

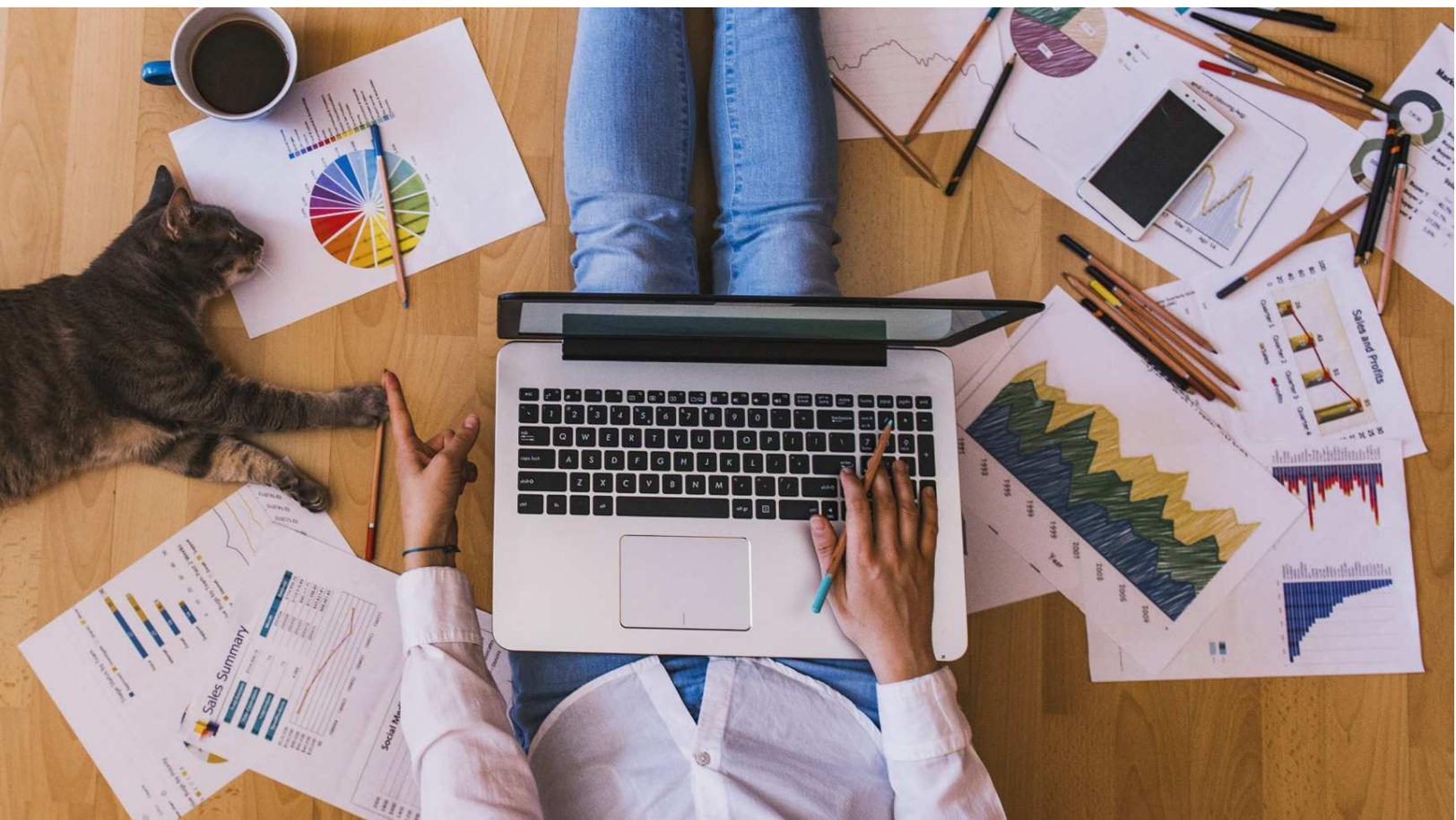
LEARN AT LUNCH #5

Effective Home Working

22 OCTOBER 2020



**Clinical
Audit**
SUPPORT CENTRE



Overview

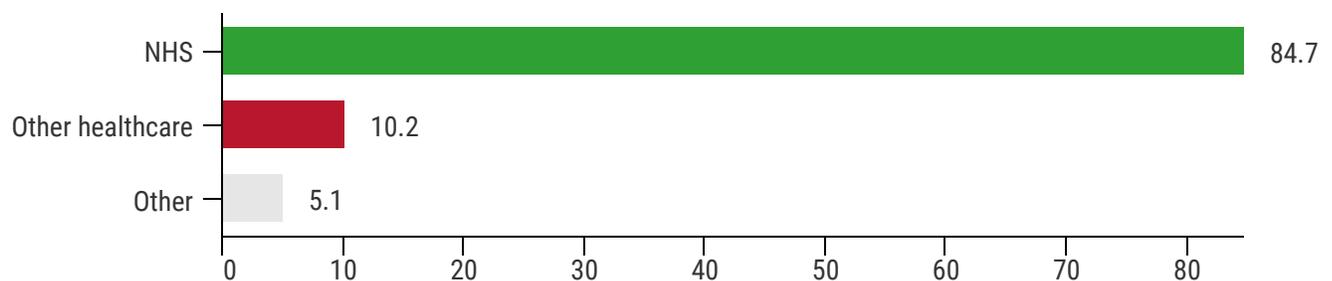
This 'Learn at Lunch' session held on 22 October 2020 and was entitled 'Effective Home Working'. The session featured a number of speakers, including: Stephen Ashmore and Tracy Ruthven (Clinical Audit Support Centre), Hollie Mann (Head of Human Resources at Richard House Hospice), Corrina Bentley (Clinical Audit Manager at North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust) and Dr Claudia Chetcuti Ganado (Neonatal Consultant at Luton and Dunstable University Hospital). A total of 150 learners signed up to the session with a peak of 85 in attendance.

The CASC team provided some personal viewpoints on working from home and also shared details of more theoretical information. The three guest speakers (Hollie, Corrina and Claudia) provided personal case studies of how they had found working from home through the lockdown and the beyond in 2020. CASC also conducted a short pre-event survey with all those who signed up to take part invited to give their views. The results of the survey were shared as part of the event. Interestingly, this event led to considerable discussions via the chat forum and we have shared a number of the key themes in this short document. It was noticeable that this topic generated more discussion via chat than any other previous CASC Learn at Lunch event. We expect to revisit the subject of working from home again at some point in 2021, especially if the pandemic continues to impact on our working lives.

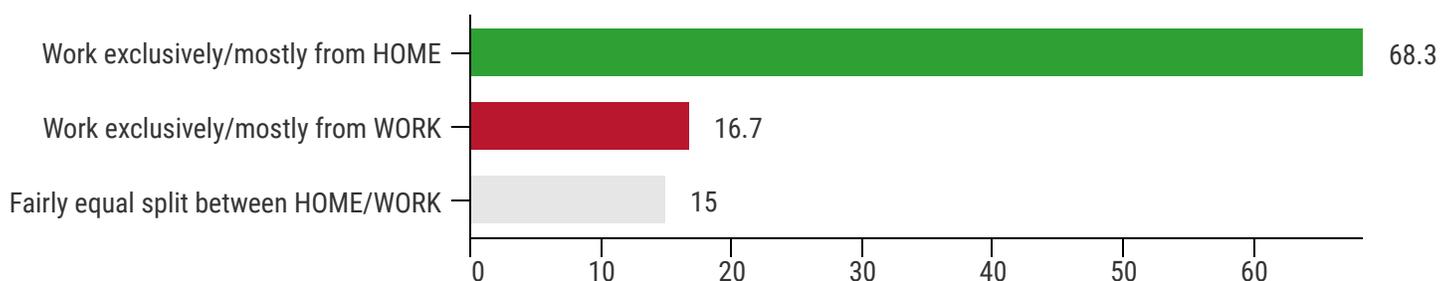
Pre-event survey results

In the week leading up to the event, the CASC team sent out a short SurveyMonkey questionnaire to all 150 delegates that had asked for a place on the Learn at Lunch. The survey was closed 48 hours prior to the event in order to allow CASC time to analyse the data and include the results as part of the presentation. For all questions displayed below and on pages 3 and 4, a total of 61 delegates completed the survey.

Q1: Who do you work for?

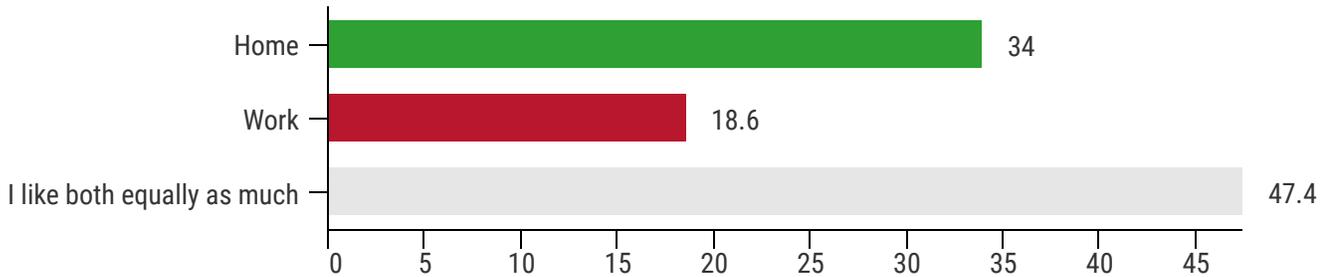


Q2: Please describe your current working situation?

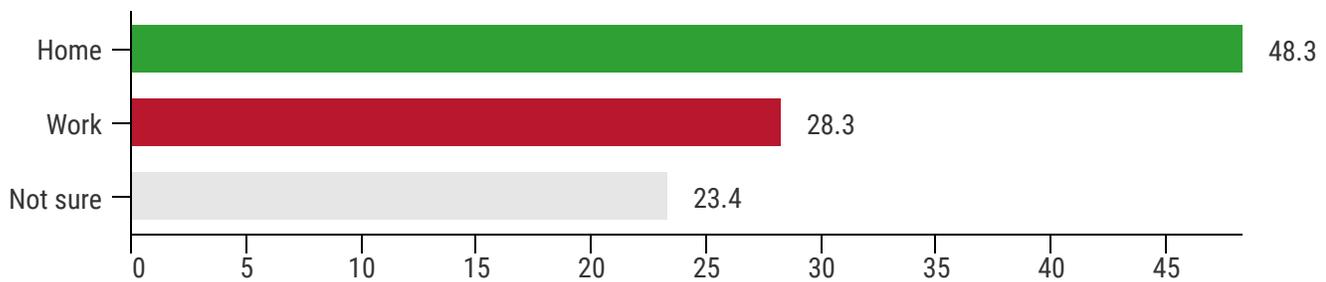


Pre-event survey results (continued)

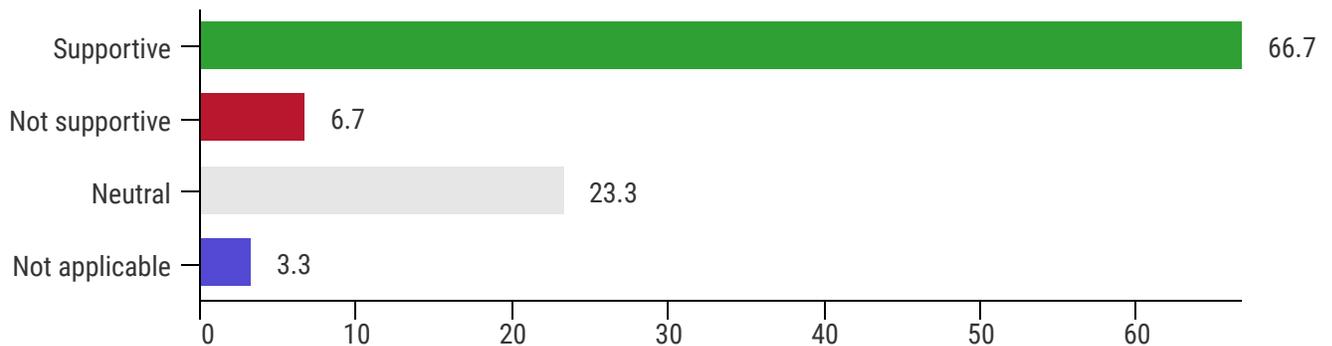
Q3: Do you prefer to work at home or at work?



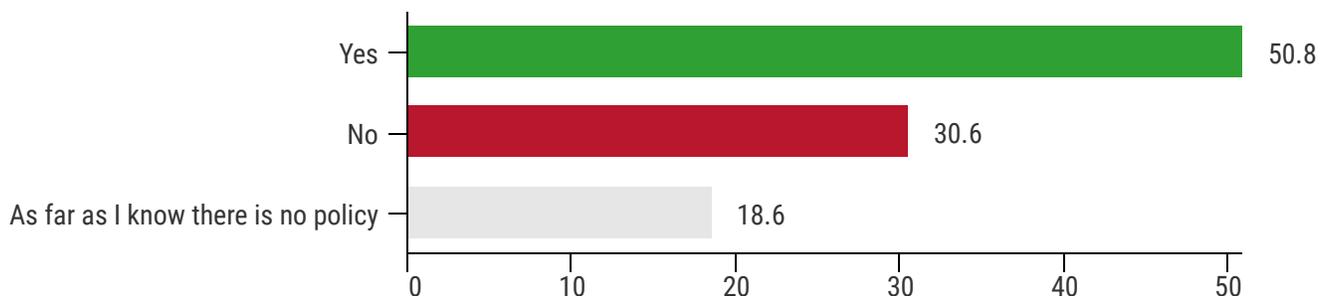
Q4: Where do you feel you work most productively?



Q5: Please rate your line manager in terms of supporting you to work from home

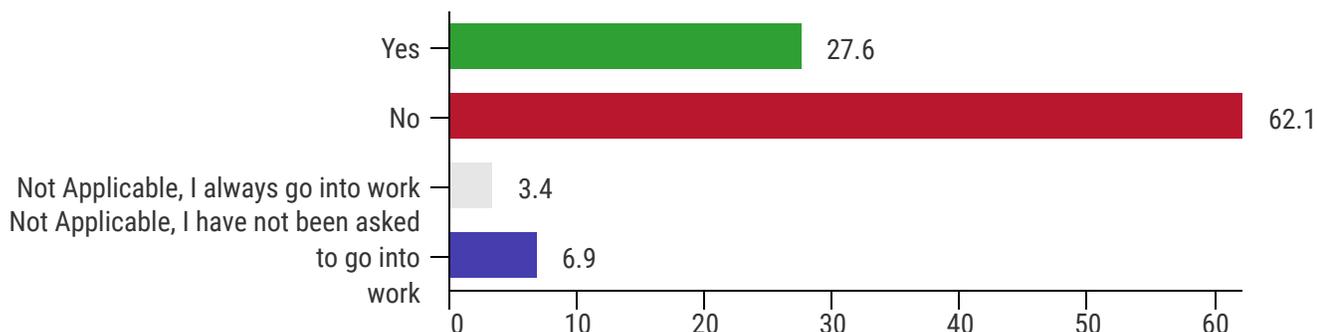


Q6: Have you read your organisation's 'work from home' policy?



Pre-event survey results (continued)

Q7: Do you feel that at any point since March an inappropriate request has been made for you to go into work?



As with all surveys that CASC conduct we do not attempt to interpret the data that we have analysed. We simply supply this so that others can review this at their leisure.

Free-text comments

In addition to the quantitative questions, the survey also asked participants for free-text feedback in relation to three questions. The responses are listed on below and overleaf.

Q8: What one thing do you like **MOST** about working from home?

Three main themes emerged in response to this question:

- **Work / life flexibility (21 comments)**
- Less travelling (15 comments)
- Find it easier to concentrate at home (12 comments).

Focusing specifically on the 'top' response, comments included:

- "The flexibility of managing your [working] hours"
- "Improved well-being as there is a better work / life balance"
- "The flexibility of being able to work my hours around my family"
- "Enables an easier way to manage work / life balance"
- "The flexibility" (x 2 comments)
- "Ease of flexibility of hours and breaks"
- "I am less stressed as the balance between home and work life is improved"
- "Flexibility" (x 6 comments)
- "Having a better work / life balance"
- "Flexibility in a busy life"
- "The flexibility of managing your hours"
- "Improved well-being, as there is a much better work / life balance"
- "I can take my breaks when I want".

Free text comments (continued)

Q9: What one thing do you like LEAST about working from home?

Two main themes emerged in response to this question:

- **Loneliness / lack of contact with others (28 comments)**
- Time management issues (9 comments)

Focusing specifically on the 'top' response, comments included:

- "It is a far too insular environment that means people in the long run will struggle to return to the office"
- "Not having my colleagues nearby to speak to and run things past"
- "Not seeing my colleagues"
- "Lack of work banter"
- "Miss interaction with colleagues"
- "Human contact"
- "I am missing colleagues - used to go for a walk and a chat at lunch, but not now - miss the exercise and company"
- "I feel a bit low as I don't see other people"
- "Missing my colleagues"
- "Isolation from my colleagues, missing out on chance conversations that increase my awareness of what is going on across the organisation"
- "It can be boring, lonely and cold"
- "Can't ask quick questions to my colleagues across the desk"
- "Lack of interaction with others"
- "Miss the camaraderie with my work colleagues"
- "Its lonely"
- "Less / no opportunity for incidental conversations - the water-cooler moments"
- "Lack of actual face-to-face contact"
- "Lack of face-to-face social contact and immediate support from colleagues in the office"
- "The isolation"
- "The isolation from my work colleagues"
- "Not seeing people"
- "I miss working with my team, it does make a difference"
- "There is no one to bounce ideas off or have a quick chat".

Q10: Any additional comments

- "I think in the future I would like to work in the office and at home on certain days"
- "After COVID-19 I would like my employer to consider extending the home working option with a split between the office and home agreed"
- "I think working from home may become more challenging with the onset of the winter months, the darker morning and evening and the prospect of tighter lockdown restrictions".

Tips for better WFH



A number of participants used the chat function during the event to share ideas and tips (or back up suggestions made by presenters) to in effect generate tips for better home working. These are listed below:

- It has been a lot easier to work from home since we've been able to replicate the office IT at home
- It's dangerous having work emails on your mobile, I find myself checking them on my days off
- I like routine and planning to do specific things on specific days
- Couch to 5K app is brilliant - it helps you build up to running with good coaching skills
- I go [into work] once a week to see 'real people' and this has helped my headspace totally
- [Look for alternative work places as per this comment] We have a local pub and a coffee shop who are both making table space available for people to work if they buy a coffee
- I find music helpful for focussing. I also break up the day with mini-meditations from Headspace or Unmind
- I have a third bedroom converted into a proper office. The problem is that my husband occasionally works from home too, so when we are both in the office I have to impose a strict 'no talking' rule!
- You need an understanding manager when you have kids and WFH
- Use the Space App (or similar) to monitor and regulate how much you use your mobile phone
- Turn off your laptop and throw a blanket over your workstation at the end of the day so that your not looking at work in non-work time
- Online MS Teams check-ins are vital to feeling connected during this time
- Invest in setting up a mini-home office - foldable chair and desk that you can put away. Memory foam seat pad and foot rest. All ergonomic and packawayable!

Claiming tax back



During the presentation CASC provided more details of how you may be able to claim some money back if you are working from home for long period of time. This led to an excellent discussion on this subject and the following comment from one participant 'our Trust is offering financial assistance to those who are struggling to pay their utility bills, all based on individual circumstance. Therefore, it would seem like a good idea to find out more in terms of whether your employer can assist you.

Looking at a wider level, there is the potential to claim a small amount of money back - in the form of Tax Relief - if you work from home. We know a number of people that have done this and their experiences have been variable, but in theory this should be a simple process where you supply information to the Government and they adjust your Tax Code.

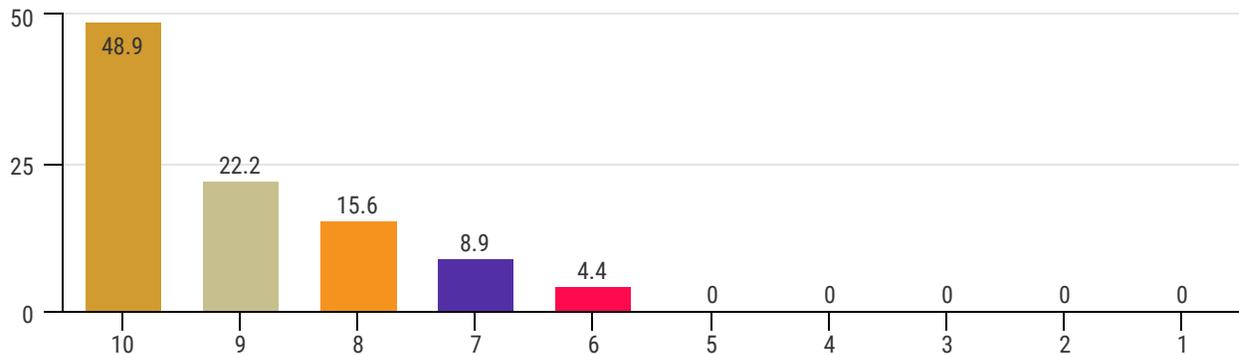
We would recommend a number of useful online resources that will provide useful information in relation to this:

1. Visit: the relevant Government website, [here](#)
2. Martin Lewis (MoneySavingExpert) dedicated his blog on 20 October 2020 to this subject and this provides lots of useful information and links. You can access this [here](#).

Feedback from participants

After the course we sent out a short SurveyMonkey questionnaire to gauge feedback and a total of 45 responses were received. Feedback was mainly qualitative text comments, with one quantitative question. We have shared some of the most interesting free-text comments below in the exact format given. Note: all feedback is anonymous.

How would you rate today's meeting? 10 = very good, 1 = very poor (n=45)



What did you like most about today's meeting?

- Other people sharing their experiences of working from home
- The three 'external' speakers were excellent. Really good mix. Great to see hospices and MH represented
- The speakers, particularly the clinician. It was really interesting to see that someone 'clinical' has the same worries as the rest of us!
- The personal stories of the presenters made me realise that the emotions and feelings I am experiencing are common to most WFH employees these days, which was also borne out in the chat comments
- Personal stories and comments box. Reassuring to hear that we are not alone in feeling the way we do
- Home working case studies, quiz at the start of the session - a good way to engage us, feedback from the home working survey
- I liked the three presentations AND the survey results, because it was interesting to have the mixture of data
- Sharing experiences and tips
- Tips and stories from peers, emphasising that none of us are experts. We are all just doing our best but can learn from each other, good discussions on chat also
- The group chat to be able to read what everyone is contributing to the presentations and discussions
- Really informal, supportive atmosphere. Encouraging everyone to take part
- I could feel my 'super-power-protective-shell' cracking a little as I began to acknowledge a few home truths
- The honesty and sharing about just how much life and work has changed in a few short months and knowing that I am not alone in those feelings
- Hearing other peoples experiences and coping strategies.

How could our future meetings be improved?

- More surveys during the presentations to get immediate input from attendees
- A little bit shorter
- Sorry, not a fan of Zoom would prefer teams
- More focus on clinical audit.

Coping with loneliness

What surprised (and pleased) us most about the this Learn at Lunch on 22 October was just how honest those participating were. What rapidly became noticeable from the survey feedback, the presentations, the conversations in chat and the open verbal discussions is that many clinical audit and QI professionals now feel isolated. Working from home clearly has many benefits but for some it is a lonely experience. Reading the survey comments and chat you quickly notice how much people are missing their work colleagues. To help combat this loneliness and feeling of isolation, we have decided to set up more Learn at Lunch events and on 10 November at 9.15am we will be launching the clinical audit cafe which is simply an online get together for 45 minutes to allow people to meet up and talk about whatever they want. If you are feeling isolated, lonely, low and possibly even depressed we would encourage you to speak to your manager and/or other key support agencies in your organisation. It is no shame and the pandemic has had an impact on all of us. Lots of us are finding the day-to-day very difficult and challenging. In addition, we have supplied a number of useful websites and resources below that we hope you will find useful.

- [NHS advice: what can you do if you feel lonely during the coronavirus outbreak is available, here](#)
- [Advice from the Mental Health Foundation is available, here](#)
- [Advice from Mind is available, here](#)
- We like the infographic below created by the Mental Health Foundation:

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

from mentalhealth.org.uk

Sketchnote by
@Haypsych

try to avoid speculation and only use reputable sources on the outbreak

good sources:

- Public Health England
- Public Health Wales
- Health Protection Scotland
- NHS
- Gov.uk
- World Health Organization



try to stay connected

- keep in touch with friends and family
- set up private chat groups on WhatsApp
- increase communication with colleagues working from home in isolation



stick to a daily routine

- Keep active
- eat a balanced diet
- have a to-do list
- take a lunch break
- have a regular start and end to your working day



try to anticipate distress

- acknowledge how you are feeling
- talk to someone you trust if you are feeling anxious
- reassure people you know who may be worried
- check in with people you know who are living alone



try to manage how you follow the outbreak in the media

- limit your consumption of the news and social media
- if the news starts to cause you stress and anxiety, take a break from it
- Don't avoid all news as it's important to keep informed and educated about the outbreak



if you are in self-isolation or quarantine

- acknowledge that it is a different rhythm of life
- Keep in touch with other people regularly on social media, email, phone, video calls
- create a new daily routine, such as reading more or learning something new
- be gentle with yourself, rest if you need to