

# The future of flexible working

Now is the time to leverage lessons recently learned, experiment in flexible working, and reap the rewards – say Clare Kelliher and Sarah Jackson from the Cranfield School of Management, two of the UK’s leading authorities on flexible work.

Flexible working offers employees discretion over their working hours, place, and time. It is a wider concept than hybrid working and includes both part-time and other customised work patterns.

The flexible furlough schemes adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic required managers, previously often resistant to part-time work due to the additional organisational challenges and extra costs of recruitment and training, to adapt to new ways of working.

## How things have changed

Through adapting and responding to the experience of recent years managers around the world have:



# Key implications of flexible working

## Value of experimentation

New ideas around how work is organised and how employees are managed.

## Economic activity

Flexible work offers can encourage older people or the health-impaired back into the workforce.

## Evidence of better employee performance

Performance benefits when flexible work creates more time for employees to recover. Findings from recent experiments in a four-day working week support this.

## Operational efficiency

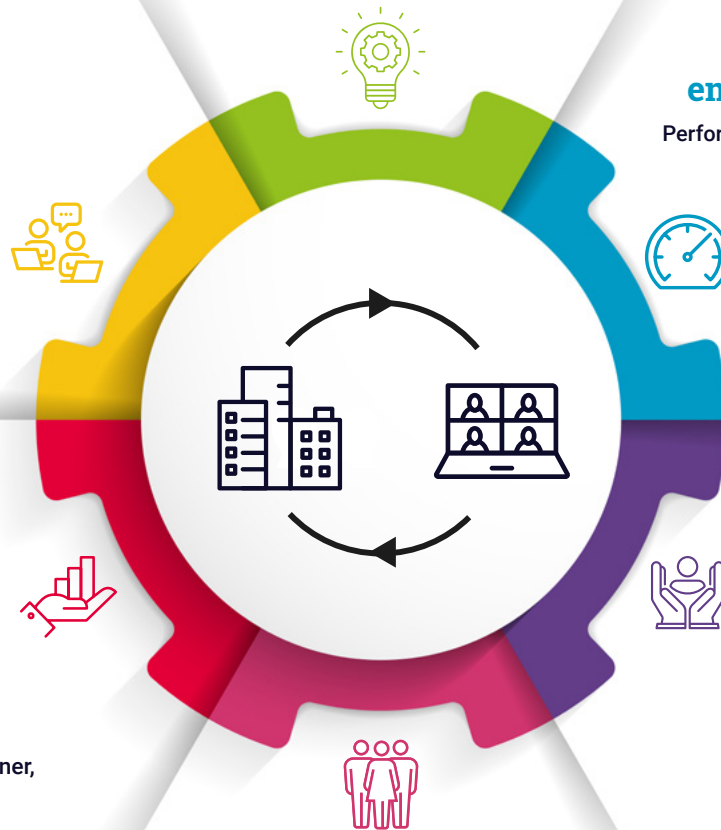
A greater focus on tailoring human resources to match demand patterns leads to leaner, more efficient operations.

## Diversity and inclusion

A wider workforce can be included as flexibility offers greater opportunities for those not able to work on a full-time basis.

## Recruitment and retention

Offering flexibility can help companies hold on to employees and attract new talent.



## Wider benefits from flexible working revealed by the pandemic

1

### Increased manager confidence

The positive way managers responded to workforce challenges during the pandemic bodes well for addressing other challenges, and brings a welcome openness to considering alternative ways to get the job done.

2

### Time vs. money

The growth in popularity of this concept combined with increased calls for flexible working from employees raises awareness that time as well as money should be prioritised in any job offers.

3

### Employee well-being

Work intensification, long hours, unpredictability, a lack of boundaries; work is making us ill. Greater certainty and control over working hours and an improved work/life balance are linked to better mental and physical well-being.