

Working from home

A guide on how to do it effectively and enjoyably

Version 2. May 2021

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Purpose: To support AFB colleagues to work from home effectively whilst protecting their health and mental wellbeing



Work From Home

Set-up

How to set up an effective homeworking environment



Staying Focused

How to stay focused when working from home



Health & Wellbeing

How to protect your health and wellbeing when working from home



Managing a Remote Team

How to support and get the best from your team when remote working



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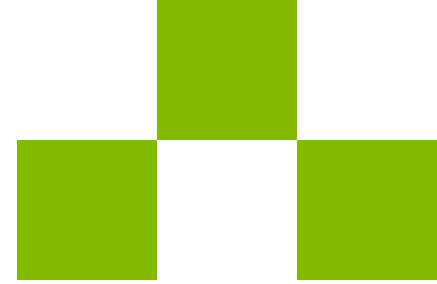




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Home working Set-up



Home working set-up

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Home working set-up

01

An Effective Working Environment

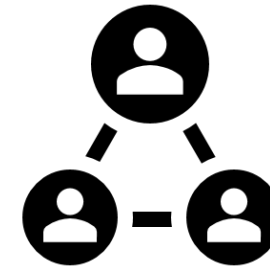
Try and separate your work and home areas if you can. If you can't shut a door on your workspace, try and put away your work tools each evening or cover the area so whilst you are relaxing you aren't reminded of your workplace, and whilst you are working you aren't distracted by your personal belongings.

Make sure you have a space where you can sit comfortably, establishing good posture with natural light and that is large enough for you to have everything you need to hand.

Check on the images below for guidance



Ergonomics



Connecting
with others

TOP TIP

Many blogs have great suggestions for subtle ways of mentally separating work from homelife such as lighting a specific candle during work time only or getting dressed as if you are going to the office.





Ergonomics

TOP TIP

Stand up and stretch regularly. Why not swap a catch-up Teams to a walk and talk call? Remember the YuLife app can help you stay active. Click [here](#) for more info.

Ergonomics

Noun 'the study of people's efficiency in their working environment'.

The most common challenge in homeworking is creating an *effective space* and *correct posture*.

Click on the links on the right for more guidance.

- Use a separate keyboard and mouse so the laptop can be put on a stand and the screen opened at eye level.
Discuss options with your line manager about the need for additional equipment i.e. monitor(s), wireless keyboard & mouse, chairs, desks etc.
- 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

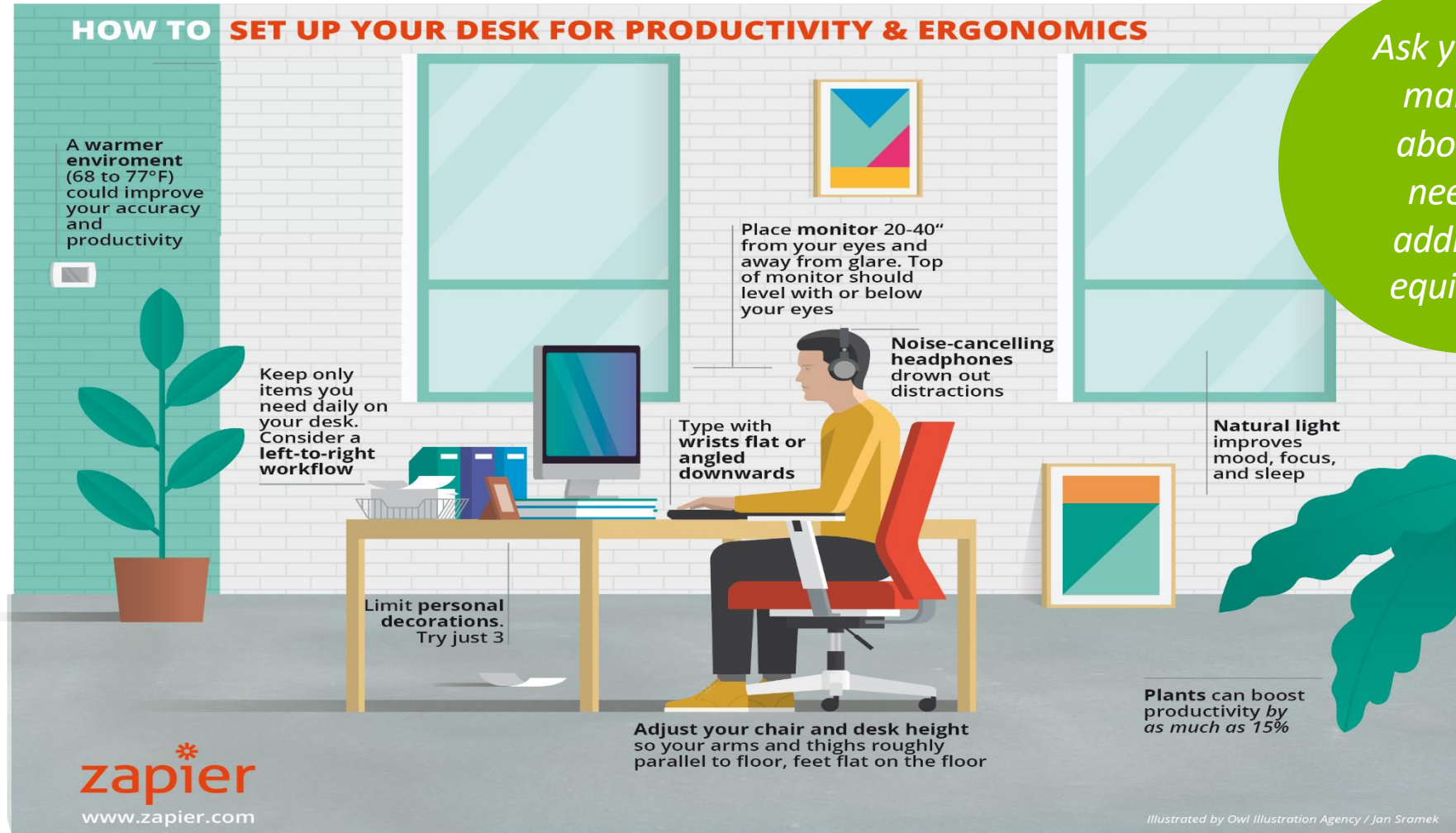




Ergonomics

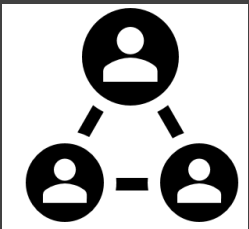
Ergonomics

Noun 'the study of people's efficiency in their working environment'.



Ask your line manager about the need for additional equipment





Connecting
Technologies

Connecting with others

At AFB we predominantly use Microsoft Teams to collaborate, connect and conduct virtual meetings with colleagues. Please use the links below to support you in doing this effectively

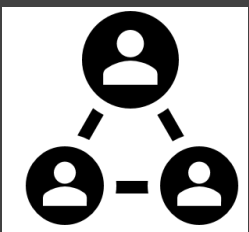


The basics of how to
use Microsoft Teams



Guidelines on
connecting remotely





Connecting
Technologies

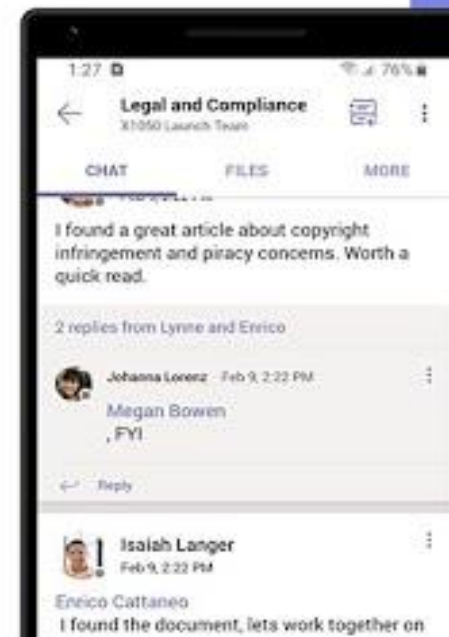
Microsoft Teams



As a business we use Microsoft Teams to conduct video conferencing. For those that have a license for 'Teams' they can set up meetings with their colleagues to stay connected and maintain business objectives. The video and links below will help you get the best from the technology.

Microsoft Teams

Welcome to Teams





Connecting with
Others

Connecting with colleagues

Going to work provides us with social interaction and is often taken for granted as it becomes part of our normal function. Working from home drastically reduces and, in some cases, eliminates this interaction so it's vital that we are proactive in connecting with friends and colleagues, however it's important not to impose video calling and continuous calls on your teams as it can create unnecessary distraction. Please use the guidelines below to help you:



Connect with Colleagues: Why not have a non-business weekly Teams call with your colleagues with the purpose to connect and check in on how they are doing? It can take as little as 15 minutes to catch up with a colleague!



Plan downtime between meetings: Why not book 25 or 50-minute meetings instead? Or at least diarize regular breaks throughout the day so you are not constantly on screen. Ensure you take as a minimum 30 minutes for lunch away from your desk space



Standardise Lunch times: Why not agree with yours and the wider team a standardized time for lunch each day? That way everyone will be off emails and screen at the same time offering a better opportunity for space and respite. It will also send a message to colleagues that's its okay to take a lunch break!

TOP TIP

Have a Friday afternoon clear out of emails?

Why not use the delay sending function in Outlook? That way you will not fill up your colleague's email inbox as they are trying to finish for the weekend





Home working set-up

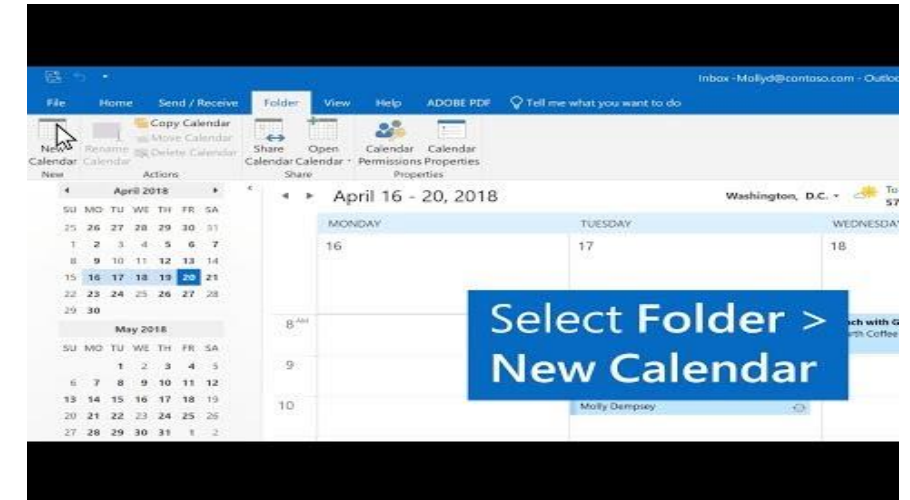
02 Set Boundaries



- Ensure you are out of the box, open and purposeful when discussing the options around homeworking with loved ones, consider baseball as a tool to have the conversation.
- Remember: You don't necessarily have to work the same hours you did in the office, be flexible and realistic based on your home set up and be open to compromise.
- Talk to your line manager or HR about the options and check out our key workplace policies using the link below.



Why not update existing or create a new calendar in Outlook or on your phone for when you are going to start, finish, take breaks, exercise etc. It will provide an important prompt for you when you are in the throes of getting the tasks done. Just note that these will appear as busy in your calendar for anyone suggesting meeting times if you are blocking your whole day out.





Staying Focused

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Staying Focused

01

Create Routine

Previously your commute to and from work provided you with a period of transition, whether that be a walk or a drive. It also provided you with separation and structure, so your mind knew "okay I am now at work and when I leave, I am going home" – home working ultimately does not naturally have that physical dynamic, so you may need to create it



Get Up early: Ideally at the same time you would normally if you were commuting.



Have Breakfast: Its important you fuel your body for the day, enjoy the time with your family without having to rush to beat the traffic!



Exercise: whether this be a walk, run, Yoga, weights etc. for some or all of the period of time you would normally have spent commuting



Go to work: Make the transition from home to office, whether that be a designated space or at the kitchen table and even consider dressing smart /casual!

Remember: It's important to take regular breaks every few hours leaving the workspace, go for a walk, do some stretching etc.





Staying Focused

02

Daily Planning

The 'to do list' is how many of us plan and organise our day. With home working this becomes vitally important, but it does require discipline. You may now need to plan time away from your desk, like taking a break or going for a walk etc. Whilst in an office environment other colleagues will provide behavioural cues on getting a drink or when to take lunch, this won't be present when working from home, so you need to prompt yourself



Create Purpose: Make a list of tasks that you want to achieve that day and don't forget to review it at the end of the day and acknowledge the progress you've made.



Use available software: Use your Outlook Calendar and Tasks within it to help structure your day



Be disciplined: Try and push any calls or Teams meetings to the afternoon

Important: Work to create at least 1 day a week when you have no calls or meetings planned in





Health & Wellbeing

Health & Wellbeing

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Get help now:

24 Hour GP Access
Click [here](#) for details



Click Logo

Free Helpline [08088 021 122](tel:08088021122)
[Live Chat](#) Available 24/7, 365
days a year



Health & Wellbeing

TOP TIP

Why not use the new Leading the Blakemore Way to refresh on the tools and techniques and support you in your mental wellbeing? Click the logo below for details



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01

Promoting Mental Wellbeing



Use support networks

Create the opportunity to connect with others authentically, whether that be around the dinner table with family, a non business related phone or MS Teams call with a colleague(s), it doesn't matter who you connect with provided that you are able to be honest with your thoughts and feelings with them and they are able to give you support, direction in a non-judgemental way.



Process your stress and anxiety

Our minds lie to us and often present an exaggerated or pessimistic view of the world. It's beneficial to our mental wellbeing that we gain perspective on the reality of situations rather than accepted our mind's perception. This can be done in a number of different ways:

- Processing: using the tools of Leading the Blakemore Way i.e. stress generator and verification can provide an opportunity to create clarity and disempower our mindtalk this offers us an opportunity to create purpose and meaning.
- Mindfulness: Taking time out, focussing on our breathing and tuning in to our thoughts and feelings can often inhibit behaviours and attitudes that are not serving us, taking a walk in the fresh air, especially in nature can provide an opportunity to create a different perspective.



Be kind to yourself

When you are not at your best or feel anxious or stressed acknowledge that it is perfectly natural to feel that way, after all we have a range of emotions and is it really realistic to expect you to feel positive and happy all the time? When you have these moments take some time to look after yourself, indulge yourself with some time out, a relaxing bath, a movie, a nice meal something that takes little to no thought or effort.

If you are concerned for your own or others mental health [click here](#) for support and guidance

Helpful
Links

<https://www.rightsteps.co.uk/customers/groceryaid>

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Health & Wellbeing

Mental Health

We all have Mental Health and, just like our physical health, it needs looking after. Often we forget to help our mental health fitness and only concentrate on our physical fitness.

Under normal circumstances, **1 in 4** of us will experience a mental health issue in any given year and estimates suggest that at least one in six workers experience depression, anxiety, or stress-related issues at any one time. COVID has led to a degradation in mental health in addition to this.

Use the links below to support yourself and your colleague's Mental health.



My Mental Health



My Colleague's
Mental Health





Health & Wellbeing

Supporting your own Mental Health

IMPORTANT

If you notice yourself becoming increasingly stressed, depressed or anxious whilst at work, please reach out and seek help.

Contact your doctor or indeed speak to your line manager, a trusted colleague or one of our dedicated Mental Health First Aiders to support or direct you to appropriate help.

Unsure on how you are?

If you experience **4 out of the above 10** symptoms above **within a 2 week period** you could be suffering from depression.

1. An unusually sad mood that does not go away
2. Loss of enjoyment and interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
3. Lack of energy and tiredness
4. Loss of confidence in yourself or low self-esteem
5. Feel guilty when you are not really at fault
6. Suicidal thoughts
7. Difficulty in concentrating or making decisions
8. Bleak or pessimistic views of the future
9. Having difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
10. Loss of interest in food or eating too much leading to either weight loss or gain



MHFA England

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Helpful
Links

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

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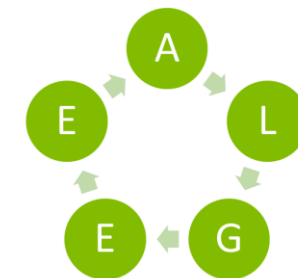




Health & Wellbeing



Supporting the Mental Health of others



TOP TIP

Why not use the new Leading the Blakemore Way to refresh on the tools and techniques and support you in your mental wellbeing? Click the logo below for details



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- To support colleagues if you identify concerns around their mental health we encourage you to follow the Mental Health First Aid for England guidance in using the ALGEE acronym.
- If you don't feel confident in approaching a colleague contact one of the registered Mental Health First Aiders who can support you.
- The Leading the Blakemore Way App will also support you in your leadership and support of others. (see Top Tip)
- Remember we have a fantastic supporting resource through Grocery Aid which gives free access to counsellors and therapist, use the link below for more details.

A

- Approach the person, assess and assist with any crisis

L

- Listen and communicate non-judgementally

G

- Give support and information

E

- Encourage the person to get appropriate professional help

E

- Encourage other supports

Helpful Links

<https://www.groceryaid.org.uk/>



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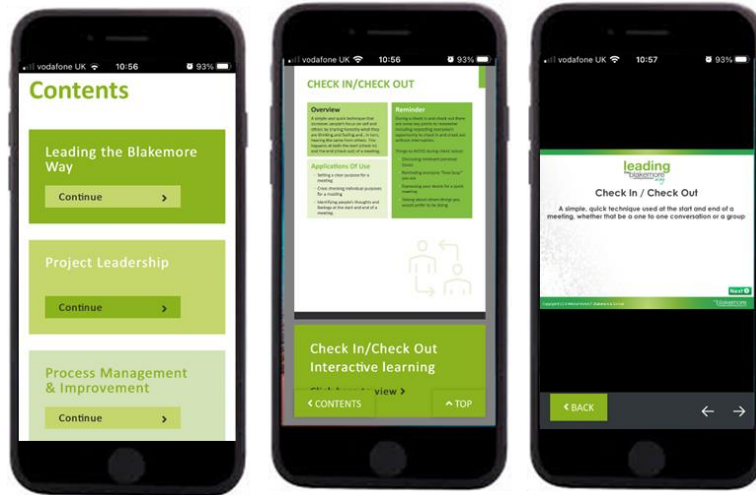
Health & Wellbeing

Take care of Mental Wellbeing

In this current climate there is a lot for your mind to get busy with often resulting in increased levels of anxiety and stress so it's important that you 'tune in' to your state regularly.

'Checking in' with yourself and with others is an important diagnostic and done in an authentic way through conscious breathing, meditation or relaxation exercises gives you the opportunity to choose your mood rather than it be dictated by mind-talk.

To help you why not revisit the tools and techniques of Leading the Blakemore Way via the new App?



Link: <https://www.afblakemore.com/leadership-handbook/>

Password: LTBW1917





Health & Wellbeing

02

Take care of Physical Health

The danger of working at home is that you sit without moving more, so it's important that you make a real effort to stop this. How about a brisk walk, a cycle, a Joe Wicks session with the kids, or a walk with the dog? One of the great things from COVID is the amount of free resources now online there is something for everyone!

Have you checked out the Yulife App?
AFB have partnered with life insurance provider YuLife to offer colleagues access to a 24/7 virtual GP and wellbeing app. You can earn points to spend by logging your walks and taking a daily challenge!

Click the logo below to get started



Our bodies are designed to move, so even short periods of inactivity have an impact. This video focuses on relieving back pain but there are many more exercises that can be accessed on the NHS website.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/>



TOP TIP

The NHS free app Couch to 5k is a firm favourite, or give Adriene Yoga (beginner's 30 day challenge) on YouTube a go!





Remote Team

Managing a Remote Team

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Remote Team

01

Staying Connected

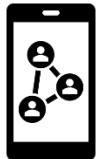
It's important as a leader that you understand and are close to your teams physical and emotional state. The lack of face-to-face supervision and access to information may have them feeling uncertain about what needs to be done or how and if they are doing the right thing. Your team may feel social isolation, loneliness with having no one to talk to or they may have distractions at home, children, lack of working area, household chores etc. Below are a couple of pointers that can support you to support them.



Formal Check-in's: Establish structured daily check-ins – Teams call, phone call, Facetime etc



Informal Check in's: Maybe discuss with your team about having a WhatsApp group? But ensure you establish the do's and don'ts



Have fun!: Provide opportunities for remote social interaction – encourage team calls but to talk about anything other than work, create team games, quizzes etc



Be there: Offer encouragement and emotional support through one 2 ones with your team, listen to concerns and address anything that has come to light.





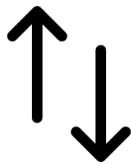
Remote Team

02

Collaboration and Flexibility



Establish the 'Rules of Engagement': Remote work becomes more efficient and satisfying when managers collaborate with their teams, agree and set expectations for the frequency, means, and ideal timing of communications. E.g. no calls between 10am- 3pm.



Be Flexible: Agile working relates to 'where' i.e. working from home, flexible working relates to 'when' – the hours of work. Don't default and impose the hours that teams did in the office when they are working from home unless you have first discussed and agreed it with them individually and established agreement. Rarely do tasks have to be done in the 9-5 window, giving staff some autonomy to work around life at home will improve productivity not reduce it. Be conscious not to eek the working day out to include what used to be the commute time. If you are a manager, be conscious of the hours you are working as whether you realise it or not you will be setting the tone for your department. If you work 7-7 your team will think this is what good looks like.

?0?!

Reacting to a crisis: Employees look to their managers for cues about how to react. If a manager communicates stress and helplessness, this will be mirrored by employees. Effective leaders take a two-pronged approach, both acknowledging the stress and anxiety that employees may be feeling in difficult circumstances, but also providing affirmation of their confidence in their teams, using phrases such as "we've got this," or "this is tough, but I know we can handle it," With this support, employees are more likely to take up the challenge with a sense of purpose and focus.

TOP TIP

Do you know someone is on holiday? If so, does that email really need sending now? Why not use the delay send option and make sure you're explicit on when you're expecting a response: swap I hope you're having a good holiday to I hope you had a good holiday!

