

24 March 2020

Dear Colleagues

As we are now entering a Level 4 stage alert as from midnight tonight for the next four weeks, we thought it appropriate to provide you with the attached Working From Home Guidelines. These guidelines have been developed with the possibility of a return to work at some stage, depending on alert levels. These Guidelines will also be available on EnableHR.

We would like to highlight that during the next four weeks, no staff are to come into the workplace unless with the express permission of the Senior Leadership Team, that all staff must work from home and are expected to be fully deployed. Each staff member in discussion with their manager, needs to create a plan of work to cover the next four weeks. In addition to your regular work, you need to consider additional activities that you might be able to carry out including training and professional development, helping other colleagues, special projects, and non-routine work. You might also want to use this time to take annual leave. Please have your plans ready and operating by the end of next week. Staff will need to provide a weekly summary report to their manager of the activities they have carried out during the previous week.

Note also the requirements in the Guidelines around taking leave, whether annual, sick or unpaid leave.

As Easter falls within the four week period, we would like to reiterate that Friday and Monday (10 and 14 April) are Public Holidays.

Below are some tips for working from home that you may find useful.

## **Workstation set-up**

### **Technology**

Do you need a laptop or other gear? Talk to your Manager and let them know what you need.

If you need help with connecting to the Future Skills network from home, talk to IT on how to do this.

Need to brush up on your video conferencing etiquette? Check out these tips from The Guardian.

Future Skills will pay for any necessary work-from-home technology and other costs, over and above what you are already paying for data usage etc.

### **Physical environment**

If you are an academic staff member, think about where you'll teach from home – particularly if you're using video technology. Do a trial run so you can check what your audience will see on your screen.

## **Health and safety at home**

Please follow usual guidelines around health and safety:

- Ensure that your home workspace is arranged so that it is comfortable and ergonomically sound;
- Make sure you take regular breaks;
- Keep your workspace clear and free from obstacles or tripping hazards;
- Keep in regular communication with your manager and proactively discuss any problems that arise from working from home.

## **Practice makes perfect**

Practice your setup at home as soon as you can. Check that you can access the files and programmes you need.

Get familiar with all the technology you think you'll need.

Do you have technology, workspace or internet access challenges at home? If so, advise your Manager as soon as possible

## **Staying productive**

### **Behave professionally**

Keep regular hours. That means knocking off at the end of the day, and remembering to take morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea breaks at the normal times;

Talk to your friends and family and set boundaries. This is difficult when you have family members at home – perhaps use a 'do not disturb' signal such as a shut door or headphones;

Work from your workstation – not from your bed or on the couch. If you don't have a suitable space to work from, talk to your Manager.

### **Use productivity hacks**

Work in short bursts (use a productivity app) and then take a short break;

Struggling to focus? Take a quick walk outside or have a cup of tea;

Keep the area you're working in tidy so you're not distracted by household chores;

Use the Chrome extension StayFocusd to limit your time on distracting websites.

## **Keep connected**

### **Microsoft Teams**

Create a team channel for communications and support. If you need a hand with Teams, talk to IT;

Schedule a daily video call with your team to talk about workload and to touch base;

Memes for the win! There are plenty of features in Teams to keep you smiling;

Always wanted to write a blog post? Why not write a post about how you and your team are working from home – what advice do you have for others?

### **The good old-fashioned telephone**

Share your contact details so you can call each other – sometimes nothing beats a conversation.

## **Keep talking**

Need to talk or some support? Free call or text **1737**

Keep your manager in the loop with how you're dealing with this change – they are here to support you and offer help as and when you need it.

## **Questions**

Do you have a question about working from home? Have a chat to your manager – they are here to help.

The COVID-19 situation is constantly changing and we will continue to provide you with regular updates.

Take care of yourselves and your loved ones and stay well!

Vicky Dobson  
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