

**STAFF HEALTH
& WELLBEING
GUIDANCE**
linked to
**CORONAVIRUS
(COVID-19)**

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1 Supporting EA Staff at this time

EA has developed this resource to support staff health and wellbeing during this time of uncertainty. There is a particular focus on supporting staff to take proactive self-care linked to the following circumstances

- EA staff working in critical areas
- EA staff working from home
- Line managers supporting staff remotely

To assist staff EA has introduced

- A range of alternative working arrangements including; homeworking where possible and alternative working patterns and minimal staffing arrangements as appropriate
- Remote meetings including new technologies e.g. Zoom to ensure staff can stay in touch
- A new Health and Wellbeing online digital solution, EA Health Well, providing a wide range of support linked to COVID-19 and other wellbeing matters <https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/>
- COVID-19 Frequently asked Questions - the latest version is available at <https://www.eani.org.uk/covid-19-questions-and-answers>
- Pay and Absence Guidance linked to COVID-19 - the latest version is available at <https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Guidance%20on%20Absence%20-%202020%20March%202020.pdf>

During these unprecedented times it is more important than ever to make the extra effort to stay both mentally and physically well. This resource aims to offer support, helpful hints and tips about how best to cope with the now and moving forward in a positive and proactive fashion.

We have a range of staff all managing their own individual circumstances linked to this pandemic. The need to manage our anxiety levels and stay well has never been more important. This resource contains helpful signposting for those experiencing high of levels of anxiety and/or stress during this challenging time.

2. PHA Latest Advice



How to Prevent Catching & Spreading Coronavirus (Covid - 19)

Follow these tips to prevent yourself from catching Covid-19, or potentially spreading the virus to others

How to Prevent Catching The Virus



Wash your hands properly and often (as per PHA Guidance)



Avoid touching your eyes and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw out the tissue.
Catch it, Bin it, Kill it.

How to Prevent Spreading the Virus



Disinfect surfaces that you touch. Wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds.



Avoid close contact with other people. Use a tissue to cover your mouth, if you do not have a tissue sneeze into your elbow.



Stay at home while you are sick.



Monitor your symptoms and seek medical attention if your symptoms worsen.

For further information on how to stay safe please see below

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): UK Government response [CLICK HERE](#)
- World Health Organisation COVID-19 advice for the Public [CLICK HERE](#)
- Northern Ireland Advice from the Public Health Agency [CLICK HERE](#)

3. Self-help Strategies during social distancing

Earlier this year EA launched its first all staff focused Health and Wellbeing Strategy. In light of COVID-19 we have developed some tailored health and wellbeing advice linked to the strategy's key health intervention themes.



THEME 1 - Supporting Healthy Minds

1. **Spend time** doing things you enjoy e.g. reading, cooking or other stimulating hobbies.
2. **Mood.** Long periods of time at indoors can affect one's mood and motivation levels. Try to get plenty of fresh air. Spend time outside e.g. in the garden in keeping with social distancing requirements.
3. **Know yourself.** Draw upon your own skills that have helped you through previous life challenges - they will be a great asset to help you manage your emotions during this time.
4. **Manage your expectations.** Be flexible with your time – this is a new world and you are juggling many new challenges. Show compassion for your family, friends and colleagues as they are all dealing with this unprecedented challenge in their own way.
5. **Book and make use of your annual leave** (where possible) to ensure you take time to invest in your wellbeing and re-energise.
6. **Take Notice.** This is one of the NHS's Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing. Taking time to be observant, pause, savour 'the moment' and take notice, will broaden your awareness and help you reflect on life priorities and what is important to you. Work on being more aware of the world around you as research shows that being aware of what is currently taking place and appreciating the present can enhance your self-understanding and help you make positive choices.

Take some time to enjoy the present, the moment and environment around you today by:

Observe what is pleasant about your surroundings

Notice what is beautiful, new, unusual or extraordinary in your life

Take notice of others feelings or behaviours

Clear some clutter

Get a plant for your workspace etc...

7. Stay mentally active/ keep learning. Setting challenges and goals and engaging in adult learning has been found to improve wellbeing. So continue learning and take on a new challenge. Some examples are provided below:

- Rediscover an old hobby
- Sign up for an online course
- Learn a new language
- Learn to play an instrument
- Cook new foods
- Offer to take on a different responsibility in work
- Read a book
- Set up a virtual book club
- Access 'How to' videos online to learn a new craft or hobby
- Listen to Podcasts

8. Managing Anxiety

- Get the right information. Only follow news and updates from trusted sources for example real experts, government and NHS websites. This can help reduce some unnecessary anxiety and fear. Know and understand the guidance around social distancing inside and outside of the workplace
- Limit the amount of time watching the news, media coverage and checking for updates – this can add to anxiety.
- Consider turning off some of your notifications e.g. on social media if you are finding the information overload overwhelming

If you are feeling overly concerned and need additional help to manage your anxiety, you can also try practicing the following **APPLE** technique (encourages you to Acknowledge, Pause, Pull back, Let go and Explore)

ACKNOWLEDGE - Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.

PAUSE - Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Just pause and breathe.

PULL BACK - Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.

LET GO - Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.

EXPLORE - Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.

When you are anxious, don't forget you can:

Ask for help - don't feel embarrassed to seek help for your mental health

Access free 24/7 counselling

<https://www.inspirewellbeing.org/>

Tel: 0808 800 0002

Access the EA Health Well Hub

<https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/>

Make contact with the Health and Wellbeing team

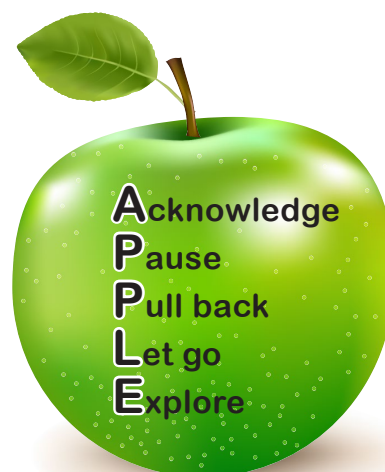
<https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-staff-hub/hr-online/health-wellbeing>

Complete an online Mindfulness class through the Health Well Hub

<https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/news/mind/daily-mindfulness-sessions-ea-staff>

APPLE

A mindful response to thoughts





THEME 2 - Supporting Healthy Bodies

LIFESTYLE

1. Maintain a healthy lifestyle and routine. See Tips to support you while you Work from Home (section 4)

NUTRITION AND HYDRATION

2. Eat healthy and well-balanced meals, drink plenty of water. To avoid unnecessary journeys (in line with government instruction) and to support healthy nutrition, remember to plan your shopping effectively.

PRIORITISE SLEEP

3. Sleep is crucial to help you both physically to be more alert and mentally to cope with this period of uncertainty.

MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE EXERCISE LEVELS

4. Often in period of uncertainty and stress one can deprioritise the need for regular exercise. In periods of lifestyle restriction exercise is an important way to keep the body healthy, ensure good energy levels and support the mind. Adequate exercise is essential to supporting wellbeing, lowers depression and slows down cognitive decline. Engage in regular exercise that suits your level of mobility e.g. go for a controlled walk, a run, cycle, play a game, do some gardening or dance.

OTHER IDEAS

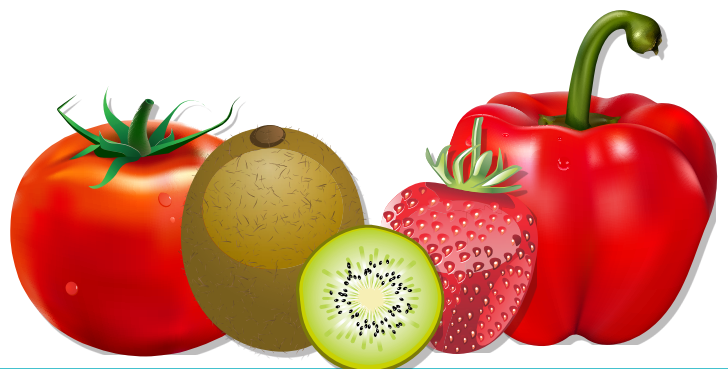
5. Why not try some:
 - Online workout videos
 - Yoga
 - Body Balance
 - TiK ToK with your children
 - Walk to the local shop for essential supplies
 - Run up and down the stairs
 - Skipping outdoors
 - Create a circuit of exercise in your garden

SUBSTANCES

6. Try to avoid or limit substances which can have a negative effect on the body or mind e.g. Smoking, alcohol and drugs. *See section 6 for more information on support for substance related addiction.*

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

7. Keep your windows open to ensure regular ventilation and get some natural sunlight
8. When working from home ensure your workstation is setup up correctly to support good posture - *see Appendix A*





THEME 3 - Social Health

STAYING CONNECTED

Notably one of the NHS's Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing. Social relationships are fundamental to one's wellbeing. Therefore in times of social limits we need to make extra efforts to connect by other means with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

Embracing the lively virtual social scene is one way to improve this. Use the multiple online platforms to stay connected.

Social distancing does not mean social disconnecting!

Effective forms of communication during social distancing include

- Use FaceTime/ Whatsapp / Skype / Zoom or other online platforms to see people in real time
- Email
- Telephone
- Use instant messaging / chats

Whilst your priority will be contact with family and close friends you could use this as an opportunity to reach out to those you have been meaning to contact for some time.

Those working from home should utilise some of these channels to stay in touch with colleagues as required.



Social distancing does not mean social disconnecting!



THEME 4 - Giving Back

Getting involved in acts of kindness is proven to increase wellbeing and provides further opportunities to connect with people. In the current global pandemic, there is no shortage of acts of kindness and opportunities you can engage in to help others, for e.g.

- Volunteer within relevant Educational settings linked to the Education Minister's direction to provide support to key workers
- Offer to support a neighbour or the vulnerable in self-isolation by picking up groceries and prescriptions (while still following guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19)

More information on how you can get involved in supporting the NHS will be provided shortly.



THEME 5 - Financial Wellbeing

For some the COVID-19 pandemic will have presented or added to their financial worries.

It looks like the COVID-19 impact will be felt for some time and there's still a lot of uncertainty as we move forward. The more you can do now to plan ahead will save you time and energy – and importantly, money!

To help you get started, EA has added a number of resources to EA Health Well which is available to all staff via your device or PC.

All of these resources have been provided in response to this pandemic by local expert sources such as Advice NI, The Money Advice Service, the Consumer Council and more.

Some useful links have been provided below;

<https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/news/financial-health/coronavirus-and-your-money>

<https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/news/financial-health/coronavirus-important-consumer-advice-travel-home-energy-and-lots-more>

<https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/news/financial-health/understanding-universal-credit-awareness-sessions>

<https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/content/budget-planner>



4. Tips to support you while you Work from Home

Working remotely or from home presents new challenges and potential stress and anxiety. While we adjust to this new way of working, please find a series of tips to create a new work day routine to help you during this evolving time:

BUILD A NEW ROUTINE

- Get Ready for work at your usual time
- Get dressed (even for working from home)
- Establish a space at home to work from
- Plan your day or week - Structure the tasks you are going to do for the day/week in advance and give yourself goals for each day
- Organise a new plan for what your regular work day looks like. Ensure scheduled 'work time' as well as scheduled time to stop -'check out' time. Define your after-hours, so that you can draw the line
- Building clarity around your workload will help people spend less time thinking about it and being anxious when it is mapped out
- Take time away from your desk - take some time away from the screen
- Consider swapping your normal commute travel time for a walk (while maintaining social distancing), some fresh air or breakfast in the garden
- Check-in with your colleagues - Learn the language of emoji's. Find out how your colleagues are doing
- Take regular breaks to avoid burnout - get up and move about regularly
- Tell your colleagues when you plan to go offline as this will help minimise disruptions
- When at work, stay focussed as this will help navigate through this challenge.

There are also a series of helpful tips and guidance to support you in setting up for remote working successfully.

A number of tips are included to aid line managers in supporting their teams to work remotely.

Please see the following infographic for helpful tips and suggestions.

Making Remote Working Successful



Get ready for Successful Remote working

Options to consider for remote working



Scheduling multiple teams to take turns at working remotely and in the office - rotational to cover key functions



All individuals and teams work remotely

Making Remote working a success with your team

- 1 Establish team NORMS to maximise rapport**
Hold a Team Norms session to set expectations on availabilities, behaviours and preferred methods of communications
- 2 Create Clear mission and goals**
Agree objectives and key results via online tools and agree how individuals / team will deliver these
- 3 Create the right workspace environment**
Arrange access to good internet connection, a dedicated workspace to ensure high quality communication with limited distractions

Remember to still try team building e.g.

- Establish regular Coffee over Skype calls
- Share survival tips
- Use Netflix Party to watch a movie together
- Play an online game
- Share comical Quarantine games
- Start a book club

5 Tips for Successful Remote working

Plan work for remote working and team working

Employees now need clearer goals, tasks, milestones and transparency than ever before. Hold people accountable but don't micro-manage.

Over-communicate for Team Engagement

Communicate at regular & scheduled intervals - swap emails for more video/Skype and phone calls to engage remote employees face to face and one to one communications - use your cameras.

Check-in without checking up. Ask how they are feeling/doing & if they need any help. Add the personal touch outside of emails. Consider ways to build and support morale remotely.

Maximise the use of Technology tools

Use the right mix of tools that enables effective remote collaboration based on what needs to be done.

Continuously Align

Utilise scheduled and ad-hoc meetings to ensure continuous alignment and information sharing.

Become Overly Transparent on Feedback

Gather Feedback internally and externally to improve ways of working and deliver better value.

5. Other Social Distancing Hints and Tips

SOCIAL DISTANCING AT WORK

Know and be familiar with the Do's and Don'ts of Social Distancing while in the workplace.

Social Distancing in the Workplace

Social distancing means avoiding close contact with others to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and include:



Sitting at least 2 meters apart if you are in the office, leave spare desks in between if you can



Limiting, postponing, or cancelling all face to face meetings



Remote / Work from home, where possible, limit the time you do attend the office



Conducting meetings virtually but keep in touch with line managers and team members



No non essential travel



Stick to all Government advice and guidance with regards to exercise and shopping etc

Staff Must Not:



Come to work if you are experiencing symptoms, please check PHA website



Congregate with other staff for any reason



Crowd another colleague's space - maintain 2 metres at all times



Make food, tea/coffee for other colleagues



Access areas that have been sealed off without prior approval of the duty manager

Help contain the spread of the coronavirus, keep up to date with EA information at www.eani.org.uk/staff

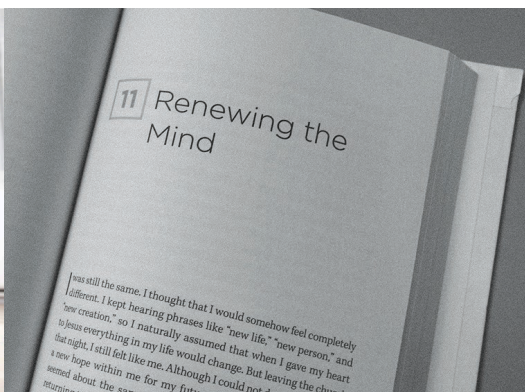
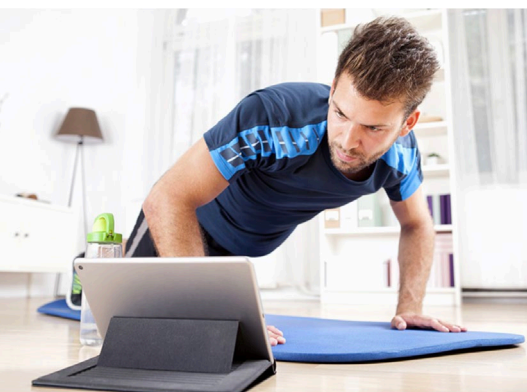


In addition to social distancing there are other vital ways that you can help to prevent catching and spreading COVID-19. *Refer back to Section 2 for more information.*

POSITIVE THINGS TO DO WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

In addition to the suggestions above, here are a number of suggestions which will support your wellbeing through engaging in positive activity while maintaining Social Distancing guidelines:

- Family time
- Board Games
- Meditation
- Journaling – your thoughts, a daily brain dump, reflections
- Have a Bath
- Exercise – see section 3 theme 2
- Starting a project e.g. handmade cards
- Chores
- Listen to Music
- Gratitude Exercise
- Arts & Crafts
- Dancing
- Positive Quotes
- 5 Minute Breathing exercise
- Painting by numbers
- Colouring in for grown ups



6. Helpful Contacts and relevant EA Community Partners

URGENT HELP

- Samaritans – 116 123
- Lifeline – 0808 808 8000
- Childline – 0800 1111
- Social Services – 030001 000 300
- Inspire Wellbeing (free 24/7 counselling) <https://www.inspirewellbeing.org/> Tel: 0808 800 0002

OTHER SUPPORT

- Employers for DisabilityNI - Advice for groups with specific mental health needs during the coronavirus situation - <http://efdni.org/2020/03/30/advice-for-groups-with-specific-mental-health-needs-during-coronavirus-situation/>
- EA Health Well Hub - <https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/>
- EA Health and Wellbeing team - <https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-staff-hub/hr-online/health-wellbeing>
- Aware NI are also offering online support groups - <https://www.aware-ni.org/how-we-can-help-you/aware-ni-online-support-groups>
- Mental Health Foundation - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>
- Support you and your family - <http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk>
- Womens Aid NI - <https://www.womensaidni.org/domestic-violence/what-is-domestic-violence/>
- Support for your Mental Health - <https://www.mindingyourhead.info/>

Anxiety UK <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/products/anxiety-condition/health-anxiety/health-anxiety-fact-sheet-instant-download/> Contact Anxiety UK by email (support@anxietyuk.org.uk) or by calling the helpline on 03444 775 774 between the opening hours of 9.30am – Public Health Agency's Minding Your Head service at <https://www.mindingyourhead.info/>

If you are feeling concerned or overly worried there are some techniques you can use to help manage your anxiety such as simple breathing or (short-term) distraction exercises and mindfulness. A free guide is available to download from the organisation, Anxiety UK <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/products/booklet/breathing-and-relaxation-guide/>

Appendix A

Correct setup for workstations to support good posture

POSTURE TIPS FOR LAPTOP USERS

Here are some ways you can make your laptop safer and more comfortable to use:

- use a separate keyboard and mouse so the laptop can be put on a stand and the screen opened at eye level
- use your laptop on a stable base where there is support for your arms, and not on your lap
- take regular breaks. If you're moving, there's a lot less stress on your muscles and joints
- sit properly with lower back support, and ensure other desk equipment is within reach
- get into good habits before the aching starts. Neck, shoulder and back problems gradually build up over time

For more information click here <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/posture-tips-for-laptop-users/>

