



ASSOCIATION  
OF COLLEGES

# Tips when managing people remotely


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# It hasn't been easy but....

“We have been particularly struck by how further education settings have been at the forefront of providing **outstanding online provision to learners**, almost from day one of the lockdown. Minister Keegan, in a number of virtual visits to institutions and in online discussions with young people, has seen first-hand how impressive this work is and how it is allowing people to **continue their vital studies and maintain some much needed stability and focus during such a difficult time.**”

*(Gavin Williamson – letter to Governors – June 3<sup>rd</sup>)*

A laptop is shown in the foreground, displaying a video conference with five participants in a grid layout. The participants are diverse in age and ethnicity, and they appear to be in a professional setting. The background is a blurred office environment with a person's hand visible on the right side, suggesting a meeting or collaborative work environment.

'Coming back after Covid19' –  
can what we have learnt help  
us as an organisation, as  
teams and as managers?

We need to reflect and build  
on our learning.

Problems  
that occur  
when  
working  
remotely -  
you may  
have had to  
deal with  
some of  
these

- Getting used to new work-life boundaries
- The expectations of how much work you are doing (were you more or less productive at home?)
- Maintaining the focus and impact of team meetings
- Different norms established for sharing information
- Two-way trust issues (were you really working as hard and as effectively as you could? Did you feel confident that colleagues felt you were working as hard as you could?)
- Too many distractions not enough traction

# Managing your team remotely



"The secret to managing virtual teams to increase productivity and decrease inefficiency lies in task assignments and relationship building."

Distribute tasks across the team to achieve an overall measurable goal (single person leadership).

Continuously try to improve the cohesion and well-being of the team.

# Tips for managing remotely

- Agree ways of working and regularly review
- Maintain 'purpose' and flexibility
- Set expectations and trust the team
- Ensure everyone has what they need
- Establish and maintain routines
- Ensure effective communication and listen
- Foster relationships and well-being

# What makes a successful remote team?

Everyone takes individual responsibility for getting work done and the achievement of agreed tasks and to help each other where needed

Everyone knows how to use the technology to interact with colleagues and learners – making use of the tools available even if they are not perfect

Have regular one-to-one interactions not just team meetings and communications

When working virtually it is even more important to manage relationships and not to let frictions fester into conflicts

Regular weekly (daily) updates, so everyone knows what they are doing and how it fits into the overall goals and objectives

Agreeing norms and ground-rules from the outset and revisiting them if anything changes



# Your remote conversations

Even remotely, you have to manage emotions and information in a sensitive way.

- When communicating virtually there are loads more opportunities for conversation to go awry
- Build on experience - a lot of standard day-to-day communication was already virtual (e-mail overload?)
- Where possible use video but beware of potential technology issues
- Be aware of the 'sense of distance' so don't waffle
- Be specific (its just good feedback) – prepare and take notes
- Recognise that emotional issues can be exacerbated through a lack of personal contact





# Remote Team Meetings – what have we learnt?

- Have clear objectives and protocols
- Make sure everyone is prepared for what is being covered
- Collaboration and collaborative problem-solving is to be encouraged and facilitated
- Everyone has time to speak (using headset if possible)
- Keep everyone engaged e.g. people are given different tasks, you regularly ask questions for input
- Social meetings are important along with the formal ones (e.g. having virtual ‘coffee breaks’)

# Embedding learning - reflective questions to ask your team

What have we learnt from the last three months that we must/want to take forward?

What have we missed by working remotely?

Which behaviours and practices were most important to our effectiveness?

What have I learnt about myself (my skills, my qualities, my attitude, etc.)?

# Resilience in uncertain times

# The counter-intuitive approach

Whether you're building individual, team or organizational resilience, the key thing is to harness the power of people.

This holds true for wherever and however you're working.

And that means building your resilience even when the world is still uncertain...

# The uncertainties testing our resilience...

The big stuff – CV-19, economy, global events

The UK stuff - rolling lockdowns, just going to the shops, impact on operations and emotions

Personal stuff – strain on relationships and finances

And then there's the day job...

- Don't be surprised if people are finding it tough – they should be.
- We're asking people to process change quickly when their natural reaction is to resist
- The change we're dealing with is unprecedented...

# Change is everywhere



Adapting policies and procedures for safe working



Adapting teaching for online and blended learning



Assessment protocols



Safeguarding and safety challenges



Cyber security



Different rules for different people because of shielding etc.

# The resilience hierarchy



# How do we encourage resilience right now?

- Look after ourselves – look after each other
- Keep talking – keep in touch, build networks
- Recognise change – expect it, accept it
- Support wellbeing on an individual basis – one size won't fit all
- Encourage forward thinking – plan for the future and avoid getting stuck in crisis mode
- Invest in people – keep people engaged & motivated
- Learn from what is going well – take control of the challenges by learning from them
- Celebrate successes – reassure people they are doing well and that you can see their work paying off



# Thank you

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