



# managing your team in a crisis

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shaping  
print to  
business

# Managing your team through the pandemic - for a typical smaller Prokom member

## Introduction

This guide is a checklist with added comments to help you work through the necessary actions to manage your staff through the pandemic.

Depending on your country and its government policy, you may have been instructed to close or partially close your operation. For example in the UK at the time of writing, everyone who can, is instructed to work from home, but there is no universal instruction to shut printing companies. For the purposes of this guide, we will assume that you have some flexibility in deciding for yourself what best to do.

**Remember not to be too ambitious – you will all be stressed by the pandemic and fully stretched, so be patient and pace yourself and your team. Remember to keep thanking them for their support through these challenging times and give them the time to talk to you.**

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## The checklist

### Establish a staff communications channel

One of the benefits of a smaller team is that in theory communications should be easier. People chat. The question is do clear communications get passed promptly to all staff?

Given the social distancing measures, see later, face-to-face communications will be more difficult, so consider implementing a formal staff communications channel. This should be limited to messages that need to go to all or sub-sets of your staff and perhaps be numbered so that staff can ensure they have seen all of them. Email is probably easiest and most secure, if universally available to all staff. If not, complement it with social media, but be aware of the security risks involved.

Remember the value of communicating in these stressful times, even when there may be relatively little to report. For example tell people how each other are coping by adding fun items, how staff off sick are progressing etc. Keeping people feeling mutually supported and even giving people a laugh is important as well as directing them to actions to stay safe or help the company.

You may want to establish an emergency channel of communications, perhaps the same channel but with a clear Crisis headline, so that busy staff do not overlook vital communications.

Do not allow this staff communications channel to get clogged up with responses and staff communicating with each other on related or even non-related matters. If you do, the channel will quickly lose value and your important messages will be lost in the 'noise'. On the other hand encourage staff to give feedback, perhaps by establishing a feedback@..... link at the bottom of all your communications emails and ensure that you read all of them and reply whenever possible.

Finally ensure that as well as the staff communications channel there is an emergency telephone number that all staff are given and can ring and can leave a message and get a reply promptly.

### Matching staff availability to company need

Some Prokom members will continue to be busy or even busier, despite the pandemic, eg working for the health sector, in certain packaging markets, adapting products to meet PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) demand. Others will see a near complete collapse of orders in the short term. Most will fall somewhere in between these extremes. We will address complete or partial shutdowns and the furloughing or redundancies of staff later in this guide. However you must consider sending staff that are elderly or have underlying health conditions home with full or at least generous partial pay.

Initially you need to have a clear and immediate 'view' of the key roles you need maintained and the staff available to fill them. Elsewhere in the Prokom crisis management toolkit there is a Pandemic Planning Template that advises on the process of defining the critical processes that must be maintained. You need to ensure you have a daily report of the availability of all staff – keeping a record of staff off sick or self-isolating for whatever reason, those asked to stand-down because of lack of demand etc. and regularly updating the record.

You may have already a staff skills matrix. If not consider creating one now. You can then match the staff availability to business need and identify any gaps to fill, surpluses to manage and any cross-training (remote or with adequate social distancing) that should be given remotely to improve resilience for any possible future sickness patterns.

One way to minimise the number of staff attending on any one day and make social distancing measures more practical in small workplaces is to consider having A and B teams attending on alternate days.

### **Providing Health and Safety measures**

You have a legal as well as moral duty to keep your staff as safe as possible in these challenging times. You must provide as quickly as possible the following:

1. Additional safety equipment

This should include alcohol-based hand cleansers, pop-up additional hand washing/cleansing facilities, plenty of soap and disposable towels, face masks, latex gloves etc. Clearly there will be supply issues associated with these and if need be you must take difficult decisions with regard to priority access eg those staff who are vulnerable or whose role makes social distancing more difficult. Alongside such additional equipment must be placed clear instructions on their use.

2. Additional cleaning cycles

Increase the frequency and intensity of cleaning cycles, getting the assistance of staff to particulate if your normal cleaners cannot do it thoroughly or frequently enough.

3. Social distancing measures

In the UK people are advised to stay at least 2 meters apart. Ban handshaking or other close communications. There are number of essential steps that can assist such social distancing. Consider staggering shift start/finishing times, close canteens or ensure people do observe social distancing in them, stop staff from congregating in breaks, including the usual smoking huddles, stop having face to face production and other management meetings and replace with virtual ones using Zoom, Microsoft teams or similar. Again provide clear signage on these measures.

4. Staff not following health and safety procedures

Staff seen not to be following these measures must be immediately challenged and if they persist in failing to follow instructions, you must consider immediately asking them to go home, rather than risk the health

of other staff. You will need to continue to pay them in most circumstances.

#### 5. Contractors and suppliers staff

You may still have contractors' and/or suppliers' staff and/or agency staff on site. Your legal and moral obligations to keep them as safe as your own staff has not changed in this situation. Ensure that you take all the necessary measures to cover them in all your actions, including where necessary communicating with their own companies to advise of the actions you have taken.

### Staff sickness reporting

You may already have a staff sickness reporting process. If not create one and ensure you are immediately advised of anyone feeling unwell whilst at work. Make sure all understand the virus symptoms to be looked for. Ensure social distancing where possible even in a crisis and either send sick staff home immediately (ensuring they can get home safely), or call for medical support as necessary. Have an identified 'sick' room always available. To assist this process you should ensure you have emergency contact numbers of family members or equivalent for all staff.

If a member of staff reports in that they either have the symptoms of the virus or even have been tested positively for the virus, you must consider the implications for all staff that may have been in contact with the sick staff member previously. They in turn depending on their likely exposure should be asked to go home and self-isolate, following the guidance issued by your own government. Keep clear and detailed records of all sickness of staff both at work and reporting in sick or self-isolating and any consequent actions that you have taken.

### Sick pay and holiday entitlements

Your government may provide a statutory sick pay scheme or the equivalent and will provide guidance on how this should be apply in these exceptional circumstances. If you offer contractual sick pay it is good practice to pay it if you can afford to do so. Bear in mind the contractual implications of any breach of contract in this regard. Bear in mind that if you do not provide sick pay, regardless of any government support, staff may be tempted to come into work because of financial pressures, even if they or members of their immediate family are showing symptoms, thereby threatening the health of other staff.

Equally you must announce a clear and consistent policy to allow staff to postpone any booked holidays.

### Home working

If you have identified members of staff who can work from home, remember you have legal and moral responsibilities to look after those staff. There is

more detailed guidance elsewhere in the Prokom Crisis management toolkit on home working. But here are some basic points:

1. Equipment

You will need to provide appropriate IT and other equipment to ensure they can adequately work from home. This should include advice on creating an adequate working environment, difficult in small flats for example, particularly if kids are at home.

2. Adapting processes and providing training

Remember that some processes may 'assume' physical transfers and/or rekeying of files when working in the company, that may not be practical when staff are working from home. You may have to redesign processes 'on the fly' but if you do so, ensure they are thoroughly tested and that all staff impacted are advised and trained. This must include staff up and down the process in other departments as well as those in the immediate team.

3. Communications and support

Communications will be more difficult when working remotely – no more calls across the office, water-cooler chats etc. Consider remote team meetings using Zoom, Microsoft Teams or similar to ensure everyone feels engaged. Allow time for one-to-one calls with remote workers to check on how they are getting on and their mental health as well as work issues.

### **Complete or partial shutdowns, furloughing and redundancies**

Depending on your government, there may be support for your company in the form of loans, partial or complete payment of staff to stay at home not working but remaining on your payroll (furloughing) or you may be forced to consider redundancies. This short checklist is not designed to provide complete guidance on any of these difficult options. However there will be guidance available from your government, your banks, your insurers, local industry organisations eg local chambers of commerce to provide further details.

However at the foot of this guide is a useful CIPD (UK Chartered Institute of Personnel Development) Pandemic Workforce Planning Decision Tree that may assist.

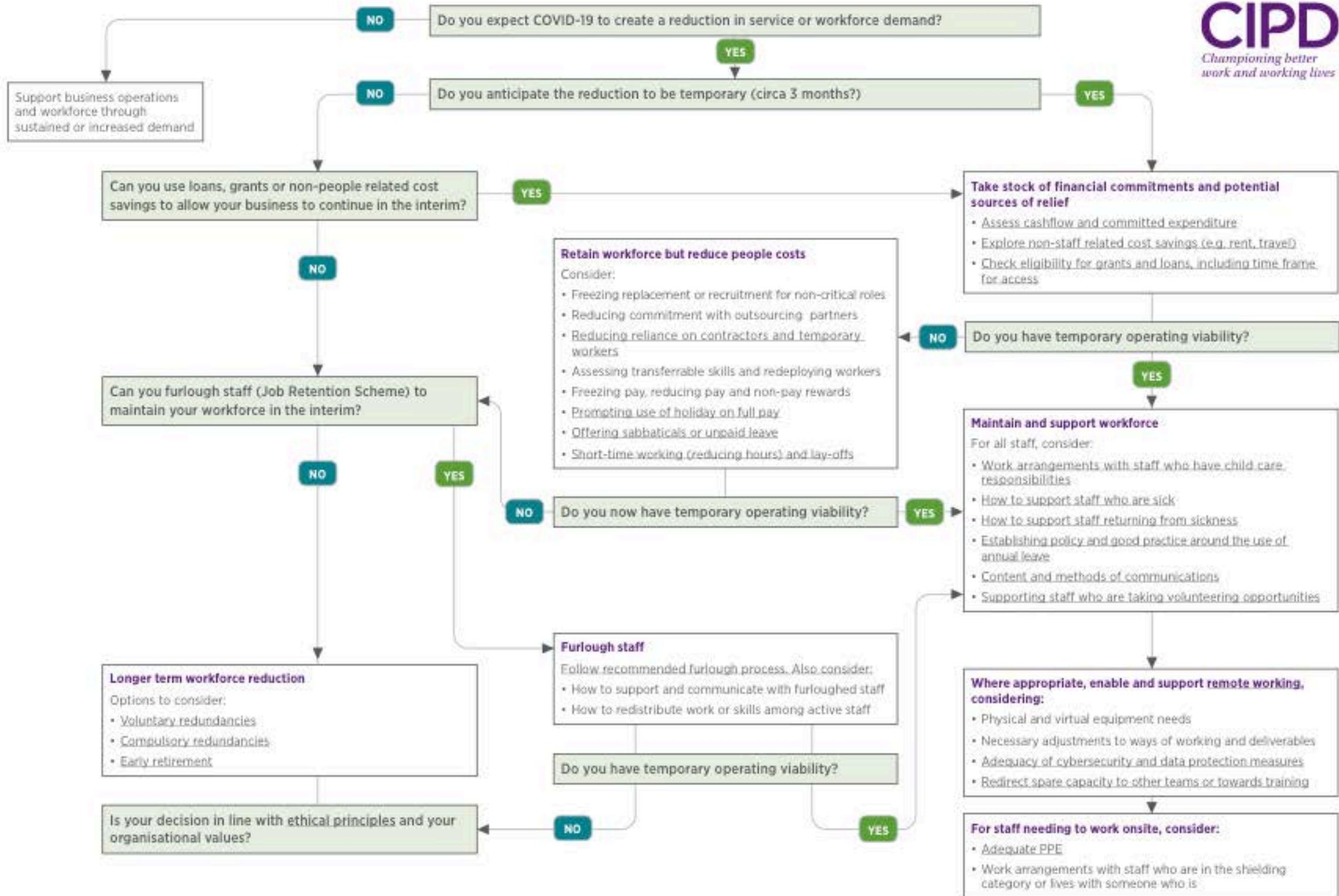
### **Longer term staff changes**

This guide is focussed on the immediate actions that need to be taken with respect to your staff. However as the crisis progresses, you will need to consider how the company may need to adapt in the longer term. Prokom will be providing planning guidance on this including staffing issues.

Clearly this will depend on the emerging demand for your products and services, the pattern of economic recovery in your country and many other variables. However there will be long-term consequences for staffing in the vast majority of printers. There will need to be changing roles and responsibilities, differing staff numbers needed and possible redundancies, long term sickness of staff to allow for, and even recruitment of fresh staff with

perhaps fresh skills to consider. We will address these issues and more in the planning guidance.

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