

20 Tips for managing the well-being of remote workers

The following are guidelines to assist in managing the well-being of remote workers:

- 1** Ensure that staff recruited for remote working have a good psychological fit for that type of working. This is also important when considering remote working as a re-deployment option or reasonable adjustment. (e.g. some employees may actually feel more withdrawn and isolated if they work from home and lose the social contact of coming into the office).



- 2** Always highlight the importance of self-care of remote workers. Encourage them to check their own stress levels on a regular basis and talk about issues that may arise.


- 3** Talk to remote workers about their home work station set up to check it is fit for purpose.


- 4** Encourage staff that are on the road a lot to plan their journey's carefully and ensure they take a break at least every 2 hours.


- 5** Highlight the EAP provision and encourage remote workers to use this.


- 6** Build in regular reviews, preferably via skype, so some face to face contact is possible.


- 7** Where there is no face to face contact your tone of voice is what has the most impact.


- 8** Ensure you dedicate enough time to the conversation and focus on it entirely. Sometimes it can be tempting to multi-task. This will make you more likely to pick up signs of stress in the employees tone of voice and the words that they use.


- 9** Most of us can tell if someone is pre-occupied on the other end of the phone. Ensuring you are devoting your undivided attention will help to build trust and you are also more likely to pick up if they sound pre-occupied or distracted.


- 10** Build in regular "temperature checks" with your team and ensure remote workers are included. Ask direct questions such as "How are you managing", "What would you most like support with at the moment?". Show empathy and concern as well as a willingness to explore practical solutions.



11 If you think a remote worker may be struggling act sooner rather than later.

The isolation that accompanies remote workers can aggravate a period of stress that might be sorted out relatively easily if dealt with promptly.



13 Adopt a supportive management style and keep in contact with remote workers and encourage them to keep in touch with other staff and other remote workers.

12 Encourage remote workers to share experiences on a regular basis- positive and negative.

Employers have reported this as being a very supportive forum for their staff. It could help to normalise concerns that remote workers may be ruminating over as well as be a forum for moral support and sharing practical tips on coping.



14 Arranging regular social events can help to create a positive team environment.



15 Use internal and external resources for guidance and support - e.g. HR, EAP, Unum, weblinks.



16 Ensure training opportunities are made known to remote workers and that remote workers have access to the same provisions such as H&S info/ Occupational Health.

17 Try to include remote workers in training and update events, where possible, through video conferencing/ conference calls.



18 Provide briefing on home-working and preparation support in terms of ensuring the correct equipment and internet/ phone connection is provided.

Clearly stipulate working hours, and the amount of flexibility afforded regarding when these working hours are completed. Express the importance of regular breaks and not regularly working overtime.



19 Ensure that regular opportunities to meet with managers and colleagues face-to-face are provided and facilitate social engagement and sharing of best-practice. Where these are not frequently possible, arrange regular conference calls for colleagues to discuss concerns (perhaps without a manager present). A buddy system, providing each employee a colleague to link with for support may be beneficial in building colleague relationships and ensuring employees do not feel isolated when dealing with challenges.



20 Prepare an appropriate lone working reporting procedure for when employees are meeting with clients in non-public places such as the client's home in order to ensure employees feel safe and any issues can be appropriately managed.

References

- http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/f/2/Home-is-where-the-work-is-a-new-study-of-homeworking-in-Acas_and-beyond.pdf
- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/characteristics-of-home-workers/2014/sty-home-workers.html>
- <https://ework.coventry.ac.uk/documents/content/about/hintsandtipsv1.pdf>
- <https://ework.coventry.ac.uk/about/about-us.aspx>

unum.co.uk

Unum Limited is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

Registered Office and mailing address: Milton Court, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3LZ Registered in England 983768 Unum Limited is a member of the Unum Group of Companies.

We monitor telephone conversations and e-mail communications from time to time for the purposes of training and in the interests of continually improving the quality of service we provide.