

# **Registers of Scotland**

## **RoS Board**

**6 May 2020**

### **Temporary Remote Working Steering Group**

#### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this paper is to brief RoS Board members on the introduction of a Temporary Remote Working Steering Group (TRWSG) to provide direction and co-ordination of a range of health and wellbeing, technology and security activities to support colleagues as a result of the closure of our buildings in response to UK Government advice and direction. The paper also provides additional information about other activities during the lockdown period considered by EMT.
2. The TRWSG does not form part of formal governance arrangements but reports to EMT. The group was initiated during week two of the lock-down in recognition of a wide range of activities needed to support our workforce for the duration of said lock-down (potentially 12 weeks or more).

#### **Recommendation**

3. The RoS Board are requested to note the role and activities of the TRWSG and provide feedback to support the group and its effectiveness.
4. Board members, particularly non-executive colleagues, are invited to share any examples of good practice that may assist the TRWSG to continue to support the health, safety and wellbeing of RoS colleagues.

#### **Background**

5. The TRWSG acts in respect of steering all matters relating to remote working during the UK and SG COVID-19 emergency response. The TRWSG comprises a group of senior leaders' representative of the organisation and reports to the EMT. See Appendix 1 for the Terms of Reference.
6. It is worth noting that RoS has not and does not intend to make any substantive policy changes during the lockdown period but rather is looking to adapt existing processes to account for the emergency position. Should any substantive policy changes be required post-emergency these will have Policy and Practice Group (PPG) oversight before seeking EMT approval.
7. Another key role for the TRWSG is to assist with co-ordination of internal communications relating to temporary remote working including support communications for staff who are yet to be IT-enabled. EMT has approved an ongoing rollout of people, process and technology related changes to remote working practice at RoS, including although not limited to establishing safe working environments, wellbeing support, work equipment and technological security, safety and operation.

## **Roll call**

8. We closed our buildings within 24 hours of the UK Government's announcement on the lockdown. It was therefore necessary for us to establish a roll call process to identify and capture the status of each and every member of staff, in particular from a health, safety and wellbeing perspective in the first instance.

9. The roll call provides us with the ability to account for our people, particularly important during the initial stages of the COVID-19 development in Scotland. Once our buildings were closed it gave us the assurance that we needed to confirm that we had been in contact with everyone and it provided an initial snap shot of the health and wellbeing of our people. Initially administered by Secretariat this database is now owned by the HROD team and used as a colleague contact line.

10. It is also being used as the single source of truth for information about availability for work, IT-enablement and skills-set. As we seek to re-introduce some RoS services for customers and stakeholders we require an up-to-date and in-depth understanding of our operational capacity, specifically the registration and customer service workforce to ensure we can satisfy demand across different products and services and meet customer expectations.

11. Registration have worked collaboratively with the Business Intelligence and Analytics team to create a centralised database that captures the relevant information we need. Firstly identifying the workforce that were already online and available to work, for example, we knew at the beginning of the lockdown we had only 26% of registration online and this population was weighted towards managers (26% of the total number were Team Leaders) and intake staff. Being able to flex our online workforce enabled us to meet the emergency Advance Notice demand in the early days of lockdown.

12. Holding information about workforce availability to work, primary and secondary skills and our current focus of activity, has allowed us to prioritise the roll out of the VDI solution using personal devices based on current business needs. We are also able to prioritise rollout to colleagues able to work on casework at home to maximise income potential at this time.

13. Our goal now is to prioritise the digital-enablement of the remainder of the workforce both to enable them to contribute to operational delivery and also to re-connect them with the organisation so they can keep engaged whether or not they are fit and available to work at the present time.

## **IT enablement**

14. Prior to the lockdown period, we had a remote enabled capacity of approximately 40% of the total organisation (about 500 users). This IT enablement was predominately found within the corporate and leadership areas of the business. As the COVID-19 period escalated we observed a sharp rise on average working from home cadence, from 10% of the organisation to 40% of the organisation per day.

15. As lockdown became an increasing inevitability, the IT service teams worked with registration colleagues to rapidly enable remote working at scale. This was achieved via corporate laptop distribution to key operational staff within Customer Services, Payroll and the team supporting the Advance Notice service for First Registrations. During this short window of opportunity before lockdown we increased our remote working capacity by a further 17%, enabling an additional 200 users.

16. In the subsequent three weeks following lockdown a review of our IT network activity demonstrated a consistent cadence where 670 users per day were actively working from home, which equates to 56% of the organisation.

17. As it became apparent that the lockdown measures were to be in place for an extended period of time, we started to plan for the re-opening of our core application records through digital submissions and remote operations. This surfaced a need to further enable our remote working capacity beyond the existing 56%, and in a way that would focus and prioritise key skills relevant to core application record support.

18. Utilising existing investments made within our Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) technology platform, our Risk & Information Governance, HROD, Registration and IT teams collaborated to present a people, process and technology option for EMT to consider. This interim option would enable colleagues to utilise specific personal devices for remote working. The option was supported by a robust due diligence process that was incorporated into a formal Information Governance Risk Assessment (IGRA).

19. EMT received the necessary levels of advice and assurance from the teams and approved the use of the VDI solution in a controlled manner. To date, this solution has further enabled an additional 60 users, increasing our working remotely capacity to approximately 750 users (63%).

20. IT, Registration and HROD colleagues continue to collaborate and collate an accurate dataset reflective of our staff configuration to progress the work to digitally-enable the whole workforce.

21. It should be noted that we have approximately 100 new laptops and peripherals at Meadowbank House with an additional 200 laptops stored at a warehouse. Ideally we would like to connect the majority of the workforce using RoS IT equipment. To support this aim, plans are in place which would allow rapid distribution of corporate laptops to prioritised staff when lockdown restrictions permit a restricted element of on premise attendance.

22. Looking ahead, IT are working collaboratively with the Workplace project on a strategic review of our Modern IT workplace plan, in light of the emerging change and to support the Transition project led by the Keeper.

### **Working Well Remotely (WWR)**

23. A Working Well Remotely project was established in view of an emerging need in response to the COVID-19 emergency and our office closures. A 12 week support programme has been developed specifically for our people currently working remotely. This newly designed service is available in parallel with the ongoing HROD activities

provided for specific teams that require additional and bespoke support ensuring scale and depth.

24. The programme looks at three key themes:

1. **Digital skills** – can I confidently use the tools I need? As information emerges we are creating personas to help identify digital skill requirements at scale.
2. **Personal and team effectiveness** – what skills would be helpful during this period?
3. **Keeping safe and healthy** – how do I stay fit and well, both emotionally and physically

25. It is split into three distinct phases to ensure colleagues can access support in a timely and meaningful way while affording flexibility.

- Phase 1 - getting started. Days 1 to 5 of initial remote working.
- Phase 2 - team working. Days 6 to 20.
- Phase 3 - a 'new normal'. Day 20 and beyond.

26. Examples of the content of the Working Well Remotely project can be found at Appendix 2.

27. Feedback loops have been established to review the effectiveness of the support, to quickly learn and adapt the offerings to ensure value for the individual and the organisation. The feedback will also help us to understand emerging needs, re-prioritising and designing support to meet requirements for the 'new normal'.

### **Mental fitness application (app)**

28. HROD colleagues recommended that we invest in the 'Calm' mental fitness app as part of our Wellbeing strategy to support colleagues during lockdown and beyond.

29. Evidence from sources including the 2019 RoS Wellbeing Survey showed that improving the psychological wellbeing of colleagues was a priority. Now, with the ongoing situation, efforts to support psychological wellbeing are of even more critical importance and supporting colleagues who are not enabled to connect remotely is a particularly key focus due to feelings of isolation and disconnectedness.

30. 'Calm' is a digital app that offers a range of content based around healthy sleep, mindfulness and meditation. A range of user benefits are reported, including better sleep, less stress and improved resilience. All are likely to be welcomed by colleagues at a time when these areas are being adversely impacted by the prevailing circumstances.

### **Health & safety**

31. We are very aware that the health and safety of our colleagues extends to them working remotely. In order to help them work in a way that minimises any detrimental

impact on their physical wellbeing, a series of communications have been put out to help people set up their home workstation, promote the taking of regular breaks and adjusting their working day to suit the new environment.

32. We are also mindful that colleagues who had an existing workplace adjustment in the office are now being asked to work from home with what could be a sub-optimal setup. To tackle this we have commenced a pilot initiative to contact people who had an existing adjustment to see what peripherals they need to work effectively from home. This offers IT, desk and chair accessories. Orders are being processed by the Procurement team with deliveries being made directly to colleagues' home addresses. If successful this will be rolled out wider to meet the requirements of other colleagues.

## **People & change**

33. A wide range of people-centric activities are underway to support all colleagues during this emergency situation and support operational readiness:

### **a. People management practice**

Coaching and supporting leaders within an unprecedented context to engage their people and align their skills with critical business objectives; analysing the emergent issues and opportunities and coordinating resources and interventions to support line-managers. Examples include the set-up of a Working Well Remotely Group and Capacity Mapping (in rapid development) to identify skills availability as we look to bring our services back on-line.

### **b. Service development for digital submissions**

Working alongside operational leads and supporting professionals to determine how the new service is provisioned; observing and reviewing change internally at each phase of roll-out and supporting improvements. A practical example is OD Practitioners aligned to all operational meetings and virtually present alongside teams at go-live dates.

### **c. Change implementation**

Recognising and responding to emergent impacts and issues for the teams; coordinating with other functions for resolution; aligning communications. For example: working on the emergent threat to the work of those in centralised support with contingent workers and permanent staff to consider.

### **d. Digital re-on-boarding**

Facilitating reintroduction of colleagues through the management line as they return remotely to a new operating model/team – mapping this change in detail at the individual level to appreciate the challenges and opportunities for colleagues and leaders. A practical example is workshops for Senior Team Leaders and Team Leaders to guide the re-on-boarding of their people.

### **e. Impact assessment**

Observing a range of implications for the wider organisation from the experience of present unplanned and planned change in context of the strategic direction set before the present crisis; collating and framing these observations for senior leaders.

## **Annual leave, flexitime and overtime working**

34. The Government has introduced the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 which amends the Working Time Regulations 1998 to create a further exemption relating specifically to COVID-19. The main aspects of this for RoS to be aware of are carry forward of annual leave and buy back of annual leave.

35. The new regulations are in place to ensure that organisations can continue to be resourced appropriately by allowing employees to delay their annual leave at the current time and use the leave at a later date without losing an entitlement to statutory paid leave. EMT have agreed to the following:

1. Colleagues should be allowed to cancel leave if they are no longer able to go on holiday etc. and
2. Colleagues should be encouraged to take leave on a regular basis e.g. 2/3 days per month. This should be monitored by Team Leaders and HROD.

36. EMT will take a view on the buy-back position for annual leave later in the year when things are clearer and better understood, particularly from a financial standpoint. We wish to encourage people to take regular periods of annual leave aligned to business needs and their own health and wellbeing. EMT has agreed that colleagues can carry over up to 20 days annual leave into 2020 / 2021. Any colleagues who wish to carry over more than 20 days annual leave into this leave year must seek Director's approval.

37. EMT has asked HROD to remind line managers to make effective use of the policy and procedures that support the request for annual leave i.e. 48 hour notice period when applying for leave to enable us to plan resource availability. In the current circumstances colleagues need to be aware that if they are fit and available for work they can be called upon at any time to undertake a range of duties therefore they are asked to plan ahead with annual leave requests.

38. EMT has relaxed the rules governing excess carry over of flexi credit at the end of settlement periods at the present time, but would like HROD to monitor the flexi system and alert senior managers of anyone working excess hours over long periods. Overtime working has been stopped and can only be undertaken with Director's approval. HROD will monitor any overtime activity and report to EMT.

## **Contingent workers**

39. The EMT decision to close our buildings and enable as many colleagues as possible to work from home extended to contingent workers engaged by RoS. Information was published on our intranet on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, stating that agency workers would receive full pay whilst unable to work because of our offices being closed.

40. The majority of our agency workers are engaged in Registration work, mainly but not exclusively in Centralised Support, which involves manual processing of paper applications and deeds.

41. EMT provided reassurance to contingent workers that they will receive pay for a maximum of three continuous months with effect from the date they ceased to be active at RoS for reasons related to COVID-19. Should our buildings open before the end of the 12 week period, contingent workers could be re-engaged at RoS, subject to organisational demand.

42. EMT also approved the 20% top-up on the 80% reimbursement which will be given to agencies (the employer). In effect, RoS expenditure reduces from 100% of pay at RoS' earlier discretion to 20% of pay for the period of 12 weeks. The 100% pay discretion was a decision taken by RoS in the interests of public health and in advance of the Treasury's announcement regarding support available to contingent workers. In line with guidance received from Stephen Gallagher at Scottish Government we are also investigating appropriate use of the UK Government's COVID-19 job retention scheme.

43. EMT has not applied the restriction to workers who require to organise alternative childcare. We have very few agency workers in this category and the measures suggested by Cabinet Office appear draconian in the context of school and nursery closures, social-distancing from grandparents and other family members who, in normal circumstances, might be available to provide childcare.

44. Board members should note that EMT has suspended all recruitment activity until further notice. Based on operating costs and organisational demand, EMT has committed to reviewing the status of contingent workers in May 2020 to determine if some or all of these workers should be given notice of termination. It is acknowledged that agency workers are not our employees and their employing organisations could request that workers move to alternative roles in other Civil Service bodies or indeed the wider Public Sector on or before that decision requires to be made.

45. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Trade Union Congress published a joint fair work statement in response to the COVID-19 crisis. In response we have submitted a formal reply to SG colleagues to confirm how our activities are ensuring fair treatment of our workers during the COVID-19 situation.

46. In light of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance's agreement with the Trades Unions that public bodies should implement the basic award of Public Sector Pay Policy 2020 / 2021, I can confirm that RoS has received approval from SG Finance Pay Policy officials to make the award with April 2020 salaries.

## **Communications**

47. From the earliest point of activity around COVID-19, the Communications team has been working closely with EMT and other colleagues to ensure RoS communications activity was providing the right message, at the right time, to the right audience, and was aligned to Scottish Government's response to the crisis. The communications team provided a range of support to assist the business as it followed government advice moving staff to home working for those who were remotely enabled; then moved quickly to respond to the lockdown instructions, providing messaging to colleagues and customers on the current position for RoS. Work then began with EMT to update colleagues and customers on issues relating to working

from home, support for colleagues facing caring responsibilities etc. and keeping customers informed around our plans for a range of interim processes to support the property market and Scottish economy. This was particularly important as Customer Service colleagues were receiving exceptionally high numbers of calls on a range of issues, which helped us draft additional content to support the legal profession and reduce calls to our Customer Service colleagues.

48. During the initial 2/3 week crisis communications phase, we issued daily updates to colleagues providing advice and guidance, and keeping them up to date. For colleagues who were unable to connect to our systems we created an unlisted page on our website to provide (edited) information. We also directed team leaders to share this link with their team members to help disseminate as widely as possible. We issued 20 updates for colleagues during this period, and created a specific section on the intranet to host this information in a more digestible format. Analysis of the intranet content showed just under 18,500 visits to COVID-19 content, much higher than business as usual content views.

49. We also created regular updates to customers, key stakeholders, the media, Ministers, and MSP/MPs. We issued 2 MSP newsletters, 4 external stakeholder newsletters, and provided almost daily updates on our interim measures, and legislative changes. During this time our social media and website activity resulted in unprecedented engagement which we are now focussing on maintaining and developing to drive high levels of engagement with future content.

#### **Weeks 3-4**

50. The focus of the Communications team, as it moved out of the initial 2/3 week crisis communications phase was to support the business and provide stable communications channels for a range of audiences. This has been achieved with regular updates now provided to staff (using internal and external channels), to customers, their clients, and other external stakeholders, with daily and weekly updates and blogs (with a particular focus on social media and our website), and regular MSP/MP updates being issued too.

51. For colleagues working with other teams across the business including people & change, support is provided for the Working Well Remotely campaign, creating specific content area within the intranet for this, as well as working with team leaders and others to share information with colleagues who are not yet connected to our systems. The Communications team has also worked with the Keeper to develop a 'keeping in touch' plan, designed to enhance EMT visibility for colleagues during this challenging time.

52. The Communications team has also continued with what would be considered as business as usual engagement activity, with activities such as SLIDO (an online tool that allows users to ask questions), Team Leader quarterly briefings, and the Keeper's weekly staff blog. We are currently piloting a series of webinars that colleagues with or without RoS enabled IT equipment can participate in. During this time there have been 18 updates for colleagues, with a much lower view rate now that we are out of the crisis, although viewing time is only slightly shorter. External blogs, newsletters and a specific MSP/MP update is now issued weekly, and engagement levels and open rates continue to be much higher than we would expect.



## **Conclusion**

53. This briefing paper serves to highlight the extensive amount of work that has been undertaken since our offices were closed on 24<sup>th</sup> March and credit must go to all those colleagues who have worked tirelessly and gone the extra mile to get us to the position we are in. Not only have we significantly reduced risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce, but we have made significant progress to sustain a remote working capability that will help us endure the current crisis and beyond. Coupled with the fact that we are in a position to re-open the application record while our offices remain closed is a significant achievement and will help to shape our 'new normal' via the Transition project that the Keeper is leading on.

**Corporate Director**  
**Corporate Directorate**  
**22 April 2020**

Appendix 1

**Registers of Scotland**  
**Temporary remote working steering group (TRWSG)**  
**Terms of reference**

**Purpose**

The Temporary remote working steering group (TRWSG) acts in respect of steering all matters relating to remote working during the UK and SG COVID-19 emergency response. The TRWSG reports to the EMT.

**Who are we?**

- Corporate Director (*Chair*)
- Accountable Officer
- Head of People and Change
- Head of Corporate Communications
- Head of Procurement and Estates
- Head of IT Service
- Head of Land Register Completion
- Head of Risk and Information Governance
- PCS Union Representative

**What is our role?**

- To receive, review and approve proposals for RoS policy changes to support remote working during the UK and SG COVID-19 emergency response.
- To review and assist with co-ordination of internal communications relating to changes to RoS policy changes in relation to [temporary] remote working including support communications for staff who are yet to be enabled for home working, and those who may not be enabled for home working throughout the lockdown period.
- To oversee ongoing rollout of people, process and technology related changes to remote working practice at RoS aligning with the UK and SG COVID-19 national responses, including although not limited to establishing safe working environments, wellbeing, work equipment and technological security, safety and operation.
- To oversee, own and approve a generic risk assessment and controls for all RoS employees and any ongoing changes valid during the emergency response period
- To oversee an HR verified roll call of remote working persona/status of all RoS employees to enable ongoing person centred support to be provided
- To receive an HR summary exception report on person centred risk assessments as exceptions to the generic risk assessment and controls and remote workplace adjustments

- To receive HR verified report on employee experience trends and recommended follow-up actions, changes to practice or decisions for TRWSG, other governance groups and RoS Heads of Services.
- To advise the EMT on all aspects of remote working decisions during the UK and SG COVID-19 national responses.

## **Our Meetings**

We Skype meet weekly on a Monday at 1100-1200 hrs.

The PMO provides administrative support to the TRWSG.

The following items are standard agenda items:

- Staff notices

Items proposed for discussion at the TRWSG meetings will be listed and circulated before each meeting in a draft agenda. The Chair will determine the final agenda in consultation with other TRWSG members.

Minutes and papers are subject to RoS' Records Management Policy and may be disclosable under the terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

## **Authority**

The Temporary remote working steering group (TRWSG) acts in respect of steering all matters relating to remote working during the UK and SG COVID-19 emergency response.

In fulfilling this purpose, the TRWSG is informed and requests advice, support, decision making or approval from other RoS Governance Groups including but not limited to EMT, BPB, PPG, SWPG and IAG.

## **Reporting**

Matters are referred to EMT as necessary to inform them of the activities undertaken in relation to remote working and to recommend decisions.

## **Performance assessment**

TRWSG will review its role and functions monthly, seeking the views of its members individually and collectively with the intention of conducting business efficiently and effectively throughout the UK and SG COVID-19 emergency response.

## **Registers of Scotland April 2020**

## Appendix 2

## Working Well Remotely Project

## Example Content – Keeping Safe and Healthy

Content delivered during the right phase

Underpinning everything is a focus on maintaining physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing. Providing clarity and assurance on how to manage issues is key; with access to the right people at the right time to alleviate concerns and provide reassurance.

Many messages from keeping safe and healthy ties into personal effectiveness learning too, so care will be taken to ensure all messages reinforce each other, providing consistency and confidence.

Typical content/touch points will include:

- Developing Resilience
- Potential of a Colleague Support line
- Home working set up – your physical environment and keeping it safe
- Accessing EAP (emotional, financial or other concerns (ie now working in a dangerous environment)
- Wellbeing – for example the 5 pillars
- Specific Covid-19 HR process and policies
- Access to the right teams at the right times (ie HR and ER all hands call for leaders)
- Personal responsibility for protecting our own wellbeing
- Access / encouragement to try external support (Joe Wickes, Audible, Scouts etc)
- Maintaining social connection and fun, linking in with SEG and CSSC.

6 // Registers of Scotland

## Example Content – Digital Skills

Available now through online learning in PAL

Many colleagues will be using their Outlook calendars to manage their time, let others know when they are available and create meetings to collaborate and communicate with their team.

This collection of learning will support these activities by enabling colleagues to use Outlook calendars effectively.

Videos include:

- Introduction to Outlook calendar
- Creating (face to face) and Skype meetings,
- Joining a Skype meeting
- Opening a colleague's calendar
- Responding to meeting requests
- Searching for meetings
- Setting categories
- Adding reminders in your calendar.

All learning will have the theory and content, with follow up tasks that allow people to embed the learning, and develop good home working patterns

7 // Registers of Scotland



## Appendix 2 (cont'd)

### Example Content – Personal & Team Effectiveness

#### Content delivered during the right phase

A critical element of effective home working is developing the skills and habits that help individuals maintain control and focus on the key tasks and activities that are needed

Typical content will include:

- Time Management techniques
- How to schedule and build working patters for you
- Circle of Influence – controlling the controllable
- Building trust remotely
- Trusting your own decisions
- Delivering a compelling message\*
- How to run and manage an online meeting\*
- Hosting useful check in's and check out's
- How to monitor work and provide feedback\*

\*Manager / Leader specific

All learning will have the theory and content, with follow up tasks that allow people to embed the learning, and develop good home working patterns

8 / Registers of Scotland

