

Tea is for team

When you're a department made up of people who can mainly work from home, how do you keep your team together?

It's something many of our offices are now facing, as it becomes apparent that for some of our teams, coming back to the office won't be an option for quite a while.

Our information services organisation (ISO) teams are tackling this with "cuppa and catch-up" meetings, held via Microsoft Teams.

The meetings are helping people stay in touch, whilst helping managers understand the concerns people have as we move into a post-Covid world.

ISO head of business and programmes, Steve Jennings, said:

We have seen a real shift in people's point of view recently.

It has always been the case that people appreciated the opportunity to talk to others.

At the beginning we were being told by our people they were coping really well, but as they've realised this could be much longer term than they first thought, their view has changed.

They feel much more daunted by the idea that working from home could be a permanent situation for them. The idea of no social interaction for months is hitting them hard.

This change in their views has shown us we have work to do as managers to help our people understand how this is going to work. Working from home could be the future for some of our people, but it's not something they should 'put up with', it's something they should feel they can embrace.

Such get-togethers are becoming an integral part of people's working week – not just in ISO but across the business where staff have found themselves working from home.

ISO's communications officer Lucy Routledge explained:

We encourage people taking part in the sessions to take a break from their home desk and grab a drink.

Although we are successfully home-working across ISO, we recognise that no matter how good the capability and tools are, there is nothing that can substitute the face-to-face interaction that we all once enjoyed in the office environment.

The sessions are about allowing us to catch up with one another, to have a chat about how we're coping, how we are finding home-working, and what, if anything the ISO lead team can do to help.

The sessions also provide the opportunity to ask us any direct questions or raise any concerns. If they can't immediately be answered, the lead team come back with a response or address it in a future lead team blog.