## **Helping you overcome “Technostress”**

The increase in working from home during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) period, combined with social distancing, means that people are probably relying on technology both for work and personally more than ever, and may be feeling “techno-stressed”.

Technostress is what happens if we don’t deal with our reliance on technology in a healthy way. It is sometimes described as having an ‘always on culture’ or ‘being unable to switch off’.

But there is plenty that we can do to tackle the sense of being overwhelmed that many of us may be experiencing at this difficult time.

**Tips for Tackling Technostress**

Whilst there is no one size that fits all, you may find some of the following help to alleviate “technostress”:

**Reducing your own stress:**

* Agree clear expectations with your line manager and colleagues for when you will and will not be online.
* Turn off your work phone / laptop / PC etc when you’re not working.
* Keep a note of how to contact your IT helpdesk handy, just in case there are any glitches.
* Your daily routine may have changed, so it’s important to establish regular patterns wherever possible – have a look at the document included in this folder “Establishing new norms”for suggestions.
* Remember the importance of taking a break from ALL technology (work and personal) in maintaining your wellbeing.

**Reducing others’ stress:**

* Use Flexible Working Signatures (for example *“I work flexibly – so whilst it suits me to email now, I do not expect you to respond outside your own working hours.*")
* Adopt a standardised format for subject lines which makes it clear what is needed and by when (e.g, for info/action; for response - including deadline where appropriate).
* Humanise emails with a warm greeting - eg “I hope you and your family are keeping well in these uncertain times”. Also, think about tone and re-read emails before you send them. Words matter, and responding too quickly can inadvertently lead to misunderstandings.

**Choose the right channel:**

* Match communication channel to the message – eg, where available, videoconferencing is best for replacing face-to-face conversations. But be mindful that use of too many different channels, each with their own in-box, can itself be a source of stress.
* Reduce the number of emails by using other routes for less formal communications, such as instant messaging or WhatsApp – and don’t automatically hit “reply to all” when sending “Thank you” & “Cheers” emails.

**Team Working**

* Respect and protect colleagues’ privacy.
* Identify and highlight opportunities to create space between individuals’ personal and professional lives and ensure this is respected.
* Optimise social activity, not just productivity – It is easy to become isolated, so build in opportunities for social interaction.

 **Lead by example**

* Pay attention to people’s capacity for virtual working (mental, technologically and relationship-wise). Remember that they did not “sign up” for this and be prepared to provide additional support where needed.
* Role model good behaviours by ‘switching off’ yourself.
* If you find it difficult to switch off, try practicing [mindfulness](https://intranet.justice.gov.uk/guidance/security/emergencies/coronavirus-guidance/keeping-well/mindfulness/) and encourage others to do so as well – it’s a great way to manage day-to-day wellbeing at any time.