



# Visible Leadership

How to engage with your teams during uncertain times

# Principles for engagement

## 1. Be honest and consistent with your messaging

This is a challenging time for all and people will be looking for stability where they can find it. It is important to not add to any uncertainty by being honest and consistent at all times. [Look at our FAQs which will help with engaging employees during uncertainty.](#)

## 2. Little and often is better in times of uncertainty

The change in ways of working will impact people differently with some being used to it, and some not at all. Twinned with other lifestyle changes, it's important to check in with employees more regularly letting them know when you are available. The key point here is about creating space and a routine for teams so that people know when and how they can engage with you.

## 3. Remember the whole person

Work is only one part of what is happening for people at the moment. As you might be, most will be worried about their loved ones, their jobs, school closures if they have children and just the general disruption to their lives. Don't just make check ins about work; try to understand what is happening for them and know that it is ok to show your vulnerable side too.

## 4. Two way communication is important

It is important that employees have the opportunity to ask any questions they have and to feel engaged with a variety of different tools available for use. [Our slide on an example cascade has some suggestions on how to create two way communication.](#)

# What do people want to hear?



What the organisational response is to the challenge for example, how has ECC responded to governmental advice.



What the impact will be for them in their jobs for example, how can they do their roles working from home, whether there will be flexibility for those having to maintain work as well as caring responsibilities for example.



That support is available to them during this uncertainty for example, for a lot of people uncertainty can trigger a variety of emotions and colleagues will want to know what support is available. This doesn't always need to be formal support but more space to discuss changes.



That you, as senior leaders, are there with them and will support them by being transparent with messaging on a regular basis. They know you are going through it too so whilst you are there to lead through this challenge, showing your vulnerable side helps to bring teams together.

# What do people want to hear?

What are the organisation-wide comms from Gavin and our Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)

It's important that employees see something daily at each level as national advice is changing everyday

This then gets translated into Functional Leadership Teams who understand the impact for services

It's important that FLT updates their teams on developments as it'll be line managers that employees go to on a daily basis

This then gets cascaded to line managers who need to understand how we can implement this information into operations

Line managers then need to inform their teams of what needs to happen next as a result of the communications in order to make it happen.

It's important that employees have the opportunity to ask questions and the space to have a direct link to senior leadership so that they understand that we're all in this together.

# The role of leaders and managers

## Line Managers

Line managers are an employees first point of contact. They help make sense of what is happening so it is crucial that managers understand the operational impacts of change.

How can managers engage with employees?:

- Daily team check ins via MS Teams
- Regular 1:1s with your reports (ask your reports what works for them)
- Set up team channels so you can share messages and articles

## Heads of Service

Heads of Service are there to lead the service through change, and to guide line managers through this, staying connected to the other services across ECC.

How can Heads of Service engage with employees?:

- Daily team check ins via MS Teams
- Regular 1:1s with your reports (ask your reports what works for them)
- Daily updates to whole services reiterating key messages from FLT's
- Regular micro-blogging

## Directors

Directors are there to lead the function through the change, staying connected to what is happening organisationally. Employees look to EDs for key strategic messages.

How can Directors engage with employees?:

- Daily team check ins via MS Teams
- Regular 1:1s with your reports (ask your reports what works for them)
- Regular functional stand ups via MS Teams
- Weekly blogs

# Top tips for line managers

- **Have regular check ins with your team.** This can be a daily check in with your team as a whole as well as regular check ins with your individual team members depending on what would work best for them.
- **Be supportive and listen.** Your teams will likely be feeling very unsettled right now. Some might be worried about how they continue with their jobs whilst having to manage childcare. Some might be starting to feel quite isolated working from home, especially if they live by themselves. Just keep listening to your team and provide stability where you can.
- **Come up with some principles for working from home** e.g. what will the etiquette be for breaks? Should people send a quick update via their team channel to let their team know when they are going for a break? How will teams know when you are available for a chat? Have a chat with your team to see what would work best for them.
- **Set up team channels on MS Teams.** These don't need to be work related alone, you can set up your team and have other channels for example, for sharing articles, for fun etc. Work is a major source of social connection for many so it is important to create spaces for teams to be together to talk about how they are feeling.
- **Recognise that everyone is different.** Everyone will cope in different ways. Some will like the team check ins and some will prefer catching up in smaller groups. People might have to work different hours taking into account other pressures they need to keep on top of. Keep talking to your team to find out what works best for them and be as supportive as you can be.

# Top tips for senior leaders

- **Have regular check ins with your team.** Your direct reports will be there to support you with the uncertainty on the ground so need to be aware of what needs to happen so that they can cascade this. Have regular/daily check ins with your FLT's to discuss key messages and concerns.
- **Be empathetic.** Remember that this isn't just about work. Every aspect of everyday life has likely changed for your whole function as well as for yourself. Be empathetic to this by sharing the importance of looking after wellbeing in your weekly briefings, encourage your direct reports to show flexibility about working arrangements and be available for questions.
- **Be visible and available.** Colleagues will be looking to senior leadership for structure and stability. They'll want to know we're in this together. Consider holding functional stand ups so that you can share key messages yourselves and be there for any questions that teams might have for you. Even if there aren't any, it's a good way of showing your support for teams during this uncertain time.
- **Show your human side.** By this, we don't mean sharing all your concerns with everyone as this would create panic. However, your teams know that you are human and going through the same emotions. It creates comradery to share when you don't have clarity on something or that you too are worried about loved ones.
- **Provide stability where you can.** Whilst there will be some things you don't know, it's important to provide stability where possible. For example, for those who might be concerned about juggling work and personal commitments, give assurances that support will be provided to employees who need it at this uncertain time. By just saying this, people will be comforted that there is support available.

# FAQs

## What if I get asked questions that I can't answer?

This is uncharted territory for everyone. No one will expect you to know all of the answers so the best thing to do here is to answer what you can and for anything you don't, be honest, try to find out the answer where you can and if you can't, be supportive.

It has never been more important to follow up on questions where you have said you will so be mindful of what you commit to.

## Where can I go for support on remote working/managing remote teams?

There is support and resources available for you on [My Learning](#). You will find a mix of tools, webinars, podcasts and also virtual tutor-led sessions that cover creating healthy habits when working from home and managing remote teams. You can dip in and out of these, or you can choose to go through some of them as a team during one of your virtual catch-ups.

To access this playlist, simply visit [My Learning](#) and you will find our "Supporting you to work from home: Resources" playlist on the carousel.

ODP & ST will continue to work with your People Business Partner to identify any team-specific support or intervention that may be delivered by our colleagues in the Performance Consultancy team.

# FAQs

## What support is available for myself and my team?

There is a range of support here for you if you need it - you can always speak to your line manager and our free [Employee Assistance Helpline](#) is also available to you. In addition to the resources mentioned above, we now also have a designated area for all things wellbeing-related. We will continue to add new resources over the coming days. To access this, simply visit [My Learning](#) where you will find My Wellbeing on the carousel.

Please make sure you bookmark [My Learning](#) in your web browser and advice your team to do the same. Using the link offered in this slide allows you access to the platform without having to access the intranet, or relying on any of our systems (e.g. Outlook).

## How can I support redeployment?

As a leader and manager, it is so important to support the redeployment effort so that we can manage the demand on our services and make best use of the skills and experience we have across the organisation. Please make sure that you:

- Encourage people to complete the survey so that we can identify and match key skills to service areas in need
- Release any employees that you might be managing that could be better used elsewhere and make sure they understand what is happening and why
- Get in touch with any new employees that might be moved across to support your area and engage with them closely. This will be an unsettling time for them but they want to help.

Our slide on redeployment will provide you with some more top tips for managing this.

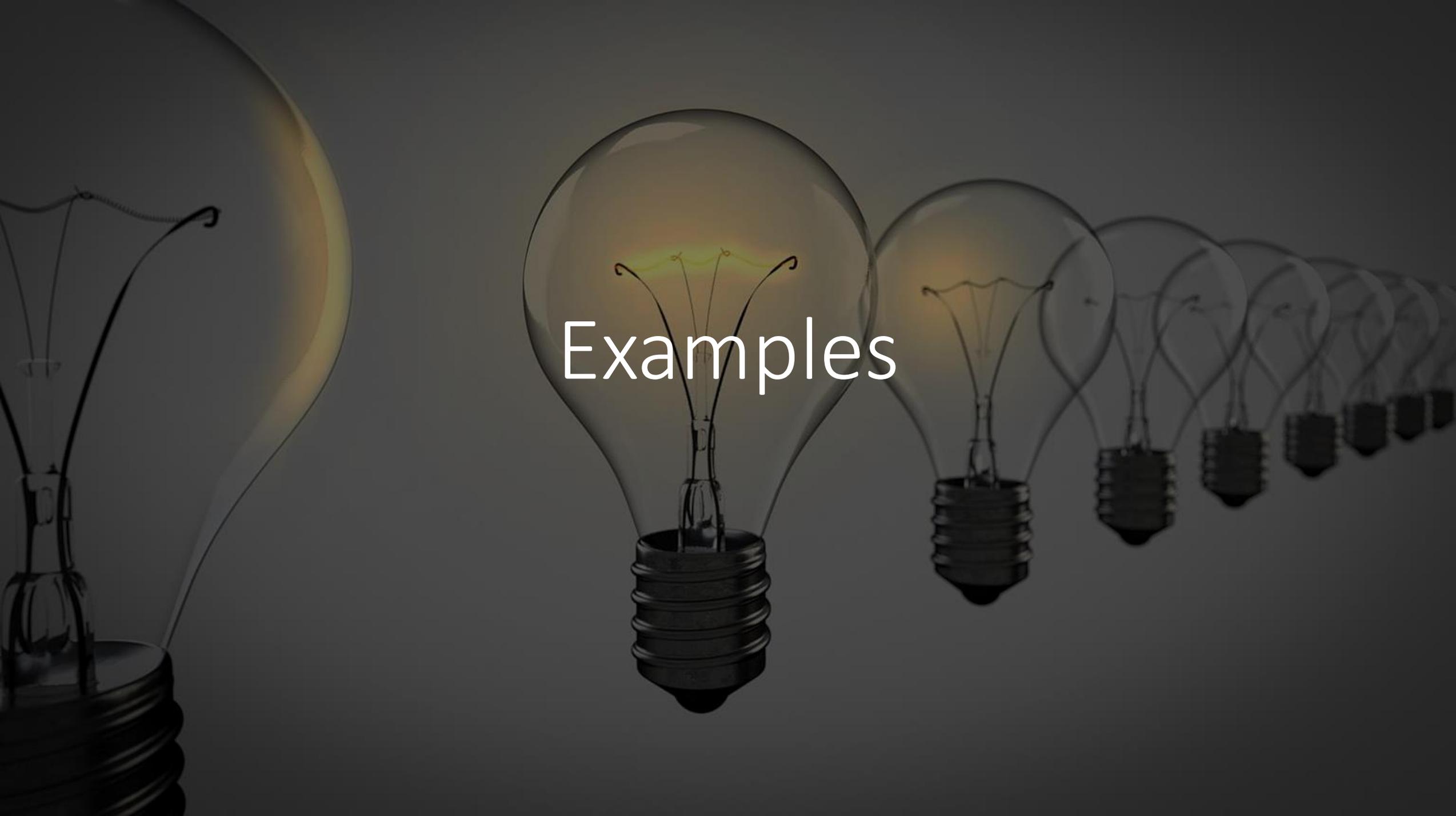
# Redeployment

## For those managing employees who will be redeployed to new areas

- Encourage your team to fill in the survey explaining the benefits and need for redeployment at this difficult time.
- Explain as much as you can about the area that redeployed employee(s) might be moving to.
- If you know the area, make the connection to the relevant line manager to support the employee(s) with the transition.
- For some, this may be unsettling as they look to move to an unknown team at a time when they might be looking to their own team for support. Discuss whether it would be helpful to keep regular check ins in the diary and involve the new line manager within this discussion.

## For those who will be managing new employees redeployed to your area

- You might be managing employee(s) who have experience in your area but might not be as aware of key processes. If this is the case, spend time with them (as a team if more than one) explaining these processes to them.
- Send them any training or guidance notes so that they can familiarise themselves with relevant information.
- Ensure they are invited to relevant team check ins and book in regular 1:1 check ins with them.
- If appropriate, assign them a buddy (one who has a lot of experience if possible) so that they have someone else in the team to go to with any questions.
- Be patient with redeployed employees. They are learning new roles under stressful circumstances.

A row of light bulbs is shown against a dark background. The central bulb is illuminated, casting a warm glow, while the others are dim. The word "Examples" is written in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the glowing bulb.

Examples

# Example cascade

This is just an example of the sorts of things you can do to keep your team engaged during this uncertain time. You don't need to do it all, and times will be dependent on individual need, so they are just some ideas.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>9am –12pm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start of the week team check ins</li> <li>Daily FLT check in</li> <li>Heads of Service (HOS) cascade key messages following FLT</li> <li>1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily FLT check in</li> <li>HOS to cascade key messages following FLT</li> <li>Virtual team check in</li> <li>1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily FLT check in</li> <li>HOS to cascade key messages following FLT</li> <li>Virtual team check in</li> <li>1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily FLT check in</li> <li>HOS to cascade key messages following FLT</li> <li>Virtual team check in</li> <li>1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>End of the week virtual team check in</li> <li>Daily FLT check in</li> <li>HOS to cascade key messages following FLT</li> <li>1:1 check ins</li> </ul>
<b>12pm –1pm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set aside time for people to go outside for a walk</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider a weekly virtual functional briefing via MS Teams</li> <li>Follow up the briefing with a blog/email update</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual team lunch break</li> </ul>
<b>1pm – 5pm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual team tea break</li> <li>Continue 1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual team tea break</li> <li>Continue 1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual team tea break</li> <li>Continue 1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual team tea break</li> <li>Continue 1:1 check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual team tea break</li> <li>Continue 1:1 check ins</li> </ul>

# Example functional virtual briefing

- Virtual functional briefings can be short lasting typically 30 minutes
- Briefings are a good way for cascading key messages and informing employees of information they need to know whilst providing teams with the opportunity to ask any questions they have
- They can be run regularly with weekly or fortnightly being a good option

## How to run a virtual functional briefing:

- Send recurring invites to the whole function to attend via MS Teams (you can ask people to send questions in advance if that would be useful).
- Given the size of the function, encourage employees to mute their mics so that there isn't any background noise
- A typical agenda might be to start with an update from the Executive Director followed by team updates from Heads of Service (or from employees if that feels best).
- Once updates have been provided, encourage employees to ask any questions or raise any concerns they might have. They can use the chat functionality during the meeting if they feel more comfortable doing that.
- Finish on a positive note by asking for any positive news stories or just by saying thank you to teams.
- Send out some key points via email to the function for those who might not have been able to attend.

# Example etiquette for remote working

Some of you will be used to working with MS Teams and for others, it will be brand new. Below are some tips for how you can manage a team remotely with MS Teams in mind.

- **Set up your team on MS Teams** and from there, you can create different channels for updates, for team chat and for work streams (maybe a channel per project for example).
- **Discuss with your team how best to stay in touch.** Given how uncertain everything is, and the importance of creating a routine, we would recommend daily team and individual check ins.
- **Discuss with your team how you all want to manage breaks.** You could ask people to let the team know when they are about to go for a lunch break on the 'update' channel so that everyone knows when they can and cannot contact each other.
- **Remember, a lot of people get their social interaction from work.** It's important to make space for this even when working virtually so do make sure check ins are not just about work but about what is going on for people.

For further information on how to use MS Teams, [you can watch an interactive demo.](#)

Remember to also look after yourselves.

This is an unsettling time for everyone and you are an employee as well as a manager.

Be kind, be patient and remember that there is support available for you too!