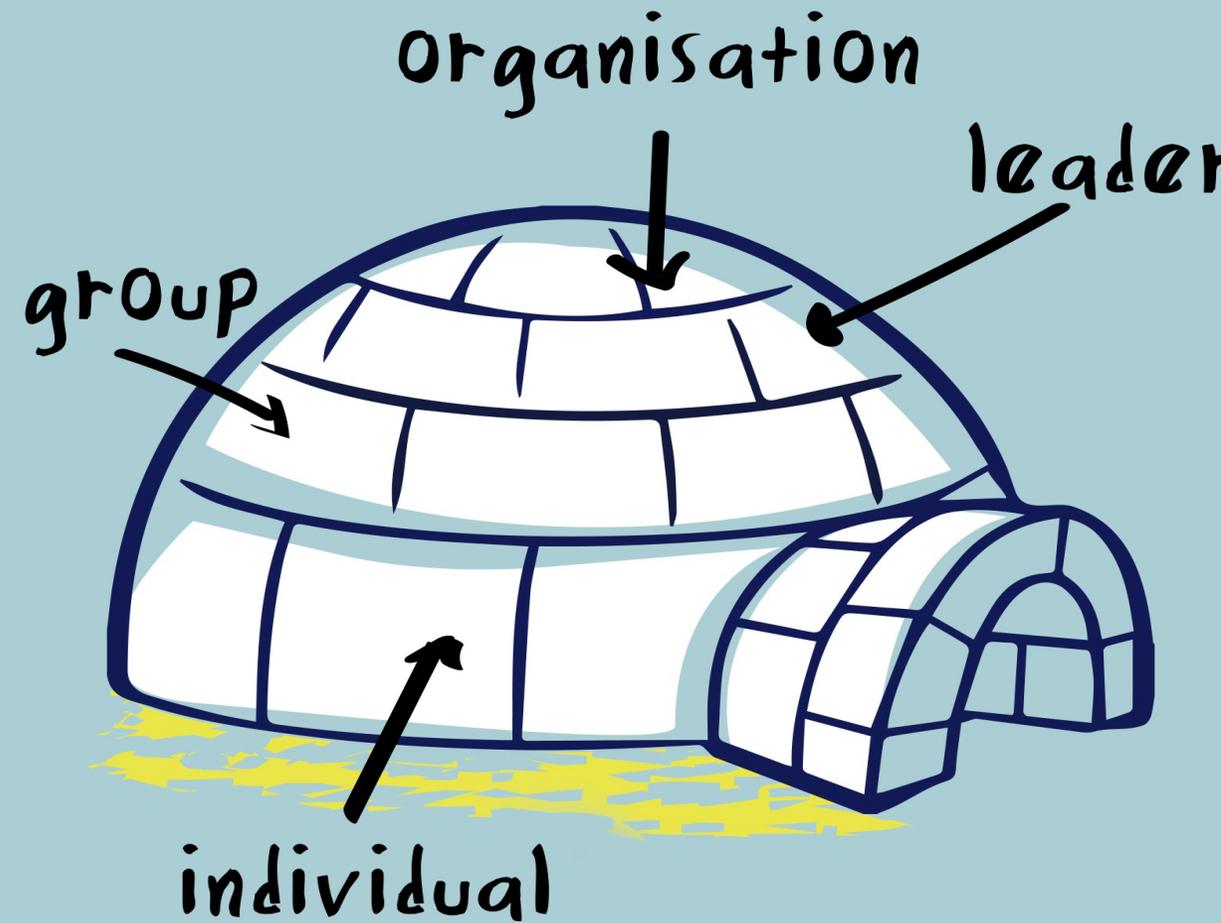


# It's a rollercoaster – long COVID workers' lived experiences adjusting to work

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# Work and long covid

## What is long covid?

'signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with COVID-19 which continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis'. Nice.

## TOO MANY

- Over 2 million adults in England may have had Long Covid (Whitaker et al., 2021)
- Lunt et al. (2021) found that less than 15% of employees experiencing long covid had returned to work fully

## FOR TOO LONG

- The longer people stay off, the less likely they are to return

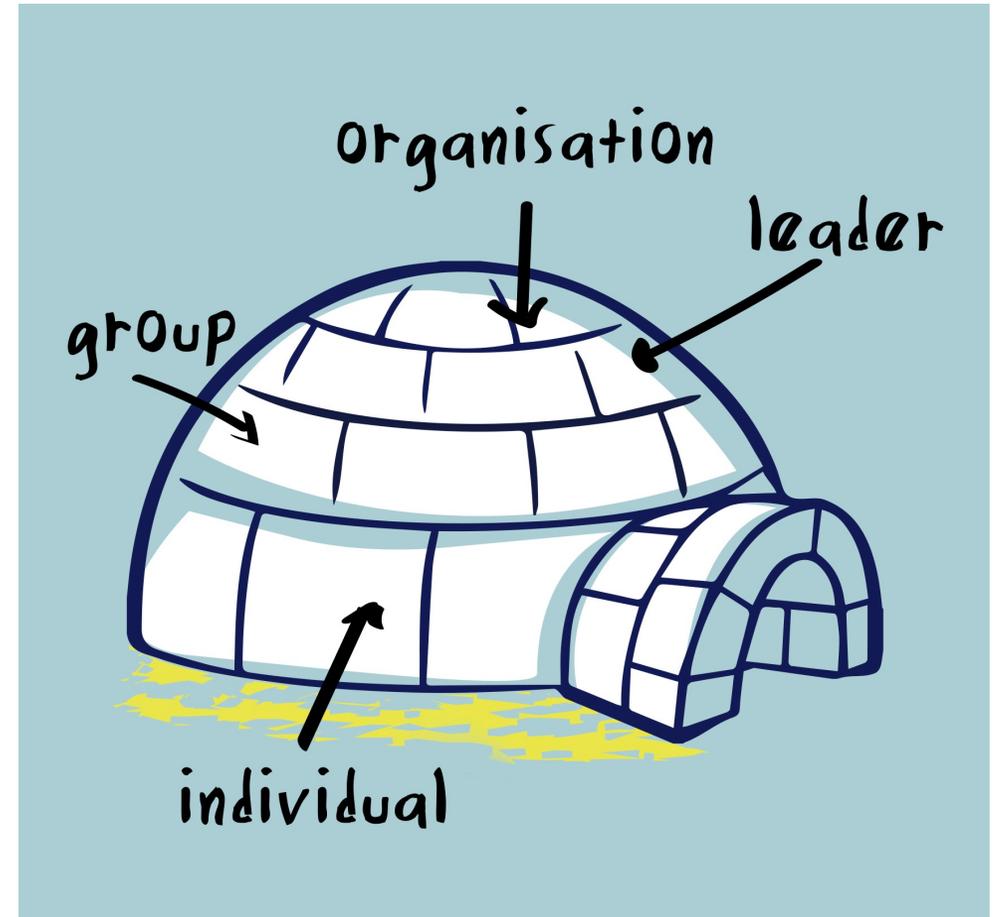
## WITH TOO LITTLE SUPPORT

- Managers are unsure of what to do or say, they do not know how to make adjustments
- Employees are unsure of what to say, or what to do



# Our approach

- Whole systems approach to employee wellbeing
- Draws from the Hobfoll's conservation of resources theory
- Evidence review, interviews with 14 workers, Roundtable discussions with 43 professionals
- We can't do it all on our own



# Individual level

## Resources

Coming to terms with reduced work functioning and not being able to push through like before – pacing self

Resetting career expectations (for the time being)

Being open about symptoms and work functionality - while hard it is necessary

Prioritising self-care

Knowing employment rights and what accommodations or adjustments might help



# Group level

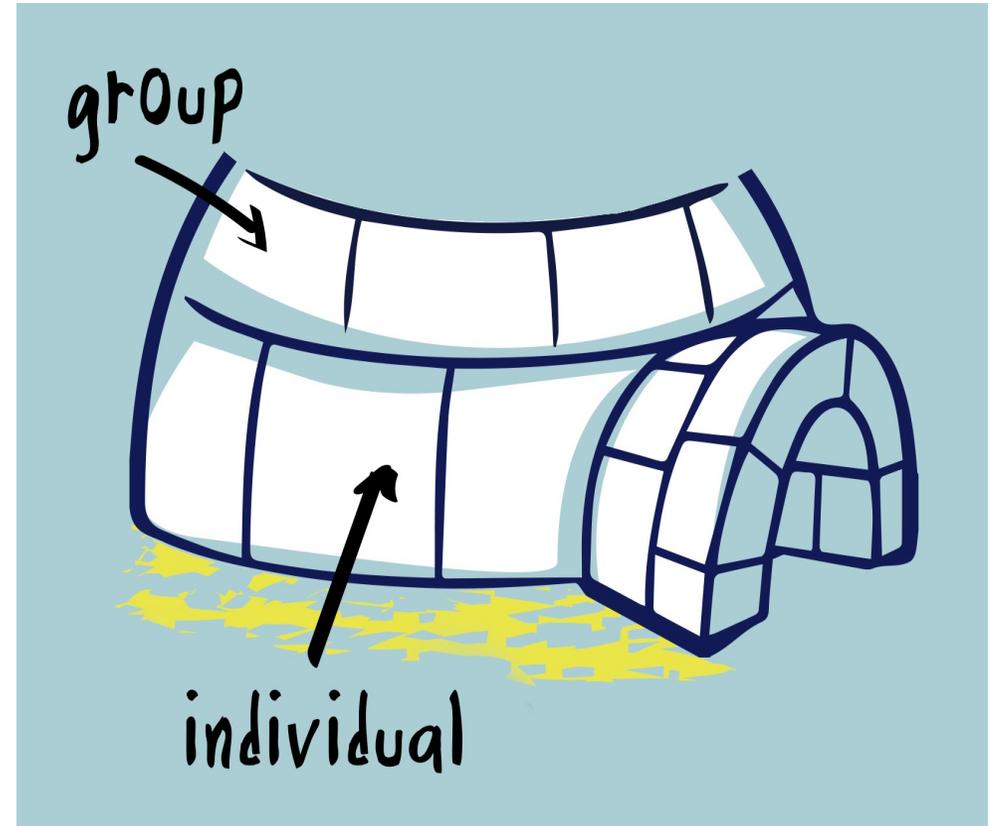
## Resources

Knowledge and awareness of long COVID and how it impacts people at work

Stepping in to help with tasks – particularly when the task is challenging

Being treated in the same way as before – not someone who is damaged or broken

Proactive approach to managing team mental health and wellbeing – talking openly



# Line manager

## Resources

Knowledge and awareness of long COVID and how it impacts people at work

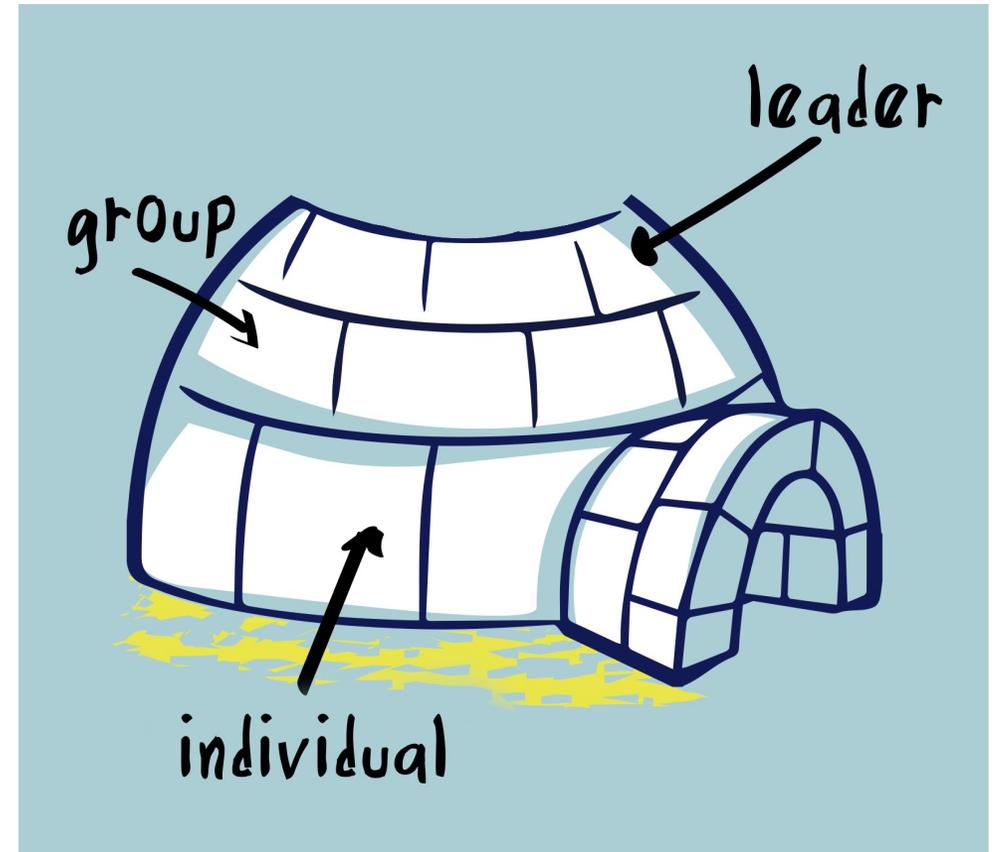
Extending the phased return period (6mths +)

Adjusting tasks e.g. removing cognitively and physically taxing tasks, work from home, flexible hours,

Taking an individualised approach, flexing work adjustments on a test and learn basis

Considering what is communicated to colleagues/ others

Regular and easy check-ins



# Organisational level

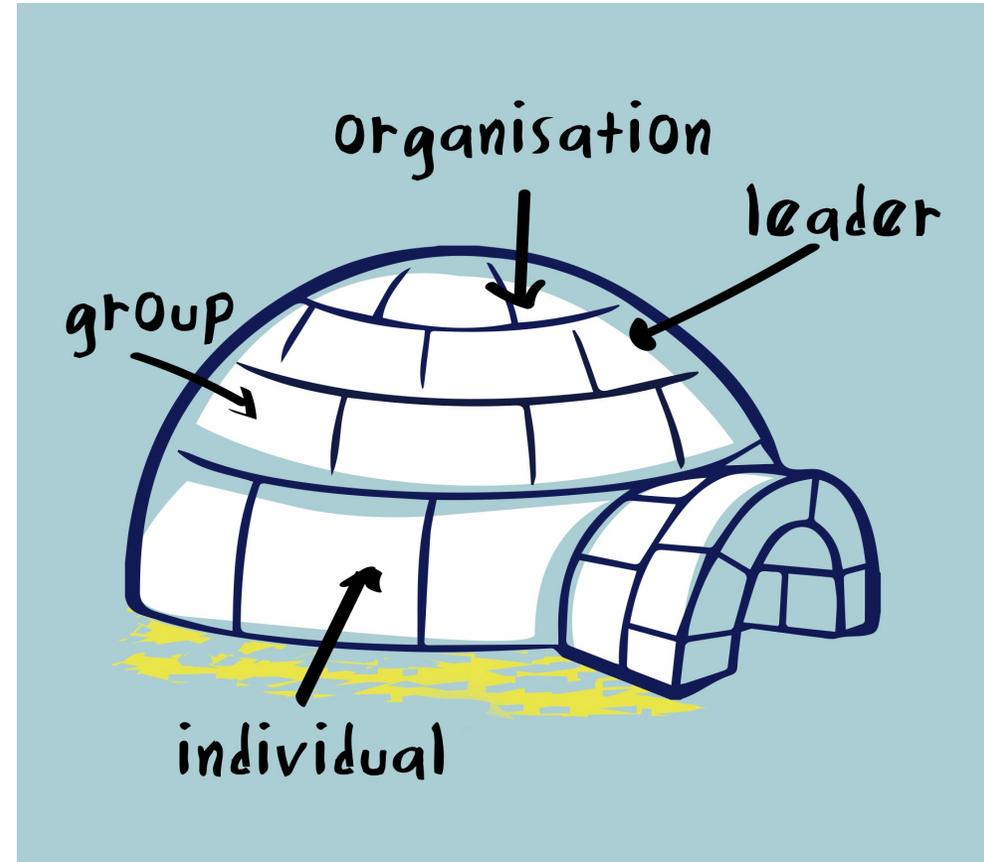
## Resources

Providing flexible working practices and leave policies

Establishing a culture of psychological safety where mental health and physical health are prioritised

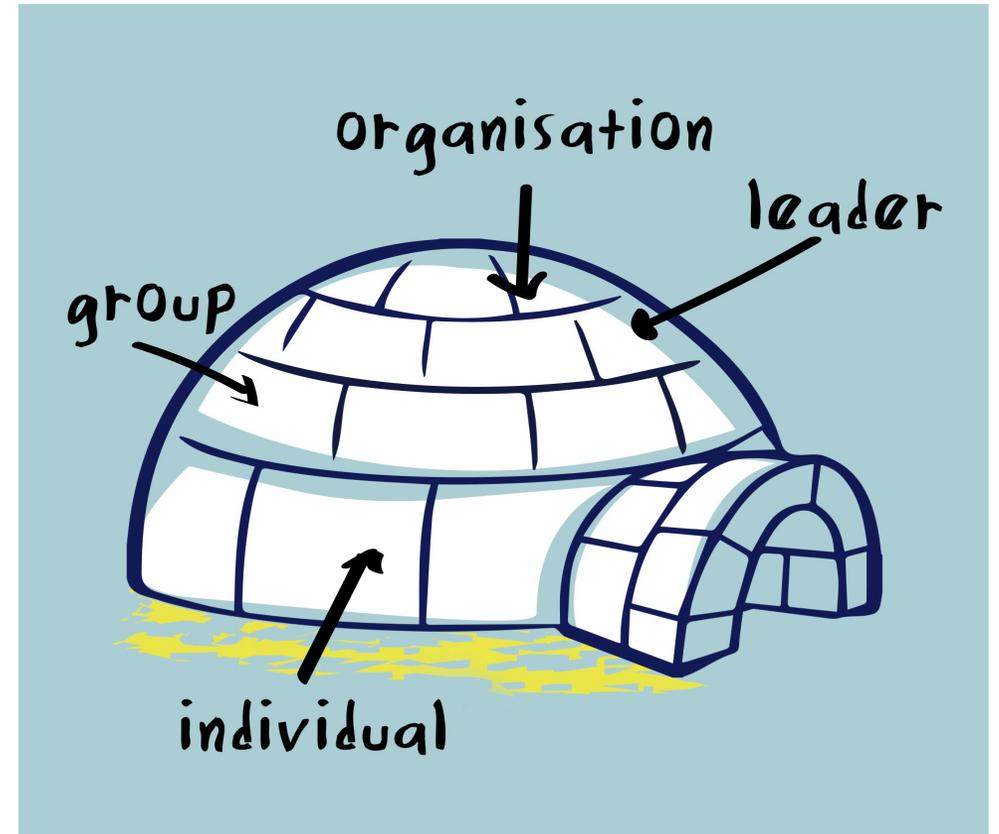
Reviewing absence management policies to avoid punitive systems for fluctuating conditions

Support and adjustments based on symptoms, not diagnosis



# Outside the organisation

Resources
Occupational health
Long COVID clinics
Vocational support
IAPTs and employment advisors
Support groups e.g. Long covid support group





# WORKING WITH LONG COVID

Research evidence to  
inform support

## CIPD

### Tips

#### For organisations

1. Flexible and **compassionate** absence management policies
2. Provide timely access to **occupational health** services
3. Ensure **leaders** understand long COVID and its impact
4. Foster an open and **inclusive** work culture

Working with long COVID



# Thank you

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