

MANAGING TEAMS REMOTELY



For the foreseeable future you will be managing your teams who are working from home or working remotely.

Some line managers will be more accustomed to this than others. The difference now is the context in which we are working and living.

Across Perth & Kinross Council employees are stepping up, taking on new roles, putting plans in place, forming networks and groups, they just know what needs to be done. The main support that you can give is personal support.

Here's what you can do:



COMMUNICATE WITH COMPASSION



We need to make conscious efforts to check in with our teams, at least weekly, and make sure people know we're there to support them. Checking in with employees and getting a sense of how they are feeling is top priority now and in the months to come. Listen hard, empathise with the way they feel, and help by taking thoughtful and appropriate action. Use video calls if you can, so you can get as close to face-to-face communication as possible.

BE A ROLE MODEL


Acknowledge with your teams that it's difficult delivering services in any crisis and that this has the potential to affect us, both professionally and personally, emphasise the importance of good self-care.

- Diarise regular check-ins.
- Two key questions to ask, regularly:
 - *How are you?*
 - *What are you doing for self-care?*



- Ensure employees have access to the Health & Wellbeing newsletters. There are also lots of useful resources at [PKCstaff.org](https://www.pkcstaff.org), H&W section and at [PKLearning](https://www.pkclearning.org) wellbeing section.
- Encourage one-on-one coaching/Listening Ear sessions available via greeves@pkc.gov.uk and establish a support network within your teams, looking (listening) out for each other.

MAKE COMMUNICATIONS EASY



Communicate on a personal level as well as in relation to work. Remember when you're chatting with people you manage, it's all about them, talk about you with your peers and your line manager.

It's a big change adapting from day-to-day interactions in person to conducting these virtually. Make best use of Teams for messaging (chat), calling and video calling. The chat function is less formal than email and communicating in this way will help people feel more connected with their line manager. When managing virtually, we miss out on the opportunity to read social cues and body language. It's not so easy to check facial expressions for understanding, we can't read a room, see someone's slumped shoulders, or their eyes when they get excited, even during video calls. So clarity of your communication is much more important up front.

Keep up-to-date with corporate communications.

Ensure your teams know where to find these, check for understanding and take time to discuss them.

Remind staff to keep personal contact details and preferred mode of contact, up to date on MyView. **You must have contact details** for people in your team.

STAYING SAFE

Working from Home Like a Pro contains information for the home workstation DSE assessment and **Connecting to Networks**.



RETASKING

Don't let the terminology confuse you, re-tasking and re-deployment is interchangeable.

Be clear about whether your team members are currently 'essential' workers or not. If you're unsure get clarity from your line manager.

Explain the status and rationale about your team member's current role - 'essential' or 'non-essential'. Clarify that this is only in relation to the list of 18 essential services that have been defined nationally and other 'non-essential' roles are still pivotal in carrying out our role as a council.

Talk to 'non-essential' staff about the potential for re-tasking and to anticipate being asked to do different duties. Anxiety about doing something different is normal. **Give your team members as much support as they need.** Re-assure them that training and shadowing will be provided. For those interested in re-tasking to health and social care share this [short clip](#).

Where employees are re-tasked you will continue to approve annual leave, record

sickness absence etc. You and their new line manager have dual responsibility for supporting employee wellbeing, allaying concerns and dealing with employee queries.

Process for Requesting Re-tasked Employees Back to Substantive Role

The transition back to recovery needs to be carefully managed to avoid negative impacts on the 18 essential services. Managers requesting their re-tasked employee back to normal activities must firstly contact HR.



ENCOURAGEMENTS

TRUST

In an office environment, people create trust by social interactions, harder to do when working virtually. In an office you are more likely to see what your colleagues are doing, the meetings they're in or the calls they're on. Yes set clear priorities and expectations, assign ownership and timelines, but place trust in people that they have the flexibility to operate in the way that works for them. Everyone is doing their best.



Sometimes people just need to know what they're doing is OK. Ask people what's going well. They will likely start with a negative but encourage them to focus on the positives. They'll appreciate the question. Mindsets are so important.

Feedback success stories to your line manager - at both a team and individual level - our leaders want to hear all about it.

A shout out can make all the difference to employees.

WORK LIFE BALANCE

It's human nature to do whatever it takes at times such as these so you and your teams must be prepared to know when to stop and recharge.

Ensure people know how to pace themselves without burnout and how to recharge their internal battery. You might like to set up regular quiz nights or something similar, in the evening for a bit of fun. Remember some of your team members will be living alone and potentially feeling isolated.



JUGGLING COMPETING PRESSURES

It's true we're not just working from home, we are at home trying to work. Some employees have children at home to look after and to home school; elderly parents or relations to support; unwell family members; and / or partners who are also trying to work from home. Be as flexible as possible with people in your teams to accommodate working patterns which work best for them.



ABOVE ALL, BE KIND



WORKING REMOTE - COVID-19 PRINCIPLES

Right now there's only one global story: COVID-19. It's a stressful situation professionally and personally; employees may have high-risk or already ill family members or friends, and are now cooped up with their families or flatmates who are all also trying to work from home as best they can.

While we should aim for business continuity, it is also important to understand that employees will not (and possibly cannot) be as productive as they were previously.



1 You are not 'Working From Home', you are 'At home, during a crisis, trying to work'.

2 Your personal, physical, mental and emotional health is far more important than anything else right now.

3 You should not try to compensate for lost productivity by working longer hours.

4 You will be kind to yourself and not judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping.

5 You will be kind to others and not judge how they are coping based on how you are coping.

6 Your team's success will not be measured the same way it was when things were normal.

Contact

Corporateod@pkc.gov.uk

for information or advice.

