

BPS Policy Statement

April 2021

Working from Home during the Covid-19 pandemic

Issue

Continuous WFH is having a huge psychological impact on workers. A range of negative stressors have been reported as well as many positive experiences for people including more flexibility in how they manage their work and personal responsibilities.

History

Continuous WFH has not been presented as an issue before. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced much of the office-based workforce to WFH consistently over 2020 and into 2021. This has resulted in little to no access to face-to-face workplace interaction and socialisation. Previously, WFH had significant benefits as part of a blended approach, including;

- increased flexibility to work when a person is most productive.
- Less time, energy and the associated cost of commuting.
- Reduced spending, greater financial wellbeing.
- Improved productivity.
- More social time with children and family.
- Better environments for some neurodiverse conditions to thrive.

However, the current situation has provided a range of more negative side effects;

- Virtually invites work colleagues into a person's home environment.
- Invites potentially traumatic work into a safe home environment.
- Makes it more difficult to manage staff safely.
- Makes it more difficult to manage the duty of care to staff.
- Can potentially isolate staff from emotional support.
- Tests the quality of technology we have in home environments.
- Increased distractions e.g., home schooling.
- Lack of routine.
- Increased workload.
- Embedding an 'always on' culture.

Evidence

- [Working from Home](#) (BPS, 2020)
- [Taking trauma related work home](#) (BPS, 2020)
- [Covid-related anxiety and distress in the workplace](#) (BPS, 2020)
- [Psychology at work](#) (BPS, 2017)
- [Cognitive strain in Parliament](#) (BPS, 2020)

Recommendations

We need a greater understanding that the current pandemic model is not normal; that constant WFH is not necessarily good for everyone. Our future course is undetermined, but the past year has shown that for the many, WFH has had major benefits, and that some of the reported negatives are more likely linked to the current Covid-19 situation and not a normal experience of working from home.

The Society would like to see a blended / hybrid model in future, allowing staff to WFH and the office based on preference whilst ensuring the needs of the business are met (i.e., three days at home and two days in the office). We need to manage the potential negative impact of WFH whilst capitalising on the positive experiences people have reported. Returning to the office five days a week should not necessarily be the norm.