

Case Study

Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting Ltd

Healthy Working Wales Gold Small Workplace Health Award



Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting (WREC) is an education and social welfare organisation. Founded in 2012, we deliver a variety of high quality skills-related programmes and social services provision.

Our programmes include support for unemployed individuals to retrain and secure jobs, vocational training programmes, adult education and social services provision such as support for families who have children with disabilities and parenting support.

With a team of 29 staff, we supported 1,352 individuals across our programmes in 2018/19 in South Wales, Dorset, Wiltshire and Sussex. Our existing clients include five local authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Education & Skills Funding Agency. We are an approved centre with City and Guilds, the Institute for Leadership and Management, Northern Council for Further Education and Agored Cymru.

Highlights

- We have been concerned for the health and wellbeing of our staff whilst working remotely and it has been imperative the company ensured good communication and engagement with all staff.
- Daily staff meetings at 9am help us all to be prepared for the day ahead as well as keeping communication levels up, creating a routine and helping everyone to stay focused and motivated. It also ensures staff feel less isolated.
- Staff are encouraged to move away from their desks throughout the day and undertake some form of exercise.
- Using virtual platforms has increased our workflow and streamlined some of our processes.
- It doesn't matter where staff are, if communication and engagement are top priority it can work. Staff feel supported, valued and have reported that communication channels have improved.
- Working with Healthy Working Wales has enabled us to make the connection between the importance of employee wellbeing and the benefits this can bring to the workplace.
- Having wellbeing policies and practices embedded into everything we do as a business has provided us with strong foundations which we were able to draw on to best support the workforce during these uncertain times.

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Staff communication and engagement

We carried out risk assessments and provided guidelines for home working, and staff who required IT equipment had it purchased for them. Staff have access to their local office where they have been able to collect items such as chairs to use at home.

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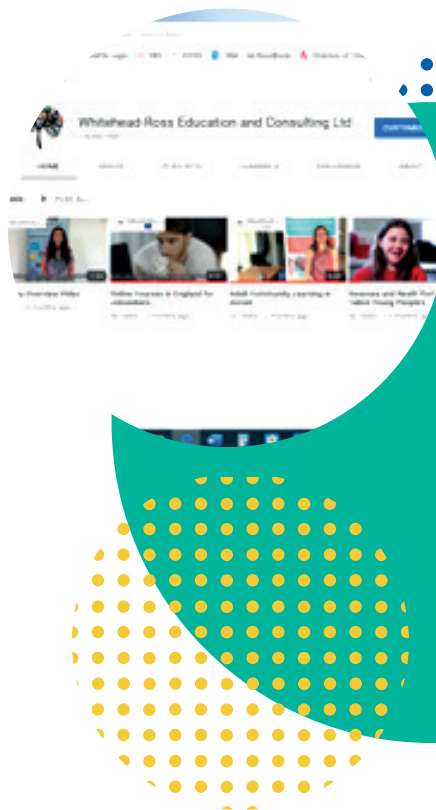
Daily staff meetings are held at 9am via Zoom to help staff to be prepared for the day ahead as well as enabling everyone to keep communication levels up, continue with their routine, keep focused and keep motivated. The meetings are important to help staff working from home feel less isolated as we are mindful of the mental health challenges this can pose.

Staffs 1-2-1s are held over Zoom and we continue to have an open door policy in place even on a virtual basis so that staff can speak to their manager or other staff.

Staff are encouraged to move away from their desks throughout the day and undertake some form of exercise such as walking, yoga and running. Some have begun to swim in the sea every day.

We have employed two new members of staff whose interviews and training were initially carried out virtually with training completed using a Zoom and socially distanced blended approach.

During lockdown the company has had the opportunity to produce three promotional videos. Staff contributed information in relation to the services they deliver and this has helped to keep them focused on the fantastic work they do.



Productivity and flexible working

Using virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom has increased our workflow and streamlined some of our processes. We will continue to use a mixture of virtual and classroom learning sessions in the future.

Our flexible working policy has proved vital during these times. It allowed an intern to travel to Greece at the beginning of July to be with their parents and work from there. All their work was completed proving that you do not always need to be in the office 9 to 5.

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Lessons learnt

It doesn't matter where staff are, if communication and engagement are top priority it can work.

We will continue to use a blended approach to working, using virtual platforms along with physical meetings in the future as we have not seen any decline in productivity.

Staff feel supported, valued and have reported that communication channels have improved.

Working with HWW has enabled us to make the connection between the importance of employee wellbeing and the benefits this can bring to the workplace. Working towards the HWW Small Workplace Health Award has provided us with a framework to start to implement best practice and identify what needs to be in place to create a health promoting workplace.

Having wellbeing policies and practices embedded into everything we do as a business has provided us with strong foundations. Foundations which we were able to draw on and utilise to best support the workforce during these uncertain times



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"We have been forced to adapt and work in new ways and will continue to do so in the future on a permanent basis. Staff felt they had so much more contact and communication than in the office and they did not feel isolated. To evolve you need to adapt as this is the key to survival."