



PSA 

Covid 19 update

Working from home under lockdown- what to consider

On 23 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that within 48 hours the COVID 19 alert level will change to level 4 which has severe consequences on how and where work is performed. For details of the different alert levels go [here](#). The country is in lockdown for four weeks which means a lot of you are unable to work in your usual environment.

Some of you have the option to work from home. In order to make sure you stay safe and healthy at home here are a few suggestions.

1. Stay safe

Make sure you have access to safe working conditions. If you're working on a computer think about your desk set up and posture. Try and set up somewhere quiet with plenty of natural light and good ventilation.

2. Stay healthy

To maintain your **physical health**, ensure you get regular short intervals of fresh air, moving and stretching yourself. Just step outside or go for a brief and brisk walk around the block if you are able. Temperatures outside are dropping so make sure you have appropriate heating where necessary. It is important for your physical and mental health to eat healthily and to get enough sleep.

Your **mental health** is as important as your physical health. Focusing on the things you can control can help to improve how you feel. A good place to start is the [five ways to wellbeing](#). Answers to frequently asked questions about looking after mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19 by the Mental Health Foundation are available [here](#). Further reading including resilience strategies, how to talk to children about the virus, podcasts and more are available [here](#). The Ministry of Health has also compiled [information](#) to ensure your and your children's mental wellbeing.

Under lockdown, it is normal to feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious or upset, among a wide range of other emotional reactions. Some practical things you can do include to use a journal to write down how you feel, talk to others or do something creative. Also avoid excessive consumption of media coverage.

3. Have the right equipment

You will also need to have access to all the relevant equipment (such as an office chair and monitors) and IT software you would normally use in your day-to-day working life. If you need access to a programme you don't have available at home, then talk to your manager. Your employer should pay for wi-fi needed for work if the person doesn't have internet access at home.

4. Know what is expected

If you're working remotely it is important to be clear about what work you are expected to carry out, especially if this differs from your usual tasks and duties. Talk to your manager and possibly write down what you are working on and what you will be able to deliver over a certain period of time. Getting agreement will provide you, your manager and your team with certainty.

5. Keep in touch

Stay in touch with your manager and your team. There are lots of different ways you can do this. You may want to think about setting up regular video calls with colleagues. You can also use email, phone and chat groups like. You should also stay in touch with your union delegates or organisers for any help or developments about what is happening.

Keeping in touch is important to ensure you, your colleagues and your manager are informed about each other's work. It is also important to avoid loneliness and other negative mental health effects of being socially isolated.

4. Work regular hours

It can be hard to stick to set hours when working from home due to a more flexible working regime. Domestic distractions, care responsibilities and blurred boundaries between work and time off can be difficult to navigate.

Follow your usual working patterns and stick to a routine where possible. Some might find it useful to keep a diary or use an online hours calculator to ensure good discipline around working hours. It is a good idea to proactively communicate your working hours to others in your team.

5. Do not work when you are sick

Whether you have got coronavirus symptoms or another illness, if you're too ill to work, you're too ill to work. It doesn't matter if you're based in the office or at home – sick leave policies still apply. It helps to keep your calendar updated with any leave you might be taking (sick leave, domestic leave, annual leave etc.). It keeps your team aware of your situation.

6. What to do when you encounter challenges

Challenges when working from home can take different forms. It might be challenging to physically finding a quiet space where you can concentrate, separating care and work responsibilities, dealing with (pre-existing) anxiety or depression or domestic violence. To prevent, mitigate and eliminate challenges it is even more important that we are kind and generous towards each other. Look after your neighbours and check on people at risk regularly.

Those who are at risk or experiencing mental health and violence issues must not hesitate to seek professional help immediately.

Schools and childcare centers are now closed adds additional pressures on many families and parents' **care responsibilities**. Information on how parents can maintain resilient and how to communicate with their children is available [here](#).

Specific resources on COVID 19 and **family violence** can be accessed [here](#). The Family Violence Information Line (0800 456 450) provides self-help information and connects people to services where appropriate. It is available seven days a week, from 9am to 11pm, with an after-hours message redirecting callers in the case of an emergency.

In case you need support with your **mental health** the following helplines are available

- 1737 – Free call or text 1737 any time for support from a trained counsellor.
- Lifeline – 0800 543 354 or free text 4357 (HELP)
- Youthline – 0800 376 633 or free text 234
- Samaritans – 0800 726 666

7. Stay in touch with your union

We will be providing regular updates via our [website](#) and social media channels. Also stay in touch with your delegate or organiser. We are here to help and to share information. We can and must be union – especially under lockdown.