

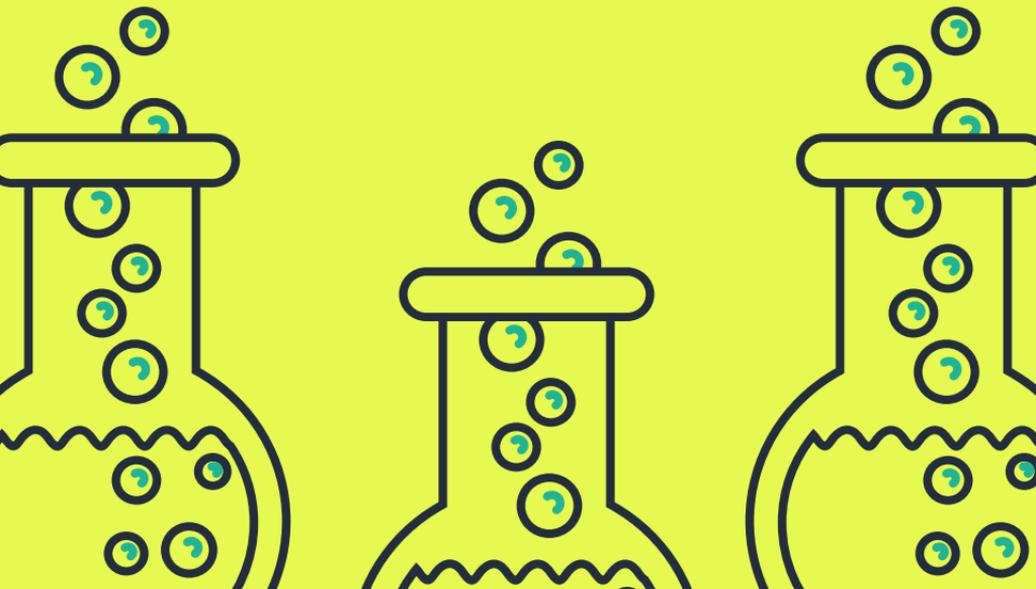
UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

BUBBLING UP: COVID-19

**Termly collection of wellbeing stories
shared by staff and students, because we
care**

ISSUE 2: APRIL 2020

Editors: Manpreet Kaur and Andrew Lacey





ABOUT US

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If you are interested in joining the team, giving us feedback, or submitting a piece for the upcoming issues, please get in touch via a form on warwick.ac.uk/bubblingup or by emailing Dr Bo Kelestyn on bo.kelestyn@warwick.ac.uk



FROM THE EDITORS

MANPREET KAUR AND ANDREW LACEY

During these unsettling times, those of us fortunate enough to be safe will be finding themselves pondering how to introduce structure in a life that suddenly now involves working from home. The lines that otherwise would have existed between academic and personal lives are blurry and work-life balance might feel like a myth when both work and life have been confined to your home (except you get to go on a walk once a day!).

Everyone in the department will be finding themselves doing things differently to how they would normally, and naturally some may find it easier than others. However, change is never easy.

It is okay if some struggle with or become frustrated by the shift in lifestyle brought on by the ongoing crisis. It might take a while to get your head around how you want to work, and you should take the time to properly think things through.

After following all the advice issued by the government on how to keep safe, the next thing to manage will be your mental health. Instead of hysterically trying to get work done whilst saturating your mind with the latest updates in the news and the words of overwhelmed people on social media, it can be better to take some pause, a deep breath.



FROM THE EDITORS

MANPREET KAUR AND ANDREW LACEY

And for most of us, the simplest and single best thing we can do for the people out there is to exercise social distancing.

Try to not think too much about when the lockdown will be lifted and break down the thoughts of months into weeks, or even days. With possibly a lot more time on your hands, it is sometimes better to take small steps. Bring positivity and purpose into what you are doing now at home. Most of you will find yourselves busy with academic work. But the least productive way of managing anything with the potential to harm your mental health is to try and pretend like it is not there. Acknowledge and accept how you feel and speak to your friends and family. Now more than ever is it necessary to support and reach out to our loved ones, friends and colleagues. And, most importantly, let us all be kind. None of us knew this was coming and everyone at all levels is still trying to figure out how to work through this.

On that note, we hope you enjoy reading stories from people in the department with their takes on 'working from home' life!

LEANNE LOVEITT

MCHEM STUDENT, CHEMSOC OUTREACH OFFICER & WELFARE OFFICER

I was already seeing a counsellor through Wellbeing Support Services before we were advised to self-isolate and the lockdown began. Although not originally intended for this, my counselling sessions have helped me adapt to this new way of life, and cope better with the relative isolation. With the support and guidance of my counsellor, I have developed some strategies to improve and maintain my mental health. I want to share these in the hopes of helping someone else. I'm the type of person who relies on structure and routine in order to motivate productivity and keep my mood lifted. A big part of that used to be leaving the house every day to work and socialise in an environment with lots of other people. However, in the absence of lectures and being able to head to the library, I've struggled to achieve this. If you're like me, I would suggest spending the time to set a routine, before attempting to do anything else. It doesn't have to be very strict; I've found something as simple as getting out of bed each morning and getting ready, as though I'm going to leave the house, has really helped me make progress in other areas. I would also recommend taking the time to exercise regularly. This can be a really great way to kick-start the day! I walk my dogs in the morning, and do another form of exercise when I get back home - I've tried DVD workouts with my mum,

LEANNE LOVEITT

MCHEM STUDENT, CHEMSOC OUTREACH OFFICER & WELFARE OFFICER

Youtube Zumba routines, and guided yoga sessions. There are so many resources available online, so don't feel disheartened if you don't like the first thing you try. My final piece of advice is to try mindfulness exercises - ideally for a few minutes every day. Mindfulness is the process of focusing one's attention on experiences occurring in the present moment without judgement or analysis. This includes purposefully directing awareness to thoughts, feelings, sensations, and the surrounding environment. I had already heard of (and attempted) mindfulness, before my counsellor suggested it to me recently, but I didn't think I was good at it. I tend to overthink a lot and my mind wanders easily. When I sit doing nothing, trying to meditate, I find myself on the 15th carriage of a train of thought before I'm even aware that I was thinking. I know unconscious thought appears to be an oxymoron, but I suppose that's what daydreaming is! Instead, I've found mindfulness coupled with physical activity, like yoga, works better for me. Try different things, and see what works for you. Some days will be harder than others. You may wake up one morning and not feel like getting out of bed, or have a resurgence of anxiety, or experience negative thoughts. It's important to acknowledge this and accept that you may not be feeling your best, and that that's okay, but try not to dwell on these moments - things can and will get better.

ADAM ALCOCK

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR

I distinctively remember sitting in the office about 6 months ago, telling my office mate how much I just wanted a week at home. Life was busy: weekdays were bustling with work and my weekends were full; I felt like I wanted to hibernate, catch up with my favourite TV shows and read a good book. Fast forward to April 2020 and I can't help but wonder if I should be careful what I wished for....

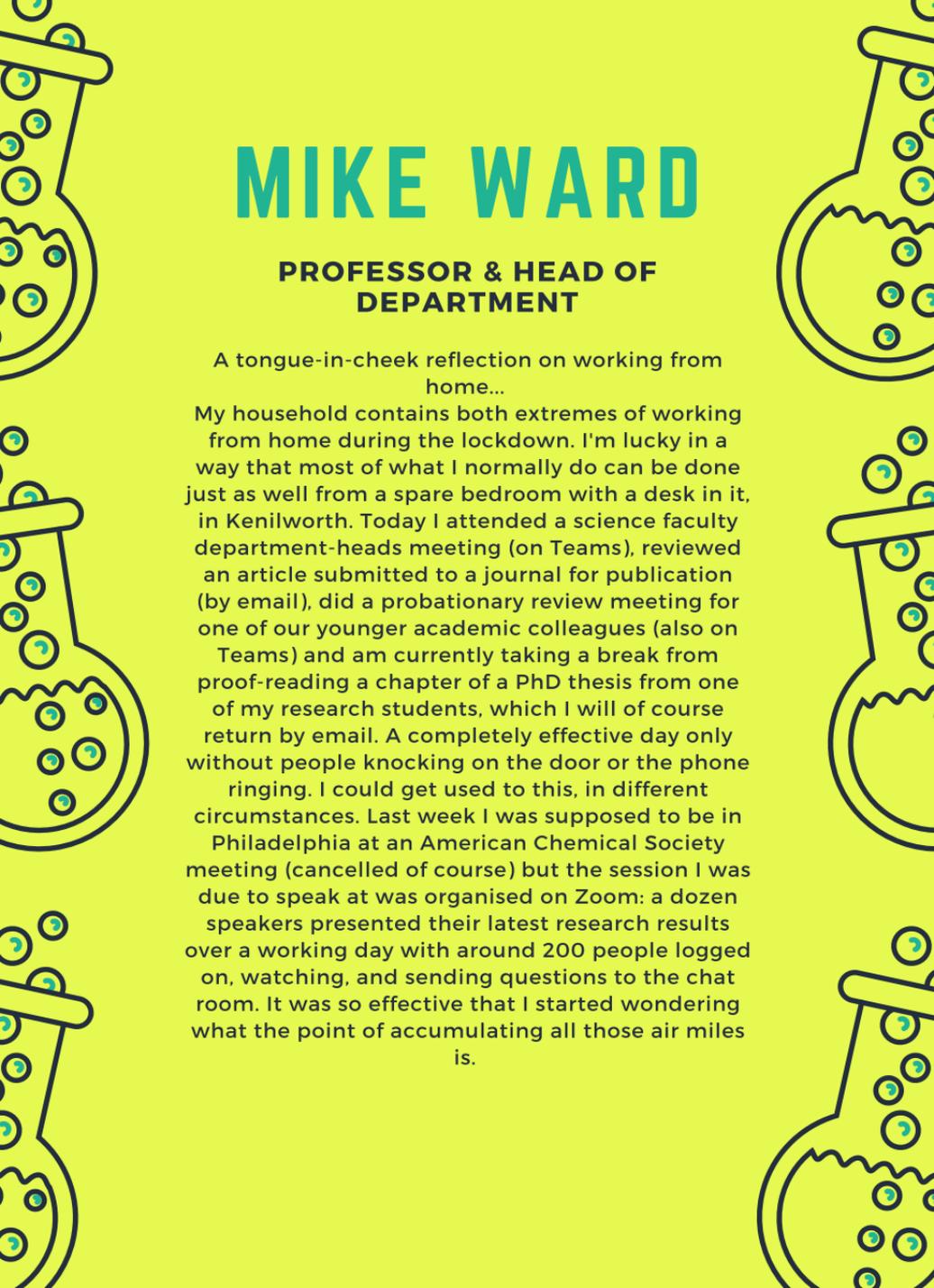
Working from home has been a revelation. I joined Chemistry in March, amidst the start of the working from home orders, so I've started remotely getting to know colleagues through grainy webcams in their living rooms and home offices. It's almost like I'm watching a nature programme being narrated by David Attenborough... "and here, we find the Director of <insert job role here!>, in their natural habitat", none of it feels real. And that sums up how I'm feeling - I have feelings of surrealness that have completely unsettled me. I've always been pragmatic - I know what needs to be done but my feelings have been tripping me up lately. I started my working from home journey feeling low; I didn't feel productive and tasks were taking much longer to do at home. I like being busy and being slowed down through new laborious methods were getting to me, but as the weeks have passed I've started to adapt to new ways of working, utilising new applications and probably most importantly, I've started being kinder to myself

ADAM ALCOCK

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR

So what have I been doing to combat the covid-19 blues? I've changed my mindset, that's what! Instead of viewing this as a negative, I've tried to find the silver lining (and sometimes, it's been incredibly difficult to find!). I pulled myself together and created a schedule and added structure back into my days. So I get up, showered and dressed - PJs are for bed, and not work after all. I take lunch at the same time everyday and finish around tea time. I've set myself up with a little home office, tucked away in a corner of the living room; I have family photos and some flowers by my laptop so I've surrounded myself with positive things. I pack it all away on a Friday to signify the weekend!

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturday I do an Instagram workout run by one of the personal trainers at the gym I attend... I don't recognise myself - Instagram for workouts, who'd have thought that was even a thing?! I've even been for a few runs. Aside from adding structure into my day, my biggest help is that I do one 'happy' thing a day. This has taken the form of my favourite meal, a good film, an episode of my favourite box-set or another chapter of the novel - something to look forward to. I have chats with my family and friends in various WhatsApp groups too - as it makes me still feel connected to them. In fact, my friend just called me for a virtual coffee (again, who'd have done that a few weeks ago?!), and she reminded me that working from home isn't a lock in, it's our safe haven and I couldn't agree more!



MIKE WARD

PROFESSOR & HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

A tongue-in-cheek reflection on working from home...

My household contains both extremes of working from home during the lockdown. I'm lucky in a way that most of what I normally do can be done just as well from a spare bedroom with a desk in it, in Kenilworth. Today I attended a science faculty department-heads meeting (on Teams), reviewed an article submitted to a journal for publication (by email), did a probationary review meeting for one of our younger academic colleagues (also on Teams) and am currently taking a break from proof-reading a chapter of a PhD thesis from one of my research students, which I will of course return by email. A completely effective day only without people knocking on the door or the phone ringing. I could get used to this, in different circumstances. Last week I was supposed to be in Philadelphia at an American Chemical Society meeting (cancelled of course) but the session I was due to speak at was organised on Zoom: a dozen speakers presented their latest research results over a working day with around 200 people logged on, watching, and sending questions to the chat room. It was so effective that I started wondering what the point of accumulating all those air miles is.

MIKE WARD

PROFESSOR & HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Mind you the big drawback with Zoom is that you don't all get to go to the pub afterwards, which is a significant issue. And I never to got to try a Philly Cheesesteak, a wonderful-looking 2000-calorie mid-morning snacklet. At the other end of the spectrum... my 19-year-old twins (both year 1 at university) have got over the wild excitement of having no exams, and not much of anything else: and are sadly contemplating weeks of lockdown with - urgh - their parents. In desperation actual books are occasionally being read. Trumpet practice has been known to happen. Jogging takes place. Extended facetime sessions with remote boyfriend / girlfriend occupies most evenings. However what makes it most bearable for them is that they ganged up on me to buy a Nintendo Switch, which I did because I'm nice, and I got probably the last one on Amazon. But - silly me - I made the rookie error of linking it to the Nintendo games store using my paypal account without a password, which means that the price of keeping them occupied is that my bank account is systematically pillaged for new games. Still, it has one benefit: when I run out of videoconferences to have for work I'll be able to rack up high scores on everything from Zelda to Mariokart and Animal Crossing. Can't wait!

LOUIS AMMON

BSC FINALIST & CHEMSOC POSTGRADUATE REP

This is a list of the resources I've found useful and others have recommended to me! They range from top tips to more in-depth articles, Enjoy!

List of WFH resources:

[Charlie Waller Memorial Trust: WFH Your Wellbeing Action Plan](#)

Great for wellbeing:

[Science Focus: 10-science backed tips to help you WFH successfully](#)

Dr Zoë Ayres' amazing poster:

[Scientist without a lab? A PhD researcher guide to Covid-19](#)

More tips:

[Science Mag: WFH because of COVID-19? Here are 10 ways to spend your time](#)

[Stanford News: The productivity pitfalls of WFH in the age of COVID-19](#)

[Warwick Organisational Development: Coronavirus: OD support for remote working](#)

[Mind: Coronavirus and your wellbeing](#)

[@RachelKillian: Top tips for WFH](#)

LOUIS AMMON

**BSC FINALIST & CHEMSOC
POSTGRADUATE REP**

Check out this WFH Wall in Padlet!



**It is a space to share your experiences and any
tips and advice about WFH. Let's keep the
conversation going!**

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

NEXT ISSUE: EXAM STRESS

Termly collection of wellbeing stories
shared by staff and students, because we
care

COMING SOON

If you have been affected by this issue, please
find out more about the support available on
warwick.ac.uk/bubbling up or by speaking to your
Personal or Senior Tutor in the department.

