



Managing Remote Workers: The IOSH Approach

Ruth Wilkinson

Head of Health and Safety, IOSH

Who are IOSH

Professional body

A not for profit organisation holding a Royal Charter that exists for the public good

Employer,
SME, engage
with
volunteers

Thought leader

Underpinned by research, expertise and understanding around occupational safety and health



Membership organisation

Supporting a global network of 47,000 members in 130 countries

Enabler

helping organisations around the world to excel in safety and health

Responding

Initial preparedness and response to Covid-19



Business continuity arrangements mobilised (operational, tactical and strategic response)

Also...

Following Government advice daily regarding travel, preventative measures, etc



Daily monitoring at strategic level, risk assessments undertaken



Communication to relevant persons initiated e.g. position statements produced for employees, volunteers, IOSH events, FAQ for employees and managers, etc



Scenario planning and preparedness



Response plan to cover:

- Compliance with Government advice
- All vulnerable groups to work from home
- *All workers who could work from home to work from home*
- *'Essential work'*

Challenges of working from home

Change in work arrangements e.g. some teams never home work, some ad hoc, some contracted, etc



Reduced access to organisational information

Differing home situations/ workstation set-up e.g. childcare, carers



Limited face-to-face contact

Multiple or moving work locations



Workers facing uncertainty

Adapting to a new working environment

Home working and assessment



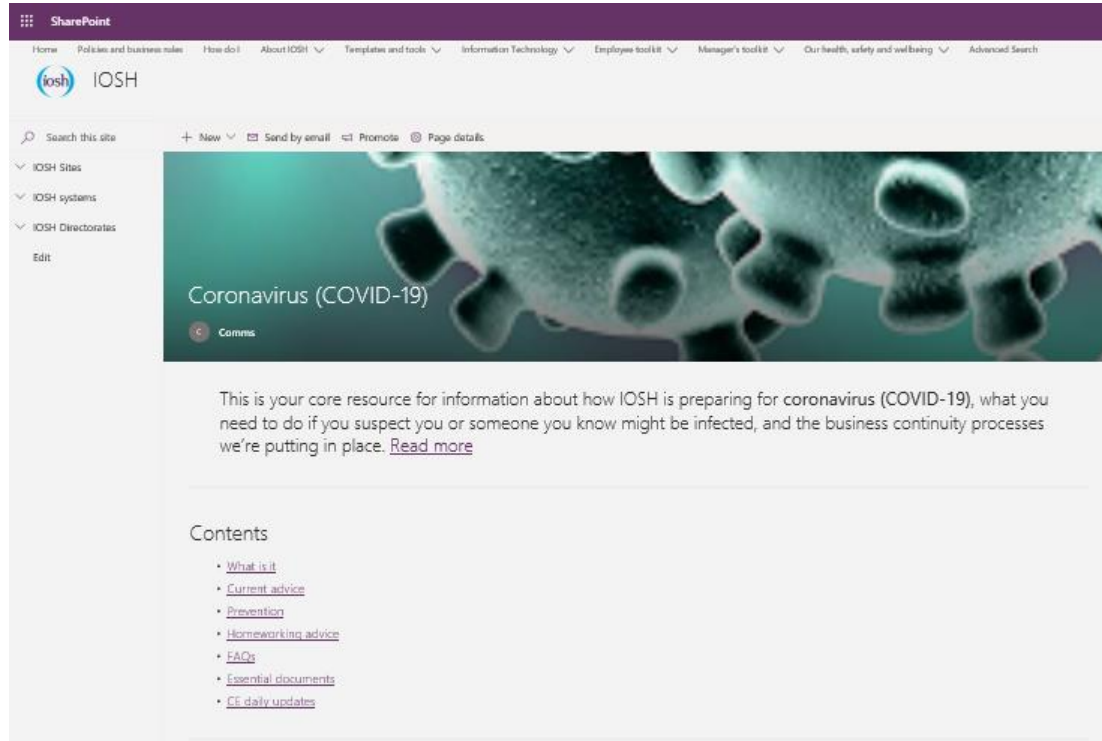
Action taken

Overview of action taken in response to the challenges



Action taken

Specific actions



SharePoint

Home Policies and business rules How do I About IOSH Templates and tools Information Technology Employee toolkit Manager's toolkit Our health, safety and wellbeing Advanced Search

iosh IOSH

Search this site + New Send by email Promote Page details

IOSH Sites
IOSH systems
IOSH Directorates
Edit

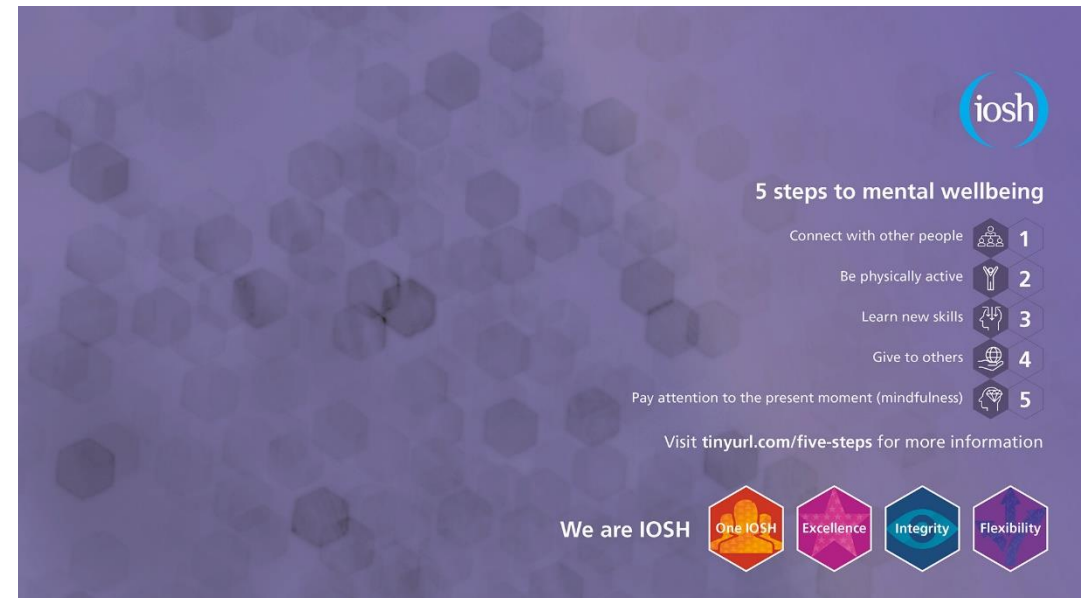
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Comms

This is your core resource for information about how IOSH is preparing for coronavirus (COVID-19), what you need to do if you suspect you or someone you know might be infected, and the business continuity processes we're putting in place. [Read more](#)

Contents

- [What is it](#)
- [Current advice](#)
- [Prevention](#)
- [Homeworking advice](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Essential documents](#)
- [CI daily updates](#)



iosh

5 steps to mental wellbeing

- 1 Connect with other people
- 2 Be physically active
- 3 Learn new skills
- 4 Give to others
- 5 Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Visit tinyurl.com/five-steps for more information

We are IOSH

- One IOSH
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Flexibility

Action taken

Specific actions

FAQs for employees

Learn more →

FAQs for managers

Learn more →

Health and Safety Home Working Advice



Managing Wellbeing and Mental Health in Remote Workers



Action has been taken to support and enable our employers to work remotely from home where possible. This supports the Government's Action Plan and Response for Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) but it could also have negative consequences for worker wellbeing and mental health.

Here are some organisational considerations to manage and prevent the potential for negative wellbeing or mental ill-health. The suggestions will have either direct or indirect consequences:

From the Organisation

1. Communication is key:

| IOSH External Advice | | Application within IOSH |
|--|---|---|
| Communicate the organisational plan | <i>Be open and honest with all workers and ensure clarity. The workers have a right to know what the organisation is doing to help protect its workers, their families and friends, and the organisation itself.</i> | Within IOSH our Chief Executive has regularly been communicating with us, and communication is currently daily via an email, also daily via IOSH Today, and through other means such as via our SLT structure, WLT-O and Workplace. |
| Keep in regular contact with remote workers | <i>This will help to avoid feelings of isolation and loneliness. It's a good way to ensure that workers are well supported and that any issues are presented to them.</i> | We have various methods you could use, such as Zoom, Jabber, etc. Why not make the Zoom team meeting a regular catch-up to aid engagement? It is important to ensure you are available to support them. |
| Use a variety of methods of communication | <i>Teleconference-based calling should be the preferred method. This can be supplemented with other methods such as video, audio, and text. Although, telephone, email and social media engagement may still be used to supplement communication.</i> | Utilise all options, however, do not lose the human contact and the visual feedback that can be gained. When working from home, ensure you are aware of family situations/impacts. |
| Use social distancing for | <i>Ensure must-have group meetings and engagements follow government social distancing advice. This may</i> | Due to working from home we are applying this, and employees can find |

Managing Wellbeing and Mental Health in...

Click to view →

Top five ways to look after your mental health and wellbeing while working from home



1. Look after and listen to your own mental and physical health and wellbeing:

- *Maintain a healthy lifestyle* - e.g. regular exercise, healthy eating, getting enough good quality sleep, and prevent reliance on smoking, alcohol and/or drugs; get fresh air where possible
- *Look for ways to maintain contact with family and friends* - if you cannot visit them, consider using Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, phone or text.
- *Utilise support mechanisms* - IOSH provides an Employee Assistance Programme if you would like to talk to someone independently about any matter.
- *Stay connected and communicate* - stay connected with your manager and team and ensure regular communication with them. Remember to also do this for non-work talk to have those social interactions you would have had in the office.
- *Try new things and look for new ways to connect* - there are many options online to connect with others, including groups, book clubs, learning, virtual museum tours, virtual theatre shows, and more.
- *Monitor your health* - look out for any new symptoms and if necessary, check the government / local healthcare information to see how best to respond.
- *Keep 'you' energised* - identify and undertake personal tasks that work for you, such as reading, going for a walk, deep breathing exercises, music, mindfulness, etc. Utilise coping mechanisms that have worked for you in the past, or those you may have picked up through training e.g. resilience and change training.

2. Look after your own health and safety:

- *Stay in contact* - ensure you have arrangements in place to contact your manager while working from home and find ways of staying in contact, for example instant messaging via Jabber, emails and Zoom. It is important to prevent social isolation.
- *Ergonomic principles* - follow the advice provided regarding the ergonomic setup of your workstation and take frequent work breaks. This includes getting up, having a walk, stretching and undertaking exercise.
- *Adjustments* - consider if you require reasonable adjustments. If so, discuss with your line manager, People and/or H&S teams.

3. Maintain your work / life balance:

- *Have a routine, have a plan and take breaks* - The opportunity for work and life to blur into one can present itself when your home becomes your normal place of work. When working from home, be strict with yourself and be clear on your time parameters for work and when you are stopping for 'home' time.
- *Locate your workspace and have the right technology* - Having a set area within your home, that you can walk away from at the end of the working day will help. If possible, ensure you have some natural daylight.
- *Get dressed* - this will help get you into the mindset for work.
- *Speak up* - if your situation changes, dependents are within the house requiring your time, or due to ill-health, have an honest conversation with your manager to identify any impacts, arrangements, etc that can support in these unusual times.

4. Keep up-to-date and avoid misinformation and fake news:

- *Use credible and reliable sources* - During crises such as this, fake news can spread quickly through social media channels. When keeping up to date with the situation, it is important to get your information from credible sources such as IOSH, the World Health Organization, the NHS, and your local government.

5. Talk about how you are feeling:

- *Listen to your own mind and body* - regarding your health and wellbeing and speak up, raise concerns as necessary. This may be to your manager, a member of the People team, Health and Safety team or someone independent from the organisation such as our Employee Assistance Programme. Remember, it is good to talk and do not think you are on your own.

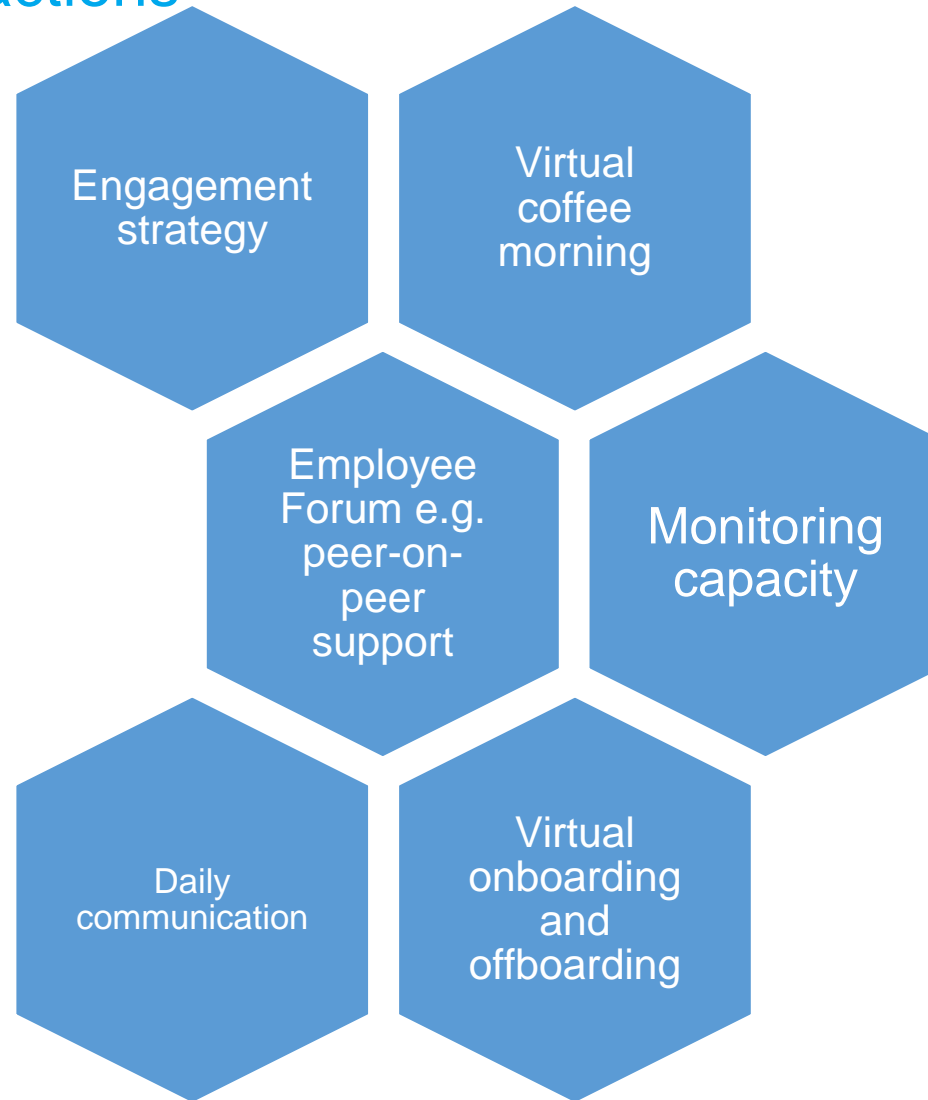


DSE Quick Set Up Guide

Click to view →

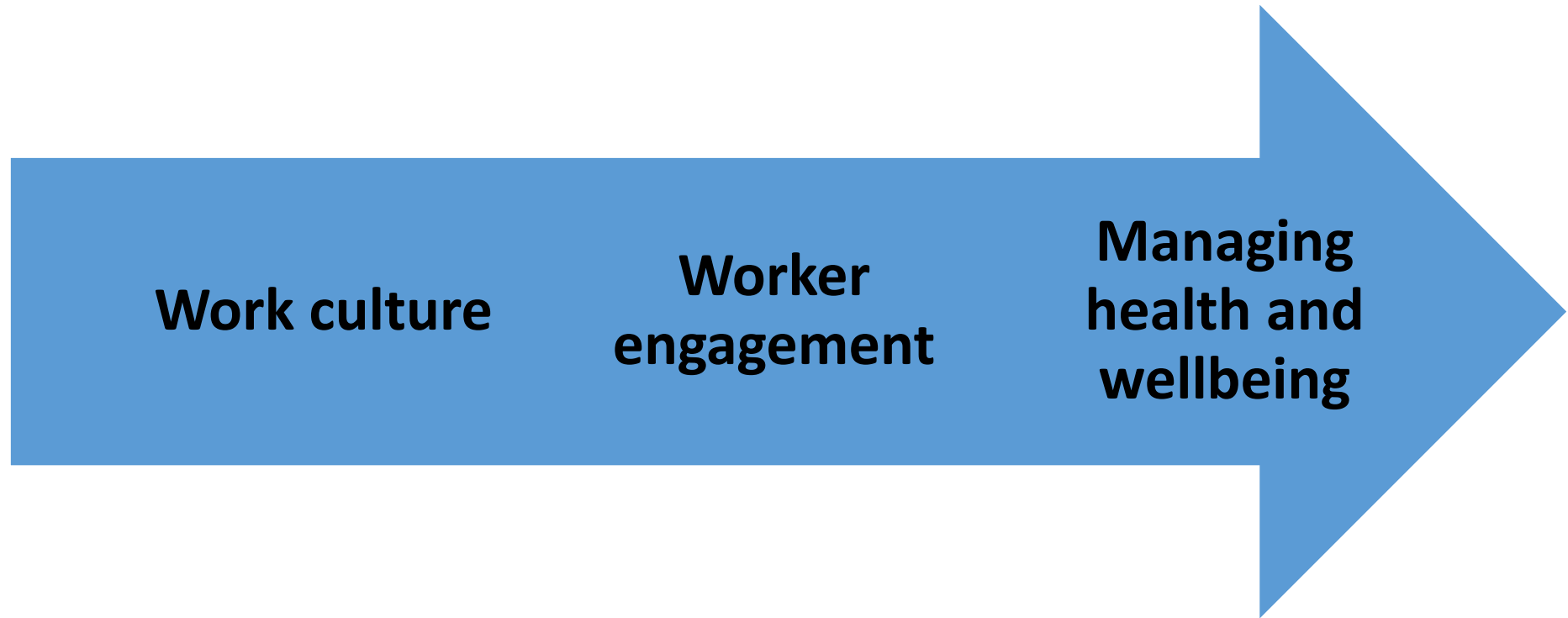
Action taken

Examples of specific actions



Our findings

Areas of focus for senior leadership teams



Our findings

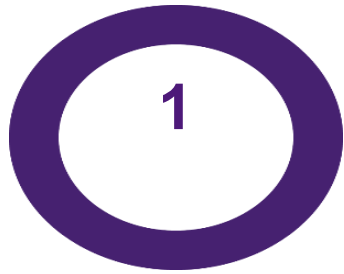
Advice for line managers

Should provide:

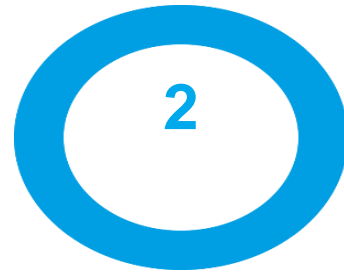
- Competent and motivational leadership
- Regular and clear communication
- Straightforward and adaptable procedures
- Up-to-date and easily available resources
- Establish monitoring and reporting systems

Our findings

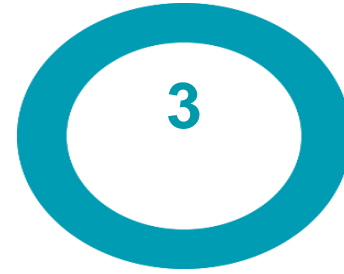
Managers communicating with workers



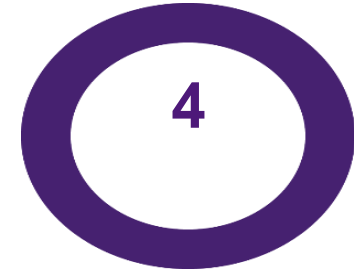
Keep in regular contact



Communicate the organisational plan



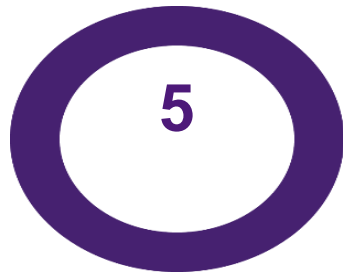
Use varied methods of communication



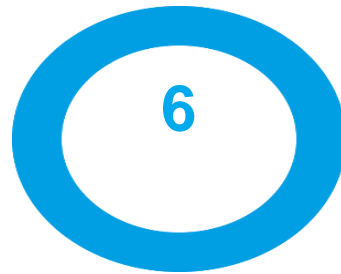
Use social distancing

Our findings

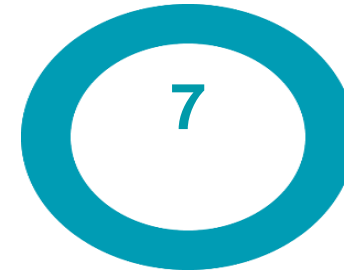
Managers communicating with workers



Provide support
e.g. reasonable
adjustments



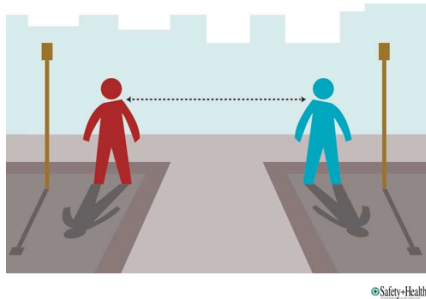
Set boundaries
between
working and
non-working
hours



Encourage
workers to
discuss
wellbeing/
mental ill
health
concerns

The role of the safety and health professional

Role of OSH practitioners in COVID 19



- Assess risks – infectious and non-infectious hazards, develop/update plans for prevention, containment, mitigation, and recovery
- Identify high risk occupational groups, provide risk communication, advice on preventive measures, health surveillance
- Occupational health and safety in alternative work arrangements – teleworking, staged work
- Participate in business continuity plans
- Assess risk, identify, record and follow up occupational exposure
- Provide risk communication and engagement of workers, psycho-social support
- Collaborate with community/public health authorities


WHO presentation with IOSH last week

- Assess risk, identifying vulnerable groups and advising on action
- Identifying and providing advice on preventative and protection measures
- Participating in business continuity plans
- Providing communication and engagement e.g. Government and public health, compassion, support on health, wellbeing resilience/motivation, etc
- Collaborating with other disciplines
- Considering recovery plans


My reality

Our findings


Advice on information gathering



Provide
clear and
factual
information



Encourage
workers to listen
and follow
public health
advice



Advise on
when to seek
public health
information

Further information

- IOSH website: <https://www.iosh.com/resources-and-research/our-resources/communicable-diseases/coronavirus/>
- WHO: Psychological First Aid Guide
https://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/guide_field_workers/en/
- WHO: Mental health and psychological considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf>
- Interagency Standing Committee: Interim Briefing Note Addressing Mental Health and Psychological Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak. Version 1.5.
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-03/IASC%20Interim%20Briefing%20Note%20on%20COVID-19%20Outbreak%20Readiness%20and%20Response%20Operations%20-%20MHPSS_0.pdf

Thank you