

# COVID-19 Remote Working Technical Resource Guide

The outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 has impacted the way we work. The prospect of having to work from home for the foreseeable future may daunt many people; especially those who don't normally do it on a regular basis. The following text provides you with advice on how to embrace remote working during these unusual times.

Please see The Council's [pages](#) for the latest information on COVID-19.

If you have any questions, queries or are looking for further advice, then please do not hesitate to get in touch at [edinburghworkplaces@stantec.com](mailto:edinburghworkplaces@stantec.com)

## Internet Connection

Working from home can present new challenges. Although your organisation may have provided you with technical assistance to set up home working arrangements, it's successful operation is likely to depend upon a reliable & fast broadband connection. The following tips will help facilitate this:

- **Make your router clear of other devices** - Keep your router as far away as possible from other devices. Microwave ovens also reduce Wi-Fi signals, so don't use one when you're doing something important online. Also, place your router on a table or shelf rather than on the floor.
- **Lower the demands on your connection** - The more devices attached to your Wi-Fi, the lower the speed you get. Devices like tablets and smartphones often work in the background, so try switching Wi-Fi reception off on these when you're not using them. You might also want to manage your family's online activity, so that different people aren't carrying out data-heavy tasks at the same time.
- **Try wired rather than wireless** - For the best broadband speeds, use an Ethernet cable to connect your computer directly to your router rather than using Wi-Fi. If this is not possible, consider buying a Wi-Fi booster for your home.
- **Test your connection** – Take this [Test](#) to determine whether your broadband is fast enough for remote working.



## Cyber Security

Be aware that cyber criminals are still active during these trying times and are preying on the fears of COVID-19 by sending phishing emails that try and trick users into clicking on a fraudulent, or otherwise dangerous, link.

**Avoid** links which offer financial reward or claim they have a 'cure' for the virus. If you have already clicked on the link, then make sure to contact your IT department for next steps.

### Technical Programmes

Your workplace may already have put a programme of communication into place, if not, then please see the suggestions below:

- **Microsoft Teams** – Lets you quickly pull together a 'team' of people inside / outside your organisation via online conversations and resource sharing. More information can be found on Microsoft's step-by-step [online guides](#).
- **Zoom** – Zoom allows you to virtually interact with colleagues via online meetings & screen share. This resource has various payment tiers and associated features. More information can be found on this [online guide](#).



### Communication & Resourcing within the Workplace

Remotely collaborating with colleagues and planning future resourcing may pose a challenge. The following tips can help smooth this process:

- **Host regular resource calls** – You may have already done this whilst in the office, but endeavour to increase the number of these over the week to ensure colleagues are clear on responsibilities, tasks etc.
- **Create online reference documents** – Utilise Microsoft Teams to create records of completed / future tasks, people's working routines etc.
- **Learn different modes of communication** - Phone calls, emails, text messages, instant messages, and face chats are all viable means of communication. In order to function efficiently you need to use these means appropriately. For example, there are times when a phone call would be a waste, but an email would work perfectly.
- **Designate tools for specific communication** – Too many tools equal too many places for people to comment and relay information. This can result in missed messages or people feeling overwhelmed/bombarded. Find a system that works best for your team and define how every tool will be used e.g. Skype for Business for regular check-ins, emails for call to actions etc.
- **Be mindful of your virtual body language** – Considering the tone in a phone call, the posture in a video call or the structure of your writing could help prevent misunderstandings when working remotely.
- **Filter / code your emails** – Many colleagues may be becoming inundated with video calls, emails and meetings. To maintain an effective stream of communication, include within the header of your email the importance of your communication alongside a response deadline. This way, those receiving a high amount of communication can prioritise more important emails. Also consider instant messaging for more quick fire and simple pieces of information / questions.

Having a working routine is vital for maintaining your productivity and preserving your well-being. These tips aim to help you establish a regular working routine:

**Set working hours** – The absence of a commute may mean you are starting work a lot earlier, but that does not mean you have to work longer hours. Make colleagues aware of your new working hours and stick to them.

**Create a separate workspace** – This doesn't mean having a dedicated office. Instead, it should be an area that mentally prepares you for work mode. Furthermore, it shouldn't be a place where you relax – thus separating work from home outside of 'work'. See these inventive [ideas](#) for your own workspace.



**Know your body, take regular breaks and be sociable** – Working remotely makes it very easy to work for long periods without taking a proper break. Make sure you make time to get up and stretch your legs. Regular movement and varying tasks will keep you comfortable and productive whilst working at home. Also follow the [20-20-20 rule](#).

**Be realistic about what you can achieve** – Be realistic about what you set out to do and feel satisfied rather than disappointed you didn't do everything.

**Decide the best way of working for you.** This might be the traditional To-do list, or perhaps using the [Pomodoro technique](#). Alternatively, if appropriate, you could discuss with your team whether you try working together on a sprint, part of the [Scrum Framework](#) found in [Agile Project Management Methodologies](#).



**It is worth taking the time to set the basics up correctly** - Take this [free DSE assessment](#) to evaluate your workstation. Or, follow these recommendations:

### Chair

- Forearms level with your work surface or keyboard;
- Hips level with, or slightly above, knees;
- Good back support - use cushions or pillows to raise your seating position up to a comfortable height or to support your lower back; and
- Depending on the height of your chair, you may need to raise your feet a little from the floor. You could use a large book, box-file, box or a tin.

### Screen

- Centrally positioned and an arms-length away;
- Angled or raised for eye height; and
- If you have a keyboard and mouse at home, you can raise the screen so that the top is at eye level using stacked printer paper, board games or books. If you don't have a mouse or keyboard, you can tilt the base of the laptop so that you can achieve a more comfortable typing position

## How to Stay in Touch with your Colleagues

Many people will be used to working around others and thus miss the 'buzz' of the office. Use these suggestions to ensure colleagues don't become isolated whilst working at home:

**Call colleagues on a regular basis** – Even if unrelated to work, make sure to call colleagues throughout the day to recreate those social moments around the kettle, at the printer etc, even if it is just for five minutes.

**Schedule lunchtime seminars** – Schedule bi-weekly seminars to discuss topics related to your line of work. Even an informal discussion is a good way to connect with colleagues.

**Arrange those post work social events** – If a group of you and your colleagues regularly go for after work drinks on a Friday, then why not use video apps to re-create that down-time after work from the comfort of your own home? Don't forget to use your personal device for these activities!



## Working from Home with Children

Many people will be looking after their children whilst working from home. These strategies are intended to minimise the impact doing this may have upon your ability to work from home.

**Establish a routine** – Both children and adults alike thrive on routines, so it is important to set out structure for the day. There is no need for your schedule to be sophisticated – set small specific goals and anything extra is a bonus.

**However, acknowledge that your routine can change** – Setting a fixed routine does not always work, especially when your children's needs must adapt every day. Having a rigid routine might feel like a good thing for one's mental health but failing to stick to it can be quite devastating. Acknowledging that things are likely to change can help your and your children's mental health.

**Communicate with your partner** – If you live in a two-parent household, it is important to discuss your workload with one another so that you can establish how your working days are going to run alongside taking care of your children. Working in two hours shifts can help give one parent time to do some work, while the other parent will not feel overwhelmed with new caring responsibilities.

**Be honest with your employer** – Once you have established a schedule that works, don't be afraid to discuss it with your line manager.

**Plan activities that don't require supervision** – Different activities will apply to different age groups, depending on your schedule and the age of your children. Why not use these following links for ideas?

- [BBC Bitesize Daily Lessons](#)
- [Scouts – The Great Indoors](#)
- [Save the Children – Keeping Kids Entertained](#)