

Preparation for coming out of lockdown

As the Government plans to look to an ease of the lockdown, the Nation are wondering what that might be and how it will look. Whilst we may not be able to return to “business as usual” as we knew it, reassurances have been given about public safety and what will be required. As part of their communications, the Government has warned that the end of lockdown would not be like “flicking a switch and going back to the old normal”.

At the beginning of the pandemic we felt an uncertainty and many felt anxious, as we did not know what to expect. Many may have felt a of loss of control and of more general loss as we had to learn to manage a different way of being day to day, which caused many individuals to feel overwhelmed.

Then came a time of acceptance - that this is how it’s going to be. Many of us will have began to try new things; such as a greater use of technology to stay in touch with friends and family and to be able to do our work in different ways. For some, the initial anxiety may have eased compared to the beginning of lockdown measures and we may have began to feel somewhat less worried and anxious about the situation.

7 weeks in and we may now be beginning to regard this as the “new normal”. We are getting a chance to do things differently and work differently and for some, there may be a feeling that this is how we would like it to remain a while longer. Of course, most of us may want to see our friends and family, we may be missing face-to-face physical contact and the ability to feel “free”, but rather than worrying too much, we may instead feel that we are settling into the present state.

With daily Government briefings addressing us returning to normal, about returning to work and the work place and because of the uncertainty this brings, many are being thrown back to that early anxiety stage because simply, none of us know what to expect.

The Health and Safety response will be to look at all aspects of the workplace in terms of individual and corporate safety and have produced a 4 stage response *The Prepare, Inform, Prevent, Recover Approach* as outlined below -

(CORONAVIRUS, COVID-19, RETURN TO WORK, SAFETY MANAGEMENT, WORKING FROM HOME COVID-19 H&S RESPONSE) –

Prepare. Get ready to return to work and identify your return to work plan.

Inform. Establish a return to work program and establish who will communicate with staff. The more senior the person, the better.

Prevent. Ensure that health and hygiene is managed and maintained.

Recover. The business recovery is a key stage. Leaders should monitor the effectiveness of the return to work program to ensure that it remains effective and is supporting those who have returned to work

In terms of your own Mental health and wellbeing, in the time before the measures are changed it may be worth asking yourself how you manage change. Recognise how things are for you in terms of comfort level and ask –

- How can I do things differently?
- Do I want things to go back to how they were?
- What (if anything) have I learnt from this period “away from the world?”
- If I want to change things going forward how might I do that?
- Who can I talk with about these things?
- Is my manager approachable? and would they understand?
- Do I need information to help reach any decisions, if so what sort of information?

Remember, your employer will not want to put you at risk, so be reassured that every organisation will be undertaking comprehensive risk assessments to ensure your safe return to work.

It is important to look after yourself and be able to identify your needs and how these can be met. Take time to “be in the moment” and see what you can take from that.

The world of work may be a very different place to what we were used to and it will take a period of adjustment so, don't be too hard on yourself or others and remember it is important that we keep ourselves safe and well no matter what may come ahead.

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.