

Wellbeing and Mental Health guidance – For you and your staff

Dear colleagues

We just want to start by reiterating that we know how difficult and challenging things are for all of us at the moment in circumstances that are changing rapidly. We are, as you know, continuing to respond with our priority being the financial long term stability of your business as well as the wellbeing of you and your staff.

A significant amount of work has yet to be done by the Government to manage the situation and support businesses as far as we possibly can and for all of our clients to continue in some form of meaningful business engagement, be assured we are here to support you.

We also recognise and appreciate that you are managing work in addition to coping with challenging personal circumstances. Some people are more vulnerable, have caring and childcare responsibilities, and are in many circumstances distanced from those that are vulnerable and needing support.

The health and wellbeing of all my clients is also a key concern and now that we have moved to closure or adapting how we all conduct business, or are working from home - wherever possible - here are a few key points to consider to help and support you over the coming weeks.

Be patient and understanding if things take longer than usual to get done. There is a lot of work being done in the background, we may not be able to see that work, but many professional and support staff across all areas of the Government are meeting (through virtual means) and working hard to deliver key decisions in relation to the current situation.

Be open and honest about how you are feeling

All of us will struggle in one way or another. These are extraordinary times and it is important to be realistic about how much work you can achieve in these extraordinary times, as well as what – if any - your staff can achieve. This is especially important if they have children at home or other family members for whom they are caring for. Please consider your own and staff, who work with you to agree what is achievable and what is right for you also while you work through so many individual situations. We all at ADVOCO recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

If you have not worked from home before and are fortunate enough to be able to do this, it may take a while to get used to this new way of working. This will be a learning curve and transition for many people. You are not alone, so please do allow yourself the time to get used to and adjust to it. If you are not able to do your usual job, there may be new tasks or even opportunities to learn outside your current field of expertise, or training opportunities for you to get involved in.

Also, please be honest about how you are feeling. These are unique circumstances and it is natural to feel worried or anxious. Do talk to your family, partners, staff or colleagues about how you are feeling and especially if you are feeling low or isolated, as they are probably feeling the same as you.

Be connected to Staff when isolated

Technology gives us many ways of keeping in touch, so while you may be home on your own, for example, you don't have to spend your day without any social contact. Many firms and businesses are setting up social media contact groups, encouraging staff to stay in touch with each other.

Talk with your staff about ways you can keep in touch during this period. There is a range of channels available, such as BT conference calls, What's App, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype.

Check in with your colleagues too to see how they are feeling. If you think they are not engaging in any arranged online meetings, why not contact them individually in confidence to see how they are getting on?

As well as keeping in touch for work, don't forget to share what is happening in your day – consider sharing photos of your new 'office' or scheduling in a virtual team lunch or coffee break, or even a beer out of working hours. Try and find ways of replicating the daily informal chats you enjoy with colleagues throughout the day.

Keeping connected with family and friends at this time is also just as important, especially if they are far away. Dinner parties or a social drink via Skype and virtual book clubs or film groups can be great fun and complement phone calls and text messages.

Be aware of what Support is available

The [Big White Wall](#) is a free anonymous online mental health support service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and has specific advice if you're concerned about coronavirus.

The [Mental Health Foundation](#) and [Dorset Mind](#) have some useful guidance about managing your mental health during this period of staying at home and financial uncertainty.

Be comfortable

Think about where you can set up your home office. If you are lucky enough to have a spare room or space where you can leave your 'office' set up, that's great. Otherwise, pack your laptop and work away at the end of the day to create separation between your work and home life.

Do make sure you schedule regular breaks in your working day. It is easy to get engrossed in work and forget about the time and often sit for long periods of time.

On the other hand, if you are working at home with children in the house, you may need to break up your day and plan for time working and time with the family. Diarise these to help you plan your day and that others can see when you are and aren't working. Again, be realistic, you are unlikely to be able to work in the same way. You just need to find a way to get essential work done. Talk to your staff about how to be flexible and stay well.

Be active

It is important that we all follow the latest government announcement about staying at home. Schedule breaks during your day when you can get up from your desk. Take time to clear your mind and benefit from some activity, other than work while observing social distancing guidance as part of the Government's lock down requirements.

If you have to stay indoors, consider setting up an exercise programme you can do in your lounge.

Perhaps consider doing a different activity each day as a great for getting away from your screen and moving around.

Our community

Above are some suggestions which you may find helpful.

Please do take the time to adjust to this new situation and to keep you and your family safe and well.

Best wishes

Alan Rodgers