

## **Manager's Guide to Supporting Employees Mental Health**

### **Appendix 1 – Tips on having successful conversations around mental health**

### **Appendix 2 – Managers' Checklist**

In lockdown the advice has been that- if you can work from home- you need to do so. For those employees whom this has affected, some employees may have adapted well to this new way of working, whilst others may be finding the lack of routine and contact stressful and therefore causing a negative impact on their mental health.

To help you to address any issues within your team, we've collated a step by step, best practice guide to help you provide appropriate support.

**It is important to seek advice or support for yourself.** You can find support from our [Occupational Health Provider](#), our [Employee Relations Team](#), our [Mental Health and Wellbeing Adviser](#) or our network of [Mental Health First Aiders](#) who will be able to help you find solutions to [support your employees mental health](#).

#### **1. 1-2-1's via Teams**

Weekly 1-2-1's will allow the employee to discuss any issues they may be facing and also allow you to set outcomes and tasks for the week ahead so that the employee has direction and can feel purpose in their role. Having purpose is extremely beneficial to building positive mental health. Short additional check ins every day could be added where an employee requires additional support. These check ins could also be in the form of informal chats giving additional support to the employee's wellbeing.

#### **2. Team Meetings via Teams**

This allows employees to stay connected with each other and allows you to set the agenda for how each of your team members work fits in to the bigger picture. Staying connected is vital to promoting good mental health. Further information on how to do this effectively can be found [here](#).

#### **3. Having regular conversations with your staff about mental health.**

By promoting informal catch ups either as a team or as a 1-2-1, this will allow you as a manager to check in with employees and ask, "how they are doing?" As the manager, you will know your employee best and will be able to pick up on any signs if they appear to be struggling. The first step to supporting your staff is to establish open communications (see [Appendix 1](#))

**Top Tip:** Consider using video chats as this allows us to feel more connected if we can see the person we are talking to. If your team doesn't have access to technology like Teams, you could explore another means of video chat using personal devices for meetings if conformable.

**NB.** Ensure staff members know how to use all video call functions such as blurred background/false background and also encourage staff to ensure that they set up workplaces at home with backgrounds they are comfortable for colleagues to see.

#### **4. Consider referring to other support mechanisms.**

Encourage the employee to access the various support services that are available to them like our Employee Assistance Service ([Time for Talking](#)), our network of [Mental Health First Aiders](#), or consider referring to our Occupational Health Provider ([Iqarus](#)).

## 5. Identifying the Issues

If the issue impacting the member of staff is due to the lockdown and the lack of routine caused by working from home, find out what support you can give the employee to build some sense of momentum. You could try to increase the regularity and number of 1-2-1's you are having, perhaps starting off with a daily catch up for 5 minutes each morning or afternoon.

Working from home, staying indoors and physical distancing can lead to changes in routine. This can have a negative effect on your employee's mental wellbeing. Try to encourage them to create a daily routine that helps everyone keep a sense of calm and order.

Check out NHS Informs handy guide for tips on how to do this [here](#).

## 6. Working hours

For some employees they may find it beneficial to continue working their regular working day but for others it may not be possible therefore we encourage managers to be as flexible as possible, for example by relaxing the requirement to work core hours. We are asking managers to remind staff to take regular breaks during the day and, once the workday is done, encourage staff to turn off their laptop to ensure they get adequate daily rest. Find more information on [People Anytime](#).

## 7. Annual Leave

It is important to ensure our employees take the rest and recuperation they need, particularly at these challenging times. It is key that, in terms of mental health and wellbeing, we use our entitlement to annual leave for time away from work and the rest that we all need. It is important that annual leave is adequately spaced across the year to avoid workload pressure on each other and our services, towards the end of the year. Managers are encouraged to ensure the agreed approach to annual leave during the pandemic is followed, ensuring staff (unless exempt) should have taken 25% of their annual leave by the end of June and be on course to have taken 75% by the end of October. You can read more about annual leave [here](#).

## 8. Considering allowing an employee to return to the office

In Phase 3 remote working **remains the default position for those who can**. Indoor office workplaces including contact centres can reopen once relevant guidance has been agreed and with physical distancing. This means that Chief Officers and Service Managers are currently devising how much office space each service will have available to them. The capacity of our buildings will be significantly reduced and teams will need to work differently to share a reduced office space between those who need it to be fully effective and those who it is deemed might benefit from some time out of the home for their wellbeing.

**Remember**, if the issue is the lack of contact with the team, the rest of your team may still be continuing to work from home, and therefore returning to an office space is not necessarily going to resolve the issue.

## Appendix 1

### Tips on having successful conversations around mental health:

**Choose an appropriate place** – due to the coronavirus outbreak, the most appropriate method of meeting face to face may not be available to you but ask what method the employee would prefer, this may be over the telephone, via online video chat etc. Or consider if you could meet face to face, at an appropriate quiet venue where social distancing can be adhered to but **only** if the member of staff is at a crisis point and all other methods have been exhausted.

**Encourage people to talk** – have an open culture, talk about mental health and make these conversations regular to help embed them into your teams' way of doing things. This will allow employees to open up. Let the employee tell you in their own words how they are feeling and what impacts and triggers any negative mental health issues.

**Don't make assumptions** - allow the employee to tell you how they feel and what support they may need. Many of us experience negative mental health and may require additional support during difficult periods.

**Listen to people and respond flexibly** – treat people on an individual basis and focus on the person. Allow the employee to help identify solutions and find out any difficulties they are experiencing. Adapting how you respond and tailoring adjustments as required will help your employee to feel supported.

**Be honest and clear** – address issues at an early stage and be clear with any interventions you may be thinking of introducing.

**Ensure confidentiality** – staff need to be reassured that anything you will discuss with them will be treated confidentially and shared with as few people as possible. Have a discussion with the employee who they would like any information shared with.

**Develop a plan** – work with your employee to develop an action plan to help identify the signs of their mental health issue and pinpoint any triggers and stresses that have a negative impact on the way they work.

**Encourage to seek advice and support** – check with your employee that they have contacted their GP to get any advice and support available to them. Remind them of our Employee Assistance Service, [Time for Talking](#), where online or telephone **(0800 970 3980)** counselling is available for them and their families to gain additional support. Further assistance can also be gained by accessing our in-house [Mental Health First Aiders](#) who are available online or contactable by telephone to speak to anyone experiencing mental health issues. You can also source further advice and support from various external crisis lines which can be found easily on our [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#) pages.

## Appendix 2

### Returning to Office Space Checklist

The following checklist should be used to ensure that you have exhausted all other avenues of providing additional support to improve mental health and wellbeing before considering completing and submitting a request for an employee to return to an office space. Whilst non-essential office spaces remain closed, only individuals delivering critical services which cannot be done from home should be accessing an office, however if you feel that there is a reasonable exception to be made for an individual who is coming to harm mentally from remaining at home, then this checklist and request form can be used. Check the latest guidance on working at home and reinstating services here.

	Considerations	Yes	No
1	We have explored having regular 1-2-1 meetings via Teams or by phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	We have explored regular Team Meetings via Teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	We have explored and identified the causes that are impacting on mental health as per the guidance above.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	We have considered alternative/flexible working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	We have explored more regular contact with colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	We have explored taking regular breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	We have explored taking more regular exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	We have explored the <a href="#">People Anytime Mental Health and Wellbeing</a> pages to using online tools for support find other support available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	We have explored gaining additional support through the use of the <a href="#">Mental Health First Aid Network</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	We have explored using the <a href="#">Time for Talking</a> Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	We have explored sourcing additional support from a referral to <a href="#">occupational health</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	We have explored whether the employee has any concerns around the future of their role or the impact of lockdown on their role going forward in the current climate and have provided reassurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	We have considered meeting face to face, in an outside location and adhering to all physical distancing protocols, as a means of addressing significant isolation concerns as an exceptional measure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have explored and/or utilised all of the above and you have determined that access to an office space may be a further useful mitigation and the only alternative method to support the employees mental health, then please complete and submit the [online form](#) and upload this checklist for consideration.