

## Supporting Personnel in Isolation – A Guide for Leaders

Our Defence Community is increasingly being affected by the growing wave of OMICRON spreading across NZ. More members of NZDF and their families are likely to contract COVID and more members and families will be required to isolate.

This creates new challenges for leaders to maintain the delivery of core outputs and services while also effectively monitoring and supporting the morale and wellbeing of our Defence Community.

Some key challenges include:

- Dwindling numbers of available personnel owing to own health status or support for families
- Increasing dislocation within team -concurrent task activities, remote working, isolation, compassionate return to families and sick leave

This will require:

- Prioritisation of activities
- Promotion of self-care across teams spanning health protection and wellbeing, and management workloads to minimise the potential for burnout in team members
- Monitoring of morale and wellbeing, and ensuring regular welfare checks for those with COVID or isolating in barracks or at home
- Response to team and community needs (which will span physical and psychosocial health needs and in some cases, especially for families, practical welfare needs).
- Support for families with partners deployed
- Self-care during a busy time

As a leader you can't do this alone. Leaders will need to mobilise teams to empower personal responsibility and ensure that individuals are well prepared to respond to the potential challenges ahead in terms of self-care, family support planning, risk and contingency management.

### COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 and what it means for our people, our community and our organisation continues to shift. Many business areas are centrally involved in planning to ensure force health, business continuity and our national response. For others it is endeavouring to maintain the delivery of units and functions, supporting competing priorities task requests and switching off the non-essential, connecting with teams largely using remote working arrangements, reminding our people to remain ready and to follow health guidelines.

The [COVID-19 ILP page](#) is now the 'go to' page for the most current COVID related health information and guidance, while the [COVID-19 F4F page](#) on the F4F site remains the hub for information for our broader Defence Community. Both are updated regularly. The HR Toolkit [ILP](#) also has other information relevant to leaders and NZDF community. Please continue to familiarise yourself with the updates provided on the Ministry of Health guidelines, and any other official communication releases.

As circumstances change you will need to consider the impact on your people, day to day work programmes and business continuity. It is important to ensure that our people and their families are feeling well informed and connected. It's important to talk with your teams about their family arrangements and planning and preparation if needing to self-isolate, and any additional considerations that you may need to be aware of relevant to support going forward.

The Ministry of Health guidelines for wellbeing are [here](#). Please contact HR or Health for advice if you are unsure and encourage your people to utilise [NZDF4U Wellbeing Support services](#) for support if they need it.

### When one of your team has to self-isolate

Encourage your people to utilise the range information and support that is available to them, and to keep an eye out for each other. Reinforce the importance of compliance with NZDF and MOH guidelines for self-isolation.

Check in regularly with your team members and be cognisant of individual circumstances and needs. The Mental Health Continuum (below) can provide a useful framework for checking in on wellbeing. Discussing this with your team beforehand, and providing them with a [copy](#), can provide a shared language and frame of reference. When talking to your team about the continuum it can be useful to remind them of the following;

- They should build time into their battle rhythm and routine to reflect on their wellbeing. When we are busy we can forget to notice how we are doing.
- It's normal to move up and down the continuum, so don't be alarmed if they notice that. But take action to improve wellbeing early.
- Most of us can recover from short periods where we are "orange" or even "red", but the longer we are down there (even a day or two) the harder it is to recover.
- It can be useful for reflecting on others in the same self-isolation bubble as well.

Using the mental health continuum as a guide, here are some questions that might be useful;

- "Where on the continuum do you think you are now?"
- "Where did you feel you were before you were notified of the need to go into self-isolation?"
- "If things continue as they are, where do you think you might be in a week?"
- "Have you noticed any changes that aren't captured here?"
- "What would it take to move you a little to the left?"

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
Normal mood fluctuations; Calm & takes things in stride	Irritable/Impatient; Nervous; Sadness/Overwhelmed	Anger; Anxiety; Pervasively sad/Hopeless	Angry outbursts/aggression; Excessive anxiety/panic attacks; Depressed/Suicidal thoughts
Good sense of humour; Performing well; In control mentally	Displaced sarcasm; Procrastination; Forgetfulness	Negative attitude; Poor performance or Workaholic; Poor concentration/decisions	Overt insubordination; Can't perform duties, control behaviour or concentrate
Normal sleep patterns; Few sleep difficulties	Trouble sleeping; Intrusive thoughts; Nightmares	Restless disturbed sleep; Recurrent images/nightmares	Can't fall asleep or stay asleep; Sleeping too much or too little
Physically well; Good energy level	Muscle tension/headaches; Low energy	Increased aches & pains; Increased fatigue	Physical illnesses; Constant fatigue
Physically and socially active	Decreased activity/socializing	Avoidance; Withdrawal	Not going out or answering phone
No/limited drug & alcohol use/ gambling	Regular but controlled drug & alcohol use/gambling	Increased drug & alcohol use/ gambling—hard to control	Frequent drug & alcohol or gambling use—inability to control with severe consequences

Sustainable mental health requires a balance across all the elements of wellbeing.

- Physical Wellbeing (Taha Tinana).** Ensure that individuals with physical health concerns (COVID symptom related or others) receive appropriate health support. Some key protective behaviours related to physical health are physical activity, healthy eating, and getting enough sleep. Keep an eye out for those that may be staying up all night gaming and make sure that those in isolation are getting access to a balanced diet and opportunities for regular exercise.
- Mental Wellbeing (Taha Hinengaro).** Requirements for isolation and the restrictions, social disconnection and boredom that can come with this can take a toll on mental health. Use the MH Continuum to monitor how people are tracking and keep an eye out for potential shifts in mood or behaviour over time. People may also have other stressors in life related to work or family that can start to take a toll of mental health and wellbeing over time.
- Spiritual Wellbeing (Taha Wairua).** Different people have different perspectives on spiritual wellbeing. Behaviours that relate to spiritual wellbeing are things like being passionate about our work, acting according to our principles, and maintaining a connection to our culture. For those in isolation this may be a time of self-reflection and the opportunity for a stronger connection with their values and sense of purpose. Chaplains are a great resource to provide support for those who may be feeling lost. There are also a range of tools available for meditation and mindfulness practice.
- Family or Social Wellbeing (Taha Whānau).** Connection and belonging are fundamental to human wellbeing. Concerns about family are likely to increase so it is important that support plans are in place and individuals are able to attend to family needs if required. There is an increased risk of social disconnection which makes regular check-in's, support plans and buddy systems even more important. Conversely for some families being confined together may compound or create relationship strains. Keep an eye out for those who are disconnected or seem withdrawn and be mindful of families who may not have good support, especially families of deployed personnel and those who are unwell or having to isolate while military members are working away from home.

Understanding the pressures your team are facing across these areas will enable you to notice changes in health and wellbeing intervene early. Asking one or two questions in each of these areas when you do your wellbeing check in's will help you develop a fuller picture of your team member's wellbeing;

Social	Mental & Emotional
Who is in your bubble? Is there anyone outside your bubble you are concerned about? How are things with your family/whānau at the moment? What are the tension levels like at home at the moment? What are some of the tensions? How are your relationships with the team, any concerns about things within the team? Who else can you lean on in the team? What would help you feel connected to the team?	How has the prospect of lockdown impacted on your morale? What worries or concerns are showing up for you? This is a stressful time for many of us, what has been difficult for you and your whānau? How's your ability to concentrate and focus? On a scale of 1-10, how optimistic are you feeling about the prospect of lockdown? What would have to change to nudge you up just one point? What helps you manage stress, and how can we help with that?

<b>Spirituality, Meaning, Identity &amp; Values</b>	<b>Physical</b>
<p>What do you feel are your work priorities at the moment?</p> <p>What's important for you at work at the moment?</p> <p>What are the things outside of work that you are important to you?</p> <p>What do you feel you are strong in at the moment?</p> <p>How can I help you prioritise your time and energy at the moment?</p>	<p>How's your health, more broadly?</p> <p>Any pain or old injuries?</p> <p>How's your sleep?</p> <p>How's your diet and appetite?</p> <p>How're your energy levels?</p> <p>How're you planning for some recovery time?</p> <p>Has COVID had any impacts on your whānau's financial situation?</p> <p>What are you doing, or planning to do, to look after yourself at the moment? How can I help with that?</p>