaker questions such as 'is this your first virtual interview?'
- Once you have recruited someone, think about how you will induct them virtually. Put time in their diary with team members and schedule a team social within their first week to help them feel included

Annual Leave

It's important we all continue to take annual leave to give us space to rest and recuperate even if travelling options are limited.

Leave that's already been booked:

- Encourage your team to take any leave that's already been booked or to consider spreading out blocks of annual leave over a longer period of time.

Taking leave – temporary changes

- With wellbeing and business needs in mind, encourage your team to use the remainder of their holiday for 2020 as it accrues – and to use a minimum of 10 days (pro rata for part time) by the end of September 2020 where possible.
- Considering current circumstances, everyone can carry forward 10 days annual leave (pro rata for part time) into the 2021/2022 holiday year and use it at any point. The same principle will apply to the 2022/2023 holiday year.

Buying and selling leave

- If you or your team have bought additional leave, this arrangement has already been factored into your salary. You can't sell any leave you have bought for the 2020/2021 holiday period and should ensure it's scheduled before the end of the holiday year (March 2021).

Returning to the office post lockdown

As we gradually start returning to the office, there are a few things that you as a manager will need to be aware of to support your team. Below is a checklist that you should go through with your line reports before they return to the office.

- ❑ **Desk booking form:** if a member of your team would like to return to the office, they will need to fill in a [desk booking form](#). Talk with your line report about why they would like to go back to the office, taking into account risk factors such as health, commute and frequency of travel. If you need support, contact [_____](#). More information about the process is [here](#).
- ❑ **People at high risk:** those who fall into the vulnerable or extremely vulnerable categories as per [NHS guidance](#), or are living with those who are shielding, should not return to the office. You should speak to your team member and ask whether they fall into this category.
- ❑ **Changes to ways of working:** both the office and are ways of working will be very different post lockdown, read through the changes [here](#) and share them with your team.

Workplace wellbeing and inclusivity

Supporting the wellbeing of your team

Wellness Action Plan

Change can be a source of worry and some of your team members may need additional support. Mind has developed a new [working from home WAP](#) to help us support our mental health when working remotely. Encourage your team to revisit their WAP and ask them if they would like to discuss it in 121s.

Balancing organisational and individual need

Particularly during times of uncertainty, it's difficult to distinguish between individual and organisational need. Try separate the two as it will help you be clear about your responsibility from the offset to the individual in conversations.

Temperature checks

Regular temperature checks at the beginning of meetings are a great way to see how your team is doing and encourage a culture of openness between you. You might want to ask people to put themselves on a scale of 1-5 or compare how they're feeling to the weather (sunny = good etc.).

Creating an inclusive environment

It is your responsibility as a line manager to create an environment in your team which is inclusive of all team members. Spend some time reflecting on the dynamics within your team and whether your ways of working allow everyone to thrive and bring their best selves to work.

- Ensure your meetings are inclusive of different ways of working and learning styles. Circulate all documents before the meeting and consider recording meetings on Zoom/Teams for people to return to. See [neurodiversity in meetings guide](#).
- Consider how team roles and individual learning styles might have been affected by remote working. The [Belbin Model](#) is a good reflection tool.
- Conversations about inclusion can be challenging. Try to be direct with your team members and take the lead in prompting these discussions – don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Be flexible. Change will affect people differently so be prepared to be flexible, ask your team members how they might be able to use flexible working to suit their individual needs and preferences.

Signposting to wellbeing support tools

Mental Wellbeing

Reflective practice:

50 minute 121 sessions with a trained counsellor to support you work through any workplace or personal issues. See [here](#) for more info, to book email [_____k](#)

Employee Assistance Programme:

EAP is available to all staff and close family members for counselling, legal and information services. More info can be found [here](#).

Wellness Action Plan

Keeping WAPs up to date and regularly reviewing them in 121s helps people consider their workplace wellbeing needs. More info [here](#).

SilverCloud

Online CBT based platform designed to support range of health needs. More info can be found [here](#).

Workplace Wellbeing

Staff networks across Mind:

- [LGBTIQ+ network](#)
- [BAME Network](#)
- [Disabled Staff Network](#)
- [Parents' Network](#)

Click on the links to email the network/network organiser.

Dignity at Work Advisors:

First point of contact if someone feels they have experienced or witnessed bullying or harassment. More information can be found [here](#) or email [_____](#)

Mind Days

A chance to focus on your wellbeing.

Signposting to wellbeing support tools

Financial Wellbeing

HSBC support:

Book a 121 call with a financial advisor free of charge, email _____ in the subject line to schedule a call.

Employee Assistance Programme:

There is a wealth of financial support on the [online hub](#) including webinars, money health checks and budgeting tools. Username: _____ :

Social Wellbeing

Random Coffee Initiative:

[Sign up](#) and be randomly matched with someone across the organisation for a coffee/catch up.

Flexible working policy:

Mind's [flexible working policy](#) aims to give staff the flexibility to maintain a positive work/life balance and work in a way that suits them.

Physical Wellbeing

Yoga and Pilates:

All classes are now virtual and run in 6 week blocks on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Everyone who signs up gets access to recordings of all classes.

Boxercise:

Virtual classes run every Wednesday and include a mixture of boxing drills and strengthening exercises.

Bootcamp and Pilates:

Classes in Cardiff alternate between bootcamp and pilates each week. To sign up speak to Anna George.