Centre for Ageing Better

Flexible Working for Older Workers

Evaluation of a programme to explore how over 50s can access the benefits of flexible working

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December 2021

in partnership with:

THE TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE®

About us

Centre for Ageing Better

The UK's population is undergoing a massive age shift. In less than 20 years, one in four people will be over 65.

The fact that many of us are living longer is a great achievement. But unless radical action is taken by government, business and others in society, millions of us risk missing out on enjoying those extra years.

At the Centre for Ageing Better we want everyone to enjoy later life. We create change in policy and practice informed by evidence and work with partners across England to improve employment, housing, health and communities.

We are a charitable foundation, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and part of the government's What Works Network.

Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR)

Founded in 1947, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) is an independent, not-for-profit, multi-disciplinary social science organisation dedicated to the study of human relations for the purpose of bettering working life and conditions for people within their organisations, communities and broader societies. Working nationally and internationally, the TIHR's core activities are: evaluation, particularly of complex programmes in a range of areas of public policy (including children and young people; health; transport; education, training and employment); applied research; and organisational consultancy. Our evaluation work also includes provision of bespoke evaluation training for a wide variety of organisations (local government, central government, third sector organisations), development of evaluation frameworks and guidelines, and support with managing and commissioning evaluations. The TIHR is committed to work with people and organisations to make sense of situations, apply learning from evaluation and research into practice, all in service of supporting ongoing learning.

Acknowledgements

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) would like to thank the Centre for Ageing Better for commissioning this evaluation, and Guys and St Thomas Trust (GSTT) and Legal & General (L&G) for the opportunity to carry out this work. With the COVID-19 pandemic, their continued engagement and support have enabled us to use the evaluation also as an opportunity to understand flexible working in a new context. Our thanks also to Timewise for taking part in discussions throughout.

Without the people who participated in interviews we would not have been able to collect such rich data. Our special thanks go to all the pilot participants and other members of staff at GSTT and L&G who shared their experiences with us.

Contents

Executive summary

The Flexible Working pilot

The Centre for Ageing Better worked with the Timewise Foundation and two large employers to increase the availability and take up, by people over 50, of more flexible working arrangements.

"The collaboration between Timewise and the Centre for Ageing Better was designed as an 18-month programme to explore how over 50s can access the benefits of flexible working, bringing value to employers through improved employee wellbeing and motivation and, in the longer term, recruitment and retention."

The Flexible Working Pilot project, delivered in Guys and St.Thomas' Trust (GSTT) and Legal & General (L&G), aimed to increase the availability and take up, by older workers, of more flexible working arrangements. The pilot trialled changes to the working patterns of a cohort of over 50s with Timewise providing support and guidance to them and their line managers. The pilot completed in February 2020 (therefore before COVID-19).

The evaluation

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) carried out an independent evaluation of the pilot. The overall aim was to understand and learn about what works in implementing and facilitating access to flexible working – for which people and in what kinds of situations – addressing the following questions:

– What do new flexible working practices look like in the pilot sites?

– What outcomes and impacts have these new practices had?

– To whom have these flexible working practices made a difference?

– What sort of organisational changes were required in the pilot sites to enable new flexible working arrangements to become a reality?

We initially answered these through:

– Reviewing Timewise, L&G and GSTT information

– Observing training sessions delivered by Timewise

- Asking pre- and post-training questions of pilot participants (both line managers and job holders)
- Carrying out initial interviews with pilot participants (both line managers and job holders)
- Circulating an online survey to pilot participants and older workers at GSTT and L&G who were invited to take part in the pilot but did not
- Holding follow-up interviews with pilot participants (both line managers and job holders)

Midway into the pilot COVID-19 took hold, which generated large scale and significant change as most participants moved to working from home, with some making additional changes to their working patterns. We moved to exploring not only what had changed because of the pilot, but also what impact the pandemic had on job holders' chosen flexible working arrangements and sought to understand what the impact of COVID-19 had been on working practices in both organisations outside the pilot.

What changed for pilot participants and their line managers?

Job holders highlighted that most flexible working arrangements trialled went well. However, their experience was shaped by the external context and, with COVID-19, the picture changed dramatically. Our learning suggested there were four broad pathways for job holders into and through flexible working:

- **Pathway 1:** where the **arrangement became no longer relevant** in its original form - particularly because of the shift to working from home following lockdown.
- **Pathway 2:** here original **arrangements continued to work as planned with no changes made**, but participants also 'acquired' the added (default) flexibility of working from home dictated by circumstances.
- **Pathway 3:** where **original arrangements remained largely unchanged, but participants made additional minor tweaks to them** (without changing their core features).
- **Pathway 4:** the most disruptive, which saw **some participants unable to continue with their planned arrangement at all** because COVID-19 increased demands on participants' time.

The significant changes in both pilot organisations included requiring home working (apart from clinical staff at GSTT) and that they then provided digital and remote working support, e.g. for those who might have felt isolated and amending line management and supervision mechanisms and style. Both organisations additionally developed ways and tools to support line managers as they moved to working remotely with their teams.

The benefits of the pilot that **job holders** described included:

– Better work life balance

– Less time commuting

– Better mental health

– Greater sense of focus when at work

– Greater sense of value and recognition

Although they did not find either the trialled arrangements or the changes resulting from COVID-19 difficult to implement and spoke to the benefits of the post-COVID-19 expansion of flexible working arrangements (discussed in more detail below), a few **found themselves working longer hours**. They described the challenges of being able to manage work/life boundaries (because of regularly working from home), also raised by some line managers, with concerns of how to deal with its implications.

Some suggested that COVID-19 had enabled them to feel more confident about asking for a modification to their flexible working arrangements or to have an even better understanding what flexible working options are possible.

Very few shortcomings to the pilot were mentioned by job holders. Some described difficulty acclimatising to working flexibly, due to concerns that they may be perceived as not pulling their weight in their teams. For others, their hands-on management style felt incompatible with having to delegate responsibility to junior staff when they were not at work. However, these issues were generally temporary and resolved once the job holder had acclimatised to their new working pattern.

The benefits **line managers** reported seeing centred on:

– Greater productivity

– Improved employee satisfaction

– Improved recruitment and retention

– More effective distribution of staff resource.

What worked well about the trial

Piloting was clearly important and it was suggested that having external support and facilitation was an additional factor when introducing, promoting and rolling out flexible working. Timewise had considerable knowledge and expertise, knew what options would be appropriate and provided a legitimacy that in turn may have helped the pilot organisations to take the initiative seriously.

The pilot was an opportunity for both organisations to develop their existing flexible working practices. At L&G, a general and organisation-wide flexible and agile working policy for everyone appeared to work well, but practice differed across managers. At GSTT, practices varied across services and the pilot helped to raise the profile of flexible working as well as supporting managers to shift perceptions and consider different ways of working. The specific **added value of the pilot** was that it:

– Provided a safe and contained opportunity to trial new working arrangements that could be reversed if unsuccessful or modified.

– Publicised flexible working, helping managers and job holders understand the available options and provide them with a space explicitly designed to focus their thinking.

– Enabled participants to connect with others facing similar circumstances, which validated their difficulties.

– Legitimised flexible working by offering a route to ask for a change that some job holders did not think would be accepted or did not think they were entitled to.

– Challenged attitudes and organisational cultures and helped explore new ways of working and collaborating, all of which were then accelerated due to COVID-19.

Timewise have argued that any new flexible working arrangement will benefit from a pilot or trial period. This enables the individual, their line manager and their team (if relevant) to become accustomed to new arrangements, review their appropriateness and leave the door open for further change. This pilot conformed with good practice in the process almost regardless of what people might have thought about the training. Thus the intervention itself was the principal facilitating factor.

What needs to be in place to make flexible working successful?

The conditions for success appeared to be reliant on three core interconnected elements – job holders, teams and organisations – with the characteristics of each needing to be in place at the outset. The emergent picture was complex and the evaluation findings suggest that there are many factors, from individual wishes through to ensuring teams can dovetail their activities to meet the requirements of the organisation. The learning here also suggests that there are essential elements that can enable the promotion of flexible working – now more than ever on many organisations' agendas.

For individuals

Individual characteristics, as well as the characteristics of their roles, appeared to be important factors in whether flexible working felt plausible, successful or was even desirable. In practice, this was often due to the specifics of working arrangements that involved different set of demands on individuals, line managers and the wider organisation. At the same time, they were likely to include a mixture of personality types, work/office set ups and the need for customer/public contact.

For teams

Ideally, it is teams that make flexible working feasible. In the pilot, teams often worked on the basis of collective understanding, coming together in the delivery of the core work. We learned from line managers that some were not as enthusiastic about 'new' practices but recognised that (and even more so as a result of COVID-19), it would be difficult to avoid incorporating flexible practice into their teams even where there had been apparently negative impacts.

Line managers said they recognised that not every individual would want to work flexibly and agreement to requests would also be dependent on how this would fit with the demands of the business. Beyond this, participants in the evaluation suggested that for flexible working to succeed in teams, four elements were critical:

– **Buy-in from managers:** although job holders had variable experiences, participation in the pilot training appeared to have been an important factor in ensuring line management commitment.

– **Trust:** this became increasingly important as more people moved to working from home and job holders said they did feel trusted by line managers. Some referred to the importance of team trust and strong team relationships as enablers for successful flexible working. Openness and transparency were considered essential where team members understood why people worked flexibly and would therefore be more likely to cover for them when needed. Concerns about productivity appeared to be unfounded.

– **Reciprocity, equity and in-team flexibility:** Job holders and line managers recognised the need for 'give and take' and this was more noticeable during the pandemic. Some jobholders were concerned that others may see them as privileged, but managers understood the need to demonstrate fairness and encourage fairness and tolerance. Where reciprocity and trust were embedded in a team and in relationships, access to and implementation of flexible working was easier.

– **Capacity to provide additional support:** For the pilot participants, line management was largely unaffected. With COVID-19, some line managers found themselves increasing the number of occasions, both formal and social, on which they met staff – related to trust, but also for many a genuine desire to ensure individuals were still connected to teams and colleagues. They recognised that flexible working (and if/when people return to their workplace) needed to be supported and individuals needed to be reminded on how to access this.

For organisations

Widening conversations beyond a team within and across organisations was considered essential. Pilot participants described the importance of ensuring that flexible working was deemed an acceptable and integral part of work practice. Key considerations also included:

– **Providing formal definitions and flexible working practice:** For some people, a recognised agreement was very important. However, retaining a less formal process remained important in some situations where a small number of participants here abandoned their formal agreement for a more ad hoc approach.

– **Offering an open culture with shared values:** This required ensuring conversations were had across organisations and, in some instances, providing role-modelling to enable flexible working. There was also a recognition of the need to move beyond individual to team objectives, which helped create a collective sense of purpose round contribution to the organisation.

– **Ensuring a structure and systems in place:** This required having access to relevant IT systems and providing for individuals who wished to start work particularly early or work particularly late by having offices that were open and staffed (pre-COVID-19). Some offices had carpooling policies, which limited an individual's choice about when to get to and from work, especially if public transport was less freely available (for example, if buses or trains are infrequent or begin at a particular time in the morning), which needed to be considered.

The age specificity of flexible working

The pilot was explicitly targeted at those who were aged 50 and over. However, most participants in the evaluation, and in the light of COVID-19 that created large-scale change in working practices, queried whether flexible working should be restricted to older workers. At the same time, some acknowledged that the age-related element did offer:

- Showing the value that the organisation gives to older workers and their experience/expertise

- Opening conversations about and normalising 'ageing'

- Making participants feel less "alone" in their need to change their patterns (highlighted above).

There was consensus that flexible working was a good thing for all employees, with provisos related to the core business of the organisation or service, department and team requirements, and that individual roles could accommodate flexible patterns. At the same time, and within this broad agreement, there was recognition that an age-sensitive approach was helpful as job holders experience life differently dependent on their stage within a working life-cycle.

Flexible working into the future

For flexible working to be sustainable and for organisations to plan for the future, the findings from the evaluation suggest a range of key lessons for employers:

- **Having a point in time when 'business as usual' practices were questioned, and new ways of working implemented, is valuable in implementing flexible working.** Both the pilot intervention and the impact of COVID-19 demonstrated this. It was not necessarily the pilot that made the difference but rather the act of providing time and space to make changes and question working patterns.

- **Offering over 50s specifically the opportunity to consider flexible working may make them feel more involved and valued by their employer.** The stage in an individual's life and/or career may be important to consider in implementing flexible working. But flexible working does not need to be only targeted to or supported for people over 50 for them to benefit.

- **Flexible working does not need to mean wholesale change; small-scale changes can make a significant difference to individuals** without adversely affecting others or the workload.

- **Trust within teams and between line managers and employees** is critical to successful flexible working – even more so post-pandemic where home working has significantly increased. This may now involve a greater investment of time in relationships that may result in benefits for employers and employees.

- **Successful flexible working needs a personalised approach.** This involves line managers having an in-depth awareness and understanding of what employees need by ensuring intentional, flexible-working focused conversations

- At the same time, it is important to move the conversation focused on how flexible working can benefit individuals and teams to the **broader, "visionary" conversations** about how an organisation can redesign and deliver in the future. This implies always thinking at 'scale', e.g. if one person requests a change, what would this mean for the team or if the entire team wanted to change their working arrangements?

- Encouraging staff to **share their team-based approaches to flexible working** will facilitate change by adding to the evidence on how different ways of working can be successful (and therefore continue to shift the culture). Role models – including at a senior level – can show what is possible.

- **There may be inequalities in who can work flexibly** and organisations can explore this through conversations with staff about flexible working on what would work for individuals and the employer.

Some key considerations emerged in light of the pandemic:

- **Home working policies need to be reviewed** because they may no longer be fit for purpose. The expectation is that many people will work remotely or from home some if not all the time, which needs to be explicit in organisational policies.

- **Organisations can take the opportunity to focus on how jobs are designed** that recognises that not every job needs to be full-time.

- People did not want to go back to 'how things were' and the way forward is to capitalise on the learning and transformation brought about by COVID-19.

Flexible working often happens informally. In some situations, formalising the process and practice will help to reinforce the values that many described as critical to its success. These encompassed transparency and trust, which may also lead to equity and fairness. The evaluation findings showed that reciprocity was also a foundation to good practice where line managers acknowledged that job holders gave back as much and sometimes more than they were given.

1. Introduction

‘Let's think outside the 9-5 box. For the new generation, this old school way will not work. It will not attract the future workforce. They do not want to do it like this – we need to adapt. They're just not going to come if we don't change.’

Line Manager

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) has been working with the Centre for Ageing Better, Legal & General (L&G), Guys and St. Thomas' Trust (GSTT) and Timewise to undertake an independent evaluation of the Flexible Working pilot project. Our overall aim was to understand and learn about what works in implementing and facilitating access to flexible working, for which people and in what kinds of situations.

Timewise took a two-phased approach to the pilot project[1,2]:

– **Insights research:** The first phase consisted of focus groups and surveys with six large employers: Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Leeds City Council, Legal & General, McDonalds, Sodexo and Whitbread. Timewise spoke to more than 40 staff aged 50 and over from these organisations, as well as 34 managers with older people[3] in their teams. They also ran a survey with 421 respondents to understand attitudes and perceptions about work-life balance and flexible working, and to gain an insight into their lived experience. This was conducted between November 2018 and February 2019.

– **Employer pilots:** The research was followed by pilots with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and two divisions at Legal & General. The purpose of the pilots was to bring about changes in individuals' working patterns for a cohort of over 50s, providing them and their managers with the training and tools to implement and adapt to different flexible working patterns. Both employers used the lessons and resources to further develop their flexible working offer to their staff aged 50 and over, as well as other demographics. This part of the programme

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1   https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Timewise-Flex-Working-full-report.pdf

2   https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Timewise-Flex-Working-toolkit.pdf

3   In this report, we use the term 'older people' to refer to those over the age of 50, which was the definition employed in the design of this pilot. In practice, this equated to pilot participants between the ages of 50 and 70. We do not make any claims which apply to over 70's.

ran from May 2019 to February 2020 and was completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The collaboration between Timewise and the Centre for Ageing Better was designed as an 18-month programme to explore how over 50s can access the benefits of flexible working, bringing value to employers through improved employee wellbeing and motivation and, in the longer term, recruitment and retention.

The Flexible Working Pilot project, delivered in GSTT and L&G, aimed to support both organisations to increase the availability and take up, by those over 50s, of more flexible working arrangements.

Both are very large organisations with a wide range of job roles. The pilots involved trialling changes to the working patters of a cohort of over 50s (20 in each organisation), with Timewise providing support and guidance for them and their line managers. The project took place between November 2018 and February 2020 (therefore before Covid-19). Following Timewise's early 'insights' research[4], key project activities **delivered in the context of existing flexible working policy and practices** included:

– diagnostic work (focused on the individual's job role, providing a steer to consider what sort of flexibility might be possible)

– the delivery of a training workshop (to look at what flexibility would work at the individual level within their team and agree on a flexible working arrangement to trial)

– the implementation of the trial of the flexible working arrangement agreed

When the pilot project started, there had been considerable change in the way flexible working was understood and some employers had already introduced formal Flexible Working programmes to support their employees. The initial plan was for the Tavistock Institute to undertake a scoping exercise where pre-existing data, along with information derived from initial conversations and workshops, was used to produce an evaluation framework, a Theory of Change and a Theory of Scale (see Appendix 1 for more detail). These activities helped produce initial key evaluation questions:

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4   https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Timewise-Flex-Working-full-report.pdf

– What do new flexible working practices look like in the pilot sites?

– What outcomes have these new flexible working practices had?

– For whom have these flexible working practices had outcomes and impacts?

– What sort of organisational changes were required in the pilot sites to enable new flexible working arrangements to become a reality?

After this first phase, we planned to answer these questions through:

– Reviewing Timewise, L&G and GSTT information on the flexible working routines that job holders adopted, including from:

– The initial requests made by job holders

– Mid-trial reviews with both job holders and line managers

– Post-trial case studies

– Observing training sessions delivered by Timewise

– Asking pre- and post-training questions of pilot participants (both line managers and job holders)

– Carrying out initial interviews with pilot participants (both line managers and job holders)

– Circulating an online survey to:

– Pilot participants

– Older workers at GSTT and L&G who were invited to take part in the pilot but did not

– Holding follow-up interviews with pilot participants (both line managers and job holders).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic generated large scale and significant change as most pilot participants moved to working from home, with some making additional changes to their working patterns. The evaluation therefore took place within the vastly changed context of the pandemic and resulting lockdowns. As a result, while we still conducted follow-up interviews, we expanded these beyond the focus on the flexible working routines adopted during the pilot or their impacts. We moved to exploring not only what had changed because of the pilot, but also what impact the pandemic had on job holders' chosen flexible working arrangements and, specifically, asked if they were able to continue with them, how had they changed and what impact has this had on their lives. Additionally, we sought to understand what the impact of COVID-19 had been on working practices in both organisations outside the pilot by posing the following questions:

- How did working practices shift due to COVID-19?

- What was required to implement these changes?

- What were the challenges, benefits and disadvantages associated with these changes, and for whom?

- What was learned about flexible working and how it can be facilitated?

- What might flexible working practices look like in either organisation in the future?

We aimed to answer these through a series of additional interviews with members of the pilot advisory group (who belonged to different organisations) and managers in other departments of GSTT and L&G (who had been responsible or significantly affected by the changes to working patterns and routines prompted by COVID-19).

The learning is described in this report. However, we acknowledge that the impact of the pandemic and crisis responses to flexible working practices now and for the future are still unfolding.

The following sections explore what happened to the job holders, managers and organisations taking part in the pilot both before and after the March 2020 first COVID-19 lockdown. We address core questions about:

- what new flexible working practices look like in the pilot sites

- what outcomes and impacts they have had and for whom

We also open the discussion about the **organisational changes required in the pilot sites to enable new flexible working arrangements** to become a reality and examine, in the light of what we have learnt, **what will happen tomorrow and into the future for flexible working** including for people over 50.

2. The contexts of flexible working before and during COVID-19

'Flexible working is shown to increase the productivity and morale of workers and making it an option will help address the UK's longstanding productivity gap and help level-up the country.'[5]

In this section, we look at the pre-pandemic picture, setting out the specific context for people over 50 as a way of acknowledging that their aspirations, needs and requirements may be different to other age groups at different stages in their working lives.

2.1 The meaning of flexible working

2.1.1 The national picture before COVID-19

The history of flexible working can be dated back to the 1970s in the UK. However, it was only in 2003 that the UK government introduced **the right to request flexible working**, but limited it to parents and some other carers. Over ten years later in 2014, the legislation was extended to all employees in post for 26 weeks or more, regardless of their responsibilities. However, this offered no guarantee of approval and, as our evaluation shows, there continued to be an emphasis on caring responsibilities as the most legitimate argument to change an individual's work pattern. Today, particularly as organisations reflect on the impact of COVID-19, there are increasing calls to consider requests from all employees and for any reason, as one manager told us:

'If you're going to offer it to everyone then offer it not just to people with children. If you want to do flexible working to have a nice Friday or something, that's fine. It's as valid as having kids.'

Line Manager

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5   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-says-in-the-interest-of-employers-and-employees-to-make-offer-of-flexible-working-standard

Prior to COVID-19 and its widespread impact on how people work, flexible working was understood in the context of formal approaches to defining and applying within-organisation practices, in particular considering when, where and how much people wanted to change their arrangements. Formal flexible working has been defined as including part-time, compressed hours, working from home, working term-time and job sharing[6] and all were based on agreement with line managers, limited to a specific arrangement.

The pandemic has led to a widespread shift in understanding of flexible working as primarily working from home. However, access to home-working has been unequal. According to a recent ONS study[7], managers and other professionals over 50 were more like to say they were always able to work from home, compared to less than 40% of this same age group engaged in routine roles.

Participants in the evaluation described a 'before and during' situation, as well as anticipating what may happen in the future in their organisations where flexible working is implemented formally and informally. Although there were arguments for having informal approaches, so working from home on an ad hoc basis, the advantages of a formal arrangement have been described as enabling job holders to make requests and crucially, legitimising different work practices.

2.1.2 GSTT and L&G's flexible working pre COVID-19

Here, a brief overview of the flexible working arrangements in place before the Timewise pilot took place is provided, thus pre-dating COVID-19. Both organisations regularly consulted with staff about satisfaction in the workplace, including their views of flexible working practices. There was also a degree of informal and unmonitored flexible working taking place, so it is unclear as to the extent or type of arrangements in place.

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6   https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/types-of-flexible-working

7   https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/
birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglonger/
olderworkersduringthecovid19pandemic

Guys and St Thomas' Trust

GSTT had been struggling, particularly with **issues related to recruitment and retention**. It is a large Trust (c. 18,000 staff) that has seen a 30% growth in staff over five years and the voluntary turnover rate (voluntary early retirement and voluntary resignation) was understood to be faring well at 12.6%. However, an analysis of the data in 2016 highlighted that 40% of leavers could have been enabled to stay (with work-life balance mentioned as a key reason for leaving) and that 18% of nurses were leaving within their first year. In addition, while a staff satisfaction survey also highlighted that over 54% of staff felt satisfied with their flexible working, those who worked full-time were less satisfied[8].

In terms of existing flexible working arrangements, practices and policies, there was a mixture of staff working part-time, compressed hours and a small number of job-shares, both formal and informal. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were seen to be 'pockets of great practice happening' (stakeholder interview) and there were seen to be challenges to accessing and implementing flexible working, including staff not always feeling comfortable talking about flexible working, and some line managers' resistance to it largely related to perceptions of possible difficulties of flexible working, particularly for certain roles. As one manager said, 'There is a perception that for corporate staff flexible working is easier, and that rosters are more difficult and trickier.'

It was within this context that **GSTT had started focusing on flexible working 18 months prior to the pilot** by developing a programme of work that included:

– **Linking flexible working to other existing workplace strategies** including their Digital Strategy and New Ways of Working

– Focusing **communication** on the importance of work-life balance to open conversations around flexible working

– Creating **'pop-up' surgeries** for staff to discuss challenges with their working arrangements and exchange experiences and ideas

– Focusing on **building the evidence** to show and promote how flexible working can work

– **Developing tools** to support access to flexible working, such as a Staff Guide (e.g. on how ask/make a business case for flexible working) and a Guide for Managers (e.g. on how to deal with flexible working requests); and webinars on related topics

Getting involved in the Flexible Working pilot was therefore an opportunity to build on, and expand, this existing package of initiatives.

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8   https://www.nhsemployers.org/-/media/Employers/Publications/GSTT-case-study-April-2018.pdf

Legal & General

For **L&G**, the pilot was also an opportunity to 'move the organisation further' in the knowledge that 'we could do better' in relation to flexible working practices. The organisation had a general and organisation-wide flexible and agile working policy for everyone[9], with the latter seen to be working particularly well.

– However, and not unlike GSTT pre-pandemic, there was a difference in practice pre-COVID largely related to some managers' resistance to flexible arrangements. For example, 'some agree to one day a week working from home while others agree to four' and there was still a feeling that 'flexible working needs to be sold' (stakeholder interview) to managers.

– Moreover, this resistance was compounded by the perceived rigidity of pre-existing HR processes related to flexible working, which made it a longer-term undertaking that was difficult to reverse if it did not work for the individual or organisation. When combined with concerns about the trust and accountability required to make flexible working possible and questions over whether it would work in more target-driven, customer facing, or high-pressure roles, the need to promote flexible working was clear.

– In these circumstances, the onus to justify flexible working was said to fall entirely on the job holder, which required much awareness and confidence from them.

GSTT and L&G were interested in the 50+ target group for broadly similar reasons plus neither had explicitly focused on staff in this age range before. For GSTT, while the composition of the organisation is generally younger it had areas where there is a majority of workers aged 50 and over (e.g. catering and communities services) and the interest was in planning ahead and understanding how flexible working may 'entice people to stay in their jobs longer' (stakeholder interview) therefore retaining the wealth of experience of older staff. For L&G, the interest in this cohort of older workers came from the desire to understand 'whether we were having the right conversations with them' (stakeholder interview) because, while the organisation had acknowledged the need for flexible working for younger workers, there had not been the same level of understanding of the life circumstances which may have been different for older workers.

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9   Flexible working is usually defined as related to how individuals work. Agile working denotes an organisation's response to achieving its objectives.

For GSTT, the pilot was a way to

– Continue in the journey of raising the profile of flexible working

– Generally to get to a point in which talking about it 'feels normal' and where 'managers are open to it'

– Support managers to think about flexible working differently and shift perceptions, as well as feed into the evidence generation of how flexible working can be successful

This was similar for L&G, who also wanted to develop better tools to support staff to have conversations they might not be comfortable having with their managers and to support them to make decisions on what type of working arrangement would work best for them.

2.2 The national impact of COVID-19 on people over 50

It is widely known that older people have been adversely affected in both medical and non-medical ways by COVID-19. For example:

– A nationally representative Ipsos MORI survey[10] that explored how people aged between 50 and 70 experienced the pandemic found that more than a third (36%)[11] stated that their mental health had deteriorated. The effects were greater on those aged between 50 and 60, and on those considered more vulnerable (e.g. who are out of work, live in rented accommodation, with a poor financial outlook or whose physical health had deteriorated).

– People who live alone were also more likely to say that their mental health had suffered during lockdowns. In addition, the research highlighted that the impact on participants' mental health often manifested in feelings of stress and anxiety due to concerns around employment and finances (felt particularly by those who had been furloughed, or who were out of work and concerned about the impact of this on the job market); personal health (a concern for those with pre-existing health conditions and those shielding); and the health and wellbeing of their family members.

There is also a considerable volume of evidence about the impact of COVID-19 on organisations, their changing work practices, employment and how older people are affected by this, including:

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10   July 2020: Approaching Later Life in Lockdown, a study carried out by IPSOS Mori and the Centre for Ageing Better. The study also included a focused literature review and longitudinal interviews with 19 purposively selected participants. https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/experience-of-people-approaching-later-life-lockdown.pdf

11   1,000 participants responded to the online survey

- In June 2020, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggested that data up to early May showed that older people were no more concerned about finances than other age groups, but were less optimistic about a return to 'normal'[12].

- However and while older people are less frequently in paid work, where they are, the Institute for Fiscal Studies argues now that 'older workers are one group of people who are at risk of suffering serious and persistent consequences from the economic turmoil arising from the coronavirus pandemic'[13] including job losses, difficulties finding new work and the negative effect of the crisis on retirement savings. Yet, in March 2021, the Employment Minister told AgeUK[14]:

'There's a danger that older workers feel they need to get out of the way for younger workers – we don't want that. This can be one of the most fulfilling times of your career and where you can choose what path to pursue, and we want to make sure that people are able to use their talents.'

- According to the Centre for Aging Better 'the number of older workers on unemployment-related benefits has nearly doubled because of the pandemic – increasing from 304,000 in March to 588,000 in June'[15].

- Over 50s may feel reluctant to request flexible working in a world where they have been disproportionately likely to have been furloughed or made redundant[16].

- In 2018, pre-dating COVID-19, the UK government established a flexible working taskforce[17] to improve workplace equality, co-chaired by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The CIPD has subsequently provided a range of flexible working practice guidance[18] that has been updated in 2021 to include the impact of the pandemic.

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12   https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/
        birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/
        coronavirusandthesocialimpactsonolderpeopleingreatbritain/3aprilto10may2020

13   https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/BN305-The-coronavirus-pandemic-and-older-workers.pdf

14   https://www.ageuk.org.uk/discover/2021/march/the-future-of-employment-for-
        older-people/

15   https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/Tackling-
        worklessness-among-over-50s-after-covid-report.pdf

16   https://www.ft.com/content/1713815d-567a-467c-91ac-f5fd73239ded

17   https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/policy-engagement/flexible-working#gref

18   https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/
        factsheet

– Timewise has suggested that older workers may have been overlooked as organisations plan for post-COVID workplaces and offer their advice to including them[19].

In terms of changes to working practices because of lockdown, it is important to note that working remotely has also brought positives. The Ipsos MORI study[20] found that those who have been working at home mentioned the increased flexibility this allows, for example being able to adapt their working schedule to fit around their other commitments. Those continuing to go into work noted the quicker commuting time (due to reduced traffic), resulting in less stress. These findings chime with the data emerging from this evaluation where we heard about the benefits of reduced commuting for those who started working from home, of increased time available to spend on other things, as well as reduced stress and reduced living costs.

The impact of COVID-19 on flexible working is yet to be fully understood. However, many organisations have introduced change and at a pace that could not have been anticipated or planned. They are exploring opportunities for 'hybrid' working with a mix of office and home. A recent study suggested that two thirds of people aged 55 and over preferred this model compared to returning to the workplace[21]. A key consideration is how changing work practices have affected the ways in which managers communicate and, at the same time, are able to recognise greater satisfaction for job holders. The pandemic has accelerated change within organisations and, in parallel, is influencing conversations about employment policy and legislation[22].

2.3 The impact of COVID-19 on flexible working at GSTT and L&G

The entire working landscape was changed by COVID-19, forcing a rapid scaling up of flexible working practices. While its full impact is yet to be realised in terms of health, social and economic life in the UK, for organisations like L&G and GSST there was an immediate effect and they are working with the continuing consequences of the pandemic. The message to staff from both organisations was to work from home if possible, and that no one was forced to do anything they felt uncomfortable with. Then

19   https://timewise.co.uk/article/looking-after-your-older-workers-during-the-coronavirus/

20   https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/experience-of-people-approaching-later-life-lockdown.pdf

21   https://www.cityam.com/the-hybrid-working-gap-the-young-broke-and-single-prefer-the-office/

22   The Economist (2021) The future of work April 10 – 16 2021

individuals could determine with their line managers and the team what the changes to working practices were going to look like.

Our learning suggests that both organisations rapidly responded to the crisis by:

Requiring working from home	- Moving to almost all (non-clinical at GSTT) staff working from home, including those who had never worked from home before.
Providing digital support	- Upgrading IT requirements of home-working and using tools (such as Teams) to support changes that happened virtually overnight (for GSTT, this was particularly transformational).
Providing remote working support	- Including "how to set yourself up at home"; the importance of taking breaks; supporting people who might feel isolated – particularly those who were shielding.
Amending line management and supervision	- Changing structures and practices to support the health and wellbeing of staff. The message to line managers, for example, was to have regular "check-ins" with staff and communicate regularly (including being open about the challenges in personal lives, such as increased childcare or caring responsibilities because of lockdown).
Pulling together tools to support line managers (GSTT)	- Challenges for line managers and leaders were focused on building trust when staff are not 'visible'; and how to manage performance at a distance. Support packages therefore included: - Webinars on how to manage remote teams and how to build trust, e.g. the importance of spending time to build rapport, of understanding the needs of staff and their challenges, of showing care and managers' own vulnerabilities. - Sessions on how to use a team-based approach to work to support a different way of managing performance is not just about time served in front of a screen, e.g. developing short-term objectives as a team; setting up team expectations. All things that give staff 'the mandate to get on with doing things' translates in team accountability, which creates peer pressure that people tend to respond to (stakeholder interview).

At GSTT and L&G, the conversation about the effect of accelerated change was already underway; new practices were in place and were being extended to people aged 50 and over as a group that warranted particular attention. That discussion has extended to all employees, but there remain some specific issues pertaining to an older age group and that are addressed in this report.

3. What changed for pilot participants and their line managers?

'I think you can just wrap it up in one thing: the pilot, the already existing flexi-contract and the results of COVID-19 prove that people can work from home more, and as long as there's time management and work management it can work. And it can work across the board.'

Line manager

This section explores our key questions:

– Who is working flexibly? What are those flexibilities? And what flexibilities have not been possible?

– Who is not working flexibly and why? How have workers' and others' understanding of what 'flexible working' means changed?

With the pandemic, the picture changed dramatically, and we additionally explored the following questions:

– Were participants able to continue with their arrangements and did these stay the same or change further, how, and with what impact?

– What did the future hold for flexible working in these organisations?

These cannot be considered without reference to COVID-19, which rapidly changed the entire landscape of working life and practices shortly after the pilot trials moved into the implementation stages. Working from home became normal for many, with organisations forced to make wide-scale changes to respond and adapt to the requirements this entailed. In this context, people's understanding of flexible working also had to change. COVID-19 forced a scaling up of flexible working, to some extent 'backgrounding' the pilot and for some and having an impact on the flexible working arrangements they were in the process of implementing.

We start with a snapshot of the pilot and then present a review of our findings related to what happened to people's working arrangements. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 set the scene for the remainder of the report.

3.1 Pilot participants and flexible working (pre- and post-COVID-19)

These findings are based on interviews carried out between June/July and September 2020 and again in 2021 with 16 job holders (eight from each organisation) and six line mangers (four at L&G, two at GSTT). They focused on participants' journeys and experiences of the trial pre-pandemic through to early 2021, specifically exploring what happened to their flexible working arrangements (see also Appendix 1).

The Flexible Working trials before Covid-19 and now

A range of individually designed flexible working arrangements were trialled across the two organisations including:

– a compressed week/fortnight

– flexitime, for example working 7:30am to 2:30pm

– reduced hours

– job-share

– part-time

– working from home

At GSST, seven job holders were already working flexibly prior to the pilot. At L&G, nine of the 11 job holders who implemented the trial were also working flexibly.

Timewise carried out follow-up calls with participants about their progress midway through the project and these indicated that the trials appeared to go well for most people. Although the new arrangements represented small alterations to their original (and often already flexible) working patterns they brought considerable benefits, such as increasing flexibility to work from home, slightly changing their core hours of work, or moving to compressed hours.

Our insights from interviews in autumn 2020 and in spring 2021 highlighted that since before the first COVID-19 lockdown most of the flexible working arrangements trialled continued to go well.

What we found were four broad pathways through to flexible working for pilot participants.

Pathway 1: Flexible working no longer relevant	This was where the arrangement became **no longer relevant in its original form**, particularly due to the shift to working from home following lockdown. These people (four at L&G and one at GSTT) had flexible arrangements involving working from home a day a week (and then working from home every day) and/or those who trialled compressed hours specifically to reduce commuting time. This group of people saw their original arrangement expand. As one line manager noted, **'(…) the whole point [of the trial] was for [job holder] to get an extra day off. It's a difficult one now because all of it goes out the window (…) you have built-in flexibility every day.'**
Pathway 2: Flexible working carries on	Here the original **arrangements continued to work as planned with no changes made**, but participants also 'acquired' the added (default) flexibility of working from home as dictated by circumstances. Those who took this journey (one at L&G and three at GSTT) were trialling changes to core working hours, which in most cases were small-scale adaptations to their pre-pilot working patterns (e.g. from 8am to 4.00pm to 7:00am to 2:30pm) or compressed hours. Participants in this group reported no challenges in maintaining their flexible working pattern, and in fact experienced the added flexibility of working from home as a benefit, even though they had not requested it as part of the trial.
Pathway 3: Flexible working adjusts to the new world	This was a slight variation of Pathway 2 outlined above where **original arrangements remained largely unchanged but participants** (two at L&G and one at GSTT) **made additional minor tweaks to them** (without, however, changing their core features). These changes were made for two reasons. The first related specifically to the implications of lockdown: the added flexibility of working from home opened the possibility to easily change core working hours further (again, these modifications were very minor), either formally or informally (e.g. moving from an original 7am to 2:30pm to a 6am to1:30pm working pattern, therefore starting earlier by an hour or half an hour). The second reason was unrelated to COVID-19 and spoke more to the need to adjust original arrangements to better suit individual needs and preferences (for example, changing a compressed hours arrangement from 7am to 5pm four days a week, which felt tiring, to a more spread out pattern – keeping the early start but working five days a week 7am to 3pm).
Pathway 4: Clashes with new ways of working	This was perhaps the most disruptive or challenging, which saw some **participants unable to continue with their planned arrangement at all** (four participants). In most cases this was COVID-19 related, which resulted in rapidly increased (and higher than usual) demands placed on participants' time. This translated into, for example, working every day and longer hours (perhaps augmented with working from home which created the added challenge of managing time boundaries), or not being able to take the planned day off (e.g. returning to full-time work). In one example, this was unrelated to COVID-19 and more to do with team restructuring: a job share role with managerial responsibilities which were spread among the team after restructuring, resulted in the job share being less worthwhile and effectively turned it into two separate part-time roles.

These pathways provided the basis for following and making sense of job holders' journeys through the changing landscape of work during the COVID-19 crisis. What we learned in the final stage of the evaluation was that for many people, COVID-19 did not undermine successful flexible working arrangements that had been put in place and there appeared to be no negative consequences, for example:

- **Pathways 2 and 3:** one person who had requested to work from home one day per week, did so full-time and another, who had not requested this but was also required to do so by default, realised that they did not want to return to their original compressed hours at home. In effect, this means is that their trial arrangement may be 'tweaked'. Both noted that they felt more confident to ask for this now.

- **Pathway 4:** one person here was never able to implement their new arrangement of compressed hours and, indeed, concluded that it did not matter as he could now work the hours as appropriate. This participant said they felt empowered knowing that change was possible and for now it was good enough. However, there were others who had been overwhelmed by more, rather than less, work due to the pressures of the pandemic.

One job holder from Pathway 1 described her journey.

Lauren has been an employee at L&G for many years in different roles and very much enjoys her current job, which she has had for just a few years. Before the pilot, Lauren was already working flexibly: 7am to 3pm Monday to Friday and working from home one day a week. She took part in the pilot because she was interested in seeing whether there was another working pattern that might fit better with her life. Lauren and her now-retired husband wanted to slowly work towards spending more time together. However, the long commute, caused by the time spent in traffic and the challenge of finding a parking space, meant that this was hard and stressful to do. It also squeezed the time she had for herself and her hobbies.

Lauren had not considered asking for a change in her working arrangements because she wanted to remain in full-time work. Despite already working flexibly, in a team with colleagues who also work flexibly, she did not think there was another pattern that would allow her to continue to full-time work and have more time to spend at home.

In conversations with her line manager as part of the pilot, tweaking her core hours of work to finish earlier in the day seemed to be a good way forward. Lauren trialled compressed hours, finishing at midday every Friday (rather than 3pm) and working at home two days every other week. This was a relatively small-scale adaptation to her existing patterns of work.

In late 2019, everything was working well. With COVID-19, Lauren did not alter her core hours of work but did switch to work from home every day, acquiring additional flexibility. Both transitions (from original working pattern to the trial as part of the pilot and then from the pilot to home working) were straightforward. Lauren and her line manager reflected that the ease of transition was supported by pre-existing systems supporting working from home. However, it was also down to the fact that the team work very well together: they plan their work together, meet regularly and know each other's working hours. All of this supports clarity and good time management.

Lauren said her work-life balance has been so much better and this makes her and her husband happier. Not sitting in traffic and worrying about getting up early to find a parking space makes her feel less tired and less stressed. Overall, it means she is also more efficient. The built-in flexibility of working at home also means she can work after 12 on Fridays if she needs to, because the time can be recouped during the week. She now also has more time for her hobbies and things that relax her, which has never happened to her before. Because of this flexibility, which enables her to stay in a job she enjoys full-time and have time for personal commitments, Lauren feels she would stay in work for longer. For her line manager, this is equally important because keeping an older workforce that has extensive knowledge and experience is vital to the business.

3.2 The experience of the pilot: outcomes, success factors and challenges

Based on Timewise's learning and our own preliminary discussions with stakeholders, we considered the following questions:

– How did individuals, line managers and wider teams experience the changes that resulted from the flexible working pilot? How did other stakeholders describe the benefits and drawbacks, intended and unintended changes/outcomes and impacts?

– To what extent has the project resulted in attitude changes and for whom?

3.2.1 The pilot's impact for job holders

> 'The value added to me was the pilot has given me that thing to ask the question rather than just carry on. When I asked [to change my working patterns], it was only because a friend encouraged me. The pilot has given that legitimacy, because asking for it depends on the person and how confident and comfortable they are.'

Job holder

Flexible working for administrators: Three members of an administration team supporting customer-facing staff at an L&G office (where there was already some informal flexibility) applied to the Timewise pilot. Although two were unavailable to attend the training sessions due to work commitments, the pre-existing conditions within the team meant that the transition to flexible working was straightforward. All three of the pilot participants wanted to start work earlier, either because they found they were getting up increasingly early as they got older or because they wanted to spend more time with their family in the afternoon. All three were already working flexibly: two worked from 8am to 4pm with a one hour lunch break and shifted to starting at 7am and finishing at 2:30pm. The third, working from 8am to 3:30pm with a half-hour lunch break moved to starting at 7:30am and finishing at 3pm.

With strictly administrative roles, these job holders did not need to be available within specified hours and there was always work, created by customer-facing colleagues, for them to do at any time. Their line manager reported already having invested in building team rapport so that working relationships within the office were strong and they were all aware of each other's personal circumstances.

The job holders' new working patterns appeared to make little difference to their colleagues or line manager, and the transition to working from home caused by COVID-19 allowed them to start even earlier, since they could start working at the time they usually would have left home. The job holders all reported an improved quality of life, with the line manager commenting that they seemed better connected with their colleagues because they were altogether happier with their working arrangements.

Looking particularly at the first three pathways set out above, few mentioned additional challenges in terms of ways of working. Most people already worked flexibly (including working from home a day a week or working in a team where many worked staggered hours) and much of the infrastructure (e.g. IT systems) was already set up. This meant that the expansion of their arrangement (and working from home particularly) was not experienced as disruptive. Many job holders spoke of small tweaks made to already existing communication processes, such as having more regular meetings, or changing the times, or introducing new mechanisms for communication (for example having short catch ups/check-ins every morning or at regular intervals and more ad hoc communication).

Key findings from the job holder interviews showed that:

– Although they did not find either the trialled arrangements or the changes resulting from COVID-19 difficult to implement and spoke to the benefits of the post-COVID-19 expansion of flexible working arrangements (discussed in more detail below), **some found themselves working longer hours**. This was not necessarily as a direct result of COVID-19 and the increased demands on people's time but because of time saved from, for example, not travelling. They described the challenges of being able to manage work/life boundaries (because of regularly working from home), also raised by some line managers, along with concerns of how to deal with its implications.

– Some suggested that COVID-19 had enabled them to feel **more confident about asking for a modification to their flexible working arrangements** or to have an even better understanding what flexible working options are possible.

– There was some **dissonance between line managers and job holders**. While there were line managers who felt that the pilot did not offer anything 'new' or 'extra' and perhaps wondered why their staff did not simply request the change through existing flexible working processes and opportunities, there were job holders who experienced **the pilot (and COVID-19 subsequently) as the vehicle that enabled them to request a change in their working arrangements**.

These last two points are important as they speak to the real or perceived 'blocker' that some experienced in requesting patterns of work that would meet their needs, even though they may already have been working flexibly and/or the organisation had policies in place to support this.

The benefits that job holders described support earlier findings from the evaluation, now reinforced during the pandemic, including:

– **Better work life balance:** Job holders described having more time and energy to spend with family or friends, as well as performing other chores and hobbies (for example, shopping, maintaining their house, and exercising).

– **Less time commuting:** Working from home or for fewer days meant less time commuting, with people reporting that they were less stressed and that their living costs had reduced. For some, this became a benefit they 'discovered' as a result of COVID-19 and the restrictions it imposed.

– **Better mental health:** Several job holders reported having an improved sense of mental health because they were managing their workload more effectively, were no longer commuting as much and were able to spend more time focusing on personal care and rest (which in turn gave them more energy for work).

– **Greater sense of focus when at work:** For early risers, starting earlier in the mornings meant they were working at time where they felt more productive and there were fewer distractions. For those working later into the evenings, having time to focus after colleagues had gone home meant they felt they had time to maximise their productivity with fewer distractions.

– **Greater sense of value and recognition:** Especially for more longstanding or specialised job holders, the opportunity to work flexibly felt like a demonstration that the organisation recognised their skill and importance, which made them feel more valued.

Very few drawbacks to the pilot were raised by job holders. Some described difficulty acclimatising to working flexibly due to concerns in their teams that they may be perceived as not pulling their weight. For others, their hands-on management style felt incompatible with having to delegate responsibility to junior staff when they were not at work. However, these were generally temporary and resolved once the job holder had acclimatised to their new working pattern.

3.2.2 The line managers' perspectives

Line managers' perspectives on the pilot faced in two directions. In Section 4, we look at how they viewed organisational outcomes. Here, we describe their experience and views in relation to job holders, which broadly aligned with the job holders' own views. In particular, the benefits line managers reported seeing because of the pilot (and further accelerated by the more recent context) focused on the following:

- **Greater productivity:** Some line managers said they believed that job holders were more productive in their work time. This was because they could work at the time of day they felt most able to focus, or were more rested due to having greater opportunity to recover from work, or spent the time they used to commute working instead, or were simply being forced to work more efficiently to get things done in their new working hours.

- **Improved employee satisfaction:** With job holders feeling more relaxed and energetic at work, managers believed that job holders were more affable towards their colleagues, improving team spirit and morale.

- **Improved recruitment and retention:** Albeit from a limited number of examples, line managers were pleased to be able to retain skilled and experienced staff who may have otherwise left without flexible working arrangements. At GSTT, they saw increased interest in previously hard to fill roles that were readvertised as flexi-time, an approach inspired by the pilot's training sessions.

- **More effective distribution of staff resource:** Both L&G and GSTT demonstrated some benefits of staff time stretched out more thinly, but also more extensively, across the day. This meant that they could interact with customers or clients earlier in the morning or later in the evening, making the team more accessible, especially if job holders were happy to cover for one another.

Our discussions provided additional insights into what the pilot and the rapid scaling of flexible working in teams meant for line managers themselves, their ways of working and managing – particularly in relation to challenges and less positive aspects. While this may not have been directly related to the pilot (but more to the scaling up of flexible working), they are part of learning about managing flexible working teams more broadly:

- A few line managers reported **a slightly increased workload due to the need to coordinate and keep a closer eye on flexible workers**, with a concern that having too much flexible working would be difficult to manage.

- Related to this was how to manage performance when people are not visible. Two line managers reflected on how **the acceleration of flexible working had pushed them to 'trust people more'**, which represented a change in attitude and behaviour.

3.2.3 The pilot project as an intervention

In the early stages of the evaluation, it was unclear what impact the pilot (including the training) had on the success or otherwise of the trial. One of the areas of exploration focused on understanding what difference the pilot made, and how. This was especially important as most job holders already felt they could talk to their managers and seemed to have flexible working

arrangements in place. Additionally, both L&G and GSTT had pre-existing strategies or policies regarding flexible working, with staff working flexibly both formally and informally.

Our data suggests that the specific benefits of the pilot were that it:

– **Provided a safe and contained opportunity** to trial new working arrangements that could be modified or reversed if unsuccessful. This seems to have been particularly important for line managers, representing a reassurance that enabled them to feel more receptive to experiment with something they may otherwise have felt uncomfortable with.

– **Publicised flexible working** and helped both managers and job holders not only **understand the available options but also provided them with a space explicitly designed to focus** their thinking and conversations on it (which in 'day to day' work is difficult to do). As one job holder said '[the pilot] **made me think about what I really wanted and what would work for the business (...). The training was the catalyst for me to stop, think and ask myself: "What do I really want?"'**

– **Offered participants the opportunity to connect** with colleagues facing similar circumstances, therefore **validating the difficulties** they were having with their working patterns.

– **'Legitimised' flexible working** by offering a route to ask for a change that some job holders did not think would be accepted or did not think they were entitled to. Some participants mentioned that, had it not been for the pilot, they were unlikely to have requested a change to their working patterns. For others, this legitimising function emphasised the senior-level buy-in to the pilot, in some cases circumventing formal line management structures that had previously frustrated job holders and line managers in their attempts to attain or promote flexible working.

'I think flexible working will happen more and more, and there will be some kind of hybrid, even if we get it back with social distancing, we won't be able to get it back anyway. For the (higher paid) bands 7/8/9, it's obvious they're going to do a lot of home working. For the bands 3 and 4, it's obvious they can do it but managers might want them in more.'

Line manager

– **Challenged attitudes, cultures and ways of working**. However, this was accelerated due to COVID-19. Particular roles and teams had developed working cultures that relied on everyone working the same number of hours to build togetherness and commonality of purpose. They were unable to envisage how a role could be performed in a different way (for example, by incorporating working from home or working at times when other team members were not). The pilot provided the opportunity to challenge these preconceptions and explore new ways of working and collaborating.

'A few years ago I asked my manager is it possible to work from home, and my request was refused. But now people are much more open to flexible work, and you'd be able to notice if I wasn't working because the work would be in a mess.'

Job holder

Timewise has argued that any new flexible working arrangement will benefit from a pilot or trial period. This enables the individual, their line manager and their team (if relevant) to become accustomed to new arrangements, to review their appropriateness and leave the door open for further change. This pilot conformed with good practice in the process almost regardless of what people might have thought about the training. The intervention itself was thus the principal facilitating factor.

Piloting was clearly important and it was suggested that having external support and facilitation was an additional factor when introducing, promoting and rolling out flexible working. Timewise had considerable knowledge and expertise, knew what options would be appropriate and provided a legitimacy that, in turn, may have helped the pilot organisations to take the initiative seriously.

'The piloting gives people the reassurance that they are not committing themselves to something that is too onerous. And by the end of it, if it's successful, managers are likely to say "oh well, we did that and it worked. The things I was worried about, like X person sitting around watching the telly rather than working" – didn't happen.'

Line manager

Flexible working for Community Nurses

The pilot provided a District Nursing Manager with the opportunity to support a pre-existing agreement with three experienced clinical nurse leads, close to retirement, to adopt flexible working. This is an example of where flexible working can be achieved through a synergy of understanding about potential organisational, line manager and employee benefits. This manager was responsible for two teams, each of which worked in a separate area, and was tasked with addressing health needs in the community to proactively prevent hospitalisation and support GPs.

Shortly before the pilot was publicised in GSTT, two clinical nurse leads agreed with their line manager to adopt a job share, with a third senior nurse moving to a part-time role. The three nurses are all experienced, but were seeking a change in their roles or employment patterns for a variety of reasons. Anxious about losing such experienced colleagues, their manager agreed to the new working patterns as a means of retaining them. Coincidentally, this was not long before being invited to attend the Timewise training to explore flexible working. Seeing an opportunity to help these nurses manage the transition to flexible working, their manager arranged for them to attend the training as well.

Was the age-specificity of the pilot helpful?

The pilot was explicitly targeted at those who were aged 50 and over. The rationale for focusing on this age group was that these workers might not always be able to access flexible working and experience all the benefits that it can bring. As Timewise reported, research by the Department for Work and Pensions identified that a large proportion of over 50s do not realise they have the right to request flexible working and/or do not feel comfortable asking[23]. This chimed with our learning that the real or perceived 'blocker' that some participants experienced when requesting patterns of work that met their needs. The pilot may have had a legitimising function, offering the opportunity of a change that some job holders did not think they were entitled to or would be accepted.

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23   Timewise (2020): Inclusivity through Flexibility: https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Timewise-Flex-Working-full-report.pdf

However, most evaluation participants also queried whether flexible working should be restricted to older workers. Interviewees expressed that 'age should have nothing to do with it', 'flexible working should be available to people of all ages' and that 'I don't think having an age element was particularly useful. Everyone would benefit from this, in different ways'. At the same time, we also identified what the age-related element did offer, including:

– **Showing the value** that the organisation gives to older workers and their experience/expertise.

'You could say this about all age groups, but I can see why it was for this age group. [The pilot] showed [to older workers] that the business wants to keep them, involve them, retain them in the business.'

Job holder

– **Opening up conversations about and normalising 'ageing'**, the 'life cycles' people go through and the fact that working patterns might need to be different for reasons to do with increased caring responsibilities resulting in increased demands on people's time and physical changes - all of which are perhaps less spoken about compared to the needs of younger age groups. As two job holders said:

' [the pilot] highlighted to my boss that I have an older family, my own family, plus my parents and my in-laws. I don't think [my line manager] realised quite how much I do. There are claims [being made] from the younger members of the family as well as the older, so you're looked upon to assist and you're sandwiched in the middle. You'll still need to work full-time at my age [50-55], so that flexibility is important.'

> **'I think [the age-specificity of the pilot] was important. The thing is that with age things change, you don't realise yourself about the changes you go through and maybe certain managers, particularly those who are very young, wouldn't immediately understand [...]. So I think the targeting of the age was helpful in this respect.'**

– Making participants feel **less "alone" in their need to change their patterns** (highlighted above), i.e. they felt reassured in seeing others in the training sessions who were 'in the same boat'.

'I think I would continue working longer because of it. I enjoy what I do. What I did not enjoy was the process and the travel, the not being able to do my hobbies, not spending more time with my husband, and that would make me want to retire. And you do not want to spend all your time at work and travelling to work.'

'And **we can have the best of both worlds.** I can understand if this hadn't been successful, but it has been.'

'It **was useful that this pilot was age-specific** and I want to feed back all that I feel. It's important that the findings show the benefits of this different way of working.'

In this evaluation, we continued to hear two stories. The first was that flexible working should not be targeted but should be all-inclusive; the second was that, at the same time, the focus on those aged 50 and over brought some specific benefits that appeared to be related to the opportunity the pilot offered to enable these participants to talk about their needs.

Some managers recognised the benefits of a scheme that targeted those aged 50 and over and, in particular, that the pilot was an enabler so that 'people see it's possible' and making it easier for people to come forward. It may also have been that some people, settled in a work pattern, did not imagine they could do it differently. A benefit of the pilot was that 'it's not set in stone. People can say, **"oh well if it doesn't work, we can go back to how things were before"'**.

The two stories came together as there was consensus that flexible working was a 'good' thing for all employees with provisos related to the core business of the organisation or service, department and team requirements and that individual roles could accommodate flexible patterns. Critical to decisions about how flexible working might work and for whom were:

- The need to understand everyone's ideal work patterns in order to provide suitable opportunities

- Recognition that people may have different needs at different times in their working lives, some of which are age-related (e.g. moving towards retirement) where others are not

- Understanding the value of retention of older people and facilitating a successful arrangement benefiting the organisation and the individual

'Flexible working should be offered to everybody. I don't think there should be any reason for a specific age group to have it. I think the reasons the over 50s were targeted was, broadly speaking, it's a generation that isn't used to flexible working. Ever since I started working it's been a rigid Monday to Friday set in stone, on this constant hamster wheel of the monotony of the same old, same old. The younger generation, as the technology has advanced, has started to provide more flexibility. They might also have the confidence to ask for something out the norm.'

Job holder

At the same time, and within this broad agreement, there was recognition that an age-sensitive approach was helpful as job holders experience life differently dependent on their stage within a working life. In their own report[24], Timewise describes what is 'the same but different', which speaks to this point. 'The core of good flexible working (especially around flexible job design, skills and a supportive culture) will be very similar across different age groups. **It's "what happens at the edges" that is different for over 50s'.** This included the reasons for needing the flexibility, how easy it is to talk about it and how it is used to plan for retirement.

Mirroring the evaluation findings, Timewise[25] argued that flexible working has worked best when it has been reason-neutral, i.e. when all reasons are considered legitimate when making a request. Job holders want to discuss their need with line managers and it is important to provide an opportunity for that. Here, we also heard that the reason for wanting flexible working should not require validation, but it can help determine what will work best and it may need to change pending changing environments and influencing factors, e.g. team realignments.

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24   Timewise, op cit.

25   Timewise, ibid.

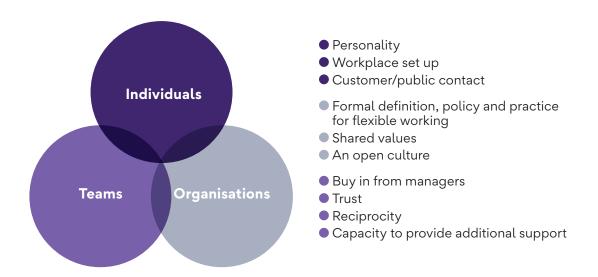# 4. What needs to be in place to make flexible working successful?

'The main part of this is that because people are able to manage their own lives, studies and children and are able to continue working, they are happy.'

Line manager

One of the aims of the evaluation was to provide an understanding of what individual and organisational factors supported, or inhibited, the successful implementation of flexible working practices, so that this learning can inform how they can become more widespread. With COVID-19, this scaling up process happened rapidly and by default, therefore creating an opportunity for the evaluation to explore what can be learned about flexible working as it unfolded on an organisation-wide basis.

4.1 The conditions for success

The conditions for success appeared to be reliant on three core interconnected elements, each of which need to be in place at the outset.

Individuals
- Personality
- Workplace set up
- Customer/public contact

Organisations
- Formal definition, policy and practice for flexible working
- Shared values
- An open culture

Teams
- Buy in from managers
- Trust
- Reciprocity
- Capacity to provide additional support

For individuals

Individual characteristics, as well as the characteristics of their roles, appear to be important factors in whether flexible working felt plausible, successful or even desirable. In practice, this often came down to the specificities of their working arrangement, which could involve an entirely different set of demands on individuals, line managers and the wider organisation, where each needed to acclimatise to them in different ways. These individual conditions were as follows:

Personality type	- Working from home felt like a more seamless transition for people who described themselves as introverted. - Those who enjoyed the social aspect of work required more contact with their teams, although this could also be attained (pre-COVID-19) by balancing working from home with spending time in the office. - Individuals needed to have the confidence to ask for flexible working if line managers did not suggest it to them. Some did not have this.
Existing workplace set up	- The transition from sitting with colleagues to working from home or agile working was more seamless for teams that operated out of primarily hot-desking offices. - Since there was no guarantee of the team sitting together prior to the pilot, job holders and line managers had already acclimatised to communicating without physical co-location.
Necessity of customer/ public contact	- Roles engaging with customers or the wider public tended to restrict flexibility because staff resources needed to be focused within a particular period. - More purely administrative roles, however, were often possible to do at any time, so long as the work was done. Whether an administrative task was done at 4:30pm on a Thursday or 7:00am on a Wednesday often made little difference. - People working more independently were generally not required to be immediately responsive to colleagues, so had more freedom in their working patterns.

While the individual was critical to the success of flexible working, their role was also important. Clinical teams (e.g. radiology at GSTT) were less likely to be able to incorporate flexibility where staff needed to be on site between specific times to meet with patients.

However, we also heard from some clinical staff that flexible working need not always be defined by role but by effective planning.

'In terms of roles, what people can do might depend on this. So some roles might lend themselves to a specific number of days, some lend themselves for working at home some days. Some are not productive at all working from home because they need to do something physically, like x-rays, but that doesn't mean other forms of flexible working arrangements are not possible – you could work a different pattern of hours for example, which means you don't have to be in every day.'

Line manager

Three members of an administration team supporting customer-facing staff at an L&G office (where there was already a degree of informal flexibility) applied to the Timewise pilot. Although two were unable to attend the training sessions due to work commitments, the pre-existing conditions within the team meant that the transition to flexible working was straightforward.

All three wanted to start work earlier, either because they found they were getting up increasingly early as they got older or because they wanted to spend more time with their family in the afternoon. All three were also already working flexible patterns: two worked from 8am to 4pm with a one-hour lunch break, with the third working from 8am to 3:30pm with a half-hour lunch break. The two starting at 8am transitioned to starting at 7:00am and finishing at 2:30pm, with the third transitioning to starting at 7:30am and finishing at 3pm.

With strictly administrative roles, these job holders did not need to be available within specified hours and there was always work, created by customer-facing colleagues, for them to do at any time. Their line manager reported already having invested in building team rapport so that working relationships within the office were strong and they were all aware of eveyone's personal circumstances.

The job holders' new working patterns appeared to make little difference to their colleagues or line manager, and the transition to working from home caused by COVID-19 allowed them to start even earlier, since they could start at the time they usually would have left home. The job holders all reported an improved quality of life, with the line manager commenting that they seemed better connected with their colleagues because they were altogether happier with their working arrangements.

For teams

Can they accommodate flexible work and, if so, how and where will it work best? Ideally, it is teams that make flexible working feasible. Here, they worked on the basis of collective understanding, coming together in the delivery of the core work. We learned from line managers that some were not as enthusiastic about 'new' practices but recognised that (and even more so as a result of COVID-19), it would be difficult to avoid incorporating flexible practice into their teams even where there had been apparently negative impacts.

'We have all the technology, so managing hasn't been a problem, but I don't think it's as easy as one would expect. For me, it's just easier if you see people. I am quite old fashioned; I am just used to going into work every day. Modern work has changed, but I am used to the older ways. So all this hasn't affected how I managed, I just like to chat to people. I think you'll still need to come into the office some days. Maybe not every day, but some.'

Line manager

Line managers said they recognised that not every individual would want to work flexibly and agreement to requests would also be dependent on how this would fit with the demands of the business. Beyond this, participants in the evaluation suggested that for flexible working to succeed in teams, four elements were critical.

What needs to be in place to make flexible working successful?

Buy in from managers	– Job holders taking part in the trial had variable experiences. Most line managers supported their requests but a few experienced some resistance. **'I didn't feel I couldn't have a conversation. But it felt like in order for you to ask, they would want something in return.'** **Job holder** – Participation on the pilot training appeared to have been an important factor in ensuring line manager commitment. **'There has to be a willingness to try it and be open to just trying it – it's line manager's personality. Some people are far more closed about it. The fear is that they might lose control because you are being asked to manage and do things very differently. It does take a lot of change and you have to be willing to do it or try it. It's not straightforward.'** **Line manager**
Trust	– This became increasingly important with working from home post-April 2020. – Most job holders wanted to be and were trusted by their line managers. Job holders having their line manager's trust was also an important organisational pre-requisite for flexible working and could influence the type of arrangement agreed. Roles where it would quickly be apparent if a job holder was not being productive offered the opportunity for a more seamless transition to flexible working. – For some roles, line managers felt that job holders needed to have a physical presence in the office (pre-COVID-19). The length of time a job holder had worked with a manager was influential here. – Some interviewees referred to the importance of team trust and strong team relationships as enablers for successful flexible working. Where team spirit, cohesiveness and familiarity with one another's personal lives were more developed, job holders' reasons for working flexibly were more apparent to their colleagues and they were therefore more willing to cover for one another. This was especially the case where more than one person was working flexibly in a team.

'I think anything like this is a trust issue between you and the team (...) I would drop everything to help out (...) so [my team] know that I wouldn't take advantage' and that 'people already appreciated one another's home lives and backgrounds so were aware of each other's working needs'.

Line manager

– However, some line managers were concerned about the effect of flexible working on productivity. The reality was that job holders not only fulfilled their commitments but did more than before where there was no travelling involved.

– Trust needed to be developed across as well as within teams, which was sometimes more challenging. In a few cases, some managers described managing upwards to facilitate flexible working. Overall, openness and transparency were key.

'If people think you are checking in, you lose it and you lose the camaraderie. If someone wants to take the dog to the vet – yes of course they can. It's about having an open and honest relationship and I get that from my boss. I am not policed; I get on with it and any issues we'll talk but you run your week in the way you feel is best.'

Line manager

'If it's a job where there are outputs I don't need to see the day-to-day work. I don't need to know whether people start at 6 or 9 or finish at 3 or 10pm.'

Line manager

'My manager was very hesitant in allowing more time from home. Just because they don't think it will work. The unknown of how it's going to work can be an obstacle because they feel that to offer flexible working you're opening a pandora's box you cannot close again. They were worried it would get out of control.'

Job holder

What needs to be in place to make flexible working successful?

Reciprocity, equity and in-team flexibility	– Job holders and line managers recognised the need for 'give and take'.
	'It genuinely has to be flexible on both sides. The person has to accept that in some instances they may not get the exact patterns that they expected or wanted.'
	Line manager
	– This was more notable during the pandemic where many people were responding to need/demand, e.g. working longer hours but were comfortable in doing so.
	– Some job holders described concerns about how they were perceived by colleagues as privileged and/or not working as hard as others. Line managers were also concerned to demonstrate fairness across the team.
	– There needed to be an element of tolerance and understanding of what is acceptable – which became increasingly important as large numbers of people moved to new work patterns in 2020.
	'The nature of the job requires a variety and because we have the variety it's worked. So, for example, we have early starters and this works well for those who need an early response to a request or an email. And we also have people who start later and are there at 6pm – so we cover quite a large period of time which means that we can accommodate different working preferences. There's people available 14 hours a day.'
	Line manager
	'There it isn't a one size fits all; you have to have a variety of sizes and with that something that covers everything and it's also being open about the issues and have conversations like "You can do Monday, Wednesday, Friday, but we need to think about how we do that thing on Tuesday that only you can do", or "On Thursday, we have that team meeting so we need to think about how we can do that if you're not around". So it's about having these up-front conversations.'
	– If reciprocity and trust were embedded in a team and in relationships, then access to and implementation of flexible working is easier.
	'[My line manager] had already done lots of work in building team morale, spirit etc. so that was already in place and supported the whole thing'.
	Job holder

Capacity to provide additional support	– For the pilot participants, line management was largely unaffected.
	– With COVID-19, some line managers found themselves increasing the number of occasions both formal and social on which they met staff – related to trust but also for many a genuine desire to ensure individuals were still connected to teams and colleagues.
	– Line managers recognised that flexible working (and if/when people return to their workplace) needs to be supported and individuals need to be reminded on how to access this.
	"To be honest, it's quite hard. I think we had 20 odd meetings in our calendar in a week and they have ramped up because people can't just grab each other in the office for a chat. Before, we'd have one meeting a month.'
	Line manager

The emergent picture was complex and the evaluation findings suggest that there are many factors, from individual wishes through to ensuring teams can dovetail their activities, to meet the requirements of the organisation. We were speaking to people in dedicated groups that had a single focus and where most of the team were doing the same or interrelated jobs. This proved easier to organise. Sometimes team-balance led to refusals to requests for flexible working. In the pilot, changes were small-scale until COVID-19, where whole team and organisation practices were forced into the spotlight.

And underpinning flexible working ran open acknowledgment that success was dependent on personal characteristics – of the job holders who had the confidence to come forward or take up opportunities when offered, and of the line managers who were open to testing the potential for new work practices.

In some circumstances, we also learned about how role-modelling flexible working may be another facilitating factor. One manager talked about a senior colleague who was working flexibly and, although some people felt uncertain about this, the fact that she was doing it, doing it openly and with conviction was important.

'There has to be a willingness to try it and be open – line manager's personality. Some people are far more closed about (flexible working). The fear is that they might lose control because you are being asked to manage and do things very differently. It does take a lot of change and you have to be willing to do it or try it.'

Line manager

For organisations

What emerged from our discussions with non-pilot participant line managers was the importance of widening conversations beyond a team as well as within and across organisations. Pilot participants also described the importance of ensuring that flexible working was deemed an acceptable and integral part of work practice. This was viewed as critical to enable job holders to seek it out, line managers to promote it and provide an environment in which individuals were unlikely to experience negative feedback from colleagues. There were other key considerations for whole organisations to address to make flexible working both before COVID-19 and now integral to the future of work.

Formal definitions and flexible working practice	- For some, **a recognised agreement** was very important. Most of our participants wanted a formal flexible working arrangement to legitimise and increase individual confidence to ask and validation of agreements. - However, retaining **a less formal process** remained important in some situations where a small number of participants here abandoned their formal agreement for a more ad hoc approach.
An open culture with shared values	- **Ensuring conversations were had across organisations** and not just in teams or with individuals was seen as critical to the success of flexible working. - In some instances, **role-modelling** played an important part in enabling flexible working. Line managers of pilot job holders as well as those not part of the pilot and who had been supported by their own managers, tended to buy into new work practices and staff requests. - There was recognition of the need to **move beyond individual to team objectives** that helped to create a collective sense of purpose about a contribution to the organisation. This enabled individual flexible working success through seeing how working practices contributed overall to organisational success.

Structure and systems in place	- **Accessibility of relevant IT systems:** The transition to working from home due to COVID-19 was easy for many, but others required much more intensive IT support and resourcing to effect the change. Some essential IT systems also require shutting down overnight, which limits how early or late an individual can work.
	- **Office availability:** For individuals who wished to start work particularly early or work particularly late, having offices that were open and staffed (e.g. by security and other facilities staff) was essential (pre-COVID-19). An organisation's lone working policy was also relevant here.
	- **Transport availability:** Some offices have carpooling policies, which limited an individual's choice about when to get to and from work, especially if public transport was less freely available (for example, if buses or trains are infrequent or begin at a particular time in the morning). Interviewees in both organisations cited examples of informal flexible arrangements being made based on public transport timetables.
	‘The systems are there. They made it workable, I just couldn't see that before. Also, I am comfortable working from home. I've got less distractions. You can do your work in a comfortable way, and it's obvious to me now." **Job holder**

In summary, multiple factors contributed to the success or otherwise of flexible working for pilot participants including the impact of COVID-19. The learning here also suggests that there are essential elements that can enable the promotion of flexible working – now more than ever on many organisations' agendas.

5. Flexible working into the future

'A lot of us think this is going to stay. My feeling is that a form of flexible working has to continue. Now people have realised that it's possible, it can be made to work and it'll be hard to go back.'

Line manager

5.1 Embracing change

Flexible working is here to stay. Yet there is no single model for how individuals, teams and organisations may adopt and adapt flexible working practices due the diversity of individual and organisational needs. This report has described where L&G and GSST older job holders and their line managers believed that flexible working has been successful for them. They told us about the many benefits as well as the challenges they faced, and we have understood more about the wider impact that flexible working patterns have had organisationally. The effects of COVID-19 have shaped what it has meant to scale up for all staff including people aged 50 and over - unexpectedly and rapidly - and the longer-term challenges and implications of this in relation to older job holders in the workplace of the future.

'There's been a huge shift in attitude – just huge. People who didn't want to work from home or didn't think they could now know they can. There has been a survey and about 80% of people said they wouldn't go back to how it was before.'

Line manager

In this final section, we examine how far and in what ways learning from the evaluation can be applied on a wider basis, including a review of the impact on job holders, how organisational outcomes have been achieved (e.g. staff retention and staff satisfaction because of the availability as well as take up of flexible working) and how sustainable the changes (and their benefits) may be.

Embracing change is challenging. In the context of Timewise's research and pilot project, it was clear that some organisations had already undertaken to explore and implement flexible working practices. However, none could have anticipated how COVID-19 would require an acceleration of changes to work practices nor that it would prove to have multiple benefits for organisations and individuals.

Although the switch to homeworking because of COVID-19 can be seen as another, far greater, intervention to further embed flexible working, there were key differences between this and the Timewise pilot which illuminate the value of their approach:

– While not all pilot participants attended the training, and not all of those who did attend reported finding the experience valuable, the process provided a more extensive and thoughtful overview of potential options for them of flexible working.

– People who were unable to implement their proposed flexible working pattern reported having a greater knowledge of the options available to them in the future, with those who were successful in taking up their flexible working pattern (because of the pilot) also adopting quite different arrangements to others who did so only in response to COVID-19.

– The pilot helped job holders and line managers have conversations about how their roles could be carried out differently, reformulating when, where and how the roles are performed to better meet the needs of the individuals, teams and organisations.

– The 'unpiloted COVID-response' provided less opportunity for reflection in the face of an overwhelming need to adapt. This adaptation largely revolved around working from home, with greater informal flexibility about when people performed their roles (e.g. starting work earlier in the morning or finishing later in the afternoon to accommodate childcare or home-schooling responsibilities). However, this did not involve discussions of how individuals could meet their own or the organisation's needs through different working patterns and vice versa.

The more limited understanding of flexible working held by those who did not attend the training and did not participate in the pilot (but still adopted predominantly informal flexible working patterns due to the pandemic) appears to have stood in contrast to those who had been involved.

– Flexible working was much more strongly associated with agile working (i.e. working from home, which was already present in several areas of L&G).

– Knowledge of the more commonly adopted formats for flexible working – compressed hours whether weekly or bi-weekly, part-time or reduced hours, different combinations of working in the office and working at home, job-sharing and flexitime, for example – was far less apparent among those who did not participate in the pilot.

Organisations can and do support older workers in their roles and responsibilities alongside their evolving personal commitments and wishes for life after the age of 50. Introducing a mechanism for reflective dialogue and exploration of how reformulating roles can facilitate individual, team and organisation needs which, from the findings here, would seem more effective and appropriate for reaping the rewards of flexible working.

5.2 The sustainability of flexible working practices

Job holders and line managers (as well as project sponsors) described what they anticipated as positive and potential long-term changes, which included:

– Closure of offices (for L&G) leading to a radically changed work landscape

– Introduction of new practices including non-work meetings where colleagues socialise and the introduction of daily team catch ups

– Further opportunities to work from home and hours that suit individuals and roles

– Increased numbers of people likely to request flexible working arrangements

– Finding ways to support people who do not want flexible patterns or to work from home

The findings from the evaluation demonstrated that there was a high level of satisfaction with the changes made to work practices, leading to job holders being more likely to stay and line managers believing that these would help keep staff they valued regardless of age.

However, it is not clear what will be sustainable for either pilot organisation as they continue to respond to COVID-19 and take into consideration a wide array of factors. They were clear that they wished to retain the benefits of the pilot and changes resulting from the impact of COVID-19 in relation to flexible working, but the steps required for this to happen are ongoing and likely to be incremental. As one line manager said, **'we are still working this out. The main thing is to try and preserve the flexibility of working and preserve everything that has been learned"**.

Importantly for the two pilot organisations, there was a growing understanding that different patterns of work enable job retention and satisfaction and, more recently, that there was no real need to return to office-based or previous practices. Harnessing this is key to the future and sustainability of flexible working by:

– Shifting work culture, including facilitating attitude changes, and developing staff sense of responsibility and new ways of communicating, which were here seen to lead to higher levels of satisfaction.

– Understanding the increased pressure of flexible working for line managers. With COVID-19, some were providing a much greater level of support, e.g. through daily team meetings. Others were concerned that increased time on communication was sometimes the result of not being able to see what people are doing.

For flexible working to be sustained, both L&G and GSTT have already looked beyond the pilot and COVID-19 to the good practice of the future.

'You can probably bring flexible working into most roles, as long as the detail of the "how" is worked out. You've got to build it into the role. I would say that ultimately it's more about the person than it is about the specific role. You know, some people just like to be busy and work full-time, and others don't. It also just depends on circumstances: if you're single and a workaholic you might like to work full-time and you may not be interested in changing that. So whether it's of interest depends on circumstance, not so much the role, because you can build flexibility into most roles.'

Line manager

5.3 Replicating the learning from the pilot

The findings of the evaluation were derived from two organisations and a small group of job holders, line managers and other stakeholders. The forms of flexible working scaled up in response to the pandemic were different from those adopted in the pilot, and the learning associated with these (for individuals, teams, and organisations), while distinct, provides useful signposting for the future of flexible working. Here we make suggestions about the core principles and values that appear to underpin successful flexible working policies and practices. These may provide a useful basis on which a wider group of public and private sector organisations can build their own good practice when considering the retention of and support for workers including those aged 50 and over.

There is now a considerable volume of evidence and commentary about the impact of COVID-19 on work practices and how the pandemic has influenced the concept of 'going to work' into the future. Organisations have had to rapidly reconfigure how they provide services and/or provide working environments that enable sustainable productivity and delivery. Globally, there has been a significant and widespread move from working in offices to working from home, where employees have experienced greater

flexibility about how and when to work – provided they get the job done and in ways that fit with colleagues, teams and the organisation. This shift in culture towards more flexible working practices has also been seen as having potentially positive outcomes for the future of work[26],[27]. The question that remains is how to promote and embed good practice in organisations.

Key considerations for organisations exploring flexible working now and for the future include:

– Both the pilot intervention and the impact of COVID-19 demonstrated the value of **having a point in time when 'business as usual' practices were questioned and new ways of working implemented**. It therefore may not have been the pilot that made the difference, but it rather provided time and space to make changes and question working patterns.

– **Flexible working does not need to be only targeted to or supported for people aged 50 and over**. However, the stage in an individual's life and/or career may be important to consider. The benefits for older workers may be that they feel more involved and valued by their employer.

– **Small-scale changes can make a significant difference to individuals** without adversely affecting others or the workload.

– There continue to be **inequalities about who can work flexibly** that can be explored within organisations.

– **Trust within teams and between line managers and employees** is critical to successful flexible working and more so now post-pandemic with significantly increased home working.

– People did not want to go back to 'how things were' and the journey is **to capitalise on the learning and transformation that COVID-19 brought about**.

– **Home working policies need to be reviewed** because they may not be fit for purpose now. The expectation is that many people will work remotely or from home some, if not all, of the time, which needs to be explicit in organisational policies.

– **Organisations can take the opportunity to focus on how jobs are designed** to recognise that not every job needs to be full-time, and that there is more that can be done.

– Focusing on **staff wellbeing and ensuring a 'personalised approach'** to flexible working is essential in the knowledge that one-size-fits-all does not work. This involves having an in-depth awareness and understanding of what people need.

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26   https://theconversation.com/Covid-19-could-have-a-lasting-positive-impact-on-workplace-culture-143297

27   https://www.economist.com/briefing/2020/09/12/Covid-19-has-forced-a-radical-shift-in-working-habits

– At the same time, it is important to move the conversation focused on how flexible working can benefit individuals and teams to the **broader, 'visionary' conversations** about how an organisation can re-design and deliver in the future. This implies always thinking at 'scale', e.g. if one person requests a change, what would this mean for the team or if the entire team wanted to change their working arrangements.

– Encouraging staff to **share their team-based approaches to flexible working** will facilitate change by adding to the evidence on how different ways of working can be successful (and therefore continue to shift the culture).

– Looking at and **drawing on examples** of where flexible working has worked well.

Flexible working often happens informally. In some situations, formalising the process and practice will help to reinforce the values that many described as critical to its success. These encompassed transparency and trust, which may also lead to equity and fairness. The evaluation findings showed that reciprocity was also a foundation to good practice where line managers acknowledged that job holders gave back as much, and sometimes more, than they were given.

Appendix 1: Flexible Working Pilot participants

Data from pre-training proformas indicated that **28 people took part in the pilot from GSTT**, including 23 job holders and five line managers. Of the 23 job holders, over half (13) were already working flexibly prior to the pilot. The picture was roughly similar **at L&G**, with **26 staff in total taking part in the pilot**, including 16 job holders and ten line managers.

The table below provides the age breakdown of pilot participant job holders.

Table 1: Participant job-holder ages

Age groups	L&G	GSTT	Total
50-55	6	4	10
56-60	4	8	12
60-69	1	5	7
Total	**11**	**17**	**29**

The total number of job holders in each organisation who took part in the project highlights that the 'hoped-for' cohort of 20 was reached. However, their participation took different forms. Participants can be divided into three groups, having taken three different journeys after attending the training provided by Timewise. The first group was comprised of **participants who proceeded with the trial**. At L&G, this group was made up of 20 people (11 job holders and nine line managers). At GSTT, the number was 17 (12 job holders and five line managers). The second group contained **participants who started the trial but withdrew or could not implement it** (already at the time of the mid-trial review).

At GSTT this applied to three participants where all three encountered challenges due to staff shortages: in one case the application to work flexibly (from full to part-time and to move to a permanent arrangement) was denied due to this (with the intention, however, of potentially re-submitting the application at a different time). In another, the trial could not be implemented because of the needs of the service; and the final case saw the job holder start the arrangement (nine-day fortnight) but was called into work on the planned day off and decided to withdraw. The third group was

made up of **participants who only attended the training** and decided either to not take up the opportunity of a trial or were not able to submit a request to implement it.

The table below summarises these three groups across both pilot organisations.

Table 2: Pilot participant groups

	L&G	GSTT
Group 1: participants who attended the training and implemented the trial		
Job holders who did the training and the trial	11	12
Line managers who did the training and the trial	9	5
TOTAL	**20**	**17**
Group 2: participants who started the trial but withdrew		
Job holders who started the trial and withdrew / could not implement it	-	3
Group 3: participants who only attended the training		
Job holders who attended the training and did not start the trial	6	8

Appendix 2: Methods

1. Introduction

The overall aim of this evaluation was to understand and learn about what works in implementing and facilitating access to flexible working, for which people and in what kinds of situations.

The learning here was generated from the evaluation and other data collection activities that took place both before and after the COVID-19 crisis began to impact on work and personal life. We continued with the evaluation as planned, while incorporating managerial staff from GSTT and L&G into our sample to ensure we had satisfactory coverage of each organisation's response to COVID-19, how their responses had been managed and what the impacts of each response were.

2. Three phases of the evaluation

We carried out this work in three phases:

2.1 Phase one

Phase one involved interviews with the key pilot sponsor from each organisation and documentary analysis, along with the development of an evaluation framework, theory of change and theory of scale. Interviews with key pilot sponsors (one from GSTT and one from L&G) focused on understanding the organisational context, pre-existing flexibly working practices and policies, the rationale for getting involved in the pilot, relevant strategic priorities, how they approached implementing the pilot and what they hope to gain from it.

2.2 Phase two

Phase two consisted of a round of interviews with pilot participants and a survey of older workers in GSTT and L&G, followed by a reflection on the findings so far that was used to inform the third phase.

We used our Phase two interviews/discussions with L&G and GSTT as an opportunity to hear about the then current and potential future impact of the crisis on approaches to flexible working for their organisations and their older job holders. This included those who had or wished to take up flexible working along with their managers who have been now required to address flexible working as part of the effects of COVID-19 on their teams and broader working practices. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the interviews conducted, which amounted to a total of:

– 16 interviews with job holders (eight at L&G, eight at GSTT)

– Six interviews with line managers (four at L&G, two at GSTT)

Table 3: Summary of first round interviews

	Job holders interviewed	Line managers interviewed	Total interviewees
L&G	8	4	12
GSTT	8	2	10

This round focused on Group 1 as shown in Table 2; the 'core' group of participants (20 at L&G and 17 at GSTT) who attended the training and went ahead with the trial.

At L&G, 14 pilot participants agreed to participate in the evaluation[28]. Of these, we spoke with 12 (eight job holders and four line managers). At GSTT we spoke to ten participants (eight job holders, including one participant from Group 2, and two line managers). Given the disruption created by COVID-19 at the time of the fieldwork, interviews were carried out in stages - between June and September 2020 - to ensure flexibility and enable those who agreed to take part in the evaluation to arrange times that were most convenient for them.

We also made efforts to contact participants in Group 3 (at GSTT). To minimise burden, we sent out an email with a short set of (closed) questions specifically to explore why they did not submit a request to take up the trial. Out of the eight job holders we contacted, we received three responses that highlighted two reasons for not going ahead with the trials:

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28   Participants were invited to take part in the evaluation via the project sponsor. Following their agreement we contacted them directly to arrange interviews. This number excludes the three that had taken part in the Timewise case study work whom we did not approach to reduce burden.

– Two participants felt they did not have **Line / Senior Management support:** in one case, the participant did not go ahead with the trial because she felt that the request would be denied; in the other, the request was put forward but was not picked up. In both instances, participants would have wanted to change their working arrangements (and therefore would have liked to implement the trial).

– For the third participant, the reason was that at the time of the pilot she **did not intend to change her working arrangements** (therefore did not feel the need to trial a different arrangement) and was mainly **interested in gaining a better understanding of, and exploring, flexible working options** (which she could consider in the future).

Although these numbers are very small, they are nevertheless useful to highlight as impediments to flexible working.

Table 4 shows the age ranges of the job holders interviewed in round one, to provide additional insight into how the notion of 'older workers' was operationalised in this pilot[29].

Table 4: Job-holder interviewee ages

Age groups	L&G	GSTT	Total
50-55	4	2	6
56-60	4	5	9
60-69		1	1
Total	8	8	16

The interviews were semi-structured and focused on the following topics:

Job holders:

– Involvement in the pilot and withdrawal if not completed

– Experience of the pilot and what it entailed

– Views on the age-specific element of 50+ for the pilot

– The impact is COVID-19 having so far (e.g. in terms of practices, ways of working)

– Job holders / the team doing things differently

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29   Age range data was only available for those who participated in both the training and the trial (group 1 participants).

– Learning gained about flexible working, challenges to it, how to overcome them and benefits

– How work will look like further down the line in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on flexible working practices/policies

Line managers:

– Involvement in the pilot and progress since mid-trial review

– Experience of the pilot

– If job holder not continued, reasons for this

– Emerging outcomes, success factors and challenges

– Benefits of this pilot/different working arrangements?

– The key factors supporting the success of this arrangement

– Unexpected outcomes (positive or negative)

– What the pilot entailed

– Possibility to trial the flexible working arrangement had it not been the pilot/added value

– Usefulness / effectiveness of an age-specific FW intervention?

– Impact of COVID-19 on practices, ways of working, changes in perception / awareness

– Challenges been and how they are being managed and overcome

– Participation in the pilot supporting line managers to manage changes and challenges

– Longer-term impact of COVID-19 on flexible working practices/policies

The survey of older workers differed for each organisation and was circulated to all staff who had been invited to participate in the pilot. It asked respondents about their knowledge of flexible working, their knowledge of the pilot, whether they had considered participating in the pilot, how able they felt to have conversations about flexible working with their line managers, and whether they had considered adopting flexible working at some point in the lead up to retirement. The survey is not presented as part of this report because it was conducted shortly before the pandemic and both organisations went on to do more comprehensive pieces of research into their staff's attitudes towards flexible working.

Documents analysed in phase two included the following:

– From L&G and GSTT

- Pilot training attendance lists (e.g. number of those who attended the training, which also included some information on the number of people who went on to implement the trial or chose not to)

- Mid-trial reviews

- Role diagnosis forms used by Timewise as part of the training and preparation for the trial[30] (these were available only for a small number of participants and we used them just to cross-check information held elsewhere).

– Timewise's final report "Inclusivity through flexibility"[31] and related Flexible Working Toolkit for employers[32].

2.3 Phase three

Phase three consisted of a second round of interviews with pilot participants and additional interviews with managerial staff. These were from both organisations and had direct experience of managing or supporting organisational responses to COVID-19 (in terms of flexible working) or strategic oversight of the changes.

The second round of interviews with pilot participants were again semi-structured and focused on similar topics to the first round, with an added focus on how sustainable flexible working routines were, whether the impact of COVID-19 had altered their changed (or unchanged) working patterns, what other measures had been taken to adapt to COVID-19, and what participants would like in the future in terms of flexible working.

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30   The forms captured information about job holders' roles, to help understand what sort of flexible arrangements were possible. The completed forms were used by Timewise to inform the flexible working training workshops and the discussion between job holders and line managers about creating a flexible arrangement.

31   Timewise (2020): Inclusivity through Flexibility: https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Timewise-Flex-Working-full-report.pdf

32   Timewise (2020): Flexible Working over 50s – a Toolkit for Employers: https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Timewise-Flex-Working-toolkit.pdf

The number of pilot participants interviewed in the second round is as follows:

Table 5: Summary of second round interviews

	Job holders interviewed	Line managers interviewed	Total interviewees	
L&G	6	3	9	
GSTT	7	1	8	

Although we attempted to interview all pilot participants we spoke to in the first round, we were unable to interview five of them. One job holder from L&G did not respond, a second declined to be interviewed but said nothing had changed for them, and line manager had changed teams soon after their first interview so felt they had nothing more to offer. At GSTT, one line manager did not respond, and one job holder, who had been unable to implement their new working pattern, declined to participate.

Interviews with non-pilot-participant managerial staff focused on the following topics:

– The extent of flexible working in their department or division prior to COVID-19

– Their knowledge and thoughts of the pilot

– The changes they made as a response to COVID-19

– The impact of those changes, how they adapted to them and managed the transition

– What support they were given to facilitate the shift to home working

– Views on the age-specific element of 50+ for the pilot (and whether it should bear any relevance to flexible working policies and practice)

– What they thought the future of work in their organisation looked like

We also attempted to interview seven non-pilot managerial staff from L&G and five from GSTT. Of the seven from L&G, two declined to be interviewed. Table 6 presents their job roles to illuminate how they differ from pilot participants.

Table 6: Summary of non-pilot-participant managerial staff interviews

GSTT interviewees	L&G interviewees
Accounts Payable Manager	Pension Risk Transfer Manager
Deputy Head of Radiology	Insurance Customer Service Manager
Director of Operations	Underwriting Manager
General Manager of Surgical Oncology	Retirement Institutional Transition Team Manager
Overseas Visitors' Manager	Payroll Team Manager

3. Review of the evaluation approach and methods

In the original proposal, we framed the evaluation in developmental terms because of the experimental nature of the pilot. Taking this approach proved to be all the more important given the significant change in flexible working brought about by COVID-19. The evaluation design enabled us to develop our methods on the basis of the need and the interest of project stakeholders. CfAB embraced this way of working from the outset, was open to change and worked with us through the uncertainty. This enabled us to refine our focus and fieldwork design as and when required. Although the switch to homeworking resulting from COVID-19 complicated the evaluation of the pilot, it did not nullify our findings. Rather than rendering the pilot and its associated learning obsolete, the COVID-related expansion of flexible working practices has instead added greater depth to them, illuminating the complexity of establishing flexible working within large, diverse organisations and providing a point of comparison by which the impact of the pilot was further investigated.

Our learning from the evaluation process suggests the following:

– Early investment in building relationships with the two pilot sites but also with the project system (which went effectively from July to September 2019) was important for the development of the evaluation. At the start of the work, it was unclear what kinds of data we would or would not be able to collect. There was a period at the outset where we agreed with CfAB that an evaluation might not have even been possible as we were unsure if we could collect our own data.

– The initial phases of the work were as much about understanding the context of the project – to ascertain how we could maximise the evaluation and potential for data collection – as it was about the carrying out our work. We had anticipated a diagnostic phase that emerged as the best approach at the time.

– The joint 'outcomes workshop' with GSTT, L&G and CfAB and held in Autumn 2019 was useful because it consolidated the work, providing us with the framework to design the fieldwork. This approach we believe also supported the creation of a wider project team, which meant that when COVID-19 hit, the team came together again to take stock (in Spring 2020 when we were due to hold a Theory of Scale session), and then again in December 2020 to design the next phase. These activities facilitated the process of reflective practice required to fully address key questions including 'what's happening, so what, and now what' and an approach that supports evaluative thinking.

The fieldwork design and conduct remained as originally proposed but the focus and content changed as did the eventual groups of participants. In particular, we have reflected on the following aspects of the later stages in the interviews.

– Following the onset of the pandemic, it appeared that engaging in the evaluation was difficult which was unsurprising given the (post-training and mid-term review) COVID-19 upheaval in people's working and private lives caused by a significant and crisis-driven contextual change. It was unclear what we could expect for our round two interviews given the continued impact of COVID-19 on people's lives.

– However, in the main, people were pleased to speak with us again and this is probably also because they thought it was important to contribute to wider learning. Given the timing and then current circumstances, their participation appeared to be positive and perhaps speaks to a wider need/ wish to share something of what work (and life) have been like over the last nine months.

– We did not speak to all potential interviewees in the second round, but the 'extended' evaluation activities (which included speaking to 'wider stakeholders' including other managers not involved in the pilot) supplemented the slightly lower number of interviewees and proved to be very valuable.

– We attempted to involve Advisory Group members (via 1:1 conversations) without success and, with hindsight, we do not believe a brief questionnaire would have worked instead. Recontextualising the pilot and its impact from current literature helped fill this gap in our learning.

In conclusion, we have considered whether it would have been better had we been commissioned at the start of the pilot. This would have enabled us to build the relationship with stakeholders, including Timewise, and we could have embedded the evaluation into the pilot process. This might have increased co-creation and reduced the time required for rapid response to design questions when the evaluation was agreed. Importantly, given the buy-in from the pilot organisations, job holders and managers, we also believe that the evaluation has been successful beyond data generation by

providing space and opportunity for reflection on flexible working, the impact of COVID-19 and future thinking – thus the evaluation may have had the unintended outcome of acting as an intervention too.

Appendix 3: Flexible Working Pilot Theory of Change

Phase one of the evaluation involved the co-development (with GSTT and L&G project 'sponsors', Timewise and the Centre for Ageing Better) of a Theory of Change (ToC) for the Flexible Working Pilot (December 2020). Its purpose was to:

– Provide a first articulation of how change was expected to happen, as well as the assumptions that explained how project components are connected and why.

– Support the decisions to be made about the scope of the evaluation, and the evidence required to test the project's initial hypotheses. In this sense, the ToC therefore supported the development of the project's Evaluation Framework.

– Provide the basis for developing a Theory of Scale (ToS), focused specifically on teasing out the (individual, organisational, contextual) conditions required for a project/intervention to be scaled up.

The ToC is presented overleaf. The evaluation report demonstrates that most of the short- and medium-term outcomes in the ToC were achieved, to a greater or lesser extent. That said, below we provide some reflections on change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and impact on the project.

– The COVID-19 pandemic represented a significant contextual change, triggering the rapid scaling of flexible working practices across all sectors and types of organisations. The Flexible Working Pilot was therefore superseded. However, the theory that underpinned the pilot continued to be, and remains, valid.

– Nevertheless, there is an important difference: the assumptions underpinning the theory will now need re-visiting (e.g. 'there are enough people who would like to work flexibly'). These would need to be re-articulated, bearing in mind the changed external and organisational contexts in which an intervention to support the development of flexible working practices might be implemented.

– We are not in a position to determine how far and in what ways the longer-term impact of retention has been achieved. However, some interviewees did express that their increased satisfaction would encourage them stay in their jobs for longer. In addition, line managers felt that providing opportunities for working flexibly would help retain staff.

– We are not able to say whether one of the activities of the pilot – namely the dissemination of resources (e.g. flexible working toolkit and guidance)- took place and, if so, with what effect.

– Given the scaling of flexible working, it is not possible to determine what would have happened in the absence of the pilot. However, data suggests that the pilot itself was a vehicle that supported participants to change their working practices.

1. IF employers and staff are actively supported and guided to create opportunities for flexible working, THEN individuals, manager, and organisations will benefit (see outcomes for specific areas of change).

Assumptions:

– Organisations/teams have the resources (time & material) and commitment to change their working practices & facilitate flexible working

– Organisations have the right structures to enable flexible working arrangements

– There are enough people who would like to work flexibly

– If employers have guidelines and frameworks, flexible working will be easier

2. IF job holders are satisfied with flexible working arrangements, THEN they will stay longer in their jobs – and feel more satisfied with their work and work/life balance.

Assumptions:

– Working arrangements contribute to dissatisfaction and issues of retention

– The people who come forward are already open to changing their working practices

– There are the conditions to support sustainable change (flexible working becomes part of business as usual)

3. IF employers have flexible working practices, THEN recruitment (& retention) will increase/improve.

Assumptions:

– Flexible working practices attract greater numbers of and more talented staff

Broader context / issues	Immediate context / issues	Activities/delivery components	Outputs	Outcomes		
				Short term	Medium term	Longer term
UK employers face skills shortages and difficulties in replacing workers that leave the labour market **Older workers** face challenges maintaining employment (due to informal caring, chronic illness, etc.)	**For employers/managers** issues may include: Concerns around job design and issues relating to practice e.g. struggling to conceive of how workloads can be reformulated, performance managed or fit in with team dynamics. Lack of training or support around job redesign / lack of flexible working tools for line managers. Concerns about increased workload for managers/other staff. Lack of productivity tools to manage efficiency of teams.	Timewise identify key sponsors and **deliver training for line managers and job holders/ older workers** in the two participating organisations.	**Line managers** - Up to 20 line managers trained in each organisation **Older workers/Job holders** - Up to 20 older workers trained in each organisation	**Line managers** Increased awareness and understanding of different types of flexible working Increased awareness and understanding of how jobs can be designed differently Increased confidence in working differently to implement and manage flexible working teams/ individuals Recognise the need for flexible working processes (principles, policy, practice)	**Line managers** Increased skills in managing flexible teams Increased confidence in working differently Will speak to teams about flexible working more frequently Acquire skills to redesign jobs and manage implementation for flexible working	Changes in staff retention Changes in job satisfaction, retention, work satisfaction and work/life balance Extension to working life Changes in job satisfaction, retention and work/life balance Skill retention for organisation **Broader change** **Impact of access to guidelines and resources on how to negotiate flexible working**
	For older workers issues may include: Feeling vulnerable/expendable (therefore reluctant to ask for flexible working) Fearing requests would be refused (therefore not asking for flexible working) Having the request denied due to job design/capacity issues Employers/managers' limited experience of implementing flexible working Lack of awareness of the right to work flexibly Lack of knowledge of the flexible working options available to them Lack of finances Fears that justifications of requests are not valid	Timewise **deliver regular, tailored support sessions to job holders and managers** as they experiment with their new working arrangements.		**Older workers/Job Holders** Increased awareness and understanding of different types of flexible working Increased awareness and understanding of how jobs can be designed differently	**Older workers/Job holders** Implement flexible working practices and arrangements Experience changes in job satisfaction, retention and work/ life balance Individuals that take up flexible working offer continue to maintain it	
	For the organisation: Lack of strategic agenda Perceived barriers, which are specific to sector and organisational context e.g. costs of implementation	Timewise **disseminate learning** from the pilots in each organisation by producing and circulating case studies and sets of resources and guidelines	Resources/guidelines produced and disseminated in each organisation 20 case studies of individual older employees working flexible produced and disseminated in each organisation		In participating organisations: More people have access to information and tools for achieving flexible working practices Flexible working has an effect on the team (positive / negative)	

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