**Homeworking during COVID-19 – updated August 2020**

Guidance for Managers

**Purpose**

As we move to a more prolonged period of homeworking, we have updated the temporary guidance that was developed to support to managers responsible for colleagues working remotely during the pandemic. It is intended only to be used during this period and replaces the previous guidance. We recognise that due to individual circumstances, some employees may not be able to adhere to all of the advice.

Managers should consider whether any new ways of managing and supporting staff are required to keep them motivated and productive whilst proactively offering additional support to staff who may be finding current working arrangements challenging. Even those who are accustomed to working from home, may find these times challenging, particularly now that it is for a prolonged period.

The University is responsible for the health and safety of all employees, including those working from home. All team members should have completed the required e-Learning modules outlined within this guidance to support their homeworking arrangements. It is really important that you maintain regular contact with your team, encourage collaboration, ensure their health and wellbeing as much as possible and generally support them as best you can. You should promote a culture of openness and maintain a virtual open door so that people can easily raise any concerns that they may have.

Please read this guidance in conjunction with the **Homeworking during COVID-19 – Guidance for Employees (updated July 2020)** and ensure that your team members follow this advice as much as possible. You should also familiarise yourself with **Transition back to Campus – Guidance for Managers** which will support you to transition colleagues back to campus, when this is appropriate.

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**Top tips for supporting your team effectively**

* **Regular check in’s** - check in with your team via video call, or pick up the phone. Arrange 1:1’s and have informal catch ups. Try to check in more frequently with any team members who you know are living alone.
* **Regular team meetings** – schedule these to keep your team connected and to maintain a shared purpose.
* **Continually clarify priorities** - break down objective setting to guide independent working. Most staff are not used to homeworking for this period of time and may need extra direction to help them keep on top of things.
* **Apply coaching skills** - in these uncertain times, there is likely to be constant change, so it is very important that you keep communicating, focus on what we can control and help staff adapt to the changes - listen to, and respond to any concerns that they may have.
* **Celebrate success** – recognise individual and team achievements, no matter how small.
* **University’s scheduled social activities** - promote and encourage staff to take part.
* **Ensure your team have the right equipment at home** – see below for further guidance.
* **Manage annual leave** - proactively encourage staff to take regular planned breaks from work.
* **Support mental health** - be mindful of individual circumstances and regularly discuss with your team members how they are coping. You may be best placed to spot any changes in mental health so look out for any signs that they may be struggling and offer support - discuss ways to help them manage their workload, maintain a healthy homeworking schedule, encourage them to take regular breaks from their display screens and separate work from home.

**Working Arrangements**

* During these difficult times, it is important that we all continue to show flexibility and are sensitive to each other’s personal situations. You should understand the extent that your team members can carry out their normal duties at home and if there has been a change in work priorities, or if it is impractical for some duties to be carried out at home, you can ask people to undertake reasonable alternative duties within their capabilities. It is expected that normal activity planning will continue for academic staff, however there may be occasions where certain types of work may need to be reprioritised. It should be expected that both managers and staff members approach reprioritising work in a flexible manner.
* You should continue to support staff with limitations, such as unplanned caring responsibilities for dependants, which might limit capacity for work. For many parents, school and nursery closures will mean splitting work time and care duties every day. We recognise that this will be challenging, particularly for those with sole responsibility for children or other dependents, or who have very young children to look after.
* You are expected to exercise greater flexibility in order to accommodate this unusual situation. You should speak with your team members to discuss practicalities and establish what they are realistically able to do. Wherever possible, you should try to accommodate a more flexible working arrangement around caring responsibilities, for example different working hours and/or working patterns such as condensed/longer/shorter days, working in the evening or weekend if this is practical for the role that is being carried out. This will be dependent upon individual circumstances and may not be possible in all cases.
* If any of your team are unable to work at all due to caring responsibilities or due to the nature of their role, they should use any outstanding periods of flexi leave and TOIL in the first instance. They should then use annual leave to cover the period that they cannot work up to a maximum of 10 days. After this period, you should discuss the situation with the HR team to work out the best solution for the employee.
* The University has introduced the option for staff to request to take a period of unpaid leave or to temporarily reduce their working hours in order to provide them with additional flexibility to balance work and home life more effectively. Where appropriate, you should remind staff of these options.
* Staff are responsible for the normal costs associated with their place of residence, for example heating, lighting and broadband and any home insurance to cover loss or damage to personal property whilst undertaking work duties. Staff can obtain a tax rebate for costs associated with working from home via [HMRC](https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees). If a team member is experiencing financial hardship cost due to homeworking, you should explore whether other equipment could be sourced to avoid these costs, or if they can work differently.

**Health and safety**

* We have a duty of care for our employees and are responsible for their health and safety whilst they are working from home. Employees also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety. It is not possible to carry out usual health and safety risk assessments in people’s homes, however it is important to follow the advice below to ensure that we are taking all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of our staff whilst they are working from home during this period.
* If any of your team members informs you of a change in their health, you should support them in normal way, in accordance with the [Attendance Management Policy](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/HRDocuments/Documents/Attendance%20Management%20Policy.pdf), ensuring that you record any absence on their HR Connect record. If an employee develops symptoms of COVID-19, you should advise them to follow the latest [NHS advice](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19).
* [**Health and Safety homeworking e-Learning module**](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/governance-compliance/healthandsafety/training/Pages/eLearning.aspx)- You are responsible for ensuring that your team members complete this e-Learning module to help them transfer their knowledge of setting up their workstation to the home environment.
* **Health and Safety Homeworking checklist** – You are responsible for ensuring that your team members complete the simple homeworking checklist contained within the appendix of the **Homeworking during COVID-19 Employee Guidance (updated July 2020)** to help them to assess their workstation. Further information is available from the [Health & Safety Executive (HSE)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm#dse). You should also encourage them to read the [University's guidance on DSE](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/governance-compliance/healthandsafety/policies/Documents/Computer-Hand-Held-Devices.pdf).
* You should discuss the output of the homeworking e-Learning module and homeworking checklist with each employee to identify any barriers to safe and effective working from home. If an employee’s home working environment does not support their individual needs or if they raise any potential health and safety risks, you should discuss this further with them and obtain advice from the HR team if required.
* If a solution is to collect key items of furniture or equipment from campus, access can be arranged by booking a slot via the Building Access app in Microsoft Teams, using [this step-by-step guide](https://edinburghnapieruniversity.newsweaver.com/4irwbtgywc/egnb89i8tq4168izr9qjhi/external?email=true&a=5&p=1668084&t=112125). Microsoft Teams is available to all Edinburgh Napier colleagues via a web browser, or through the app which can be downloaded free-of-charge.
* If necessary, assistance may also be provided to help relocate these items to their home environment. If the employee requires additional essential equipment, they can order this by following the guidance detailed within the [IT Procurement intranet page](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/cit/Pages/IT-Procurement.aspx).
* Wherever possible, reasonable adjustments should be made to enable safe homeworking for employees with a disability or medical condition, based on occupational health advice. You should contact the HR team for further advice in these circumstances.

**Supporting wellbeing**

* Working remotely means that it will be harder for you to tell who is having a good/bad day, who is struggling, or needs additional support and what relationships are like within the team. Natural and informal interaction opportunities are likely to be limited and it’s harder to tell what people are really thinking or feeling. It is therefore important that you consciously plan in time to check-in with your team members.
* Using coaching skills, such as listening closely and asking open questions can help to find out how people are and what support they might need to help them adapt to the changes and work through any challenges. Home in on what’s not being said and ask questions to clarify your interpretation.
* It is likely that some people will be experiencing a higher level of stress and anxiety at the moment. You are not expected to diagnose mental health problems, but you know your team members and may be able to recognise potential early signs of changes in mental health and wellbeing, even whilst working remotely. The University’s [Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace - Guidance for Managers](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/HRDocuments/Documents/Mental%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20in%20the%20Workplace%20-%20Guidance%20for%20Managers.pdf) provides advice about recognising early signs of the more common mental health problems, how to have a conversation about mental health and the support that is available.
* The University’s [Health and Wellbeing](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/workingattheUniversity/healthandwellbeing/Pages/healthandwellbeing.aspx) pages contain a range of information, resources and support and you should familiarise yourself with the support services available so that you can signpost them to staff, as appropriate. Key resources that provide support with managing mental health are:

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| [**Workplace Options**](https://edinburghnapieruniversity.newsweaver.com/4irwbtgywc/15o7osi28dh1jrkwpx5g6e/external?email=true&a=5&p=1144469&t=112125)**(Employee Assistance Programme)** | A free, confidential and independent resource to help employees balance their work, family and personal lives. |
| [**Big White Wall**](https://edinburghnapieruniversity.newsweaver.com/4irwbtgywc/y3xfvdeysw51jrkwpx5g6e/external?email=true&a=5&p=1144469&t=112125) | 24/7 peer-to-peer and professional support from clinicians. |
| [**Mindfulness sessions**](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/workingattheUniversity/healthandwellbeing/Pages/Wellbeing-Training%20and%20Events.aspx) | Free online live mindfulness sessions that consist of 35-40 minute mindfulness practice followed by some reflections and discussion.  |
| [**MIND**](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/) | Practical advice about taking care of your mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak. |
| [**NHS and HSE Stress Control classes**](https://stresscontrol.org/) | Live-streamed free stress classes specific to support you through COVID-19 and which can also be accessed via You Tube. |
| [**Mental Health Foundation**](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/while-working)  | Advice to looking after mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak. |
| [**Headspace**](https://www.headspace.com/) | An new app package has been created called “Weathering the Storm” |

* Please encourage your team members to look after their physical wellbeing and incorporate regular breaks from work and [desk exercises](https://www.posturite.co.uk/help-advice/useful-resources/learning-guides/workstation-exercises) into their daily routine.
* Discourage presenteeism. If you are unwell, take leave and do your best to give an update or handover on urgent work. As a manager, encourage people to take time off if they are unwell and model the behaviour yourself.

**Ways of working**

* Agree ways of working with your team and make sure every team member is clear about how you will work together remotely, how you will keep each other updated, and how frequently you will meet virtually. Specifics will vary by team, but it is important to keep a rhythm of regular one-to-one’s and team meetings to maintain structure and continuity for all. Very regular virtual huddles are essential for keeping connected as a team, checking in on each other’s well-being and keeping workflow on track. These needn’t be for long, but regularity is key.
* You may find that it is more difficult to make things happen when your team are all working from home. Remote working operates best when there is a focus on achieving outcomes. It is important that each of your team members understand what you are expecting of them and are in agreement that these outcomes are reasonable given their individual circumstances. Then trust them to get on with it. Focus on achievements rather than activity, emphasise appreciation and celebrate success.

**Communication and collaboration**

* Collaboration is still possible, using online platforms to encourage two-way communication with your team. Informal and ad-hoc interactions will be limited, so be deliberate and structured in your communication, ensuring messages are clear, and actions explicit. Spell out clearly any actions that need to be taken and by whom. Summarise meetings and circulate notes promptly, as appropriate.
* Homeworking over a sustained period can lead to feelings of isolation so you should share information regularly and encourage your team members to do the same.
* It can be helpful to use a mix of structured and informal communication methods – embrace video calling and blend structured communication approaches, such as weekly team ‘check-in’s through MS Teams or WebEx, with informal, real-time messaging through MS Teams, or email, or phone calls.
* Some employees may require both audio and visual connection in a meeting in order to connect properly, for example some people may need to lip-read whilst others may require visual cues to help them follow the conversation. You should be mindful of this and wherever possible host your team or group meetings with both mediums to ensure that no one is disadvantaged.
* Consider your feedback and communication carefully, people can be more sensitive if they’re feeling isolated or anxious, so take this into account in your written and verbal communication. During video calls engage participants regularly, it’s hard to listen online for a long time, invite people to give their feedback or ask questions.
* Make time for social conversations to help foster and maintain good working relationships. Holding ‘virtual’ coffee mornings or tea breaks and arranging a virtual social events can help people feel connected and reduce feelings of isolation. A Workplace by Facebook group for your team, or a WhatsApp group chat, can be good platforms for enabling people to share stories and keep connected.

**Technology and equipment**

* You should ensure that your team members have the support and equipment they need to enable them to work at home. This includes any help that they might need to use online systems or work remotely.
* If any of your team members require access to the campus to pick up equipment, they can book a slot via the Building Access app in Microsoft Teams, using [this step-by-step guide](https://edinburghnapieruniversity.newsweaver.com/4irwbtgywc/egnb89i8tq4168izr9qjhi/external?email=true&a=5&p=1668084&t=112125). Microsoft Teams is available to all Edinburgh Napier colleagues via a web browser, or through the app which can be downloaded free-of-charge.
* If any of your team members requires additional essential equipment, they can order the equipment following the guidance detailed within the [IT Procurement intranet page](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/cit/Pages/IT-Procurement.aspx). You should work with them to ensure that the required approvals are in place. Demand for equipment is high so there may be a delay obtaining and then allocating the requested equipment. If the employee is unable to undertake their normal duties at home due to a lack of equipment, you can ask them to undertake reasonable alternative duties during this time, if this is possible.
* If their current home working situation is not suitable, please discuss what items they may need to purchase and why they need them. Examples might include a desk or a chair. If you agrees they may purchase items up to a maximum limit of £250 plus reasonable delivery costs. All purchases must be pre-approved and claimed through the normal expenses procedure with items receipted. If staff have specific disabilities this limit may be extended further to ensure they have suitable equipment. Such requests should be discussed with HR.
* [Information Services Guidance](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/information-services/Pages/Information-Services.aspx) is available to support everyone who is working from home.
* The University’s preferred platforms for hosting virtual meetings are WebEx and Skype for Business. The latter will be replaced by Microsoft Teams in due course. When it’s fully rolled out across the University, in addition to enabling video and audio calls, its functionality will allow you to:
* Work with your team in real-time, editing Word and Excel documents and discussing ideas online
* Store and easily access all your teams files, documents and more in one place
* Send instant messages to your team via Group Chat
* Share your screen with other people
* Schedule meetings that automatically integrate with your existing Outlook calendar
* Integrate many Microsoft applications.

IS have developed a new [MS Teams Portal](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/cit/O365/Pages/MS-Teams.aspx) which offers specific guidance on MS Teams.

**Confidentiality and security**

* It is essential that University systems and data continue to be protected from cyber security threats during this period. Some of the usual University security measures don’t apply from home, so it is important that you remind your team to be more careful and vigilant.
* [Information Security e-Learning module](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/cit/infosecurity/Pages/InformationSecurityTraining.aspx) - you should encourage your team members to this module to refresh their understanding of the risks and what they can do to protect the University, and themselves, by minimising the likelihood and impact of information security incidents.
* [University's Data Protection Code of Practice - Security of Personal Data](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/governance-compliance/governance/DataProtection/Pages/SecurityofPersonalData.aspx) - you should ensure that your team members ensure that they understand their obligations in relation to the security of personal data under the Data Protection Act.

**My Contribution**

* It is important to take the time to reflect on this academic year with your team and discuss successes, challenges and any support that is needed going forward. You should plan and schedule virtual end of year conversations with your team members in the normal way. End of year self-assessment and feedback should be recorded using the current review form on HR Connect. You may wish to consider the following:
* Gather examples in advance to support your review discussions.
* Be ready to share this documentation via the screen share option.
* Expectations may need to be adjusted and managed, based on individual circumstances.
* Performance objectives may need to be revised due to changing priorities.
* Recognise that staff need to be given time for adapting to their new working environment.
* You can start planning 2020/21 objectives with your team members using the offline template on the My Contribution intranet site. You’ll then be able to copy and paste these into the new system when it goes live.
* [My Contribution intranet pages](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/workingattheUniversity/MyContribution/Pages/My-Contribution.aspx) and online training sessions are available to support this process, further details are available on the [online staff development events page](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/workingattheUniversity/LandD/Pages/Online-Staff-Training-Events.aspx).

* You should continue to discuss with staff what skills development would be good to do now. The prolonged homeworking period may offer some people an opportunity to develop their skills and commit to completing training. Learning and development can contribute to positive wellbeing, building resilience and helping adapt to these changing times.

**Support**

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| **Human Resources Team** | humanresources@napier.ac.uk  |
| **Health and Safety Team** | safetyoffice@napier.ac.uk |
| **Trade Union** | Members of UNISON or the EIS can obtain support from their trade union representative. |
| [**Workplace by Facebook Line Manager Lounge**](https://my.workplace.com/groups/1080358785667142/members/) | A closed online community for managers to provide them with access to tools, resources and support to help them manage remotely. |
| **Managing virtual teams training session** | A virtual session to discuss how to keep staff working remotely feel connected, supported and productive. Contact learninganddevelopment@napier.ac.uk for more details.  |
| [**Workplace Options - Virtual Roundtable Recording**](https://www.advantageengagement.com/p_content_detail.php?id_division=d00&id_module=m9013&id_element=030&id_cr=1120283) | This session explores the practical ways that managers can help their people to make the adjustment and effectively establish new ways of working *(username – napier and password – employee)* |