



COPROP

THE ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF CORPORATE
PROPERTY OFFICERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



ACES

Flexible Working Policies and Environments in UK Local Authorities: Current Practice

Professor [If Price](#)

Sheffield Hallam University,

[Facilities Management Graduate Centre,](#)

Unit 7, Science Park, Sheffield, S1 1WB

Publication sponsored by



Sheffield, UK. October 2001

Executive summary

The research surveys the uptake of 'modern' or flexible working practices in UK Local Authorities, especially as it impacts on property and office accommodation.

Nearly all permit flexible starting and finishing times for as many employees as is practical while forms of accredited hours working for at least some appropriate employees are policy in a majority. Flexible practices with property and ICT implications, working from home without a dedicated work station, formal policies, 'hot' desking, flexible offices and satellite or drop-in offices are less common (ca 10%) but have grown significantly in the last two years. A number of councils also report being at the stage of planning pilots.

Five detailed case studies are reported. Three authorities have expanding strategic programmes for 'workstyle' changes or new ways of working. One has shifted its emphasis away from such plans toward higher density office usage only and one was awaiting the election result before anticipated permission to start.

These cases do all come from authorities in areas of much higher than average property values and costs. While they have seen savings, they emphasise that the initiatives were equally about better work life balance and improved office environments. Green benefits and service enhancements are harder to quantify but are believed to have been achieved. Higher density of net space utilisation has uniformly been achieved.

Executive commitment and clear member support are seen as critical strategic success factors. Clear liaison between HR, Property/ Facilities and ICT has been essential to operational success. Entrenched management attitudes and, at least initially, staff reluctance to change, are cited as the major drawbacks. Accounting and valuation practices can also be a barrier.

Similar messages are provided by a variety of pilots, some undertaken deliberately as strategic tests, others as much more of an ad hoc response to local circumstances. Most have not, or not yet, seen net office space reduced. The more successful pilots were not 'just' either property or HR policy initiatives: indeed there is some evidence that initiatives involving only one of the two functions have been less successful.

Service areas most frequently cited as being involved in changes are various property functions. Trading Standards and Social Services are other areas where the real or potential development of flexible working and shared desking is highlighted though the latter in particular is also cited as an area where workers in the office have particular mutual support needs. Higher density officing for less mobile workers is, in principle, an option more widely available.

Workplace strategy should reflect future service delivery models, asset management plans and organisational development. New ways of working have been a tool for achieving changes in culture and delivery, but were, **and are**, a challenge to traditional mindsets. They will involve senior property professionals in a range of issues with which they have not traditionally been associated. Future property and workplace strategy will be driven by an authority's service models and aspirations as to working culture: **but will also be a tool, alongside organisational development (OD) and ICT, to achieve change and improvement.**

Contents

Executive summary	i
Contents	ii
Sponsor's statements	iii
Further copies	iii
Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
Research method	1
Results: Questionnaire	2
Flexi-time	3
Accredited hours contracts	3
Working from home	4
Formal hot desking / hotelling etc in the office	4
Support for peripatetic working	4
Overall	5
Results: Interviews	5
Case studies: Major schemes	6
Case studies: Pilots	12
Lessons learnt	17
Future plans	18
Other comments made	19
Discussion and conclusions	20
The pros and cons of the case for flexible working.	20
Implementation issues	21
Appendices	23
Appendix A: Expanded Interview Results	23
Lessons learnt	23
Appendix B: Flexible working a 3 month review (estates)	27
Appendix C A County Council evaluation submitted to members.	30
Appendix D Flexible Working Arrangements	38
Appendix E Council Homeworking Policy 2	44

Sponsor's statements

Many Authorities are revisiting how they should deliver services in the 21st Century. Combined with this are numerous topics such as Sustainability, Flexible Lifestyles for Employees and Service Users, and how services can be provided more efficiently. One area that many Authorities are considering, but few as yet are actually taking forward to any great degree, is Flexible Working including Home Working.

Some Authorities have taken this forward seriously but the vast majority are now only dipping their toe in the water and would very much benefit from learning from the experience of others.

With this in mind, COPROP (The Association of Chief Corporate Property Officers in Local Government) and ACES (Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in Local Government), decided to commission a report from Sheffield Hallam University asking them to analyse the experience of Local Authorities to-date with a view to guiding those that wished to take the topic forward. This report is the outcome of that investigation.

Any development of this topic will involve not only property professionals but also personnel colleagues along with the individual service managers. It is hoped that the report will be shared with, and be of interest to, all those involved in considering the topic.

Further copies

To Facilitate that sharing the report is available online at:

<http://www.occupier.org/flexibility/lgflexibility.pdf>

Appendices, B, C, D and E are available on line as either pdf files or word documents. Full details and links can be found at:

<http://www.occupier.org/flexibility/flexibility.htm>

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to all COPROP and ACES members who completed the questionnaire, and particularly those who agreed to be interviewed and provided frank opinions on successes and problems with flexible working trials.

I am also grateful for the support of COPROP and ACES in conducting this research, and for comments and discussions to Roger Wilcox of Shropshire County Council and my colleagues B Haynes and J Pinder however the views and interpretations expressed are my own.

The publication of the report is supported by the RIC Research Foundation.

Introduction

The Best Value policy is demanding that Local Authorities review and challenge their models of service delivery in all areas. Meanwhile the DTLR's Strategic Service Delivery Partnerships research envisages further development of 'service delivery partnerships' including inter-authority delivery and extension of PFI/PPP into other service areas. 'One stop shops', either centralised or dispersed into local centres, are becoming a more common phenomenon as the interface of the authority with its public and 'e-government' raises the likelihood of greater use of call, or contact¹ centres and the internet at the same interface. The Audit Commission's 'hot property' recommendations bring particular challenges concerning the ownership and use of property assets.

More generally, the Internet and developments in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) make 'mobile' working increasingly feasible. The 24-hour society raises new expectations concerning service availability and the environmental agenda argues for decreased use of the car, either for commuting or business travel. Concerns of workload stress and 'work-life balance' are raised in management and HR literature and by unions. The 'new office' and 'new ways of working' movements have suggested themselves as a solution though the true benefits have been the scope of little independent research. Much of the literature on both topics could be considered thinly veiled advocacy which ignores issues of workplace psychology and especially sociology². The claimed experiences of flexible working are mixed with reports of both high profile failures and equally of successes, but the evidence in terms of impacts on service delivery, innovation and profit, is not available: a statement made after a [comprehensive review of publicly available information](#).³

The combination of all the above increases the challenge facing local authority property officers whose strategies may have to respond to a different, and less predictable, demand for space. It also brings into greater play issues of workplace design and the interface between property / facilities, HR, and ICT. With these factors in mind COPROP⁴ decided, in December 2000, to support an exploratory study of the current situation in UK Local Authorities with a view to assisting members with planning, to identify good practice examples, and to better understand gaps in the knowledge base.

Research method

A primary objective was to gain as wide a response as possible to what was planned as a survey addressed to all COPROP and ACES⁵ members in the UK. A deliberately short 7 question, single page questionnaire was devised, based on earlier research by the Facilities Management Graduate Centre (FMGC) into flexible working practices⁶ which had revealed a

-
1. Since 1999 Call Centre managers have started using the term Contact Centre, partly to dispel negative images but also to indicate that contact is no longer solely by telephone.
 2. Cairns, G. and Beech, N. (1999). Flexible working: organisational liberation or individual straitjacket? *Facilities* 17[1/2], 18-23
 3. Haynes, B. et al. (2000) *Does property benefit occupiers? An evaluation of the literature*. Occupier.org Report No 1 <http://www.occupier.org/report.htm>
 4. The Association of Chief Officers of Property.
 5. Association of County Estates Surveyors
 6. Unpublished report to FMGC's Local Government Research and Application Forum

spectrum of approaches (Figure 1), all known to be in use in at least one authority. The questionnaire was distributed by COPROP with returns then passed to FMGC for analysis.

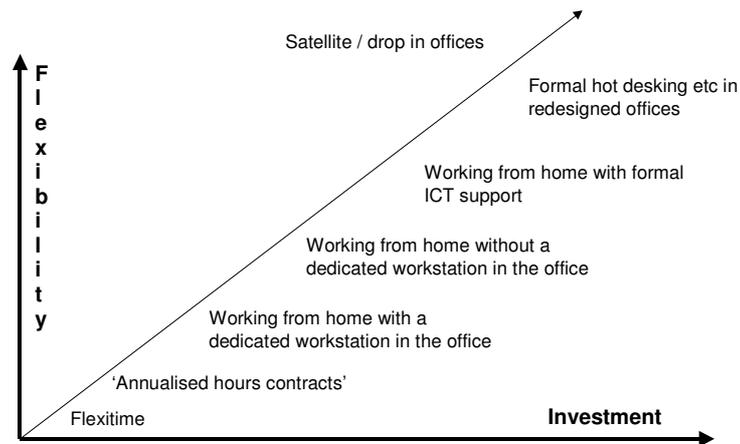


Figure 1: The spectrum of flexibility option illustrating the trade off between flexibility and investment. This is currently a working model which has not been quantified.

Respondents were invited to submit any reports already produced on work in this area and whether, if they had developed accommodation initiatives, they would participate in a follow-up telephone interview. The subsequent interview was semi-structured, designed to illicit spontaneous comments on 'soft' as well as 'hard' implementation issues, without leading the respondent.

Results: Questionnaire

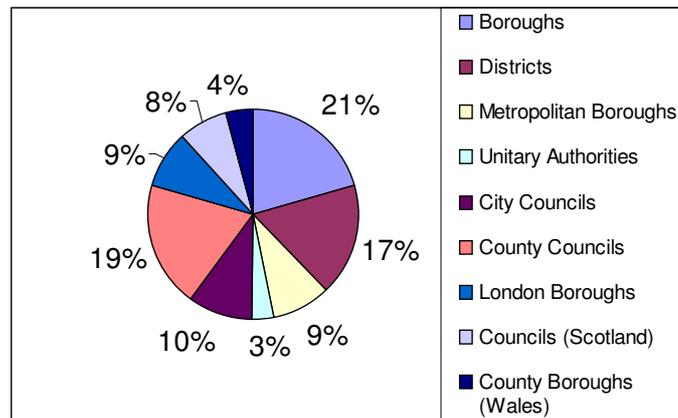


Figure 2: Responses by authority type.

Of 273 questionnaires distributed, 146 were returned; a response rate of 53% that would generally be considered high for this form of survey. In 4 cases two replies were received from the same authority. A few respondents chose to answer for their department or directorate rather than for the authority as a whole, and one did not identify the authority for whom they worked.

A full spectrum of all types of authority has been achieved (Figure 2). Responses were received from three of the four County Councils generally believed to have been most active in this area⁷.

Flexi-time

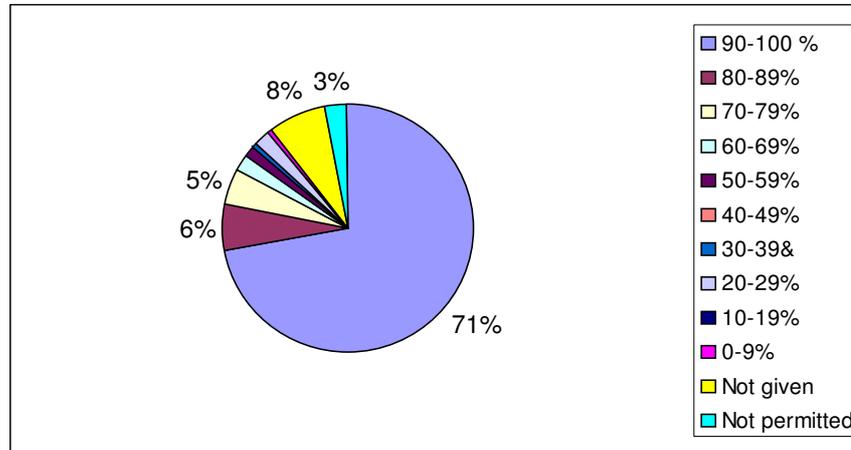


Figure 3: Percentage of employees granted flexible starting and finishing times.

Varied starting and finishing hours are permitted in all except four of the responding authorities (3%). A large majority (71%) extends the arrangement to 90% or more of their staff though others report a range of lower percentage. An exploration of the reasons for the difference was not sought however one respondent specifically commented that it was at the discretion of individual directorates. Some interviewees subsequently made the point that certain local authority jobs are not, or are less, amenable to flexi-time so the figures above may be a slight underestimate.

Accredited hours contracts

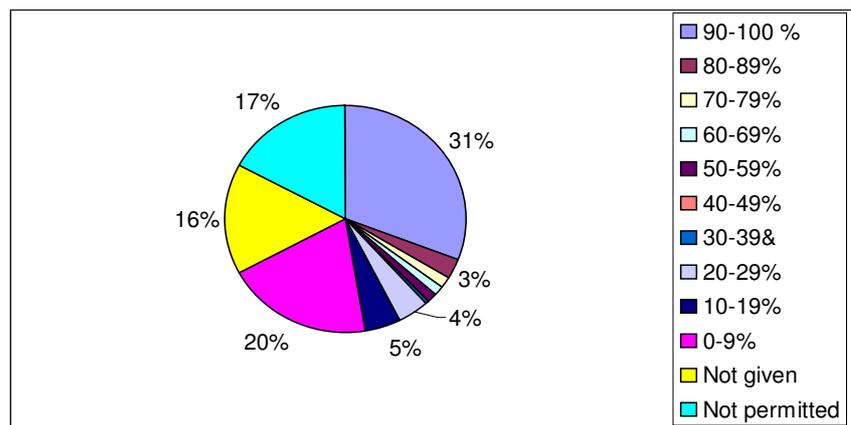


Figure 4: Percentage of employees granted forms of accredited hours contracts

A variety of more flexible working contracts have appeared in the last few years (Appendix D contains a good summary) with staff either obliged, or permitted, to vary working time according to either job need or particular preference. Extra time worked is to a varied extent,

⁷ The other, perhaps the authority with the most developed programme has been described in an internal FMGC report and, in an online case study, by Lake (2000) www.flexibility.co.uk/cases/

carried as additional time off in lieu. As shown in Figure 4, 31% of responses indicated that such arrangements were available to all or most of an authority's staff. However 17% did not allow it, 20% only allowed it in special circumstances (time of in lieu for meeting clerks for example) and 16% could not estimate a figure making comments like 'at management discretion', 'special circumstance' only, or 'discouraged'. Overall the 'not allowed' or 'very limited' sample accounts for 53% of the responses. No correlation with authority type was observed.

Working from home

Working from home, with or without a dedicated workstation in the office, is even less common. With a workstation 53% of respondents said it was not permitted. Of the 66 (46%) authorities where it was permitted the numbers involved were uniformly reported as small. Six respondents specifically referred to 'trials or pilots'.

Working from home without a dedicated workstation in the office is even less frequent. Ninety-seven (66%) do not practice it and of the 45 (31%) who do the numbers are again reported as small. No trials were reported.

Eighteen authorities did however report the development, or trials, of formal work from home policies with home based ICT equipment replacing a permanent workstation. Many described their experience as a pilot. Further details of some of these initiatives are reported in the interviews (see below).

Two authorities supplied copies of formal homeworking policies developed by their respective HR departments (Appendices D & E).

Formal hot desking / hotelling etc in the office

Hot desking (use of workstations on an ad hoc basis) or hotelling (on a bookable basis) are being propounded in the literature as the solution for reducing accommodation costs, especially for staff who are not normally desk based. Twenty authorities (14 %) reported using them, in nearly every case as a pilot involving limited numbers of staff. One reported 600 staff working this way with plans to extend the programme. Nine more reported being at the planning (or in one case 'discussion') phase.

Support for peripatetic working

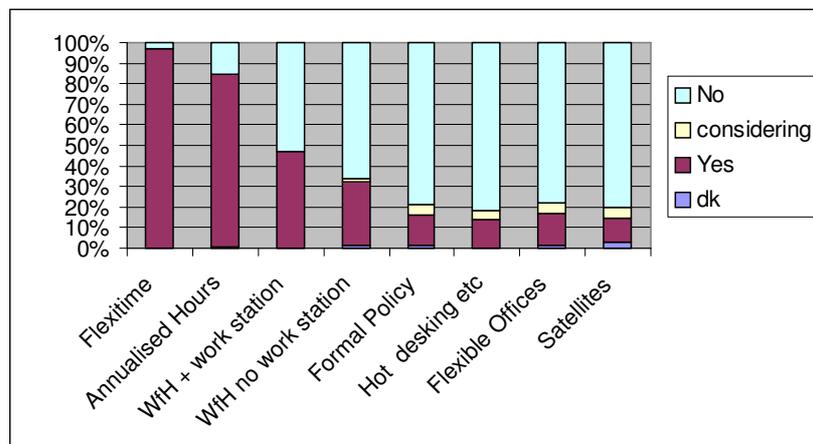


Figure 5: Summary of development of flexible work policies

Some councils have developed or experimented with 'satellite offices' or drop in centres into which staff who are between appointments can access IT networks, phones faxes, meeting space and sometimes library facilities. The final question asked whether these were in use.

Seventeen (12%) said yes. Four did not know and 123 respondents (84%) said no. Seven of these did however report their authority as considering such a scheme.

Overall

One way of viewing the flexibility spectrum (Figure 1) is that the move from flexitime to satellite offices implies an increasing impact on, and role for, the property / facilities manager. Flexitime can be considered as largely if not entirely a personnel and line managerial issue. More radical change has a significant property impact. Clearly the present flexibility spectrum is predominantly at the contractual end (Figure 5) however the dimensions with a property / facilities impact are growing. Note also the increase in the 'considering' element where the more radical options are concerned.

In 1999 we received responses from 73 authorities concerning property officers' impressions of changing working practices. As Figure 6 illustrates in respect of homeworking, respondents generally saw significant changes in the percentage of staff working in 'new' ways over the next five years. The number of pilots reported as having started since 1999 or as being under consideration suggests that the changes foreseen in 1999 are indeed starting to happen⁸.

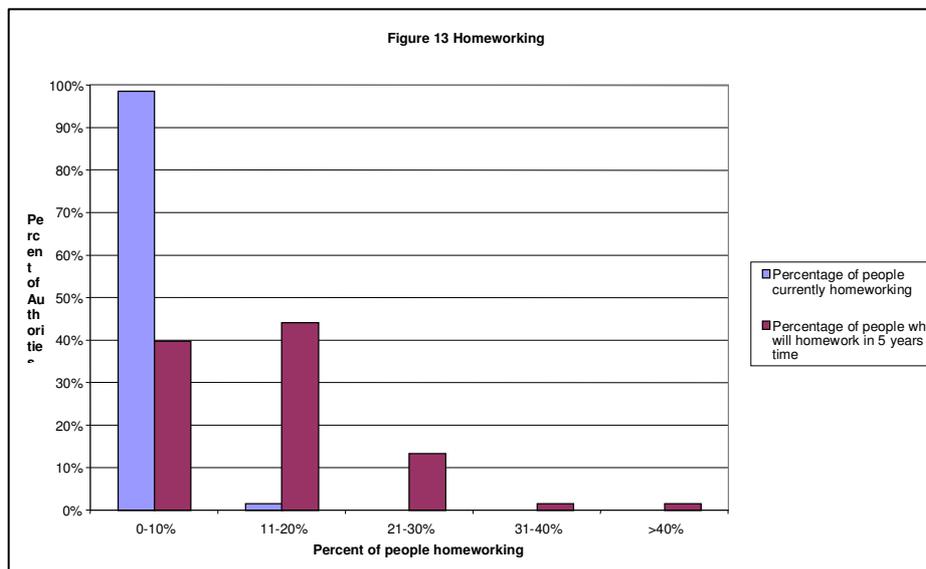


Figure 6: Views of Facilities Managers in Local Authorities on changing patterns of home working from 1999 to 2004. The proportion of staff working that way in 1999 is shown in the left hand column. The anticipated proportion in five years time is shown in the right hand column. Percentage are scaled from 0 to 50 in 10% blocks

Results: Interviews

Respondents who indicated initiatives other than those involving flexible work hours, and who agreed, were contacted for follow up telephone interviews. Questions were deliberately scripted so as to avoid leading the interviewee but nonetheless designed to allow underlying implementation issues to arise.

The script was as follows:

⁸ The recent publication of the third Gerald Eve survey of UK office occupancy patterns finds the same significant increase in flexible working initiatives between 1999 and 2001. (*Overcrowded, Under-utilised or Just Right? Office Space How much is enough?* London Gerald Eve and RICS Foundation)

1. Can you describe what the authority has done
(Check dates, timing, Services Areas, numbers of staff, reasons)?
2. What benefits have you seen or are you expecting?
3. If not mentioned in 2 have you seen or are you expecting⁹
 - Improved staff retention
 - Improved service delivery
 - Reduced work mileage
 - Reduced commuting mileage
 - Reduced stress and sickness
 - Other benefits
4. What, approximately were the costs (capital, revenue and time)?
5. Implementation
 - What went well?
 - What would you do differently next time?
 - What were the barriers?
 - What was critical for success?
6. What, if anything, is planned in the future?
7. Are there any other comments you wish to make

All interviews were conducted by the author who has several years experience using this research approach. Interview note taking was manual but all interviews were transcribed within 2 hours of completion.

To the interviews, we add one study (County A below) previously researched by FMGC as a case example. Including this one there are three cases of what might be called well developed major schemes, one case where a strategic initiative was wound down and one case of an authority at an advanced stage of planning. There are then 15 interviews with individuals involved in pilots with varying degrees of formal backing. These are reported separately. In the event the cases proved so diverse that completion of a full interview in each case was neither possible nor appropriate.

Case studies: Major schemes

County A

This case is taken from a previous FMGC report, issued with the authority's consent.

The workwise initiative was introduced in 1994 and was intended to complement the council's travelwise scheme to reduce congestion and environmental emissions. The aims of workwise were:

- To create greater flexibility in working practices beneficial to both the employer and the employee
- To make better use of office space by purposely designing the accommodation and improving working conditions.
- To encourage increased productivity, efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- To achieve a 26% reduction in office space.

⁹ The question was deliberately asked after Question 2 to gain some insight into the primary reasons for a particular initiative.

It was identified that any change in working patterns would have to be achieved in consultation with the staff, and that the new layouts should be designed to encourage motivation. To be able to access potential workwise projects the Council have identified six 'P' criteria:

- People - the personal angle
- Property the accommodation angle
- PC's - the technology angle
- Pounds - the business case
- PR keeping people informed
- Process - links all strands and considers the process in the organisational development sense.

Four projects have been completed:

- A flexible office in the County Hall complex for corporate strategy and information team
- A new Social Services office (in a former warehouse) incorporating some desk sharing and new forms of space
- A fully flexible new office for the Trading Standards group
- A network of branded 'drop in' offices

The County Hall design embodies desks (informally shared) around the walls of a room with meeting space in the centre. Barriers between desks have been much reduced and storage is shared with portable personal units. While not dramatic (Figure 7) the design is very much a departure from local authority norms. Furniture is not being used to delineate personal space. Decor is themed according to a team preference.



*Figure 7. Strategy Team space County A.
The design maximises the possibility of
interaction between team members..*



*Figure 8. Informal meeting space.
County A Social Services*

The new Social Services office (Figure. 8) extends these design principles supplying a much higher quality of design and finish than is usual, in return for a higher net density of usage, particularly for shared desks.

The trading standards employees were originally based in two separate towns with traditional cellular offices and an apparent shortage of space. As the third workwise pilot 65 staff relocated into a single office, reviewing working practices as a result. Careful analysis and employee consultation identified that the officers worked in four teams of eight: each out of the office for at least 60 % of the time. Each team was allocated four desks configured in a clover layout. Overall a 40% floor plate saving was achieved.

Since the office became operational other identified benefits are:

- A ca 10% reduction in business travel costs
- Faster response when needed
- Improved security for officers, in mobile contact with the office

The network of drop in offices now provides additional support for mobile workers. One noticeable feature of the scheme is the development of a brand image 'the Oasis', to provide an identity in the centres and encourage their use.

County B

The Head of Asset Management provided this summary to the author. His quotes are in italics.

The Council initiated 70 service / revenue reviews in 1996/97 including the then office portfolio, 670,000 sq. ft costing ca £7.2m pa, too much of it of poor quality and expensive. In 1998 a plan (workstyle) was formulated involving a single HQ, 4 area offices and a network of local offices. With flexibility in working practices (in office and from home) the goal was a better quality working environment, with less space and cost. To date 70,000 sq. ft have been released for capital receipts of £5m (covering investment in ICT for the scheme) and revenue savings of ca. £1m pa.. More staff are served from the space (a situation not envisaged in 96/97). An ICT template has been developed with the aim that by year-end any staff member should be able to use any workstation in the County.

Property savings are important but *not the only be all and end all*. There is a belief that this is the route to better service and progress has not been *as quick* as they would have wished. Staff retention is not seen as an issue (turnover is always high). Transport benefits are being assessed. Area and local offices which need immediate access on an ad hoc basis are *difficult to reconcile with green transport policies which assume a fixed office and encourage shared transport solutions*.

Government policy requiring capitalisation of leases longer than 10 years has been a barrier and held up at least one deal where the owner insisted on a minimum of a 15 year lease. County Hall has been partly refurbished but a decision has been made to seek to relocate it (special circumstances apply). Currently an OJEC notice has been issued for a PFI new build, but any provider will be expected to take on the workstyle programme. The council is *still committed to workstyle*. The PFI partner will also be offered the current County Hall (Grade II). Planning insistence on continued service use when the CC sought to redevelop for residential / hotel (higher value usage in a regenerating city centre) had been another barrier to change.

Home working is increasing. For example 50% of Trading Standards personnel now use the office as *a team base*, on average once a week. Elsewhere there has been more resistance. Social Services argued for cellular offices on confidentiality grounds despite being offered designs that incorporated private and break out space and have yet to be fully satisfied.

The *biggest resistance has come from middle managers who want to see their staff at work 9 to 5* However there is a clear direction that *its here to stay*. Training to help with managing differently is being introduced. Storage and desire for files / paper in the office *remains an issue*. We are not there yet but a contract for off site service will shortly be let. **Culture change is the biggest hurdle** (emphasis added)

County C

The following response was received electronically:

Firstly, can I say that the County Council has over 40 semi-independent service and business units, grouped into a half dozen directorates, covering some 23,000 staff. Whilst I have a broad overview of flexible working, or 'New Ways of Working', there may be areas of operation where innovative practices are being used which I am unaware of. With that caveat, the answers I give cover the Authority in general.

The approach we have taken to flexible working primarily covers office based staff, and this is only a relatively small proportion of the County Council's total workforce. The largest categories of staff numerically are teachers, care assistants, fire fighters, library staff and similar. Virtually all manual staff, such as road workers, construction and maintenance workers are outsourced. The County Council's flexible working approach covers some 4000 office based staff, and is managed under the catch-all title of 'New Ways of Working'.

The first, and most important thing this County Council has done is to reverse its previously entrenched position, which was based upon fixed hours, with a range of start and finish times, which could be selected upon appointment, but not regularly changed. Two to three years ago, more flexible working was not even on the agenda, and repeated attempts by Unison to introduce the issue were rebuffed.

A number of factors brought about change; foremost among them **the retirements of some senior staff and members** (emphasis added), difficulty in recruiting some professions, a changed climate driven by new legislation, escalating costs of office space, and a drive to reduce commuter traffic at peak hours. Changes are being proposed and co-ordinated by a 'New Ways of Working' group of senior staff from a number of key service areas.

In the last 12/18 months, we have:-

- (1) Introduced guidelines for Managers, which promote flexible working, in terms of time or place. This includes a range of start and finish times, variable hours, variable days (e.g. 9-day fortnights), job share, working from home.
- (2) Installed, (or are in the process of installing), over 1200 space planned, modular workstations to promote (a) more efficient use of office space and (b) free access desks (hot desks).
- (3) Installed (or are in the process of installing) IT/Telecomm facilities at over 100 workstations, which will allow the workstation to be used by any password holder.

Initially, the space-planned workstations enabled us to save office space, giving the opportunity to dispose of small and costly offices and consolidate 'hub' sites around the County. The rapid and continued growth of the County has latterly meant that the space planned offices, home working/hot desking has enabled growth in staff numbers to be contained within existing offices. Many of these are now reaching capacity. There has therefore been a benefit in containing office costs.

We expect to see benefits in lower staff turnover in the longer term and in diminished stress as employees find it easier to balance the demands of work/home. The only readily quantifiable costs are relocation costs, workstations purchased and the IT/telecomm costs which, together are in the order of £1.2M. Against this, there have been reductions in office operating costs, and capital receipts from offices sold, which has offset most of the cost. Staff

time in achieving the change has not been measured but will amount to many thousands of hours.

After initial resistance, because staff were each allocated less space, the modular workstations have been enthusiastically received and are well liked. Flexible working has also been well received, but regarded as overdue in coming by many staff.

We are still very much in the process of introduction of NWOW, so are learning as we go along. Key lessons learned are

- (1) not to underestimate the time taken to achieve change
- (2) to make driving the change a specific individual's or team responsibility, rather than another add-on to the core work of 'volunteers'.

The process would have moved faster if some 'pump priming' money had been available, rather than requiring departments to fund changes from existing budgets already under great pressure.

The barriers to change were: -

- (1) those described in 1.3.(author's note entrenched management attitudes)
- (2) finance (as mentioned above) and current managers who would much prefer to see staff sitting by them and measure output by hours worked, rather than results.

Critical for success was:-

The attitude of the Chief Executive and Senior Board members.

The long term vision is to have several (probably 5) single site administrative hubs around the County, with core resource areas, free access desks and 'landing pads'; promote more home working, where clear benefits can be shown, and to continue with space efficient developments. Each of the hubs would be linked by video conferencing facilities (two already are) to minimise time and travel. This vision is in respect of office based workers and the Council still has over 700 direct service points around the County (e.g. schools, libraries, day centres, fire stations etc).

County D

This text was agreed with the officer concerned following an interview.

The authority had a relatively high profile in the investigation of telecentres and full flexible working methods in the late 1990s, but has since drawn back from the full ongoing development of them. It has pressed on with an Office Strategy which focuses on consolidating as many office requirements as possible in 3 planned key office sites (two of which are now completed) and a network of town centre based Locality Offices. This targets a strategic need to reduce floor space by ca. 40% and realise associated capital receipts etc. That drive continues, but, not surprisingly the conclusion was reached that investment in telecentres and some flexible working infrastructure costs had to give way to the pressures of operational service delivery.

The focus has therefore been on higher density, and better quality offices. Where possible, i.e. where staff's duties involve being away from the office, a sharing of workstations on a three between four basis has been adopted. With moves currently in progress the assessment of barriers to change is difficult but a trend towards claims, by managers, that their staff need some private offices has been noted and challenges the open plan concept which formed part of the originally agreed criteria.

New ways of working, improved staff recruitment and retention and potential environmental benefits were some of the other advantages targeted in the original thinking but would have been difficult to prove. In terms of the last point the development of green transport initiatives was seen to be easier to encourage in a more focused office estate.

Some service improvement initiatives, some of which may have flexibility and workspace implications are necessarily being driven at directorate level with an increasing input from the central property core as the change process moves on.

City Council E

Subject to the election, and final approval, the Council plan a £1.5 million investment which will take one major office off lease and consolidate others into the centre with staff who need / want to work more from home and in satellite offices. The anticipated saving is £1m p.a. in lease costs (running cost savings will be offset against longer opening hours as service models change). Overall space saving will be between 10 and 30%. The Union supports improvement to work life balance. Disability benefits and green benefits are recognised but are not part of the financial justification.

Typical rents in the city range from £20-30 per sq. ft for best space to £7-8 for 1960s buildings with inflexible shells. *We can only afford the lower end of the range. We should move towards higher quality but better utilised space*

Discussion

The above cases justify the model in Figure 1. In certain circumstances at least, modern methods of working are moving from being purely a Human Resource issue to have a significant impact, in conjunction with ICT, on the property and workplace arena. The management of physical assets as a tool in strategic change is demonstrated. In the three successful cases, and in the plans of Council E a strategic management role combining property, working practice and culture change is demonstrated. As a matter of history, the American founders of Facility Management foresaw such a development over 20 years ago¹⁰. Since then however the profession and the FM industry has come to be dominated by issues of operational maintenance and the term is not widely recognised as describing such a strategic role within Local Government in the UK¹¹. Regardless of terminology the cases demonstrate the impact the role can have. If property professionals wish to play a full part in such developments they will find themselves developing, or needing, other skills than those of traditional property management and surveying.

Management attitudes emerge as the single biggest factor in the promotion of or retarding of change. At a senior level if top management / members resist the change it will not get started (County C demonstrates). For operation in practice, the role of middle management is mentioned as the most common barrier. Modern working, as has been observed before, redefines how managers manage. The office is less the place where work is done and more the venue for the necessary team aspects of the job, including socialisation and the reaffirmation of membership of an organisation.

The cases show that alternative ways of working are possible, that they can, at least, have no impact and in at best enhance service delivery. They can be part of a significant change in how a council becomes accessible to members of the public. Furthermore, perhaps after initial resistance, staff and unions can welcome new work practices. The successful trade off seems to be between spending on traditional offices and investment in higher density, higher quality work places and ICT. It is however a fair observation that the 'flagship' successes all come from areas where property values are high and traffic congestion is an issue. Evidence has not, or has not yet, been forthcoming of sufficient improvement in service or reductions in mileage to justify, in hard terms, the investment needed, if similar schemes were to be instigated in areas of lower property cost.

¹⁰ Price, I. (2001) The history of FM in Best, R., di Valence, G. and Langston, C. Eds *Building in Value: Workplace Strategies and Facility Management* Butterworth-Heinemann in press

¹¹ The County A initiative was led by a Director of Facilities acting as a strategic officer

Case studies: Pilots

What was being done

Pilots reported to the survey ranged from experiments involving one or two individuals to schemes formally approved and constituted as authority pilots which, if successful, were likely to be extended. The difference is not always clear cut but in summarising the findings I have endeavoured to categorise the schemes described as strategic (i.e. seen as a pilot for a council) and tactical (i.e. initiated at a directorate or departmental level).

One respondent pointed out an informal three fold scale attached to working from home, ad hoc arrangements, provision of a lap top and mobility, and formal investment, by the authority, in a home work station, likely to be assessed from an health and safety perspective. Three detectable levels of flexibility of office environments generally mirror the classification (Table 1). The case studies (Table 2) were analysed in terms of these levels.

Level	Working from home	Flexibility in the office.
1	Permitted on an ad hoc basis. No formal policy or ICT support	Ad hoc sharing of existing workstations
2	Staff equipped with laptops, and may or may not desk share	Adaptation of existing space without significant new investment. Flexible workers likely to have an allocated workstation, at least part of the time
3	Formal home work stations established and subjected to H&S assessment	New office planned with flexible workspaces. Flexible workers may not have an allocated workstation

Table 1. Levels used to classify home working and office flexibility. Note there is no suggestion that any scheme will involve the same level in each category.

Strategic Pilots	Levels: home working, first column, office flexibility 2nd column
100 staff in a network of seven 'public interfaces' (one stop shops) who are either at a counter on in a back office and do not have a dedicated desk in the latter	0 2
Introduction of three 'corporate centres' (drop in offices providing IT, meeting space and desk space in principle for any mobile workers. Aim is promoting flexible working wherever possible. Have also released an office previously accommodating 200. Lease saving £300k p.a. Increasing space density and reducing private offices in main civic accommodation. Also trialled to one stop shops in borough council offices. Initial 'horror' at the suggestion that 'they' should 'line manage our staff' has been overcome.	0 3
Just about to centralise housing benefits. The new office will be set up from day 1 as a model.	? 3
Last three months. Pilots in development control and traffic, working from home with extended core hours and shared computers that can be taken home. 20/30 staff in each area.	2
Developed formal work from home / flexibility rules in September 1999 (see Appendix D). Managers are encouraged but not obliged to introduce them. It is tailored to individual personnel. Uptake has been limited.	3 0
May 2000 introduced a pilot (following completion of a wfh policy (see Appendix E) which was itself a response to the realisation of ad hoc arrangements in existence). Offered 12 'approved' pilot places but got less (8 6 Ed Services, 1 C Exec dept, 1 property). Ad hoc wfh continued in Social Work. With 19,000 staff covering 10,000 sq. mls wfh seen as a means of reduced travel	3 0
HR comment. Eight staff (IT professionals) were given a wfh opportunity as a planned pilot in May 1999. One also has a workstation in the office. Property comment 'It was a trial, mainly involving women. It suited them to work from home. The benefits and challenges come at the next stage where the numbers impact office requirements.'	3 2

Table 2 (part 1). Strategic pilots with scale of home working and flexible office practice

One other authority, which indicated that an interview would be premature, had conducted a formal pilot involving their trading standards personnel. A recommendation to extend the scheme has been approved and they did supply the committee report reproduced below as Appendix C.

Two pilots involved the production, by the HR departments concerned, of comprehensive work from home guidelines, including formal selection procedures (Appendices D and E). Both reported low take up of the scheme compared to initial expectations. The same message came through in the comments of the authority where property / facilities had driven the initiative on their own. All three cases appear to reinforce the conclusion that **an integrated approach, with executive and member support, is a pre condition of significant benefits.**

Ad Hoc Pilots		
Since I completed the questionnaire the hot desking has finished. They managed to grab more space from the section next door. The solution forced on them to start with was not what he (the section manager) would have selected	0	1
Three bookable desks in a quiet room are available either to visiting officers (e.g. from depots or other outlying offices) or to staff who have to complete a piece of work without interruption. 50 % utilisation after 6 months	0	1
Only a few professionals	1	0
Social service had real problems making it work. I understand it was lack of support. They did not have the opportunity to get things out of their system.	1	0
3 people sharing 2fte posts share 2 workstations. One has her own desk for her morning job	1	1
A pilot involving a maximum of 20 people in the resources directorate reducing to 12 workstations (all had the same access and portable phones, home working was encouraged but not mandated there was always somewhere to put down a laptop if needed). It faded as groups reorganised and we are not now working more people than workstations. People got absorbed by traditional methods. Other directorates have undertaken their own initiatives under pressures of lack of space and a need to rationalise space and storage. No central guidance on good practice or otherwise. All are responding to local problems.	1	2
A pilot offered to 8 staff (surveyors) in a 16 person estates department. One lap top and access to a pool plus six mobile phones. All retain a workstation (their choice this may evolve. I introduced it because my staff were under stress and not able to vary their response according to peaks and troughs of workload and work / life balances. On certain days there is no point in me being there. I was prepared for full hot-desking but my staff didn't want it then. This is the thin end of a beneficial wedge. We scrapped the core hours (9.30 to 12 and 2 to 4) policy and staff work when they like but are contactable.	2	0
Education advisors and Social Service inspectors; 30 or so fairly senior staff (who might have expected own offices) located in two shared 'hot desk suites since June 2000. The main driver was a need for space in County hall if they were to be close to the relevant director. One office per team and three people on average per workstation, plus laptops.	2	2
A pilot involving 6 desks in property services shared under a rota. Three levels, ad hoc (own IT), frequent (lap top) and Formal HW (contracts, and IT spec and HSE)	3	1
A pilot since June last year under a mileage reduction initiative. Three 'text processing staff. Was a summer holiday's initiative but the ladies were so keen it continued. One missed the social side of the office and couldn't get back fast enough. Had to duplicate equipment computer printer and fax and make an informal arrangement to drop off an collect work - we've not bottomed out email yet	3	1

Table 2 (part 2). Tactical pilots with scale of home working and flexible office practice

Drawing general messages from this sample is difficult. Clearly some 'pilots' were a response to particular space problems and two were abandoned as soon as those were resolved. Others involved very limited numbers.

One operational pilot does however stand out as working and gathering pace. Where staff were involved, with an enthusiastic manager a significant challenge to traditional ways of working seems to be perceived, by those involved, as a success. Their first evaluation is included here as Appendix B. A notable feature is the list of objectives set, and met, as well as the unanticipated benefits recorded. One case again does not constitute proof for all circumstances, but does demonstrate that, where those involved participate, modern ways of working can achieve what is perceived as a change for the better.

What benefits were seen

Interviewees were first asked what benefits were seen or expected when the pilot was launched (Table 3) and only then referred to a checklist of other possible benefits. The intention was to establish what was uppermost in particular individual's / authority's thinking when the initiative was first launched. Underlying the approach was the hypothesis that a higher level of success would be reported where pilots started with a vision which combined property benefits with new approaches to service delivery and a better work life balance for individuals, then. In general this was indeed the case.

The range of opinions driving changes is clear in the table. Some were responding reactively to shortages and criticism, or were primarily seeking savings. In general such initiatives had a short life. Others indicated a more proactive approach, specifying changes to culture and mindset. They reported positive results.

Only after seeking an insight into the particular 'mindset' or priorities of individual cases did the interview proceed to a check of all potential benefits (where applicable: some cases were too limited or short lived to assess) Each benefit was seen in some schemes (Table 4)

Two respondents commented that an impact on staff absenteeism had not been evaluated. Other said the question was not applicable though one home worker did note that minor ailments were less likely to lead to their taking a day's absence¹².

¹² Recent research by the Industrial Society supports the assertion. (*Maximising Attendance*, London The Industrial Society, June 2001)

Property Benefits

Typical rents in the city range from £20-30 per sq. ft for best space to £7-8 for 1960s buildings with inflexible shells. We can only afford the lower end of the range. We should move towards higher quality but better utilised space

Saving £300k p.a. in office costs

Space dictated the desk share

Primarily logic. Those involved had no need other than tradition for a desk. It was also cost effective.

We expect better space utilisation and a response to criticism from DETR

Space benefits depend on individual services (overall council is short). Main issue was travel and environment. Evaluation will take place later this year

The long-term benefit is the release of property which we clearly did not see or expect in the first pilot. It will require a corporate overview and Departmental Directors amenable to a completely different arrangement; e.g. a mix of accountants, social workers and surveyors in one office. If you don't change mindsets there will be no tangible saving. I'm trying to get the corporate management team to grasp this(HR). We as a council did a best value review in 1996 which identified too many buildings, too much cost and 70-80% occupancy. We really need critical mass (100 minimum)

Efficiency benefits

Organisational efficiency and proof that hot desking can be a workable solution, applicable in principle to any mobile, multi-location workers.

There are work benefits if you choose carefully what you put together. Cross-area communication increases if you jumble people up and they talk. It needs management support as a strategy. We did not take it as far as measuring tangible service improvement but when property, HR and IT people were co-located we were able to give faster responses to office accommodation questions. Its amazing how things get streamlined and how you can catch someone as they pass to the tea trolley. Space is part of a generic approach to project management. It does work, rejumping from time to time 9theres always benefit in throwing in the odd pebble)

My output and accuracy is up with fewer distractions

Social workers have found wfh gives more peace and quiet for writing up and office use is more for conferencing and meeting

Reduced travel costs and getting more done without the interruptions

Staff morale

Staff like the 'hotel desk' facility

A copy of the review e-mailed. Staff find it more conducive and their availability has been extended to ca, 8am - 7pm. Its difficult to say if business productivity has changed

Don't yet know but we expect happier personnel

The staff feel happier - trusted and looked out for.

More efficient self management of staff time

A improved work live balance (expected)

Table 3. Response to the question 'what benefits have you seen or are you expecting.'

<i>Staff retention and recruitment</i>	<i>Service Improvements</i>	<i>Reduced mileage, commuting</i>	<i>Reduced mileage business</i>
(hd) No,	No	No	No
No	No (except 1 stop shops)	No	No
(wfh) No	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
No	Not applicable	Probably not	Not applicable
No	wfh) Not really yet	(hd) Yes due to review	No change
Not applicable	Not thought about it	(wfh) Yes, not permanent	Don't know I've not looked
Not an issue for us as biggest employer in region	Would have considered	Incredible and time	Hopefully not checked
Teleworkers are keen to continue but too small a sample to asses relative impact. No Grasp yet.	Generally don't have data (8 staff in pilot) and not yet evaluated, but the guidelines ask that managers should discuss	Yes no data collected	No stats
Possibly	(hd) Yes Better team work with directors from cross-area communication	Yes	(hd)Yes due to review
Would have considered	We surveyed internal customers pre and post the wfh pilot. They either noted improvements or did not realise the staff involved were working from home.	Hard to prove but reduced rush hour commuting	(wfh) Yes definitely
	The customers noticed no difference (99.9% of a survey). Feared detrimental effects did not materialise. There was not an improvement but the average level of satisfaction with our service is 4.3 out of 5 anyway	Its really the environment directorate who are driving it. Anything to reduce office space would be welcome	Yes no data collected
	The strategy supports longer opening	Yes for two people in the pilot	

Table 4. Responses to specific questions as to whether particular benefits were seen.

Other benefits noted included:

- Personal comfort
- Policy covers overtime, abuse of systems, discipline. We have not yet seen any benefits in terms of savings in office space, e.g. no hot desking yet. It is early days, but release of space must happen in chunks.
- A true productivity measure is difficult. The pilot group are project managers measured by deadlines met. Outcomes have apparently increased.
- Should boost effective management (HR Comment). The policy requires regular discussions and makes it more important for managers to confront issues of under-performance
- The main benefit is space utilisation. If two people share a 10ms work station half the cost is saved (at approx. £250 p m2 per annum rent plus overheads)
- Members starting to use satellite offices
- A good impression on Best Value inspectors

Costs

The hope was that it would be possible to establish costs in terms of revenue, capital and time. In the event the data was not available. Estimates ranged from ca £1,000 per head (not costing property services time) to ca £5,000 per head (for a home office with IT assessment, HSE assessment, IT equipment, chair and alarm).

One strategic pilot reported a full cost of ca £28,000 for 8 staff, recognising the figure as an investment. Their next stage, envisaged for 60 staff will have a year one investment of ca. £200,000. Others mentioned that they were not yet at the stage of evaluating the investment / space trade off.

Two respondents raised the difficulty that investments to support home working (ICT) were expected to be met from individual service budgets, while the benefits of reduced property costs would accrue at the corporate level.

Lessons learnt

The open ended questioning as to lessons learnt generates data, in the form of individual quotations, which is lengthy to repeat. This summary is written without that evidence. An expanded version, with the quotations, is included as Appendix A.

When asked **what went well** the most frequent response was the involvement of staff in the various schemes and pilots. Three respondents mentioned the time needed for people to get used to a change:

One, at an early stage in attempting to introduce flexibility, mentioned the opportunity for individuals to ask for home working but expressed surprise at a low take up despite earlier consultation indicating demand. This was an HR led initiative. Another, who saw the initiative in property terms as simply a cost reduction opportunity also felt that the take up of flexible working was disappointing. Here office standards, in the supposed flexible work environments had been *"kept to a minimum"*

There is less of an obvious theme in reply to the question about **what people might do differently** next time, though the question of management attitudes began to surface. Several respondents emphasised the extent of the cultural shift needed.

Staff reluctance was mentioned as a barrier: while two respondents specifically mentioned the psychological importance people attach to 'their' workstation¹³

Various operational details are included in Appendix A.

Issues of organisational culture were the dominant theme in response to the question '**what was critical for success**', or in some cases what was seen as an relative lack of success.

To a large extent, the cultural comments can be seen as mirrored in the number of comments about management attitudes being critical to success: a conclusion supported by other research¹⁴.

Future plans

Four respondents were clear on the strategic direction they were taking

We intend to get down to two offices (from ca 15) which will mean flexible offices based on identical workstations. Its a case of the necessary consent and funding

Further use (of hot desking) potentially to all mobile workers

In the longer term reduced offices

We are exploring both home working and hot desking at the moment, in principle for any area where the job involves 75% of the day outwith the office. We have a surplus of rented property and should reduce by 10%. We are also looking at drop in offices, perhaps in schools. All directorates have 6 months to identify how many staff could work this way,

Others were more cautious.

We are waiting until the subject is better researched. I've told my resources committee that at least this research is needed first

We are not sure yet. We will do a space audit in 12 months time

Review first pilot after 6 months then report to the management board who will decide whether the roll out continues (staff will be very disappointed if it doesn't)

A second phase pilot involving ca. 60 staff (social work trainers, some Internal Auditors, Some admin and clerical personnel from development and regeneration). Currently a report rests with HR and Finance Directors.

We have just done a survey

How do we show the users of home working feel it has improved things for them?

The theme of relating working practices to changing service delivery models was raised by a number of authorities:

New policies take three years to embed and tie in to other issues of when and how services are delivered.

We are developing office facilities at our service points/ one stop shops

We are considering extending two successful community offices with parish councils for example and providing drop in service

Possible call centre and possible working from home initiative to reduce office overcrowding, Its not currently clear which is driving which

¹³ An issue insufficiently addressed in the literature on new ways of working (<http://www.occupier.org>)

¹⁴ Lupton P. and Haynes, B. P. (2000) Teleworking - the perception-reality gap. *Facilities* 18[7/8], 323-327

Other comments made

As the final stage of the interview respondents were offered an opportunity to make any other comment they wished. The results reinforce the messages provided in previous sections.

A link to service delivery models

We have thought about drop in centres but need a board level champion from a service perspective.

Should not be seen in isolation. Members react to e-government as 'oh we need a call centre'

Confusion of flexible working and e- government (housing have done a call centre and sold an office)

Environmental issues

Green transport is an issue for the future. Our new office will be next to a Park and Ride site and we might introduce P and R to County hall.

We don't know the transport implications yet but we recognise they are there. It would be useful to have the data to assess the scale.

Drop in centres etc

In their infancy. There have been some discussions with DAs and other PAs about possible sites but enthusiasm varies with existing tenure length. Those with historic (free) freeholds are less interested

Policy

Lots of central government ideas seem to come from Australian and New Zealand practices. We have been trawling their asset management initiatives.

The latest DETR performance measures for property make it very difficult for those with Civic Centres to appear in the upper quartile

Members are keen to see the scheme extended so there is pressure for it

Only workable with 'front-line' staff, so will not be a total solution

We went for the cheap and easy option and it worked. The next stage is to invest

Management support / culture

People must want it and have their managers approval

There are benefits if managers are prepared to trust their staff but then you can have them skiving in the office

My CE is very thrustful and supportive which helps. He's an accountant and sees the benefits.

Its all very well BT or BA saying do it, That won't work in Local Government or the NHS its a long road yet

There are signs of demand from other areas for the same treatment (after 1 year)

Other / general

The authority must recognise an investment is needed

It must involve big numbers and we must get it right before an office can be closed

The most radical flexible working initiatives (with the higher costs) have tended to be in authorities where intrinsic property values and potential capital receipts are higher

Hard cost benefit data do not exist. When you go behind the articles on home working, etc the evidence is hard to find.

Discussion and conclusions

The pros and cons of the case for flexible working.

In many ways the final four comments listed above provide a good summary of the current state of play with regard to 'modern' or flexible ways of working. Successful examples show that various forms have proved to work for various groups of staff whose work involves regular elements of time out of the office. Property, Trading Standards and Social Services are the most frequently cited. Working from home has also been shown to work for groups of both professional and clerical staff, if properly supported. At worst such arrangements have been invisible to customers. At best they have been welcomed by staff and have led to what are seen as more flexible and responsive services.

It is also true that the financial returns on investment in teleworking are most obvious where property savings can be demonstrated, either as capital receipts or as reduced rental payments. Authorities who are not in high cost locations, i.e. the South East or economically buoyant cities, will not see the same return and indeed may struggle to make a conventional financial case. Financial justification may be complicated if benefits accrue to a corporate capital or property budget and costs are seen as being for individual directorates to bear.

Environmental benefits are harder to quantify. Up to 10% reductions in business mileage and equivalent (at least) reductions in commuting mileage are recorded, but the equation is complicated, firstly by the potential adverse effect on other transport schemes and secondly by any net exchange of energy costs from an office to a home.

There is evidence, in the successful cases, that flexible working has, after frequent initial reluctance, been welcomed by staff and unions as a benefit, as an instrument for changing organisational culture and an enabler of 'empowerment'. Some links to an improved customer focus are suggested. Where flexibility has been approached reluctantly, or simply as a way of reducing costs, it has not succeeded.

It is clear that success was easier where a new way of working was seen, usually by members and executives, as a strategic issue, one linked to service delivery and working culture as much as to property. A common thread in the reports of those whose experience was less positive is the perception that property cost savings have been the sole, or the dominant driver. Other commentators have made the same observation. For example, Professor Vivian Loftness (a leading US authority) used a commentary in *Harvard Business Review*¹⁵ to criticise use of the "*rhetoric of productivity*" when "*the debate is driven above all by the desire to reduce costs*". A greater emphasis on, and seeming commitment to the benefits of working differently is discernible in the comments above.

The service points by which authorities reach their community are clearly changing. The traditional 'single directorate' reception is being challenged by:

- integrated one stop shops
- distributed one stop-shops (at market town, borough or even community level)
- call / contact centres offering telephone and potentially email / Internet access.

Although the latter has received most prominence, especially with the drive for e-government the distributed centre approach still seems to be preferred by many authorities. In rural locations the preservation / enhancement of community services and the contribution to

¹⁵ In Vischer, J.C. "Will this open space work?" *Harvard Business Review* 77, no. May/June (1999): 28-36

market town centres are important considerations. Some City Councils have also clearly opted for the distributed approach, especially it seems where city centre property is at a premium

and attracting people into the centre is not an issue. There does appear to be most synergy between forms of telecentre working and the distributed contact model.

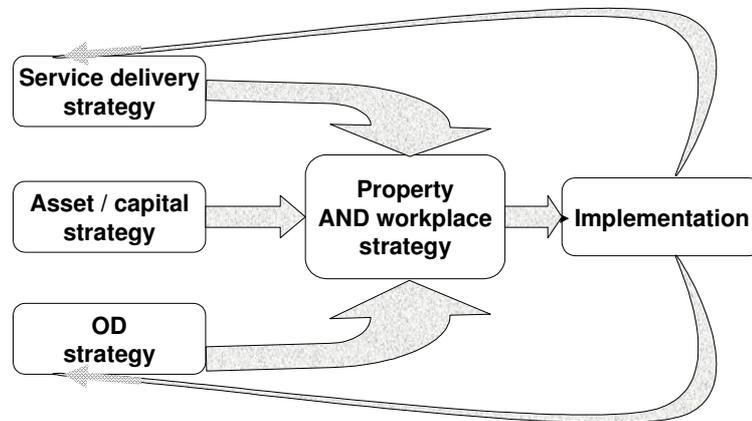


Figure 9 The drivers of a workplace strategy

As Figure 9 seeks to demonstrate a property and workplace strategy is likely to be a function, not just of an authority's asset and capital strategies¹⁶ but also of its service delivery model and plans for the future 'culture' of the organisation. However successful implementation of modern ways of working and modern working environments can also be an influence for more proactive service delivery and culture.

Implementation issues

Assuming a decision to move towards flexible working what issues of implementation arise? Many points of detail are covered in the Appendices and need not be repeated here. Four more significant areas merit comment.

First the attitudes of managers are crucial. What might be termed traditional management, judging staff by their presence and apparent activity, will not be compatible with a flexible environment. Judgements have to be made on outcomes. Managers are actually put in a position whereby confronting issues of under performance is more important.

Second any initiative must be seen as, and presented as, a win-win. There are benefits for staff, the authority, and the customers if a scheme is successful. There are also great uncertainties for individuals; will they lose their space, will they lose contact, will they feel less secure, will some who for whatever reason are not working flexibly find their workload increases, by for example extra telephoning and general message handling.

Third offices serve a purpose. They are part of the informal 'pattern' without which no organisation can operate. People pick up and re-enforce an existing culture. They derive informal support from colleagues, exchange more or less knowledge and potentially innovate. Provision of the space and time in which such interaction occurs is crucial.

Finally it is clear that any change involves property / facilities, human resources and ICT specialists. Input from all is needed in planning any changes even at the pilot level. The traditional property professional, whose expertise and outlook will probably reflect a certain

¹⁶ Themselves likely to converge under current DTLR policies for a convergence of Asset Management Strategies and the Single Capital Pot.

professional perspective is going, if they are to make their full contribution, to have to embrace and appreciate the issues and perspectives of the other disciplines involved.

Appendices

Appendix A: Expanded Interview Results

Lessons learnt

When asked **what went well** the most frequent response was the involvement of staff in the various schemes and pilots, viz.:

The opportunity to experiment - people enjoyed being involved in the planning

Co-operation 'lets do this'

Peoples willingness to change for a change

Our team prepared to have a go

It was popular. The cultural change went more smoothly than expected. People enjoyed the freedom - not tied down to the Local Government 9-5 regime so much

Planning. A working group before the pilot started, a code of practice, scheduled 1/2 to 1 day in the office per fortnight for team briefing communicating etc, including social interaction. Criteria (personnel and job) for hw defined. One of my (HR) team meets pilot group every two months to check for issues. They are not isolated.

Three respondents mentioned the time needed for people to get used to a change:

Staff now like it

If you'd asked me a year ago I would have said it can't work. A year from now we'll probably have more of it.

Initial take up (of drop in offices) was low. Its showing signs of change now.

One, at an early stage in attempting to introduce flexibility, mentioned the opportunity for individuals to ask for home working but expressed surprise at a low take up. Other comments were:

Positive response from the director

Stress reduced (Social workers) "the amount you get through in half the time"

A training programme for staff in our new community offices. They spent 1/2 weeks with each department and Social Service and Highways in the CC so as to know the faces they call. We have periodic updates.

One, who saw the initiative in property terms, saw it as:

The opportunity to set base standards, reduce footprints and encourage disposal or archiving of material/ Forty tons of 'rubbish' disposed of.

The comment came from an authority who felt that the take up of flexible working was disappointing and where office standards had been *'kept to a minimum'*

There is less of an obvious theme in reply to the question about **what people might do differently** next time, though the question of management attitudes begins to surface.

Nothing

More briefing for staff who are not involved

Working tips - how to organise a home office

People working from home need a decent office set up. Fully kit up if you are doing it properly

Be more innovative with furniture etc

I think my director (HR) pushed it. It might have been easier if he had more directors on board prior to the start. Had they come the other way it would have been a bit easier.

Support managers to manage in a different way. People need to feel remembered, not out of sight out of mind. Some managers skipped contact. Perhaps they didn't see staff anyway

More resources

Incorporate an ICT policy and look at HSE aspects (HR)

Only when IT came on board and got the system sorted did the satellite offices work.

Its great in theory a lot of little things to sort out.

Perhaps more storage

Private areas, certainly when the concept is applied to bigger spaces

You may have to get people to sign up in blood that they have no dedicated space to come back to.

Good question

Staff reluctance was mentioned as a barrier:

Initial staff reluctance - it took a lot of negotiation

Some were not going to like it and decided it wouldn't work (and it didn't)

There was resentment from the other staff in the office who had more interruptions and telephones to answer.

They would sooner travel (back to the main office) to claim mileage.

People who have worked for the council for a long time want no change. New recruits were more flexible.

while two respondents specifically mentioned the psychological importance people attach to 'their' workstation¹⁷

When we allocated L's desk to someone else she felt the umbilical cord had been cut. Now we use it for temps when she's not in but its her desk.

The psychological tradition of territory. It was a barrier to break down. I can't say it was difficult to get the logic across and the TUs were supportive. We emphasised that it was different. Private sector organisations were doing it.

Management attitudes were raised

Managers were a barrier as always. It was discretionary and support has to come from the director of corporate services

We expect an element of 'I can only manage if I see you'

as was the extent of the culture change needed

The Local government ethos of 'you do 37 hours then stop'

It took a cultural change for managers to realise that at home meant contactable

None really. I took the idea to personnel and had to wait while two other teams were recruited. My director supported it. He seeks to encourage a culture of being willing to try different ways of doing things Within LG there are people entrenched in the 70s. Having been through CCT may have helped us appreciate the need for change. It is breaking the traditional moulds but the government is driving that change anyway.

Finally four respondents mentioned operational details.

Office doesn't know when I've clocked off

¹⁷ <http://www.occupier.org>

Not enough telephone lines 'computer and phone share one work line'

Good IT - we are only moving to dial up access from home (£200 per person)

ICT which was left to services at first. It is now being looked at and a standard package is agreed with our service supplier

Hampered until IT came on board

We had to invest in a new Switch Board to enable voice mail..

Issues of organisational culture were a dominant theme in response to the question '**what was critical for success**, or in some cases what was seen as an relative lack of success.

A mind change, a culture change the team (surveyors) used to like to come in and talk at the start of the day 'they couldn't help it'

UPTAKE When we first talked there was huge interest. I'm discouraged that only 8 individuals out of 9,000 came forward. My director says 'its not a priority' but something happened politically. We must evaluate why the uptake was so low. No body I have spoken to wants full time wfh: one or two days a week maximum.

Even where we saw it has helping with disability issues people with disabilities want to come into the office for the social and professional aspect

"We don't want to be kept out there unseen" was a common response

The work life balance survey showed a significant number, 30%, interested in flexible contracts (4 day weeks, 9 day fortnights, annualised hours etc) but when it went live on 1 April the expected flood did not materialise. Of my 280 staff 12 asked and the response across the council was similar. We have been advised that the trickle will grow as the movement progresses

Aspirations of all surveying department staff

To a large extent the cultural comments can be seen as mirrored in the number of comments about management attitudes being critical to success (a conclusion supported by other research¹⁸).

A directive from the Chief Executive

Manager's attitude is critical. If they are not keen it won't work. Without space pressure he might not have been so supportive

TRUST *Managers have to know that knowing where someone is is enough.*

It comes down to management style

Managers. You are presuming good management practice. If good management is not there then home working will not work. For example managers were reluctant to approve wfh for perceived under - performers but why hadn't they faced the performance issue anyway

It will help staff where managers want to see bums on seats.

Some managers don't seem to see it

Other people raised operational success factors

Property Management spending time selling the benefits

Project officer support with a desk share. Being disciplined

Trend to everyone having email working at home.

Perhaps spending slightly more per workstation than we would have otherwise - a higher quality environment

¹⁸ Lupton P. and Haynes, B. P. (2000) Teleworking - the perception-reality gap. *Facilities* 18[7/8], 323-327

Be trackable! E diaries and voice mail proved vital. This has evolved. It was not cast in tablets of stone to start with.

Criteria for suitable posts and suitable people

Having a room set up as an office at home

Much depends on UNISON if they help it is much easier

Appendix B: Flexible working a 3 month review (estates)

One authority volunteered this review of a flexible pilot involving a group of estate surveyors. The bold bullet points reflect objectives set before the pilot began. The later bullet points were additional benefits found.

- **Maintain effective communication channels and ensure employee access to organisational information**

As part of the pilot scheme, 6 new mobile phones were purchased to ensure that staff working from home could be accessible for any matters that arose whilst away from the office. The office adopted a procedure whereby anyone working from home would have to give the rest of the office 24 hours prior notice of their intention, and advise of the relevant mobile phone they had with them.

As a full home working option was not adopted within estates, normal means of communication within the office were maintained, team meetings continued etc.

- **Ensure there is access to support from management and contact with colleagues and other officers, where necessary**

As stated above, normal team meetings and methods of communication were maintained.

- **Ensure employee is appraised in line with Divisional Policy**

This was achieved.

- **Ensure employees have continued access to development opportunities**

This was achieved.

- **Ensure adequate measures are in place to protect the Health, Safety and Welfare of employees**

Procedures existed in the office prior to the introduction of flexible working for matters such as site visits. Where someone intends having a late start, or is going on a site visit before arriving at the office, 24 hours prior notice is given, together with anticipated time of arrival in the office. If they do not arrive in the office investigations are made as to their whereabouts or the person rings into the office to advise of their later arrival.

A laptop was also purchased for use at home. Instructions/guidelines were issued to staff about the health and safety issues relating to the use of laptops. A separate keyboard is now provided with the laptop to overcome some of the health and safety issues associated with the “cramped” posture required for laptop use.

Some staff have chosen to use their own PC’s at home for convenience. They do this as a choice. Risk assessments have not been undertaken of these “workstations”.

- **Maintain and improve service delivery in line with principles of Best Value**

Flexible working has allowed staff to use their time more effectively. It has also allowed them to work earlier and later in the day, whilst still in works time, when there are less disruptions and allows them to make better use of the time available to them.

Homeworking has allowed consolidated time (free of office distractions) to be spent on complicated projects.

It has allowed staff to more closely relate their working hours to the nature and demands of the work they are undertaking (as opposed to finding work to fit the hours). For example, if staff have to put an 11 hour day in they can without feeling aggrieved that a lot of this would ordinarily be done in their own time. It also avoids the syndrome of “it is 6 o’clock I’m going home now” and the case waits till the next day. Matters are increasingly getting dealt with so

that the targets required are met. General comment from most staff was they can do jobs quicker.

It has also broken some of the myths that local authority employee's only work from 9 to 5 and in some way may begin to help the public's perception of public bodies. It is surprising how many times you can ring people after 5 and you get a comment "*are you still there, thought you would have left by now etc*"

As part of the Best Value consultation process for Estates, questions will be included in the questionnaire to be sent to clients to make specific enquiry's of them about whether they have noticed any change in service delivery.

Consolidated working time allows staff to produce a better end result which has been thought out better.

- **Ensure employees access to necessary equipment/facilities to perform roles within a divisional office**

This has been maintained, and in some cases improved (mobiles and laptop) to meet the demands of the new way of working.

- **Improve/reduce office accommodation**

This was not an expected output from the elements of flexible working introduced in estates. In terms of improved office accommodation, clearly we are better off than we were when in xxxx. There is a general feeling that xxxx was better than yyyy.

The space we occupy has been reduced from what we had in xxxx to what we have yyyy. This more intensive use of space was not received favourably by staff, as there were concerns that the level of office noise and distractions would increase having an adverse effect on work output. The option of home working has alleviated this to some extent as the need for uninterrupted/distraction free time can be accommodated elsewhere.

- **Ensure delivery levels and customer access to officers are maintained and improved**

As referred to above, the Consultation questionnaire will include questions about the client's views on level of service delivery following the introduction of flexible working. General view of staff is that service delivery has improved in that it is more responsive as staff are able to control the length of the working day to suit the demands of the job, rather than trying to keep the hours on the flexi clock within the necessary bands.

Everyone in the office has e-mail now so access is almost immediate, mobile phones are available to maintain contact when working from home or out on site.

- **Maintain term and conditions of service; where there are changes these will happen following negotiation/consultation**

UNISON were consulted on the introduction of the scheme and also participated in a meeting with all staff in the office (not just those on flexi working) so that all concerns etc of staff could be addressed. There were no changes in terms and conditions required.

- **Improve work and home life balance**

This has been seen to be a major benefit to staff. They are no longer tied to the strict hours of working.

General observation of the Head of Estates is that whilst staff are still under pressure, they are less stressed as they know they are not working to rigid timescales. For example, if you have say a doctors appointment and would normally take half a days leave but had a deadlines to meet on specific projects you might try and fit a full days work into half a day, or feel aggrieved etc that the only way you could meet the deadline was by doing the work in your

own time. Flexible working now allows staff to have an early doctors appointment, arrive at work at say 11 am, and still put a full day in.

It allows staff to avoid the rush hour traffic thereby wasting less time coming to and going from their work place. This in itself reduces stress as you are not rushing to get to work to meet a rigid 9.30 clocking time. It also allows staff to meet personal commitments more easily where these clash with work ones e.g. dropping kids off at school and need to be at work at a similar time.

Other observations

- Seen as a non-financial reward for staff.
- Staff feel trusted – people want to do the job and in the most effective manner, and flexible working allows this, and breaks some of the traditional “clock” watching.
- There is a sense of pride that staff work for an organisation that is innovative in it’s thinking and prepared to try new (for local authorities) ideas. Shows management is being progressive in its practices.
- Feel good factor, improved commitment.
- There is also a sense of pride by virtue of the fact that others within the organisation see the benefits for both staff and the organisation to this approach to working and there is a sense of jealousy as they want it as well.
- Moral has improved (although the problem of low moral generally has not been resolved – comparatively low financial reward/recognition still needs to be tackled).
- Appropriate dress approach has been received favourably – this is a more visual statement that something different is happening which helps increase the awareness of the pilot scheme.
- Increased number of hours of office cover (office open from 7am till 8pm in theory, in practice cover probably from 7.30am to 6.15pm).
- Contribution to reduce traffic congestion and emissions (CGSS) – either by travelling at a less congested time or not at all.
- “Forces” others to really consider whether what they thought was urgent and requires your immediate attention is actually that urgent. It also removes some unnecessary activities – sometimes people like to just have a chat¹⁹.

¹⁹ I would perhaps challenge this point. The chat in offices, can be an important part of the knowledge management process (note added by IP)

Appendix C A County Council evaluation submitted to members.

The officer who supplied this example did not want to be interviewed. He did comment that members wanted to see things happen, perhaps faster than the current IT systems allow. The document again supplies a good compilation of many of the issues. It was issued as a report to the Council's Strategy and Resource Committee on 2 March 2001.

Title Teleworking/Homeworking; Progress Report

Abstract (plain text version of the report)

Purpose of Report

To present a progress report on the pilot Working from Home scheme in Trading Standards and trial arrangements introduced or planned in other service areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 THAT progress on the Working from Home initiative be noted.
- 2 THAT the report on the Trading Standards pilot scheme be noted and that this working arrangement be continued for the pilot participants and extended to other Enforcement staff.
- 3 THAT departments identify potential "drop-in" centres for use by staff working from home rather than operating from a fixed base.
- 4 THAT the initiative now be taken forward by drawing up schemes for staff to work at home (either full-time or part-time) with primary consideration being given to the maintenance of service standards. Such schemes to be fully costed before being submitted for Member approval.
- 5 THAT the Guide to Teleworking be approved for general distribution.

Priority Objectives/Key Task Implications

Investigating and trialling working from/at home is a key task and is also consistent with Best Value policies.

Resource Implications and Statutory Authority

These are included in the report especially as regards the Trading Standards pilot scheme. Specific budget provision was made to assist the pilot scheme but there is no specific resource allocation for further initiatives. The development of teleworking should produce eventual offsetting savings in travel and office space costs.

Environmental Loss or Benefit

Reduction in travel - either to or from or in the course of work - supports the County Council's sustainability policies.

Equal Opportunities Implications

Working at or from home can be a significant factor in facilitating employability among people unable, for various reasons, to travel to or from a base daily. The initiative is important to the County Council's family-friendly employment policy.

Anti-Poverty Implications

Teleworking could assist people take employment where they might otherwise be unable to do so.

Departmental Contact

Background Papers

Homeworking/Teleworking - A Discussion Document (ACC Working Group - 1999).

XXXX County Council - Guide to Teleworking.

YYYY County Council - Guide to Homeworking.

Introduction

1 Since submitting the first progress report in November Chief Officers have been asked to develop plans for extending the principle of working from home within their own service areas.

Present Position

2 Appendix A sets out details of those groups of staff in respect of whom arrangements have already commenced, those where plans are in hand for early trialling and other staff identified as potentials for this method of working but where no firm programme has yet been developed.

Trading Standards Pilot

3 A report on the pilot scheme is attached at Appendix 'B'. This includes details of the set up and running costs and some initial information about performance. It is interesting to note that while the staff on the pilot scheme considered themselves to have increased productivity under the new arrangements the performance statistics do not bear this out. However, the initial IT teething problems plus some sickness absence and the nature of the work - some cases are complex and time consuming - render it difficult to make accurate comparisons with previous years.

4 The overall experience of the Trading Standards pilot has prompted the CTSO to continue and in fact extend the arrangement.

5 Progress in implementing working from home has been slower with less take-up so far than originally anticipated. There is growing interest among staff however, and departments are now increasingly receiving requests from individuals wishing to be considered for remote working. Why then have departments not been able to move more quickly? There appears to have been a number of contributory factors.

- The Trading Standards pilot had encountered problems with IT support and departments were reluctant to launch until these had been overcome
- The question of insurance cover for equipment kept in cars/at home needed to be clarified
- The health and safety implications regarding remote working were not clear in all cases
- The requirement for Social Services to work closely with the Health Authority (with some potential teleworkers due to transfer out this year)
- The Social Services budget overspend with little scope for financing teleworking at the present time
- Reluctance to commit to wide extension of teleworking where financial resources were not available to meet set up costs
- The absence of "drop-in" centres with IT equipment available for remote working staff to access and send E-mail and type up reports
- A preference on the part of some staff and managers to explore scope for staff actually working at home with appropriate IT equipment installed in home offices (the initial pilots were to trial the concept of peripatetic officers operating from home with little actual requirement to work at home)

- The fact that some officers have expressed interest in a hybrid arrangement involving some part of their working week being spent operating at home with the remainder at base
- Impending changes in departmental structures with attendant uncertainties about future location or reporting arrangements

6 Queries raised by staff and managers, e.g. on insurance, health and safety, tax implications, have been addressed by a small group of officers and have been clarified. In order to assist departments the County Personnel Officer has produced a Guide for Managers and Staff covering the issues raised originally and also incorporating advice on setting up teleworking arrangements. A copy of this is attached together with draft technical guidelines to remote working produced by the IT Services Manager. This has not yet been generally distributed but, if approved, could generate a considerable amount of interest --and perhaps pressure - to take the initiative forward.

7 The Guide has been written in the hope that it will deal with the majority of issues raised by both managers and staff. It invites managers not so much to identify posts specifically suited to teleworking but rather to ask the question "*what are the reasons for excluding them from such an arrangement?*" Many posts do, of course, require staff to work at a specific base daily simply because the service they provide is delivered at dedicated centres, e.g. schools, libraries, day centres, residential establishments. Others, however, do not necessarily demand daily journeys and attendance at what is really only a base. The intention is to identify such posts and encourage both staff and managers to consider the question.

Conclusions

8 There still remains further scope for introducing working from home arrangements for staff who travel regularly in the course of their duties. These should be pursued especially in Social Services Department.

9 Although the Trading Standards pilot has run the course originally intended the IT difficulties have only recently been resolved. Experience thus far has, however, encouraged the CTSO to extend the scheme.

10 The existence of "drop-in" centres has assisted other authorities in meeting the operational needs of mobile staff. The development of such facilities should be pursued here. The possible use of libraries (where space is available) could benefit that service at the same time.

11 Departments should now be encouraged to explore the scope for staff working at home (whether full-time or part-time). In each instance, however, a costed case should be produced with a clear understanding that homeworkers should no longer have a dedicated work station in County Council premises ('hot-desking' and/or a docking station should replace the existing office/personal desk arrangement). In this way homeworking arrangements would produce a reduction in office space requirements. Another (named) County Council have set a target of reducing their office space requirements by 10 per cent and teleworking is significantly contributing to this.

APPENDIX C1 (from the original document)

Department Staff Presently Working from Home Staff Scheduled to be included in working from home arrangements

Potential Participants (but not yet scheduled)

Trading Standards Enforcement staff (5) Enforcement staff (6)

Education - Area Finance Officers (up to 8) Education Welfare Officers

(awaiting outcome of Best Value Review)

Library, Arts and Museums - - Service Support and xxxNet staff (lack of resources to provide IT support)

Environment Road Safety Officers (6) Enforcement Officers (2)

Parish Path Liaison Officers (3) Development Coordinators (6) (Pilot starts Feb 2001)

Social Services Home Care Workers (556) - Field Workers -subject to developing closer working relationships with Health (particularly Primary Care). NB: Registration and Inspection staff identified as suitable but Health Authority has resisted this (staff due to transfer out in any event in Sept 2001 or March 2002)

Department Staff Presently Working from Home Staff Scheduled to be included in working from home arrangements

Potential Participants (but not yet scheduled)

Corporate Services Audit and Consultancy staff (ad hoc basis at present)

Legal Services staff - occasionally but little scope for permanent arrangement.

IT staff - again on occasional only basis.

Property Support Officers (4)

Clerk of Works (2) - -

Fire & Rescue Fire Safety Inspection Officers (3) operating on remote working basis.* - -

*Scope is limited in Fire and Rescue Service. Retained Firefighters have one drill night a week but otherwise respond from home or non F and R workplaces. Consideration of homeworking/teleworking has, however, resulted in some employees travelling in to base less frequently.

APPENDIX C2 TRADING STANDARDS TELEWORKING - REVIEW

Background

The terms of reference for the pilot were agreed and issued to trading standards staff in July 1999. The pilot scheme officially commenced in September 1999 with 5 volunteers. These were all full time operational enforcement staff whose role is peripatetic. The normal flexi-time provisions are suspended for the volunteers. This means that the participants are free to determine their own working hours subject to a record average of 37 hours per week over a four-week period. Subject to having built up the requisite amount of time the volunteers have also been permitted to take up to 2 days flexi-leave per month as opposed to the usual day off.

Details of Costs

The pilot was financed by a successful Corporate IS investment fund bid of £42,800

Set-up costs:

The capital cost per teleworker was £2,873. This included: -

- Laptop computer and docking station (£2,200)
- Connection to Remote Access Gateway (RAG)
- Mobile handset plus connection and accessories
- Fixed line connection
- Printer
- Fax machine

The laptops were purchased as part of the department's Y2K hardware replacement strategy. The docking station means that officers should be able to use the laptop as a desktop machine whilst they are in the office, removing the need for a separate desktop PC.

On-going costs:

These include annual RAG access costs for each laptop, home fixed telephone rentals, cost of mobile phones and consumables (ink cartridges for printers, paper etc). The cost of these per teleworker are approximately £1,000 a year.

Assuming that a teleworker is no longer provided with a dedicated office work space the potential saving, based on current property values in County Town, would be £540 a year - this is the current basic rental charge per 6 sq. m. to which should be added cost of heating and lighting and any additional provision.

Effects on Service Provision

The amount of flexi time taken by the volunteers has increased by 87% during the life of the pilot.

Business mileage covered by the volunteers is virtually the same as pre-teleworking but the home to base journey has been eliminated.

Output for periods before and during the pilot have been compared in relation to:

- Visits by officers
- Complaints investigated
- Trade advice enquiries dealt with
- Prosecution reports submitted

This is a very crude numerical indicator that takes no account of the quality of service offered or the complexity of the workload. It should therefore be viewed with some care before conclusions are drawn. It shows that:

- Departmental output in these areas dropped by 17%. This was due to a number of factors such as changes in enforcement emphasis and some long-term sickness.
- For 3 of the 5 staff involved in the pilot levels of output have reduced
- For 2 members of staff the reduction in output was over 25%. However one of these officers was acting-up to cover for an absent senior colleague.
- Other factors have been identified which could have contributed to this reduction e.g. sickness absence, complexity of some cases, delays especially in the early days of the pilot - caused by IT problems.
- All participants have identified problems with IT and IT support during the pilot and this has undoubtedly also had an adverse effect on service provision and productivity. For example, one officer was not able to work remotely until 1 March 2000.

Views of staff included in the pilot

These have been extracted via questionnaire. The collated results are attached.

Views of staff not included in the pilot have also been canvassed. These are mainly positive with some communications issues. However some staff have mentioned what is described by one as *"a growing resentment amongst office based staff ... that teleworkers are the privileged few"*. The main issue causing this division is the increased flexi-time provision for teleworkers i.e. the ability to build up credits over the working day that could result in a nine-day working fortnight.

Cost Effectiveness

Cannot be fully assessed because of initial problems with IT. However, for this method of working to be fully cost effective it should be part of a strategic policy to rationalise County Council owned office accommodation. (This was the case in Another County Council where targeted reductions in office accommodation acted as a catalyst for introducing remote working).

Future Plans

Problems with IT prevent a conclusive assessment of the effect of the pilot on service delivery. However, with the IT situation improving, the pilot is to be broadened with the inclusion of a further 6 staff. Performance of all staff to be closely monitored and time recording system to be introduced. Final review date needs to be agreed

Technical Guidelines for Remote Working.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 These guidelines cover the technical aspects of Remote Access to the County Council network. For advice about other aspects of remote working such as health and safety, insurance, tax implications and confidentiality of information please contact your departmental personnel unit.

1.2 The remote access gateway (RAG) provides a secure means by which XCC staff and external users, such as other organisations, can access the XCC network and systems. This gateway must be used to make a remote connection to any GCC system that is on the network.

1.3 The gateway consists of the following components:

- Dial in server
- Smartgate server
- Citrix server.

1.4 Any user who accesses the RAG using a modem will connect first to a dial-in server. This server does not provide call-back. This means that the call charges will be incurred at the user's end of the connection. Users should contact their department if they feel call charges should be reimbursed.

1.5 The Smartgate server provides authentication and encryption of information sent between the Smartgate server and the end user. Dial-in users will be transferred to the Smartgate server. Some external users may be routed directly to the Smartgate server on fixed lines.

1.6 The Citrix server provides access to systems that an individual requires as detailed in the RAG authorisation form required before access is given to a user. If a user requires access to more systems at a later date, this access must also be authorised by the users' Line Manager and IS Manager.

1.7 Information Systems, Corporate Services, will act as 'administrators' of the RAG system and an SLA has been drawn up with Provider to cover the operation of the system. While the SLA recognises that the system needs to be available outside 'office' hours, XCC will take no liability if the system is not available.

1.8 XCC reserves the right to suspend access to the RAG at any time.

2.0 Line Manager responsibility.

2.1 Line Managers must approve remote access to XCC systems by their staff.

2.2 System controllers must approve remote access to their system by non XCC personnel.

2.3 Remote Access accounts provide a way into XCC systems from external sources. If a user with remote access leaves, it is the Line Manager's responsibility to inform Information Systems so that the account can be disabled. If remote access users are absent for a period of over one month, it is the Line Manager's responsibility to inform Information Systems and the account can be temporarily disabled.

2.4 Departmental IS Managers will be provided with a quarterly report detailing their remote access users and when they last used the facility. This report should be checked and Information Systems informed if any users' accounts can be disabled.

3.0 User responsibility.

3.1 XCC staff must abide by XCC policies in force - for example:

- E-mail
- Internet
- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Data Protection

3.2 Users should ensure that the machine that they use to connect to the RAG has adequate virus protection to reduce the risk of transmitting viruses to GCC systems. Users should seek advice from their departmental IS Manager to ensure their anti-virus protection is adequate and regularly updated.

3.3 Users who are accessing personal data remotely must ensure that they observe the Data Protection principles. Amongst other aspects, this covers security of data when it is stored on a hard drive, floppy disk or paper. It may be appropriate to use hard disk encryption software. Please contact your departmental IS Manager for technical advice and your departmental Data Protection Officer for Data Protection advice

3.4 XCC machines must not be connected to the XCC network and simultaneously to any other network.

3.5 Internet access from a XCC owned machine used remotely must use the RAG to access the XCC Internet provider. In some instances a Chief Officer may authorise another method of access to the Internet.

3.6 Users should make sure that they take due care of XCC equipment. They should not allow other people to use the equipment for any purpose.

3.7 Users should not tell anyone any passwords that they use to access XCC systems. If a user suspects that their password is known by someone else, they should change it, or arrange to have it changed. Please contact your departmental IS Manager if you require advice.

4.0 Technical specification of PC to be used.

4.1 There is a technical specification for the following categories:

- XCC owned machine - PC or Laptop
- Staff owned machine

For details of the most recent technical standards, please refer to Corporate IS/IT Standards document. This can be obtained from your departmental IS Manager or from StaffNet.

5.0 Support

5.1 For PCs or laptops that are the property of the County Council and are registered for PC support with Provider, telephone support will be available during service desk hours. If the problem is not resolved further support will be delivered by Provider at the employee's normal office base or Specified Office.

5.2 For a non XCC owned PC or Laptop there will be no XCC provided support.

6.0 Installation

6.1 Machines requiring remote access will need to have software installed on them. This can be done using installation and upgrade days from Provider.

6.2 For PCs which are not the property of XCC (eg owned by staff), departments will need to arrange installation. XCC will not accept any liability arising from the installation of the Remote Access software on non XCC equipment.

7.0 Charges

7.1 There is a charge for remote access. For a copy of the up to date charges, please apply to the IS Applications Manager, Information Systems, Corporate Services Department.

Appendix D Flexible Working Arrangements

A guideline policy produced by one unitary authority.

Introduction

The Council recognises that its employees are drawn from a diversity of backgrounds which place varying pressures upon them. Subject to service needs, a range of flexible working options is available to employees to help them balance their work and non-work commitments.

This guideline gives a summary of the types of flexible working which are available within the Council subject to the needs of individual services and jobs. The exact manner in which flexible working arrangements apply is not prescribed corporately but is for Directorates and/or work groups to decide - what is operationally feasible for one job may not be for another. Although guidelines are included on some arrangements, these are purely for guidance and hence can be amended/adapted to suit local needs.

Flexible working is available at the line manager's discretion. Managers are, however, strongly encouraged to facilitate these arrangements wherever reasonably practical. If an employee feels that a request to take up a flexible working arrangement has been unreasonably refused, he or she will have the right of appeal through the Grievance Procedure.

Types of flexible working

Flexible working can be defined as any pattern of work which differs from the traditional 8.30 am to 5.00 pm, five days per week arrangement. There are a range of flexible working options but some of the more common are briefly described below (detailed guidance on the application of Flexitime, Job-sharing and Teleworking are set out in annexes to this guideline and can be adapted or amended to suit local needs);

Flexitime Flexitime allows an employee to choose their own start and finish times each day around fixed core hours. Excess hours can be carried over from one accounting period to the next or used as flexileave. Similarly, a limited number of deficit hours can be made up.

Job-sharing Job-sharing is a variant of part-time working in which two or possibly three people share one particular job working part of each day, part of a week or alternate weeks depending on circumstances.

Teleworking Teleworking or homeworking are arrangements which can be considered wherever permanent attendance at the office is not essential and some work could be effectively undertaken at home. This could be on a permanent, regular or occasional basis, ranging from the odd part or whole day at home to a regular teleworking arrangement. Many 'teleworkers' have computer or telecommunication links with their 'office' which facilitates communication between them and their manager and colleagues.

Compressed Hours A system of working in which employees work a slightly longer day in return for an agreed period of time off. The most common arrangements are the four and a half day week i.e. employees work slightly longer on Monday to Thursday and in return take Friday afternoon off and the nine day fortnight ie employees work slightly longer for nine days and take alternate Fridays off.

Annualised Hours During certain periods of the year the employee works longer hours and less at others. The period of time an employee is contracted to

work is defined over a whole year as opposed to a week and the hours worked are not spread evenly through out the year. The employee's contract will normally specify the number of committed hours at certain periods of the year and a number of reserved hours that are to be worked as service demands.

Term-time only

Term-time only working allows employees to reduce hours or take unpaid leave during the school holidays. Most employees have between four and six weeks leave but their children have around thirteen weeks which leaves seven to nine weeks during which employees have to find care for their children. Term-time workers are able to take unpaid leave during this time. Usually, most annual leave has to be taken during the school holidays.

Confirming flexible working arrangements

It is the responsibility of management to determine which jobs may be covered by flexible working arrangements and, in so doing, line managers will ensure that in all instances service needs will take precedence. Normally, any flexible working arrangements will have been determined prior to appointment but where an employee or team of employees wish to change their working hours or working arrangements they should apply to their line manager.

The line manager will confirm the conditions under which flexible working has been agreed and where such changes to contractual working arrangements involve variations ie an increase or decrease in working hours, the line manager will inform the Central Personnel Section using the PIPS notification form.

Abuse of flexible working

Where an employee fails to work his or her contractual hours or otherwise abuses permitted flexible working arrangements, the privilege of flexible working will be withdrawn and/or disciplinary action taken.

Flexible Working Arrangements : Annex 1 - Flexitime Model Scheme

Flexitime permits employees to choose, within certain limits, the time they start and finish work to suit their personal lifestyle and commitments provided they attend work during certain agreed hours. It is not necessary to work the same hours every day, although it is important that the choice of hours is not detrimental to the efficient working of the Authority.

Managers and their staff are free to vary the model scheme set out below to suit particular service delivery needs but the essential principle of flexitime is that 'work comes first'. Service to clients and customers, both internal and external, must not suffer as a result of working flexitime and there may therefore be some instances where flexitime working may not be appropriate. Part-time and casual employees will normally work to the times set out in their contract but may be included in the scheme at the discretion of their line manager.

Key features

The following is a model scheme which permits the employee to structure his or her working day:

Core Time The periods when employees must be at work, except for unauthorised absences. The core times are 9.30 am to 12 noon and 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm Monday to Friday.

Flexible Time The periods outside of core time when employees may vary their starting and finishing times. Employees must agree with their line manager the flexitime bandwidth ie the earliest start time and latest finish time. A lunch break of at least 30 minutes must be taken.

Cover Time The period of time within which the minimum staffing level as defined by the Section Head will apply. Cover time is 8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30 am to 4.30 pm on Friday.

Recording of Hours

Hours worked must be recorded in a manner approved by the line manager and this will normally be on a flexitime form. At the end of each accounting period the form must be given to the line manager for confirmation of hours worked.

Accounting Period and Time off in Lieu

The accounting period is four weeks and during this period the employee will be required to work their contracted hours ie 148 hours, subject to permitted credits and debits. During the accounting period the employee may work up to 10 hours in excess of their contracted hours which can be carried forward to the next accounting period. During each accounting period excess hours worked may be taken off with the line manager's prior approval as flexileave. No more than four debit hours may be carried forward and debits in excess of the four hour limit will be treated as absence without leave and an abuse of the system.

All credit hours must be used prior to the employee leaving the Council's employment as no payment will be made for excess hours worked and not taken. When the employee is in debit, the number of hours in debit will be deducted from the final salary payment.

Absence from work

Time away from work due to authorised absence ie holidays, sickness, training etc will be credited to the employee. Wherever possible, medical, hospital and dental appointments should be made outside core time ie before booking in, during the flexible lunch period, or after booking out, unless they are emergencies or for ante-natal clinics.

Overtime

Overtime will be authorised and recorded as normal and is completely separate from flexitime. However, overtime will only start within the agreed bandwidth if the employee has already completed a standard 7 hour 24 minute day. Overtime will not be approved if the employee is in debit.

Abuse of the system

To maintain an effective level of service, Section Heads will determine the minimum staffing level that will apply during cover time ie normal office opening hours. It is essential that employees working flexitime co-operate with the Section Head to ensure that minimum staffing levels within their section or work group are maintained. Failure to do so may be considered to be an abuse of the system. Employees found abusing the system will be excluded from the flexitime arrangements and may have other disciplinary action taken against them. Other 'offences' would include arriving or leaving during core-time without permission, persistently working less than the contracted hours within the parameters set out above and falsifying records.

Flexible Working Arrangements : Annex 2 - Job-Sharing

The Council, as an equal opportunities employer, recognises the value of providing more flexible patterns of employment and opening up a wider range of job opportunities. Job-sharing offers additional employment and flexible working opportunities to people who otherwise would not be able to enter the labour market due to domestic or other reasons and permits more than one person to voluntarily share the responsibility of one job with salary and other benefits divided equally or on a proportional basis between the employees concerned. Subject to service needs, managers are encouraged to offer jobs on this basis.

Vacant Posts

Managers recruiting to vacant positions should consider whether the vacancy to be filled could be offered on a job-share basis. If this is the case, both the internal and external advertisement should contain a statement that applications will be considered from applicants on a job-share basis.

Job-sharing for existing employees

Existing employees may apply to share their own job by submitting a written request to their line manager. In deciding whether to accept the request for job-sharing the line manager should consider:

- how the functions of the job could be divided
- the most suitable working pattern
- the needs of service delivery and whether these can be met in a job-share arrangement

In circumstances where it is necessary for the functions of the job to be constantly covered, the manager may decide to defer any agreed arrangements until such time as the other party(ies) to the job-share have been recruited.

If approval is not given to a job-share application, the manager should give the reasons to the employee(s) concerned and confirm these in writing.

Employment conditions

Hours and Duties

The division of the workload and the hours of work will be determined by the line manager in consultation with the job-sharers. As a matter of good practice the sharers should be provided with an up to date job description. The division of hours and duties of a post should take account of:

- the type of work and its requirements
- the degree of supervision involved
- any special skills, knowledge or abilities of either partner
- preferences of the job-sharers
- any overlap period necessary

The hours agreed should always be such that should a part vacancy occur the working hours arrangement to be advertised will form a viable package to attract new applicants.

Where a system of flexitime working is in operation its application to the job-share arrangement will be determined by the line manager. In practice the opportunity for job-sharers to work flexitime are likely to be limited because of the nature of the job-share arrangements.

Pay

Job-sharers will be paid pro-rata for the hours worked and will be eligible for all appropriate national and local conditions of employment. Incremental position on appointment and progression within the grade of the post will be on an individual basis.

Premium payments will be calculated as though the post was occupied on a full time basis and will be divided between the job-sharers pro-rata to the hours worked.

Job-sharers will be required to work additional hours to cover any absence of their job-share partner as and when requested by their line manager and will be paid for additional hours worked or receive time off in lieu. Overtime will be payable when full time hours have been completed.

Leave Annual leave and bank holidays will be applied pro-rata to the normal hours worked. All these elements should be added together as a leave entitlement in hours. This avoids confusion which could arise due to complex working arrangements.

Car allowance Where the job-share post attracts an essential user car allowance the lump sum will be pro-rated with the job-sharers then claiming individually on the basis of actual mileage travelled.

All other terms and conditions remain the same as for non job-share employees.

Sharing more than one job

Provided total contracted hours do not exceed the full time working week, an employee may share more than one job simultaneously. A job-sharer who wishes to occupy the vacant part of their full time job may be assimilated into the vacant hours provided the line manager wishes to fill such hours.

Flexible Working Arrangements: Annex 3 - Teleworking

Teleworking is an arrangement where employees regularly undertake part of their work in the home environment. With the availability of advanced technology becoming more and more commonplace in the office and home, teleworking, even on an informal and ad hoc basis, can bring many potential benefits and opportunities for both employees and the Council.

There is no automatic right to telework. Arrangements will only be entered into on a voluntary basis which may be initiated by either the employee or his or her line manager. Each case will be considered on its own merits and before approving any request from an employee to telework, the suitability of the style, patterns and demands of the work should be considered. Where agreement to telework has been reached should either party consider that the arrangement is unsuccessful in practice it will be open to both parties to terminate the arrangement.

Communication

Teleworkers will be required to attend their office or normal workbase on a regular basis, and at times agreed with their line manager. The manager will ensure that the employee receives all appropriate information and communications and will also ensure that a workstation will be available for the employee when he or she comes into the office.

Hours of Work

Contractual hours and times of work as a result of teleworking will remain unaltered unless by mutual consent. Where a variation is agreed the pattern of working hours will be agreed between the employee and the line manager to suit both operational and the employee's needs.

Equipment

The employing Directorate will be responsible for the provision and maintenance of any equipment deemed necessary for the carrying out of the employee's duties. Equipment supplied will remain the property of the Council at all times and may not be removed to another location without written consent. The employee will be responsible for the

safeguarding of the equipment and for its safe return if and when the teleworking arrangement ceases.

Confidentiality

The employee who is teleworking will be expected to ensure the confidentiality of any papers, files etc and to take measures to ensure their security.

Health and Safety

Both the Council and the employee maintain their obligations under the Health and safety at Work Act. The employee will be expected to provide a safe working location within the home and to ensure that adequate measures are taken to meet current health and safety regulations. Risk assessments and routine inspections will be undertaken by the line manager to ensure that the areas of work are safe and that safe systems of work are being practised.

Access to the home

On occasions the Council will require access to the employee's home to ensure that the home meets health and safety requirements within the Health and Safety at Work Act and to check and maintain any supplied equipment.

Insurances

Under the terms of the Council's Employer's Liability Insurance and Personal Accident Insurance, teleworking employees who sustain an accident are covered in the same way as employees located on Council premises, provided that the incident occurred whilst undertaking Council business. Household insurers always need to be advised if any part of a domestic area is to be used for any other purpose than residential. It is the responsibility of the teleworking employee to do this.

Telephone Expenses

The teleworking employee should arrange for an itemised telephone bill in order that business calls can be separately identified and the cost reimbursed

Council tax

The Council will not meet any part of the Council Tax which is the teleworker's personal liability. Business rates would most likely only arise if the use of the employee's property changed.

Appendix E Council Homeworking Policy 2

Introduced May 2000 and currently due for review. This authority was surprised at the low initial take up.

Introduction

Government action and legislation such as the Employment Relations Act 1999, promotes flexibility in workplace practice. Contemporary management practices recognise the changing nature of work and the impact on personal life. Effective personnel policies should balance work, family and environmental factors and which should also lead to better performance and enhanced productivity.

Background

This paper provides the general background to developing a home-working scheme. It sets out the criteria against which applications must be considered, and identifies a number of important issues which require thought before a decision to home work is made both by the Council as an employer and the individual employee.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Home-working Guidance Notes (E1), which outline, in greater detail, the various issues that must be addressed when considering home-working.

The Scheme is presented as a pilot for review after 12 months. This will the scheme to be monitored and evaluated taking into account the practical issues, costs involved and the effect on productivity and quality of service.

The pilot will potentially apply to all staff within the xxxx Council. However, due to the nature of home-working, only those posts which are deemed feasible, and only individuals who are deemed suitable for this type of working, by reference to the stated criteria, will be eligible to work from home. The total number of posts will also be restricted to a maximum of 12 in the period of the pilot.

Home-working

Home working consists of working **at** home rather than at the normal place of work and may involve using electronic systems to accomplish tasks and remain in contact with the managers/supervisor. It could mean working a set number of days a week, a fortnight, or in a month on a formally agreed basis, or could include an employee working at home for occasional days or at certain times throughout the year on an informal basis but with management approval.

The purpose of the Homeworking Scheme is to encourage working at or from home where this is appropriate, and would achieve one or more of the following:

- give extra flexibility in working hours providing potential for increased productivity
- higher quality of work due to improved morale, and fewer interruptions
- improve quality of work life (morale, personal control of work - families/personal life balance).
- improved service delivery by e.g. non-interruptible working time, enabling quicker turnaround of tasks and better quality through improved concentration levels
- reduced costs - lower overheads
- lower absenteeism
- retention/recruitment of employees – (wider pool of recruits e.g. people with disabilities)

- reduced travel problems e.g. transport availability/cost implications
- environmental considerations e.g. petrol emissions
- improved organisational/cost efficiency in property management
- improved management of staff through more effective communications, and encouragement of management by objectives.

For Services assessing the suitability of a post for home working the following criteria would apply:

- is the job suitable for home working?
- does the applicant home worker hold the right personal qualities?
- is it cost effective?
- is the home site suitable?
- will there be adequate administrative/clerical or general support available for the home workers?
- will there be commitment from both manager and participants to making this scheme a success?
- will there be an increase in workload for other employees?
- what are the supervision/reporting arrangements

Conditions of Service

Home working agreements should be entered into on a voluntary basis between an employee and their manager, and can be agreed on a full-time, job-share or part-time basis.

Where it is agreed that an employee may take part in home working, his or her revised terms and conditions should be based on the following principles:

- no reduction in grade
- no loss of status
- no loss of career prospects

Occasional journeys made to the employee's administrative base cannot be claimed as travelling expenses. For business journeys where the starting and finishing point is the employee's home, the principles of the travelling expenses and subsistence allowance will apply (other than where travelling to the administrative base). On termination of the home working arrangement any equipment provided by the Council will be returned.

Operation of the Scheme

Services interested in introducing formal home working arrangements, will be required to identify posts or specific tasks that would be suitable for home working, taking into consideration issues outlined in the attached Guidance Notes.

A report from the Director of the Service would then be submitted to the Director of Corporate Services for discussion and consideration for approval, outlining the post being identified as suitable for home working, and providing information which includes:

- aim of home working scheme within the service
- **advantages/benefits to be gained and any cost implications**

Managers will require to assess each individual application against specific criteria. If the post is approved as being suitable for home working, then the detailed conditions will be set out for the employee. However, it must be stressed that home working is not a condition of service available to every employee and home working arrangements can only be approved where it can be operationally justified and employees can meet the criteria specified.

Where it is accepted that an employee will work at home during normal working hours they will be required to demonstrate that they do not have dependant care responsibilities within their stated working hours.

Line managers must ensure that an effective management process is in place to monitor, supervise and evaluate home working arrangements. A homeworking agreement will be drawn up between the employee and the line manger prior to the start of the arrangement. The employee's contract of employment will be amended to reflect the homeworking arrangement.

Informal homeworking arrangements such as working the occasional day or week at home to meet particular deadlines, or to assist in easing an employee back to work after a period of sickness absence may be approved by a Head of Service

Trade Union Consultation

The scheme is based on similar approaches taken in other Councils and the Trade Unions were supportive of this policy initiative.

Review

The Director of Corporate Services will monitor the scheme as a pilot and review after a 12 month period.

Appendix E1 HOMEWORKING SCHEME – GUIDANCE NOTES

1. Introduction

In considering the option of Homeworking within a Service the following should be taken into account:

- organisational benefits/advantages
- is the post deemed suitable for homeworking under the specified criteria
- is the individual deemed suitable for homeworking under the specified criteria
- are there any additional costs incurred
- any training requirements to be met
- a suitable home site in relation to health and safety and security arrangements is required
- the need for a homeworking agreement to be established between line manager and employee

2. Definition

Homeworking consists of working **at** home rather than at the normal place of work, and may involve using electronic systems to accomplish tasks and to remain in contact with the manager/supervisor. This could include working a set number of days a week, fortnight, or in a month on a formally agreed basis, or could include an employee working at home for occasional days or at certain times throughout the year on an informal basis but with management approval.

Working **from** home involves an employee engaged in an occupation which requires an ability to use their home rather than an office as the base from which journeys are undertaken.

3. Advantages/Benefits

Reduced Employment Costs

Premises

Homeworking may help the Council achieve savings in heating, lighting and accommodation costs and may also solve accommodation problems by releasing over-utilised office space. It has a knock on effect for offices that are overcrowded resulting in a quieter and more effective working environment.

Parking spaces can also be better utilised.

Staff Turnover/Recruitment Costs

Where employees would otherwise have to leave the Service due to their partner's relocation, care commitments versus time/transport arrangements, loss of mobility or general travel difficulties, the option of homeworking can help retain operational continuity, skills and experience.

Reduce Sickness Absence

Research has estimated that sickness absence is reduced or can be reduced by a significant level as homeworking can allow the employee to readjust to the work environment after a period of absence and also reduce unnecessary journeys.

Equal Opportunities

Homeworking allows organisations to attract a wider pool of potential employees who might otherwise not be able to apply. These include people who have a disability and whose main difficulty is travelling to and from work for specific times of the day and those with caring responsibilities.

Productivity and Job Satisfaction

Employees are able to create a quieter, less stressful workplace at home in which they are able to concentrate, work faster, without interruption and are therefore more effective.

Studies on the effects of homeworking state that employees are more productive, reliable and produce better quality work and are likely to have lower sickness absence rates. Homeworkers find they are able to control and time manage work more effectively.

The ability to control quiet working time in order to achieve set targets provides job satisfaction as opposed to frustrated efforts to complete pieces of work in a noisy/interrupted environment.

Reduced Travel

Many employees resent the hours wasted when travelling to and from the office and find reduced travelling time a huge benefit. It can reduce the stress of travel, or having to cope with problems caused by public transport.

There is also considerable cost savings in terms of daily travel and added advantages of reducing environmental pollution caused by the need to commute.

In terms of enabling employees to apply for part time or job share work to care for dependants - the possibility of a reduction in travel time and cost can make the reduction in hours financially viable – and hence allow employees to stay with the Council rather than terminate their employment.

4. Costs

The cost of homeworking can vary a great deal. The cost for each individual home based position will vary depending on the equipment available at the home base site and the arrangements that can be reached with the employee.

A baseline cost consists of the equipment that may be required at home, and the costs of networking necessary information between the office and the home. The following are some of the main elements of expense that could be involved

- Telecommunication Systems/Call Handling
- Computers
- Other Business Equipment

Professional advice is available from Provider and the Roads and Transport Communications Unit, on the most viable and cost effective means of computer and telecommunications systems for each homeworking arrangement.

Other Requirements

- Homeworkers will have other requirements which will have a cost factor such as;
- Postage and courier services.
- First aid.
- Fire safety.
- Storage facilities for confidential information/secure equipment.
- Training and Guidance (for the manager and the employee)

5. Criteria for Homeworking Applications

What posts/tasks are suitable for homeworking

It would not be possible to provide a definitive list of occupations suitable for homeworking, however, research on homeworking indicates certain job characteristics which lend themselves to home based working. These characteristics are;

- A high degree of written rather than manual work.
- Work performed on an individual basis or with clearly defined areas of individual work i.e. project work, research and report writing, policy analysis, case work, administrative tasks.
- Work which has clearly defined objectives, and is not subject to sudden changes of priorities.
- Work that has performance measurement indicators.
- Work which does not require frequent input from other employees and centrally provided facilities.

The introduction of home based working should not cause an adverse effect on the level and quality of service.

Identifying employees for which homeworking would be suitable

The success of homeworking depends on the homeworker holding the right personal qualities and skills and with appropriate monitoring and support systems being in place.

The following are some of the characteristics that would be considered in approving an employee's application to take part in the homeworking scheme;

- Self motivation
- Self reliance and discipline to work without direct supervision.
- The ability to complete work to scheduled deadlines.

- Initiative, flexibility and time management skills.
- Ability to cope with reduced social contact and isolation.
- Ability to cope with additional pressures or working in the home where the demands of family life are difficult to ignore.

The above characteristics should be measurable and provide guidelines in terms of establishing evidence to support an individual application. They should also be used to monitor and review the continued viability of homeworking.

Choosing suitable location at home

Consideration has to be given to the suitability of the proposed location. The work site has to be adequate both for practical working and in terms of health and safety legislation. Ideally the employee should have a separate room or area set aside for homeworking which will be sufficient in terms of accommodating all the necessary furniture and equipment.

Health and Safety

Health and safety legislation that applies in an office generally applies in a homeworking situation. Ergonomics become even more important as quite often homeworking can involve continuous working periods longer than would be undertaken in an office environment. The Corporate Services' Health and Safety Team would assist services with risk assessments in a home based location.

Security

Security arrangements should be adopted and clarified in the homeworking agreement to ensure:

- Security and confidentiality of Xxxx Council equipment and information.
- No access of family and friends to work.
- Provision of secure containers.
- Protection of home computers and their links.
- Appropriate use of other communication links.
- Disposal of classified waste.

Insurance

The Xxxx Council's Employers Liability and Personal Accident insurance will cover homeworking provision as long as a risk assessment has been completed, and the employee has an amended contract of employment to denote their homeworking status.

Property

There will be no change to Council Tax or Domestic Rates. Domestic rate is only affected if the employee is carrying out a business from their home.

Dependant Care

It is not considered appropriate to combine homebased working with dependant care. As such homebased working should not be viewed as an alternative to paid dependant care.

6. Management Responsibilities

Once suitable posts and employees have been identified and approved for homeworking, arrangements should be put in place to ensure a smooth transition from office based working to homeworking.

Managing employees who work at home or at another location requires a different approach to those in traditional face to face management. An operational agreement will be put in place. It will be used in the monitoring and evaluation of the homeworking pilot.

The following issues should be agreed and used as part of the induction for employees entering into the homeworking scheme;

- Clear tasks and objectives.
- Procedure for assessing/monitoring performance and output.
- Contracted hours and how to record hours worked.
- Communication and reporting procedures.
- Arrangements for face to face meetings.
- Future training and development to be agreed through personal development plans.
- Ordering, delivery and installation of necessary equipment.

Employees entering into a homeworking agreement will require to receive an amended contract of employment.

Selection process should be seen to be fair and reasonable and in line with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. Reason for refusal of an application should be conveyed to an employee.

7. Employee Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of each employee to take reasonable care to ensure safety, and security of equipment and to maintain the working environment to the agreed health and safety standards.

Any equipment supplied by the Council should be used for the Council's work only. This is particularly important with respect to computer equipment due to the risk of introducing computer viruses.

Employees will be responsible for ensuring any necessary confidentiality as per the agreed homeworking operational agreement.

Employees who work at or from home will be covered by the terms of the Council's code of conduct.

Employees will be required to inform their home and contents insurer that extra IT equipment has been provided and that they are homeworking.

As there is a need to balance work and home life, employees should inform their friends and family about their homeworking arrangements to ensure that there will be minimal interruptions.

As there is a need to balance work and home life, employees should inform their friends and family about their homeworking arrangements to ensure that there will be minimal interruptions.

Appendix E2

APPLICATION TO HOMEWORK

Please read the information contained within the Policy and Guidelines on homeworking before you complete this form. If you require guidance please speak to your Line Manager or your Area Personnel Adviser or Personnel Advisers based at HQ.

For sake of brevity the formatting of the original has been removed

SERVICE:
SECTION:
NAME:
POST:
LINE MANAGERS NAME:

Please tick box where appropriate

Is your work performed on an individual basis or with clearly defined areas of individual work? Yes No

Can it be carried out without continuous face to face contact with other people?

Yes No

Can essential face to face contact be organised into, e.g. 1 day a week?

Yes No

Can the work be managed by results to meet targets agreed with Line Manager?

Yes No

Can information necessary on a daily basis be accessed by telephone or electronically?

Yes No

If your work is highly time sensitive, can it be delivered electronically or within hand delivery distance of the end user?

Yes No

What type of work do you undertake within your Section?

What percentage do you spend during your work (estimate)?

I. USING A COMPUTER?

Less than 15% 15% 30% 45% 60% 75% 90% 100%

II. MEETING WITH PUBLIC AT YOUR WORK PLACE?

Less than 15% 15% 30% 45% 60% 75% 90% 100%

III. MEETING WITH PUBLIC OUTSIDE THE OFFICE OR CARRYING OUT WORK AWAY FROM YOUR OFFICE?

Less than 15% 15% 30% 45% 60% 75% 90% 100%

IV. MEETINGS INTERNALLY WITH COLLEAGUES AT YOUR WORKPLACE?

Less than 15% 15% 30% 45% 60% 75% 90% 100%

V. OTHER – PLEASE SPECIFY

Less than 15% 15% 30% 45% 60% 75% 90% 100%

If other, please specify.....

REGULAR PATTERN OF WORK

The homeworker will undertake the following regular pattern of work

If other, please specify.....

MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM HOURS FOR HOMEWORKING

The homeworker will work at home for a maximum of hours and a minimum of hours in a four week period.

CREDITS FOR SICKNESS AND HOLIDAYS

The homeworker will be credited with the following hours for sickness and holidays – 7 hours per day other

If other please specify and give reasons.....

.....

REPORTING TO LINE MANAGER

The applicant will report to their line manager.

Daily Weekly As Required Other

If other, please specify.....

ATTENDING MEETINGS WITH LINE MANAGER

The applicant will attend meetings with their Line Manager and other members of their Section (note that this should be at least monthly and any travel or associated expense will be paid for by the homeworker).

Monthly Fortnightly Weekly

ABSENCE COVER

The applicant will ensure that all necessary information is available to the office based staff or other homeworkers during a period of absence such as holidays.

HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER

It is appropriate to give the following people the applicants home telephone number.

Only staff of the Xxxx Council /The public / Anyone that the homeworker chooses

Please give reasons

If for example the applicant only wants Council Staff to have their telephone number, staff should be made aware of the fact, and their home number should not be given out.

ALLOCATION/RETURN OF WORK

Work will be allocated by the Line Manager and returned by the homeworker in the following manner.....

HOMEWORKING PART TIME/FULL TIME

The homeworker will be working from home:

Full Time / Part Time / Fixed

Other, please specify.....

POST

If the homeworker is required to post items of correspondence the following arrangements have been agreed:

(I) The homeworker will fax/E Mail correspondence to official base to be signed and sent in mail.

(II) The homeworker will be allocated a float of stamps, envelopes etc and will record all postages in a post book.

(III) The homeworker will generally use system (I) above, but in exceptional circumstances will use system (ii) above.

(IV) Other

IDENTIFICATION OF EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO WORK FROM/AT HOME

Information to be updated at each Line Manager/Employee Meeting.

Date:

Attendees:

TASKS AND OBJECTIVES

PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSING/MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND OUTPUT.

For monitoring purposes the Line Manager should retain a copy of this form

Sheffield Hallam University

Flexible working policies and environments in UK Local Authorities: current practice

PRICE, Ilfryn

Available from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/3960/>

Copyright and re-use policy

Please visit <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/3960/> and <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html> for further details about copyright and re-use permissions.