**Well-being**

**Staying mentally healthy while working remotely**

As we are now working in unusual arrangements, supporting each other to stay mentally healthy while working remotely is really important!

Remote working may be a new experience for many of you that could feel unsettling or very isolating and requires some adjustment for both the individual and team.

Issues that can arise which might impact the mental health of ‘our people’ working remotely include:

* Loneliness and a lack of collaboration and communication with others
* Being unable to set healthy boundaries between work and personal time and being unable to ‘unplug’
* Lack of motivation

**Tips to encourage you to stay mentally healthy**

* Human connections will be more important than ever during this period of remote working – maintain regular contact with your Line Manager and colleagues
* Stay connected through Email, Teams, chat – regular check-ins with your Line Manager will be maintained, as well as team meetings
* Take action if IT support is needed to ensure you can fulfil your role and be fully productive
* Your Line Manager will have set clear expectations of working hours; you are not expected to stay logged in or check emails after your working day is finished
* Stay active and ensure you are looking after your physical health
* Take appropriate rest breaks away from your work and screen

The Mental Health Foundation has released guidance on how to look after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

There are also other sources of support and information that can help, such as the Every Mind Matters website <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

**Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) with Health Assured**

During the next few uncertain weeks and possibly months, we acknowledge that some of you may be experiencing higher than normal levels of stress and anxiety.

If you are experiencing any personal difficulty (your close family are also covered), may we remind you that you have access to a 24/7 confidential counselling helpline, through the support services of Health Assured, which can be reached on the contact details below.

The following information provides an overview of the support they can offer, which includes:

* EAP is designed to help you deal with any personal or professional problems which could be impacting on your general health and well-being in a completely confidential way.
* Health Assured is an independent, external organisation who work to a robust, professional code of conduct.
* They offer a 24 hour, 365 days of the year helpline which will provide you and your close family (partner and children 18 – 24 in education) with advise on personal and legal problems.
* Fast intervention when an employee reports with an absence relating to stress or anxiety
* Dependent on the nature of the issue, counselling or advice can be provided by fully qualified professionals.
* If the decision is made that you require counselling this can be over the phone or face to face at various locations
* They also offer online resources including live chat and online health assessment forms as well as a mobile app health e-hub.

**There are 3 methods of contacting Health Assured to get support:**

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* 24 hours, 365 days of the year helpline, call 0800 028 0199
* Website – [www.healthassuredeap.com](http://www.healthassuredeap.com).  The logon details for all is **Username: summit Password: learning**
* Mobile app – health e-hub which can be downloaded from your provider’s app store.  If logon details are required they are the same as for the website

Health Assured may also be able to help people to find out about information for elderly relatives and financial information, as well as the latest updated information on Covid19.

**Social Distancing – what is it?**

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (Covid-19)

They are to:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
3. Work from home, where possible. Please refer to the **Remote Working guidance** document which was previously sent to you, but can also be accessed via Sharepoint
4. Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
5. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is practicable.

We strongly advise you to follow the above measures as much as you can and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible, particularly if you:

* are over 70
* have an underlying health condition
* are pregnant

This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time such as:

* look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the NHS website
* spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to the radio or watching TV programmes
* try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
* keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or get outside into the garden

You can also go for a walk or exercise outdoors if you stay more than 2 metres from others.

**Social Handwashing and Respiratory Hygiene**

We can all help reduce the spread of coronavirus by following the public health advice.

General principles you can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

* washing your hands more often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food. This will help protect you and the people you live/work with. This step is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of passing infection to others.
* avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
* avoid close contact with people who have symptoms
* cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue to hand, sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand.
* clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home

**Stay safe and well!**