

# Individual Wellness Plan – Working from home

## Guidance for managers

### Introduction

This guidance for managers gives information on how to ensure that you have a proactive and effective discussion with staff on supporting them in maintaining their wellbeing while working from home.

This also includes documentation to use to enable the conversation, advice on support that's available and the process to follow where working at home has been identified as being potentially detrimental to their physical or mental wellbeing.

Working from home on a continual basis is a new way of working for many staff. It's therefore important for all staff to consider and identify what they can do to stay well and look after their own health and wellbeing. It's also essential that staff working from home feel supported by their manager and have the opportunity for regular communication with 1:1s/catch ups.

Managing staff when they're working at home means it's harder to identify signs and symptoms of when they are not well and therefore directly asking staff how they are feeling should be a regular topic during conversations. Consider asking how they're feeling more than once as often staff will say they're fine. (See **Conversation Guide** in this document)

### Individual Wellness Plan – working from home

The 'working from home' Individual Wellness Plan should be used proactively by staff and managers and you should ensure that staff are aware of this document, where to find it and encourage them to use it and discuss it with you.

This can also be used actively and directly where staff have indicated that they are not feeling well, and their wellbeing is being affected.

### Key Psychological and Emotional Issues

Whilst staff continue to work from home, and we begin to look at recovery, staff have time to start to reflect. Most staff will feel able to cope successfully using their own preferred style, individual resources and social support. Many may be changed in a positive way, experiencing personal development. However, some may experience intrusive thinking about what they 'should' have done differently and shame or guilt about what they have or haven't achieved.

Individual difficulties have wider family and social impacts which may have a longer-term effect. Certain staff may be at risk of other psychological difficulties, including but not limited to burnout, anxiety, post-traumatic stress or suicidal thoughts.

Suicidal thoughts can be a natural response to when challenges start to feel too much, but help is available. If the person discloses suicidal thoughts encourage them to contact the Samaritans (116 123), speak to their GP, or you can make a management

referral to EAP on their behalf, with their consent, or they can contact a local helpline (see 24/7 helpline or out of hours crisis support information on <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/mentalhealth>).

If they are in immediate danger of harm call 999. Asking about suicide can feel scary, the Zero Suicide Alliance has produced short videos to help you to start the conversation: <https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training>

## Conversation Guide

Use the **HELP** model below to have an open, honest and effective conversation.

**H**ave an open and non-judgemental conversation:

- Ask open questions, for example, how are you? what would help you? how does that feel for you?
- Avoid judgemental and patronising responses and questions, for example, you're clearly struggling, what's up? why can't you just get your act together? everyone else is in the same boat and they're okay.
- Remember that two people who are experiencing similar situations may not need the same level of support

**E**mpathise:

- Acknowledge what they are saying, e.g. "that sounds really challenging", "I am sorry you are going through this"
- Ask questions to understand more, e.g. "what has it been like for you?", "how are you feeling about everything?"

**L**isten actively to hear and understand what they're really saying:

- Allocate enough time
- Identify a suitable time and date
- Avoid interruptions, e.g. put your phone on silent
- Maintain appropriate eye contact (try to look at the camera)
- Be patient and don't rush them

**P**rovide support to the employee in finding ways to keep them well at work:

- Make yourself aware of the support available to employees prior to the meeting
- If someone asks for an adjustment which you are not sure we can provide, explain that you will need to check what support is available and get back to them.
- Seek help: If you are not sure what to do, you should discuss the issue with your HR Advisor. It may be appropriate to refer to Occupational Health.