



Essential guide to Working remotely

If you are a manager please also refer to the 'Essential Guide to Managing Remotely'. Both guides should be read in conjunction with the Remote Working Policy.

Remote working has many benefits for both the individual and the organisation. This guide has been designed to assist you in understanding the basic requirements and tools available, as well as to emphasise the importance of looking after your wellbeing.

Although physically distanced it is important to remain socially connected.

Communications protocols

Daily basis

Recording of hours

Fill in My Portal with your time recording each day, clocking out for breaks in the normal way. You should not work overtime or excessive amounts to build up flexi time without the prior approval of your manager.

Breaks

Working remotely can really help our productivity but, because we can focus more easily, we may end up having fewer breaks.

Make sure you **review the wellbeing section** of this guide and ensure you give your eyes a rest from your screens.

Also make sure you use your annual leave entitlement to give you a change of routine and scenery.

Regular basis

Availability updates

It is important to highlight your working pattern in your calendar so colleagues know when you are available. Make sure your calendar is readable to the whole organisation – you can make specific items private if necessary.

Use your out of office when you are not working to advise when you will be back and who to contact for urgent items.

Social interaction with colleagues

We all need to be reminded that we work and interact with real human beings, not just virtual ones. Wherever possible turn on your cameras so you can 'see' your colleagues; not only does it help us feel more connected to them but being able to see their facial expression and body language helps to prevent misunderstandings.

Even though you may be on a work call it's ok to talk to each other as you would over a cuppa in the office – ask your colleagues how their week is going, how their family is or what they are doing at the weekend. Even better, if you are able to, why not schedule lunchtime walks with each other.



Data/IT security

Regularly check that you are up to date with our remote working and portable device guidance in relation to data protection.

- Keep mobile devices and laptops safe from theft
- Do not leave devices unlocked if left unattended in the house
- Make passwords secure
- Ensure you cannot be overheard whilst on a call or in a meeting
- Make sure you are the only one who can see your screen
- Avoid saving items to the desktop as these are not remotely backed up
- Store physical data securely out of sight
- Do not destroy physical confidential data at home – keep this secure until you are able to dispose of it properly at the office
- Be vigilant of phishing attacks and keep up to date with your cyber security training



Weekly basis

Catch-up

We recommend that you have a video catch up with your direct line manager once a week.

Monthly basis

One to ones

It is important to have a monthly discussion with your manager dedicated to reviewing your progress against objectives and training.

This meeting should ideally be a video chat on Microsoft Teams accompanied by a one to one form within Ashford Achieve to keep a record of the discussion. Speak to our Learning and Development Officer for assistance with this.

It is also a good opportunity for another check in with how you are feeling and what support you need.



Appraisals

When you review your objectives and training needs regularly as part of your monthly one to ones then your annual appraisal and mid-year reviews are a breeze.

Make time for these – the more thought you put into how you feel the past year has gone and what you'd like to concentrate on/learn during the next year the more productive these will be!

General tips

Health and Safety

Continually review your workstation to check you are following health and safety advice and keeping yourself safe.

Report any accidents, injuries, diseases or dangerous occurrences arising from and/or relating to the performance of your work that occur whilst working at home to your manager and complete the normal reporting procedures.

Staff updates

Make sure you keep up to date with all the latest internal staff communications via the ABC newsfeed blog on the Smarthub. You can 'follow' this and receive email notifications when something new is uploaded. Alternatively you can use the Connect+ app as explained later in this guide.

Recognition

It is just as important to say thank you to your colleagues whilst working remotely, or to recognise when someone displays one of our values (Ambitious, Creative and Trustworthy).

As you will not be passing their desk to do this, think about making use of our e-cards on the Smarthub so everyone can celebrate the excellent work that goes on daily throughout the organisation.

Sickness

You should report in sick in accordance with normal reporting procedures.

Face to face contact

At least one face to face team meeting will take place every eight weeks and these will be attended by all employees including those who have remote working arrangements.

There may be other instances where you are required to attend the office during your normal remote working hours for a specific meeting or training.

How to use tools – tips and etiquettes

Below we have listed some of the most frequent tools and systems we use and how to access them. Please speak to your manager if you need to know how to use one of your services' systems if it is not listed.

It is really important to keep your technical skills up to date when working remotely and this can be difficult when no-one is sitting near you to lend a hand. If there is something you are stuck with or feel like there must be an easier way to do something, make a quick call to your manager or colleague and find out how. Don't be shy! Think of all the time you could save.

Skype

Making a call

Skype will automatically load when you switch on your pc. Click the icon on the task bar to bring the app up. Here you will see members of your team and any other contacts you have added.

To make a call, double click their name. A box will appear and at the bottom you have the option of sending an instant message, making a video call, an audio call or sharing your screen. To make a standard audio call click the telephone icon and select 'Skype call'.



Send an instant message

Click the speech bubble and a text box with cursor will appear. Type your message and press enter.



Make an external call

To make an external call you can either type the number into the search bar or select the keypad and type in the number there. Press enter.



Microsoft Teams

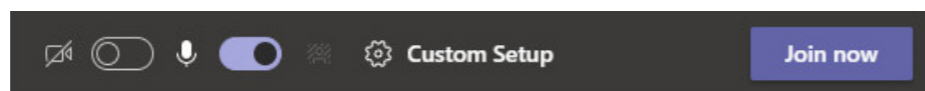
MS Teams will also load automatically on start up. **You can access training on the different functionality here.**

MS Teams etiquette

If you are engaged in a meeting or telephone conversation on Teams it is good practice to switch your video camera on so you can see and talk to your caller clearly.

Also please ensure that your setting is suitable and you can't see a lot of clutter or items that you would not want others viewing behind you. If you can't have a clear background you can always use one of the pre-loaded ones or blur your background by clicking the silhouette on the toolbar.

If your environment is at all noisy please remain on mute until you wish to speak. Also follow the normal courtesies of allowing others to speak and not talking over them.



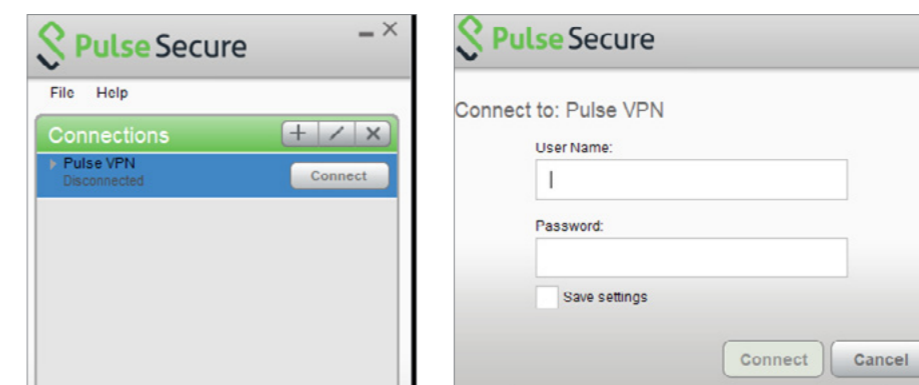
Accessing systems

Pulse

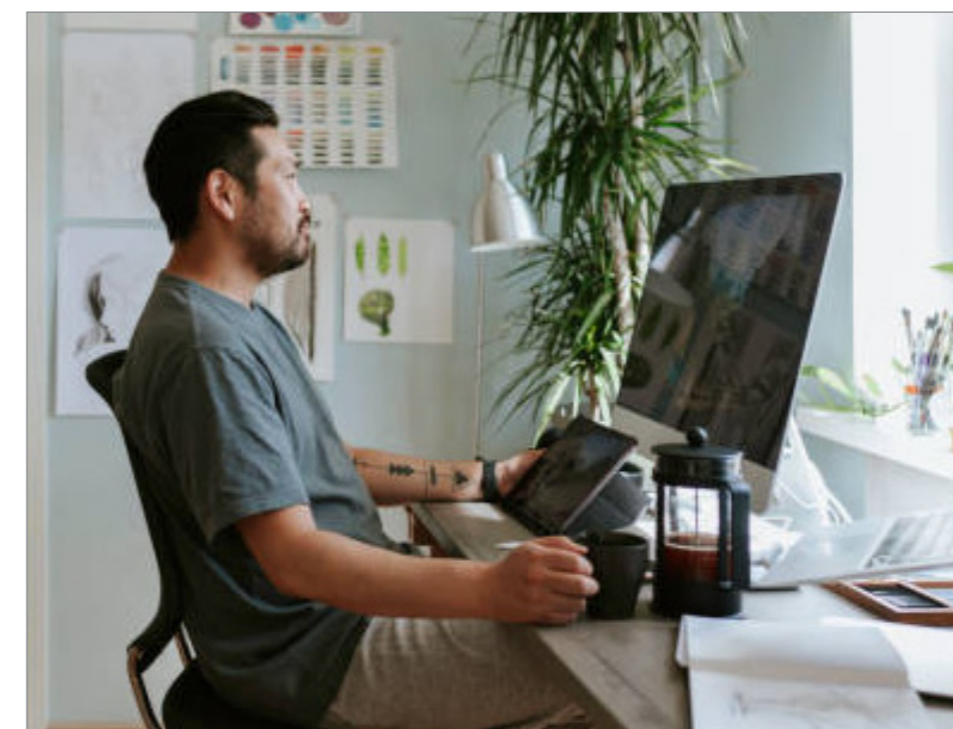
Follow the instructions issued by IT for initially getting set up to use Pulse, then simply select the Pulse icon in the system tray when you log on.

Double clicking this icon will bring the connect box up.

Click connect then you should see your username. In secondary password type **push**.



You will now see that you are connected and can use your laptop to access our different systems.





Drive access

On the task bar at the bottom of the screen you will see the file explorer icon.



Clicking on this will show your frequently used folders, recent files and on the left hand pane you will see the drives you have access to. Where the drive has a green connector, clicking it will bring up the folders within that drive. If there is a red cross as shown below, clicking it should make the red cross disappear so you can access the files. If not, log a call with IT.



Efin

To access efin, double click the icon on your desktop. From here you will need to enter your username and password. This is your standard system logon.

Ashford Achieve

To access Ashford Achieve for your learning and development either hover over the self-service tab on the top of the intranet homepage or [access Ashford Achieve learning and development here](#) to go straight into the system.

This will take you to your logon screen. Your username is your firstname.surname (all lower case).

If you can't remember your password select 'Forgotten your username or password' and enter your username or your email address (not both). You will receive an email if your account has a current email address that will allow you to reset.

iTrent

To access iTrent hover over the self-service tab on the top of the intranet home screen. You can select either iTrent (self-service) if you wish to book holiday or change your personal details or if you are a manager and you are looking for the team information select iTrent People Manager.

My Ashford Rewards

Accessing the site - Apps

There are two free apps to download.

1. Connect+

The first is the **Connect+ app** which you can download free from Apple Store and Google Play (search Connect+). It will verify who you are by sending a code to the email address you use for My Ashford Rewards.

This app provides mobile, on-the-go access to important employee communications as well as the ability to easily send and receive e-cards, and look at the social recognition wall.

The app will give you a notification when a new blog is posted (a discreet app icon) and you can scroll through all the news at your leisure (with the added bonus of easy access to ecards).

2. SmartSpending™

The second is the **SmartSpending™ app** which you can download free from Apple Store and Google Play (search SmartSpending). It will verify who you are by sending a code to the email address you use for My Ashford Rewards and then you can set up a four digit pin number.

This app is for the shopping discounts. With it you can purchase Instant Vouchers at a discount and use them in-store and online, earn Cashback when shopping, order new and top up existing reloadable cards and view your account details – all from your mobile device.

You'll even receive alerts when top retailers increase their discount!

These two apps don't show you the homepage for My Ashford Rewards which contains other information about locally negotiated employee benefits, wellbeing, the Onion Club and more so make sure you also review the website periodically to make the most of everything.



Try 3G VIP

3g

Write down (this is more effective than thinking) three things that you are grateful for and try to vary this daily. This could be things like – my daily walk in the fresh air with my dog, the sun shining, crunching in autumn leaves, a smile from a stranger or a conversation with a loved one.

You cannot have two emotions at once so by filling your mind with positive things it gives you an immediate mental boost and sense of wellbeing.

VIP

Write down your:

Vision – what do you want to achieve this week/this year/in your life? This can help you clarify your thoughts and work out what is important to you.

Intention – what is your intention for the day? Identify one main thing you want to achieve and try to tackle this early on when you are fresher. This will give you a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Progress – look back at previous days/weeks to see how far you've come and think about what you've achieved for extra motivation.

Hydrate

Did you know that just a 5% drop in hydration can reduce your productivity by 35% – not to mention affect your immunity! Make it a habit to have a long glass of water as one of the first things you do in the morning. Ideally this should be slightly warm water that has been boiled, but if you don't fancy that then just try to avoid ice cold water for your first glass of the day.

Keep in touch

Maintain regular contact with your manager and colleagues. Use Microsoft Teams for group video meetings which can provide an opportunity to share concerns and offer help and support to each other. Keep communications positive and have some time to talk about things other than work. This can help you feel more connected to those faces you'd usually see on a daily basis.

Create natural energy

Stand up to make your calls or walk around the room when considering a problem.

Take regular breaks

Rest and recovery is extremely important for optimal wellbeing. Regular breaks are also essential for productivity and creativity. If you were in the office you would do a tea round or chat with a colleague so make a cuppa, give your pet a cuddle, put a load of washing on and get some exercise at lunchtime – just ensure you log out for your lunchbreak and keep an eye on your hours.

Where possible, schedule a walk each day. Movement and exposure to nature will boost your mental health.

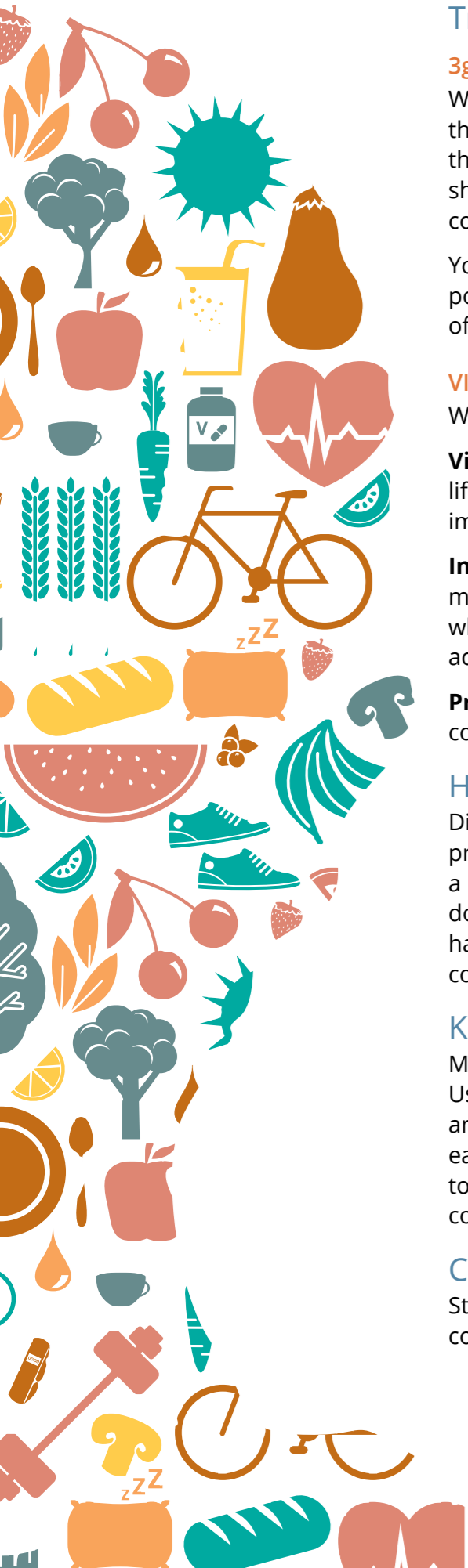
Upgrade your lunchtime

If you're working from home you may have more variety in your cupboards than the bog standard sandwiches. Take the opportunity to step away from your computer to make something from scratch or maybe read a book or sit in your garden.

Plan your meals. This encourages eating for wellbeing and contributes to a sense of achievement.

Mark the end of your day

Just like you did in the morning, develop a ritual for the end of the day to signify that you have finished work. If you can, put your laptop away, tidy your desk and get changed. Anything that naturally signals the end of the workday will establish some boundaries.



3. Now move both hands to your tummy and allow your breath to just come and go naturally.

4. Keep your attention focused on any movement that you might feel underneath your hands. It may be minimal, that's fine. You may also find your mind wandering but just keep bringing it back to your breath and the movement of your tummy. After a while your breathing may naturally deepen with this continued focus.

Speak to someone

If you need mental or emotional support speak to your line manager, your colleagues or [access the Health Assured, our employee assistance programme website here.](#)

Username: ashford

Password: council

Free 24-hour Confidential Helpline on 0800 030 5182.

e-Hub App

Download the e-Hub app on your mobile device. The Health e-Hub app provides total support in the palm of your hand. It's free to download and available on both IOS and Android.

If you have a question about anything in this guide please speak to your line manager or email human.resources@ashford.gov.uk

now it's me time...

