

# Research Paper

**Flexibility in the Workplace:**  
Implications of flexible work arrangements for  
individuals, teams and organisations

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**Professor Sharon Clarke and Dr Lynn Holdsworth**

**(University of Manchester)**

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# Flexibility in the Workplace: Implications of flexible work arrangements for individuals, teams and organisations

Professor Sharon Clarke & Dr Lynn Holdsworth

Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester



Prepared for Acas by:

Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester,

Booth Street East, Manchester, M13 9SS

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flexibility in the workplace has been defined as “the opportunity of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks” (Bal & De Lange, 2014). Recent trends in the availability of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) have seen an increase in flexibility in the workplace. FWAs include a variety of arrangements, which allow employees to work flexibly both in terms of when and where they work. Employees who have *time flexibility*<sup>1</sup> may have variable start and finish times for their workdays (e.g., 8-4, 10-6), or work fewer days (e.g., four days per week). For those employees who have *location flexibility*, they may be able to work remotely for some or all of their working hours (e.g., working from home one or two days per week). The increase in the number of flexible employees in workplaces leads to challenges for individuals, teams and organisations.

Our research focuses on identifying how flexible working impacts on the working lives of individuals and the implications for team and organisational effectiveness. We conducted a review of the flexible working literature, and in-depth interviews at two organisations (one public organisation, and one private) to illustrate flexible working in practice. The primary aim of the research is to identify both advantages and disadvantages of flexible working, for individuals, teams and organisations, and provide best practice guidance for the implementation of FWAs.

### Main findings

- Organisations are often reluctant to implement a widespread roll-out of FWAs because they fear that this will result in reduced productivity for both individuals and teams. However, our interviews demonstrated a number of ways in which **flexible working increased both personal and team effectiveness**. For example, flexible workers actively ‘craft’ their work environments to improve their own efficiency (and also the effectiveness of their colleagues), engage in more citizenship behaviour (e.g., helping out colleagues) and were more focused in their work effort. In addition, managers in our interviews discussed how they felt that flexible workers were more organised and productive. There is also evidence from the research that homeworkers are more efficient than office workers due to fewer distractions (but that they also experience barriers to greater productivity, such as problems with communications and team coordination). Efficiencies introduced by flexible workers also benefit their team’s productivity leading to improved overall team effectiveness.
- Employees who have been allowed to work flexibly tend to demonstrate **greater commitment and a willingness to ‘give back’ to the organisation**. Our interviews found that flexible working acts as a motivator for employees, such that they are more willing to work overtime, change work hours, take work home, etc. While this has positive benefits for teams and organisations, in terms of increased productivity, there are potential negative effects for the individual, as this can lead to *work intensification*.

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<sup>1</sup> See Glossary for definition and description of italicised terms

- The literature suggests that flexible working benefits employees due to a reduction in occupational stress. We found evidence that **occupational stress can be reduced through less work-life conflict, commuting stress, and interruptions**. However, there was also the potential for occupational stress to be increased as a result of work intensification, conflicts with co-workers, and disrupted information flow. These factors were particularly salient for homeworkers, who can also experience a lack of social support to help them cope with these stressors. The negative effects of occupational stress can be mitigated by increasing the level of control that employees experience.
- Managers are often reluctant to grant flexible working for employees as they fear that teams with flexible workers will be more difficult to manage. A key issue for managers in our interviews was that **managers expect flexible workers in their team to be 'flexible with flexibility'** or this can impact on availability of staff resources. The extent to which team effectiveness is affected by flexible working depends critically on how it is managed. We found that managers need to ensure fairness and consistency in the implementation of FWAs, and avoid ad hoc arrangements, to avoid a negative impact on team morale. They need to build trust and confidence in their teams.
- Participants in our interviews described both **the 'hidden benefits' and the 'hidden penalties' of flexible working**. On the positive side, flexible working had the potential for improved organisational performance, due to employees working at their peak hours of productivity, or demonstrating citizenship behaviours and increased commitment. On the negative side, however, the tendency to under-value flexible workers, or perceive them as lacking in ambition, can lead to organisations missing out on having these talented and committed individuals in their senior management teams because they work flexibly.
- Formal policies for flexible work can be effective if used consistently across the organisation. We found **that inconsistencies in the application of flexible working policy could lead to perceptions of unfairness, and disrupt working relationships**. Furthermore, there was evidence that those working flexibly felt that more senior roles might not be open to them in the future as flexible workers.

### **Recommendations for best practice:**

Organisations should consider the following recommendations when implementing flexible working. Our research supports the positive benefits for team effectiveness and organisational productivity when flexible working is carefully managed.

- *Ensure clear communications*, including setting boundaries and managing expectations;
- *Make formalised arrangements*, but ensure that both parties maintain a willingness to be 'flexible with flexibility';
- *Implement consistent practices across teams* to ensure perceived fairness;

- *Consider requests for flexible working on an individual basis, such that managers are open to requests for flexible working, and consider each request on its merits, using consistent principles;*
- *Encourage managers to work flexibly themselves, so they act as role models.*



## 2 INTRODUCTION

Recent trends in the availability of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) have seen an increase in flexibility in the workplace. With contemporary developments in information and communication technology (ICT), many employees are able to work anytime (e.g., flexible working hours) and from anywhere (e.g., working from home). In addition, legislative and organisational changes in the UK have also increased opportunities for employees to take advantage of FWAs. This trend in organisations has significant implications for the working lives of individuals and teams and for organisational effectiveness.

### 2.1 Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs)

Flexibility in the workplace has been defined as “the opportunity of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks” (Bal & De Lange, 2014). Despite the growth of FWAs in many organisations, and the benefits extolled by academic studies, the reality is that in many situations employees and organisations are dissatisfied with their experiences and the outcomes (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). Managers are unsure how to put flexible policies into practice and believe that they will have difficulties supervising flexible workers and managing their performance (Van Dyne, Kossek & Lobel, 2007).

### 2.2 What is Flexible Working?

By ‘flexible working arrangements’ we mean employees who, to some extent, work in different locations or non-traditional working hours. This includes:

- flexitime: where employees can vary their start and finish times provided a certain number of hours are worked. The number of hours may be set weekly or monthly and core working hours, such as 10.00am to 4.00pm may be set;
- part-time or reduced hours: where the employee works fewer hours than a full time worker who usually works 35 hours or more a week;
- term-time working: where an employee only works during school term time. This means working around 13 weeks less per year;
- homeworking: where the employee works from home or another location away from the central office one or more days per week;
- job sharing: where two employees share the work of one full time job;
- compressed hours: where employees work a full week’s worth of hours in fewer days (e.g., five days worked over four);
- family-leave programmes: where employees get paid or unpaid leave to attend to personal or family responsibilities usually for a temporary period.

A distinction is often made between *time flexibility* in which there is flexibility when work is completed, versus *location flexibility*, in which there is flexibility

where work is completed. However, flexible working can be extended to give employees much greater control over other aspects of their work schedules, including: (1) when to take a break, (2) when to take holiday or a day off, (3) distribution of work days across the week, and (4) whether and when overtime is worked (Nijp et al., 2012).

### **2.3 Research design and report structure**

The research conducted for this report includes a review of the flexible working literature, and interviews conducted at two organisations (one public organisation, and one private) to illustrate flexible working in practice. The primary aim of the research is to identify both advantages and disadvantages of flexible working (for individuals, teams and organisations), and provide best practice guidance for the implementation of FWAs.

The report is organised into a number of sections: introduction; literature review; case study findings; and, best practice recommendations.

- The introduction provides a brief overview of the research context and definitions of flexible working arrangements.
- The literature review provides a review of key academic and 'grey' literature, highlighting the benefits of flexible working for individuals, teams and organisations, and also the barriers to implementing flexible working effectively.
- The case study findings discuss the results of our interviews conducted in two organisations that have implemented flexible working, integrating empirical findings from the wider literature as support.
- Finally, the best practice recommendations draw on both the literature review and the interview findings to provide recommendations for best practice.

### **3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The aim of the literature review was to examine the impact of flexible working across levels, looking at the advantages and disadvantages at individual, team and organisational level. In our review of the literature on flexible working, we found that much of the literature has focused at either an individual level, or at the organisational level. At the individual level, there has been a focus on the impact of FWAs on work-life balance, and also the impact on job performance. At the organisational level, the literature has focused on the advantages for organisational productivity, but has also examined the importance of effective management of FWAs to realise the benefits. The literature highlights the importance of teams and the effects on team work, but relatively little empirical work has been conducted in this area.

The introduction of FWAs into organisations has been viewed primarily as a means of providing flexibility in work practices so that employees might be better able to manage their work-life balance. It is assumed to be of most benefit to those with family or other caring duties, and in practice, FWAs are most utilised by working women, particularly those with high family responsibilities. There is potential for organisations to experience a range of positive benefits from employee use of FWAs, as well as from perceived flexibility (i.e., just having FWAs available). Organisations that have flexible working policies signal that they value their employees, which can lead to increased commitment to the organisation. There are further benefits associated with employees who use FWAs. These include increased productivity, fewer work accidents and reduced turnover (Kossek & Thompson, 2016).

Most research has focused on the effects of FWAs at the individual level (e.g., health and well-being, work-life balance, personal effectiveness and performance) or at the organisational level (e.g., productivity, employee turnover). There is limited evidence, however, on the impact of flexible working on teamwork and team effectiveness, despite the acknowledged importance of understanding the social context in which FWAs are employed. However, with increased numbers of flexible workers, with variable work schedules (e.g., different start and finish times, different working days, different times in and out of the office), this will have implications for effective and productive team work. Therefore, we consider the implications of the research evidence for teams and team management.

#### **3.1 FWAs, Work-Life Balance and Employee Well-being**

Research has focused on examining the relationship between the use of FWAs and work-family conflict, based on the assumption that FWAs will reduce conflict, by helping employees to better manage the boundaries between work and home life. Although a positive relationship would be expected, research findings have been inconsistent, suggesting a complex picture in which flexibility does not always facilitate a better work-life balance for working parents (Bryon, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006). Overall, the research suggests that flexibility is effective in improving some aspects of work-life balance, specifically, by reducing work-to-family conflict, but the effect is relatively small (Shockley & Allen, 2007). These benefits are mostly due to time flexibility rather than other forms of flexibility, such as location flexibility, and are also largely confined to working women with high levels of family responsibility, rather than working women in

general, or other categories of employees. Further studies have indicated that the level of benefit from FWAs depends critically on the extent to which flexibility increases (or decreases) the amount of control that employees experience as a result (Allen et al., 2013).

The support provided by the organisation and line managers is an important factor in ensuring that employees benefit from FWAs. Lapierre and Allen (2006) found that supervisory support was linked to reduced work-family conflict and improved well-being. Although there were some benefits associated with time flexibility, they found that location flexibility (e.g., working from home) could actually have negative effects, as this can lead to family time demands impinging on work responsibilities. The attitudes of spouses will influence the effects on employees, with positive partner attitudes towards FWAs facilitating a decrease in work-family conflict, and enhancing the employee's commitment to the organisation (Wayne et al., 2013).

Flexibility at work is often viewed as a recruitment tool for organisations, and it is increasingly common for employees to negotiate personalised work arrangements on their appointment with an organisation (known as idiosyncratic deals, or *i-deals*). Hornung, Rousseau, and Glaser (2008) found that the negotiation of flexibility *i-deals* (such as part-time working or homeworking) led to decreased levels of work-life conflict, but had no effect on work performance.

There is good evidence to support a link between the use of FWAs (particularly time flexibility) and employee health and well-being (Nijp et al., 2012). Grzywacz, Carlson and Shulkin (2008) found that FWAs (including time flexibility and compressed hours) were associated with lowered stress and burnout, with time flexibility being the best predictor of employee well-being. The evidence for other forms of flexibility is less consistent. Nijp et al (2012) conducted a review of studies, and found that enhanced flexibility (such as employee worktime control) was strongly related to improved work-life balance over time, but this did not necessarily lead to better health and well-being. Ter Hoeven and van Zoonen (2015) found that employee well-being was enhanced through improved work-life balance, increased control and enhanced communications, but could still be damaged through increased interruptions (especially due to location flexibility).

Overall, the research presents mixed evidence of the extent to which FWAs improve work-life balance, and subsequent health and well-being. Where there is support from the organisation, and also from the family, the evidence suggests that there can be a significant impact on individual well-being, which should translate into improved job satisfaction and job performance. However, the benefits are relatively small, and largely restricted to working women with high family responsibilities.

### **3.2 FWAs, Work Engagement and Work Performance**

Another mechanism through which FWAs may impact on individual and team performance is through improved employee engagement. However, the research evidence surrounding the link between the use of FWAs, work engagement and work performance has been mixed, with relatively little support for flexibility leading to improved work performance through work engagement. Bal and De Lange (2014) found that the use of FWAs was not linked to employee engagement. However use of FWAs was related to job performance: employees

who were better able to manage their work-life balance performed better at work, but this was not necessarily facilitated by higher employee engagement. However, the availability of FWAs was a significant predictor of both employee engagement and performance. This is because the availability of FWAs acts as a signal to employees that they are valued by the organisation, and so increases their level of organisational commitment. The effect of perceived flexibility on work engagement is also influenced by perceptions of supervisor support (Swanberg et al., 2011). Increased commitment to the organisation can strengthen intentions to stay, and so increase retention. Indeed, significant associations have been found between FWAs and employee turnover (Richman et al., 2008).

Recent research has supported differential effects of perceived flexibility (i.e., availability of FWAs) versus the use of FWAs by employees. Timms et al (2015) found that use of FWAs had a significant negative relationship with work engagement over time, while non-use of FWAs actually led to increased work engagement. The research suggested that unless FWAs were implemented within a supportive organisational environment, they could put an additional burden on employees that reduced their engagement over time. The positive benefits of using FWAs were very much contingent on support at an organisational level and perceived support from supervisors. Working for a company that had FWAs available increased work engagement, for those employees who did not use them, while those who made use of FWAs experienced less work engagement. These findings might suggest that those who use FWAs see this as necessary for them to manage work-life boundaries, but at the same time, damaging to their career prospects, and so negatively affects their work engagement.

Gajendran, Harrison, and Delaney-Klinger (2015) found evidence that flexible working (remote working) has a positive effect on individual effectiveness, including both task and contextual performance, but this is dependent on the relationship with the line manager. Individuals with a good supervisor relationship achieved higher levels of task and contextual performance regardless of the extent to which they worked remotely. In addition, remote working was linked to task and contextual performance via perceived autonomy.

Overall, the research evidence suggests that there is limited support for a clear link between flexible working and job performance facilitated by enhanced work engagement. Organisational productivity benefits more from perceived flexibility (i.e., the availability of FWAs), than via the increased work engagement of flexible workers. Indeed, the extent to which flexible working enhances work engagement (and subsequent performance) of flexible workers depends critically on the relationship between employees and their managers.

### **3.3 Managers' perceptions of FWAs**

As highlighted in the previous sections, managers' perceptions of flexible working and support for flexible workers are important to achieving individual, team and organisational benefits from FWAs. Research studies show that managers see the use of FWAs as an indicator of employees' organisational commitment and work ethic. For example, managers' perceptions of the impact of flexible working on productivity are critical in determining the effect of FWAs on employees' career success (Leslie et al., 2012). If managers perceived that FWAs had a positive effect on productivity, this led to career premiums, but if they perceived that

FWAs had a positive effect on personal life (at the expense of productivity), this led to career penalties. Kossek et al. (2016) interviewed line managers about their perceptions of using a specific type of flexible working called 'reduced load work' (RLW). They found that managers were more likely to be supportive of this alternative work pattern, if they perceived employees to be high performers, flexible in their use of RLW, and employed in conducive jobs. Less supportive managers expressed concerns about commitment to the organisation and the impact on productivity. They felt that a request for RLW acted as a warning of employees who were not coping with demands of the full-time job.

Concerns from managers regarding the effects of FWAs on productivity have been found at the most senior levels within organisations. Williams, McDonald, and Cathcart (2016) found that senior executives, who recognized the strategic benefits of having FWAs, were still concerned about the impact of FWAs on productivity: "executives signaled that FWAs could be implemented where the productivity of the individual and team were not jeopardized... Differences in FWA practices across divisions revealed that open communication and encouragement by executives to their team is essential to explicitly signal support for FWAs" (p. 13). The study concluded that these senior management attitudes resulted in a tendency for inconsistent practice across the organisation and leaving decisions to supervisory discretion. In addition, as the executives did not use FWAs themselves, this tended to reinforce the message that flexible working is career limiting.

Overall, therefore, the research reinforces the importance of managers' perceptions of the impact of FWAs on individual and team productivity. These perceptions' determine the extent to which managers are prepared to support FWAs. As noted previously, organisational and supervisory support for FWAs is critical to their success.

### **3.4 Effects of FWAs on team and organisational effectiveness**

Most research has focused on the effects of FWAs at the individual level, and also at the organisational level. While there is evidence of benefits at an organisational level, in terms of improved productivity, fewer accidents and reduced turnover (Kossek & Thompson, 2016), the underlying mechanisms have only been identified at the individual level (e.g., personal effectiveness, health and well-being, better work-life balance). Research studies, however, point to the importance of contextual factors, including the attitudes of co-workers, as well as supervisors and line managers.

Gajendran, Harrison, and Delaney-Klinger (2015) found evidence that the positive relationship between homeworking and individual effectiveness was dependent on the norms for homeworking, suggesting that the social context of flexible working is an important factor. Furthermore, there is evidence that co-workers' flexible working has a strong influence on the decisions of employees to work flexibly themselves through a contagion effect (Rockmann & Pratt, 2015).

*Social network analysis* has been used to look at the effects of flexible working (in terms of work schedule control) for an individual in the context of their co-workers (McAlpine, 2015). The study found that there were effects on job satisfaction and organisational commitment and suggested that flexible working is more impactful for the individual when it is unique to him/her. This was also

reflected in the study by Gajendran, Harrison and Delaney-Klinger (2015) who found that strong norms for flexible working were associated with lower task and contextual performance. Furthermore, the work of McAlpine (2015) suggested a 'ripple effect' whereby the negative effects are extended to employees regardless of whether they worked flexibly or not.

Personal arrangements to work flexibly (*flexibility i-deals*) were associated with improved employee performance (at the individual level), but this positive relationship was stronger in groups with low team orientation and task interdependence (Vidyarthi et al., 2016). This suggests that flexible working can have negative effects on highly cohesive teams that perform interdependent tasks. The nature of teams has also been found to affect supervisors' perceptions of FWAs. Lembrechts, Zanoni, and Verbruggen (2016) found that supervisors of highly interdependent teams were less supportive of flexible working. Their findings suggested that supervisors were concerned about the impact of flexible working on team productivity, such that working flexibly would disrupt team effectiveness.

Overall, the research looking at the social context of flexible working highlights the importance of the nature of the team, in terms of team cohesion and task interdependence. The existing research suggests that more tightly knit groups (in terms of both tasks and relationships) may be more disrupted by flexible working than other types of group.

### **3.5 Summary of key findings**

- FWAs (particularly time flexibility) can reduce work-life conflict. This effect is largest for work-to-home conflict (i.e., reduced negative spillover from work to home) for working women with high family responsibilities, but this is a small effect.
- Employees benefit from FWAs (particularly time flexibility) through improved health and well-being. Employers see improved organisational productivity and retention.
- Improvements in work performance depend on the work context: including a good relationship with the manager, organisational and supervisory support, and increased autonomy.
- FWAs do not necessarily increase work engagement. If FWAs are not well-supported they can increase the burden on employees. It can depend on whether FWAs are viewed as career limiting.
- Managers are often concerned about the effects of FWAs on productivity. They are reluctant to allow FWAs, except for high performers, whose jobs are conducive to flexible working. Flexible workers are often perceived as not able to cope with the demands of a full workload, or lacking commitment.
- Recent evidence suggests that flexible working may impact on team cohesion, which reduces team effectiveness, especially for teams with highly interdependent tasks.

## 4 CASE STUDY FINDINGS

The main aim of the research was to explore the impact of flexible working on the effectiveness of individuals, teams and organisations; and, to identify the advantages and disadvantages of FWAs for employees and employers.

Interviews were conducted in two organisations (see Appendix A for further information on the two case studies). The first is a public organisation that has implemented a flexible working policy. Employees were largely office-based, and worked in teams. For participants in our interviews, the most common form of FWAs related to reduced hours working, time flexibility (flexible start and finish times), and occasional homeworking. A total of 11 employees and managers were interviewed, including both flexible workers, and those who managed flexible workers. The second is a private organisation that has moved from traditional office-based working to remote working for at least three days per week. A total of 20 employees were interviewed, including those who managed teams. All interviews took approximately 45-60 minutes. With the participants' permission, all interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in full.

Our analysis of the case studies identified the following main themes:

- *Efficiency* (personal effectiveness, and the ways in which flexible working could increase efficiency);
- *Productivity* (ways in which flexible workers managed their time and resources in order to maximize their own, and their team's, productivity);
- *Communication* (increased efficiency in communications and decision-making, but also the effects on informal communications);
- *Flexibility* (the need for those using FWAs to be flexible about their working hours, scheduling and time away from the office);
- *Stress* (the effects of flexible working on the experience of occupational stress, including work-life boundaries, commuting, and control);
- *Fairness* (the implementation of FWAs fairly and consistently, the impact of FWAs on career development, and the impact of managers' attitudes towards FWAs);
- *Commitment* (increased organisational commitment, team commitment, and engaging in citizenship behaviours);
- *Leadership* (managing flexible workers and factors affecting the successful management of teams including flexible workers).

These are broad-based themes, which include a number of sub-themes, but serve to organise the comments provided through our interviews (see Appendix B for a table summarising the themes and sub-themes).



## 4.1 Efficiency

One theme that emerged strongly from our interviews was personal effectiveness, and the ways in which flexible working could increase efficiency. This was reported by flexible workers, and also by those who managed them. Individuals were able to identify ways that they felt that flexible working had impacted on their personal effectiveness; they felt they were able to be more focused when in the office, and to manage their time and workload to maximize their personal efficiency.

### 4.1.1 Work Effort and Focus

Flexible workers discussed how they felt that they were very focused on tasks while working (i.e., they were not easily distracted and concentrated intently on their work tasks). We also found that managers viewed flexible workers as more focused when they were working, and therefore, more effective.

*"...the people who are on flexible hours, when they are here, they are completely focused. I find more so than people that might be on your standard nine to five. ... they will start early and finish early but in that actual time, they are completely focused and happy that, 'oh I am only here till four and then I am off, I have got my whole evening', they are extremely focused more so than teams that don't have the flexible working approach"* (Public Organisation #1)

*"I think people who work flexibly work hard at the times that they are in the office"* (Public Organisation #2)

The focused work effort was also described by homeworkers, who felt that this improved their personal effectiveness.

*"...at home, it's a kind of a bubble. You can just sit in your bubble and nobody can disturb you in that case and I think that's why you can just do work faster"* (Private Organisation #1)

### 4.1.2 Strategies for Maximising Personal Effectiveness

Flexible workers tend to increase their effectiveness through the implementation of a number of strategies, such as being well-organised; for example, they are more likely to set deadlines for themselves and others. Some flexible workers talked about setting deadlines as a way of managing their full-time colleagues, and clients, to fit their job tasks into their own condensed hours or part-time working patterns.

*"...part timers are a bit more likely to give deadlines because they are more likely to think, 'oh when am I next in, I will ask for that by Wednesday'. But full timers often don't give a deadline because they are not thinking about it really and then weeks later still haven't got it. So I suppose strangely again there are some benefits of part timers in the way they work, they become slightly more organised"* (Public Organisation, #3)

Flexibility in the workplace allowed employees to work more effectively by seeking out the best working conditions when they needed this; for example, by working outside of the office when they needed to concentrate on a specific piece of work.

*"Potentially I would do more flexible working but I find I have better discipline within the office, my outputs [are] better, unless there is a distinct piece of work which I need to focus solely on, then I need peace and quiet which I don't always get in the office so I find the space I can do that in"* (Public Organisation, #4)

A number of subthemes emerged around personal effectiveness, including the need for careful planning ahead and having arrangements for completing work organised in advance. This suggested that flexible workers and their managers used specific strategies to enhance their effectiveness. This often relies not only on the cooperation of individuals, but also coordination within teams.

*"...you need to plan, and if there is a deadline, you need to plan in advance... have people got enough working days in order to get the job done?"* (Public Organisation, #5)

While advanced planning seemed to be important for helping flexible workers to manage their work effectively, we explored how they might deal with short deadlines and emergencies. The primary mechanisms that were described in the interviews included managing client expectations and managing individuals' work across the team. Participants discussed how they would be able to get assistance from others within their team, both from colleagues and their managers, in order to get work completed. It was important for the effectiveness of the team that there was sufficient capacity for work to be covered by others within the team. This demonstrated the critical nature of interdependence of tasks, and specialisation of jobs. While managing within the team was preferred, if no-one was able to cover for a colleague, this work had to be left and client expectations managed, or taken up by the immediate line manager.

*"I have had a situation where certain activities have to get done on a particular day and then a member of the team has said, 'well, I have got to go at half four I can't finish it off'. You will just have to manage people's expectations that it will have to get done tomorrow morning, which isn't ideal but I think people are quite accepting of it within the organisation because, there is a high degree of flexible working going on and some people are often away from site or from the office"* (Public Organisation, #5)

While interviewees generally expressed confidence in their own ability and the ability of the team to cover work, full-time employees and managers occasionally talked about the frustrations of having to fill-in or cover for flexible workers.

*"We sometimes feel... we are picking up the slack of certain individuals who are here because they just want the part time job and the reduced hours and don't want to take the responsibility of the grade even if they are on reduced hours. They just want to do the task and go home so it creates tensions"* (Public Organisation, #4)

Homeworkers also discussed the need to be well-organised in order to maximize their personal and team effectiveness.

*"...we are not working physically very closely together therefore if you want to get the communication to work you have to be more to organised. When I want to talk to someone I have to think forward and I have to organise meeting with him and organise what we will talk about... But from the other side because I have to put in extra effort when I want to ask something and when I want to meet someone, the quality of the information and the quality of the meetings is better..."*

*it requires extra effort, but this extra effort has, better results as well" (Private Organisation, #2)*

#### *4.1.3 Work-Life Balance*

The perception about being more effective is echoed by flexible employees, especially as flexible working arrangements are often used in order to reduce work-life conflict, such as organising family commitments. In general research describes positive outcomes for individual effectiveness from an increase in work-life balance, including reduced absenteeism and improved objective performance (Kossek et al., 2014). Although, there is some ambiguity in the literature whether there is sufficient evidence to support the idea that work-life balance practices, such as flexible work options, improve performance due to a reduction in work-life conflict (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

*"The positive side is he [my boss] knows that I've done everything I can with my family and everything. I've come into work and I'm a bit more relaxed and he knows I can just get on with my work. When you come into work, you're not stressed, thinking about your kids. 'Oh what's happening, this and that', because you deal with most of that when you're flexible, you deal with all that and then you come into work and it's sort of – you're relaxed and you can get on with your work. So it gives you a better, positive, I think, outcome in the end" (Public Organisation, #6)*

#### *4.1.4 Decision-making and Responsibility*

For homeworkers in our interviews, they discussed increased efficiency due to flexible working as it enforces higher responsibility among the employees. This means that employees are more efficient in their work as they are able to work without referring decisions up, and managers are able to work uninterrupted.

*"I think that the effectiveness is better. Mainly because the people are forced to take a little bit more responsibility, more decisions. They are forced to think and handle [things] in a more structured way" (Private Organisation, #3)*

*"So, people are getting more able to make small decisions... I think it's good that they are more self-driven and they are making their own decisions" (Private Organisation, #2)*

## **4.2 Productivity**

Research has demonstrated the benefits associated with flexible working, including an increase in productivity (Shepard, Clifton & Kruse, 1996), profit-sales growth and organisational performance (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). Gibson et al. (2002) summarized a number of organisational case studies where location flexibility had increased productivity by 15 per cent to 37 per cent and errors decreased by 60 per cent.

#### *4.2.1 Task Scheduling and Autonomy*

Our interviews suggested that managers view flexible workers as more organised and productive. We found that employees segregate different types of work for working at home, and schedule their work in order to be as productive as

possible. Research suggests that the flexibility over work location encourages the employee to take control of scheduling specific work tasks themselves (i.e., what they choose to do and when they do them) which increases their perception of autonomy (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

*"I probably dedicate say all of the first hour to check my emails and then send all the emails I want to check then I am going to switch it off so I can concentrate on this piece of work and then I will log back in again at lunchtime and do the same"* (Public Organisation, #5)

*"I think it helps me from a performance point of view. Mainly because I know that if I had lots on and it reached three o'clock and I was just thinking 'oh just had enough I need to get home', I could actually head home, have a break and then start again and work at home and catch up. So having that flexibility I feel like it takes a bit of the pressure off. So I feel that if I put those extra hours in then, if I'm wanting an early finish or a later start then that is fine and it is justified in a way"* (Public Organisation, #1)

#### 4.2.2 Effects on the Work Environment

Our interviews demonstrated that flexible workers may not only be more productive at an individual level, but also enable their co-workers and their teams to be more productive. Flexible workers affect the working environment, not only for themselves, but for the whole team. For example, variable working hours across the team creates busy times and quieter times in the office.

*"In a big open plan office, it's harder sometimes to concentrate on work so particularly if we have got deadlines or they are working on a final report that really ideally you would be in a room where no one was speaking to you, then they get that work done between four and six when it's quieter or the other way round when they get in at eight, they have got probably a good couple of hours when the office is more productive"* (Public Organisation, #5)

First-line managers tend to see their role as supervising others and managing input and productivity, which is perceived to be difficult to do from a distance. Research though suggests that in many instances it is the employee who chooses not to work flexibly due to the perception of being less productive and committed (Lewis, 1997). Homeworking employees account for their increase in productivity as due to fewer distractions and meetings, ability to work at their own 'peak' times, and increased motivation as they value their opportunity for FWAs (Olmsted & Smith, 1994).

In our interviews, working from home one or two days a week can make employees more productive, but also can help to increase the productivity of their co-workers. For example, those working at home can be more accessible on those days than employees working in the office.

*"You know he is going to be there so you will email him. You are more likely to get a quicker response because you know that he is not sat at a meeting and might not pick up emails till the following day or when he gets back to the office in the evening"* (Public Organisation, #5)

According to Gajendran and Harrison's meta-analysis (2007) the homeworking samples with more women reported greater benefits in increases in performance levels (supervisor or objective ratings) and career prospects. It is suggested that

as they tend to have primary family responsibilities they may benefit more with increased control over work and family life. A review of previous studies by Beauregard and Henry (2009) suggests that introducing FWAs may increase productivity as employees either put in more effort in order to maintain the benefit of FWAs, or work during their peak hours. In addition making FWAs available appears to give employers a competitive advantage in regards to recruitment and may allow them to negotiate on salaries in exchange.

### 4.3 Communication

Current practice regarding homeworking seems to suggest a growing trend (for example, homeworking has increased by 103 per cent in the US over the period 2005-2016; Global Workplace Analytics, 2016), with more employees homeworking for part of the week (e.g., 1 or 2 days). Research suggests that those who work at home less than 50 per cent of the working time (*partial homeworkers*) are not doing it for the same reasons as those who work from home more than 50 per cent, including full-time (*homeworkers*). Homeworkers tend to work this way in order to balance work and family demands, whereas as partial homeworkers are seeking freedom from interruptions (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

#### 4.3.1 Informal communications

In our interviews, most homeworkers in the public organisation were partial homeworkers (i.e., working from home no more than one or two days a week), whereas those in the private organisation worked at least three days away from the office (including full-time). Homeworkers discussed the negative effects of remote working to a greater extent than partial homeworkers, including the impact on communications within the team.

*"...we have planned meetings twice a week and then a lot of ad hoc communication, mostly through email. [But] I think there are a lot of communication barriers that exist when you are not face-to-face. There are a lot of times where we waste a lot of time [trying] to get concepts, or points across."* (Private Organisation, #4)

*"you have to be more precise writing an e-mail, you have to be more specific, not just writing one sentence and that's it, you have to describe all the circumstances. In this way the communication is a little bit slower, however it could be more effective. If you write a one-sentence-mail, then the receiver asks back "could you explain a little bit more" and so on and so on and at the end of the day you have ten mails instead of one"* (Private Organisation, #5)

Homeworkers discussed how the nature of communications changed if they did not have the opportunity to meet regularly with their team members face-to-face. For example, more informal communications were limited, and misunderstandings could develop over time.

*"There are times in the team where I feel I don't know what is going on...I mean you can't be sending an email to someone every minute to update him. But in reality sometimes work changes so fast and if you are far away it is hard to keep people in the loop"* (Private Organisation, #7)

*"...you're not in the office, you don't hear the chitchat, and you're missing information that is quite useful for your work" (Private Organisation, #9)*

#### *4.3.2 Decision-making*

However, on the positive side, homeworkers discussed how communications had become more efficient, and this had improved decision-making in the team. Managers minimized interruptions from their teams by encouraging greater empowerment to make decisions without consulting them frequently.

In our interviews, the process of decision-making was felt to have improved when homeworking because it changed the behaviour of co-workers and therefore team productivity. Homeworking provides a more effective work environment because flexible workers are not so readily accessible for minor queries. In our interviews, flexible workers discussed how their fellow team members gathered more data before calling them with queries, which streamlines the decision making process.

*"[when] I sit in my office, I do my work and everybody comes in with every problem they have, and want an answer right there and want to talk about it... For me, it's better to prioritise and make my work more effective, and I think it also should be more effective for my people, because they learned that at one time, you have to use the resources in the right way. And the second time, that they have to talk about it, what they want to discuss or what they want to send me for a decision, and they collect first all the data, and if there is something which I need, then I refer back, or I call them or make a chat, and then we can make a decision, or I can make a decision in a much shorter time" (Private Organisation, #10)*

The issues for homeworkers associated with communications are well-established in the literature, both in terms of virtual teams, and the effects on homeworkers, including social isolation (Acas, 2013).

### **4.4 Flexibility**

Another theme that emerged from our interviews was around the need for those using FWAs to be flexible about their working hours, scheduling and time away from the office.

#### *4.4.1 Being "Flexible with Flexibility"*

We found that flexible workers, who had fixed agreements about their working hours, generally discussed a willingness to be flexible, by changing their days off or amending their hours to suit the organisation.

*"But from my experience the people who do not work on one day, they would be flexible about changing their day, if say there is a meeting and everybody else can go, they are not going to give that as a day that they wouldn't attend that meeting. So it kind of works both ways" (Public Organisation, #5)*

Managers of flexible workers discussed their frustrations with full-time workers who were often less flexible than those using FWAs. They suggested that because users of FWAs were grateful for the flexibility they had been given to vary their schedules, or to work from home, they were more willing to be flexible and accommodate the organisation's needs. This was often held in contrast to full-time workers who could be less willing to show flexibility.

*“So I think sometimes people who are very rigid, I will start at nine I will finish at five, I will have one hour for lunch, you often have more issues with because they can’t compute or cope, there are fluctuations in workloads as well” (Public Organisation, #4)*

#### *4.4.2 Challenges of Managing Flexibility*

Research suggests that whether managers are likely to support workplace flexibility practices to reduce and customise workloads depends on if the employees are the top performers; willing to be flexible to change how they use flexibility to meet fluctuations in employer demands, such as working longer hours or on different days, that is to be “flexible on flexibility”; and only if policy use was restricted to certain jobs that were “non-core” (Kossek et al., 2016).

*“...if we did have something urgent on, people are happy actually putting that extra hour in if it is actually needed. So I am happy that they leave at four o’clock but that is on the understanding that if something urgent is happening that they would actually stay” (Public Organisation, #1)*

Employers were more likely to support work-life flexibility as a contingent reward, if employees were willing to expand work hours to work overtime or at home to meet employer needs. Employers saw “good” workplace flexibility as a way to obtain just in time labour, a contingent workforce or as a means for labour cost reduction. Yet these are all examples of workplace flexibility that workers may see as “bad flexibility” in the social exchange of contributions for flexibility inducements (Kossek et al., 2016).

### **4.5 Stress**

Research looking at employees who experience work-to-life and life-to-work conflict suggests a negative impact on job attitudes, such as lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which behaviourally can result in reduced work effort and performance, and increased absenteeism and turnover (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). The implications for organisations are that work-life conflicts can have a negative impact on employee performance, therefore, implementing FWAs to help employees manage their work-life conflicts may offer benefits (e.g., European Network for Workplace Health Promotion, 2006). However, there is much conflicting evidence about the benefits of work-life practices (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). For example, Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate (2000) propose that employees have different preferences and certain work-life practices may not work to reduce conflict if they do not satisfy an employee’s specific needs, values or preferences for dealing with their multiple roles. Location flexibility (such as working from home), for example, may work for some employees but not for those with greater family responsibilities, where it blurs the boundaries between work and home life (e.g., Hill et al., 1998).

#### *4.5.1 Work-Life Boundaries*

Location flexibility can have negative impacts on stress. It can increase stress through extending the working day (Towers et al., 2006), role ambiguity, lack of social support and feedback (Sardeshmukh, Sharma and Golden, 2012).

In our interviews, homeworkers discussed how their working days can become extended, leading to stress. For example, even though one employee was working flexibly (i.e., location flexibility), he found that his work hours increased because he was expected to be available for longer.

*"I have to be available from 8am to 6pm basically. So for me, there is no flexibility" (Private Organisation, #9)*

Homeworkers also discussed the stress they experienced when they were waiting for information and this disrupted their work. As they worked remotely, it wasn't possible to get instant information in urgent situations by walking into someone's office; people were able to stay unreachable.

*"I really get stressed because I cannot reach the people who can give me that answer... So if you cannot reach [them] on the phone, you cannot reach [them] in the email, you cannot reach [them] in the chat, you don't know if it's their flexible time, or they are available at the moment or they're off, so it's difficult. That one is not working, so that was my problem, once or twice" (Private Organisation, #1)*

Another source of stress for homeworkers is managing conflicts with co-workers. As homeworkers do not see their colleagues face-to-face or for long periods, this can lead to be conflicts being unresolved, and resulting in stress.

*"we are not meeting daily, so the conflicts are not resolved easily... if you meet someone day by day it's much easier to say sorry or listen, but if you don't see someone for weeks and weeks and these conflicts stay for longer." (Private Organisation, #2)*

Homeworking may increase boundary permeability where work life intrudes into home life, thus increasing work-life conflict (Standen, Daniels & Lamond, 1999). It can also make psychological disengagement from work difficult resulting in possible time-based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) particularly through the use of ICT (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2004). On the other hand, any negative effects of permeability could be reduced if employees can schedule their work to minimise family involvement, such as working earlier or later (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). This might also apply to working compressed or reduced hours. In our interviews we found that interviewees discussed checking emails at the beginning and end of the day despite the fact that they were not working.

*"I used to check emails because I wasn't coming in till ten, I would get up and check the emails before I even left the house which again is a kind of habit that I have had to break because I wasn't able to switch off" (Public Organisation, #5)*

#### 4.5.2 Commuting Stress

There are some benefits to flexible working from a stress perspective as it can reduce commuting stressors (Stephens & Szajna, 1998). In our interviews, a number of participants commented on the reduced stress they felt by being able to travel into and out of work later (or earlier), avoiding peak travel times.

*"when you come in at nine, there's so much traffic and sometimes you bring that stress into work with you as well because you're stressed, you're waiting in traffic. When you come in that time and there's no traffic, you just ease straight into work. There's no stress. You come in, you're happy" (Public Organisation, #6)*



### 4.5.3 Control

Flexible working can increase autonomy, flexibility and control, and reduce interruptions and distractions from office-based colleagues, thus providing greater concentration to complete tasks to schedule (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003).

*"I know that I'm going to have extra hours, I'll have extra work, but I can manage the working, the hours to fit in with the work, then in about a week and a half I'll get a day off, I'll get a long weekend, so it's creating a reward for the extra work, like I do that as a sort of self-appointed thing, for others, it might be a long lunch"* (Public Organisation, #8)

Results from an Australian study on individual well-being and homeworking (Bosua et al., 2013) were positive and unanimous across all participants in terms of the following:

- Working away from the office engenders a more positive attitude towards work.
- Homeworkers feel 'more in control' of their work, which in turn eases work-related stress.
- Family and work life can be better balanced when working away from the office.
- Fewer or no work-related interruptions add to a general feeling of well-being.
- The ability to work from home one or 2 days a week (partial homeworking) often makes workers feel more productive, fosters individual well-being, promotes better work-life balance and creates a more positive attitude towards work.

A number of participants in our interviews had compressed hours. They did not report any negative health effects, and commented on how it helped them to participate in non-work roles on their days off. However, research does suggest that working longer hours per day can reduce alertness and contribute to errors at work and an increase in accidents (Kossek & Thompson, 2016). Also, if employees don't have choice over when they take days off, they are less likely to benefit from a well-being perspective (Golden, 2010).

A review of 'controlled before and after' studies found that time flexibility did not lead to significant improvements in self-reported physiological and psychological health outcomes. However, FWAs that increase worker control (e.g., partial retirement, self-scheduling of shifts) have a positive effect on health outcomes. Whereas, FWAs that were in the organisation's interest (e.g., involuntary part-time) have an equivocal or negative effect (Joyce et al., 2010). Employees who rate their supervisor high on family supportive behaviours have more control over their working hours, higher job satisfaction and a lower perception of stress (Hammer et al., 2013).

### 4.5.4 Work Intensification

If a full-time employee reduces their hours and their workload is not reduced accordingly this could result in *work intensification* (e.g., they may work at times they are not meant to work). Some studies have indicated that homeworkers working at home may work increased hours, as it becomes easier to do the extra

work. Also part-time workers have been shown to bring increased enthusiasm and energy resulting in more intensive effort (e.g., Edwards & Robinson, 2004). There was some indication that flexible workers did put in more effort, and would work longer than contracted hours, but felt that this was better than working full-time.

*"[my team] deliver what they need to do and they fit the work to what they do and I think rather like me, I think some of them feel like well I might end up doing the extra half day here and there but I would rather do that and have my day off than, be just working a full time job for the sake of it for what might be a few hours here and there"* (Public Organisation, #2)

A number of meta-analyses have shown positive relationships between homeworking and increased job satisfaction (and performance, autonomy and reduced work-family conflict amongst other outcomes) (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Although not all studies find positive outcomes, with issues such as the boundaries between home and work, and negative outcomes for some who work from home more than 2-3 days a week (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Bentley et al (2016) distinguish between those who work from home a few hours a week (basically extending their working day) and partial homeworkers - those who work one or more days a week remotely.

Social interaction is seen as an important factor in job satisfaction (Sims, Szilagyi and Keller, 1976). Therefore the reduced interaction with colleagues due to remote working can result in social isolation and impact on homeworker's job satisfaction, which means organisational support and social support are important to enhance homeworker's satisfaction and well-being (Acas, 2013; Bentley et al., 2016). Homeworkers in our interviews discussed the effects of social isolation, particularly when they worked remotely full-time or several days per week.

*"I miss, of course, when I'm working at home, the human part..... Of course, it's fine when I don't have to travel across the city and spend more than one hour on the way. But sometimes, it's really better to see each other ... And you will get more information sometimes, you know, the gossip"* (Private Organisation, #1)

Gajendran and Harrison's meta-analysis (2007) suggests that perceived control over work arrangements is the most influential mediator of the effects of homeworking, such as job satisfaction, role stress, and performance. Flexible workers, who have chosen to work reduced hours, have been linked to greater job satisfaction, loyalty, and organisational commitment (Williams et al., 2000). Flexible workers report higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment than non-flexible fellow workers (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

#### **4.6 Fairness**

Another major theme emerging from our interviews was around the issue of fairness. Lack of consultation with managers about the development of FWAs can contribute to feelings of unfairness, which may undermine implementation. For example, Baltes et al. (1999) speculated that one reason for the negative effects of high levels of flexibility in the studies they reviewed may be that more flexible policies on paper may result in managers clamping down on flexibility in practice in order to sustain control. Dex and Schriebl (2001) also noted that some of the managers in the larger organisations they studied felt alienated because they were compelled to introduce policies on which they had not been consulted.

#### 4.6.1 Fair Implementation of FWAs

In our interviews we found that managers felt that it was important to implement FWAs fairly and consistently across their team, in order not to cause dissatisfaction and lower team morale.

*"We manage it really well within our team. I think the time is if we have a member of staff that says they use their flexi on a Friday, constantly every Friday, we don't allow that. We do say, you know, if you're having your flexi every Friday, it means you need to look at your reduced hours if you're going to do that because it's not fair on somebody else who then can't take a Friday. We have to keep it fair like that but it works really well at the moment"* (Public Organisation, #10)

In addition, as formal policies were quite vague, there was a large amount of managerial discretion in how these policies were put into practice. Our interviews showed that managers felt that the inconsistency in practice across teams was having negative effects on satisfaction and team morale.

*"When you've got different areas doing it and potentially they're having different or slightly different rules or allowances, then why is that a bit fair? I think if we're doing it, it needs to be the same for everybody if they want to do it... If I'm doing it one way and somebody else is doing it a different way and the book is not clear, I think that's what upsets staff and they can pick up on that really, really quickly and they'll be the first to jump down and say well why can't we do this when somebody's done that?"* (Public Organisation, #10)

In our interviews, we found that there was inconsistency in how FWAs were allocated across departments, and that much was devolved to line managers. Different practices had evolved such that much more flexibility was offered in some departments compared to others. One manager reported having defined boundaries herself, as the organisational policy had stated 'reasonable' flexibility, whereas she found this difficult to implement fairly, without specifying boundaries. This practice then differed from how the policy was interpreted by other managers in the same organisation. This led to employee perceptions of unfairness, but managers maintained this was the only way that they could retain control.

*"[In relation to time boundaries from a manager perspective] ... the reasonable time, I would say, is half an hour... We'll give you half an hour getting there and coming back. If you have to leave a lot earlier than that, it has to be in your time because it's not fair for the ones that live close and the ones that live far, so that's how we manage it. It's been working now for over a year like that, so it seems to be okay. Somebody else could be treated totally different in another office"* (Public Organisation, #10)

#### 4.6.2 Career Development

In our interviews, some flexible employees felt that they should not be restricted in their career development due to working flexibly. However, they talked about the perception that roles at higher grades were viewed as full-time jobs that could not be completed satisfactorily by someone who worked flexibly.

*"in my current role, there is too much to do and the area is too big to be able to do it with reduced hours, we just wouldn't have the capacity elsewhere or the knowledge within the teams to be able to pick that up. I think compressed hours*

*I might get away with because I do know of some people the way they have done it working nine days over the ten and they do it that way” (Public Organisation, #4)*

Those with managerial responsibilities discussed the perception that those who work flexibly are seen as less ambitious or career-focused because they work reduced hours. This is something that managers disagreed with, but felt that flexible workers could find their choices to be career-limiting. This happened for a number of reasons, sometimes because employees feared losing their flexibility if they changed roles, or because they were unfairly disadvantaged by managerial perceptions of FWAs.

*“It is a challenge for the senior management of what to do with good ambitious people who want to work flexibly... And you can make a decision you need those people stuck at a certain level or you make a decision that you are going to slightly reorganise or re-plan things so those people could move up the organisation... but I think it’s definitely a barrier to moving up which is a shame” (Public Organisation, #2)*

In our interviews, participants felt that flexible working could help those returning to work from maternity leave to return to the same grade, and so avoid being unfairly demoted.

*“I think it allows people to come back so rather than having to make the decision that you would do a less stressful, you know a more junior role when you want to come back, that you can come back and still work at the same grade and level as before you have gone off on maternity leave and still, I suppose, it’s still valued that even though you are not full time you can still make the same contribution” (Public Organisation, #5)*

Senior managers leading by example and taking flexible working options was also seen as important for encouraging career development.

*“sometimes there is the impression that people who work part time are not ambitious and I think that’s really been true in this team. And having myself coming into the team first of all as a peer and then as a manager has probably opened people’s eyes a little bit and made them step back, oh maybe actually you could do this and maybe there are opportunities” (Public Organisation, #2)*

#### *4.6.3 Managerial Attitudes to FWAs*

Knowledge of FWA practices in organisations by supervisors and managers is often variable and poor, which can affect their ability to offer FWAs (Casper et al., 2004). But there is also unfairness in how requests for FWAs are granted. For example, female managers are more likely to agree to FWA requests (Powell & Mainiero, 1999); supervisors who themselves have greater parental responsibility are more likely to be more flexible; and supervisors with a greater need for control are less likely to be flexible (Parker & Allen, 2002).

In our interviews we found that flexible workers, including those in managerial positions themselves, identified issues associated with their senior managers’ attitudes towards flexibility in the workplace. These included perceptions that certain roles could only be undertaken full-time in a traditional work pattern, and concerns about granting FWAs for some employees would lead to unmanageable requests for flexible working.

*"I would want to understand why they needed to [work flexibly] and whether it would impact on the business. And I guess my initial reaction might be feeling a bit nervous because I would probably immediately think 'oh, if I agree it for you, lots of people may start asking' and that's really my biggest issue with flexible working. Because I do like flexible working, I like to support it where I can I think it's very important and I have had a few run-ins with senior colleagues who haven't supported it in the past"* (Public Organisation, #3)

Studies suggest that some FWAs are usually unavailable to professionals and managers, and when they are available (e.g., flexible hours, working from home) they are often associated with career derailment (Kossek et al., 2017; Raabe, 1996). The perception is that time spent physically at the workplace is a sign of commitment and contribution to the organisation, therefore less presence has been related to lower performance evaluations and fewer promotions (e.g., Bailyn, 1997). Our interviewees felt that career aspirations should not be curtailed due to flexible working, and that most roles could be adapted for those who want to work flexibly.

## **4.7 Commitment**

In our interviews a consistent theme emerged about flexible workers recognizing the advantages of FWAs and this being reflected in increased team and organisational commitment. This type of gratitude to employers for allowing FWAs is a central theme in discussions amongst people who work flexibly (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Koivisto & Rice, 2016).

### *4.7.1 Citizenship Behaviour*

In our interviews we found that flexible workers talked about ways in which they 'gave back' to their team managers, and to the organisation. Flexible workers discuss their willingness to work extra hours, do work during their breaks, and stay late.

*"if work has to be done, for me, sometimes I can stay late, I'm willing to stay late...for example, for the first two weeks my little one is in holiday club all the two weeks, for me I got lots of overtime because it's quite a crucial time for the department, so I have always planned to work [as] late as possible if they need me"* (Public Organisation, #7)

Flexible workers record higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment than traditional workers but the increased organisational commitment may lead to work intensification as 'an act of reciprocation or exchange' (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). In Kelliher and Anderson's study (2010) interviewees described experiencing work intensification through an increase in the working day when working from home, or those working reduced hours working more intently when at work. A feeling of 'imposed intensification' was reported by employees with reduced hours, many of whom felt they were still doing a full-time job, but in 'fewer paid hours' (p.93). An increase in work intensification may have negative outcomes for employees (e.g., Fairris & Brenner, 2001), although this study found little evidence of negative outcomes as the perceived high value of the FWAs overcame the negative consequences of the extra effort.

Managers of flexible workers also discussed the benefits they received by granting FWAs for their teams, which included greater work focus and effort, commitment to the job, and commitment to the team and organisation.

*"I think the flexibility is a big motivator for a lot of the team. So particularly one of my direct reports who works four days a week, she is very committed and she loves her job... she probably works more than her four days quite often but that's because she is committed to it. And I think giving her the flexibility, we are getting it back in spades by her commitment to the job"* (Public Organisation, #2)

#### 4.7.2 Organisational Commitment

A survey by the Society of Human Resource Management found 91% of HR professionals agreed that FWAs 'positively influence employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention' (Kossek et al., 2014). Employees who are allowed to work flexibly often show an increase in commitment, engagement and improved performance (Kossek & Michel, 2011). In our interviews, commitment to the team was seen as a prerequisite to flexible working being effective, as well as reinforcing organisational commitment:

*"there was one person in particular who did three days a week who I noticed when she was full time perhaps she used to complain more about being a bit disillusioned with the institution and when she was part time she seemed less disillusioned... Maybe people get disillusioned when they spend too much time at work and not enough time at home"* (Public Organisation, #3)

Moderators of FWAs and job attitudes suggest that the positive association between providing flexible working and organisational commitment is dependent on employees perceiving they have control over their time (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999), and when employees perceive their supervisors to demonstrate positive and constructive leadership styles (such as *transformational leadership*, and *individual consideration*; Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). There are also gender and practice use moderators. For example, the availability of FWA had a positive relationship with commitment for women, mediated by organisational support, whereas with men FWA were only related to commitment when men's practice was high (Casper & Harris, 2008).

Explaining the increase in organisational commitment due to the provision of FWA is often interpreted using social-exchange theory (Blau, 1964) in that when employees are treated favourably by the organisation the employees feel obliged to reciprocate in kind. However, some criticism of this theory proposes that in the context of the *psychological contract*, the employee may not feel obliged to reciprocate if they feel they are entitled to the provision of FWAs (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Although a study of employees in Ireland and the UK did not indicate a perception of entitlement to support for child care, or flexible hours or parental leave, unless the practices were practical for the organisation in relation to time, costs and operation (Lewis & Smithson, 2001). Providing FWA may not improve organisational commitment if employees feel that using the practices may have a negative impact on their work lives, such as on career prospects (Eaton, 2003).

## 4.8 Leadership

At the organisational level, the challenges of flexible working include difficulty in managing a team member's activities and preventing unproductive developments (Hertel, Geister & Konradt, 2005). A Canadian study (Richardson, 2010) confirmed that managing homeworkers requires extra effort in three areas:

enhancing communications, balancing autonomy with micromanaging, and increasing trust. Managers are often unsure how to implement flexible policies and practices in their organisation, often perceiving that they will have a harder time supervising, communicating, and managing team performance (Van Dyne, Kossek & Lobel, 2007). A survey of professional and managerial employees, Klein, Berman and Dickson (2000) found that organisations were more likely to approve requests to work part-time for employees whose performance was good, would be likely to leave if their request was denied, and would be difficult to replace. Requests were also more likely to be approved from women, and for child care reasons rather than for personal interest. In our interviews, managers focused on their assessment of the capability, performance and trustworthiness of those applying for flexible working. Managers were more positively disposed towards flexible working for those employees they perceived to be high performers.

*"I would be quite comfortable letting excellent staff work from home but the staff who aren't very good I would be less comfortable with them working from home, partly because they tend to need more supervision and guidance and partly because I wouldn't trust they were necessarily doing the work"* (Public Organisation, #3)

#### *4.8.1 Setting Expectations and Clarifying Boundaries*

Interviewees discussed the factors that managers felt were important to managing flexible employees and their teams effectively. They highlighted the importance of setting expectations and clarifying boundaries. Managers discussed having greater difficulty in managing flexibility in teams when arrangements are more informal and ad hoc, and preferred that expectations were clearly defined and more formalised.

*"being open to it and not necessarily saying it can't work but I guess discuss with the person and perhaps set boundaries...with such a large organisation you think that we should be able to cope with pretty much any kind of set up really but as long as I suppose there was some kind of defined limits, so I guess because it does it works for us with the whole flexible [working] but within a boundary"* (Public Organisation, #5)

*"I have realised [it] isn't particularly satisfactory where you have got this informal arrangement about someone going home a bit earlier on certain days, you don't know where you stand sometimes and don't feel like you can necessarily do anything or say anything about it because it's a bit of an informal arrangement. So I think it probably helps to be more formalised and agreed, the easier it is to work with it"* (Public Organisation, #2)

#### *4.8.2 Need for Trust*

Many studies emphasize that management issues are often associated with the lack of trust that managers may have in their employees (e.g., Brown et al., 2016). This may be due to previous bad experiences. In our interviews, managers discussed the need to trust their team members to work efficiently, and to work productively, even when not being supervised.

*"It's an element of trust. There's no other way about it. There's an element of trust, knowing that somebody comes in, sits down at eight o'clock and then starts their work"* (Public Organisation, #10)

*"I think trust is a huge element in it, trusting your colleagues, and managers having faith in you not to abuse the system, because if one person was caught abusing the system they'd be told"* (Public Organisation, #8)

Exchanging trust for managerial control was critical for the success of homeworking in our interviews:

*"the employee and the boss do communicate every day and there is not strict control... so trust is very important"* (Private Organisation, #11)

Managers felt that difficulties in managing flexible workers could be minimized through effective communications. This was particularly important in terms of ensuring that work could be completed on time, with deadlines and targets being met. Thus managers expressed some concerns about potential negative effects of flexible working on team effectiveness, but felt that these could be managed with good communications.

*"if you are clear and you communicate well the times where it is crucial that we have activities that must be met, targets that must be met... [workload] ebbs and flows through the year so there are busy times, but there are other times in the month where there is a degree more flexibility"* (Public Organisation, #4)

#### 4.8.3 Maintaining Control

A related concern that managers expressed was ensuring that they had sufficient coverage within the team, and maintaining control over the team. They would be supportive of flexible working provided they felt they could monitor productivity and had some control.

*"But unless you had a really large team where you were always going to have people, there was enough people that just on the bounds of probabilities you were going to have enough people in at both ends of the day and you could cover it. Because we often work in quite small teams, you have got like two or three people, it would be too much, it would be too much that you couldn't control if that makes sense?"* (Public Organisation, #5)

There was some evidence from the interviews that this was often achieved through team members' self-monitoring of their work, rather than through supervisory monitoring.

*"we're all quite self-disciplined really... if they need to come [home] early they will work late the following day, so they will make time up"* (Public Organisation, #7)

Further management difficulties were described in relation to inflexibility, where managers would expect that flexible workers were willing to accommodate business needs, e.g., staying late when needed, or changing their days off as required.

*"if we did have something urgent on, people are happy actually putting that extra hour in if it is actually needed. So I am happy that they leave at four o'clock but that is on the understanding that if something urgent is happening that they would actually stay"* (Public Organisation, #1)



#### 4.8.4 Managing Workload

Managers may believe that introducing alternative work schedules can have a negative impact on interactions and coverage with customers and suppliers, as all parties may not be available at the same time (Nollen, 1981). In our interviews, managers were very concerned about ensuring team effectiveness through managing workload, ensuring cover within teams, and having clear understanding of arrangements for deputising within the team. The importance of sharing knowledge about each other's roles was evident, as well as the interdependence of team members, for ensuring team effectiveness.

*"it's about having clear [deputisation] and responsibilities or even if it's not one individual, but several... we have got a clear sign of what we need to achieve in the next day or when I am not there or whatever time frame it is and that people know what they are responsible for, what they still need to pass by either myself or my boss and what they have got autonomy to deal with, we have got that clear and reasonably clearly defined I would say"* (Public Organisation, #4)

### 4.9 Summary of key findings

A summary of the main themes and subthemes identified from the interviews are presented in Table 1 (appendix B).

1. *Increased personal and team effectiveness* for flexible workers (especially those with time flexibility and partial homeworkers). There can be greater efficiency for homeworkers, but drawbacks in terms of social isolation, communications and team coordination.
2. *Impact on managing teams with flexible workers.* Managers rely on flexible workers being 'flexible with flexibility' or this can impact on availability of staff resources. Managers need to ensure fairness and consistency in the implementation of FWAs, and avoid ad hoc arrangements, to avoid a negative impact on team morale. They need to build trust and confidence in their teams.
3. *Effects on occupational stress* can be reduced through less work-life conflict, commuting stress, and interruptions; but there is also potential for stress to increase from extended work hours, conflicts with co-workers, and information flow (especially for homeworkers). Mitigating factors are increased control, but there can be less social support (again for homeworkers in particular).
4. *Greater commitment and willingness to 'give back' to the organisation.* Flexible working acts as a motivator, so that employees are more willing to work overtime, change work hours, take work home, etc. However, this can lead to the potential for work intensification.
5. *Demonstrating organisational support for FWAs.* Organisations need to have a consistent formal policy that can be applied across departments. Senior managers should be encouraged to consider requests for FWAs on their merits, and act as role models by working flexibly themselves.

## 5 IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ON INDIVIDUAL, TEAM AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Our literature review and case studies explored the effects of flexible working on work effectiveness and productivity at an individual, team and organisational level, with the aim of making best practice recommendations for organisations, and their leaders, in the implementation of flexible working practices. The report will now summarise the key impacts of flexible working on individual, team and organisational effectiveness.

### 5.1 Impact on Individual Effectiveness

In general, the research describes positive outcomes for individual effectiveness from an increase in work-life fit, including reduced absenteeism and improved objective performance (Kossek et al., 2014). However, Beauregard and Henry (2009), in their review of the literature, found there was insufficient evidence to support the idea that work-life practices, such as flexible work options, improve performance due to a reduction in work-life conflict. In our interviews, while the reduction of stress was mentioned by flexible workers as improving their effectiveness at work, a stronger theme of efficiency emerged around work effort, focused attention, and organisational skills. This was reflected in the comments of flexible workers, but emerged most strongly in the discussions by managers. The underlying mechanisms seemed to be more influenced by social exchange and felt obligations, than by a reduction in experienced stress.

We found that managers in our interviews tended to view flexible workers as more focused and well-organised than those on traditional work patterns, for example they are more likely to set deadlines. Some flexible workers may do this as a way of organising full-time colleagues to fit the job tasks into their own condensed hours or part-time working patterns. The perception about being more effective is echoed by flexible workers, as they describe being more focused when in the office, and working proactively to manage their time and workload to maximize their personal efficiency. Descriptions of specific strategies that flexible workers used to maximize their personal effectiveness suggest that there was a conscious and deliberate form of *proactivity* from flexible workers, in that they applied significant effort to being as productive as possible, which involved active *job crafting* (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Flexible workers actively engage with 'crafting' their jobs (e.g., changing the ways in which they work and their working conditions) in order to enhance their personal effectiveness. Strategies used by flexible workers included:

- matching work tasks to changing work environments to maximize personal efficiency (e.g., taking advantage of quieter times in the office to complete tasks that required higher levels of mental effort and concentration);
- managing colleagues and clients (e.g., setting deadlines so that flexible hours did not obstruct the flow of information, and so the completion of tasks);
- advanced planning (e.g., scheduling work to ensure that tasks could be covered across the team, planning how work would be completed across a work week, and avoiding the accumulation of work to ensure deadlines would be met).

A consistent theme emerged about flexible employees recognizing the advantages of FWAs and being prepared to give more back to their manager and the team. This type of gratitude to employers for allowing FWAs is a central theme in

discussions amongst people who work flexibly (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Koivisto & Rice, 2016). Flexible workers record higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment than traditional workers but the increased organisational commitment may lead to work intensification as 'an act of reciprocation or exchange'. In Kelliher and Anderson's study, interviewees described experiencing work intensification through an increase in the working day when working from home, or those working reduced hours working more intently when at work. A feeling of 'imposed intensification' was reported by employees with reduced hours, many of whom felt they were still doing a full-time job, but in fewer paid hours. An increase in work intensification may have negative outcomes for employees.

While work intensification is a potential negative effect for flexible workers, we found little evidence of this being described in our interviews. This would suggest that the perceived high value of the flexible working arrangements can overcome the negative consequences of the extra effort. Flexible workers in our interviews discussed their extra effort in positive terms, rather than as an imposed intensification of their work. Although it must be noted this was a small-scale research study, and therefore cannot be generalised to all employers who undertake flexible working practices.

## **5.2 Impact on Team Effectiveness**

From their own perspective, flexible workers expressed few concerns about the impact of their flexible working patterns on team effectiveness. Indeed, they felt that their teams worked effectively, as team members worked well together to ensure that work was completed by set deadlines. They also felt that flexible working boosted morale within teams, which led to more friendly working environments. Thus, there can be contagion effects, as happier and more relaxed employees create more positive working environments not only for themselves, but for others.

We found evidence that increased efficiency at an individual level could have spillover effects for team effectiveness. For example, flexible working changes the working environment in offices, such that there are more 'quiet times' which allowed all team members (not only flexible workers) to focus more on their work and manage their time to take advantage of quieter periods in the office (thus mitigating the negative effects of working in big, open plan offices). In addition, the efforts of flexible workers to craft their jobs to allow them to be more effective, can have positive benefits at a team level, as job crafting has been found to boost team performance (Mäkikangas et al., 2016). We also found evidence that flexible workers engage in higher levels of organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), such as working over contracted hours, taking work home, and staying late, which increase the performance of the team overall (e.g., allowing the team to complete tasks by set deadlines).

Managers emphasised the importance of communication within the team by their flexible team members. For example, when handing over incomplete work and information for others to deal with in order to hit deadlines. When setting up FWAs it is crucial that employees clearly establish how they will work with their colleagues and manager to maintain work productivity (Kossek & Thompson, 2016). This approach has been introduced as best practice to overcome specific management issues with virtual teams. Recommendations include: promoting close cooperation among the team; establishing processes for gathering

information; and maintaining norms and procedures at the beginning (Cascio & Shurygaillo, 2002).

Indeed, managers in our interviews emphasized the importance of establishing expectations and setting boundaries when managing flexible workers. In our interviews, homeworkers discussed barriers to effective team working as a function of working remotely through ICT, such as email, messaging and chats. These barriers included: loss of informal communications, more complex and time-consuming conversations, feeling 'out of the loop' and less face-to-face contact with colleagues. They mentioned that teamwork could be disrupted by difficulties in resolving interpersonal conflicts with co-workers, and less opportunity to build relationships in social settings. These factors can all affect group dynamics within the team, suggesting that high levels of emotional intelligence might be important to working successfully within flexible teams (especially when there is a high reliance on ICT for communications).

Although managers recognised the increased commitment and greater efficiency of flexible workers, they discussed the implications for managing teams. This included the extra effort required in terms of managing cover within teams, ensuring that arrangements for deputising were in place, and stepping up to take on extra work themselves, when work could not be achieved in the team. Some managers described the frustrations associated with 'taking up the slack' created by flexible workers. Others described how they needed to maintain careful control over the number of different types of flexible work patterns in place, and the potential consequences, which meant that there were additional managerial burdens associated with this type of team. Some managers felt that they would rather refuse FWAs than face managing flexible teams, as they feared it might quickly escalate to a point that they could not easily control.

Fairness emerged as a critical factor in our interviews. There were a number of examples described where allowances for FWAs were not perceived to be fair, leading to negative feelings within the team. In our interviews we found that managers felt that it was important to implement FWAs fairly and consistently across their team, in order not to cause dissatisfaction and lower team morale. FWAs can lead to resentment within teams, especially if managers are unwilling to extend FWAs across the team. For example, managers discussed how they would allow flexibility for some employees (who were perceived to be high performers and trusted), but not others, so that the benefits of FWAs are not available for all employees. Many managers were willing to tolerate some flexibility, but feared that 'too much flexibility' would exceed their ability to manage it, and so affect the operation of the business.

Social comparisons between those who are allowed to work flexibly, and those who are not, will likely lead to disruption within teams and affect group dynamics. There was considerable discussion in our interviews not only about potential disparities within teams, but also between teams. As organisational policies were not implemented in the same way across departments, there was the opportunity for practices to differ significantly. This is likely again to affect team functioning, as perceptions may exist that some managers treat their teams unfairly compared to other managers who allow greater flexibility.

### 5.3 Impact on Organisational Effectiveness

Studies have demonstrated benefits associated with flexible work, for example an increase in productivity (Shepard, Clifton & Kruse, 1996), profit-sales growth and organisational performance (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). Based on our interviews, these organisational benefits are likely to derive not only from increased individual performance, but also through increased performance at team level.

A number of managers commented that, although they did not particularly like flexible working, they could see “hidden benefits”. The potential for improved organisational performance may be attributed to benefits such as employees working at their peak hours of productivity, or via a social exchange mechanism where employees who have been treated favourably feel obliged to respond in kind through extra-role behaviours or increased commitment (e.g., Allen, 2001; Shepard, Clifton & Kruse, 1996). However, some employees can view flexible work as an ‘entitlement’ and may not feel obliged to repay the favour, particularly if the arrangements are deemed to be practical for the organisation (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). In our interviews, we did find instances where employees felt that flexible working was implemented for the organisation’s benefit, rather than employees. For example, flexible workers were often expected to work beyond their hours or change their days, but there would be reluctance to agree time off from work, or show flexibility if employees wanted to change their days at short notice. While managers often talked about wanting ‘flexibility with employee flexibility’, sometimes they were less willing to be ‘flexible with flexibility’ themselves in return.

In addition to the hidden benefits of FWAs, however, there are also the ‘hidden penalties’ to be considered. In our interviews, we found evidence that the use of FWAs could be career limiting, where flexible workers were perceived to be lacking ambition, or perceived to be unsuited to more senior positions. This means that organisations may be missing out on having these talented and committed individuals in their senior management teams because they work flexibly.

The interviews highlighted a belief that there are some roles, especially at higher grades, that require the employee to work full time due to the nature of the job. A survey by the Institute of Leadership and Management (2013) found that 27% of managers felt it was wrong for managers to work flexibly. Also it is often more difficult for managers to work flexibly, particularly in the context of long-working-hours cultures (e.g., Bond et al., 2002; Lewis et al., 2002) and the belief that managerial or supervisory tasks cannot be performed flexibly (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). First-line managers tend to see their role as supervising others and managing input and productivity is perceived to be difficult to do from a distance. Research though suggests that in many instances it is the employee who chooses not to work flexibly due to the perception of being less productive and committed (Lewis, 1997) and fear it will have a negative impact on career prospects (Cunningham, 2001). This view is further supported by the Institute of Leadership and Management (2013) who found one in five managers believed flexible working to be career limiting. Additionally the benefits of certain types of flexible work, such as flexitime and compressed work weeks, may be lower for managers than other employees because managers already have considerable autonomy and therefore these policies are less relevant (Baltes et al., 1999).

## 6 BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Best practice recommendations were developed based on an integration of the research evidence reviewed and the findings from our own interviews. In addition, we reviewed evidence of best practice from previous literature.

**1. Ensure clear communications, including setting boundaries and managing expectations.** When setting up FWAs it is crucial that employees clearly establish how they will work with their colleagues and their manager to maintain work productivity (Kossek & Thompson, 2016). This approach has been introduced as best practice to overcome specific management issues with virtual teams, where it is important for promoting close cooperation among the team; establishing processes for gathering information; and maintaining norms and procedures from the beginning (Cascio & Shurygaillo, 2002). However, it has emerged as being just as important for blended work and other forms of flexible working, such as time flexibility.

**2. Make formalised arrangements.** FWAs should be formalized, rather than ad hoc arrangements, as managers find the latter create management difficulties. Studies that have looked at work flexibility implemented on an ad hoc basis (such as flexitime) have concluded that to gain maximum benefit on organisational performance managers should limit the amount of flexibility allowed and ask employees to specify in advance the days and hours they would work (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999). Our research found that managers expressed frustration over informal arrangements, which they found hard to challenge, and those where employees were demanding over their specific requirements. While formal arrangements are preferable from a management perspective, maximum benefit from both parties can be gained through a willingness to be 'flexible with flexibility'.

**3. Implement consistent practices across teams.** Clear and consistent organisational policies can reduce issues with how managers implement FWAs and eliminate local variations. This is particularly important in terms of perceived fairness. This emerged as a concern in our interviews, and has also been recognised in a number of studies where considerable differences have been found in how FWAs are adopted within a single organisation (e.g., Kossek, Lewis & Hammer, 2010). Research has also recommended consistency in decision-making (Lewis, 2003) and a formal organisational policy (Kossek, 2005). The role of HR should be to ensure some consistency in application of FWA policies and procedures and to identify instances of favoritism or inconsistencies between managers and departments (Kossek et al., 2014).

**4. Consider requests for flexible working on an individual basis.** Managers should be open to requests for flexible working, and consider each request on its merits, using consistent principles. The use of consistent and explicit principles is important as this helps to overcome employees' perceptions of injustice (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Research has suggested that managers need to adopt a leadership style that will fit with flexible working, for example leaders should be flexible and give due consideration of the maturity of the individual employee in making decisions about FWAs (Brown et al., 2016). Managers need to be convinced of the value in flexible working as supervisory support is a critical aspect of the organisational climate that is essential for policies to be effective in practice (Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). A lack of trust that employees can work effectively unsupervised is often the source of

managers' reluctance to allow FWAs. But the key to facilitating flexible work rests with managers' willingness to exhibit a trusting and results-oriented work style in which productivity is measured based on work product rather than work practices (Brown et al., 2016).

**5. Encourage managers to work flexibly themselves.** We found that managers who worked flexibly themselves were more likely to support flexible working within their own team. In addition, they were more understanding and accepting of the benefits of FWAs for their employees and the organisation. This finding is supported by the Institute of Leadership and Management survey (2013), which found that 82% of managers who work flexibly believe it benefits their organisation, whereas managers without personal experience are less convinced, with 27% thinking there would be no benefit at all. Best practice suggests managers should model work-life integration and flexibility into their own lives by working reduced or flexible schedules, rather than long work hours (Lewis, 2003). In this way, managers act as role models, reducing perceived career barriers, and de-emphasizing the long-hours culture that links *presenteeism* with career advancement. Kossek et al., (2014) suggest that to foster the engagement and productivity of flexible workers, managers should model flexibility in own working lives, and interact positively with flexible workers.

## 7 GLOSSARY

*Blended* arrangements are flexible work arrangements in which employees work remotely (e.g., from home) one or two days a week, spending the remainder of the work week at the office.

*Homeworkers* are employees who work from home more than 50% of their working, including full-time; *partial homeworkers* are those who work from home less than 50% of their working time.

*Idiosyncratic deals, or i-deals*, are personalized working arrangements that employees negotiate with their employer. *Flexibility i-deals* are personal arrangements to work flexibly.

*Job crafting* involves employees proactively changing the ways in which they work and/or their working conditions.

*Location flexibility* indicates flexible work arrangements in which there is flexibility over where work is completed. It often involves working remotely through the use of information and communication technologies.

*Presenteeism* refers to the practice of being present in the office or working long hours, even when not well enough to be working. It reflects a belief that there is virtue in being present.

*Proactivity* at work refers to employees taking personal initiative and engaging in anticipatory behaviour aimed at changing the situation or oneself (such as improving work methods, or proactive problem solving).

*Psychological contract* is the unwritten contract between the employer and employee that includes perceived promises and expectations.

*Social network analysis* is a form of data analysis that focuses on the relationships between people (e.g., strength of social connections with different coworkers).

*Time flexibility* indicates flexible work arrangements in which there is flexibility over when work is completed. This includes flexibility over start and finish times, compressed hours (e.g., working five days over four) and reduced hours (e.g., working part-time).

*Transformational leadership* is a form of positive, constructive leadership style that places emphasis on inspiring and motivating employees to put in extra effort at work. One aspect of this leadership style is *individual consideration*, where leaders demonstrate concern for their employees' well-being.

*Virtual teams* are employee teams where the majority of communications are via information and communication technologies (as opposed to traditional teams which tend to hold face-to-face meetings).

*Work intensification* refers to situations where employees are completing more work in less time, or that they are working at times they are not meant to work.



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## 9 APPENDICES

### 9.1 Appendix A: Case Studies

#### Public Organisation

*Type of organisation:* Public organisation, large, office-based, single city-based site

*Organisational policy on FWAs:* Yes, formal flexible working policies

*Type of FWAs:* Time flexibility - flexible start and finish times; location flexibility - occasional home-working; reduced hours / part-time; full-time workers also had some limited informal flexibility from their managers

*Participants:* worked in small teams, varied in extent to which tasks were interdependent, included team-members and managers of teams

#### Private Organisation

*Type of organisation:* Privately owned organisation, number of city hubs, based internationally

*Organisational policy on FWAs:* Formal flexible working policies – mainly to enable remote working

*Type of FWAs:* Location flexibility – frequent home-working; time flexibility – some flexibility in working hours

*Participants:* worked in small teams, mostly virtual through ICT (email, messaging, and chats), most tasks were interdependent, included team-members and managers of teams



## 9.2 Appendix B: Table of Themes from Case Study Interviews

**Table 1: Main themes and sub-themes emerging from the case study interviews**

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Examples		
<b>Efficiency</b>	Work effort and focus	Work harder than full-time workers	More focused when working	
	Strategies for maximizing personal effectiveness	Well-organised	Forward planning	Managing workload
	Work-life balance	Reduced work-life conflict	More relaxed at work	
	Decision-making and responsibility	Encourages empowerment within teams	Streamlines decision-making processes	
<b>Productivity</b>	Task scheduling and autonomy	Schedule work to maximize productivity	Increased feelings of autonomy	
	Effects on the work environment	Low-density homeworkers more accessible for consultation	Creates 'quiet times' in the office	
<b>Communication</b>	Informal communications	Less informal communications & feelings of social isolation	More complex communications	Feeling 'out of the loop'
	Decision-making			
<b>Flexibility</b>	Being "flexible with flexibility"	Willing to accommodate organisational needs		
	Challenges of managing flexibility	Inflexibility impacts on resources		
<b>Stress</b>	Work-life boundaries	Extension of working	Conflicts with co-workers	Sharing information /

		hours	more difficult to resolve	delays in getting information
	Commuting stress	Avoid peak hours	Less stress from being late	
	Control	Less micro-managing	Scheduling flexibly over days off & hours worked	
	Work intensification	Work extra hours	Miss social contact	
<b>Fairness</b>	Fair implementation of FWAs	Perceived unfairness impacts on team morale	Inconsistency due to local variations	Unfair impact on promotion opportunities
	Career development	Senior roles seen as not suitable for flexible working	Flexible workers seen as not ambitious	
	Managerial attitudes to FWAs	Negative attitudes from senior managers		
<b>Commitment</b>	Citizenship behaviour	Willingness to 'give back' to the team	Acts as a motivator	
	Organisational commitment	Less disillusionment with the organisation		
<b>Leadership</b>	Setting expectations and clarifying boundaries	Clear expectations of working hours and schedules within team	More formalized arrangements	
	Need for trust	Build on good relationships	Clear communications and exchange of information	
	Maintaining control	Ensuring business needs can be met	Monitoring behaviour and productivity	
	Managing workload	Ensuring continuity within the team	Ensuring cover and arrangements for deputies	



