

Hybrid Working

Lockdown measures across the UK and Isle of Man in 2020 as a means to control the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) resulted in people being ordered to stay – and work, where possible – at home, with all non-essential high street businesses closed and people only allowed outside their home for essential reasons.

The proven success of home-working for some departments and employees during the pandemic has meant that many people are expected to want to combine home (or remote) working with reduced workplace attendance.

This post-COVID approach to the design of work is being referred to as 'hybrid working' or 'blended working', where people will combine remote work with time spent in the workplace.



Hybrid working is a form of flexible working and the pandemic has undoubtedly been the catalyst for widespread interest in its potential to deliver both high levels of productivity for departments and a better work:life balance for employees.

Not all departments will be in a position to accommodate hybrid working as some occupations or roles may be unsuited to this. There is also some concern that socio-economic factors will make it more practical for some people to work from home than others, thus potentially generating workplace inequalities. The psychological health and safety of employees became a significant concern for employers during the pandemic. Some people experienced poor mental health (feelings of depression, anxiety, isolation and stress etc) and hybrid working, with its associated time spent in the office/workplace, can be a means of offering appropriate face to face support for those with psychological concerns.

What is Hybrid Working?

Hybrid or blended working can be described as a flexible workplace policy that allows people to work from different locations (at home, on the go, from the office, in a rented flexible space etc) but a key feature is that it includes both remote working and time spent in the office.

Where practical hybrid working can also potentially give employees some say over when they work. Not all work tasks are suitable for hybrid working and it is up to the manager to ascertain the practicality of this option for all, some or none of his/her job roles. There is no statutory right to hybrid working and whilst it can represent a flexible working option for

Case study

UK Cabinet Office Civil Service

UK Cabinet office Civil Service was joint winner of Timewise's 2020 Flexible Employer award.

It won the award for using flexible working to hit an ambitious inclusive employer aim.

The Civil Service actively promotes and encourages flexible working among



employees, it must be practical for the employer also.

Hybrid working potentially has an almost infinite number of options. If this way of working is appropriate for some, or all, of an departments employees it will need to be tailored to the needs of the role and, if relevant, those of the team in which the role fits. It could however look different for different employees, depending on their personal circumstances. Some examples of hybrid working arrangements include time spent in the office/workplace combined with time spent working:

- From home.
- In a co-working space with one or more colleagues.
- Daytime work in someone else's home.
- In a café or other public space – subject to appropriate data security protection measures.
- At a base overseas – even across different time zones.
- Anywhere where there is a secure internet connection, no interruptions and data protection can be assured.

existing staff and potential applicants, using open communication channels, such as a blog on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and the Civil Service Careers website.

To make it easier for users to find the roles they're looking for, the site includes a work pattern search function, with options such as job share, homeworking and part-time.

Additionally, after managers and staff asked for a range of different ways to access information and support flexible workers, the Civil Service created a 'gateway' advisory tool.

As a result of these initiatives, the appetite for flexible working has increased year on year, as has its availability. In 2018-19, of the 44,000 vacancies advertised on Civil Service Jobs, 98% had flexible working options available; a clear demonstration of the success of their approach.

Legal Requirements

The umbrella term 'flexible working' describes a wide range of working conditions (part-time, annualised hours, flexitime, term time working etc) but is perhaps best described as an agreed alteration to an employee's working pattern to suit their needs or preferences. Hybrid or blended working is a form of flexible working and whilst normally associated with a split work location, it can also be linked to modified working hours.

Hybrid working involves attending both the workplace and working remotely (often from home).

Before permitting home-working the employer must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed to ensure all potential hazards and risks have been properly considered.

Risks to health from display screen equipment (DSE) must be managed. For long-term home-working, employers should explain how to carry out full workstation assessments and provide workers with appropriate equipment and advice on control measures.

Employees working at home must take all reasonable steps for the safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their work activities, e.g. visitors and family members. They must:



- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of anyone else who might be affected by their acts or omissions.
- Work according to any instructions and training received from their manager.
- Report any hazards not addressed by their procedures or risk assessment.
- Not deliberately or recklessly interfere with, or misuse, anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

Employee benefits and challenges of hybrid working

Benefits

- Better work:life balance.
- Potentially, more flexibility in working hours.
- Reduced commuting costs and travel time.
- Ability to relocate further from the workplace.
- Opportunity to improve IT skills.
- Lower vehicle insurance premiums due to limited mileage policies.
- Ability to accommodate caring responsibilities (both people and domestic pets) whilst remaining in employment.
- Easier to manage a disability or chronic health condition.
- Employees feel trusted.
- Some in-office time offers social interaction and promotes creativity and collaboration.

Challenges

- Finding a space at home conducive to work or renting a workspace.
- Managing distractions (noise, family etc).
- The risk of poor mental health as a result of more isolated working.
- Setting work:life boundaries.
- Internet connection speed.
- Effectively collaborating with other.
- Obtaining appropriate line manager support.
- Communication costs – phone and broadband charges.
- Checking with a landlord or mortgage provider that home working is permissible and no covenants will be breached.
- Checking home insurance cover.
- ‘Switching off’ at the end of the working day.

