

Adaptability is the key for nuclear worker Kay

When she left her house for work for the first time after the coronavirus lock down was announced, Kay Mulhatton felt nervous.

While other people were urged to stay at home, as a key worker keeping one of our nuclear plants safe, Kay was asked to continue to come to work.

It felt strange the first time I set off for work. I didn't know what to expect. Thankfully, as time has moved on, things have felt more normal.

Kay works 12-hour shifts in the vitrification plant. While the plant isn't currently turning radioactive waste into glass, work in the facility cannot stop. This has meant a change in Kay's role.

Our team of 5 process engineers would ordinarily be working to keep the plant running. As the plant's normal processes are paused, we're carrying out other work that must continue, and are supporting our colleagues in other parts of the facility and at home. In fact, we've been doing quite different sets of tasks to normal.

We've all adapted to our new circumstances, and it's reassuring to see just how seriously all key workers on the site are taking this. It did take time though. At first people were trying to work as usual, but we all support each other and call out behaviours that are unsafe. This means pointing out when people are not social distancing.

Thankfully we've had to point this out less as people have become accustomed to it. But we obviously remain nervous about what happens when more people return to work. With more people on site it will be harder to social distance. But the measures we are seeing being put in place should help this.

These include reconfiguring canteen areas so people can keep their distance in the workplace, more robust cleaning regimes and new stations for hand sanitising and cleaning down kit.

Since the changes to working arrangements, only a small number of people have been based in the plant, but this will increase slowly, over time, as a phased return to operations takes place.

Until that point, Kay is reassured by the way those on site are working, and

the camaraderie they are showing.

I've been working with a fantastic team, and we're all chipping in to help each other. We're continuing to have good conversations about both work and our wellbeing and are enjoying some lovely home-made food. Thank you!

While there are far fewer of us on plant and on site, we're certainly a team.

Kay recognises the importance of mental health. As well as supporting colleagues and checking in with other team members, she keeps her mind busy outside of work with crocheting, knitting and DIY, as well as walking her dog.

Kay was keen to thank her colleagues for their efforts during this time. She is happy to speak to anyone who feels overwhelmed at the moment.