

OUR PLANS

i. Clear and consistent advice to support wellbeing/mental health for all staff.

Recognising the particular needs of carers, people who are neurodiverse or have other specific needs, and those returning to work, but also cognisant that ALL staff are likely to experience some challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Communications and package of care for staff:

University resources: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/covid-19-resources>

Department resources: <https://www.phc.ox.ac.uk/intranet/coronavirus-staff-info>

Advice to managers

- If you are concerned about individual staff members' health and wellbeing and/or need help as a line manager please contact: hr@phc.ox.ac.uk
- Explicitly acknowledge the difficulty of home working for all staff, both with and without caring responsibilities (people need to hear this) and that we cannot deliver 'business as usual'
- Agree regular skype/phone check-ins with direct reports (at least weekly) even if very short and offer these at hours that work for both parties (whether within or outside core hours)
- Agree work plans that have some flexibility to reduce pressure and anxiety and regularly review these, adjusting as necessary
- Find ways to encourage and praise colleagues (so that contact does not become only focused on work accomplished/not done)
- Consider the potential impact of using new channels for team communication and, where possible, use those that staff can disconnect from when not working (e.g., MS Teams or Slack rather than WhatsApp).
- Agree ways of using 'chat' channels, whether in Teams (approved by the University) or other forms of social media if the group intends to use these. Agree and reiterate boundaries and expectations when sending messages outside of typical work hours.
- Reinforce wellbeing and managing homeworking tips (including the importance of disconnecting from work and acceptability of responding flexibly).
- Encourage peer support (i.e. non line manager buddying/social contact)

- Don't neglect PDR and related one-to-one discussions. These can be conducted via Teams. Care may be needed to ensure that objectives are manageable under the current circumstances and ensure that opportunities to undertake training are maximised (eg via LinkedIn Learning, Futurelearn and other on line providers).

ii. Addressing precarity /job insecurity

Guidance from funders and advice for fixed-term research staff:

<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/covid-19#tab-1953806>

We recognise that staff on fixed term contracts whose research projects have been paused during the pandemic may be feeling anxious and stressed about job security. Line managers, Principal and Chief Investigators and group leads are working hard to ensure that work plans and bridging arrangements are put in place where possible and to communicate these to affected staff.

Following the Government announcement of additional funding for workers, the University is implementing a people strategy to manage some of the finance impacts of the current lockdown conditions. The Senior Management team will be looking at this strategy closely and will seek further guidance from the University to understand what this means for our department so we can best support staff through the coming weeks. This is an evolving situation and we will keep you informed. If you have concerns or questions in the meantime please direct these to your line manager in the first instance or to Clare Wickings or Tanya Baldwin.

iii. Longer term diversity and equality issues:

- Reiterate our REF strategy and process: decouple REF submission from promotion/performance review (and ensure systems that enforce this) and let people know the deadline will be moved.
- Discuss publication strategies for future outputs to ensure that staff have opportunities to contribute/co-author (i.e. follow authorship rules but include those who may otherwise be disadvantaged where possible). Recognise that some staff may be less able to write papers during the pandemic (this includes carers and frontline clinical staff but be aware that it may also apply to staff who do not have these responsibilities).
- In the longer term - unconscious bias training refresh (especially for SMC, PIs/CIs and line managers to ensure fairness in management/PDR/promotion processes).