

Guide for Human Resource Professionals

What can you do to help protect your employees' mental health at work during the Covid-19 outbreak?

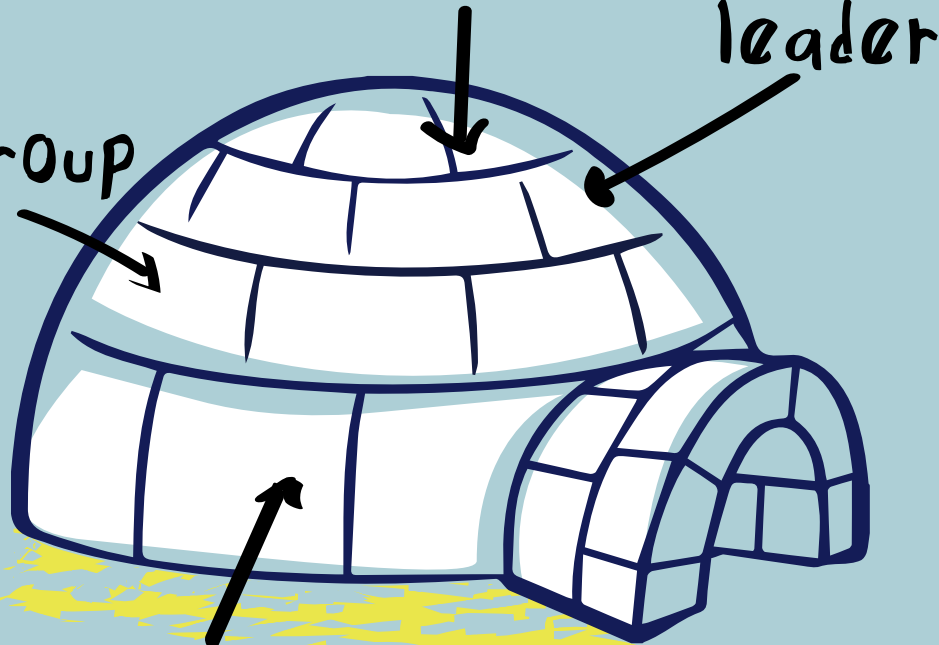
your IGLOO

staying mentally healthy at work
during the Covid-19 outbreak

individual

leader

group



organisation

Guide for Human Resource Professionals

What can you do to help your employees stay mentally healthy at work during the Covid-19 outbreak?

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a profound impact on the world of work. We are facing unprecedented challenges and many people are struggling to cope with the demands from work and home. People may be worried and concerned about health, finances or job security, they may be isolated from others and unable to perform their usual routines. These concerns are normal. In fact did you know that even before the outbreak 1 in 6 people experience mental ill health?

This guide is designed for Human Resource professionals to support employees, and those that work with them, to stay mentally healthy at work during the Covid-19 outbreak. It draws from the latest evidence to outline what works, and what does not, when it comes to working productively when experiencing stress.

We can't do everything on our own. To stay mentally healthy we often need help from others. Colleagues, friends and family, line managers and others can help the individual build their **IGLOO**. Remember, an employee with strong resources is much more likely to stay in and be productive at work.

What is stress, anxiety and depression?

Mental health is complicated. Everyone's experience of mental health is slightly different. It is sometimes difficult to tell whether someone is experiencing stress, anxiety or depression. A really important sign is a change in the person's behaviour – are they behaving differently? Here are some of the common signs and signals:

- Behavioural signs – struggling with workload, low levels of concentration and focus, difficulty in organising, low productivity, negative attitude, changes in motivation.
- Emotional signs – feeling anxious or irritable, mood changes, changes in how you interact with colleagues, too much emotion, feeling isolated or socially withdrawn.
- Physical signs – tiredness, having sleepless nights, increased drinking and/or smoking, not feeling hungry, headaches.

When employees are supported at work, they are better able to manage their mental health. Use this guide to give you examples of ways you could make your employees feel safe, valued and productive at work.



For more details on signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression, and the possible impact on work – visit [Every Mind Matters](#)

Understanding your IGLoo

We all need other people to help us stay happy and healthy. Everyone has their own set of resources inside and outside of work. We call this your **IGLoo**. Your **IGLoo** is made up of different resources that help you:

individual resources – like confidence, self-care and looking after your basic needs (e.g. eat, sleep, move, connect)

group resources – help from colleagues, friends and family

leader resources – help from your line manager, GPs or service provider

organisational resources – help provided by your organisation, volunteer groups or charities

The IGLoo for staying mentally healthy at work during the Covid-19 outbreak includes:

At home, the following actions help employees	Resources	At work, the following help employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritising self-care and looking after basic needs ● Establishing clear boundaries between work and leisure time 	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating structure in the working day – set out your working hours, break times, divide up tasks into smaller components ● Identifying your work priorities – what must be done today, what can wait
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding from others ● Receiving non-judgmental support ● Staying connected 	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing feedback on tasks to colleagues ● Giving help when doing challenging tasks ● Maintaining social and informal contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessing health and wellbeing advice and support <p>If employees are experiencing mental health concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having a consistent point of contact e.g. GP ● Facilitating links to external services and treatment 	Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensuring the necessary equipment to work safely is provided ● Communicating work demands e.g. workload, prioritising job tasks ● Giving control over the way the work is done ● Providing emotional and practical support ● Promoting positive working relationships in the team ● Communicating the organisation's response to Covid-19 ● Exploring work adjustments where appropriate e.g. working hours, review of job tasks ● Being available to employees but not intrusive ● Agreeing what information about an employee's current situation is communicated to colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to health and wellbeing advice and support <p>If employees are experiencing mental health concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessing work-focused counselling 	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing a safe physical work environment ● Providing flexible working practices and leave policies ● Providing work-focused counselling ● Establishing a culture where mental health and physical health are prioritised

How strong is their IGL00?

Use the checklist here to see what you can do to help your employee build their **IGL00**.

1. Look at the checklist. Read the statements in the 'Do I...' column. Think about whether you would answer 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes'. Mark your answer in the column.
2. Use the checklist here to test the strength of your contribution to your employee's **IGL00**. If you answer yes to these questions, you help your employee build a strong **IGL00**. If you answer 'sometimes' or 'no' think about whether they might like your help.
3. What else could you do? If you answer 'sometimes' or 'no' what could you do to make this part of their **IGL00** stronger? It may be something you need to do, you need someone else to help you do, or you need to ask for.
4. How do you make this happen? Think about what you can do to make this happen. Need help and advice? Ask colleagues, GP, Human Resources, Occupational Health, charities/support groups or union reps.

Remember...

For many people, working during the Covid-19 outbreak is not easy, but having support can make a huge difference.

If you are not sure what your employee or line managers would find helpful, ask them. Talk through the checklist with them and identify some concrete actions that you can take to help them build their **IGL00**.

Resources	Location	Do I...?	Do I... Yes, No, Sometimes	I need to... If you answered "sometimes" or "no", what else would be helpful?	I can make this happen by... Need help and advice? Ask, Occupational Health, colleagues, line managers, charity/ support groups, union reps
Individual	Work	Help create structure in the working day – e.g. divide up tasks into smaller components?			
		Help the employee identify work priorities – what must be done today, what can wait?			
	Home	Encourage the employee to prioritise self-care?			
		Ensure the employee has clear boundaries between work and leisure?			
Group	Work	Encourage the team to provide feedback on tasks to build confidence?			
		Encourage the team to help out when doing challenging tasks?			
		Encourage the team to maintain social and informal contact?			
Leader	Work	Ensure line managers: Check that employees have the necessary equipment to work safely?			
		Communicate work demands e.g. workload, job tasks?			
		Give control over the way the work is done?			
		Provide emotional and practical support?			
		Promote positive working relationships in the team?			
		Communicate the organisation's response to Covid-19?			
		Explore work adjustments where appropriate e.g. working hours, review of job tasks?			
		Are available to employees but not intrusive?			
Organisational	Work	Provide a safe work environment?			
		Communicate the policies for flexible working and leave so that I can share them if needed?			
		Provide work-focused counselling for flexible working and leave so that I can share them if needed?			
		Support a culture where mental health and physical health are prioritised?			

NB. While you can't influence the support employees receive outside of work, if you know that the employee is experiencing difficulties outside work, this could make the group support in work, or access to an EAP service, even more important for them.

Where to go for further information

Mental health

Every Mind Matters

Mind

Mental Health Foundation

Time to talk

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

www.mind.org.uk

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

take-time-to-talk.com

Professional bodies

CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)

www.cipd.co.uk

IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health)

www.iosh.co.uk

www.hse.gov.uk

HSE (Health and Safety Executive)

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1461

DRC (Disability Rights Commission)

www.drc.org.uk

SOM (Society of Occupational Medicine)

www.som.org.uk

Managing mental health at work:

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/coronavirus-and-isolation-supporting-yourself-and-your-colleagues/>

Biographies

Professor Karina Nielsen is Director of the Institute of Work Psychology, University of Sheffield. Her research focuses on the design, implementation and evaluation of organizational interventions in the field of organizational health.



Dr Joanna Yarker is Director of Affinity Health at Work, a workplace wellbeing consultancy. Her work uses evidence based approaches to improve health and wellbeing at work for employees, teams, managers and organisations.



About these Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed by a research team from Sheffield University, in partnership with Affinity Health at Work. The guidance has been developed using the latest research to inform our understanding of what works to help people stay safe and productive at work while managing mental ill-health. It builds on research funded by the Productivity Insights Network, a multidisciplinary network funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Supported by a diverse steering group of subject matter experts, practitioners, policy makers, employers and employees who have returned following mental ill-health, the research team followed 38 employees who had returned to work following a period of absence, and 20 line managers who had managed a returning employee. Using thematic analysis, the team identified the resources that employees reported helped them stay and be productive at work. Once the interviews had been analysed the steering group supported the design of the guidelines presented here. This guidance has been updated with reference to research and practice in the areas of the prevention and rehabilitation.



The University Of Sheffield.



productivity insights network

