

## About the Resource Pack

**The Health and Wellbeing at Work Resource Pack has been developed to help Investors in People Specialists and Clients on how to address health issues at work.**

It provides an overview of the key areas addressed by the Investors in People Health & Wellbeing at Work Framework. In addition, the Resource Pack provides an overview of some of the specific issues organisations face around managing health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Investors in People have gathered some of the evidence around the key work-related health issues and provided links to useful sources of further advice. In some cases, we've included specific sources of information from experts such as the Health and Safety Executive, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Faculty of Public Health, Business in the Community, MindOUT and others which we think could be particularly useful.

Of course, this can never be a definitive guide – it just scratches the surface in many areas. In keeping with the Investors in People Standard, the Resource Pack avoids being prescriptive and the issues or techniques here apply to different kinds of organisations.

Please also note that some of the good practice examples here won't apply to every organisation – you'll need to be selective in what and how you use them. Likewise, Investors in People isn't pretending to be an expert on health issues or health and safety law, when using the Resource Pack you are encouraged to follow some of the links provided here to get up to date, authoritative guidance on these issues.

---

## Balancing work with personal life

Work life balance is about enhancing organisational capability and resilience through helping employees to achieve a sustainable balance between work, life and family. It is made up of a group of practices, practical help and cultural factors, some of which are protected by employment legislation, and some of which go beyond it. It can help ensure the workplace benefits from a diverse range of people, without excluding those who have responsibilities outside work because of inflexible approaches to working hours or location.





## Flexible working & work-life balance solutions

The benefits to employee wellbeing are clear, but the potential positive impact on organisational performance is significant too:

- Increased employee morale
- Reduced absenteeism and lateness
- Improved staff retention, particularly of experienced staff
- Increased productivity and improve customer service
- A wider pool of high quality candidates from which to recruit, through offering more appealing working conditions
- Greater employee commitment to business goals
- Increased the willingness of employees to be flexible in times of business need or change
- Greater operational flexibility – e.g. 24/7 cover or a dispersed workforce closer to customers

Realising these benefits means overcoming a number of specific barriers to flexible working practices:

- The perception that they are an accommodation to women with children and not a business issue
- Management resistance: the concern that the ‘flood gates will open’, and the organisation will not have the staff resources available to meet its objectives
- The perception that flexibility is career inhibiting – employees worry that it will stop them from achieving promotions
- Cultural factors e.g. focus on headcount, long hours culture
- Lack of clear purpose in introducing flexible working practices
- Inconsistency in how flexible working is applied

## *Research & evidence*

According to CIPD survey data, three-quarters of employers say flexible working practices have had a positive effect on staff retention, and 70% say that flexible working has had a positive effect on staff motivation. 40% of those surveyed said they were extending flexible working beyond the minimum rights now enshrined in law for working parents.

In response to an application from a parent of a child under the age of six, or with disabled children under the age of 18 for flexible working under the recently-introduced right to request flexible working, an employer must call a meeting to discuss the application, inform the employee of the outcome in writing, provide a valid justification if the application is refused, and establish an appeals mechanism. Failing to follow this procedure entitles the employee to bring a claim before an employment tribunal. If successful, the tribunal can order payment to compensation of up to eight weeks' pay. Other legislation - e.g. against discrimination - may also apply to dealing with requests for flexible working.

CIPD research found organisations were most likely to make the following kinds of flexible working available to their employees:

- Part-time working (86%)
- Term-time working (38%)
- Job-share (63%)
- Flexitime (55%).

The Workplace Employment Relations Survey shows that the application of flexible working has increased sharply, nearly doubling in the last six years, with more managers recognising the role the organisation has in helping people to balance work and personal life.

There are practical issues around job design and working patterns which influence health – shift patterns, for example, can affect individual health and are an issue in retaining older workers or working parents for whom changing shift patterns can become increasingly difficult. Quoting research by Folkard and Tucker, Dr Steve Deacon, Head of Health at Royal Mail wrote in 2005 that: “shift work affects physiological function by disrupting circadian rhythms and is associated with increased incidence of ill health including peptic ulceration, coronary heart disease and compromised pregnancy outcomes”, in addition to safety risks for example of night working.

## *How the Health & Wellbeing at Work project can help*

The Health & Wellbeing at Work project looks for a clear plan for how approaches to work-life balance can enhance the organisation's effectiveness, through supporting employee wellbeing. It doesn't require organisations to introduce flexible working

specifically, but simply to consider the needs of the individual's work-life balance alongside those of the organisation.

Effective approaches might incorporate:

- A framework to request, review and implement flexibility focussed on the organisation's needs, and the scope to meet individual needs within them
- A fair, consistent application and decision-making process
- A broad menu of options and practical implementation with detailed guidelines
- Specific training – especially of managers - to raise awareness and open minds to scope to introduce flexibility into jobs, so they manage people in meeting objectives, rather than measuring people's 'face time' in the office

## *Good practice ideas*

### Introducing work-life balance solutions

Introducing work-life balance solutions can have a dramatic impact on individuals' working style and support needs, and also change the dynamics of teams. Selecting the approaches which meet the needs of people in your organisation, and introducing them appropriately are key. The following ideas aim to ensure that solutions are appropriate, justified, and help ensure they are accepted across the organisation.

#### **1) Understand existing attitudes to work life balance**

Attitudes and support – particularly amongst line managers - will strongly influence eventual success. Identify views on flexible working and possible objections and test to see if they are sound or based on myths.

#### **2) Consult with employees**

Any work life balance intervention will only work if it is genuinely matched to employees' needs – identified from team feedback, surveys, focus groups or interviews. Once assessed and potential solutions have been developed, communication is key: for example, employees must understand flexible working legislation, know how to apply for flexible working and understand why they might be refused. Early consultation on any change is essential so that employees remain engaged and continue to trust the motives behind any changes.

#### **3) Establish work life balance as part of the business objectives**

Communicate the range of benefits by showing how work life balance offers a means of better balancing work, life and family while complementing health and wellbeing and enhancing the range of skills available. Managers are more likely to be negative or nervous about flexible working if they have not considered how it will actually impact on their team's work, so encourage them to analyse roles to explore the scope for flexibility.

#### **4) Explore flexible working issues at individual level**

Ensure managers are trained to approach each case with a focus on individual needs and the specific role concerned. They need to apply the organisation's strategy fairly and consistently, but also consider – in discussion with the employee - the impact of a job change on the department, the role, the financial situation as well as the impact on the individual's home life.

**5) Ensure managers apply work life balance skills**

Managing staff on flexible work schedules requires skills of counselling, decision-making, evaluating, mentoring and communication. It requires managers to focus on outputs and to think of jobs in terms of roles, performance and tasks, rather than time spent in the workplace, and requires trust.

**6) Manage concerns of other staff & build ongoing support**

Further resistance may occur from those not applying for flexible working. Managers plan and review the impact of team members' flexible working to ensure colleagues are not disadvantaged. They also need to communicate clearly and positively about work life balance options, to enshrine them as part of the normal culture, and ensure they are not seen as the prerogative of only certain groups.

**Identifying solutions**

In relation to flexible working, you might consider whether the following solutions are appropriate to people in your organisation:

<b>Solution</b>	<b>Description</b>
Annualised Hours	Contractual working hours are expressed in total hours per year, allowing working patterns to be flexible throughout the year
Term-time Only Contracts	Staff contracted to only work during school term time and do not work school holidays. Pay can be averaged to 12 equal monthly instalments, or paid only for time worked i.e. no pay during school holidays. Contract of employment continues during breaks.
Consolidated Hours	The normal full time hours are worked in 4 long days instead of 5
Job-sharing	The responsibilities of one job is split between two people
Flexitime	Staff work around the "core" working hours of the organisation to accrue additional hours work and the ability to take time off in lieu
Working from home	Staff carry out the duties of their job either wholly or partially from home
Time in lieu provisions	Enables staff to take time off in lieu in compensation for hours worked in addition to their contractual hours

Ideas for promoting work-life balance go beyond flexible working, to include support and alternative forms of staff benefits which help employees to continue working while managing other aspects of their life effectively:

<b>Solution</b>	<b>Description</b>
On-site crèches	Allow parents to take their children to a nursery on site, thus reducing stress, reducing time travelling to and from work (no pick up and drop off required) and increasing motivation – employees can visit their children at lunch time. The facility is also helpful if there is an emergency.
Childcare vouchers	The Government does not expect employers to pay National Insurance on childcare vouchers and as such, they can pass the 10% saving on to their employees, allowing them to pay £9 for each £10 voucher and save money on childcare. Some employers simply give these vouchers to parents to encourage retention, particularly women returning from maternity leave.

Flexible benefits	Flexible benefits structures allow employees to choose which benefits suit them at their particular stage in their life. This may mean that an employee can buy more holiday, increase their health care benefits, or buy leisure/retail vouchers at a reduced rate. This flexibility allows employees to decide which benefits suit them each year, depending on their home life pressures/goals.
Concierge services	These services provide an extra pair of hands to help an employee manage their home life. They may provide a list of plumbers in the area and book an appointment, take a delivery, or arrange dry-cleaning. The level of service affects the price, but the highest level will even project manage home improvements
Employee Assistance Portals	These services offer a more holistic solution in that they provide counselling in order to combat stress, work-life balance hints and tips, concierge services and advice on everything from finding schools to dependant care. They also help businesses understand where their employee's key stressors are driven from, so that they can address root causes.
Improved maternity provisions	Provisions in excess of the minimum employers are required to provide by law (see legislation). Examples include higher pay whilst on leave, returner bonus etc.
Holiday trading scheme	Enables staff to "buy" in addition to, or "sell" holidays from their annual entitlement. There is usually a limit to the number of days that can be "bought" or "sold"
In-house Occupational Health provisions	The provision of Occupational Health facilities for staff to carry out medicals (on recruitment or at request), health checks and provide advice for staff on health issues
Counselling services	The provision of counselling services for staff, either in-house or outsourced to a provider
Private healthcare benefits	The provision of healthcare services from a healthcare organisation, to enable staff to receive free or deducted healthcare benefits
Unpaid leave	Absence from work for a set period of time, agreed by the employer and individual. The contract of employment remains in force but salary stops. Individual benefits will need to be agreed as to whether they continue – i.e. company car, holiday accrual etc.

Career breaks	A break from employment with the organisation. The contract of employment ceases, however, and the individual and organisation remain in contact at agreed intervals. The individual has the option of whether or not to return to work, after a set amount of time (e.g. 6 months or 1,3,5 years)
---------------	--

### *Links & contacts*

#### **Working Families – Employer Zone**

[http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/asp/employer\\_zone/e\\_welcome.asp](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/asp/employer_zone/e_welcome.asp)

#### **Employers for Work-Life Balance**

<http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk>

### **Health impact of long working hours**

Though recent trends show a slight shortening of average working hours, workers in Britain still work the longest hours in Europe.

Is working long hours bad for you? The evidence of the physical health effects of long hours is mixed, but studies seem to show that the psychological impacts of long working hours on stress and perceived work-life balance are significant. It also seems that the number of hours worked is not the only factor – the degree of control an individual has over how and when they work is important too, as is the kind of work they do and the support they get from colleagues and the organisation.

### *Research & evidence*

A review by the HSE suggests that there are some links between long hours and ill health – for example with heart disease, and with stress or mental health problems. However, the links between long hours and accidents, or diminished productivity are not so clear. The review concludes that the impact that the number of hours worked has is also mediated by:

- Individual factors (gender, age, personality)
- Choice and control over work hours and rest breaks
- Type of job/occupation/task
- Type of work environment or culture

But as well as the physical effects, there are psychological and attitudinal impacts too. The review concludes that: “There is strong evidence that people perceive that working long hours leads to poor work-life balance. Control over when an individual works is very important in the extent to which working long hours will impact on home and family life.”

The Work Foundation (‘The Joy of Work?’, 2004) report that workers in the UK still work the longest hours in Europe, though there is a slight trend towards reducing hours, due to the tight labour market, more flexible working and EU working time regulations. They argue long hours can harm individuals’ health, diminish productivity – and do not necessarily reflect efficiency or value.

In its paper ‘An agenda for work’, The Work Foundation argues: “A long hours culture is incompatible with ‘good work’. Long hours have an adverse effect on health, place other employees at risk and can undermine personal and family relationships.”

The Work Foundation’s survey found a fifth of male workers work over 51 hours a week. Overall, 61% of employees said they wanted to work fewer hours – 70% among men, and 52% among women.

The 2003 CIPD ‘Living to work’ survey amongst workers working over 48 hours a week found that:

- more than one in four respondents reported some sort of negative impact on health
- more than two out of five respondents reported a negative impact on their relationships
- most respondents reported negative effects on their job performance.

The HSE reviewed the academic literature around health and long working hours and concluded that ‘There is some evidence that working long hours can lead to stress or mental ill-health, although this is somewhat equivocal. The way an individual thinks about their job and the amount of control they have over their job will mediate this relationship’.

CIPD also cites work by Professor David Guest which concluded that ‘...although working longer hours may be harmful to health, the social support received by those working long hours and their control over their work have a positive effect, mitigating some of the negative effects’.

Working time is an area governed by a number of pieces of legislation – see the CIPD article for more details. For example, the Working Time Regulations introduced in 1998 introduced the following limits:

- a limit of an average of 48 hours a week over a 17 week period which a worker can be required to work (though there are some opt-out provisions)
- a limit of an average of eight hours work in 24 hours which night workers can

work

- a right to 11 hours rest a day and a right to a day off each week
- a right to an in work rest break if the working day is longer than six hours
- a right to four weeks paid leave per year.

### *Links & contacts*

#### **CIPD: Working hours**

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/wrkgttime/general/ukworkhrs.htm>

#### **DTI Working Time Regulations**

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/employment-legislation/working-time-regs/index.html>

#### **HSE Review of literature on working hours**

[http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl\\_pdf/2003/hsl03-02.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl_pdf/2003/hsl03-02.pdf)

