

Team working in rapidly changing environments

Why does it matter?

- You are working in a health or care role in Scotland when the COVID-19 outbreak is presenting it with one of its biggest challenges.
- Team working always matters, but it matters more than ever now. It's one of the conditions we need to ensure that we meet the needs of the people using the service safely and effectively **and** to protect our own health and wellbeing
- Team working is about allocating tasks, sharing work, identifying priorities, co-ordinating care and support, responding to demand and supporting each other.

How might things be different now?

- Under normal circumstances you would probably be joining a stable, well established team
- However, in current circumstances, you will have to do this quickly. Some of you might find yourself working in a team that is not particularly stable
- You may be working with different shifts, different specialities, across traditional boundaries and with different people to get the job done

How might things be different now?

- Teams will not have time to do the usual team building and development activities
- This less stable, constantly changing and high pressure environment means that you may have to quickly come together as a team

Tips for coming together quickly as a team

1. Quickly identify what knowledge, skills and expertise you bring to the table. Sometimes it might feel like you don't have anything to offer, **but you do**, many of your skills from previous experience will be very transferable to the current environment

2. 'Look to your left and look to your right' i.e. be very curious about the people around you and what they bring. How can you use those skills or draw on them when you need them?

Based on work of Amy Edmondson, Professor of Leadership and Management, Harvard Business School who has researched how health care teams operate in high pressure, complex and unpredictable environments

Tips for coming together quickly as a team

3. Be honest about what you don't know. It can be hard but now is not the time to worry about looking stupid or incompetent. It is always better to say if you don't have the skills or confidence to do something you are being asked/expected to do [\(see delegation resource\)](#)

4. Show enthusiasm and commitment it might not sound like much but in fact showing enthusiasm and willingness for another person's idea about how to manage a situation is as important as coming up with the idea in the first place

Tips for coming together quickly as a team

5. Be flexible, you might have an identified role that is sector or profession specific but there are times when you will need to be flexible and pick up tasks that are not your usual business (as long as they are appropriate to your level of practice)

6. Be a leader, there will be times when you step up and lead on what needs to be done and other times when it is important that you step back and let someone else lead. This will depend on the situation... be appropriately assertive when you know you have the skills/experience needed and appropriately humble when you know someone else would be better placed to lead in a given situation

Tips for coming together quickly as a team

- 7. Ask questions, ask questions and ask questions.** If you don't know ask, if you do know share
- 8. Be proactive** take the initiative, make a suggestion
- 9. Mind your language** different professions, sectors, services and organisations can have a language of their own. It can make the rapid coordination and collaboration we need right now harder. If you are on the receiving end be willing to ask what things mean.

Tips for coming together quickly as a team

10. Keep connected with your colleagues

- Notice their mood and levels of stress
- Respond in a supportive and compassionate way
Reaching out with a simple 'how are you doing?' 'what can I do to help' can make a difference when things are busy
- Foster mutuality e.g. 'ok, what are **we** going to do?'
- Be kind, check in with each other
- Be respectful of different people's needs and ways of responding to situations
- Respect peoples' boundaries

Tips for coming together quickly as a team

11. Monitor your own mood

Under normal circumstances everyone can have a bad day. However, in times of crisis it can feel like every day is difficult.

- Try to get into the habit of stopping for a few moments during your day to 'check in' briefly with yourself
- Be self-aware and try not to brush off or shut down feedback or concern from others... remember it will be well intentioned
- Try to be approachable even if you are feeling overwhelmed as people may need to tell you about something important.

Tips for coming together quickly as a team

12. Indicate how you are feeling in a way that you are comfortable with. You don't have to share everything; it can be as simple as 'I'm feeling a bit shaky after that ...I'm just going to take a moment'

13. Calm yourself and refocus if you need to re-group. Take a break before engaging with other people again. The environment may be rushed but a few minutes to take a few deep breaths and refocus will help



Pause for thought

After reading the information on working as a team in rapidly changing environments, take a moment to summarise the key principles in your own words.



Useful information for teams

For more information about resilience and looking after yourself and your team go to

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/28063/coronavirus-covid-19/psychosocial-support-and-wellbeing#Yourself>

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages.
Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how
we can best meet your requirements.



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