

**Skills and Systems for Remote Working Webinar, Thursday 30 April at 2:30pm BST**

## **SPEAKERS**



**Dr Nasser Siabi**  
Founder and CEO of  
assistive technology  
providers Microlink



**Dr Nancy Doyle**  
Occupational psychologist, CEO  
of neurodiversity consultancy  
Genius Within, and postdoctoral  
research fellow at Birkbeck



**Carl Ward**  
Head of assistive  
technology training and  
workplace accessibility  
assessor at Microlink



## COMPANY BACKGROUND

- Established in 1992 working within the higher education and workplace sectors
- Helped over 300,000 disabled people to succeed
- Operating in the UK, USA, South Africa and Middle East





## PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF REMOTE WORKING, AND NEW PERSONAL SKILLS

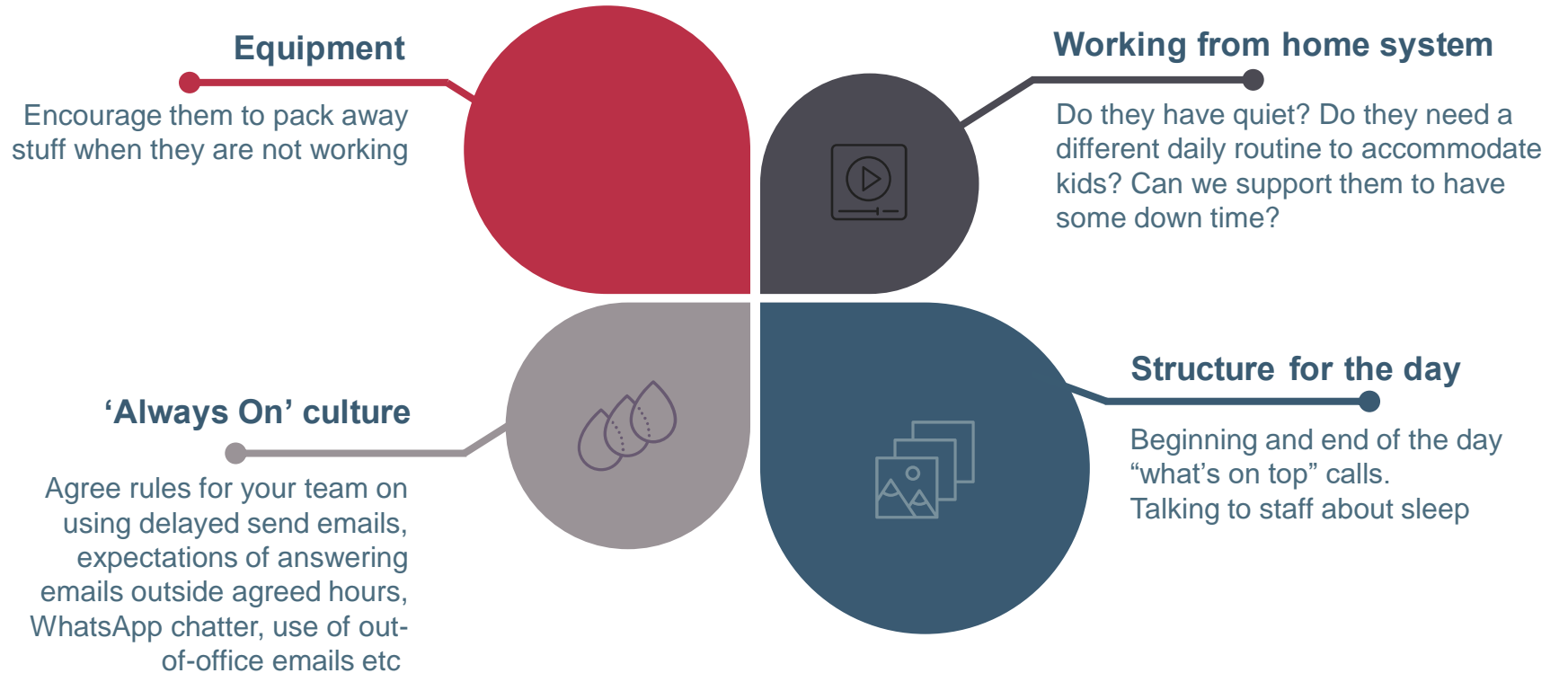
**Wellbeing & Isolation;**  
you cannot pour from  
an empty cup

**Cognitive impact of all  
this remote contact!**

*There's usually 'double peak' of anxiety, one at the start, one when we transition back so be prepared*

*Some of your staff need safeguarding, not wellbeing – this requires trained professional support*

## TIME SPACE BOUNDARIES & ROUTINES



*Help your staff manage home working with reassurances and advice on separation techniques. If you can't do it with space, you can do it with clear time boundaries.*

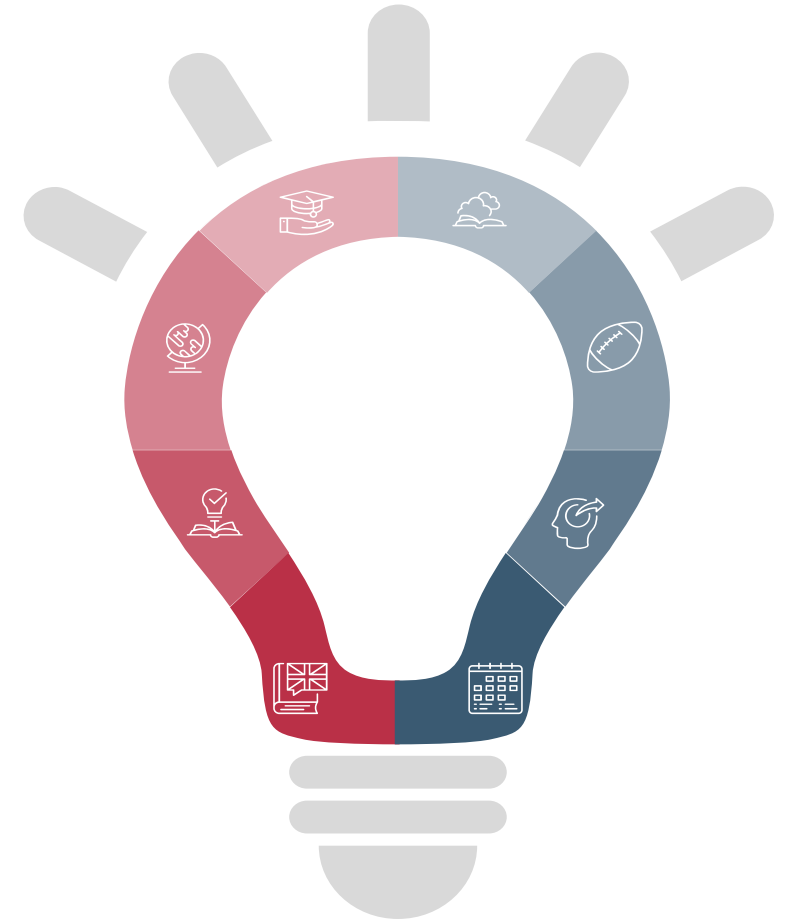


### EMOTIONAL & COGNITIVE DEMANDS OF REMOTE WORKING & PHONE/VIDEO COMMS

*Allow flexibility – for example turning off cameras for those who find it overwhelming, different screen view options for those who need to see faces.*

### ENERGISING TECHNIQUES & PACING

- This is a marathon not a sprint.
- Recommend the Pomodoro technique
- Movement creates energy for those who are well
- Pace those back to back meetings
- Acknowledging impact of sleep

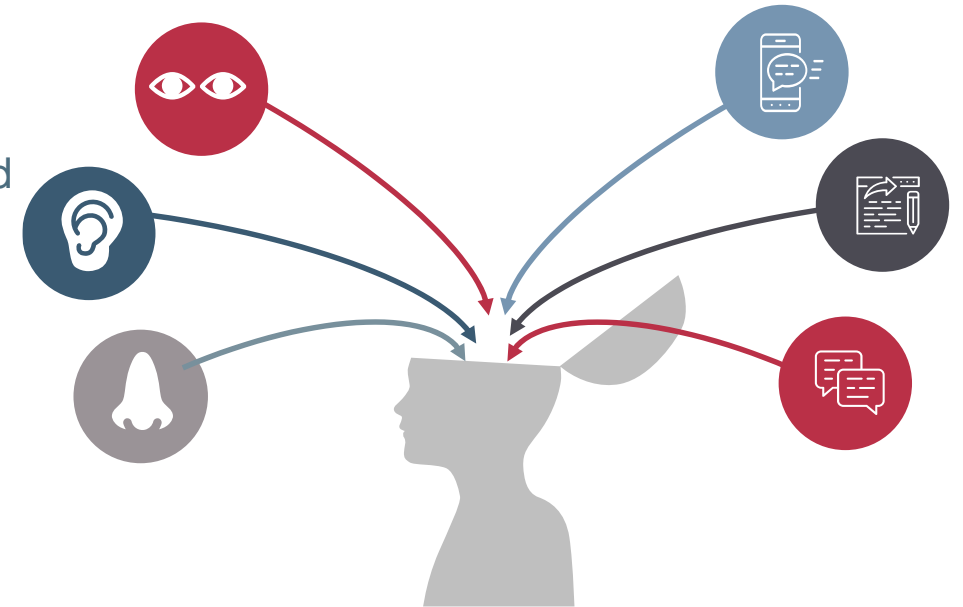




### INCREASED RISK OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

due to lack of contact and heightened anxiety.

*Practice “pre-forgiveness” – talk about this in advance so that it’s less disconcerting when it happens*

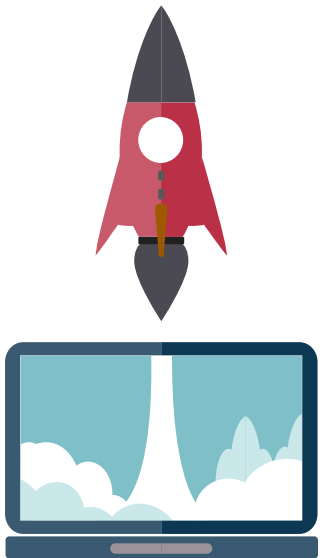


### DISTRACTIBILITY & HYPER-FOCUS

adapting working styles to realise the productivity benefits of remote working

- You may need to work with individuals around when they can actually focus.
- General distractions can be managed by masking; headphones, music.
- The news is very distracting. Set timers for when you are allowed to check.
- Have a ‘dump pad’ for intrusive thoughts about things that must be done that day.

*Have a ‘strategy session’ with your teams – people work very differently, so by sharing a wide range of ideas you are more likely to find one that works*





## SELF-CARE & TREATS

### A balanced view

If it is all food and alcohol we are going to be very unhealthy after this! However, some acceptance that all bets are off and that we need to allow ourselves things to cope with the pressure is required!

### Non-work jobs

What are the jobs that you always think you should do –like organising photos into memory books or searching for new music that you like, writing, learning an instrument, painting – give yourself time to do this within your working week as a treat.

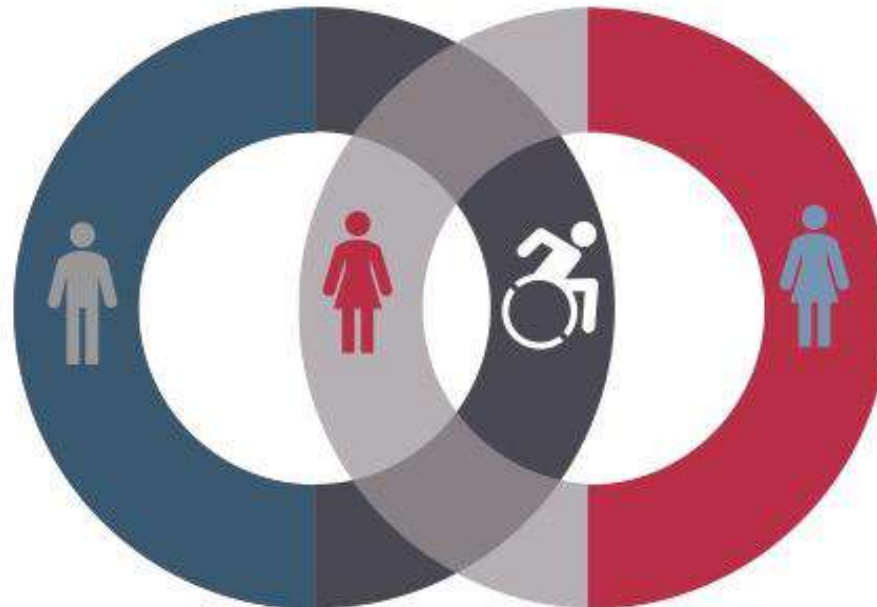
### Self Care

Self-care for those juggling busy families with working from home might be permission to watch TV with the kids and just “be” for an hour.

*Looking after yourself: making time for R&R; exercise, nutrition and hydration; managing risks around alcohol, social media, news etc; being realistic about what can be achieved; knowing when to ask for help.*

## CIRCLES OF SUPPORT & CHECK-IN BUDDIES

Groups of 2 or 3 people that can check in on each other or reach out for support





## PSYCHOLOGY; COGNITIVE IMPACT & SOLUTIONS

For all Employees  
–more extreme reactions  
possible for employees with  
health or disability issues

Increase in anxiety  
around all comms  
affects thinking



Acknowledge anxiety.  
Have 'settling'  
moments planned in  
regularly –  
conversation and  
email

Differences in ability  
to plan, prioritise  
and consider time  
boundaries



Time boundaries may  
need to be explicit  
and flexible. Some  
will need more help in  
this –find your natural  
organisers and put  
them to work

Differences in  
sensory perception  
and social perception  
– nuances lost



Acknowledge and talk  
about nuances being  
lost –prepare  
everyone to forgive  
each other for  
misunderstandings

Differences in  
sensory and social  
perception also  
affect cognitive  
strain, so meetings  
are more tiring.



Meetings need to  
take less time and  
have both and  
visual/auditory  
options. Enable  
closed captioning.  
Send agendas and  
refer to them  
frequently  
Mics, headphones,  
cameras, bandwidth





## CREATING THE HOME WORKSPACE & RELEVANT TECHNOLOGIES

**Designating an area at home to work is the first step to successfully setting up a workspace.**

- A work environment prepares you mentally for work
- Plan for long-term comfort not ten minute usage
- Consider the health & safety aspect of your space
- Correct seating = Better posture
- Conduct your own DSE and organise your desk
- Take frequent breaks, 20 min work sessions
- Move or walk around

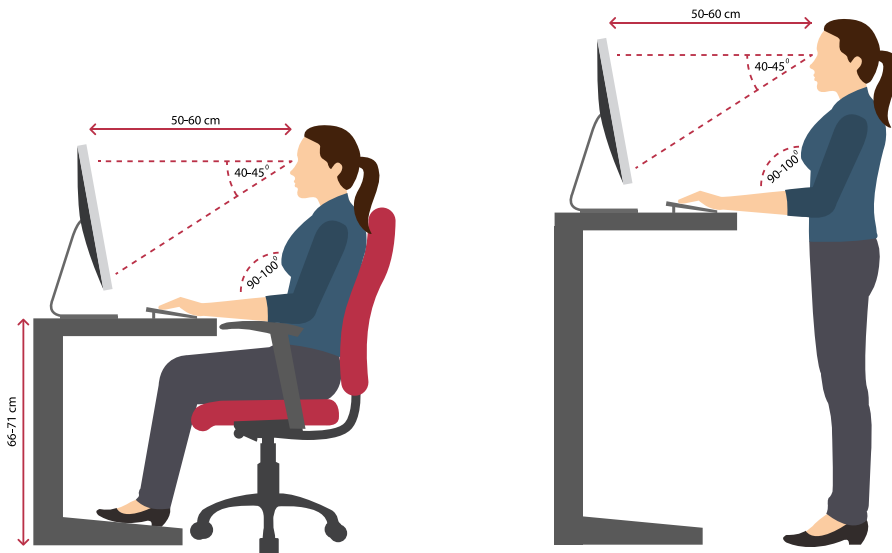


## COMMON HOMEWORKER POSTURE PROBLEMS

Many Homeworkers we encounter often display a number of very similar postural issues that will affect their well-being and productivity

- The Slouch! Leaning forward over their laptop, often in a chair that gives them no back support and is at a height that is too low or high for their desk.
- The Recline! The arms are outstretched putting pressure on the neck and shoulders, back and hips.
- The Horizontal! Many think this is a relaxed way of working but it is particularly damaging to the neck and upper back.





## GOOD HOMEWORKER POSTURE

Encouraging Homeworkers to follow a few simple rules will positively affect their well-being and aids their concentration and productivity.

- Work at a desk or table with adequate knee/foot clearance so that you can sit/stand close to your laptop.
- Use a separate keyboard and mouse with your laptop.
- Position the keyboard and mouse directly in front of you within easy reach.
- Position your laptop so that the top of the screen is level with your eye height. If you don't have a laptop riser, use a box file or some books to raise your laptop. Or plug in a separate monitor if you have one.
- If sitting, use an adjustable chair. Use a rolled-up hand towel for extra lower back support, if needed. If your chair is too low, sit on a cushion to raise your seat height.



“ Equipping yourself / employees with the right tools significantly lowers injury risk, increases productivity and fosters wellbeing. , ,

## WHAT IS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT ERGONOMICS AND EQUIPMENT

- Provide yourself a **safe and productive working environment**
- **Source the right tools** for the job
- **Home Worker Kit** – AT Tools, Ergonomics and Screen Solutions



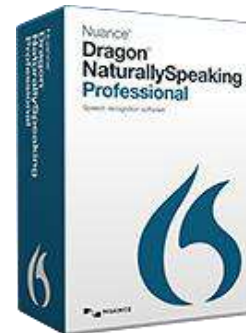
## PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS



The technology has improved considerably in the last 5 to 10 years.

## USING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AS A GENERAL PRODUCTION TOOL

## SPEECH RECOGNITION



Highly developed products such as Dragon are accurate and productive.

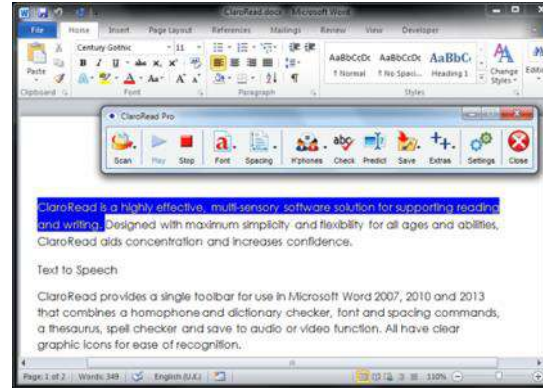


Now operating systems such as Windows 10 and MacOS come with reliable basic voice recognition.

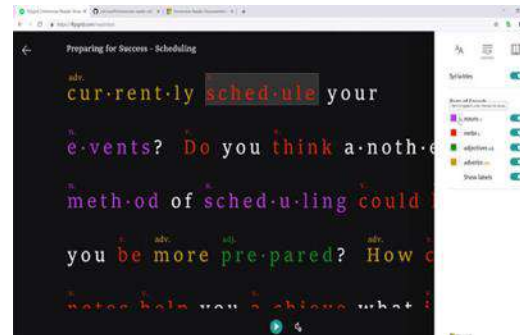
## PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS



## TEXT TO SPEECH



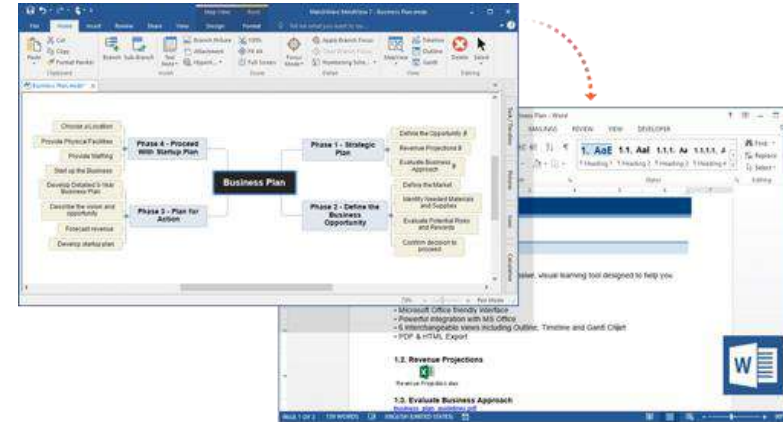
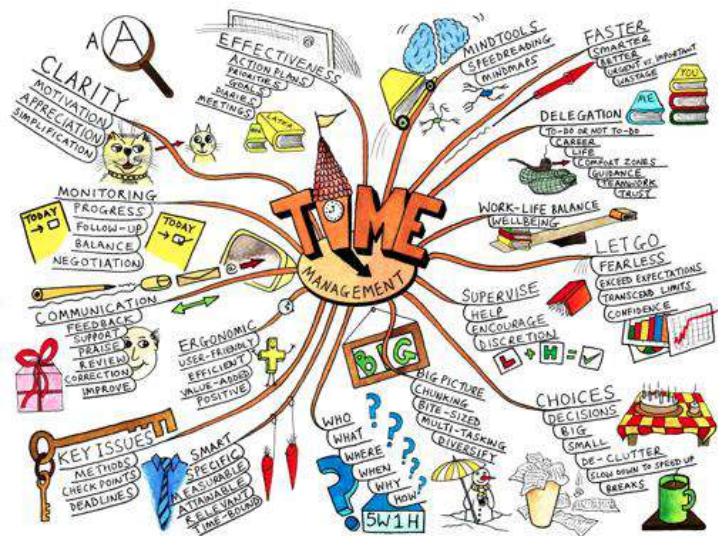
Products such as **ClaroRead & TextHelp Read & Write** give text to speech tools along with many other tools for literacy and language.



Microsoft's **Immersive Reader** gives cross platform reading tools including text to speech and dictionary functions.



## MIND MAPPING



Modern software such as **MindView**, **MindManager** and **AYOA** allows a flexible and relevant workplace application. Free solutions such as **X-Mind** are available too.

An engaging way of working for many, but.....  
Traditionally not transferable to a workplace situation.



## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES THAT HELP COMMUNICATION, CONCENTRATION & FOCUS



### ORCAM MyReader

AI device for the blind and visually impaired, that can read the morning paper, a favourite book, text messages, emails, and more.



### Super Reading

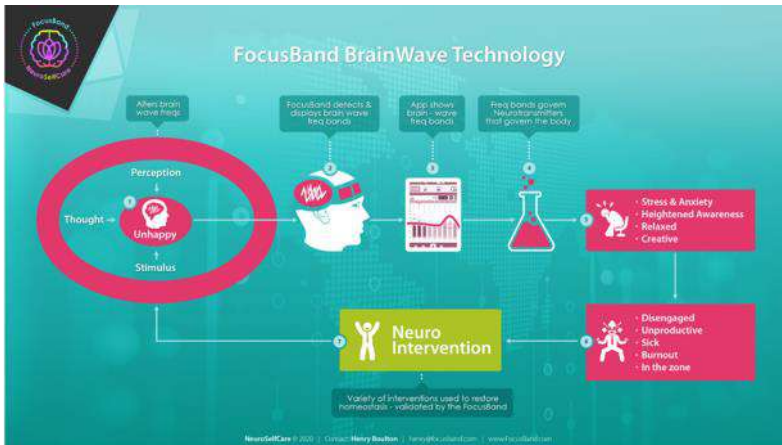
SuperReading provides tools and techniques for increasing reading speed while retaining accurate recall and comprehension by 300-500% even for those with dyslexia.





## FocusBand

Pioneering wearable technology that analyses brain activity and allows the user to independently manage different mental states through an app. A team leader can easily see a person's daily stress levels and intervene in real time for those who are vulnerable, offering support and help to decrease mental anxiety and build colleague relationships.





## FLEXIBILITY, CONSTRAINTS & RESPONSIBILITY

- Develop core structures
- Measure the teams output rather than an under a microscope management style to build trust and facts based on real time data
- Manage shared project work remotely
- Designate a Team leader to co-ordinate efforts
- Teams that come together under stress perform much better becoming robust, strong and enduring

“  
*Assistive Technologies are productivity tools; speech to text, text to speech, that enable people to dictate in text form or listen to documents as you would an audio book. Integration with IT platforms means that companies, such as Microsoft, Apple and Google have delivered a set of tools that help everyone.*  
”



“ *Organisations no longer need to suffer in silence and nor do their employees. Ergonomic solutions such as chairs, sit stand desks and desktop peripherals can change a persons work place experience. Paired with Assistive Technology these solutions redefine the future of work for everyone.* ”

## THE FUTURE OF WORK

- Flexibility will be key. Change will bring opportunities for inclusion but also new risks
- Increasingly obvious how assistive technology is useful to people across the workforce. The goal is to give every member of staff the support and equipment they need to realise their potential. Hopes for cultural and attitudinal shifts among managers and staff
- How the world of work may change post-corona: more distributed, greater autonomy. Huge value of skills learned now in future world



## THANK YOU

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