Safe Space Circles – manager guidance

• It is critical that staff are supported in their transition back to their office space. It is likely that staff will feel nervous and have questions about returning to work on site following a lengthy period of lockdown. Staff may also have the associated fear of contracting Covid-19 or passing it to friends and family members. This is completely understandable.

• Before a staff member returns to site, various changes to working practices, informed by government advice, will have been introduced to reduce risk.

• To help staff transition back into the workplace a ‘welcome pack’ will have been issued and staff will have had the University’s [Return to Work Protocol](#) and FAQs which contain a great deal of helpful and practical information and support.
Safe Space Circles - process

To support the transition back into the workplace managers should hold a remote 'return' meeting to consider the staff member's personal circumstances and whether they can return to work. It is at this stage the Safe Space Circles can provide support.

- Returning staff are sent questions to consider about returning to their office space.
- The answers to these questions are discussed with their line manager.

**Session 1**
- Facilitated meeting with peers.
- Optional for staff.
- Collectively address concerns, share ideas and promote peer to peer support prior to returning to the office.

**Session 2**
- Any feedback that will help the University develop further support tools, communication and guidance should be fed back to the ourcambridge team via email.
- This feedback should be anonymous if required.

**Feedback**
Session One – individual meeting with line manager

Developing a 'Personal Toolkit' with strategies to deal with day to day activities within the workplace may help staff with their transition back into the office. The following activity will help staff think and develop their toolkit with their manager.

Before the meeting, staff will be asked to imagine their first day back at work. A template has been developed that can be emailed to them to help capture their thoughts in advance. Staff are asked to do this as fully as possible, so that they are mentally rehearsing the whole day.

At the meeting managers should ask their staff member the following:

1. How did the rehearsal made them feel? On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being low) how apprehensive/nervous did they feel overall? Was it spread throughout the day or focused on specific events/activities? This is their overall level.

2. Staff are then asked to list and rank per activity (1-10, as for point 1), then list what tools they could personally put in place to reduce their apprehension/nervousness levels, e.g. if concerned about making coffee in the communal kitchen, could they bring a flask? This is their 'Personal Toolkit' which will be different for everybody.

3. Line managers and staff member review responses and work through their 'Personal Toolkit'. Staff are then asked to run through the day again using their 'Personal Toolkit' to re-rate their overall level.
Session Two – facilitated meeting with peers

The purpose of Session Two is to collectively address concerns, share ideas and promote peer to peer support prior to returning to the office. The session should be facilitated by either the line manager or an independent third party, according to the needs of the team. Further guidance on facilitating this session is available in the following slides. It is also suggested that local a Health & Safety Trade Union representative is invited to support this session, if appropriate. Staff may choose which group session they wish to attend but the sessions will be most productive where space is shared with other participants.

The size of the group will vary depending on the size and shape of the team but should not exceed 12 people. Line managers review the responses from the staff and list those activities which generate the most concern. Examples are likely to include team members failing to observe social distancing, interacting with other teams in shared spaces, forming negative judgements of team members depending on how they spend their free time, etc.

As a group, work through each activity and discuss and agree how you can collectively reduce levels of apprehension for each activity. This will help form a team toolkit. The group can meet again as required and stop meeting when agreed.

It might also be necessary to run Session Two with other units in shared buildings and construct a building charter for all occupants and visitors.

Staff should feel free to discuss and review their personal toolkit with their line manager and the team toolkit with the group as required and as circumstances change.
Safe Space Circles – facilitation hints and tips

Ensure ground rules are in place – all attendees know how to behave – take the time to establish these! (See next slide for Safe Space Circle ground rules)

Think about timings – you don’t want to be in a rush to cover all the material.

Ensure everyone is aware of the purpose of the session

Think about how you are going to capture feedback e.g. MIRO board?

Keep to the subject in hand. If there’s a tangent – steer back, “car park” issues outside of scope

If a virtual meeting, encourage the use of chat to make a point if not confident in speaking out

Everyone’s opinion matters

Keep an eye on all attendees, make sure everyone is having their say

Please contact the ourcambridge team for more support and tips on facilitation or find us on Yammer (‘ourcambridge’)

More resources:
ourcambridgeGuide to Online Meetings
LinkedIn Learning – A course on this topic can be found in the UoC: Professional Development Effective Meeting Learning Path
Safe Space Circle Sessions – ground rules

- The aim of the sessions is to help staff return to work and feel comfortable in their working environment.
- Feeling apprehensive about their return is perfectly normal.
- There is no such thing as a risk-free working environment.
- The aim of the sessions is to be constructive, not a vehicle for complaints.
- We will work collaboratively to identify solutions.
- All members of the team have a voice and the right to express their concerns without judgement.
- We will be respectful and courteous to our colleagues at all times.
- All team members can approach their line manager at any time for a 1:1 conversation.
- Participation in the meeting with the line manager (Session One) is required but it is not mandatory to attend the group meeting (Session Two).
# Using Miro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>• A virtual whiteboard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do I access it?</td>
<td>• There is a <a href="#">free version</a> with a small number of boards, or you can apply for an <a href="#">education plan</a> (free)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can I do in it?</td>
<td>• Capture ideas and thoughts on “sticky notes” – invite all attendees to take part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When will it be available?</td>
<td>• Once you have set up your account, you can create a board in advance of the session and access a sharing link.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Who is it available to? | • Everyone can access Miro when they receive a sharing link  
• Free version allows you to have your own 3 boards  
• Education account (free) is also available |
Miro – hints and tips

Select a sticky note
Add Text by typing on the note
Add other shapes
Create frame to group content

Export to PDF/JPEG
Share with others
Useful Help

Public Edit links are available with Education account
Zoom in or out (or roll mouse)