Leader Guide
Managing the New Workplace
November 2020

Managing the New Workplace

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Transitioning Employees to the Workplace

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ways of working as we once knew them have changed and this will impact how we conduct work into the future. As restrictions ease, the goal is not necessarily to return to our previous work arrangements, such as working full time in an office environment. Instead, the aim is to take a long-term view to the health, safety and wellbeing of our people whilst achieving quality outputs from employees and increasing their work satisfaction.

When managing the transition to the workplace, employee health, safety and wellbeing is always our first priority.

Three waves for returning to work

There will be three (3) waves in transitioning employees back to the workplace in order to mitigate the risk of cluster outbreaks. The commencement of each wave will be determined by UnitingCare's Crisis Management Team (CMT) and will be in accordance with the latest government advice.

First Wave

The first wave will comprise of:

- Roles where the work necessitates it to be undertaken in a UnitingCare workplace;

- Roles that have significant client/patient/resident/customer interaction; and

- Employees that require onsite access to efficiently and productively undertake their role due to individual circumstances.

    Please note: where possible, high risk / vulnerable employees should avoid transitioning to the workplace in the First Wave.

Second Wave

The second wave comprises of:

- Employees identified in the First Wave; and

- Roles that directly support the delivery of frontline services.

    Please note: where possible, high risk / vulnerable employees should avoid transitioning to the workplace in the Second Wave.

Third Wave

- All employees

Planning for your team

The response from employees when discussing the upcoming transition back to a UnitingCare workplace may vary. Some employees will look forward to returning to the workplace, whilst others may not want to lose the flexibility in the way they conduct their work into the future.

Before commencing discussions with your team, you will firstly need to determine:

- How many members of your team can be in a UnitingCare workplace at the

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same time? If you share a workplace with multiple teams, ensure social distancing can occur and the workplace will not exceed maximum capacity on any one day. Please speak to your General Manager or Senior Leader for advice.

- What work needs to be completed in a UnitingCare workplace and what work can continue from home?

Once you have considered the above, discussions can occur with individual employees to determine the best approach to working arrangements at this point in time.

Consideration should be given to:

- The quality of work and employee outputs over the number of weeks the employee has been working from home;

- The employees' preferences in terms of days in the office and starting and finishing times;

- The caring responsibilities of the employee and how this will impact the days/times they can be at a UnitingCare workplace;

- The disclosed medical conditions of the employee and whether this makes them high risk / vulnerable in the current environment; and

- The modes of transport available to the employee.

The **Transition to the Workplace Employee Planning Template** provided in this email can support you with recording these discussions.

It is important to note, that as restrictions ease or even tighten again, working arrangements will need to be regularly reviewed and changes made as necessary. In this instance, you will need to have open conversations with your team to discuss how the arrangements are working and what amendments may need to be made.

Remember that any long-term flexible working arrangements should be recorded in writing and have a determined review period to ensure that there are conversations regarding the ongoing suitability of the arrangement. Please refer to the Working Arrangements at UCQ Policy and National Employment Standards for further information.

Discretionary flexibility arrangements

If you have salaried employees in your team who have worked above and beyond during this challenging time, you could consider providing a discretionary flexible arrangement to reward them for their efforts and show that they are valued. For example, allowing paid time off in lieu, commensurate with additional contribution/discretionary effort, when and where operationally suitable.

Health and Safety in the Workplace

Health and Safety in the Workplace

Whilst the restrictions surrounding COVID-19 are lifting, hygiene and social distancing restrictions are still being enforced.

UnitingCare is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees, and keeping employees safe during these unique times.

The COVID-19 Safe Plan identifies the health and safety measures UnitingCare have implemented and this will be updated as required.

Below is some guidance to ensure that UnitingCare is meeting its obligations to provide a safe workplace during the transition into the new model of working.

Social distancing

Implement social distancing by keeping a distance of at least 1.5 metres between people to the extent possible, for example:

- Don't shake hands to greet people.

- Re-organise work schedules and rosters to reduce the number of workers in an area or onsite.

- Move work stations, desks and tables further apart.

- Limit the number of people in an enclosed area to one person per 4 metre square (for example, in vehicles or in lunch or crib rooms).

- Stagger meal times and breaks to limit the number of employees congregating in one area. Spread out furniture in crib/break rooms at least 1.5 metres apart.

- Conduct meetings online, where possible.

- For face to face meetings, conduct such meetings in wide open spaces to enable employees to keep the required physical distance of at least 1.5 metres.

- Restrict visitors to the workplace.

- Limit the number of people in vehicles.

- If a signature is required, consider providing a confirmation email instead (if possible).

- Where possible, prohibit drivers from travelling with passengers.

Good Hygiene

Good personal and hand hygiene helps protect against infection and prevents the virus from spreading.

- Encourage all employees to practise good hygiene by frequently cleaning their hands. Hand washing should take at least 20 to 30 seconds. Wash the whole of each hand (palms, fingers, nails and back of hands), covering all areas with soap before washing with water. If hand washing is not practical, alcohol-based hand sanitiser containing at least 60% ethanol or 70% iso-propanol is recommended.

- Consider placing hand sanitiser in locations such as lunchrooms, worker-customer interface areas and at office entrances/exits to encourage hand hygiene.

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- Promote good personal hygiene when sneezing and coughing. People should cover their coughs or sneezes with an elbow or tissue, dispose of the tissue immediately and wash their hands, and avoid touching their face.

- Ensure symptomatic people (employees, contractors, customers, etc.) do not come into the workplace. Keep the workplace clean during COVID-19.

Cleaning

Keeping the workplace clean is important for reducing the number of germs that survive on surfaces.

- Regular, routine cleaning of workplaces, such as emptying bins and cleaning toilets, enhanced cleaning may help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Where possible, provide detergent/disinfectant wipes to employees to clean workstations, and workstation equipment such as monitors, phones, keyboards and mouses.

- Provide supplies of alcohol-based hand sanitiser around the office space, in high use areas.

As a leader, it's important you support and enforce health and safety requirements. Should you identify employees not meeting our health and safety requirements, please address this with the employee as soon as possible.

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Preparing Employees for the Workplace

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Preparing Employees for the Workplace

Preparing employees to return to work is an important priority for Leaders. For many, life has become a constant juggle of video calls, daring trips to the grocery store and using milk cartons as gym weights. Not to mention trying to home school children, remember basic algebra and work through financial pressures! This won't be like returning from leave, employees won't be coming back to work under normal circumstances and many will be still facing a range of demands in their personal lives.
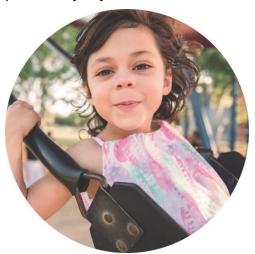
Employees Top Concerns

Across the globe, research has found that the top three concerns for employees are:

- Concern that members of their family or themselves will get infected by the virus.

- A possible recession that will impact their finances and careers. Employees report concern about having sufficient savings or insurance to cover the cost of living in the event of an unplanned work stoppage.

- How to manage family responsibilities and care arrangements over the coming months.

(Gartner, 2020).

This section will take you through the key actions you need to take as a Leader to effectively manage the return to work transition, whilst maintaining engagement and productivity in your team.

Recommended Communication Approach

Almost above all else, communication is key! The trick is working out the communication approach that works best for you and your team. You might have the best intentions, but if you don't make time for it, it's easy to let it slide. So, before you do anything else:

Open your outlook calendar, and put in a recurring appointment for 15 minutes to reach out to your team.

Choose a day and time that suits you. This way, you hold yourself to account and you are making time for it each week on top of your existing check-ins and meetings. If something comes up that you can't say no to, simply move the invite to another free time – don't delete it!

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Below is a suggested process to structure your communications with your team and prepare them for the transition to the workplace.

Comms	Purpose
Initial email to your team	Let them know that you are starting to prepare for their transition to the workplace and will contact them individually to discuss. Attach the **Transition to the Workplace Employee Fact Sheet** to this email so that your team knows our commitment to safety.
Call with each team member	• Explain the guidelines that you need to work around to protect their health and safety. • Understand what constraints they might have that will also impact their working arrangement.
Follow-up email to the team	Share the team working arrangements so that everyone understands the plan and knows who will be in the workplace and when.
Ongoing	Continue to check-in with the team to provide updates on changes and ask how the arrangements are working for each person.

During times of uncertainty, your team will be looking to you for direction and guidance. It is better to overcommunicate!

Key Message for Communications

Consistent messaging that is clear and concise is going to be the most impactful for your team and the best way to help make your employees feel safe returning to the workplace. You can draw from the list of key messages below to quickly create comms for your team:

- We are managing the return to the workplace with workplace health and safety considerations as our first priority. Your safety comes before anything else.

- The UnitingCare Crisis Management Team is providing guidance around how we manage this process to ensure that it is in accordance with the latest government advice.

- You will notice that there are some changes around the workplace. This will include additional hygiene measures to protect you and those around you.

- I want to make sure that you feel comfortable in the workplace and with the new arrangements. I will be reaching out to each of you individually to discuss work arrangements and any concerns that you may have.

- I understand that not everyone's situation will be the same. We will work together over the coming weeks to develop an arrangement that will

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work for you and meet the needs of your role.

- Our transition to the workplace will not happen overnight. Our approach will be phased over the coming months and may look different for each team. I will make sure that to support you through this I will communicate any changes as quickly as possible with you.

- Remember, it's normal to feel anxious during this time. If you are finding things difficult, please reach out to me.

It's important that you are transparent with your team. Remember, it's okay to not know all of the answers. Being open and honest about what has been decided and what has not can actually reassure people that careful consideration is going into each decision.

Managing Performance

As a Leader, to continue to drive performance and maintain engagement during this time you'll likely need to shift your approach somewhat. You need to strike a balance between demonstrating empathy and managing outcomes.

To do this, think about how you can adapt your check-ins in three ways:

1. Think about frequency. Are you meeting often enough?

Without the incidental run-ins and desk chats, people in your team don't have the opportunity to run something by you and get a quick answer. Think about how often you get to check-in with each person, it might be that you need shorter but more frequent check-ins rather than a fortnightly catch-up.

It's a good idea to take the opportunity to ask the question of your team members: how are our current team meetings and catch-ups working for you?

2. Adjust the agenda to acknowledge new personal and professional realities first up.

Try starting off the conversation with one of the following questions:

- How are you managing balancing professional and personal demands?

- How are you adjusting to working remotely/back in the office? Is there anything that I can do to support you?

- Are you getting the support you need from your peers? Is there anything we can be doing differently as a team?

- Are you encountering new challenges in your work? What can we do to make sure that you're successful?

- What questions do you have about recent communications (e.g., messages from the CEO, travel restrictions etc.)?

3. Emphasise *flexible* goal setting suited to your environment.

During this time, many employees report feeling a lack of connection to the organisation and what they are trying to achieve. Rather than focussing on long-term goals, it can help to adjust your time window Try this in your next catch-up:

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- What are you working on today and where do you want to be by the end of the day?

- What are 2-3 goals for the week?

- What's the bigger picture you're working towards? In [next month] where will we be?

Make sure you take notes and refresh at your next catch-up.

> **Remember**: Managing to outcomes involves checking that each team member knows what they should be working on and what to prioritise. You should focus on reinforcing outcomes rather than what hours people are working.
>
> A recent study by Harvard found that working from home increased work output by 4.4% and the quality of the work was the same (Harvard Business Review, 2019).
>
> So, keep in mind that **trust** should come first!

Don't forget if you are looking for templates and frameworks to support your conversations, check out the [Performance Development Conversations toolkit](#) on the intranet which is all about having regular, productive conversations between you and your team.

Refreshing team connections

Undoubtedly, some relationships may have faded over the last couple of months. It's now important that you as a leader are proactive in taking time to refresh these and help your team do so too.

Refreshing relationships within the team

You'll likely find that this refresh happens naturally. But there are some simple things you can do along the way to make sure that everyone is included. The following is a list of activities that you can run in a team meeting. The activities can help to reconnect the team and reinforce a focus on wellbeing and support.

- Open the meeting by asking people to share what activities they have tried, to invest in their own wellbeing during the last couple of months.

- Invite people (if comfortable), to share a challenge they've had to deal with lately and how they've managed it. It could be outside of work and you can start off the conversation by sharing your own.

- Send an email to the team asking people to reflect on what they've learnt about themselves, their work or others over the last couple of months and ask them to bring it to the meeting. Encourage people to keep it constructive by role modelling and sharing your own reflection.

- Ask your team to reflect on what strengths they've seen in themselves and others that have been put to good use.

- Invite people to share something they've tried that's been fun, creative or just good for the soul.

(Adapted from Yes Psychology & Consulting)

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Refreshing relationships outside the team

Don't forget that relationships outside of your team may have taken a hit too. Encourage your team to reach out to others by:

- Inviting someone along from another team to share an update around their work successes and current priorities.

- Run a 'stock-take' activity in your next meeting. Ask people to reflect on who they've been in contact with recently and identify the gaps.

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Supporting Wellbeing

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Supporting Wellbeing for You and Your Team

Maintaining your wellbeing

Remember… Don't forget to take care of you! It may seem like your list of things to do is never ending, but you still need to sleep, eat and spend time with family. Only then can you be available for your team. It's okay to feel like you don't have all of the answers, be genuine, know your limits and reach out if you need support.

Access support for you or your team

There is a range of support options available for you and your team.

Each Senior Leadership Team has a mission team. Please reach out to them with any pastoral care concerns.

- Aged Care and Community Services – Adam McIntosh
- Hospitals and Governance – Bruce Moore
- Family and Disability Services and People & Culture – Linda Hanson
- Digital & Transactional Services, Business and Financial Services, Corporate Development – Peter Armstrong

Benestar, our Employee Assistance Provider is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Simply call: 1300 360 364.

Watch out for meeting fatigue!

Did you know a recent Harvard study found that 74% of employees find meetings unproductive and inefficient!

Poorly run, long meetings have been found to significantly decrease engagement, happiness and even collaboration and communication among teams (Harvard, 2017).

Sound familiar? Many of us are finding that they are surprisingly spending even more time in meetings than ever before and it's incredibly tiring. Start these simple practices to make your meetings more efficient and demonstrate your investment in your team wellbeing:

- **Include an agenda in your calendar invite.** When you set-up the meeting, you know exactly what it's for. But by the time it comes around, you might have other priorities on your mind. Including the agenda in your invite means you can quickly refresh before the meeting and it means you start off focused.

- **Book meetings to run until ten minutes shy of the half hour, or hour.** This means your team will have time to grab a drink, look away from the screen and stand up between back to back meetings.

- **Set the purpose from the start of the meeting.** Remember simple phrases like: "I've set-up this time for us to…" and "What we want to get out of this time is…" Stating the purpose

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up front gets everyone on the same page, it also makes it easier for you to remind people if they get off track and go on a tangent.

- **Stick to the purpose!** There may be other things that come up, but if things get side tracked try saying something like: "That's a good point, let's note that down for next time so that we can explore it further." Or: "Good point but let's take that offline so that we can focus on …"

Note down actions. Take notes and record who is doing what. If a suggestion is raised, ask who is able to take that on as an action. At the end, send the actions around to the team.

Take time away from work

It's important to encourage your teams to continue to access their annual leave or long service leave, and to ensure you are also taking time away from work.

Whilst there are restrictions regarding where we can travel, we should all take time to rest, rejuvenate and do activities we enjoy. This could include single days and/or weeks of leave.

For employees who have not accessed leave this year or do not have leave booked, you should discuss their future leave plans at your next catch up/ meeting and request they book some time to take a break.

5 Steps for maintaining a healthy lifestyle

Finally, don't forget the basics, to maintain your wellness during this time, follow these five practices.

Stay active
- Consider going to an outdoor exercise class or workout with a friend
- Even when social distancing you can still go for a walk outside
- Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

Balanced diet
- Drink plenty of water. Have a glass of water by your workstation.
- Focus on eating foods containing protein, fibre, fruits and veggies and avoid snacking

Stay connected
- Reach out and contact someone in your team to check-in daily. You shoud consider refresh some of your connections face-to-face!
- Contact your family and friends and organise a face-to-face catch-up with restrictions easing

Invest time in you!
- Remember the small things that you enjoy doing and make time for them!
- Reach out to you Employee Assistance Provider, Benestar who are open 24 hours a day 7 days a week

Access support
- The Mission Team and our Chaplains are available 24/7 for support.
- Either call 07 3253 4008 or email missionteam@ucareqld.com.au.

Frequently Asked Questions

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Frequently Asked Questions

Transitioning to the Workplace

When can we commence the transition of employees back to the workplace?

The Crisis Management Team (CMT) will advise when the First Wave, Second Wave and Third Wave can transition back into the workplace. The decision to commence each wave will take into consideration government advice as well as health and safety requirements.

Until the commencement of each wave is determined, employees that can work from home should continue to do so.

How will we know when the First Wave commences?

This will be communicated via the Executive Leadership Team and Senior Leadership Team.

In the meantime, you can commence discussions with your team in preparation for the transition.

I have an employee that wants to perform all of their work in a UnitingCare workplace. How do I manage this?

Our key priority is the health and safety of our employees and ensuring we are able to comply with social distancing requirements. Depending on the UnitingCare workplace setup and the number of other employees at that particular workplace on any given day, it may not yet be possible for a particular employee to perform all their work at that location.

A discussion should be had with the employee to understand their reasons and what other arrangements can be put in place to support them.

The working arrangements put in place will continue to be reviewed and amended where appropriate to suit the needs of the employee and the role they are performing, whilst ensuring we meet our health and safety obligations.

I have an employee that wants to perform all their work from home on a permanent basis, not just whilst there are restrictions in place. How do I manage this?

In the first instance, you should obtain an understanding of the reasons for this request and consider the requirements of the role the employee performs.

It is appropriate to negotiate working arrangements that meet the requirements of the employer and the preferences of the employee. All requests should be given genuine consideration and it is important that decisions about working arrangements are based on the role the employee performs and what can be reasonably accommodated.

Please contact People Advisory for support on 1300 136 757 (option 2) or at peopleadvisory@ucareqld.com.au

I have an employee that doesn't want to take public transport to work, can they continue to work from home?

If it is suitable for the employee to continue working from home during this time, this can continue. However, if the employee is required to return to a UnitingCare workplace, it is the responsibility of the employee to arrange transport to the workplace. This

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could include walking, driving or public transport.

If the employee is utilising public transport they should maintain good hand hygiene and practice social distancing.

Health and Safety

Will the workplace be safe for employees?

UnitingCare is committed to providing a safe workplace for employees. Health and safety will be a key consideration for the CMT when determining the transitions of each wave. The **COVID-19 Safe Plan** identifies how UnitingCare will be making the workplace safe for employees.

How do we make sure employees abide by health and safety requirements, including social distancing requirements?

Whilst UnitingCare will be putting measures in place to ensure health and safety requirements are being met (identified in the COVID-19 Safe Plan), it is the responsibility of every employee to abide by the health and safety requirements and inform their leader if they have any concerns.

What should I do if I see an employee in the workplace who is not following the health and safety requirements?

Should you observe an employee not abiding by the health and safety requirements, such as social distancing, please address this with the employee and explain the importance of following these requirements for their own health and safety and the health and safety of others.

If the employee does not report to you, you can address the matter with the employee

and raise the matter with the employees' leader (if needed).

It is important for everyone to take accountability for their own health and safety and be stewards for UnitingCare's health and safety requirements.

Can employees wear masks in the workplace?

Employees that do not require a mask for their role or duties can wear a mask if they wish to do so. As the mask is not a requirement for the employee's role or duties, the employee will need to supply their own mask.

Do employees need to have the COVIDSafe application on their phone to return to work?

Whilst UnitingCare recommends employees to download and activate the application, it is not a requirement.

Can we use meeting rooms?

Meeting rooms can be utilised, however the attendees will be required to practice social distancing. If there is not enough space for all employees to practice social distancing, some employees will need to utilise other spaces (where appropriate) and join the meeting either by telephone, Skype or Zoom.

Can employees have morning tea or lunch in the kitchen?

Employees can have morning tea or lunch in the kitchen or tea room, however social distancing will need to be maintained. Employees should also be mindful of other employees needing to access these areas.

Before and after use of a communal or meal area, the employee is required to wipe down

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the area with a disinfectant wipe or cloth and detergent.

Employees will be required to bring their own cutlery and utensils to the workplace and take home each day. Given the current environment, the sharing of food between employees should not occur.

What do employees do with computers that were loaned during the COVID-19 response period?

Employees that received a loan computer during the COVID-19 response period should contact their General Manager for instruction on how to arrange a return.

Who do I talk to if I need further information?

For support relating to your service or the transition to the workplace, please speak with your manager.

For support regarding management of employees, please raise this with People Advisory at peopleadvisory@ucareqld.com.au or at 1300 136 757 (option 2).