

WORKING FROM HOME - MAKING SURE YOUR EMPLOYEES STAY MENTALLY STRONG.

With the Government recommending those that can, work from home, it is important to note that for some people it's not the perfect set up.

There is the obvious advantage of no commuting and technology means we can have more autonomy over our time but for some people we will need to monitor their mental health. Put simply working from home doesn't work for everyone.

For some people, working from home can put their mental health at risk, causing feelings of isolation and disconnection and the feedback and encouragement they receive from their fellow workers in the office can be critical to their productivity.

Working remotely may create a pressure "to appear busy" or to be online throughout the working day. This can cause stress.

So, what do the experts recommend?

Working from home is a new phenomenon for many, so issue guidance and be relaxed about the results in the first week or so as people find their way.

Suggested guidance:

- Guidance will firstly be about technology and then setting the parameters that it's OK to work in the morning and take a couple of hours out.
- Let people know they should set up a "work zone or space" and not the sofa!
- Encourage "self-care time" for meditation or exercise. One firm we know does a group video meeting with a personal trainer 3 times a week for basic fitness (let's be honest we are all different shapes and sizes!).
- Hold a team Skype, GoToMeeting, Facebook Messenger call or other group telephone call for 20 minutes each morning at 9.00am. Seeing your co-workers is a boost and just to know "you are all in it together" helps.
- Encourage a down time of between 12 and 2 and no work after 5.
- Recommend no emails before 12 so people can get their heads down and do the processing or preparation of returns and accounts they are hired for.
- If you are not paperless then allocate someone to fetch and carry files to employee's home addresses.
- Go paperless for all working papers (email us if you need guidance).
- Let people come into the office alone if they need a day away from home.
- Send your people fruit and deliveries of "goodies" from time to time.

This is not a comprehensive guide and we encourage you to talk to your people about what they want and how the arrangements work for them individually. We will offer more comprehensive guidance in due course.