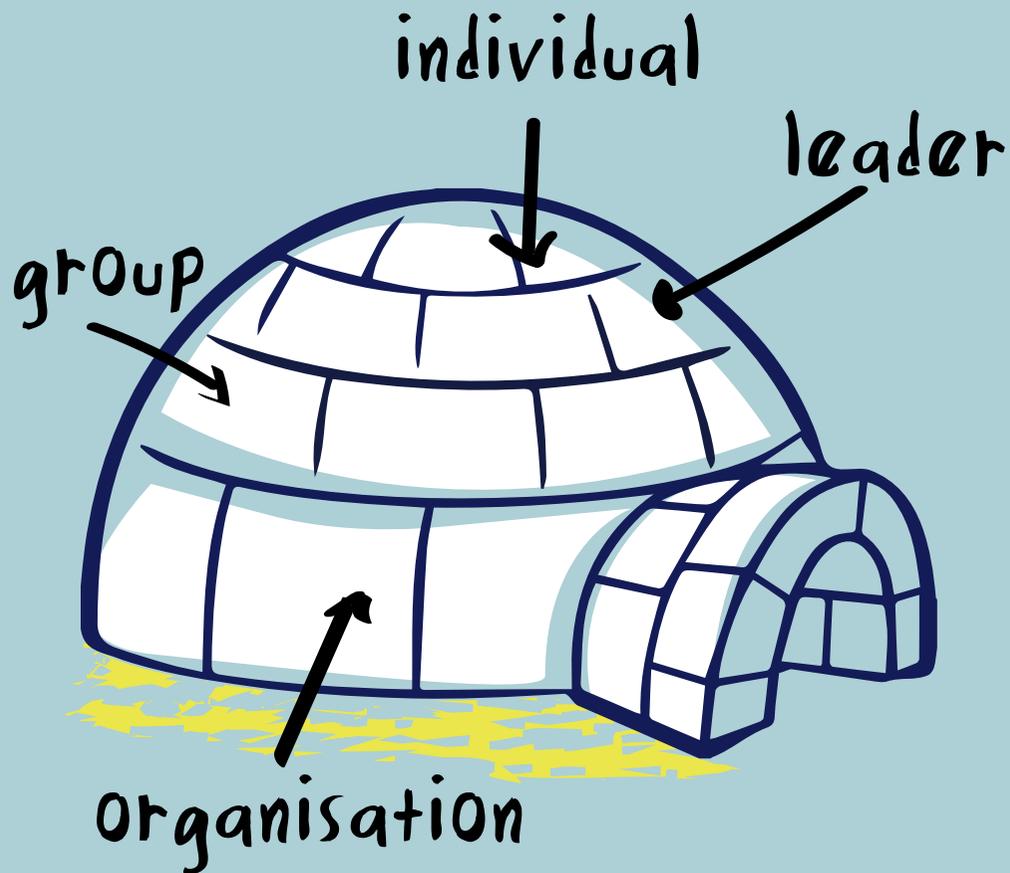# Guide for Employees

What can you do to protect your 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

Employee guide

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

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a profound impact on the world of work. Whether you are working as a key worker on the front line or working remotely, the challenges we are facing are unprecedented. With the worry and concern about health, finances and job security, combined with being isolated from others and unable to take part in our usual routines, many people are struggling to cope with the demands from work and home. 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 to help you look after your mental health while working 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.

In this guide you will find information about mental health, what you can do, and what you can ask of others, to give you the best chance of staying, and being productive, at work. The guide also encourages you to take a proactive approach by providing a quick-view checklist that can be completed at regular points.

The University Of Sheffield.

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 – you may find it helpful to share this information at work if you find it difficult to describe how your mental health impacts you:

- 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.

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

Your 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
• Prioritising self-care • Establishing clear boundaries between work and leisure	Individual (you!)	• 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
• Understanding from others • Receiving non-judgmental support	Group	• Providing feedback on tasks from colleagues • Giving help when doing challenging tasks • Maintaining social and informal contact
• Accessing health and wellbeing advice and support If employees are experiencing mental health concerns: • Having a consistent point of contact e.g. GP • Facilitating links to external services and treatment	Leader	• 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 you but not intrusive • Agreeing what information about your current situation is communicated to colleagues
• Access to health and wellbeing advice and support If you are experiencing mental health concerns: • Accessing work-focused counselling	Organisation	• Providing flexible working practices and leave policies • Providing work-focused counselling • Demonstrating care through support • Establishing a culture where mental health is not stigmatised

How strong is your IGLOo?

Use the checklist here to test the strength of your **IGLOo** and help you to build a strong **IGLOo**.

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 **IGLOo**. If you answer yes to these questions, you have a strong **IGLOo**. If you answer 'sometimes' or 'no' think about whether this would be helpful to you.

3. What else do you need/need to do? If you answer 'sometimes' or 'no' what needs to happen to make this part of your **IGLOo** stronger? It may be something you need to do, you need someone else to do, or you need to ask for.

4. How do you make this happen? Think about what you can do to make this happen. If you need someone else to do something, how can you ask them to do it? Need help and advice? Ask friends and family, colleagues, your line manager, GP, Human Resources, Occupational Health, charities/support groups, 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 finding it difficult, ask a trusted colleague or friend to help you work through the questions and identify some concrete actions that you, or they, can take to help you build your **IGLOo**.

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 friends and family, colleagues, your line manager, GP, Human Resources, Occupational Health, charity/support groups, union reps.*
Individual	Work	Create structure in the working day – e.g. divide up tasks into smaller components?			
		Identify work priorities – what must be done today, what can wait?			
	Home	Prioritise self-care?			
		Keep clear boundaries between work and leisure?			
Group	Work	Get feedback on tasks to build confidence?			
		Get help when doing challenging tasks?			
		Maintain social and informal contact with my team?			
Leader	Work	Have the necessary equipment to do my job safely?			
		Know what is demanded of me from my work e.g. workload, priorities of job tasks?			
		Have control over the way the work is done?			
		Have emotional and practical support?			
		Have positive working relationships in the team?			
		Know what the organisation's response to Covid-19 is?			
		Have access to work adjustments where appropriate e.g. working hours, review of job tasks?			
		Have access to my line manager if I need them?			
		Have an opportunity to control what my colleagues know about my personal situation?			
Organisation	Work	Work in a safe environment?			
		Know what the policies are for flexible working?			
		Know if our organisation provides work-focused counselling, and if so, do I know I can access it?			
		Work in an organisation where mental health and physical health are prioritised?			

Where to go for further information

Mental health

Every Mind Matters	www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters
Mind	www.mind.org.uk
Mental Health Foundation	www.mentalhealth.org.uk
Time to talk	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
HSE (Health and Safety Executive)	www.hse.gov.uk
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.