



Virtual Working Guidance

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Version	Date	Action
Version 1	June 2021	New Guidance

A Charter for Digital Well-being at Work

- Try to avoid arranging meetings that may mean you or a colleague do not have a lunch break of at least half an hour – be mindful of this when making arrangements.
- If you can, try and keep at least one half day a week clear of meetings, to give yourself planning and preparation time.
- Try and avoid arranging meetings on a Friday, and be mindful of this when making arrangements.
- If you are struggling with your mental health or well-being tell your line manager, or speak to a mental health employee champion.
- If you can, end your meetings at quarter to the hour, to enable you and your colleagues to have a short comfort break / preparation time before the next meeting.
- Try and undertake one well-being activity every week. Here are some ideas:
 - Go for a walk outdoors at least once during the day
 - Try practicing mindfulness, you can download free apps, or there are free courses online (<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/free-online-mindfulness-courses>)
 - Try meditation, you can download free apps or there are free courses online (<https://www.mindfulnessassociation.net/latest-news/free-daily-online-meditation>)
 - There are lots of online workout and yoga sessions which you can try which suit all abilities. You can also find out about activities the NPT PASS team provide - <https://www.npt.gov.uk/1383>
 - Try a new hobby, for example the Couch to 5k, this app is free to download.
 - Arrange to meet a friend outside for a walk or virtually for a coffee

Things to consider when working from home

1. **Set up a designated workspace.** If possible, make space for yourself to work in, somewhere you can focus on tasks without being distracted and set up with everything you need for a normal working day (remember to complete the [DSE risk assessment](#) if you haven't already done so)
2. **Make sure you have all the equipment you need.** This includes a reliable and secure internet connection, any necessary files, hardware and software, access to the network and, importantly, knowledge of how to get [IT support](#).
3. **Write a daily to-do list.** Set out a list of realistic, achievable tasks to keep you focused.
4. **Stay in conversation.** Contribute regularly to team chats/group emails so you don't drop off the radar. Ask about what people are working on and share what's on your plate. Being physically separated means you miss the 'water-cooler moments' so this is a means to keep informed.
5. **Be clear in your communication.** Speaking in person gives you visual and audio cues that help you communicate. Conversing remotely removes a lot of that extra information so make your communications extra clear and concise.
6. **Foster relationships.** Make time for non-work chats as you would in the workplace and use video calling to maintain face-to-face contact.
7. **Ask for support when needed.** Speak out when you need assistance, further training or wellbeing support. Your manager, colleagues and you are part of a team and should be supporting each other, especially remotely.
8. **Make remote working work for you.** Change where you sit, put on music, whatever helps you work. And enjoy the perks – no commute or uncomfortable shoes, and all your home comforts!
9. **Know when to step away from your desk.** Be clear about when your working day begins and ends and take breaks to refresh. It's easy to let yourself be 'always on' when your home and office are the same place. When work is over, be sure you switch off to avoid burnout. Cultivate healthy habits such as taking exercise and fresh air every day.
10. **Be kind.** Remote conversations can easily be misinterpreted as it's harder to read body language, tone of voice and other visual and audio cues. Stay mindful of this as challenging times call for greater sensitivity and kindness.

Virtual Meeting Etiquette

A successful virtual meeting requires participants to be diligent about a number of practices and responsibilities, this will help ensure a productive meeting and engaged participants.

1. **Agenda.** If you are arranging the meeting, when you send the invites, include an agenda and other relevant material. If this is not available, ensure that you include at least a sentence explaining the reason for the meeting and what you want to achieve.
2. **Attendees.** Only invite individuals who are really necessary to the meeting. If you are unsure, you can check this out when sending the invite.
3. **Respond to meeting invites.** Make sure meeting organisers are notified of who will or will not be attending. This ensures attendees are not kept waiting for a participant who never logs on. If a participant is only planning to attend a portion of the meeting, make sure the organiser know.
4. **Be prepared.** When you receive a meeting invite make sure you take time out of your day to read any documents that were sent. If nothing was sent with the invite and you are unsure whether you should attend the meeting, email the meeting organiser to see if there is any information available.
5. **Check your connection.** Before the meeting starts, check that your connection is working so that you are able to join the meeting.
6. **Log in early.** Don't wait until the last minute to log on. Logging in ahead of time is good online meeting etiquette. If you are going to be late, send a message to the meeting organiser so they know they should wait for you.
7. **Join with your video on.** Video is a good way to maintain the human connection in a virtual meeting. If you are uncomfortable sharing your background, apply a suitable filter or a blur. If connectivity is a problem, let everyone know you are going to turn your video off after the introductions.
8. **Muting.** In certain circumstances, it is important to leave your microphone on, so the person talking can hear signals that participants understand, agree etc with what you are saying. However if you are on a call with 10 or more people, if you hear a feedback echo or if you have noise in your background, it is best to stay muted.
9. **Speak slowly.** Conversing remotely removes a lot of extra information that face to face meetings benefit from. Make your communications extra clear and concise.
10. **Don't talk over people.** In a virtual meeting, it's hard to determine who spoke first. Be prepared to let the other person talk ahead of you.
11. **Try not to leave the room.** If something urgent comes up, such as signing for a delivery at the door, leave a chat message to say you will be straight back. If you have your video off, send another message when you return.
12. **Dealing with interruptions.** If you share space with others, if possible make them aware that you are joining a meeting. However if a member of your family or your pet walks into the screen, don't worry as everyone has experienced this at some time!
13. **Resist the urge to do other work.** Doing work while on a meeting means you won't be focused on either and both will suffer.
14. **Chat side conversations.** The chat should be available to everyone. Quick, private side conversations are discouraged as they are considered poor virtual meeting etiquette.
15. **End on time.** Make sure you set the meeting up for the required time and ensure that the meeting is brought to a conclusion in a timely manner.

10 top tips for managing remote teams

When you work with an in-person team, there are plenty of opportunities throughout the day to stop, chat, and connect. Those informal conversations and connections help build a rapport that carries over into meetings, making people feel more engaged and perhaps more comfortable voicing their opinions and feelings or offering feedback. Remote working does not provide team members to have these opportunities, which is why it is important to be proactive and create these opportunities. Connecting your team will help lay the foundation for remote working to be successful.

1. **Agree ways of working.** Make sure every team member is clear about how you will work together remotely, how you keep each other updated, and how frequently.
2. **Show the big picture but prepare to be flexible.** Remind your team about the big picture and how their work fits into it. Review short-term goals regularly and adjust as needed. If some members can't carry out all their usual work, consider other skills they can lend to others to meet team goals.
3. **Set expectations and trust your team.** Be clear about mutual expectations and trust your team to get on without micromanaging. Focus on results rather than activity.
4. **Make sure team members have the support and equipment they need.** This includes any coaching they might need to use online systems or work remotely. Keep your calendar visible and maintain a virtual open door.
5. **Have a daily virtual catch up.** This is essential for keeping connected as a team, to check in on each other's well-being and keep workflow on track. It needn't be long, but regularity is key.
6. **Keep the rhythm of regular one-to-ones and team meetings.** This maintains a sense of structure and continuity for all.
7. **Share information and encourage your team to do the same.** Without physical 'water-cooler conversations', opportunities to pick up information in passing are more limited. Share *appropriate* updates or learnings from other meetings and projects and invite your team to do the same.
8. **Tailor your feedback and communications.** People can be more sensitive if they're feeling isolated or anxious, so take this into account when talking or writing. Communicate regularly, not just when things go wrong, whether it is information, praise or criticism.
9. **Listen closely and read between the lines.** Not being in the same room means you don't have extra information from body language or tone to get the sense of what people are thinking or feeling, particularly in more difficult conversations. Home in on what's not being said and ask questions to clarify your interpretation.
10. **Help foster relationships and well-being.** Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport and eases communication between people who may not meet often. It also reduces feelings of isolation. Also, remind your team of our [health and well-being](#) resources.