



Making workforce mental health work

Workforce briefing: taking care during the COVID-19 outbreak

What is this briefing document about?



This brief has been developed for teams across UK workplaces to use for **reassuring, signposting and supporting** your teams during these uncertain times.

As we all adapt our ways of working to tackle the additional challenges that COVID-19 and remote working has posed our mental health, **remember that you are not alone and there is always someone there to help you.**

Mates in Mind is here to support organisations across the UK improve the mental health of their workforces. Thank you for being a part of our community.



Initial steps for managers to support mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak



- **Reassure** your team with clear, supportive communications.
- **Signpost** the support and guidance available.
- **Support** your team members directly with what they are struggling with.

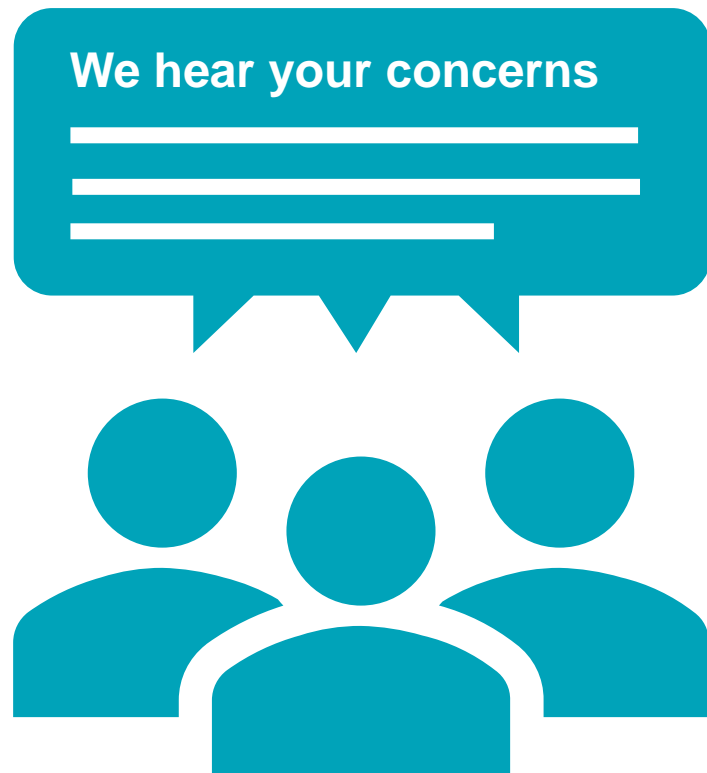


Reassuring your workforce

Communicating



- **Communicating regularly and clearly** with your team about COVID-19, and starting the conversation about this mental health is hugely important
- **Ensure that you address the topic directly**, and make your workforce aware that you are here to support them during this strange period of time
- **Try to be as informative as you can** be about your organisation's situation and keep your workforce up to date as to any changes and developments they can expect.



- **Try to make sure you are being inclusive** in your COVID-19 communications, considering factors that might be affecting different groups across your workforce
- **Make sure that your language is sensitive and considerate** of these different groups and their concerns, eg: parents/ high risk members of team etc
- **Allow your workforce to voice their concerns** and try to address their worries with transparency.

Stay informed



ACAS have provided excellent advice ranging across a number of COVID-19 related topics for **employers and employees**, including:

- Staying at home and social distancing
- Vulnerable people and those at high risk
- Self-isolation and sick pay
- If the workplace needs to close temporarily
- If an employee needs time off work to look after someone
- If someone has coronavirus symptoms at work
- Good practice steps for employers
- More coronavirus advice.

See the full advice page [here](#).



Signposting support to your workforce



Make your workforce aware of the support available to them



- Flag how to get in touch with your **HR department**
- Share the details of your **Employee Assistance Programme** if you have one
- Signpost these **confidential support services**.

Remind your workforce that **there is always someone** there to support them



It's easy to feel isolated and unsupported during these uncertain times but know that there are a range of support services available across the UK to help you manage your concerns- whatever they might be.

- For a range of advice, you can contact **Citizens Advice in England, Wales and Northern Ireland or Scotland.**
- **Adviceline** is a national phone service operated by Citizens Advice. You can contact an Adviceline adviser on **03444 111 444** (Text relay: 03444 111 445)



Financial concerns

Many of us are worried about the financial impact that COVID-19 is having on our industries. With concerns around employment and income, here are a few ways for individuals to feel a little more prepared and in control over this period.

- **Use time at home to work through your finances**
 - budgeting for this period, adjusting...
- **Find out what help you might be entitled to**
 - there are several government initiatives available
- **Keep connected and look after yourself**
 - Don't keep it in – talk to family or friends if you can.



- **Look at what is available in your community**
 - Sadly, many food banks have had to close but rapidly services like this will generally find ways of providing services around the restrictions. If you have children, and they are entitled to free school meals, take them – your school will be in touch about how to access this service.

- **Check any insurance policies you have**
 - Life cover, critical illness cover, mortgage insurance and even home insurance sometimes offers legal advice or cover that could help. If you have a mortgage or other major commitment, try and speak to your lenders soon, they may help.

- **Think about groups you might be a member of**
 - Do you have a trade union or does your sector have a benevolent charity for example – things like [Hospitality Action](#) and [The Charity for Civil Servants](#), or the [Lighthouse Club](#) for construction



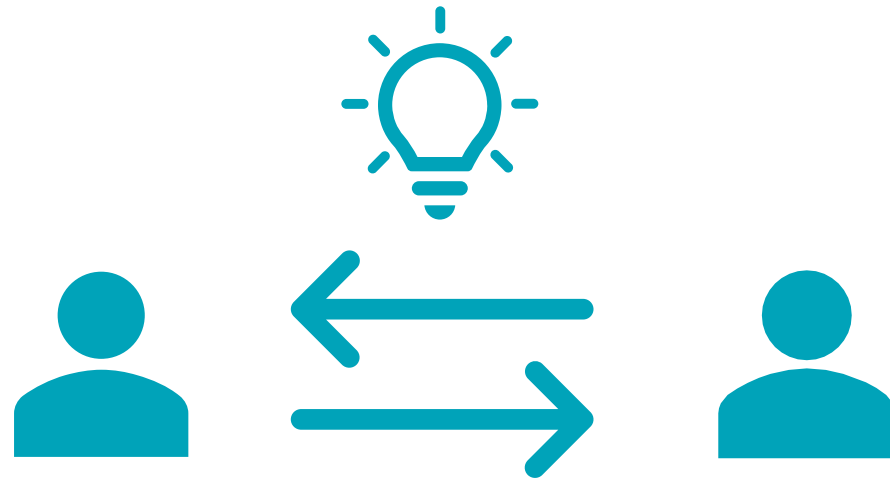
Unemployment and furlough

It can be very hard to lose access to your work – whether you are let go, furloughed (sent home temporarily) or your work drops if you are self-employed.

For more information about your rights at work visit [Acas](#).

- If you aren't at work try and **keep in touch with colleagues** – demand will increase again, and you will have a future. If you are isolated and live at home keeping those connections can be so important.
- If you are used to a very physical job, **try and keep up the exercise** – because a sudden change can hit your moods quickly.
- If you run a business, or employ staff, **try to hold off making decisions about jobs and pay until schemes being developed to support staff are up and running.**

- If you are self-employed, try **and reach out to your normal networks** – or see if there's an opportunity locally to connect with others through business forums. It's an uncertain time but your skills will be needed again soon.



- As we adjust to a period of living and working differently employers will be looking for staff – **think about how your skills transfer** – and if you want to help and are able, consider doing something else for a while.

More information is available [here](#).



Taking care of your mental health during COVID-19



Resources to help you take care of yourself whilst managing COVID-19

[Coronavirus and your wellbeing – MIND](#) - Advice and support around managing your mental health and wellbeing around COVID-19. This resource contains help and guidance around managing anxiety and isolation, a checklist to support you with isolation or quarantining for two weeks.

[Coronavirus: How to protect your mental health – BBC](#)

An article summarising the World Health Organization's main tips for protecting your mental health, advice on managing social media and news outlets, avoiding burnout and staying connected.



Mates in Mind support and resources



Our [Employers Supporting Remote Working Checklist](#) has been developed to enable employers to support their workforces and includes the latest updates and guidance around best workplace practice.

Additionally, our [Homeworking Mental Health Tips](#) are available for individuals to download and includes support and guidance for employees who are adjusting to a new working style.

You don't have to struggle with difficult feelings alone.

**If your
struggling,
remember you
are not alone**



Things you can do to cope:

 Speak to someone you trust

 Phone [a helpline](#)

 Focus on getting through today,
one action at a time

 Do something you usually enjoy

 Stay away from drugs and alcohol



Confidential helplines

**Contact the services below for free, confidential support.
Remember, you are not alone.**

Samaritans: [116 123](tel:116123)

Construction Industry Helpline: [0345 605 1956](tel:03456051956)

Mind Infoline: [0300 123 3393](tel:03001233393) (or text [86463](tel:86463))

Prevention of Young Suicide (Papyrus): [0800 068 41 41](tel:08000684141)

Cruse Bereavement Care Helpline: [0808 808 1677](tel:08088081677)

Be a mate.
Be the change.

Let's talk

 **020 3510 5018**

 **support@matesinmind.org**

