

Sadly, a number of medical professionals or family members have developed ongoing complications of COVID, currently recognised as “long COVID”. How should we try to deal with this issue?

It is likely a combination of self-education and accessing the following support systems which could help people with long COVID. Here are some links to get further information.

1. <https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>
2. [elearning.rcgp.org.uk/recovery from covid19](https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/recovery-from-covid19)
3. [elearning.rcgp.org.uk/long covid19](https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/long-covid19)
4. Facebook Group – COVID Returning Doctors Support (Newcomers have to answer three questions before access to the group is granted):
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/301162934193287/>
5. Facebook Group – COVID Doctors Forum (UK):
[https://www.facebook.com/groups/326788934801330/653085615504992/?notif_id=1585121614569299¬if_t=group nf highlights](https://www.facebook.com/groups/326788934801330/653085615504992/?notif_id=1585121614569299¬if_t=group_nf_highlights)

Many households, including NHS colleagues, may be struggling with their finances as the current COVID-19 restrictions have greater impact on our lives. Where can we get free financial advice?

NHS England and NHS improvement (NHSEI) have partnered with the Money and Pension Service (MaPS) to provide a mini series of free financial wellbeing webinars for all NHS staff. Future free webinars for NHS staff are taking place on:

- Thursday 12 November
- Thursday 26 November
- Thursday 10 December

NHS staff can [book their free place 48 hours before each event.](#)

Here are some more links to financial advice:

[Step Change](#) provides free advice and practical solutions on debt and how it affects you.

[The Money Charity](#) aims to help people to better manage their money.

[Money Saving Expert](#) has dedicated financial information for COVID-19 including:

- [employment advice](#)
- [help with finance and bills.](#)

[The Debt Advice Foundation](#) is a registered national debt advice and education charity offering free, confidential support and advice to anyone worried about loans, credit and debt.

Using a [budget tool](#) to redo your household budget for being at home could be useful. Remember that you may be saving money by not spending on things like transport and socialising. Factor that in when looking at your budget.

As more doctors are being advised to work from home or to explore the possibility of remote working, could you give me some ideas on how to we can do this safely and efficiently?

Although it has been complicated by shielding for those medical practitioners with certain health diagnosis, many who have returned or have been in the process of returning back to some semblance of normal duties have been remote working. My only caveat is that ideally it should be a “blended approach”, not purely 100% remote working if possible, in order to keep some human contact and changing environment.

Areas that need to be considered when setting up a work station at home include:

- *Effective VPN technology, IT support and NHS employer digitally secure and safe equipment*
- *Home interface work environment that meets basic health and safety regulations e.g. DSE*
- *Ergonomics of working at home [Home ergonomics set up](#)*

Further detailed information:

[acas/working-from-homeadvice](#)
[mindtools.com/working-from-home.htm](#)
[mindtools.com/work-life-integration.htm](#)
https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/6020/22078_work-from-home-wap.pdf

Is there any particular advice I could be given on the best use of telehealth and video consultations as a doctor?

The following sources give very practical but generic advice and suggestions:

[bma.org.uk//covid-19-video-consultations-and-homeworking](#)
[quick-telephone-consultation-tips-for-primary-care](#)
[zoom-fatigue-how-to-make-video-calls-less-tiring](#)

If you work in primary care perhaps part of a primary care network there is a lot of national work going on with commissioners looking at the specific triage models and certain NHS approved IT organisations.

What about the ethics of remote consultations?

The GMC has some useful guidance and a nice flow diagram

[gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/remote-consultations](#)
[gmc-uk.org/-images/ethical-guidance/remote-consultations-diagram](#)

I'm a medical manager and want to know how do I best support my virtual teams?

Here is some excellent guidance from some experienced occupational psychologists.

How can managers manage effectively when working remotely?

Leadership research highlights the need for four management competencies to make remote working work well:

- **Clarity, specificity and consistency:** Without frequent contact points and non-verbal cues, information and direction can be miscommunicated via email and zoom. Providing consistent and regular feedback is important, as is demonstrating transactional leadership behaviours of goal setting and clear prioritisation
- **Empowerment and trust:** Bringing the team together and creating a system of social support through informal and formal communication is key to building trust. Providing employees with greater decision-making authority can help them to feel empowered and prevents unnecessary delays when working remotely
- **Individualised approach** is important whether managing face to face or remotely, however strong relationships and an understanding of the unique pressures each of your team members are facing, has been found to prevent and reduce work stress and is a key predictor of successful return to work following absence – and likely to be a predictor in smoothing the transition back to the workplace when the time comes
- **Due regard for physical and psychological safety:** Health and safety is just as important, even when the risks are not 'seen' – Encouraging managers to manage the physical risks such as (DSE set up) and psychological risks such as working long hours – out of sight should not mean out of mind

What can we do to help our managers manage effectively when working remotely?

We are strong advocates of the IGLOo approach – this helps us think about the different responsibilities and resources needed at each the Individual, Group, Line Manager and Organisational level.

- **Individual resources:** Do your line managers have the skills and confidence to manage remotely? What training and development might they need?
- **Group resources:** Do your teams/ employees work together remotely? Facilitated discussions around working differently can be helpful – This way, the line manager is not charged with doing it all on their.
- **Line manager resources:** How are your managers supported senior leaders? Are the same expectations in place? Are senior leaders role modelling good management practices and healthy behaviours? Do your line managers have someone to turn to for advice?

- **Organisational resources:** Do you have the necessary technology to support effective remote working? Do you provide additional time and workload allocation for managers to adopt an individualised approach? As organisations move to blended working – working from home and the workplace – are managers provided with the systems and time to manage the different needs and work patterns within the team?

Tips for managers managing employees remotely

- 1. Look after yourself first – and then be a role model** – The last few months have been hard on all of us. Look after yourself, identify what you need to restore and take action. Your team will follow your lead.
- 2. Focus on the individual, then the team** – No one approach works for everyone. Focusing on the individual will give an understanding of the unique situation they are in, and better understand how workload and decisions will be received.
- 3. Acknowledge the difficulties and the challenges** – Things don't always go to plan and it can be difficult to address mistakes and conflicts but in a virtual environment an open, learning culture is important or miscommunications and mistakes can spiral into deeper concerns.
- 4. Shift your focus to outputs** – People may need to work different patterns, they may be juggling different home demands. Focusing on the output and trusting employees to complete their work in their own way and their own time will help them to feel empowered and manage their time in a way that best suits them.
- 5. Agree a communication strategy** – Some communicate too much, others too little. Discuss with your team how you will communicate, what medium you will use for what messages. This way everyone has clear expectations and can prioritise and protect team time.
- 6. Set clear priorities and goals** – To prevent miscommunication it is important that managers set clear and specific goals, and discuss this priorities.
- 7. Give regular feedback** – Regular feedback can not only help ensure that the task stays on track but can increase motivation towards the goal. Many people report that staying motivated is difficult when working at home so this becomes even more important when managing remotely.
- 8. Prioritise social connection** – the informal chat about the weekend and other non-work things – are so important but they are often the first things to go when we are busy. Research shows that informal communication can protect mental health and increase trust and engagement. Keep chatting over coffee breaks and lunches even if you are in separate spaces.

9. Prioritise the health and safety in the same way you would in the workplace – Consider whether your employees need equipment or software to do their role effectively and safely, and advocate for support on their behalf. Look to the HSE management standards for work stress to ensure that their work is designed and managed safely to prevent work stress.

This information has been taken from the following source:

[managing-remotely-it-is-time-to-rethink-how-we-manage-our-employees/](#)

Other additional resources include:

[nhemployers.org/enabling-and-supporting-staff-to-work-from-home](#)

[mindtools.com/working-virtual-team.htm](#)

[mistakes-managers-with-remote-workers](#)

<https://getlighthouse.com/blog/one-on-one-meetings-template-great-leaders/>

HSE guidance on:

Home workers: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm

Lone workers: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm

IOSH (health and safety practitioner) guides:

Remote working: www.iosh.co.uk/homeworking

Mobile workers: www.iosh.co.uk/mobileworkers

What about the mental health of remote workers?

The guidance from those occupational psychologists is very useful but here are some more thoughts that you might find useful:

[mentalhealthatworkcoronavirus-coping-with-the-challenges-of-working-from-home/5-ways-to-support-the-mental-health-of-remote-workers](#)

if you are really interested in knowing at a deeper level the wider challenges facing the NHS from a psychological perspective might want to have a browse at this:

<https://post.parliament.uk/mental-health-impacts-of-covid-19-on-nhs-healthcare-staff/>

How might things pan out in the future from an NHS “back to normal business” perspective?

Things have changed because a significant number of healthcare workers both clinical and nonclinical have had to deliver their roles through remote working so these innovative systems and different ways of working has been bringing its own opportunities and challenges. Some of the “good stuff” needs to be embedded into your practice.

Many regional based NHS organisations have had to learn to work together during the crisis. There seems to be more of an acceptance of joint working between primary and secondary care as well as a number of NHS linked organisations i.e. HEE (and the other equivalent organisations in the devolved countries), NICE, AOMRC, CQC and the professional regulation organisations.

This sense of community has led in some circumstances to growth and positive opportunities.

Ultimately you need to remember why you became a medical practitioner if you can keep that as your purpose and focus on delivering the skills and expertise you have, we will all get through this and be positively changed for the better for the sake of our patients and ourselves.

There is an interesting view from the ex-chairman of ACAS talking about the world of work and how it will look different from now on.

[acas/building-back-making-working-lives-better](#)

There is also a view from a European research organisation about what impact the pandemic has had in the workplace.

[eurofound.living-working-and-covid-19](#)

The professional organisation for HR practitioners (CIPD) has also recently produced a useful report called “Embedding new ways of working-implications for the post-pandemic workplace”

[cipd/working-post-pandemic](#)