A Qualitative Investigation into Remote working in the Recruitment Industry and the Influence it has on Employee Well-Being.

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Abstract

Globalisation, changing demographics and continuous development in technology are changing the nature of work today. New forms of working known as flexible working practices are more common and evident in many organisations. A flexible working arrangement termed "remote working" is increasing in organisations today, allowing an individual to work from a location other than the office environment. This study examines remote working and, in particular, how this practice influences the well-being of remote workers.

Research in relation to remote working and employee well-being is scarce. A previous study on remote working and well-being studied self employed and individuals in administrative roles. Furthermore, Crawford et al (2011), highlighted a gap in research with respect to remote working and its influence on employee well-being. Accordingly, this study aims to address this gap by investigating remote working and the influence it has on employee well-being on practitioners within the recruitment sector. In particular, the study aims to investigate the social, psychological and physical well-being of remote workers.

A qualitative approach was carried out through the use of semi-structured interviews. Eleven participants were interviewed, ranging across full-time, part-time and flexi-time remote workers, all of whom were active professionals in the recruitment sector. Semi-structured interviews were employed as these allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon in detail and obtain the opinions and experiences of remote workers in relation to their well-being. Interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and thereafter transcribed. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, which facilitated subsequent coding and collation into 5 common themes.

Conclusions were drawn which outlined that remote working had a positive influence on overall well-being. However, it is equally evident from the findings that the social well-being of remote workers was negatively influenced due to isolation. A limitation of the study may be the sample size, in terms of the number and category of participants.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore how remote working has influenced the well-being of remote workers within the recruitment sector. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the background and focus of this research. The research aims and objectives will be outlined together with the research approach adopted to conduct this study, while including ethical considerations. The structure of the study will be outlined along with a summary of each chapter.

1.2 Research Context

Myerson et al (2010), highlights changes in qualifications of the labour force, designs of workplaces, forms of working and technology which have contributed to the changing nature of work today. New forms of working such as flexible and remote working have experienced growth, and allow work to be undertaken in multiple locations as a result of technological advancements.

The research focuses on the flexible working practice known as remote working which has sparked contentious debate amongst academics and the workforce today. Remote working is a form of flexible work arrangement that has grown dramatically in recent years due to developments in ICT, workforce demographics and changes in the nature of work. Remote working is defined as a working agreement that allows individuals to carry out their work obligations from another location by utilising internet access and technology to communicate with the organisation (Madlock, 2018).

Remote workers are defined as individuals who work at a location other than the office environment (Crawford et al, 2011). Felstead & Henseke (2017), argue that the rise of the knowledge economy, demand for flexible working and changes in the demographic of the workforce have contributed to growth in remote working. While previous research has been conducted on remote working in relation to productivity and job effectiveness, there are a number of gaps in the literature highlighting the requirement for research on the well-being of remote workers.

1.3 Research Aim

The primary aim of this study is to determine how remote working influences the well-being of remote workers in relation to psychological, physical and social well-being.

The focus of this research is to investigate how remote working influences remote workers in relation to each of these aspects of well-being. There exists a scarcity of research on the impact of remote working on employee well-being, amongst other measures. Accordingly, this study seeks to address identified gaps in the literature.

1.4 Research Question

"How does remote working influence the well-being of remote workers?"

1.5 Research Objectives

- To explore how remote working influences the *social well-being* of remote workers
- To investigate how remote working influences their *psychological well-being.*
- To investigate how remote working influences their *physical well-being.*
- To investigate how remote workers manage their work-life boundaries.

1.6 Research Design

In order to address this study a qualitative research paradigm has been chosen in order to explore the influence remote working has on the well-being of remote workers. This approach allows the researcher to explain, explore and understand the phenomenon of remote working and the experiences of remote workers in the context of their well-being. The study focused on remote working within the recruitment sector. A snowball approach was used, and the sample chosen for the study is a mix of individuals in full-time remote, part-time remote, and flexible-remote working. Due to remote working being a new phenomenon in a relatively small industry, the researcher experienced some difficulty identifying full-time remote workers for this study. The data was obtained by interviewing eleven participants who were all recruiters within the recruitment sector. The data was then analysed by employing thematic analysis which involved coding and categorising the data into five themes to answer the research questions and objectives.

1.7 Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were taken into account at all stages of this study in relation to data obtained, privacy and confidentiality. As interviews were the selected method of data gathering, the researcher sought to ensure all participants were informed that this was a voluntary process and that they were free to terminate the interview at any stage. Each participant was required to sign a consent form prior to interview.

1.8 Outline of the Study

The study aimed to investigate remote worker well-being in the recruitment sector.

Chapter 1:	This section outlines the framework for this research including the background and rationale of the study. Aims and objectives are established with the chosen research method and ethical considerations
Chapter 2:	This chapter forms the basis of the study with an examination of previous research and studies in this area. Gaps in the literature are also highlighted.
Chapter 3:	The research question, aims and objectives will be outlined in this chapter. An explanation of each research objective will be included.
Chapter 4:	This chapter outlines the research method chosen to conduct this study. This includes the research design, sample, sampling method, data collection, data analysis, limitations of the chosen research method and ethical considerations.
Chapter 5:	The findings from the study are identified and categorised into five themes. Each theme is analysed with quotations from the qualitative semi-structured interviews.
Chapter 6:	This chapter examines the findings identified in this study in relation to previous literature and with reference to the literature review. Limitations of the study are also outlined.

Chapter 7: This chapter offers a summary of the research findings. Recommendations are made which may be useful to employers along with future research recommendations. Lastly, a personal learning statement and implications of the findings are included.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the rationale for this study, along with the research aims and objectives.

The research design was outlined which included the chosen approach, the sample, data collection method and how the data will be analysed.

Ethical considerations were also outlined as privacy and confidentiality must be ensured at all stages of the research.

Lastly each chapter of this study was outlined.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction:

The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive review of the research that has previously been conducted by academics in the area of flexible, remote working and well-being. The following literature examines the development of flexible working with a focus on remote forms of working and previous studies in relation to how remote working effects employee well-being.

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, it was important to evaluate, examine and critique previous research and highlight gaps in this area. This chapter will offer an understanding of remote working along with an examination of employee well-being in the workplace.

2.2 The Changing Nature of Work

Globalisation, developments in technology, increased competition and diverse generations are contributing to changes in the workplace today (Amit & Sarma, 2018). Further changes are evident in demographics of the organisation due to diverse attitudes and values, the working environment and culture of organisations (Cole et al, 2014; Wilkinson et al, 2017). Rubery (2015), highlights four significant changes evident in the workplace today such as flexibilisation, feminisation, fragmentation and financialisaton.

Flexibilisation explores changes in the way individuals work in the relation to the type of employment contract and hours of work (Rubery, 2015). Feminisation describes the changes in the labour market in relation to demographics of an organisation such as the growth of women entering the workforce (Rubery, 2015). Changes to the conventional work environment such as the traditional office space have been replaced by a modernised environment in which work can be undertaken in a variety of venues due to developments in ICT (Cole et al, 2014).

Developments in technology is a primary driver of change, as it has influenced the pace and nature of work and has placed pressure on organisations to react to competitors while keeping up to date with technological changes (Wilkinson et al, 2017). Comparable with this, Harris (2015), highlights that there is a significant focus on flexibility, well-being, technological changes and working styles in organisations today which contribute to the changing nature of work. There has been rapid development in information and communication technology (ICT),

which is contributing to changes relating to forms of work, and times of work (Cole et al, 2014; Blok et al, 2012).

Technological development and economic changes are causing organisations to become agile, enhance connectivity and adjust rapidly to unpredictable market changes (Harris, 2015). Developments in smartphones, laptops, the internet and other digital devises are allowing individuals to stay connected twenty four seven where ever they may be (Amit & Sarma, 2018; Myerson et al, 2010).

These changes are influencing many aspects of human resource management such as, for example, recruitment and retention strategies (Idris, 2014; Vaiman et al, 2012). In order to attract and retain staff many organisations are implementing new work practices recognised as flexible working arrangements (CIPD, 2019; Berkery et al, 2017; Onken-Menke et al, 2018).

2.3 Development of Flexible Working

Taylor (2014), reports that the flexible firm model was first proposed in 1984 by Atkinson, who had suggested that a flexible firm was comprised of three groups of employees; core workers, peripheral workers and workers who were employed on subcontracted terms. Moreover, the flexible firm model was primarily concerned with organisational effectiveness and reducing costs (Atkinson, 1984).

Flexible working has grown due to an increase in competition for high talent and developments in information and communication technology (ICT) (Wilkinson et al, 2017). Similarly, Choi (2018), highlights that the increased competition amongst companies for high talent has placed pressure on employers to adopt flexible work practices in order to retain staff and enhance organisational performance. However, by contrast, Idris (2014), contends that flexible working has grown due enhanced interests in work-life balance, and the increased participation of women entering the workforce.

2.4 Defining Flexible Work

The definition of flexible working is a challenging concept as multiple researchers define the term in contrasting ways. According to de Menezes and Kelliher (2011), flexible work arrangements are work schedules that are different to normal working hours. Similarly Ciarniene and Vienazindiene (2018), describe flexible working as arrangements that include

variations in relation to time, location or tasks of work. Although flexible working can be defined in various ways all researchers such as Berkery et al (2017), de Menezes and Kelliher (2011), Radcliffe and Cassell (2015), and Ciarniene and Vienazindiene (2018), all agree that this form of work is growing rapidly due to changes in technology, environment, increased competition and globalisation.

According to CIPD (2018), flexible working can offer many benefits such as cost reduction, improved satisfaction and reduced staff turnover. Consistent with this, other research indicates that flexible working practices impact positively on attitudes of employees (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). According to CIPD (2019), offering flexible work arrangements is of high importance for the attraction and retention of high talent. However although these studies have examined flexible working in relation to attitudes and performance they have not examined individual performance or a specific type of flexible work which may present a gap in research (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). Types of flexible working as highlighted by de Menezes and Kelliher (2017), include formal arrangements such as a company's flexible working policy and informal arrangements that may develop following discussion between employer and employee. Informal arrangements will include flexibility of working hours or remote working (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). Other forms of flexible arrangements include part-time work, job sharing, flexi-time and compressed working weeks (Berkery et al, 2017; Wilkinson et al, 2017).

2.5 Remote Working

Remote working can be described via multiple terms today - such as teleworking, telecommuting, remote working, working from home and agile working (Grant, et al., 2019). The quest for an established world-wide definition of remote working has triggered debate and conflict (Grant et al, 2013). Similarly, Allen, Golden & Shockley (2015), argue that the absence of a universal definition of remote working has impeded the understanding of this form of work as results of many studies are often divergent. Remote working is defined by Chiru (2017), as performing work activities at home or at a location other than the workplace by means of technology. Again, Madlock (2018), describes the practice as a working agreement that allows individuals to carry out their work obligations from another location by utilising internet access and technology to communicate with the organisation. By contrast, however, Wheatley (2012), describes remote working as paid work outside the normal place of work such as at home, or actively on the move via ICT. Individuals who work remotely at a location other than an office

base are known as remote or mobile workers (Crawford et al, 2011; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Keeling et al, 2015). According to Hayman (2010), the majority of previous research has examined the broad concept of flexible working where as remote working has not been studied in the same detail.

Remote working is an emerging trend worldwide today and is increasing in many firms due to developments in ICT (Morgan, 2004; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). According to Hunter (2019), remote working is driven by both technological changes, social trends and cultural changes. Comparable with this, Gratton (2010), highlights five forces contributing to remote working today such as demographic changes, globalisation, developments in technology, societal trends and emphasis on low-carbon developments.

Developments in technology has allowed work tasks to be performed at any time or place to assist flexible work practices such as remote working (Grant, et al., 2013). Comparable with this both Choi (2018), and Grant et al (2013), highlight that enhanced technology has offered opportunities to work from various settings. Technology has transformed the association between work and home as the conventional movement of employees from home to the workplace is upturned (Giovanis, 2018). However, Watson (2017), argues that enhanced technology may give rise to robots which will reduce the volume of careers offered to the human workforce in future years.

It is evident that the utilisation of remote working has increased as according to CIPD (2019), 60% of organisations in Ireland are now offering remote working options and predict this will increase to 70% by 2020. A study by IDA Ireland (2018), estimates that there are some 216,000 people working remotely in Ireland today. Comparable with this, Melo & de Abreu e Silva (2017), state that remote working will continue to increase in the future due to variations in attitudes and values of individuals as well as the rapid advancement in ICT. Recent studies on remote working suggest that remote workers are becoming more established today with evidence in the US revealing an increase from 39% to 43% of remote workers in the American workforce (Chekwa, 2018). However in contrast, previous debate already exists in relation to remote working - as evident in Yahoo where CEO Marissa Mayer banned all employees from engaging in remote working as it was perceived to be harming innovation in the company (Allen et al, 2015; Pathak et al, 2015). Furthermore, Radcliffe & Cassell (2015), argue that traditional gender norms still exist in relation to remote working policies as women are more aware of such practices as well as females being more likely to take on additional labour such

as childcare responsibilities. Comparable with this, Allen et al (2015), highlight that females may be more inclined to balance household and childcare responsibilities when remote working. Research also suggests women are more likely to engage in remote working then men (Allen et al, 2015; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015).

2.6 Benefits of Remote Working

There appear to be multiple benefits of remote working to both employees and employers.

In a report by Beauregard et al (2013), satisfaction and commitment levels were discovered to be higher in remote workers than office workers. Other benefits of remote working include enhanced autonomy and flexibility for remote workers in relation to work tasks and schedules (Crawford et al, 2011; Beauregard et al, 2013; Wheatley, 2012; Grant et al, 2013). Remote workers enjoy superior flexibility in their work due to portable communications and technology (Keeling, et al., 2015). Similarly, Vega et al (2015), suggest there is a lack of physical monitoring of remote employees in comparison to employees in an office setting which may imply greater autonomy for remote workers. However Putnam et al (2014), argue that enhanced autonomy may result in 'autonomy-control paradox' which can result employees working more intensely.

Crawford et al (2011) highlight that remote working offers many advantages to an organisation such as enhanced productivity and lower absenteeism. Comparable with this Allen et al (2015), Hunter, (2019), and Baard & Thomas, (2010), highlight that remote working has a positive impact on performance of an organisation. Many researchers have examined remote working to have a positive impact on productivity (Torten et al, 2016; Bhalla, 2016). This is also evident in a recent study in the UK by CIPD (2019), which revealed that 51% of remote workers felt more productive performing this form of work. However, Madsen (2011), argues that it is difficult to measure productivity of remote workers due to variations in the work environment, family situations or quantity of telework.

Remote working offers benefits to employers such as reduced costs in relation to office space and running costs of the workplace (Choi, 2018; Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Melo & de Abreu e Silva, 2017; Grant et al, 2019; CIPD, 2018; Giovanis, 2018). This form of work offers a competitive advantage to organisations as it allows a company to employ individuals throughout various time zones as well as providing HR managers with flexibility to acquire high talent all over the world (Offstein et al, 2010). Comparable with this Elshaiekh et al (2018), state that remote work can attract talent abroad which can drive a company and enhance

financial position. Similarly Lozowski (2016), highlights that remote working practices enable organisations to recruit and retain high talented employees globally. It is clear that remote working is therefore a significant recruitment and retention tool in many companies (Madsen, 2011).

An additional, important benefit is that of reduced pollution and environmentally friendly practices due to less commuting (Elshaiekh et al, 2018; Chiru, 2017). Narayanan et al, (2017) and Melo & de Abreu e Silva, (2017), support this perspective, and also refer to decreased traffic congestion. Again, Beauregard et al (2013), specifically refer to remote working practices as assisting in the support of a reduction in carbon emissions.

Remote working enables stability of an organisation during unforeseeable and emergency circumstances (Cha & Cha, 2014; Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015; Lozowski, 2016). Similarly, Greer & Payne (2014), suggest remote working may even prevent company closure during weather events or other unforeseen conditions, as well as avoidance of flu viruses.

2.7 Challenges of Remote Working

However, numerous debates and arguments challenge this form of working, which is triggering debate. Dowling (2012), contends that a risk associated with remote working is the threat to IT security when performing work at another location. Other researchers argue that access to resources such as advanced technology is a major challenge associated with remote working (Crawford et al, 2011; Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2014).

A major challenge for both employees and employers associated with remote working is effective communication (Lozowski, 2016; Smith et al, 2018). Similarly, Morganson et al (2010), highlight that communication is limited due to an absence of a personal and verbal interface between remote employees and their colleagues and managers. Communication methods such as email are poor methods for transmitting emotions and signals in contrast to video tools which are more powerful for effective communication (Allen, et al., 2015). Similarly, Avis (2018), suggests virtual meetings may enhance communication and ease feelings of loneliness. However Smith et al (2018), highlight that various communication channels are more suited to different types of personalities of remote workers. Klopotek (2017), argues that communication between remote and office workers may be effective as various communication tools such as Google docs allow individuals to work on the same document simultaneously, which may support more effective problem-solving.

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Previous research indicates that remote working may increase family conflict as the environment may be challenging if the individual has greater responsibility, and if children need to be directly supervised (Solis, 2017; Varatharaj and Vasantha, 2012).

A major challenge for employers is in relation to performance measurement of remote workers, as they are not visibly present in the workplace (Klopotek, 2017; Crawford et al, 2011; Elshaiekh et al, 2018). Similarly, Beauregard et al (2013), articulates the same perspective in managing performance of remote employees in comparison to managing performance of office-based employees. In the same manner, Eddleston & Mulki (2017), highlights that managing remote workers is the main challenge associated with remote working. However, Offstein et al (2010), argue that managers must focus on results instead of attempting to virtually monitor or micromanage employees.

Trust, therefore, appears to be a key issue between managers and remote workers. Regardless of many studies reporting that remote workers experience higher productivity levels, managers nonetheless retain a view that being present in the workplace indicates being productive (Avis, 2018). In support, Beauregard et al (2013), highlights that a major barrier to remote working is due to management trust in employees, and the perception that being visible implies being productive. Solis (2017), argues that if managers do not have trust in their remote employees this may impact negatively on performance. A recent study of teleworking in Ireland revealed that 69% of individuals obtain a perception that remote workers are 'dossing' along with a management culture oriented to employee visibility. (Donovan & Wright, 2013).

2.8 Remote Working and Well-Being

While employee well-being is a term that easily recognised, it remains the subject of debate by many scholars due to an absence of an accurate definition (Zheng et al, 2015; Simone, 2014; Sandilya & Shahnawaz, 2018). Well-being at work is defined as the quality of employees' performance and experiences in the workplace (Badrinarayan, 2016). Well-being can also be defined as the way in which individuals assess themselves, and incorporates aspects such as satisfaction, anxiety, emotions which may be affected by the work environment and its practices (Shier & Graham, 2010). By contrast, well-being at work is conceptualised as the absence of stress and negative symptoms (Kazemi, 2017). "E-well-being" involves the state of how remote workers control their health and well-being while working remotely (Grant, et al., 2013).

2.9 Aspects of Well-Being

Employee well-being is comprised of three main elements: physical, social and psychological well-being (Robertson & Cooper, 2011; Badrinarayan, 2016; Guest, 2017; Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018). Earlier definitions of well-being focused on physical factors of an individual in contrast to recent explanations that combine physical, emotional, mental and social factors (Simone, 2014). Psychological well-being (PWB), refers to personal experiences and the ability to function in the workplace (Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018). There are two main aspects of PWB which are eudaimonic and hedonic well-being (Robertson & Cooper, 2011; Yadav et al, 2014; Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2011). The eudaimonic approach examines well-being in relation to meaning, self-acceptance and the optimum level of functioning (Hoffmann-Burdzińska & Rutkowska, 2015; Robertson & Cooper, 2011). However the hedonic approach considers well-being in relation to happiness and life satisfaction (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2011). One of the first models developed to assess psychological well-being is a six dimension model proposed by Ryffs including self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environment mastery, and autonomy (Robertson & Cooper, 2011; Zheng et al, 2015; SarotarIzek et al, 2015). By contrast, however, Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie (2012), examine psychological well-being through five elements such as personal fitness at work, succeeding at work, competence, involvement and recognition.

Previous studies have examined the impact of flexible working on well-being in relation to office based employees (Hayman, 2010). However there remains a gap in research in relation to the influence of remote working on the well-being of remotely based employees (Grant et al, 2013).

Physical well-being refers to health and physical functioning at work such as exercise and sleep and also safety such as equipment and workplace environment (CIPD, 2019; Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018). However, according to Khoreva & Wechtler (2018), future studies on employee physical well-being may include elements such as increase in work load and stress. Lastly, social well-being involves having a supportive and meaningful workplace network with interactions and long-term relationships (Simone, 2014). Social well-being is defined by CIPD (2019), as 'employee voice' such as communication and involvement, teamwork and relationships with co-workers and managers. Khoreva & Wechtler (2018), also suggest future research on social well-being to examine interactions between employees and colleagues as well as organisational support. Social, psychological and physical well-being are also

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highlighted in Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Human Needs theory (Cole et al, 2014; Taormina & Gao, 2013). Maslow outlines physical needs such as sleep and safety, psychological needs such as esteem and self-actualisation, as well as social needs such as feelings of belongingness and relationships (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Accordingly, individuals pursue these basic human needs every day (Cole et al, 2014).

Research suggests factors that may influence well-being are work-life balance, stress, workload and job satisfaction (Hayman, 2010). Similarly, Yadav et al (2014), proposes issues that may influence employee well-being such as organisational support, work-life balance, workaholism and job security.

2.10   Models of Well-Being

According to Robertson & Cooper (2011), the ASSET model may be used to measure workplace well-being. The ASSET model demonstrates how certain workplace features such as communications, relationships, resources, workload, job conditions and autonomy may influence an individual's psychological well-being (Robertson & Cooper, 2011; Hämäläinen & Michaelson, 2014). The literature suggests this model of well-being is influenced by both internal and external factors in the workplace, and considers both hedonic and eudaimonic components of well-being (Sandilya & Shahnawaz, 2018). This model employs a scale to measure psychological well-being ranging from 1-5 with the result being the average point on the scale (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). However, a critical analysis of this model is that it is a broad ranging model, and the questionnaire for assessing workplace well-being is not easily accessible (Sandilya & Shahnawaz, 2018). In contrast, Robertson & Cooper (2011), argue that this model is the most representative model of obtaining data concerning psychological well-being at work.

Another framework for assessing components of well-being in the workplace is examined by Simone (2014), adapted from Danna & Griffin (1999). This framework examines factors related to well-being in the workplace and implies that well-being is affected by three primary issues; the work setting, personality traits and occupational stress (Simone, 2014). The work setting includes health and safety hazards and other risks which may influence well-being negatively, or if they are eliminated may influence well-being positively (Simone, 2014).

Risk in the work environment of remote workers is a major health and safety concern (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Comparable with this, Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson (2014), argue that data security, together with health and safety, are major concerns for remote employees.

Personality traits such as Type A with a 'locus of control' can contribute to positive or negative well-being at work as well as occupational stress (Simone, 2014). Frequent causes of occupational stress include intense workload, job insecurity, relationships at work, role ambiguity and lack of recognition and promotion prospects (Mohammad Mosadeghrad, 2014). In contrast to the ASSET model, this framework also highlights consequences of workplace well-being for both individuals and the organisation itself. Individual outcomes may be physical, psychological and behavioural factors whereas consequences for the organisation may include absenteeism, financial costs and productivity (Danna & Griffin, 1999).

An additional model of evaluating well-being in the workplace is proposed by the CIPD (2019), which suggests the five key areas of well-being. These include firstly health - such as physical and mental - and physical safety of individuals at work (CIPD, 2019). The second area is concerned with issues related to work such as management, the work environment, autonomy, pay and recognition (CIPD, 2019). Other aspects include values and principles such as ethical morals and social aspects such as employee voice and relationships (CIPD, 2019). Lastly, the fifth domain is concerned with individual growth such as career advancement, learning and innovation.

Finally, a further model recognised as the JDR model has been utilised to evaluate employee well-being in relation to flexible working arrangements (Kattenbach, et al., 2010). This model has been employed by many researchers to examine the effects of job resources and demands on employee well-being at work (Kattenbach et al, 2010; Marieke Van & De Jong, 2014).

This model proposes that job demands of a physical and mental nature may cause stress and pressure, while job resources may be positive and act as motivators (Kattenbach et al, 2010; Marieke Van & De Jong, 2014; Peters et al, 2014). To examine the effects of job demands and resources, the model suggests two practices such as the health impairment process and the motivational process (Marieke Van & De Jong, 2014; Peters et al, 2014).

In their study of flexible working times and well-being, Kattenbach et al (2010), employed the JDR model to their study and classified two approaches into demands such as time restrictions and resources into time autonomy. Previous research utilising the JDR model in relation to

remote working concluded that employees who worked from home one day per week obtained higher work flow in contrast to their colleagues (Peters, et al., 2014). Furthermore, Marieke Van & De Jong (2014), concluded in their study that job demands such as insecurity and pressure had a negative impact on well-being in contrast to job resources such as autonomy and social support to impact positively on well-being.

2.11 Previous Studies on Remote Working and Well-Being

Employee well-being is of increasing importance today due to the increasing number of employees working remotely, and which raises concerns for the boundary between work and non-work life (Hayman, 2010). According to Simone (2014), employee well-being is a vital issue as an employee's personal experiences can affect the individual and organisation in positive and negative ways. Recent research suggests flexible forms of work may present challenges to employees and can inhibit employee well-being (Hoeven & Van Zoonen, 2015). Similarly, Guest (2017), argues changes in ICT can lead to overworking and result in intrusion between home and work life.

2.11.1 Challenges:

Many researchers suggest the boundaries between working life and non-work life have become progressively blurred due to flexible work (Wepfer et al, 2018; Hislop et al, 2015; Grant et al, 2013; Shier & Graham, 2010). Comparable with this, Wheatley (2012), argues that remote working diminishes the established boundary between work and home life. Indeed, recent research by CIPD (2018), revealed that 87% of remote workers indicated that technology affected an individual's ability to 'switch off' while out-of-working-hours. Similarly, Felstead & Henseke (2017), highlight that remote working is linked to a strong inability of individuals to 'switch off' from their work which may affect their well-being. There appears to be a gap in the research which points to a need for assessing how remote workers manage work-life boundaries and the effects of being unable to 'switch off' (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017).

Research suggests that, while remote workers may be more productive, they may be working longer hours (Grant et al, 2019; Avis, 2018). There may be an argument that spare time may be spent working instead of recreation (Wheatley 2012; Klopotek, 2017). Indeed, Avis (2018), contends a potential danger exists that remote employees may work longer hours than office-based employees, and as a result engage in 'presenteeism' - which affects employee well-being.

However, other researchers argue that being situated in a different venue may facilitate working longer hours due to reduced distractions (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Vega et al, 2015).

Numerous researchers suggest that remote working impacts negatively on employee well-being due to social isolation issues (Crawford et al, 2011; Allen et al, 2015; Avis, 2018; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). Remote working may cause relationship concerns with colleagues and managers due to lack of face to face interaction (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Crawford et al, 2011). Comparable with this, Chekwa (2018), argues that remote employees may be easily disengaged due to lack of face to face communication and this may influence the well-being of individuals. Research has argued that a lack of face to face communication can effect innovation and knowledge transfer among workers (Allen et al, 2015; Baard & Thomas, 2010). In a study by Greer & Payne (2014), 181 supervisors of remote workers reported a lack of face to face communication was the most widespread challenge. Comparable with this, the primary reason for eliminating remote working practices from Yahoo was due to the major impact it had on innovation which remained essential to the success of the business (Pathak, et al., 2015). Further challenges with communication may be experienced if employees are working across various time zones which may also affect their ability to 'switch off' (Baard & Thomas, 2010; Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

By contrast, other researchers suggest that remote employees benefit from reduced distractions when working at home compared to working in the office environment (Wheatley, 2012; Madsen, 2011). Remote workers may benefit from a reduction in office politics and conflict due to lack of face to face interactions (Madsen, 2011; Crawford et al, 2011). Reuschke (2019), argues there is a scarcity of research in relation to how social isolation is associated to the well-being of remote workers, which itself presents a gap. Similarly, Crawford et al (2011), contends that research is required to investigate the relationship between remote workers and their colleagues in relation to isolation.

Furthermore, an individual who works remotely may feel liable to discrimination in relation to promotion opportunities and pay progression as may be afforded to an employee working within the workplace environment (Avis 2018; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). Long term remote working may impact negatively on career advancement and restrict skill development (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015). Furthermore, Greer & Payne (2014), argue that being separated from the physical workplace environment may give rise to scarce development opportunities for remote workers.

2.11.2 Benefits:

In contrast, many researchers such as; Grant et al (2019), Felstead & Henseke (2017), Avis (2018), and Melo & de Abreu e Silva (2017), all highlight that remote working improves satisfaction and commitment levels of employees, which may be related to reduced commuting and flexibility over their own working hours. In a similar manner, Bloom et al (2015) and Giovanis (2018), also report that remote workers experience higher levels of satisfaction. However, according to Smith et al (2018), there is a gap in research in relation to how various remote workers may experience higher levels of satisfaction than others.

Studies indicate that remote working in the form of working from home may enhance work-life balance especially for women (Melo & de Abreu e Silva, 2017; Avis, 2018). Remote working has been linked to increased work-life balance in relation to reduced commuting time (Beauregard et al, 2013; Avis, 2018; Elshaiekh et al, 2018). Many researchers propose that remote working reduces sickness as many workers take less sick days (Bloom et al, 2015; Beauregard et al, 2013).

2.12 Previous Studies & Gaps

According to Vesala & Tuomivaara (2015), previous research on the outcomes of remote working on employee well-being have been paradoxical in various studies. Comparable with this, Kattenbach et al (2010), argue that studies in relation to flexible working and employee well-being are scarce and contentious, varying from negative to positive outcomes.

A qualitative study and inductive approach carried out by Grant et al (2013), examined remote workers' efficiency, well-being and work-life balance by conducting semi-structured interviews. From this research Grant et al (2013), recommended future research to investigate remote workers' mental health and well-being due to previous research resulting in mixed results. According to Onken Menke et al (2018), there is limited research on the effects of remote working on individual employees in relation to work and non-work related factors such as family life and personal hobbies. Comparable with this Vesala & Tuomivaara (2015), highlight that research on remote working on well-being has been inconsistent as this form of work has been argued to increase work intensity resulting in issues with work-life balance. In contrast, other research suggests well-being is positively linked to remote working due to

decreased commute times (Grant et al, 2013; Melo & de Abreu e Silva, 2017). Future research recommended by Giovanis (2018), is to explore well-being in relation to remote working.

A gap in this area of research is highlighted by Crawford et al (2011), due to scarce research existing in relation to the health and well-being of remote workers and there is a requirement for future research on this area. Similarly, Grant et al (2013), highlights there is a gap in research on how remote working practices may influence well-being. Furthermore Bentley et al (2016), conclude in their study that future research is needed in relation to factors that may enhance well-being of remote workers and understanding the remote working experience. Comparable with this, CIPD (2019), highlight that it is essential for organisations to recognise and identify the impact of remote working on employee well-being. Furthermore, Beauregard (2011), suggests there is a lack of research on the work from home culture and its influence on health and well-being of individuals.

A similar study by Grant et al (2013), conducted research on remote working in three different sectors and five different companies. In addition other studies of remote working and well-being were carried out specifically on remote workers who are self-employed and working in administrative roles (Hislop, et al., 2015). This presents a gap as there is no evidence of research on remote working and the influence it has on employee well-being in the recruitment sector.

Other research suggests limited studies in relation to how teleworkers are supported during remote working practices (Bentley, et al., 2016). A further gap is presented by Eddleston & Mulki (2017), who suggest research should explore how remote workers manage boundaries between work and home and explore the reasons that prompt individuals to engage in remote working.

2.13 Conclusion of the Literature

Throughout this chapter the concepts of remote working and employee well-being have been defined by various and contrasting definitions from many academics. It is evident that remote working offers many advantages and disadvantages to both employees and organisations. However, previous research on the effects of remote working on employee well-being have been controversial and contentious. Therefore there is a requirement to explore this issue in greater detail by obtaining remote workers' experiences and feelings in relation to well-being.

Scarce research exists in relation to how remote working influences the psychological, physical and social well-being of remote workers. Accordingly, this needs to be considered in relation to what degree remote workers feel their well-being is influenced by working remotely.

There are also additional gaps in the literature which requires further examination and may be addressed such as managing boundaries between work and home life. Furthermore, research is needed to investigate relationships between remotely-based workers and office-based workers. Therefore, this study will investigate the influence that remote working has on employee well-being, specifically in relation to the psychological, physical and social well-being of remote workers.

Chapter 3: Research Question and Aims of Study

Based on the above literature, it is clear that there is uncertainty and gaps in previous research with respect to how remote working influences the well-being of remote workers. This study will aim to provide an understanding of the remote working experience in relation to how remote workers feel their well-being has been influenced since engaging in this practice.

The following research question has been chosen to answer this study. This research question will hopefully provide a clear indication as to how remote working influences the well-being of employees who work remotely.

3.1 Research Question

"How does remote working influence the well-being of remote workers?"

3.2 Research Objectives

- **To explore how remote working influences the social well-being of remote workers.** This objective was developed as the literature suggests significant research gaps exist, and indicates further research is needed to explore how remote working influences social issues and relationships, and how organisation support remote workers.
- **To investigate how remote working influences the psychological well-being of remote workers**. This objective was developed to examine how remote working influences psychological aspects such as work-life balance and satisfaction of remote workers.
- **To investigate how remote working influences the physical well-being of remote workers.** This objective was established to investigate how remote working influences the physical aspects such as health and stress and also the physical working environment.
- **To investigate how remote workers manage their work-life boundaries.** This objective was developed to investigate and explore how remote workers manage the boundary between work and home life as the literature suggests gaps exist and further research is needed.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study focuses on remote working and how it influences the well-being of remote workers. This chapter will discuss firstly the philosophy for research and types of research methods that may be undertaken to conduct this study in order to select the most appropriate method of data collection. The research design will then be outlined including the research approach selected to conduct this study. The sample chosen, and the type of research method selected will be discussed along with the data analysis procedure, limitations of the research and ethical considerations to be taken into account.

4.2 Research Philosophy

The research onion described by Saunders et al (2016), suggests there are a number of factors to consider when undertaking research. Research philosophy is the first stage, which involves the belief and outlook that direct how research should be carried out (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

There are two main philosophical viewpoints that must be considered such as epistemology and ontology. Epistemology is associated with knowledge and how it is created and developed (Horn, 2009). There are two perspectives of epistemology such as positivism and interpretivism (Quinlan, 2011). Positivism is concerned with natural sciences and may involve quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Interpretivism allows the researcher to understand differences among individuals rather than objects (Saunders et al, 2016).

Ontology is concerned with the nature of existence and may be objectivism which suggests that social occurrences are external and independent of social actors (Collis & Hussey, 2014). An additional ontological perspective is the constructivism position, which suggests that social experiences are built from the beliefs and behaviours of social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Due to the nature of this study the researcher must obtain remote working employees' individual experiences while engaged in remote working and therefore the research philosophy selected is an epistemology approach. The aims and objectives of this study were considered and an epistemology approach was selected. An interpretivist perspective was selected for this study due to the aim of understanding and obtaining opinions of individuals who remote work.

The interpretivist approach will facilitate knowledge to be open to each individual's personal interpretation and experience of remote working and its influence on their well-being.

4.3 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Methods

There are two primary methods of research which can be undertaken such as qualitative and quantitative.

According to Saunders et al (2016), qualitative data is based on meanings articulated through linguistic or visual information and can be classified into categories. Qualitative research is employed when a comprehensive understanding of attitudes, views and behaviours is required (Barnham, 2015). Therefore this form of research involves the exploration of a phenomena based on feelings, opinions, beliefs and perspectives (Quinlan, 2011). Furthermore, Horn (2009), states the use of qualitative methods provide a powerful account of individual's views and behaviours. The main sources of qualitative research include interviews, focus groups and observation (Mills & Birks, 2014). Qualitative research mainly adopts an inductive approach which centres on generating theory from data gathered (Williams & Moser, 2019).

By contrast, quantitative research involves utilising a questionnaire or statistics that produce numerical data (Saunders et al, 2016). Quantitative methods may be used when exploring factual and hard data compared to qualitative which itself offers a deeper insight when exploring a phenomenon (Barnham, 2015). Quantitative research is primarily used to test a theory as it employs a deductive approach and measures variables using statistical analysis (Park & Park, 2016).

Quantitative methods determine new information based on previous insights and develops this knowledge in contrast to qualitative methods which provides insights that develop new directions of theory (Bansal, et al., 2018). Furthermore, qualitative research is typically unstructured or semi-structured practices with a small sample in contrast to quantitative techniques which are highly structured and employ a large sample of participants (Park & Park, 2016). However, both qualitative and quantitative may be combined to form a mixed methods approach to research (Saunders et al, 2016). According to Park & Park (2016), the integration of both methods is termed triangulation.

4.4 Research Design

Research is defined as a unique investigation carried out to contribute to existing literature and understanding in a specific area (Myers, 2013). According to Saunders et al (2016), the research design will outline how the research question will be answered. The aim of this study is to investigate the influence remote working practices have on the well-being of remote workers in terms of psychological, physical and social well-being.

According to Barnham (2015), qualitative research is employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of individual's views, experiences and behaviours. Similarly, Myers (2013), states that qualitative research allows researchers to understand a phenomena in great depth and is appropriate for exploratory research when studying aspects and views of people. Therefore, in order to conduct this study qualitative research was chosen as the most suitable approach as the information required to be collected was in relation to individual's experiences and views of remote working and well-being. Quantitative research would not be suited to this study as it does not allow for exploration in depth and is less flexible than a qualitative approach (Saunders et al, 2016).

Selecting a qualitative approach has assisted the researcher to explore the research question by obtaining remote workers' views, experiences and behaviours in relation to remote working and its influence on their well-being. An additional advantage of qualitative research was the flexibility to use open-ended questions in contrast to quantitative which are close-ended and extremely rigid (Myers, 2013). Furthermore, a comparable study conducted by Grant et al (2013), also applied a qualitative approach to research in which job effectiveness, work-life balance and well-being of remote workers were explored.

This study adopted an interpretivism paradigm as it offers understanding of differences between individuals, the gathering of opinions and is suitable in understanding business research (Saunders et al, 2016).

An inductive approach was selected based on grounded theory which centres on developing theory from the data gathered. Williams & Moser (2019), proceed to distinguish this with the deductive approach, which is concerned with testing a theory.

A grounded theory approach will allow meanings and behaviours of social actors to be explored and offer theoretical explanations(Nunes, et al., 2010). The rationale behind utilising an

inductive approach and qualitative methodology is to understand remote working and its consequent influence on the psychological, physical and social well-being of remote workers. This will allow the researcher to obtain perceptions and opinions in relation to remote working and the influence it may have on well-being of remote workers.

4.5 Sampling Method

The overall aim of this study is to explore how remote working influences the well-being of remote workers and therefore remote workers were selected to participate in this study as they were the target audience. As the research is interpretivist in nature, the experiences and opinions of remote workers will be gathered. Non-probability sampling was carried out using snowball sampling which involved finding one participant to with whom to conduct the research, and then being recommended to the next participant (Quinlan, 2011). A purposeful sampling method was employed as the researcher selected the sample of participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A snowball method of sampling was chosen as it allowed the researcher to gain access to a group of individuals with whom the researcher had limited typical access. Moreover, due to the researcher's accessibility to four remote workers this facilitated the researcher being recommended to other remote workers in the recruitment sector. This was a useful advantage as the researcher was introduced to remote workers through other remote employees.

A major advantage of choosing a snowball sampling approach was that it allowed the researcher to exercise control over the sample, as the study was only conducted on remote workers in the recruitment sector. However, a disadvantage of a snowball sampling approach was it might prove difficult to secure contact with participants who are identified due to this approach being voluntary (Saunders et al, 2016).

Remote workers in the recruitment sector were specifically asked to participate in this study as they are the key subjects in this investigation. If the researcher selected standard office workers who do not undertake remote work this may dilute the integrity of the aims and objectives of this study. Four of the participants were sought through personal contact of the researcher and the remaining seven were obtained by snowball sampling.

According to Morganson et al (2010), as remote workers are typically a small portion of workers in an organisation it may be challenging to recruit participants for research on remote working. Due to remote working being a relatively new phenomenon in many organisations and the consequent difficulty in recruiting a group all being full-time remote employees, the sample selected was a variety of remote workers such as full-time remote, part-time remote and flexible-remote workers. The sample included eleven participants who were selected from three organisations across the recruitment sector. The sample was comprised of eight females and three males with age ranges of 25-48, all practitioners participants in the recruitment sector. As soon as the participants were identified, an email was issued to all of the remote workers to invite participation in this study. A copy of the original email is referenced in Appendix 1. The email was sent to thirteen subjects, eleven of whom as remote workers responded to the email expressing their interest to participate in this study. The email also attached an information form referenced in appendix 2, outlining all details of the study and a consent form seen in appendix 3.

4.5.1 Breakdown of Sample Participants

	PARTICIPANTS										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female
Age	44	44	40	25	32	38	40	36	32	48	42
Length of time working from home	6 years	8 years	10 years	9 months	10 years	7 months	9 years	1 year	3 years	11 years	10 years
Frequency of working from home	Ad Hoc	once a week or twice a month	3 times a month	Once a month	Full time	Every wedensday once a week	2 days per week	Full time	Every Wedensday once a week	Full time	2 days per week
Type of remote worker	Flexible basis	Flexible basis	Flexible basis	Flexible basis	Full time remote	Part time	Part time	Full time remote	Part time	Full time remote	Part time
Reason started remote working	Childcare & commute	Productivity & childcare	Childcare	Flexibility	Flexibility	Childcare & work-life balance	Childcare & flexibility	Childcare & work-life balance	Flexibility	Childcare & commute	Childcare & commute

Table 1. Breakdown of sample

4.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to allow the researcher establish if the interview questions were relevant to the study. An advantage of employing a pilot study is that it reduces problems, prevents surprises and allows the researcher to consider any subsequent learning to include in future interviews (Nunes, et al., 2010). The pilot study was carried out on one remote worker and the interview questions posed are seen in Appendix 4. By conducting a pilot study this also allowed the interview questions to be refined if there was slight repetition in questions or if some questions were not sufficiently open. This also allowed the researcher to then consolidate the preparation of open-ended questions in the final interviews, and follow up with further probing such as 'can you tell me more about that' and 'can you give me examples of what you mean'. This was a useful advantage as the questions were easy to adapt and change throughout the study. This would not have been possible if a quantitative approach was selected. Furthermore, the pilot study offered an opportunity to improve the researcher's interviewing skills and eliminate any potential risks (Nunes, et al., 2010). During the piloting, a dictaphone was also used to test how efficient and clear the audio was before using it in the main study.

4.7 Data Collection

The data was gathered by conducting a 30 minute semi-structured face to face and telephone interviews with the eleven selected participants from the recruitment sector. The data obtained was primary data, from an original source - being interviews with remote working employees. An interview schedule was established which included a combination of open-ended, comparison and probing questions evident in Appendix 5.

4.7.1 Interviews:

The research method that was chosen for this study was semi-structured interviews. According to Collis & Hussey (2014), interviews involve exploring data on individual's opinions, feelings, attitudes and beliefs. This type of research method was suitable for this study as the main aim of this research involved gathering data in relation to how remote workers felt about their psychological, physical and social well-being when working remotely. Furthermore, interviews are a flexible approach as they allow for additional questions and probing on important issues (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewee to raise questions

about the primary issues of interest but also to develop further questions during the interview which was an advantage in exploring particular topics in depth (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

The interviews were conducted within the two recruitment organisations with 8 remote working employees. In addition, due to many employees working remotely on a full-time basis it was not possible for some interviews to take place face-to-face and therefore three telephone interviews were conducted to facilitate the participants. The interview questions as evident in Appendix 5 were based on remote working and in particular how the participants felt their psychological, physical and social well-being has been impacted since working remotely.

4.7.2 Interview Schedule:

The following questions were developed to answer the research question "*How does remote working influence employee well-being?"* and to achieve the four objectives of this study. The concrete interview schedule is evident in Appendix 5. The interview schedule was arranged into the following 6 sections:

- Demographics of participants
- Psychological well-being
- Physical well-being
- Social well-being
- Boundary management
- Perspectives on their well-being and thoughts of remote working

In order to achieve the research objectives the following questions were developed:

Objective 1: To investigate how remote working influences the social well-being of remote workers:

1) Can you tell me how do you communicate with the office when remote working?
2) How do you feel your organisation supports you when working remotely?
3) How do you feel your relationships with your colleagues has been impacted since engaging in remote working?

Objective 2: To investigate how remote working influences the psychological well-being of remote workers:

1) How do you feel working remotely has impacted on your work-life balance?
2) Can you tell me why you engaged in remote working?

3) How do you feel in terms of satisfaction since working remotely?

4) What do you feel the major challenges are when working remotely?

Objective 3: To investigate how remote working influences the physical well-being of remote workers:

1) Can you tell me what your remote working environment is like?

2) Can you tell me what a typical remote working day involves?

3) How does your remote working environment differ to the office environment?

4) How do you feel in relation to your stress levels when remote working?

Objective 4: To investigate how remote workers manage work-life boundaries

1) How do you manage the boundary between work and home life when working remotely?

2) How do you feel remote working has impacted your ability to switch off from work?

4.7.3 Interview Procedure:

As soon as participants agreed to take part in the study they were contacted via email to arrange a suitable time to attend interview, at which time the interview schedule was created. Before each interview commenced the interviewer provided the participant with a pack containing an information sheet, consent form and contact details to read in order to understand all information of the study.

The interviews were conducted in a quiet conference room, away from distractions, so as to allow for privacy and in-depth conversation. Each interview lasted 30 minutes.

As three interviews had to be conducted via telephone, the researcher contacted each participant prior to the interview to ensure they were in a quiet location before commencing the telephone interview.

For the three telephone interviews the information pack documents were emailed to each participant before the interview. The interview commenced with a set of demographic and opening questions that allowed the participant to begin talking and feel relaxed. Once the key interview schedule questions were posed, the researcher moved to ask deeper questions and probe for additional information that they felt was of important value to the study.

4.8 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves analysing the data gathered to obtain a rich description of the phenomenon being studied (Quinlan, 2011). Once the data was gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews the data was then transcribed. The use of a dictaphone allowed the interviews to be listened to repeatedly in order to transcribe the entire interview from beginning to end. Once the data was transcribed the researcher examined and read the data multiple times to become familiar and immersed in the study. As a grounded theory approach was selected for this study the process of coding was carried out which involves three stages; open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Saunders et al, 2016).

Thematic analysis was employed to identify themes across the data gathered. According to Quinlan (2011), thematic analysis involves examining data through the application of themes. The analysis involved reading and examining interview transcriptions and notes taken during the interview in search for thematic patterns (Williams & Moser, 2019). The transcripts of the interviews were examined continuously using a highlighter pen to code and identify common themes. Once a common theme was identified it was provided with a code and each coded category was examined for patterns and common themes to ensure all the primary categories were incorporated in the data. The results from the thematic analysis and coding were then compared to ensure validity.

4.9 Limitations of Research Design

There are many limitations of qualitative research. Firstly, time was a limitation for this study as interviews are time-consuming to conduct, as well as interviewees being busy with their personal lives. In addition, the researcher maintained awareness that, according to Bryman & Bell (2011), qualitative research may be subjective due to reliability of the researcher's views.

It was also found to be heavily time-consuming to transcribe the data after the interviews were conducted. A further critique of qualitative research is that the findings may not be generalised to a specific population as the research aims to understand opinions, behaviours and beliefs of a specific issue. However, in accounting for the limitations of this research design, the researcher contends that the strengths and suitability of this research design was not degraded.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Myers (2013), qualitative research prompts many ethical considerations such as respect and security for people who are participating in the study. There were several ethical issues to consider when conducting this study.

Firstly, due to the nature of this research it was extremely important that all participants engaging in the interviews were fully informed in relation to confidentiality, privacy, sensitivity and data protection. In order to address this, all participants were issued with a consent form prior to conducting the interview setting out confidentiality and privacy as the interview would be audio recorded. All participants were informed that this is a voluntary process and they may terminate the interview at any stage. Each of the participants were required to sign the consent forms before the interview commenced. Participants who could not be interviewed face to face were provided with the consent form and information sheet via email.

Ethical considerations were taken into account when phrasing questions in the interview to eliminate any form of discrimination as this may be sensitive data in relation to employee well-being. Due to the sensitivity of the study, the interviews were conducted in a private meeting room in a comfortable environment away from all distractions.

A further ethical concern is the storage of the sensitive data once it was collected. Each participant was informed in writing and verbally that the researcher would follow all Data Protection Act regulations and the National College of Ireland's guide on ethics.

Chapter 5:   Findings

5.1   Introduction

This chapter will provide an examination of the data obtained and an exploration of the themes which were derived from the data by conducting thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eleven participants who were all remote workers in the recruitment sector. The following themes have been identified in order to address the research question and achieve the key objectives. As the remote workers were a mix of flexi-time, part-time and full-time remote employees, the findings are compared and may contain similarities and variances in certain themes.

5.2   Demographic Description

As outlined in chapter 4 the sample was a mixture of remote workers. Three of the participants were full-time remote workers, four of them were flexible remote workers and four were part-time who engaged in remote working either once or twice a week. The sample was a mixed age group ranging from 25-48 years old. The sample was comprised of eight females and three males, which may indicate a gender imbalance but the researcher experienced difficulty in obtaining male remote workers.
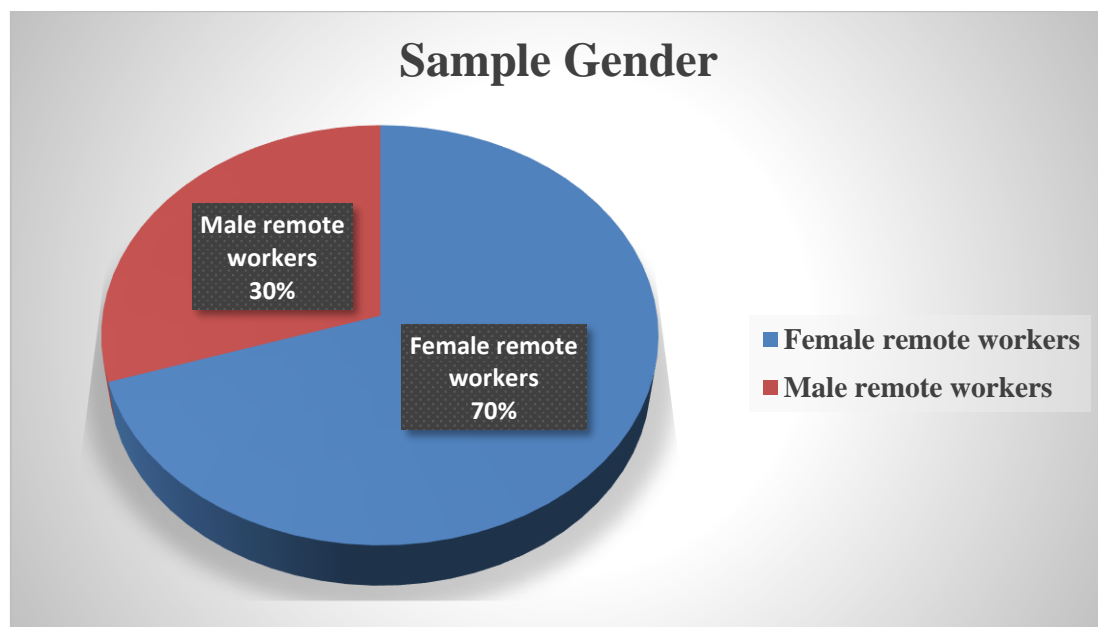
Figure 1. Description of sample gender

5.3 Themes

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data obtained from the eleven semi-structured interviews. These interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Thematic analysis was carried out by highlighting, coding and sorting the common data into themes. After each transcript was reviewed individually, it was then cross referenced with other transcripts to establish the most common themes throughout the data. The data was analysed and coded with caution, and 16 themes were initially identified during the examination. The 16 themes were further analysed as the researcher began to identify overlap in some themes - such as isolation and loneliness which can be categorised into one theme. This allowed the researcher to further analyse the themes and organise them into 5 primary themes that emerged from the data.

The researcher reviewed each of these themes and categorised them into 5 themes:

1. **Isolation**
2. **Flexibility / Personal Factors**
3. **Boundary Management**
4. **Work environment**
5. **Health & well-being**
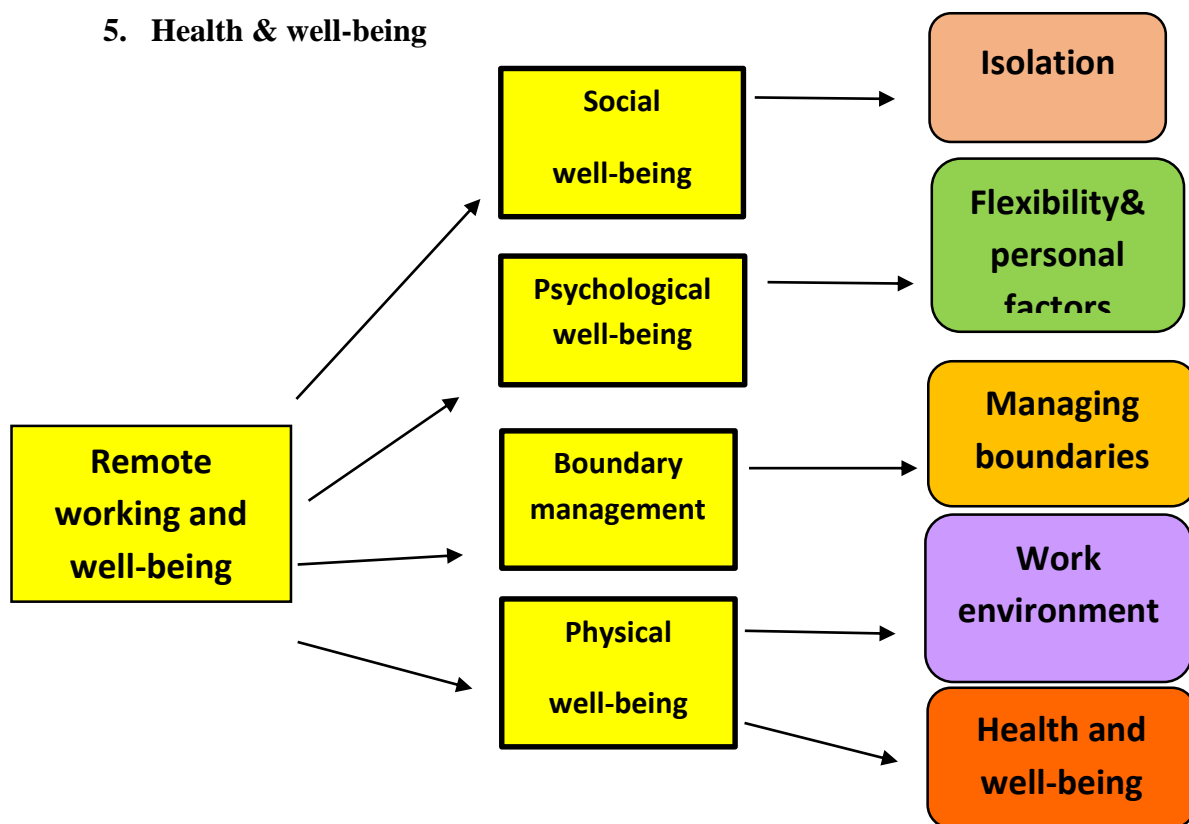
Figure 2. Thematic diagram illustrating the relationship between the research area, the five emerging themes and research objectives.

5.4   Thematic Analysis

5.4.1 Theme 1 - Isolation

Throughout the interviews all of the participants expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation when working remotely.

Participant J expressed that they *"feel isolated and don't feel like part of the team at times"*.

Similarly, participant H outlined *"people don't remember you if you're not present which can make you feel isolated and lonely"*.

However in contrast participants G and E who are both full-time remote workers outline that they don't feel *"totally isolated"* as they are *"used to it"* and therefore only experience *"aspects of isolation"*.
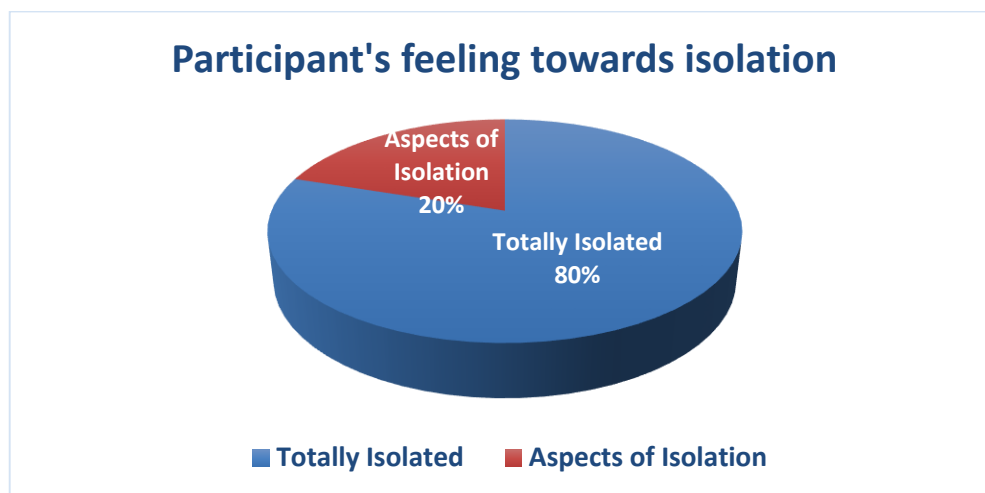
Figure 3. The percentage of participants feeling isolated

A number of participants conveyed how they felt isolated when working remotely.

Participant C stated *"missing out on the day-to-day office chats"*.

Similarly, participant F highlighted *"missing the everyday office banter"* and *"a constant fear of missing out"*.

Comparable with this, participant K expressed that they feel like they are *"missing out especially not being present for meetings and missing social events"*.

In addition participant I expressed *"the absence of everyday conversation, coffee breaks, lunch breaks and walks as you are on your own at home"*.

It is clear that many of the participants displayed a fear of missing out on conversations and office situations in relation to isolation.

Participants outlined how their organisation and colleagues support them when they are remote working.

"My colleagues are supportive, there is a culture of flexibility so everyone respects each other when working remotely and there are no hard feelings". (Participant B).

"I'm really lucky my colleagues are supportive and we are a small team so we work closely together no matter what location I am in". (Participant D).

"My team support me daily, communicating my email, skype calls and phone. I am always kept updated on any issues". (Participant H).

"We have a team video call every week and always share candidates and updates on emails". (Participant K).

This finding suggests that participants were supported positively by their organisation and colleagues.

Participants commented on their relationships with their colleagues and methods of communication when working remotely. All participants indicated using email as the best method of communication with the office.

Participant B stated *"my colleagues update me daily by email and if its urgent I would ring into the office"*.

Similarly participant A outlined *"me and my colleagues are really close and we mostly use our WhatsApp group or email to communicate everyday"*.

Participant F expressed *"my colleagues have respect for me and appreciate me as it gives them more responsibility when I am not present"*.

However, intriguingly participant G stated *"we use email daily but it's quite challenging because the person's tone may appear short at times or there may be lack of understanding"*.

Comparable with this participant J outlined that *"email is only good for short and to the point conversations"*.

All participants commented on their social well-being when remote working.

Participant J stated *"the absence of social aspects is the biggest negative for me"*.

Similarly, participant I outlined *"I am an extremely social person and although remote working is good in other areas you definitely compromise on the social factors"*.

Comparable with this, both participants A and F highlighted their *"social well-being to be negative due to feelings of isolation"*.

Overall the findings is this theme were similar for full time, part time and flexi time remote participants.

5.4.2 Theme 2 - Flexibility / Personal Factors

Flexibility was a common theme throughout the interviews. Flexibility in relation to work-life balance was a common theme that emerged from this study. A total of nine out of eleven participants all expressed positive views that remote working has on their work-life balance.

Participant A highlighted *"having flexibility in work-life balance and family commitments has helped my well-being and work"*.

Participant C outlined that since starting remote working *"my work-life balance has improved and is really beneficial for me"*.

In a similar manner, participant F stated *"working remotely has benefited my work-life balance with my family and allowed me to be more organised in my work"*.

Participant D emphasised that *"life isn't all about work and people are starting to realise that now with a greater demand for work-life balance"*.

However in contrast to these views, two participants stated that they didn't feel remote working had a positive influence on their work-life balance.

Participant E stated *"for me work-life balance is the biggest problem as I forget my life and it doesn't exist Monday-Friday"*.

A contrasting statement was outlined by participant B who stated *"I don't think my work-life balance has been reduced or improved"*.

It appears clear that debate surrounds the issue of work-life balance when remote working.
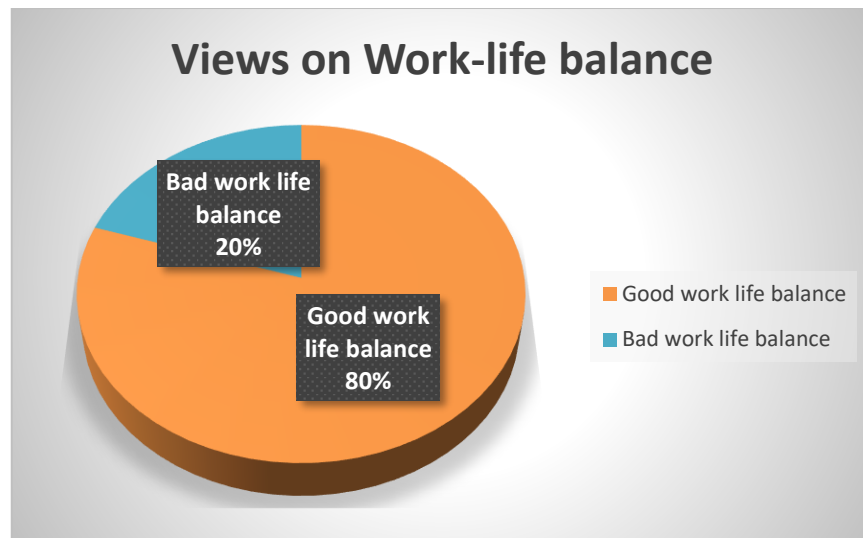
Figure 4. Participant's views on work-life balance.

Participants were asked what was the main reason for engaging in remote working. The primary reasons were for childcare reasons - with seven of eleven participants declaring for that.

However, in contrast, three of eleven participants outlined flexibility to be the main reason. Participant G outlined flexibility and childcare reasons to be the primary motivations of engaging in remote working.

Participants who outlined flexibility as the main factor expressed their views in a positive manner.

Participant D stated *"flexibility is great, you don't have to take a holiday day for an appointment that may take two hours out of the day"*.

Similarly, participant I stated *"having the flexibility to work from home is great especially when you may need to be at home for a particular reason. I can work remotely instead of taking a day off"*.

Comparable with this participant E outlined *"having charge of your own schedule is a great advantage"*.

The findings also indicated greater levels of autonomy due to flexibility.

Participant K stated *"the flexibility gives you more autonomy as I'm in charge of my own availability"*.

Comparable with this participant E highlighted *"I feel I have more autonomy and control over my schedule"*.

The second common reason for engaging in remote working is due to balance in family commitments and childcare.

Participant G highlighted *"being able to have flexibility for children with hospital appointments and family needs is a huge benefit to me"*.

Similarly, participant J outlined *"being closer to the kids and having more time with them is a huge benefit to me"*.

Both of these findings indicate a greater balance in family life.

Comparable with these findings participant H stated *"I have more time with my kids and have had huge savings in childcare costs"*.

Furthermore, participant A highlighted *"less stress in organising a child minder and savings in child care costs are a great benefit"*.

This appears an advantage as childcare costs are expensive, however it is noted that both participants who mentioned savings in childcare costs are females.
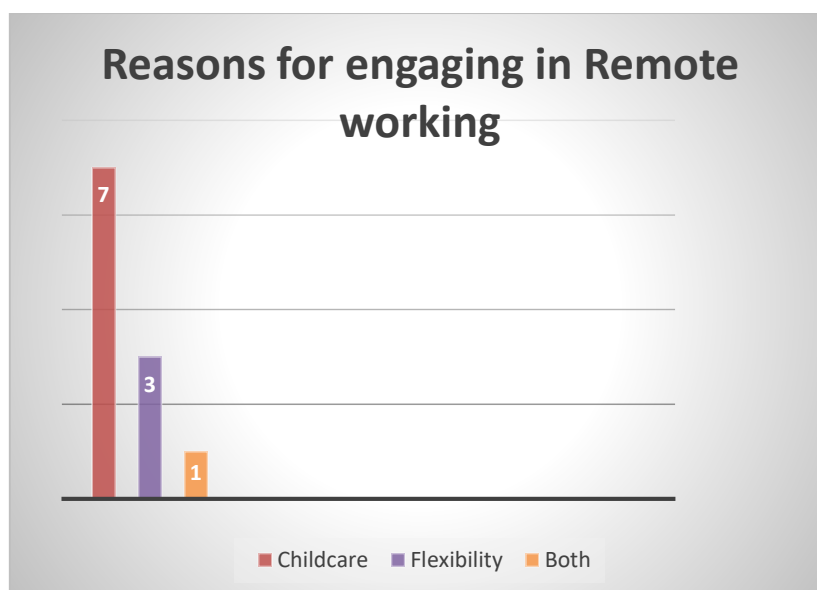
Figure 5. Reasons for engaging in remote working.

Participant B sparked a pointed debate in relation to demographics of remote workers.

Participant B stated *"remote working is typically a female thing due to being the prime carer of the child traditionally".*

The researcher found this issue of interest, and as semi-structured interviews were chosen this allowed the researcher to explore the issue and ask other participants about their view. This generated more commentary in the interviews.

Participants I, J, F, D and G all outlined that women do work remotely more often than men and may be due to childcare responsibilities.

However participant J also outlined that men who do remote work *"will not say they are remote working a lot of the time".*

This was of interest to the researcher as it sparked debate throughout the interviews and allowed the researcher to obtain more expansive views.

In relation to personal experiences eight of eleven participants expressed why they feel more satisfied working from home.

Participant H stated *"I'm so much happier since working remotely because I have my own dependence and can balance my family needs".*

Participant J highlighted *"having control over my work has made me happier and more confident that I'm trusted to work remotely"*.

However participant B outlined an increase in satisfaction due to *"greater work productivity when working remotely"*.

Several participants referred to the challenge of staying motivated while working remotely.

Participant I stated *"keeping motivated and having discipline is a challenge"*.

Similarly, participant K highlighted *"there's a huge amount of self-motivation and discipline involved, being trusted to remote work is a motivator for me"*.

Likewise, participant D outlined *"having the opportunity to work remotely motivates me and that my manager trusts me"*.

Participants were then probed to comment on how they stay motivated and disciplined working from home.

A similar pattern emerged with participants E and C outlining *"having a schedule set out for the day"* in order to remain disciplined.

Comparable with this, participants I and J stated having *"everyday checklists"* and ticking each task off once completed.

However in contrast, participant A suggested *"it depends on the person themselves and their personality"*.

When asked about the challenges of working remotely several participants commented on a lack of opportunities when working remotely.

Participant J stated *"I know I'm not going to get promoted because I'm not present in the office"*.

Similarly participant E commented *"missing out on office development"*.

Likewise, participant H outlined *"less opportunities for promotion because you're not seen in the office"*.

All three participants are full-time remote workers in contrast to the other eight participants who are a mixture of flexi-time and part-time remote who did not raise concerns in relation to promotion opportunities.

However numerous participants commented on challenges of working remotely in relation to aspects of work in the recruitment sector.

Participant B stated *"it's easier to meet candidates when working in the office"*.

In contrast participant I highlighted remote working in recruitment is a great advantage as *"I can have better conversations with candidates because nobody is around listening in"*.

Participant G stated *"I am more honest and have better relationships with clients since working remotely"*.

5.4.3 Theme 3 - Boundary Management

Participants were asked to comment on how they manage the boundaries between work and home life when working remotely. All of the participants expressed difficulty in managing boundaries and felt that the boundaries tend to become blurred. As a result, a majority of the participants stated that they work longer hours.

Participant I outlined *"boundaries are definitely blurred for me. I could be making dinner while having my laptop open responding to emails"*.

Similar statements were outlined by participants J and G who both outlined "*I could be helping my kids with homework while responding to emails"*.

Furthermore, participant G commented on the lines between work and home life stating *"I merge the two worlds together so the lines definitely blur"*.

Other findings suggest that technology may be the source for boundaries becoming blurred. Participant H outlined *"I have my emails on my phone so I don't feel like I separate the boundaries"*.

Comparable with this participant E confirmed to be *"always switched on with work especially with developments in technology"*.

However in contrast participant K indicated having emails on your personal phone may be both an advantage and disadvantage.

Participant K stated *"it's good in the way that my emails are easily accessible but also bad because I could be lying in bed checking my emails".*

Managing Boundaries

100%
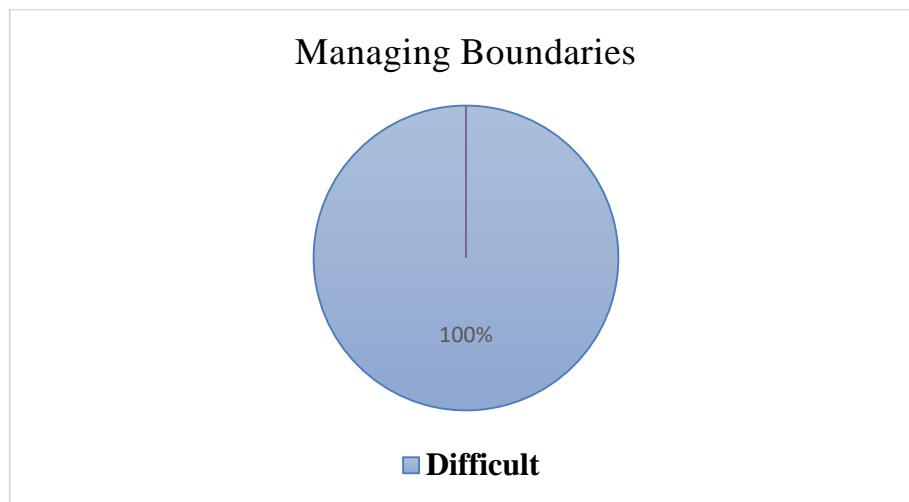
☐ **Difficult**

Figure 6. Difficulty Managing Boundaries

When asked about a typical remote working day, all participants commented on working longer hours.

Participant A explained *"I looked at the clock and it was half 6 and I was still there since half 8 that morning so I think that's a negative".*

Similarly, participant I stated *"I work a longer period of time when working from home and I keep the laptop open much longer".*

In contrast participant J revealed *"I work longer hours than I did before due to less distractions".*

However participants who remote work on a flexible basis outlined that it is acceptable as they aren't engaged in the practice full time.

Participant B stated *"I work longer hours but I like to think it's acceptable because I don't work remotely everyday".*

Similarly, participant D outlined working longer hours but *"I only do it once a month".*

Working longer hours has been linked to 'presenteeism' in the findings. Eight of eleven participants outlined that there is a perception that if someone is not present in the office that they are not working as hard as they would be in the office.

Participant G stated *"I feel like I should be constantly online and responding anyway because I'm not in the office"*.

Similarly, participant J outlined *"it feels like I have to be available all the time and I'm under an obligation to get more done"*.

Participant D expressed *"I can't be seen to be slacking off because I'm working from home so I make sure I'm always online"*.

However other participants revealed that they feel they owe something to their organisation and therefore need to prove their work.

Participant F commented on working longer hours highlighting the *"organisation trusts you to work from home and it feels like I have to prove something to them"*.

Comparable with this participant H outlined *"I work hard and feel like I do have a point to prove"*.

It appears evident that switching off from work when remote working is a challenge and problem as ten of eleven participants expressed their inability to switch off.

"I just don't switch off ever and I don't feel like I manage the boundary well because I'm constantly on and active". (Participant H).

"I log on at 8am and try switch off around 7pm but I feel like I'm constantly on". (Participant G).

"It's difficult and I can never find time for myself to chill out because I'm always on my emails". (Participant J).

However in contrast participant C outlined *"I don't find it hard to switch off as I have all my work done"*.
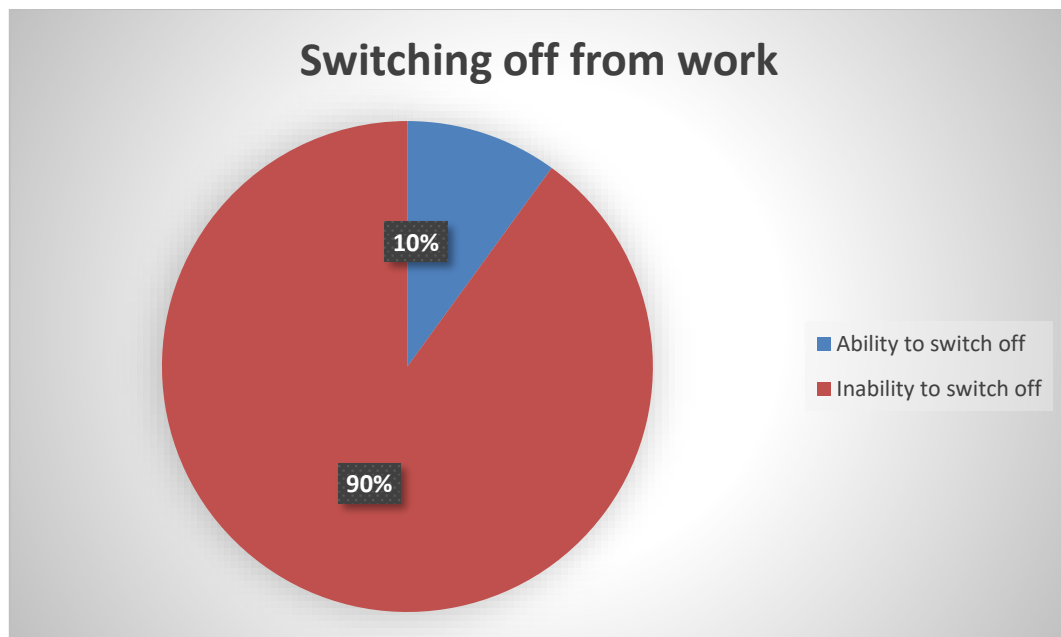
Figure 7. Difficulty Switching Off

Many participants revealed practices they engage in to help them manage the boundaries and to switch off.

Participant K highlighted *"doing mediation in the evenings to wind down and reading before bed".*

Participant I stated *"going for a walk at lunch time or a drive to try switch off for that time".*

However the remaining participants all admitted to having difficulty in managing the boundaries, and confided that they fail in managing them.

It is clear that trust issues between remote workers and managers remain an issue as five of eleven participants outlined experiencing issues with trust.

Participant A stated *"my manager viewed me differently and the full trust wasn't there".*

Similarly, participant I outlined *"my manager has a perception if someone is working from home they aren't doing as much work".*

Comparable with this both participants H and K expressed that *"a huge element of remote working is based on trust".*

The findings suggest managing boundaries is determined by self-discipline.

Participant D stated *"it's about discipline and you have to tell yourself to stop at a certain time"*.

Similarly, participant A highlights *"it comes back to the person themselves and how they manage their time"*.

Participant E outlined *"you have to be strict on yourself and have discipline but it is extremely difficult"*.

5.4.4 Theme 4 - Work Environment

Findings from this study indicate the work environment that the participants work in may play a role in influencing their well-being at work. Participants were asked to comment on their work environment when working remotely. Participant J stated *"having a work environment with good lighting and not too cramped is important for yourself and helps you to focus better"*. Similarly, participant C outlined *"setting up in a particular way having enough light and making sure I'm comfortable and not crouched over"*. Participant K highlighted *"having an environment with plenty of space, enough light and no distractions is important"*.

Remote working from home was outlined as the most common location by all participants.

However, participant B stated *"I work on the go in hotels and coffee shops as I travel a lot"*.

Similarly, participant G highlighted *"working from home, in coffee shops and on the move in the car"*.

A total of six of eleven participants stated that they work from their kitchen when working remotely and the remaining three of eleven participants have their own office at home.
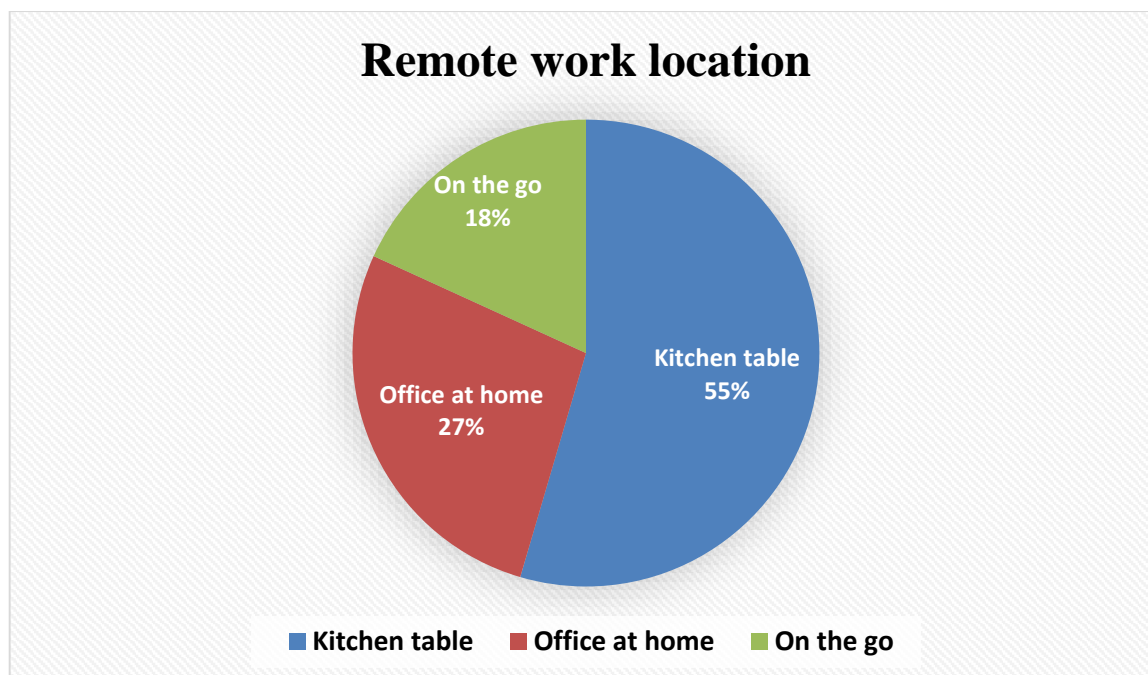
Figure 8. Remote Work Location

Support from the organisation in setting up the work environment when remote working was also highlighted by participant H who stated *"someone came out to my house to ensure it was a safe environment to work in and equipped my office with a desk, chair and laptop"*.

Similarly, participant J outlined *"my work environment had to be checked to make sure it was safe and I had the equipment needed to work"*.

Participant F and H outlined that the organisation *"ensures safety by switching on remote access for security reasons"*.

Almost all participants highlighted the importance of no distractions in their work environment.

"There's no phones ringing or chatting to your colleagues so I am more focused". (Participant D).

"I get a lot more done because there are no distractions compared to the office". (Participant A).

"I feel like my work is more fluid because there aren't as many distractions". (Participant I).

Participant F highlighted *"my productivity is 100% better working from home because I've no distractions"*.

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Similarly, participant E stated *"I'm more focused on my work and would feel more productive because there are no distractions".*

5.4.5 Theme 5 - Health and Well-Being

All participants commented on their overall health and well-being since working remotely. Some participants mentioned they have good well-being but that they wouldn't be able to remote work full time.

"It's good for my well-being in terms of positive work life balance". (Participant A).

"I think my well-being is positive but if I was to work remotely full time I don't think that would be good for my well-being". (Participant I).

"It's definitely 100% positive on my well-being but I can't comment on it if I was to do it five days per week". (Participant F).

However participants who work remotely full time also outlined having good well-being and much better health.

"My well-being is great as I'm in more control of what I do and I'm much closer to my family". (Participant J).

"It's made my life 100 times easier, both myself and my kids well-being are brilliant and I'm so much happier than I was before". (Participant H).

"I make sure I take time out for myself and my well-being to have good work-life balance". (Participant E).

In relation to stress all female participants indicated higher stress levels when remote working.

Participant J stated being stressed for two reasons such as *"not being physically apart of the team and because I am essentially doing two jobs as I'm looking after the kids too".*

Likewise participant K outlined *"it's like having two jobs because I'm working but also have pressure on me to mind the kids".*

Participant A highlighted an increase in stress as *"I get worried that I'm not in the office and not being seen".*

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However all male participants stated no increase or decrease in stress levels when working remotely.

Participant F stated *"I feel more calm and relaxed working remotely and it gives me head space"*.

Similarly, participant I highlighted *"I don't feel more stressed which is a positive"*.
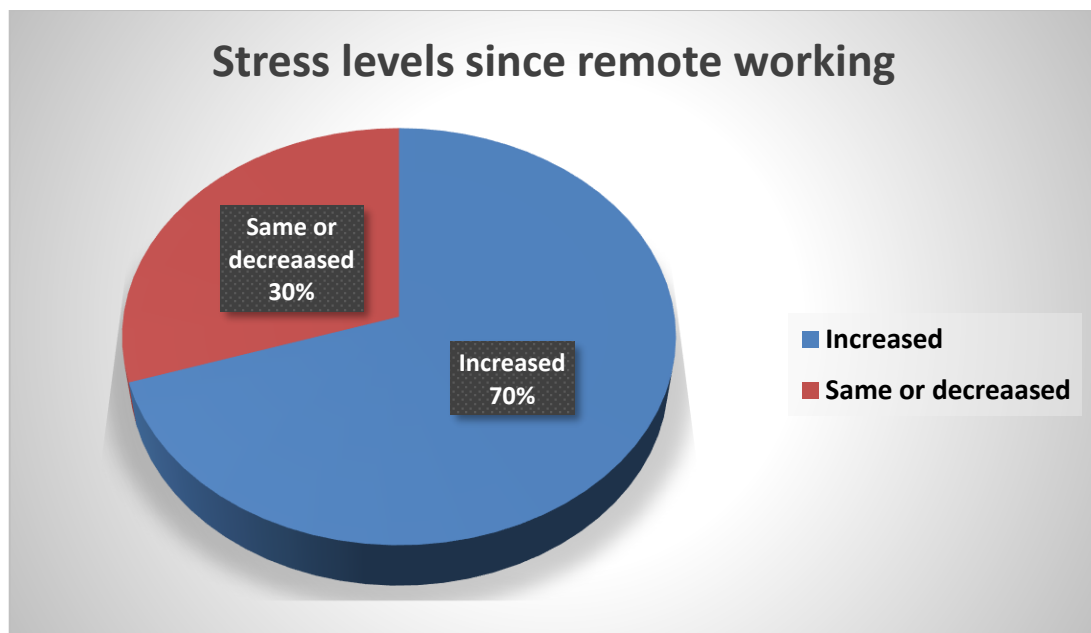
Figure 9. Participant Stress Levels

Many participants admitted to not taking breaks while remote working.

Participant B highlighted *"I don't tend to take breaks which is bad for my physical health I suppose and I don't tend to move much during the day"*.

Similarly participant K stated *"I don't tend to take my lunch but it depends on the day"*.

Participant A outlined *"I never take any breaks because I feel like I have to be there and work hard"*.

Participant H expressed *"I don't actually take a lunch break, I sit at my desk all day and I'm really focused"*.

In terms of health participant G stated *"I find it good for my health, I don't tend to get sick and if I do I never take a sick day"*.

Likewise participant J outlined ***"I don't take any sick days, I can't remember the last time I actually was sick".***

However participant D mentioned ***"my eyes get tedious and sore sometimes from staring at a small screen".***

Lastly it is evident that time saved in commuting has influenced participants well-being positively.

Participant G outlined ***"I save time in terms of commute which is great for me mentally".***

Similarly participant C stated ***"I save so much time not having to travel to and from work which is more time I can spend with my family".***

Comparable with this participant F outlined ***"I get much more sleep because I don't have to commute which is really good for me".***

Participant K also commented stating ***"I get so much more sleep now due to not having to commute and I feel amazing and have overall more energy".***

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the findings of the qualitative semi-structured interviews that were carried out to answer the research question and achieve the objectives of this study.

The data was analysed by employing thematic analysis and coding and as a result five primary themes emerged from the data.

As the sample of participants were a mix of full-time, part-time and flexi-time remote workers the findings were varied in numerous themes and similar in others.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the findings obtained in the previous chapter and discuss in detail why the findings are relevant to the research. The findings will be linked back to previous research in the literature review.

The main objectives of this study were to investigate the social, psychological and physical well-being of remote workers and to investigate how they manage the boundaries between work and home life.

Each of these six themes are related to one or more of the research objectives.

- Theme 1 is concerned with social well-being;
- Theme 2 relates to psychological well-being;
- Theme 3 involves boundary management;
- Themes 4 and 5 are concerned with physical well-being.

Each of the themes will be discussed in detail. Other findings emerged in relation to previous research in the literature review which highlighted gaps in research.

6.2 Discussion: Theme 1 - Isolation

It is clear from the literature and the findings of this study that social isolation is a major challenge for remote workers. Participants outlined their individual preferences in relation to remote working and were asked how they communicate with their colleagues.

As outlined participant J stated they *"feel isolated and not part of the team"* and participant H expressed *"it can make you feel isolated and lonely".*

All participants outlined that they experience either *"total"* or *"aspects"* of isolation when working remotely.

This supports previous research as highlighted by Crawford et al (2011), Allen et al (2015), Avis (2018) and Eddleston & Mulki (2017), who all suggest that remote working impacts negatively on employee well-being due to social isolation.

The literature suggests that a lack of face-to-face communication was a major challenge for remote workers (Greer & Payne, 2014).

Consistent with this participant C outlined *"missing out on office chats"* to be an aspect of isolation. Similarly, participant I stated *"the absence of everyday conversation".* In contrast participant E outlined *"I feel isolated but I don't have to get involved in office drama which is an advantage".*

This view is supported by Madsen (2011), who suggests remote workers may benefit from reduced office politics due to lack of face-to-face interactions.

In relation to methods of communication, Allen et al (2015), highlighted methods such as email to be poor in conveying emotions. This view is supported as participant G stated *"email is quite challenging because the person's tone may appear short at times or may be a lack of understanding".* However majority of participants use email to communicate with office based employees.

Khoreva & Wechtler (2018), presented a gap in research on social well-being to examine interactions between employees and colleagues as well as organisational support.

To address this Participant B outlined *"my colleagues update me daily by email"* and *"my colleagues are supportive, there are no hard feelings".*

Participant A expressed the relationship with their colleagues as *"really close and we mostly use Whats App for email to communicate".*

Similarly, participant H highlighted *"my team support me daily communicating my email or skype".*

Accordingly, the gap in the literature has been addressed, indicating a good relationship between remote workers and their colleagues and effective support from the organisation.

Social well-being is highlighted in the literature by Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Human Needs as feelings of belongingness and relationships (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

In support of this, participant J outlined *"not feeling part of the team".* Similarly, participant H stated *"people don't remember you if you're not present in the office".*

This may suggest feelings of remote workers lacking 'belonging', which is a basic human need according to Maslow's theory.

6.3 Discussion: Theme 2 - Flexibility / Personal Factors

It is evident that flexibility in terms of work-life balance is positive for many of the participants in this study.

Participant A stated *"flexibility in work-life balance and family commitments has helped my well-being and work"*.

Similarly participant C outlined *"my work-life balance has improved"*. However, participant B outlined *"it's debateable to say my work-life balance has improved"*.

Participant E added that *"work-life balance is the biggest problem for me"*.

Debate also exists in the literature in relation to work-life balance as Melo & de Abreu e Silva (2017) and Avis (2018), suggest remote working may enhance well-being especially for females. However, by contrast, Vesala & Tuomivaara (2015), argue that remote working may cause issues with work-life balance as evident in this study with 2/11 participants admitting to having problems with their work-life balance.

It is evident that flexibility is a major benefit of remote working for all participants in this study.

Participant K highlighted *"it gives you more autonomy and I'm in charge of my availability"*.

Similarly participants E and J highlighted having *"more autonomy"* and *"more control over schedule"*.

This is consistent with the literature as Crawford et al (2011) and Beauregard et al (2013), suggest benefits of remote working to include greater autonomy and flexibility over work schedules. Furthermore, this finding appears to align with a study by Marieke Van & De Jong (2014), which concluded that autonomy has a positive influence on employee well-being. However Putnam et al (2014), contends that having enhanced autonomy may result in 'autonomy-control paradox' which can result in employees working longer hours. This is evident in the findings as all employees outlined working longer hours than in the office due to schedule flexibility.

Many participants also outlined the benefit of flexibility in relation to child care needs. As outlined participant G stated *"being able to have flexibility for children and family as a huge benefit".* Likewise, both participants H and A expressed *"savings in childcare"* to be a great benefit. However, according to Radcliffe & Cassell (2015), gender norms are still present in remote working practices, with females more likely to take on childcare responsibilities. This may be evident here as eight females were interviewed in contrast to three men.

Participant B also highlighted *"remote working is typically a female thing and I would like to see more males taking it up".* Similarly participant F stated *"My wife worked remotely due to childcare responsibilities".*

This suggests some level of gender imbalance may still exist in relation to childcare responsibilities and remote working.

Flexibility and childcare reasons are primary drivers for participants engaging in remote working. This addresses the gap in the literature outlined by Eddleston & Mulki (2017), to explore reasons why individuals engage in remote working. A total of eight of eleven participants indicated childcare to be the primary reason for engaging in this practice while three participants outlined purely flexibility to be the main driver.

Participant D outlined *"flexibility is great as I don't have to take a 'leave day' for an appointment that may take 2 hours",* whereas participants K and H were aligned in their view: *"I get to spend more time with my kids and save in childcare costs".*

An additional reason for which three participants were attracted to remote working was due to reduced commuting times.

According to Felstead & Henseke (2017), and Melo & de Abreu e Silva (2017), remote working improves employee satisfaction. The study findings are consistent with this, as many participants outlined an increase in their satisfaction levels. Participant J stated being *"so much happier"* and participant K outlining *"improvements in satisfaction and motivation".*

Smith et al (2018), highlighted a gap in research in relation to why remote workers experience higher satisfaction levels than others. The findings indicated that participants were happier working from home due greater autonomy and schedule flexibility, ability to balance family needs and greater levels of work productivity.

Maruyama & Tietze (2012), and Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson (2015), argued that long-term remote working may have a negative influence on career progression. This is consistent with the findings in this study as the three full-time remote workers all outlined a *"lack of development opportunities"* due to not being present and visible in the office, in contrast to the other eight remote workers who are not engaged in remote working full-time.

It appears evident that working remotely has a negative impact on career development for full-time remote workers.

6.4 Discussion: Theme 3 - Boundary Management

It becomes clear from the findings that managing the boundary between work and home life is difficult and challenging for all participants.

Eddleston & Mulki (2017), highlighted a gap in the literature in relation to how remote workers manage their work-life boundaries. The fourth objective of this study was to investigate how remote workers manage the boundary between work and home life. As previously outlined in the findings many of the participants felt their boundaries between work and home life have become blurred.

Participant I expressed their boundaries as being *"definitely blurred".* Participants J, H and F all agreed it was *"difficult"* and they *"don't manage the boundaries well".*

In connection with boundary management, research by Wepfer et al (2018) and Hislop et al (2015), implied that the boundaries between working life and non-work life have become progressively blurred. Therefore it appears evident that the boundary between work and home is difficult, managed ineffectively and is blurred.

Guest (2017), highlighted ICT may impact on the intrusion between work and home life. Consistent with this participants E and H stated having *"access to work emails on their phone makes it difficult to manage the boundaries".* Participant E also indicated that *"developments in technology"* may further impact on boundary management.

The findings indicated that many participants experienced difficulty switching off from their work when working remotely. According to Felstead &Henseke (2017), remote working is associated with inability of individuals to switch off from their work.

This is confirmed in the findings as participant H outlined to *"never switch off"*. Likewise participants E, G, J and K stated they are *"constantly on"*.

Consistent with this contention, research by CIPD (2018), discovered that technology affected 87% of worker's ability to 'switch off'. This research reflects the findings in this study which have established that remote workers have an inability to 'switch off' when working remotely.

Other findings indicated that presenteeism is also associated with an inability to switch off and, in addition, that working longer hours affects an individual's physical well-being. Literature presented by Avis (2018), suggested that employees may work longer hours due to presenteeism which affects employee well-being.

This is confirmed in the findings as majority of participants expressed that they *"feel they should be constantly online"* as they aren't present in the office. Participant D outlined they ensure they are *"always online"* as they cannot be seen to be *"slacking off"*. Participant G highlighted feeling they should be *"constantly online"* because they are not *"present in the office"*. Presenteeism is clearly a major issue as one participant highlighted never putting *"out of office on emails even when on holidays"*(Participant J).

However, new insights from this study have suggested that 'optics' are associated with presenteeism and constantly being switched on when working remotely. Participants F and I outlined optics to be a major challenge. Participant F outlined that an *"agreement to work remotely may be agreed with by your line manager but the higher manager may not know about it and therefore question why you are working from home"*. Similarly participant I stated that it *"doesn't look good if the CEO came into the office and I'm not there"*.

It is clear that optics remain a challenge for remote workers and may suggest future research in this area.

An argument presented by Wheatley (2012) and Klopotek (2017), suggests that additional time may be spent working extra hours instead of switching off and engaging in recreational activities. This is confirmed in the findings as participant J outlined that instead of trying to switch off they are *"answering emails even on holidays"*.

The literature suggests that trust is a major issue between managers and remote workers. According to Avis (2018), many managers obtain a view that being present in the office indicates greater productivity. This is supported in the findings as five of eleven participants

outlined that trust is a *"huge element"* of remote working. Furthermore, two participants expressed that the *"full trust"* wasn't there with their manager and that a perception of working from home indicated *"not doing as much work"* as they would in the office.

The findings support an argument by Beauregard et al (2013), which highlights a major barrier to remote working is due to managers retaining a lack of trust in their workers and a perception that being present implies higher productivity.

Other literature suggests that although remote workers may be more productive, they may be working longer hours (Grant et al, 2019; Avis, 2018).

This is supported in the findings as all participants - flexi-time, part-time and full-time remote workers admitted to working longer hours.

The key findings suggest working longer hours is due to *"inability to switch off"*, *"presenteeism", "trust issues"* and *"less distractions".*

6.5 Discussion: Theme 4 - The Work Environment

The findings suggest the work environment, when working remotely, is extremely important for remote workers.

According to Dowling (2012), IT security is a major challenge when working remotely. However, in contrast, the findings suggest that IT security is not a significant issue as four of eleven participants outlined that their organisation *"ensured access"* and *"safety".* Two of eleven participants received visits from the organisation to ensure the remote work environment was safe.

In addition, Crawford et al (2011), concludes that access to resources is an issue for remote workers. However the findings also compete with this argument as four of eleven participants outlined they have remote access to resources, and *"the firm itself switches on the access for security reasons".* The remaining seven of eleven participants all outlined being provided with a laptop when remote working to ensure IT security and ability to access resources. Physical safety in the work environment is also a basic need by Maslow highlighted by Taormina & Gao (2013), in the literature. However it is clear from the findings that the participants satisfy this need.

While all participants conceded working longer hours, the findings suggest nine of eleven participants work longer hours owing to less distractions in the work environment. This finding is consistent and supported by an argument presented by Vega et al (2015), which outlines being located away from the office environment may indicate working longer hours due to reduced distractions. Participants in this study expressed a feeling of being *"more focused"* and that their *"productivity is 100% better"* due to less distractions.

However, a new insight into how the work environment may play a role in influencing well-being was identified. Five of eleven participants outlined the importance of setting up their environment correctly to ensure *"enough light", "enough space"* and *"no distractions".*

This may suggest that having a healthy and safe work environment will influence employee well-being positively. According to Wheatley (2012), remote workers may benefit from reduced distractions which is supported in the findings as all participants outlined they had greater productivity while two of eleven participants specifically contended having enhanced *"headspace".*

6.6 Discussion: Theme 5 - Health & Well-Being

The findings suggest that all of the participants in full-time, part time and flexi-time remote workers outlined having greater well-being since working remotely.

This addresses a gap in research as Crawford et al (2011), contended there existed a scarcity research in health and well-being of remote workers. In terms of health two participants who are full-time remote workers outlined reduced sick days since working remotely. This is consistent and confirms an argument presented by Bloom et al (2015), which suggests remote working may reduce sickness. Beauregard et al (2013) and Elshaiekh et al (2018), suggest reduced commuting may be linked to enhanced work-life balance and well-being. This is supported by the findings as four of eleven participants outlined reduced commuting to have a positive influence on their well-being. New insights into other causes of greater well-being include greater sleep and mental health due to less commuting, additional time spent with family and increased work-life balance.

However, a new insight was discovered in the findings which filled a gap in research.

Khoreva &Wechtler (2018), suggested research to explore physical well-being in relation to stress. The findings offer an additional insight into stress levels of remote workers. The findings

identified that all eight female participants obtained greater levels of stress than the three male participants. There are two potential rationales for females obtaining higher stress levels.

Firstly, participants outlined childcare responsibilities while working remotely described as *"double jobbing"* to be an issue. Secondly, the issue of *"not feeling part of the team"* in relation to isolation and loneliness was also a trigger of stress. In contrast to this the male participants outlined feeling *"more calm"* with participant I outlining *"I don't feel more stressed".*

This finding is of interest and may suggest that female remote workers are more likely to take on additional childcare responsibilities while remote working in contrast to male remote workers. This also supports the argument presented by Radcliffe & Cassell (2015), which suggests that females are more likely to take on additional labour such as childcare responsibilities which is evident in this study.

6.7 Summary of the Findings:

All participants felt isolated in relation to experiencing either total, or an aspect of, isolation when remote working.

Personal factors varied between the participants as flexibility was an overall positive factor on their well-being. However nine of eleven participants suggested work-life balance to be positive in contrast to two participants who felt it was neither improved or reduced. A similar finding for all participants is evident as they all experienced difficulty with managing boundaries between work and home life.

However, in relation to working longer hours, participants who remote work on a flexible basis felt it was agreeable to work longer as they aren't engaged in the practice full time. In relation to switching off, all participants agreed there is difficulty in switching off from their work.

With regard to the work environment, many participants outlined the importance of having a healthy and safe environment when working remotely. However, the majority of the participants undertake remote work from their home in their kitchen, and two participants remote working 'on the go', with four out of eleven participants having an office at home. Furthermore, only four of eleven participants received support in relation to remote access and

two of eleven participants received visits from their organisation. The remaining seven of eleven participants were provided with laptops but did not receive the same support in terms of facilities and visits from the organisation.

Lastly, in relation to well-being, the majority of participants asserted having better health and well-being. An interesting discovery in relation to stress was identified, however, as all participants who experienced higher stress levels at home are female remote workers.

In contrast to this all male remote workers felt either the same level, or reduced stressed level working remotely. From the findings females may be more stressed due to **"double jobbing"** - as highlighted by participant K - as it is evident that a majority of female participants engaged in remote working due to child care responsibilities.

Finally, the findings and sample demographics may suggest a gender imbalance in remote working practices which may need to be further explored in future research.

6.8 Discussion – Objectives of the Study

It is evident from the findings and discussion that each of the four objectives set out at the beginning of the study have been achieved.

The overall research question for this study was *"How does remote working influence the well-being of remote workers?"*.

The inclusive answer to this question posed is that remote working has a positive influence on overall well-being, however it has a negative influence on social well-being. This is examined through the research objectives.

6.8.1 Discussion - Objective 1:

To explore how remote working influences the social well-being of remote workers.

An exploration of remote worker's social well-being was explored by investigating their social relationships with colleagues, organisation support, and how they felt in relation to social aspects.

While all participants outlined productive relationships with colleagues and good organisational support, the findings suggest that all participants had feelings of **"total"** or some "*aspects*" of isolation when remote working. Participants commented on their social well-being when remote working, with all outlining their social well-being to be negatively influenced by remote working.

6.8.2 Discussion - Objective 2:

To investigate how remote working influences the psychological well-being of remote workers.

The findings from the study suggest that the psychological well-being is positively influenced by remote working in terms of work-life balance, flexibility and satisfaction.

Previous research on psychological well-being has been debatable. However, this finding confirms that remote working has a positive influence on remote worker's psychological well-being in relation to work-life balance, flexibility and satisfaction.

6.8.3 Discussion - Objective 3:

To investigate how remote working influences the physical well-being of remote workers.

An investigation of remote workers' physical environment was carried out in relation to the work environment, safety and security. It is evident from the findings that the work environment has a positive influence on employee well-being as participants are supported in their environment and assured of safety and security when accessing resources.

A new insight was offered where many participants suggested the importance of setting up the work environment to ensure **"enough light", "enough space"** and **"no distractions".**

Furthermore, in relation to physical health all participants indicated improved overall well-being since remote working. Two full-time remote workers indicated less sick days since working remotely which had a positive impact on their health. In addition other participants felt overall more energy and enhanced mental health due to **"increased sleep"** due to "**reduced commuting".**

However this study offers a new insight in relation to stress which identified that female remote workers attract higher levels of stress than male remote workers. The findings suggest this may be due to *"double jobbing"* such as child care responsibilities when remote working, or stress in relation to not being *"physically apart of the team"*.

6.8.4 Discussion - Objective 4:

To investigate how remote workers manage their work-life boundaries.

There were gaps in the literature in relation to how remote workers manage the boundaries between work and home life. As outlined in the findings and discussion, all participants experienced difficulty in managing the boundaries due to *"inability to switch off"*, *"presenteeism"*, *"technological advancements"* and *"self-discipline"*. Two participants outlined practices they engage in to attempt to manage the boundaries however the remaining nine participants do not engage in practices and fail to manage the boundaries.

6.9 Limitations of the Study

It is inevitable that limitations will exist throughout research.

The first limitation of this study is the sample as it may suggest a gender imbalance, comprising of eight females and three males. However the researcher did not seek this imbalance. The researcher experienced difficulty in obtaining and identifying male remote workers to engage in this study, and eventually engaged with three males to participate in the study.

Secondly, time was a challenge during this study as eleven interviews were conducted, transcribed and analysed thematically. Time was a major challenge as the researcher did not take into account the extent of time uptake to transcribe the interviews.

Thirdly, as remote working is a relatively new phenomenon in the workplace not many individuals are as yet engaging in this practice full-time. This was a limitation as the researcher could only engage three full-time remote workers to participate in this study and the seven other participants were a mix of part-time and flexi-time remote workers. Had the study been based solely on full-time remote workers this may have impacted the findings differently.

Chapter 7.   Conclusions & Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate remote working and how this practice influences the well-being of remote workers in the recruitment sector. The research question was established as *"How does remote working influence employee well-being?"*.

The specific objectives required an exploration of this phenomenon so as to investigate the social well-being, psychological well-being and physical well-being of remote workers. Furthermore, gaps identified in the literature suggested a requirement to investigate how remote workers manage the boundaries between work and home life and therefore this was the fourth objective of this study.

The study began with an examination of the literature in the area of remote working and well-being. Numerous gaps appeared in the literature, presenting a requirement to investigate how remote working may influence the well-being of remote workers. Other gaps in the literature suggested a need to investigate the social and physical well-being as well as how remote workers manage work-life boundaries.

A qualitative research approach was chosen to conduct this study using semi-structured interviews to gather the data. Eleven interviews were conducted with remote workers who were a mix of full-time, part-time and flexi-time remote workers. The recruitment sector was chosen to carry out this study and the data was analysed using thematic analysis and the findings were categorised into five themes.

The first major finding from the study is that all participants felt isolated when working remotely. Participants expressed being totally isolated or feeling aspects of isolation. This finding was supported by the literature as previous research suggested that remote working has a negative influence on social well-being. Accordingly, the finding in this study confirms that remote working influences social well-being negatively due to feelings of isolation. This outcome was of interest, as participants outlined that even while having support from colleagues and the organisation they nonetheless felt isolated.

Secondly, the psychological well-being of remote workers was investigated in relation to work-life balance, flexibility and satisfaction. Flexibility was a major benefit for all remote workers

as greater autonomy was outlined as a key advantage. The findings suggest that remote workers are more satisfied when working remotely. This filled a gap in research regarding why remote workers obtain higher satisfaction levels than office based workers. The findings suggest the key sources of this to be due to greater autonomy and schedule flexibility, ability to balance family needs and greater levels of work productivity. Furthermore, work-life balance of remote workers is identified as predominantly positive. Gaps in the literature were filled and a new insight was offered regarding what prompts individuals to engage in remote working. The two main findings in relation to this were due to flexibility or childcare reasons. Accordingly, it appears that in overall terms, the psychological well-being of remote workers is positively influenced by remote working.

The physical well-being of remote workers was examined in relation to the working environment. The findings suggested that four of eleven participants did receive support and were provided facilities in establishing their remote work environment as well as ensuring health and safety in the remote office. The remaining seven participants were provided with laptops but did not receive the same support in terms of facilities and visits from the organisation. An additional understanding of how the work environment may influence employee well-being was identified concerning the amount of light, space and absence of distractions. Overall, the physical well-being of remote workers in relation to sleep, work environment and health is predominantly positively influenced by remote working.

However, in relation to stress, a new outcome was obtained and a gap in research was filled in investigating physical well-being in relation to stress. An interesting discovery was identified that all female remote workers experienced an increase in stress, in contrast to the three male remote workers who did not feel more stressed working from home. This observation is quite pointed, with the findings suggesting this may be due to females juggling childcare responsibilities when working remotely. This finding is supported by the literature which suggests that gender norms still exist in relation to childcare responsibilities.

Lastly, it is clear that all participants experience difficulty with managing the boundaries between work and home life. All participants outlined having a difficulty switching off from their work. However five of eleven participants remote-working at home in their kitchen may contribute to the issue in managing their boundaries.

A key finding is that all participants work longer hours when remote working. However, participants who remote work on a flexible basis felt it was acceptable to work longer as they

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were not engaged in the practice full-time, in contrast to full-time remote workers. A key finding was identified as presenteeism and trust issues were strongly related to working longer hours, and being constantly 'switched on' with work.

The sample demographics in this study may suggest a gender imbalance in the remote working practice as eight of the participants were female and three were male. Consistent with this, participants also expressed their thoughts on gender imbalance in remote working and all agreed that there are typically more females engaged in this practice due to childcare responsibilities. An additional finding in this study was observed with all full-time remote workers outlining that their career progression had been impacted negatively since commencing remote working, in contrast to remote workers who are part-time and flexi-time who did not experience this issue.

In conclusion, it is clear from the findings that the overall well-being of remote workers is positive as all participants primarily outlined their health and well-being to be enhanced since working remotely. However, social well-being was negatively impacted along with stress levels which are increased for females, and neither reduced or increased for males.

7.2 Future Research Recommendations

There is still potential for future research in this area. The researcher proposes future research on remote working to include a sample of all full-time remote workers with a gender equilibrium to prevent a gender imbalance.

New insights were discovered in this study such as identifying higher stress levels in female remote workers compared to male remote workers. Future research could usefully further investigate this issue by employing a quantitative research approach, thereby enabling a wider sample to be investigated.

It is evident that childcare and flexibility are the main reasons individuals engage in remote working. Future research could explore the family glen and how steps will be taken to manage the future of work as remote working will continue to increase in organisations. Further research may also further explore the social well-being of remote workers and what steps may be taken to reduce isolation from the office environment.

The issue of presenteeism and trust between remote workers and managers may be explored in future research to identify the reasons that managers retain this perception. Exploring perceptions of remote working managers may also be beneficial for future research, and to include a larger sample by conducting a quantitative study. Lastly, the findings and sample demographics may suggest a gender imbalance in remote working practices which may need to be further explored in future research.

7.3 Recommendations

The aim of this section is to highlight recommendations which can be presented to employers in the recruitment and allied sectors who may be considering the introduction of remote working for the first time and also for employers who already have remote workers in their organisations

As evident in the findings, while remote working positively influences psychological well-being however, it has a negative influence on social well-being. The findings in respect to physical well-being are also positive. However, for overall health and well-being, the findings are negative and debateable in terms of stress levels and in terms of the working environment.

7.3.1 Recommendation 1:
Enhanced Communication & Well-Being Programme

As evident in the study findings, remote workers feel isolated and believe their social well-being suffers and is negatively influenced by their status. In order to reduce the feeling of social isolation it is suggested that a permanent, robust and enhanced communication strategy be established to improve communication between remote workers and their employer organisations. This recommendation is something that might be implemented by all employers (large and small) of remote workers across the recruitment sector.

Large employers can implement this recommendation in the following manner:

Organisation A : Large Recruitment Organisations

- The organisation might allocate a dedicated HR executive to communicate with, coordinate and manage employees who work remotely. The dedicated HR person can be titled a "remote worker buddy", and would be the first and central point of contact for the remote worker. The "remote worker buddy" would be responsible for communicating frequently (daily / weekly) with remote workers on both hard and soft issues.

  Soft issues could include; 'coffee chat' topics and gossip discussed in-house over the water cooler. Soft topics communications should be done over the telephone or on

Skype and email used very sparingly. The "remote worker buddy" should invite remote workers to join 'work group chats' on WhatsApp or on similar chat networks.

Hard topics would include; company events / occasions, holiday entitlements, absenteeism / sick days, staff appointments, staff promotions and related matters. Email should be used for communicating hard topics and issues with occasional use of telephone and Skype. The number of remote workers in an organisation will determine whether a new additional HR executive needs to be recruited or an existing HR person be reassigned part-time to the role of "remote worker buddy". It is envisaged that 20-40 remote workers would typically require a dedicated HR person.

- A second point of contact would be the Team Leader/Manager who would communicate at least once daily with the remote worker on matters related to work, such as: budgets, new business, fees, problem-solving, wins, losses, IT issues, holiday planning and holiday cover. Team Leader communications should ideally combine an equal mix of email, telephone and Skype.

Financial Costs & Timeframe

A figure of 20+ remote workers in an organisation may typically require consideration for an additional HR executive to service the needs of the remote workers. This may represent a significant overhead for the organisation as such a HR executive incurs an ongoing salary and associated employment costs. This new HR executive would need to undergo specialist training for the "remote worker buddy" role. In organisations where there are less than 20 remote workers, the part-time "remote worker buddy" would need to undergo the same level of training as the full-time dedicated person. Training in both cases is an additional cost for the employer.

Timeframe for initial set-up and implementation: 3-5 months.

- Recruit new HR Executive 3-4 months.
- Training and set-up of infrastructure: 1 month.

The Team Leader/Manager would need to divert a portion of his/her time each day to communicating with the remote worker. This may reduce the Team Leader/Manager's time

and capacity to manage his/her team in the office and would probably limit or reduce the number of 'direct reports' in the team. A reduction in team size would therefore reduce the team's production capacity, negatively affect fee generation and financial contribution to the employer organisation. The increased overheads and costs may force the employer to increase fees for services to its clients, thus making the organisation less competitive in the marketplace.

Organisation B: Small-Medium Recruitment Organisation

- The vast majority of recruitment companies in Ireland are SMEs and many do not have a dedicated HR Manager or HR Department.
- In these companies the HR function is typically the responsibility of the Managing Director or the Financial Director. The additional workload of looking after remote workers will put more pressure and strain on the already very busy directors.
- The Team Leader/Manager would likely be the main point of contact for the remote worker since a dedicated HR executive or HR Department does not exist.
- Training would need to be provided to the directors and the Team Leader/Manager, similar to that provided in large recruitment organisations.
- The absence of a dedicated HR executive "remote workers buddy" in SME's has the potential to over-burden the directors and the Team Leader/Manager and, accordingly, when choices need to be made, managing the remote worker could become downgraded.

Financial Costs & Timeframe

Significant additional workload for the Team Leader / Manager may cause him /her to be less productive in terms of fee generation and less efficient in terms of the team size he/she can manage, thereby adding to overhead costs for the employer company.
- Costs associated with training the Team Leader/Manager and the directors.
- The overall timeframe to implement this programme would be 1 month.

After a period of six months implementation of the programme, regardless of the classification of organisation being A or B, the programme should be reviewed to determine if it has delivered a reduction in feelings of isolation of remote workers.

The review could be carried out by conducting a survey of the remote workers to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme and how it could be enhanced and refined to produce better results in terms of reduced isolation and improved social well-being.

The results of the review can be benchmarked against the remote workers previous feelings of social well-being and isolation in order to determine if the programme was successful. If so, it will deliver important and significant benefits to remote workers in terms of enhanced social well-being, reduced feeling of isolation and an increase in personal satisfaction. Potential benefits for the employer organisation might includie: candidate attraction, employee retention and increased fee revenue. Contented and satisfied staff are productive employees, generating increased fees and more profitability for the business.

7.3.2 Recommendation 2: Redesign of Working Hours

As evident in the findings, remote workers experience difficulty in managing boundaries between work and home life. In order to address this, a suggestion may be that work hours of be reviewed with varied day rosters to best suit the remote worker and the business. For example 9.00am-12 noon and 3.00 pm-7.00pm, instead of the standard and rigid 9.00am-5.00 pm workday. A revised working roster may assist remote workers in managing their work home boundaries.

A further suggestion may be in setting a time to 'log off' from work so as to assist remote workers to 'switch off' from their work. This should be agreed between the Team Leader/ Manager, HR executive, and the remote worker, and might be introduced in conjunction with Recommendation 1.

This could be cost-effective for employer organisations as it would permit the remote worker to work agreed hours best suited to the remote worker's domestic situation and lifestyle. Working best suited hours, the remote worker is likely to have less distractions, be more focused on work and more likely to be more productive and successful which is also a benefit to the organisation.

7.3.3 Recommendation 3: Review of Support for Work Environment

As outlined in the findings, only four of eleven participants stated how their organisation supported their work environment in terms of providing facilities and reviewing health and safety. However, only two of eleven participants outlined that their organisation visited their remote work environment due to health and safety concerns. This may be a factor that recruitment organisations could consider in the future when hiring remote workers or enabling employees to work remotely. As a suggestion, organisations should ensure that their remote workers have a healthy and safe environment when working from home or elsewhere. A HR executive may take on this role to visit the remote worker's premises and ensure the environment is fit to work. Furthermore the organisation should ensure that the remote worker has - as far as is practical - the same facilities working remotely as they would have in the office.

Providing facilities such as laptops, desks, chairs and other set ups may be costly for the organisation but this would be a once-off capital cost. The timescale for implementing this practice may be 1 month, as soon as the remote worker has been hired or the person has been permitted to work remotely. The work environment and facilities would be reviewed every six months to ensure all IT facilities and other amenities are adequate and operating effectively.

Personal Learning Statement

In order to complete my Masters in Human Resource Management I was required to carry out a research study on a topic of my choice in relation to HR. I chose to conduct my research on the area of flexible working and in specific remote working. This topic has become a major issue in organisations today and is extremely topical.

From completing the dissertation study I have gained extended knowledge in the area of remote working and well-being of individuals in the recruitment industry. I thoroughly enjoyed conducting this research, and in overall terms it was one of the most challenging projects I have ever undertaken.

I found the journey to be a significant learning experience as I was exposed to research and analytical skills from carrying out this study. I needed to critically analyse and evaluate previous research by academics in this area, from which more enhanced skills will be beneficial in future research projects.

I gained particular insight into qualitative research as this form of research was the chosen route to carry out my study. I chose semi-structured interviews to gather the data required. Exposure to the interview process has allowed me to strengthen my related skills and build interviewing confidence which will benefit me working in HR in the future. Furthermore, by visiting organisations and meeting and networking with new people has allowed me develop my communication skills, and has provided great confidence in terms of people skills.

There were many challenges that presented in this project. Firstly, as remote working is a relatively new practice in organisations, few individuals remote-work on a full-time basis. This presented challenges in targeting and recruiting individuals to participate in this study. I engaged with individuals who worked remotely on a part-time and flexi-time basis as well as full-time in order to gather as many remote workers as possible. Time constraints were challenging when conducting the interviews as many interviewees were on holiday or had busy schedules.

It was also important that I remained within my allocated time and schedule to conduct the interviews, which were all carried out over a two week period. Time was also a major challenge to conduct and present this study at the highest standard possible. Transcribing the interviews

was extremely time consuming. If this study was being repeated, I would be sure allocate more time to transcribing the interviews.

This project has been beneficial to me in many ways. I believe I have developed my research, interview and time management skills in a real-time environment. Overall, I enjoyed carrying out this research project and I feel my findings on this research are of interest, and hope they can benefit remote workers and managers in the recruitment industry.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Original Email

Hi _____,

I hope you are well.

I am currently in the process of completing my dissertation for my Masters in HR in NCI which is an investigation into remote working and its influence on employee well-being.

As part of my study I am hoping to carry out interviews with remote workers and how they feel their well-being has been influenced since remote working.
Remote working is an extremely interesting topic today and there are many arguments for and against it. I hope to gain further insight into it and aim at looking at how it influences well-being in relation to psychological, social and physical well-being.

I have attached an information sheet setting out all specifications of the study.
I hope you can assist me in this and I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time and willingness to help.

Kindest regards,
Sarah-Jane Maguire.

Appendix 2- Participant Information Form

Participant Information Form:

Title: A Qualitative Investigation into Remote working in the Recruitment Industry and the Influence it has on Employee Well-Being.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please ask questions if anything is not clear of if you require additional information.

Purpose of this study:

- The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence remote working has on employee well-being in the recruitment sector.

Objectives of the study:

- **To explore how remote working influences the social well-being of remote workers.**
- **To investigate how remote working influences the psychological well-being of remote workers.**
- **To investigate how remote working influences the physical well-being of remote workers.**
- **To investigate how remote workers manage their work-life boundaries.**

Confidentiality:

There will be confidentiality at all stages of the study and all data obtained will remain confidential. Any information provided by the participant will be strictly confidential and will be used specifically for the study and purpose intended.

Participation is completely voluntary and that the person has the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

Risks of the study:

There should be no risks by taking part in this study, however if any issues arise or the participant does not feel comfortable answering any questions they may withdraw from the interview at any stage and are not obliged to give an explanation.

Details about the Information provided:

The interview will be recorded and data stored on hard copy folder on the researcher's laptop in a locked secured file with passcode for a specified period until the dissertation results are released by the exams board. Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will have access to this data.

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a hard drive copy until after the degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

Contact of further information:

If you seek further information please do not hesitate to contact me:

Sarah-Jane Maguire- x15407342@student.ncirl.ie

Supervisor- Bronwyn Mc Farlane.

If you agree to take part in this study please sign the consent form on the overleaf.

Please keep this sheet in your records

Thank you for your time in assisting in this study.

Appendix 3- Consent Form

Consent Form:

Purpose of this study:

As per the information sheet the primary purpose of this study is to investigate the influence remote working has on well-being of remote employees in the recruitment sector.

- I _____ voluntary agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves being interviewed and data recorded.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation discussion chapter.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a specific location on the researcher's laptop in a locked file with a passcode and only the researcher has access to this data until the relevant period until the exam board confirms the results of the dissertation.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- By signing below I am agreeing to: Participate in this study, Participate voluntarily and Give permission for the interviewer to voice record the interview.

Signed by Participant: _____ Date:_____

Signed by Researcher: _____Date:_____

Contact Details: Sarah-Jane Maguire- x15407342@student.ncirl.ie

Appendix 4- Pilot Study Questions

<u>Pilot Study Interview Questions:</u>

Q 1. How long have you been working remotely?

Q2. How often do you remote work?

Q3. What remote location do you work in? eg. Home, satellite office etc

Q4. What attracted you to engaging in remote working?

Q5. What do you feel are the biggest advantages of working remotely?

Q.6 What are the disadvantages of remote working?

Q6. What are the major differences between remote working and working in the office?

Q7. Do you feel increased stressed working remotely in comparison to working in the office environment?

Q8. Do you find it difficult to switch off from work or working longer hours when remote working?

Q.9. How do you manage the boundary between work life and home life?

Q.10 Do you work longer or shorter hours?

Q.11 Can you tell me about your work environment.

Q12. How do you feel working remotely impacts on your work-life balance?

Q13. What do you feel are the major challenges of working remotely?

Q14. Do you find it challenging to communicate with your colleagues when working remotely? Do you ever feel isolated from the work environment?

Q.15 Do you ever find problems with communication between you and your colleagues

Q.16. How do you feel working remotely effects your overall well-being?

Q.17. How do you stay motivated when working remotely?

Q.18 Do you find it more or less difficult to motivate yourself when working remote?

Q.19 What do you feel are the main benefits of remote working?

Q.20. Are there any additional comments you would like to make in relation to remote working/ or its impact on your well-being?

Appendix 5- Finalised Interview Questions

<u>Semi Structured Interview Questions:</u>

<u>Introduction/ Demographics</u>

Q 1. How long have you been working remotely?

Q2. How often do you remote work?

Q3. What remote location do you work from? eg. Home, satellite office, etc

Q4. What do you feel are the advantages of working remotely?

Q5. What are the major differences for you between remote working and working in the office?

<u>Psychological well-being</u>

Q6. How do you feel working remotely has impacted on your work-life balance?

Q7. Can you tell me why you engaged in remote working?

Q8. How do you feel in terms of satisfaction since working remotely?

Q9. What do you feel are the major challenges of working remotely?

<u>Physical well-being</u>

Q10 Can you walk me through and tell me what is a typical remote working day is like?

Q 11. Can you tell me what your remote working environment is like?

Q 12. How do you feel/think your stress levels have been impacted since remote working?

<u>Social well-being</u>

Q 13. Can you tell me about communication with the office when remote working?

Q 14. How do you feel your relationship with your colleagues has been impacted from remote working? Both social and work aspects?

Q 15. How do you feel your organisation supports you when working remotely?

Q 16. How do you feel your work colleagues view you while working from home?

<u>Managing Boundaries</u>

Q 17. How do you manage the boundary between work life and home life?

Q 18.How do you feel remote working has impacted your ability to switch off from work?

<u>Perceptions on overall well-being</u>

Q.19 How do you feel working remotely effects your overall well-being?

Q.20 Are there any additional comments you would like to make in relation to remote working/ or its impact on your well-being? Or any advice to people who are contemplating remote working.

However as the interviews were semi structured the questions varied.

Probing Questions were also used in the interviews such as:

- **Can you tell me more about that?**
- **How did you feel in relation to that?**
- **Why do you say that?**
- **Can you give me examples of what you mean?**
- **You mentioned x can you tell me more about that?**

Appendix 6- Interview Transcriptions

Transcriptions:

Interview 1:, Participant A, Female, Recruiter

R: How Often have you been remote working and for how long:

P.A: "I worked On and off over last 5/6 years and led me to remote working due to flexibility in work life balance and family commitments main reason. I worked mainly on an Ad-hoc basis not every day, when needed to, on a flexible basis. I remote work from at home from my kitchen table and have a laptop and no work phone and this was a bit of a pain".

R: What was the main reason you engaged in remote working:

P.A: "The main reason I started engaging in remote working was due to family reasons and flexibility as I am a working mother. It is easier on midterm breaks and don't have to take holidays to suit family needs".

R: What did you feel from working from home were the main differences from working in the office?

P. A: "I suppose not having the support of my colleagues would have been a con because I wasn't able to shout out a question or to have banter with them. I could of obviously picked up the phone but it is nice to have someone there to answer queries".

"I think I worked harder at home because I felt there has to be the trust between your boss and yourself so it was almost like I never want to be away from my laptop or emails, I always want to be answering emails straight away and I never really took any breaks so I think I worked harder than when I was in the office".

R: You mentioned always answering emails. Are there times you feel you are expected to answer calls 24/7 when you are remote working?

P. A: "I suppose yes but I think It depends on the person themselves and their personality as I know other people who have worked from home and would be taking their normal full hour plus more but I think it ultimately depends on the person. I would have taken calls on my mobile. One thing I found difficult was trying to ring candidates because without a work phone I didn't want to ring them on my own phone so I would have emailed candidates a lot instead."

R: You mentioned that you work from your kitchen when working remotely, How did you manage the boundary between work and home life when doing so?

P. A: "Again I think it comes back to the person because I do know of colleagues that would be putting washing out and answering the door but I wouldn't be like that I would of done no house work or any sort of thing I would sit at my desk".

P. A:" I remember one evening and I looked at the clock and it was half 6 and I was still there since half 8 that morning so I think it is negative on your well-being because you do need the balance of taking your lunch break or taking 10 min morning break. I think if someone is remote working that they should have an office to separate the boundary rather than in your kitchen".

R: How do you feel remote working has impacted on your work-life balance?

P.A: "I think it was great for me because the main reason being I didn't have to get a child minder which is saving so much money, they just came in from school or if they were off either way I was there so that was great for me to be able to be there. It definitely has benefited me in that way with my kids and family".

R: You mentioned you found communication and support harder, how do you best communicate with your colleagues when remote working?

P.A:"I would probably most often text as we have a group set up on What's app for work, I would ring into the office a lot as well though, but lots of emails too but this for me was the most difficult part of remote working"

P. A:"I miss the work family and I do feel isolated at times because even to have the banter with your colleagues or take a 10 minute coffee break etc with your friends I definitely miss that. I find that I miss out on the general chats and social aspect of the office".

R: How do you feel remote working has impacted on your overall productivity?

P. A: "I would say as a person I get a lot more done at home than in the office and I think that's because there's no distraction, you can't get distracted like you do in the office with people chatting. I definitely work longer hours when I remote work too so my productivity would increase overall I would say".

R: You previously mentioned always answering emails. Do you ever find it difficult to switch off?

P.A: "Yes definitely, because your logging off not every day but say half 6 I feel like because you don't have the journey home and don't get into your car and switch off for half an hour. I'm always feeling like oh ill just log back on to check something which is negative because I wouldn't be doing that if I was in the office".

R:How do you find your stress levels when working remotely?

P. A:"I think I've lower stress in relation to family because I don't have to find someone to mind the boys but I'd say higher in the sense that I get worried that I'm not in the office, I'm not being seen and therefore I feel like I have to be online constantly and that if the phone rings no matter what time I answer it so I am more stressed".

R: How do you feel your well-being has been impacted?

P.A: "For me I feel satisfied in terms of what I need to get done gets done but there is always the few bits you can't do at home but I think in an office its easier because you can just pop into your boss to ask them a question you weren't sure of, compared to when I work from home I always have a few notes scribbled down that I need to ask the next day".

R: What kind of views do your manager and colleagues have when you remote work?

P.A: "I would say they viewed me differently as I don't think the full trust was there definitely.

R: What do you feel are the main challenges with remote working for you?

P.A: "The main challenges are switching off in the evening definitely, time management in a good way but switching off and working too much and not taking a break which isn't good for your well-being. In relation to recruitment its difficult because you can't just shout out anyone know this client or what's the story with this client does anyone know."

R: Lastly, how do you feel remote working has impacted on your overall well-being?

P.A :"Overall If I would say it's really good for my well-being in terms of work-life balance since being a working mother with massive savings in child care costs and when children are on holidays and I say this Is a stress mostly for women as you don't have to arrange someone to mind the kids. I think it makes you work harder for the company because the fact they are giving you this option and trust me to work from home makes me more motivated and satisfied in my work".

P. A: "Overall my well-being is good in that respect but I am a little bit more stressed than when working in the office"

P. A: "I think if it was taken away from me it would affect me big time as I have gotten so used to it for example if midterm breaks are coming up I don't have to worry about organising a child minder or anything but if it suddenly stopped it would definitely impact me in a big way".

Interview 2: Participant B, Female, Senior Recruiter

R: How long have you been remote working for and how often do you remote work?

P.B: "I have been remote working for 8 years now in this current role, on a flexible basis, ideally I would do it once a week or twice a month".

R: What location would you remote work?

P.B:"I can work at home, I travel a lot so I work at hotels and coffee shops a lot, I travel internationally a lot as well so I would work outside of the country remotely too".

R: What do you find the main advantages of working remotely?

P.B: "I am in and out of the office and when I am in the office there are lots of questions and interruptions, I find remote working is most beneficial for me because there's less interruptions and distractions and I get more done so I am more satisfied with my work. I find I'm more inclined to put the head down and work harder and concentrate more because you don't have the interruptions like you would in the office like the knock on the doors etc. Overall I do find it really beneficial for me".

P.B: "The one benefit of working in the office in recruitment rather than at home I suppose would be that it's easier to get people to come in to meet you in the office and you can't really do that when your remote location is your home as you would have to go to them".

Psychological well-being

R: What do you feel are the main challenges with remote working?

P.B: "I suppose I'm not as inclined to get up and move as much which is really bad I suppose for my physical health as I don't tend to take a break when I remote work I sit for longer. I do try exercise afterwards with a walk or something".

R: What for you was the main reason you engaged in remote working?

P.B:"I suppose productivity was the main reason as a lot of my travelling needs before technology advances I had to catch up a lot with my work after I was traveling and was out of the office where as now productivity has increased because when I can work remotely I can work on the go."

P.B: "The days that I choose to work remotely at home is because there is no distractions, no phones ringing, I get more done, there is nobody knocking on my door and I would say again the reason being for productivity".

R: How do you feel your work life balance has been impacted since remote working?

P.B: "I suppose it's debatable if my work life balance has improved or not I've never really thought about it, I don't think it's been reduced but I don't think its improved. I would say my

job productivity is the best improvement of working remotely and I don't think it's my work life balance".

Physical Well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical remote working day is like for you?

P.B: "I start about 7.30 am, I work a lot more when I am remote working as I do a lot more hours. Again because I don't have to travel in-between in and out of the office which normally takes me about an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening so I find that those 2 hours of travelling are hugely beneficial in that I have a longer day so I get more done".

P.B: "So I start at 7.30am I work until about 9.30 pm, I don't typically move in the whole day that I'm working from home which is not good for my well-being".

P.B: "I don't see anybody because there is nobody else in the house as everyone else is out working or in college and my day would be quite lonely I suppose".

R: How do you feel your stress levels have been impacted since remote working?

P.B: "I've never really thought about it. I'm not typically the type of person that gets very stressed to be honest but I would say it's probably increased".

Social Well-being

R: You mentioned feeling lonely. How do you communicate with your colleagues when you are working from home?

P.B: "Mainly by email but only in emergencies they would ring me or I would ring them. They know the reason that I'm working from home is to get something done without interruptions. If I'm doing a project I would log into my emails every couple of hours and if anyone needed me urgently they would call me".

R: Do you ever feel that your colleagues view you differently since you've started remote working?

P.B: "Not with my work colleagues here as we have a culture of flexibility and everyone has an opportunity to remote work or flexible and whatever the occasion so no nobody ever has had any hard feelings".

Managing Boundaries:

R: You mentioned you work from 7.30-9.30 would you ever find it difficult switching off from your work that late?

P.B: "Yes it is but I suppose in between those hours I've probably had cups of coffee, emptied the washing machine. I tend to work a lot from home in the evenings and its mainly because I'm travelling so much so I have to tune in and catch up so I am used to it in a way but I do find it difficult".

R: When you are remote working how do you manage the boundaries between work and home life? You mentioned about emptying the washing machine while working can you tell me more about that?

P.B: "In a nutshell I honestly don't.. but because I'm not full time remote working I like to think that it's kind of acceptable in a way. It's not sustainable to do it every day. For me I find it as a plus as I feel a sense of achievement that I got so much done in one long day as appose to a week spent in the office it really does improve my productivity a lot which is really beneficial to me".

R: Are there any additional comments you would like to make on your well-being and remote working?

P.B: "I would say if someone is thinking of working from home, make sure you set yourself boundaries, time frames, breaks, especially mobility breaks that you get up and walk around as it's very easy to get stagnant and sit for long periods of time which isn't good. I think especially young parents that can work the family around without having so much childcare costs is really beneficial".

P.B: "It's definitely the future and isn't going to go away its going to increase in offices and get more popular."

P.B: "Also just to note in my experience its typically a female thing so I would like to see more males taking it up because I think if they did that would help the whole agenda of work-life balance and the whole remote flexible working scenario because it would be shared responsibility between and not just landing on the female or the prime carer of the child".

Interview 3: Participant C: Female, Recruiter.

R: How long have you been remote working and how often do you remote work?

P.C: "In current role 1 year 4 months, other company 15 years, working remotely for last 10 years. I worked remotely for 2 full weeks when my parents were sick that was the longest period I remote worked but usually I only remote work if I have something to attend or to do outside of work I suppose on a flexible basis. Sometimes I do 2 days but other times I don't so it is a flexible remote working basis usually now 3 times a month but it is all due to my flexibility. I don't do it too often maybe twice or 3 times a month not every week".

R: Where do you remote work from?

P. C: "When I work remotely I work from home in my kitchen on my kitchen table.

R: Do you have your own office at home?

P.C: "No I work from the kitchen table but I do set up in a particular way to have the light behind me, and make sure I'm not crouched over and the screen is clear for me to work with"

Psychological well-being

R:Why did you engage in remote working and what attracted you the most to this practice?

P.C: "It was for my flexibility really. For me it is because I have children and sometimes I need to be places with them so it's the flexibility of not having to travel into work and travel home to pick them up. I can start my work earlier than 8 o clock, work for as many hours in the morning as I can and then go and do what I have to do with the kids or if I had someone that had to come and do something in the house maybe I need to be there to let them in."

P.C: "what I do find about working from home is I do start really early in the morning and I get all the hours in but it could be 9 o clock at night by the time I'm finished so your day is extended but you can put your washing out and do your stuff that you need to do to get through it".

R: "How do you feel remote working has impacted on your work life balance?"

P. C: "I do think it's a huge benefit to me cause there are times when you have to be at home or a certain place and it isn't practical to drive into work and go home so you would have to take a day's holidays. So instead of me taking holidays I can still do all my work and do what I have to do from a personal point of view. Even if I had say a hospital appointment I could remote work in the morning go and still are only taking a couple of hours out of your day".

P.C: "May only have to take 2 hours out of the day to go somewhere which is great because it doesn't use a day of your holiday balance and I can still make up for those 2 hours of work later in the day".

P.C: "The flexibility of being able to do that is great. There are a lot of times when if I had to do a spread sheet or a lot of phone calls that I would do that from home because when you are in the office it's so easy to get distracted and because it's such a small office here if you are making 10 or 15 phone calls and your constantly on the phone and listening to the noise going on in the back ground is incredibly distracting where as if you are at home and making calls etc it's much easier to do them and get through them quicker as well".

What for you are the biggest challenges with remote working?

P.C: "The biggest challenges for me would be making sure the day is curtailed into 8 hours and not a marathon…em apart from that I wouldn't say there are many challenges."

P.C: "I don't really feel more stressed at home but I am harder on myself because I'm thinking ok this has to be a full day for me here and in the office you could be chatting to someone for 10 or 15 minutes but you don't do that at home so you don't miss out on time. I would tell myself ok I'm working from home that means I actually am working at home so I have to make sure I make use of that time".

Physical Well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical remote working day is like?

P.C: "I would get up early and id start working early usually 7 or half 7…I start here at 8 everyday anyway so I'm in early anyway but I would work until depending on what I have to do or if I was working at home and had a meeting for work I would work until that and head off to the meeting".

P.C: "Typically I would try get as much done in the morning as I can and do whatever I have to do and then on a few minutes I would make a cup of tea and say ok ill just put these clothes in the washing machine or whatever I have to do and that would last".

P.C: "I do try my best to still be finished at 5 o clock but that often moves out and I work later because I might take an hour during the day to do other things like a food shop and come back and I would then push the hour out at the end of the day".

R: So if you do push that hour out and you mentioned before it could be 9 o clock by the time you finished do you ever experience difficulty in switching off from your work?

P.C: "I don't really find it difficult to switch off from my work afterwards as I usually have all my work done but yes it can be difficult sometimes especially that late".

R: How do you feel your stress levels have been impacted?

P.C: "I feel more stressed in terms of making sure I get all my work done and curtailed into an 8 hour day".

Social well-being

R: How do you communicate best with the office when working remotely?

P.D: "Usually I would send an email if I needed something. If it was something urgent or something that would take 3 or 4 emails I would just call into the office and just say can I speak to whoever instead".

P.D: "I do feel aspects of isolation but as I don't do it all the time it isn't too bad but I suppose missing the coffee chats etc is hard and especially being on your own at home"

Do you find it difficult when communicating with the office compared to working in the office?

P.C: "Not really because in this company there is only a small amount of us here but in the previous company we had an instant admin on our laptops that would respond straight away and were having a conversation through a quick instant message and didn't have to make a phone call it would just pop up. We also had a phone line on our laptop which was used for conference calls online".

R: How do you feel people in the office view you as working remotely?

"There wasn't any major difference in their views of me but I do know when I worked from home full time for 2 weeks due to family reasons I was very conscious if anyone messaged me I would instantly respond even if I was in the middle of doing something because I don't want them thinking I wasn't actually working and not doing what im supposed to be doing".

"I think there is a perception that when you are working from home that you aren't actually working so I was really conscience to make sure I was always answering emails and instant messenger as quickly as I could".

Managing boundaries

R: You mentioned you work in your kitchen and doing washing while remote working so how do you manage the boundary between work and home life when you are remote working?

P.C: "Well I suppose when I get up and start really early I would make sure I have covered all the emails that need to be answered and stuff like that…then I would plan ok I'm going to do this for an hour and then I'll do a few chores and then I'll come back to my work….so I would have a schedule set out for what I need to do".

R: Do you feel like you need to be more disciplined then I suppose when working from home?

P.C: "I think when you're in the office everything falls into place in terms of discipline because you're here at your desk and you're doing stuff so certainly when you're at home you have to

be disciplined… you can't just go off and do a job that will take 2 hours… you need to get the clothes in and out and easy stuff".

P. C: "It is so easy to get distracted and especially I live next door to my parents so my car is outside and my mam would think I'm off work so she would come in and sit in for tea and distract me for half an hour and I would have to tell her that I am working so in that way I do need to be more disciplined when I'm remote working".

R: Previous subjects mentioned in relation to working from home that its dependent on your personality. How do you feel about that?

P.C: "Yes but I think it also depends on the person themselves. There are some people who work from home and don't actually work but it think that person will do that whether they are in the office or not in the office. The person that works from home has to work like if its someone who doesn't I think they will mess around whether they are in the office or not…I think it's down to the discipline that you have and it comes down to the loyalty and respect you have for the organisation as you will have to go back into the office into the job the next day and do twice as much and do it anyway if you don't do the work at home so why do that to yourself then…"

P.C: "I would overall feel more productive working from home, there's periods of time remote working that I could be 100% more productive than in the office as there's no distractions or phones ringing etc you can focus much better especially if you are doing phone calls spreadsheets etc and things you really have to concentrate on".

R: Previous subjects mentioned they feel a gender imbalance with remote working as its typically a female practice. What are your opinions on that?

P.C "I wouldn't have really thought about this before but I would agree I don't know many male remote workers".

R: Any additional comments etc in relation to remote working on your well-being?

P.C: "I think overall it's a really nice part of your job if you can work from home, it think its good aspect for your well-being. I think it also comes down to how your organisation supports you while remote working and that nobody thinks that you can't be contacted as if you're at home it doesn't mean you're not in the office and not working there anymore as just because you aren't physically there you are doing the same work from another location so I think that's really important".

P.C: "I do think that when your setting up to work remotely you do have to make sure your environment is healthy such as for me the light is proper, a good surrounding , comfortable and the atmosphere that you are in is comfortable".

P.C: "I do think overall it is really good for you both psychologically and physically and mentally on your well-being for them reasons".

Interview 4: Participant D. Female, Junior Recruiter

R: How long have you been remote working and how often do you remote work?

P.D: "I've been doing it on a flexible basis since last October so 9 months now and I would usually remote work if I have something on so it depends on that and varies. I say since October I've done it about once a month mainly due to having an appointment or a wedding or some sort of appointment".

P.D: "Because I do it only when I need to do I it more on a flexible basis as I wouldn't have a set time or day that I have to do it only when something comes up and I need to do something or go somewhere".

R: When you do remote work what location do you remote work from?

P.D:"I have an office/study at home so I would be on my own, nobody comes in or anything. I don't think I could work in my kitchen or anything as id get distracted".

R:What for you do you feel remote working is most beneficial?

P.D: "Mostly due to flexibility and not having to take days off that would eat in to your holidays or annual leave that will only take 2 hours of the day. You might only be away from your desk from an hour or if someone has to come to the house to be there to let them in.Taking a whole day off out of your annual leave to do something that might take an hour is just not worth it so for that it's a great benefit".

Psychological well-being

R: What attracted you to remote working and engaging in this practice?

P.D: "I think probably the flexibility of it and a lot of things are Monday-Friday like especially hospital appointments etc so being able to do that out of the flexibility would be the main reason for me".

R: Could you give me an example of when you've used it recently?

P.D: "Well if I have a doctor's appointment mostly or recently I was coming home from London on Sunday night but my flight wasn't going to be in until late so I would have been so tired coming into the office for 8 o clock in the morning so if I work from home I can log on a little bit later instead of taking a day off as well which would be a waste of a day off and eat into your annual leave".

R: How do you feel in relation to managing the work-life boundaries when remote working?

P.D: "You just have to tell yourself no and draw the line especially if you have other stuff to do in the evenings so you just have to have discipline and tell yourself to stop at a certain time".

R: What do you feel would be the major challenges with remote working?

P.C: "Motivating yourself and you really have to say no especially the fact you've been trusted to work from home so you have a responsibility as well so that would be the main motivator for me that fact that the organisation and my manager trusts me to work from home".

R: Can you tell me what would motivate you when remote working?

P.D: "That I'm lucky enough to have this opportunity to work from home would be a motivator for me. Also that you want to be seen to not be slacking off that im actually putting in the work even though I'm not physically in the office and bringing back that trust relationship between my manager an me".

R: Yes a previous subject did mention before that they experienced trust issues with their manager when they were working from home, how do you feel about that or have you ever had that experience?

P.D: "Yes well I mean like I'm really lucky this organisation are so good and supportive here and there is a good trust relationship with everyone and we all work together as a team".

Physical well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical remote working day would be like for you?

P.D: "Well its great in the sense you don't have to get ready and put make up on, I like to stay on the office kind of hours and I try always be on for 9 o clock anyway and then I take my usual break at 1-2. I like to have the same hours as the office because especially in the office we all work together so I can't really be logged on at a time they aren't because we do all kind of have to work at the same time".

P.D: "Sometimes I find myself working longer hours especially if I had taken a day off having to catch up on today's work as well as work I missed like there was one time I looked at the clock and it was 7.30 in the evening".

R: Do you find it difficult working that late to switch off from your work after?

P.D: "Yes because I tell myself ok after this email ill stop but then you just want to keep on going because you know if you don't the next day is going to be even busier so you want to have everything caught up and ahead for the next day".

R: Would you ever find yourself still answering calls or emails out of office hours?

P.D: "Yes definitely I mean especially because I have the laptop and my phone and you can just log on in 2 seconds and check something really quick compared to if you're not in the

office you can't do it once your home so sometimes yeah I do feel aw ill just quickly check my emails".

R: Do you ever feel more stressed when you're working remotely?

P.D: "I suppose it comes back to the switching off problem it's so hard to just say right that's it I have to go now also like working off a small laptop as well my eyes get really tedious and sore and the mouse or something might stop working I do get stressed over that and trying to get my work done".

Social well-being

R: How do you best communicate with the office when you are remote working?

P.D: "By email mostly, the odd time if its only something small id pick up the phone and ring if I need to but mostly by email because they'll answer straight away anyway".

R: Do you ever feel lonely working from home?

P.D: "Sometimes because you miss the general office chat and lunch break I think it doesn't bother me too much because I work remotely only when I need to but I think if I was to do it every day I would feel really isolated. I would feel aspects of isolation. We have such a small team here though so everyone is really supportive and wouldn't judge you or anything working from home because everyone does it on a flexible basis".

R: Have you ever experienced difficulty in communications?

P.D: "Sometimes there's been difficulty in contacting if they might have loads of emails and might not see mine so then that's why I would ring if it's been a while and haven't got back to me"

Managing boundaries

R: How do you feel in relation to managing the work-life boundaries when remote working?

P.D: "You just have to tell yourself no and draw the line especially if you have other stuff to do in the evenings so you just have to have discipline and tell yourself to stop at a certain time".

R: What do you feel your quality of work is like when working remotely?
P.D: "I definitely do feel more productive and even though I'm doing the same thing like there's no phones ringing and distractions or chatting away so I'm literally just focused on my own work and I'm on my own so you can't talk to anyone like the office".

R: A previous subject mentioned they felt remote working is gender imbalanced what do you feel about that?

P.D: "To be honest I actually don't know any guys that remote work so that is kind of interesting. I do think it's mainly women with small kids and savings in child care responsibilities because it is so expensive".

R: Any additional comments/advice?

P.D: "I think over all remote working is really good for my work-life balance I mean this is what everyone wants to do in remote working but I say having a space at home you can work in is really important I don't think I could do it working at my kitchen table and I don't think that's right because I'd find that so distracting if someone's cooking while you're working. Distractions can impact on your work as well and if you're not fully focused you can easily make mistakes and stuff".

P.D: "Overall it is great having the work life balance and my environment I work in is really helpful. I think today remote working it's going to continue to grow as well because of technology constantly developing it's much easier to do it now. Life isn't all about work and I think people are starting to realise that now which has put a demand for remote working and work-life balance now".

Interview 5: Participant E, Male, Senior Recruiter. (Phone interview).

R: How long have you been working remotely?

P.E: "I work have been working remotely for 10 years and I work full time remotely".

R: Where do you remote work from?

P.E: "Remote UK office, full time constantly. I started since I worked with this company. I come into the office once every 2 weeks but only really if they need me to".

R: What do you feel are the advantages with remote working?

P.E: "For me the advantages would be not getting involved in the physical office drama but also that I am more focused on my own work. When you're in the office you get caught up in other things so I am more productive working from home and get a lot more work done".

R: What do you feel are the disadvantages?

P.E: "Sometimes I feel isolated but because I travel back and forth from the office but I'm isolated in the fact that issues in the office quickly because I'm not there I can't solve them. It's difficult getting 10 emails explaining what's happening etc and its easier in person to catch up and explain".

R: What do you find are the major differences working remotely compared to in the office?

P.E: "It's been 10 years now and I feel I prefer it now. If I was in one place working non remotely I don't think I can do it. I prefer it as it is more of a challenge and I think I would get bored if I was to go back and work non remotely everyday".

R: What other kind of challenges do you experience working full time remotely?

P.E: "Missing out on office development may be one because its time consuming travelling back and forth to deal with issues etc. I can't plan too far ahead as I don't have set days that I have to come into the office so they could say they need me to fly over to the office tomorrow".

Psychological

R: How do you feel remote working has impacted on your work-life balance?

P.E: "For me work life balance is probably the biggest problem of doing this as for me Monday-Friday I forget my personal life it just doesn't exist I am just constantly involved in the work but I just try to get on with it and do enjoy my weekend. taking some days off now and then or holidays so you kind of need to play around with your time in lieu and all that".

P.E: "Because you're in charge of your own schedule it is an advantage because you can say aw ill work really hard for these 2 weeks then take the next week off".

Managing boundaries / Social well-being

Would you ever feel obliged to answer calls outside of your working hours?

"Yes always but I would try limit it as much as possible as people have to respect my well-being as well. If I went on holidays everyone would know and id try get everything sorted before I go so nobody would be contacting me while I'm away. Of course sometimes that's not always the case though "

Do you ever have difficulties communicating with the main office?

"Not really, we mostly use email to communicate because for some reason it's harder to catch people on the phone".

Do you feel like you are more stressed now compared to before you started remote working?

"No but I tend not to think too much into it and dwell on it. I am used to it now".

R: Any additional comments or advice?

P.E: "I think you need to be really good at time management and know how you work best and set your own plan and schedule of what you need to do. Also set your ground rules and make sure your colleagues in the office also know how you work and when you can be contacted etc".

P.E: "If you want to be good at the well-being side for yourself and for your own life and don't want to be married to your job then you would have to set more ground rules and discipline for yourself and one day a week I will work and do all my paper work"

P.E: "I also think having a home office that is set up properly is important too and a good work environment. You have to engaged and flexible in order to do it but you have to put yourself first and be disciplined in your work".

R: What do you feel In terms of remote working depending on your personality?

P.E: "If your anyway introverted you could fall into being so isolated and so away from it and someone like that would probably end up leaving"

P.E: "For me I don't feel as isolated as I did before because I am in contact with everyone every day and I come into the office every two weeks. There are some days that I would feel lonely but it think overall I'm used to it now as I've been doing it for 10 years".

R: Are there any other comments you'd like to add in relation to remote working on your well-being?

P.E: "you have to be fully engaged in it but you have to make time out for yourself and for your work-life balance but you have to be flexible too as you are giving them flexibility too."

P.E: "I find it hard to switch off especially now with developments in technology and what's app is constant so to some extent I am constantly switched on with work. You have to be organised and good at time management to do it".

Interview 6: Participant F, Male, Recruitment manager.

R: How long have you been remote working for?

P.F: "I started since January this year and work once a week every Wednesday from home"

R: What led you and engaged you remote working?

P.F: "Initially it was family reasons. As I am in a managerial role here I found that I needed head space so I sat down with my director and said like there's stuff I need to do that I can't do when I am working here so I wasn't mentally able to do it so I guess it was personal reasons that led me to it".

P.F: "Then once I began remote working I started to use that time to do the reports and found it a much smoother process".

R: What location do you remote work from?

P.F: "I work from home in my house in my kitchen where the coffee machine is. I don't have an office but I feel like my phone and my laptop is all I need so I can take them anywhere and set up an office space anywhere as I have remote access. It does have to be switched on for security reasons so its scheduled that every Wednesday it allows me to log in".

Psychological

R: How do you feel your work-life balance has been impacted since remote working?

P.F: "It's great for me 100%, I get to spend more time with the kids in the morning like normally I would be up at 6.30 and leave the house at 7, it's a little bit different now because my wife has changed jobs so were rotating the school run so its really good because I get to see them in the mornings whereas normally id be flying out the door".

P.F: "I'm not as rushed, If I want I can drop them up to the creche for half 8 go up to the garage get a coffee and get set up then and then be ready to start for 9 am".

R: What do you find the main advantages of remote working for you to be?

P.F: "For me it's the headspace from the office especially in recruitment. Part of recruitment you have your structure your directors, managers, social directors, managers principles, seniors and consultants but up to a certain level we all have to make money so being responsible for budgets etc but the further you go up the more responsibility you have like the more reporting you do the more people you are reporting into. When you have a team and it's a busy office

and there's 4 people there it's like having kids with them asking so many questions and I just don't get headspace when in the office".

P.F: "If I was to take my normal day in the office and literally pick it up and drop it into my working from home day it condenses itself way down into about 3 or 4 hours. When your in the office its distractions after distractions like the phone call, a client coming in, director from another division, training days etc. So for those reasons I tend to leave the stuff that you need more focus on etc to when I'm working at home".

Physical well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical day remote working is like for you?

P.F: "Typical day is I purposely pick Wednesdays so I can split my week up so what I do is I would schedule all my client candidate calls whether they would be skypes meetings or calls first thing in the morning. Then in the later part of the morning I would do a conference call with my team to make sure everything is ticking over nicely there while I'm not in the office. That would then allow me to do my reporting in the afternoon. I kind of work my week Wednesday to Wednesday because typically in my head I don't do Monday-Friday so Wednesday is my Monday so I would plan my schedule up until the next Tuesday evening."

R: Would you ever find yourself working longer hours than working in the office?

P.F: "Not really I mean typical thing I'll get up do the school run and drop the kids off to school for 8.45 I can walk to it from the house so I'm back at my desk for 9 o clock. Sometimes I might log on earlier to see if anything urgent is coming in but other than that I wouldn't log on earlier than 9. The organisation trusts me to do work from home so I would feel that im strict on myself because I have to prove something to them".

P.F: "I am strict on myself and treat it as a normal day so im in here at 8.45 every morning the only difference being when im at home that I don't have that commute which is 1 hour and 20 minutes so I get a lie in as well which is really good".

R: How do you feel your stress levels have been impacted since remote working?

P.F: "I don't feel as stressed working from home I didn't at the start but its more stress due to being isolated and idle than over the work but I do feel more conscious because I'm obviously not present in the office".

Social well-being

R: How do you best communicate with the office when you are working from home?

P.F: "I use email mostly and my mobile I get my landline direct to my mobile and the way things are now we have a team WhatsApp group and I WhatsApp with all my clients and my laptop has a camera on it so we can Skype too but scheduled phone calls would be 9 o clock In the morning em and we take our lunch a little earlier around 12 so I would have a call with the

team around 11.30 and then a follow up call at 4.30 that evening to make sure everything is ok".

P.F: "The organisation is so supportive in terms of remote working and what I've noticed from working from home is its given the guys on my team more responsibility and autonomy when I'm not here that day and they have stepped up and they like the fact that I'm not looking over their shoulder all the time but at the same time I'm only at the other end of the phone".

R: What do you miss most then about the office?

P.F: "I miss the everyday office banter as I do get bored at home on my own it is lonely and I do feel isolated. I do find myself ringing my colleague if that happens to see what's happening in the office because I feel like I'm missing out and I do have a fear of missing out".

P.F: "IT issues and stuff and when you can't see people it's hard from a recruitment aspect to just ask the colleague beside you oh what do you think of this candidate".

P.F: "There's definitely an aspect of isolation when working from home for me because especially if something happens and you don't know about it because you weren't in. If I ring my colleague and he doesn't answer the phone and then rings me back a while later I'm like what were you doing why didn't you answer and he might be like oh sorry this and this was happening".

Managing boundaries

R: How do you manage the boundary between work and home life?

P.F: "I don't manage it well I would say I manage it poorly even though I do try treat it as a normal day I could still be logged on until much later and then because I've my emails on my phone I'm constantly online so I would say I manage it poorly" I do have difficulty switching off especially recruitment is a sales role.

R: How do you feel your productivity is when working from home then?

P.F: "100% better than the office though I couldn't comment on what I'd be like working at home 5 days a week. You will always have issues I mean sometimes the internet might be down or your access might be switched off but it's only a matter of ringing up the office to say that. The company is very accommodating around ad hoc situations and I think it does also depend on the organisation support".

P.F: "Some of the stuff we work on is very sensitive material so it could be about them or a review or pay rise so that's the type of stuff I like to leave for when I'm at home on my own and can think about it".

R: What do you feel are the main challenges with remote working for you?

P.F: "I feel optics is a major challenge because you want to be seen to be in the office and having a presence in the room in case there Is an incident or something like that. Some days I

work from home the CEO or someone might call in Wednesdays and I wouldn't be there. You might have an agreement to work from home with your manager but the higher manager might not know about it and be like oh where's x today and they'll say oh he's working from home and they might say oh I didn't know he does that. And then it's how it looks if someone comes into the office late etc".

P.F: "I think it also comes back to the presenteeism issue. We've had situations where people have asked oh how come your allowed work from home but I've earned it and my manager trusts me to work from home. You are in charge of your own desk and it's up to you to manage it and have a presence here".

R: How do you feel remote working affects your overall well-being?

P.F: "I suppose going back to the nature of working home for family reasons it gave me comfort that my mam was able to know I was there as I was only 10 minutes away In the car etc but it also gave me time to reflect on the job as well. When you are going through a personal or work situation space is what you need and this gave me that. The last thing I wanted to do was to blow up in the office for people to see so you can work at your own pace and you surprise yourself how capable you are when you are on your own".

P.F: "At the end of the day distractions are necessary you do need to have them but at the same time you can also feel like you are drowning".

R: It's interesting in terms of male and female workers as previous subjects have stated they feel remote workers are more female dominated, what are your opinions on that?

P.F: "From my understanding there's no other guys I know who remote work so I think its traditionally old fashioned like I know my wife did it and its due to the kids and childcare responsibilities".

R: Any advice / opinion on overall well-being

P.F: "The main thing would be to treat it as a normal working day don't think it's not as there are people who work from home and don't actually work. It gave me head space and benefited my work-life balance with my family and it made me more organised as I schedule my week and all important things on the day I work from home".

P.F: "I feel I can talk a lot freely as well especially with clients when I'm working from home".

P.F: "I take my lunch break as I would in the office and I would have to answer calls outside of working hours but I still would treat it as a normal day".

P.F: "Overall it's definitely 100% positive on my well-being but in relation to the social well-being it is negative because I do feel isolated. Its brought overall balance to my week".

Interview 7: Participant G, Female, Recruiter. (Phone interview).

R: How long have you been remote working and how often do you remote work?

P.G: "I've been working remotely for 9 years now and do 2 days a week working from home and in coffee shops and on the move in the car too so a mix of places. Usually I would work remotely Tuesdays and Thursdays".

R: When you work from home where do you work?

P.G: "Kitchen table as on the go etc, coffee shops. I find at home the best location as less distractions but if I was meeting clients etc I would work in coffee shops or on the go".

R: How did you begin remote working?

P.G: "I was one of the first in the company and the first in my team to start working remotely so back then 9 years ago it wasn't as common as it is now so I suppose I did find it difficult when I first started whereas now I am more used to it".

P.G: "It was only brought into the company on a trial basis and I was told if it works and you hit your targets we can go ahead with it but if not you'll have to come back and work in the office full time".

Psychological well-being

R: What attracted you to engaging in remote working?

P.G: "Ever since I had my first child I suppose I just wanted to be at home a little bit more and my commute time and have flexibility around family needs, hospital appointments all of that. Mainly childcare reasons as its much handier and childcare is so expensive".

R: In relation to that how do you feel remote working has impacted on your work-life balance?

P.G: "It's definitely helped my work-life balance in a positive way like I can be with the kids at home , I can keep the house running and see my kids more. It's given me flexibility to be at home and not have to take a holiday day for example if I had a plumber coming to the house or someone that I had to be there its really handy".

P.G: "I find it really good for my health being at home because I don't tend to get sick or a cold and stuff and when you're at home you get over a cold much quicker and don't have the commute".

P.G: "I pretty much never ever take a sick day and because I work remotely if I feel something coming on your at home and keep yourself wrapped up etc so you can fight off illnesses much better when you're working at home

Physical well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical remote working day is like for you?

P.G: "I multitask all the time, my phone is my laptop really.. I get up I check emails straight away and respond to a few emails. I would then line up a few calls for later in the day. I tend not to do my admin at home it tends to be more reactive work and I do my admin when im back in the office and have my computer in front of me but I would mainly be making calls and responding to emails when I work remotely so definitely more reactive work at home and less admin work".

R: How do you feel your stress levels have been impacted since working from home?

P.G: "I do feel more stressed definitely being honest with you because when you're at home and especially with kids you've a lot more demands than you would in the office. I find it far more relaxing being in the office than at home so it can be more stressful at home".

R: What for you would the main challenges with remote working?

P.G: "It's those additional demands that are put on you at home".

P.G: "also not being present but having to be extra careful and conscious because of that and in relation to communications because a lot of it is by email things can often get misunderstood etc which is difficult. People have a perception that you are on a day off but they don't know that I actually get more work done at home then in the office because I can fully focus and get a lot more work done".

P.G: "I overall feel more productive at home than in the office because there's less distractions and I can focus, no commute time and I can fully focus on my own work where as in the office there's more distractions with people chatting etc".

Managing boundaries

R: Do you find it difficult to manage the boundaries between work and home life?

P.G: "I do yes definitely I tend to merge the two worlds and it is extremely hard to switch off. There's times I could do be doing homework with my kids but working at the same time sending emails so the lines definitely blur".

R: Is there anything you do to help you switch off?

P.G: "It depends there are times I'll put the phone away for a while but I'm pretty much always constantly on if I'm honest".

R: Do you answer calls out of working hours?

P.G: "I kind of feel I should be constantly online and responding anyway because I'm not in the office so I always answer calls out of working hours".

R: Just in relation to that, would you find yourself working longer hours?

P.G: "Yes I do I probably first log on about 8am and switch off around 6.30/7 maybe but I feel like I'm constantly on when I'm working remotely".

R: Do you still take your normal breaks when you're working from home?

P.G: "I take shorter breaks definitely and then tend to work longer hours".

Social well-being

R: Have you ever experienced difficulty in communicating with the office when you are remote working?

P.G: "Yes I can sometimes and a lot of our communicating would be through email so sometimes the persons tone or something may appear short or wouldn't understand it if you would if you were beside them so it can be a bit of a challenge in that way".

P.G: "I don't really miss the social aspect of the office because I'm in there 3 days a week anyway but if I was full time remote I definitely would. I do sometimes feel isolated when I'm working from home because it is lonely. I do miss I suppose the office chats everyday with my colleagues but because I am in the office 3 days a week I don't feel totally isolated just a little bit.

R: What form of communication do you find best when communicating with the office?

P.G: "Email mostly and phone I do both but mostly emails".

R: How do you feel your colleagues and manager view you working from home?

P.G: "Not really any different there isn't any trust issues for me but I think if you are new in the company there might be more trust issues there as because I've worked here for so long I suppose I've earned the trust and my colleagues are used to me doing it for so long".

R: Previous subjects in my study have mentioned they feel remote working is more female dominated how do you feel in relation to that?

P.G: "Yes I would agree 100% it tends to be mothers who do remote working for childcare needs so I definitely see that in my office and elsewhere".

P.G: "We are all a bit traditional in our way as it does come back to women having the child care responsibility but women definitely work remotely more than men in my opinion".

R: What do you think overall in relation to how remote working has impacted on your overall well-being?

P.G: "I think it has had a hugely positive impact on my mental health and well-being. If I was to commute in and out of work every day 5 days a week I would be sick a lot more, id have less energy. I think being able to work remotely means I can balance my health and sick leave that you don't need to take sick leave as you can look after yourself much more when you're

at home. Overall I think it's really good for my health and work-life balance. It is probably the number one reason why I am still in this company 15 years later because of the flexibility".

R: Any additional comments?

P.G: "You need to be very good at your job to do remote working, you need to be very clear in terms of expectations with your boss. Make sure work can be measured and can show that you are as productive if not more productive when working remotely as you are in work. I highly recommend it but need to be very good at your job to do it".

P.G: "It's helped me in the recruitment sector in what I find is when I started doing remote working I would hide the fact that I was at home but then I started not hiding it anymore and I was more honest with clients and I say I have a kid crying in the back ground and I found that if your honest and real person with clients that they like you much better and feel more real. Also build better relationships with clients as they see you more as a person and remember you more rather than hiding the fact that you're working from home. People are also more open with you if you are open with them".

P.G: "I think remote working should be done more because it is much better for your health and balance and get people off the roads and better for the environment so I think it should be the way because a day or 2 at home a week makes all the difference to your health and work-life balance and the environment".

<u>Interview 8: Participant H, Female Senior recruiter (Phone interview).</u>

R: How long have you been remote working and how often do you remote work?

P.H: "I've been remote working for 1 year now and I remote work on a full time basis completely remotely".

R: What location do you remote work from?

P.H; "I remote work from my house I have my own office at home which is away from distractions of the kitchen etc".

R: What for you do you find the major differences between working in the office and remote working?

P.H: "For me I think the advantages are that I'm left to my own devices to work away and I'm not called into meetings that don't really concern me. I am a recruiter at the end of the day so I am left to just recruiting and doing my work. Whereas when I was in the office I was a manager and I had a team to manage as well as recruiting so I was pulled away from a lot of the recruiting side as I was managing a team so I never got as much done in the office as I do now".

P.H: "Now I'm at home I get to manage myself and my time so I am more productive in that way absolutely compared to before".

Psychological well-being

R: What attracted you to engaging in remote working?

P.H: "I had no choice as I have a son with special needs and I couldn't find a carer for him so I had a choice of either leaving work or work remotely from home".

R: How do you feel remote working has impacted your work-life balance?

P.H: "I am much more happier overall I have my own dependence and time to get things done myself. It's just made a huge difference to me especially for family needs I mean it would have cost me so much money if I could get a child carer for my son".

R:What do you feel are the main challenges for you?

P.H: "I think I suppose first of all missing out on the social aspects going out for coffee, lunch etc I don't have that at home so it is really lonely and I do feel isolated in that respect. I'm at home 24/7 so there's no variety unless I actually go and meet a candidate which I do but not as much as I would have when I was working in the office so there definitely a loneliness factor to remote working".

P.H: "When you're in the office and especially as a recruiter when candidates walk in off the street there's more opportunities to meet candidates when I'm in the office as appose to when I am at home".

R: Can you tell me about what sort of opportunities you miss out on?

P.H: "I miss out socially in terms of what the goings on as recruitment Is a sales role at the end of the day so if you're not in the office you're not seen to be present, people don't remember oh Rachel works that role because I'm not there so they do kind of forget about you. I do still attend like the big social events and try go to Christmas parties etc but it's the day to day social aspects that I miss which is a negative. The team do support me though and share a lot with me we have a skype call twice a week and constantly in contact on emails etc but it is an overall negative and I can see how it would impact on some people working from home".

P.H: "But I do miss the day to day office talk like about love island last night etc so it is really lonely".

Physical well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical remote working day would be like for you?

P. G: "Well initially I get up I log on 9.30am I make sure everything is done in the house before I leave to drop my child to care. I come back and just log on straight away then and I don't actually take a lunch break I kind of work through my lunch, sit at the desk and my whole day would be prioritizing jobs I have on and work on the roles that I know I need to fill, advertising etc the whole recruitment spectrum but just really focused if you like whereas when I'm in the office and there's constant chatting about love island or EastEnders etc and you're going out for coffees etc you are pulled away from your work totally and as much as you think ah it doesn't make that much difference it does".

P.G: "I find myself totally focused and in the work. Normally in the office id be finishing at 4.45 to get the train to come home where as when I am at home I'm actually still working at 7/7.30".

R: You say you would still be working at 7.30 which is quite a long day. Would you ever find yourself having difficulty switching off from work then?

P.H: "I just don't switch off ever because here I can put the dinner on and continue to work and my other half doesn't come home until 7pm so I may as well keep working until then anyway".

P.H: "It really is a benefit to me though".

R: What do you do to help yourself switch off?

P.H: "I still answer calls all the time no matter what time. I don't really switch off to be honest, I don't feel like you actually can. Whenever I do get everything done on a Friday whether it be

8 o clock I do say ok right ok now don't think about anything work related until Monday but I mean I still do have my emails on my phone etc so it is really difficult".

R: How do you manage the boundary between work and home life?

P.H: "I don't feel like I manage that boundary well because I'm still constantly on all the time".

R: How do you feel your stress levels have been impacted?

P.H: "I don't feel more stressed in terms of work but in the fact that I'm working from home I have something to prove here so I'm more stressed in that sense. I want to stay working from home so I don't have to give up work so I feel like I have things to prove to myself and the office constantly".

P.H: "My targets and productivity has increases dramatically since I've been working from home mainly because I work so hard and feel like I do have a point to prove".

P.H: "A lot of people don't actually understand how hard it is to do and a lot of people see it as having a day off but it's not like that at all. This is your job at the end of the day and even if friends ring me and ask am I around for a coffee I say I'm working and I treat it as a working day as I would if I was in the office".

P.H: "I think you have to have discipline and be strict on yourself in that way and I know not everyone can do it".

R: How has your organisation supported you and how do you communicate with them?

P.H: "My organisation gave me this opportunity and I'd love to thank them so much in the way they supported me and open to doing it. There's a lot of trust involved".

P.H: "It comes down to the organisation I went into my boss so upset thinking I was just going to have to leave but she came back to me and said no you're going to work remotely from home"

P.H: "They supported me throughout the process and sent out someone to my house to make sure it was safe environment to work in and gave me a desk a chair a laptop everything so it really is amazing and I can't thank them enough. IT equipped my laptop etc with equipment I needed to ensure id have the same safety and access as the office. It is based on trust though and I think anyone or most people I know doing It has been in the job years and earned that trust".

R: What do you find the best way to communicate with the office?

P. G:"I best communicate with email, phone and skype. Mainly email to be honest".

R: How has remote working helped you working in the recruitment sector?

P.H: "Yes I mean I can go and meet people it is more difficult because you can't ask them to come to your house. A lot of candidates in my experience are city centre base so that's why for me it was easier to meet candidates that way".

P.H: "I'm stuck between time of when I can go and meet people as I've to drop my kids off be back to pick them up so I have a very limited window in that regard".

P.H: "What I tend to do and find best is skype with candidates a lot which works well for me but that is where the downside of it is. You are restricted in your work and you're not there in the office to just go out and meet with clients or candidates because 9 times out of 10 before I would always go if I was in the office".

R: Do you feel you miss out in relation to that?

P.H: "Yes, It absolutely comes back to the isolation factor again as we said".

P.H: "There's less opportunities to meet candidates and I suppose as well for promotion because you're not present in the office".

R: How do you feel remote working impacts on your overall well-being?

P.H: "It's made my life 100 times easier even though there are negatives the main advantage for me is work-life balance and time with my kids and savings in child care costs. If my child is happy I'm happy and the fact that I'm at home every day my child has come on so much it's amazing".

P.H: "To me it's nothing but a positive impact I mean my well-being is brilliant because his well-being is brilliant and it makes my life so much easier. It's very difficult previously if say one of the kids were sick and I'm at work worrying about it and I had so much more stress before in that regard".

P.H: "Myself personally I am so much happier working from home and I still go to the social events like a year-end party Christmas party etc. I am still part of the team I just work in a different location to them".

R: Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

P.H: "It isn't for everyone as you need to be disciplined and it may depend on the person. But for the people that it does for work it is a god send. Don't get me wrong there are days I would be like I feel so lonely and wrecked and I could easily just turn this off and not do anything but I don't do that".

Interview 9: Participant I, Male, Recruiter.

R: How long have you been remote working for and how often do you remote work?

P.I: "I've been in my current job 1 year and before that I was in another company"

P.I: "I've been working remotely for 3 years now"

How did you start remote working?

P.I: "I asked because in the other company it was a common practice that people worked from home so I didn't want to be any different so I approached the subject early on because it wouldn't have been a thing where a manager would have come to me to say oh by the way do you know you can work from home they just wouldn't have brought it up because it doesn't make a difference to them so I said it to them early on. Once it became the norm then it would just be the case that I didn't have to tell managers I was working from home I would send an email to the team just saying WFH (work from home) and that's what people did".

P.I: "In my organisation now because its less common even though I still do it I am more conscious and aware of the fact that there's more of an expectation to be there and be on site. I work in a team role at the moment so I have to recruit for jobs in northern Ireland etc so any given day I could be working from Belfast so there's some days I wouldn't be in the office anyway. I think they prefer people being in the office or on site in one of the regional offices".

R: What for you are the main differences between working from home remotely and in the office?

P.I: "I start at 8.30am and typically usually switch off around 7 but I don't have a set time that ill finish".

P.I: "For me I would say the social aspect is the main difference because in working from home I am isolated from the office and I think you have to manage that depending on how often you work from home so that would be the biggest difference for me".

P.I: "But then I think it's less stressful because you don't have a commute, the internal stress factors of a work environment".

R: Where do you work when you work from home?

P.I: "I work in my kitchen in my kitchen table".

Psychological well-being

R: What attracted you to engaging in remote working?

P.I: "For me it was the flexibility so I work in a position where it can be done from home so the flexibility of being able to work from home if I need to go somewhere during the day and I can work later or start earlier so flexibility I would say is the main thing".

R: How do you feel remote working has impacted on your overall work-life balance?

P.I: "I think it's probably given me a different perspective of work so I think an outside perception of people who can't work from home is that they would love to be able to work from home and they think that it's a perk of the job where as I think that when you have the option to work from home the novelty wears off really quickly and I suppose that's the thing for me it's not a novelty anymore it's just a way you can work flexibly if you need to do something".

P.I: "I typically wouldn't work from home just because it would be if I have a specific thing to do or an appointment to go to etc. Or if we need work done and someone can only come over and do it during the day so I can say to my boss im going to work from home tomorrow because there's someone coming over".

Physical well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical remote working day is like for you?

P.I: "As it's a type of work that can be done from home it means its not 100% different from a working day in the office. So I switch on my laptop go through my emails, whatever actions have to be taken so we have a system that we use. We use mainly emails and system based and then if there are any phone calls that need to take place to candidates, following up with hiring managers."

P.I: "I don't sit very close to the hiring managers anyway so even if I was in the office I would have to make a phone call or email them anyway".

P.I: "It's not very different it's just I'm not physically there present in the office".

R: In relation to overall well-being do you ever feel more stressed working from home?

"Not really no".

R: You mention you work at your kitchen table. How do you manage that boundary then between work and home life?

P.I: "It's difficult I would blend it and the boundaries definitely are blurred for me. For example if I'm working in the office whatever time I leave I close the laptop down and that's the end of the day but if I'm remote working I keep that laptop open much longer because I can have it

open while I'm making dinner. I never really shut it down at a certain time so I suppose I do blend both boundaries between home and work together which isn't necessarily good I suppose".

R: Do you do anything to help you switch off from work in the evenings then?

P.I: "not necessarily but I do break my day up so I give myself lunch or time away so I'll make sure I go out for a walk or I'll go for a drive I basically make sure I leave the house during the day on my lunch so that will help me switch off for that time."

P.I: "Then I suppose by the end of the day when I'm finished, ill prioritise work so if I get to a certain stage when I finish and think that's what I've done for today that's when ill close it down but I never go by time ill only finish if I'm satisfied with my workload for that day and then ill switch it off".

R: Do you feel overall more productive working from home?

P.I: "Tough question because I think for me my productivity changes on a daily basis regardless of whether you're working from home or not. I would say I am slightly less productive working from home because I might get the same amount of work done but its over a longer period of time and I'll keep the laptop open longer so I would say I am less efficient when I'm working from home".

P.I: "You're In control of your hours and productivity so it kind of at your own discretion

Social well-being

R: How do you communicate with your colleagues and how do they support you working from home?

P.I: "We mostly use email to communicate and in terms of support my colleagues are very aware of what I need to be able to do my job so I think just having a good relationship with my colleagues in the first place is key because I do rely on assistance from them and the only difference is that my colleagues would sit very close to each other in the office so I could verbally ask them something when I am in the office but when im at home its swapped for an email".

R: Have you ever experienced being viewed differently because you work from home?

P.I: "In my previous job that I worked from home for 2 years it was an extremely common practice everyone worked from home at least once a week sometimes more and that was incorporated into the culture of the business it was a US multinational and the company created technology to allow the business to work from home around the world so it was unique in the sense that you had to be seen to be practicing what they preach."

P.I: "However in my current role it's a far less common practice but I have an agreement with my manager in relation to remote working. I think it does take a lot of trust to be built up between you and your boss to be able to do it and for them to know that you will be productive

working from home and that the work is going to be done. But in this organisation I do think there is a little bit of a perception that if someone is working from home that they are skiving off work and not doing as much and don't want to come into the office".

R: In relation to that would you ever find yourself answering phone calls after working hours due to that perception?

P.I: "Yes but sometimes not necessarily because of the perception but because in my role I know that I will be contacting or trying to contact candidates during working hours and if they're working they may not be able to take the call which means a lot of the time they will get back to me outside of working hours but I'm just kind of used to that and I wouldn't consider it a thing specifically for people working from home I think that would happen if I was in the office too.

R: What for you are the major challenges with remote working?

P.I: "I think keeping yourself motivated and having discipline is a major challenge. I do a checklist every day to keep myself motivated it's like a work load list for the following day. So I get through that list and then on an ad hoc basis whenever more work comes in I know what the work that I have to prioritise for the next day and I do this whether I'm at home or In the office the next day. So I just tick off the actions that I complete once I have them finished. In terms of motivation it is something where I don't really have to think about it because I do have it written down of what I need to do that day so I just make sure I have everything written down and if anything else comes in ill add it to the list or put it on the list for tomorrow depending how important it is".

P.I: "Another challenge would be that from a work point of view networking and being seen is really important so I'm the only talent acquisition resource in my company so if a hiring manager or someone is ever looking for me I acknowledge that it probably doesn't look great if they come in and have a need and need to speak face to face and im not there. So that's a challenge around optics I suppose where again it's not just gaining the trust of your manager but it's an understanding from the business that your still going to be there for them and contactable if they need you to be even though you're not physically present".

P.I: "I partner with the business so I provide a service to the business in contrast to the other way around. So I understand that stakeholders in the business could need me at a click of a finger but it's just for everyone to know that I'm still contactable at the end of the phone or other side of an email".

R: How was working from home helped you in terms of recruitment?

P.I: "My opinion is that I think office environments have lots of distractions and there are pros and cons to being in the office and working from home but I know that in my working from home days if I need to make a phone call to candidates I can have better conversations because there's nobody around, I can discuss salary expectations and usually in an office I would have to go off and find a private room to do that in. I deliberately go off and make a call in private

in the office and find somewhere I can make a call whereas at home its easier and that's not the case".

P.I: "So I think working from home means I can work more fluidly and there's not any many distractions there are some if you want to sit there and watch the TV. But from a pure work point of view I feel my work is more fluid than being in the office".

R: You mentioned isolation being a challenge with remote working is there any examples you could give of that?

P.I: "I suppose working in a people focused role I am quite social and when I speak to my colleagues on a daily basis we speak about a lot of non-work related issues too so it's a way to express if you have any problems at home too and you have someone there you can talk to. Whereas when you're working from home you don't have that so I don't have a specific example other than just the general everyday conversation with people you work with, coffee breaks and lunch breaks , walks etc".

P.I: "At home I think although you can be more focused and the working environment is more fluid but you definitely compromise on the social aspect".

R: How do you feel remote working has influenced your overall well-being?

P.I: "I think it's positive but if I was 100% working from home I don't think it would be good on your well-being. But if you worked in a company that there was no remote working option I also think that's really negative. So I think my well-being has been positively influenced by the fact that there's flexibility because you get a sense of autonomy and I think you get a sense that your valued and can be trusted because if you couldn't be trusted you wouldn't be offered the option."

P.I: "I think it puts you more on a par with your colleagues and boss and shows that they trust you more".

P.I: "I would say my well-being has been positively impacted overall".

R: A previous subject sparked a debate in terms of remote working being a female practice. What are your views on that?

P.I: "I think that most females do work from home as that's the traditional view. But in my previous company everyone had the opportunity but I worked more in a female dominated environment so I suppose I have seen more women work from home maybe again due to flexibility for child care needs, school runs so it probably is more female dominated but I think that's my own opinion".

R: Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

P.I: "I think overall remote working is a really good option to have. I think from an employer's point of view that it's a big pull factor for candidates so if you are looking at attracting top talent I think you have to be competitive in terms of the work-life balance. From employee I

think everyone would prefer to know that life happens outside of work so you might feel better knowing you can work from home instead of the anxiety of going into the office on a Monday morning".

Interview 10: Participant J, Female, Recruiter.

R: How long have you been remote working for and how often do you remote work?

P.J: "I've been remote working for 11 years now and I work completely remotely at home".

P.J: "I come up to the office once a week usually on a Wednesday".

R: What location do you remote work from?

P.J: "Originally I had an office upstairs but then moved it down to the kitchen due to better lighting and surroundings it was too cramped up there and I like working in light. I feel like your environment is important that you're working in for yourself and to help you focus".

Psychological well-being

R: What attracted you to engaging in remote working?

P.J: "My husband took a job in Cavan and I didn't want to give up work so I asked my boss would I be able to work from home and he sad yes we can do it on a trial basis and see what happens".

R: How do you feel its impacted on your work-life balance?

P.J: "For me I work hard but I don't necessarily work smart because I am trying to catch up on stuff in the evenings that I didn't get a chance to do during the day but I think it's hard in recruitment because you do need to be available 24/7. I do have a problem with control and letting people do things for me so that's my own problem. But I hopefully am getting better. I don't even put out of office on my emails".

Physical well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical remote working day is like for you?

P.J: "Literally start early enough about 7.30/8 I would start going through my emails just to see if there are any CVs or anything in. Then I would get the kids ready for school drop them off and come back in and sit at the desk and then actually start going through my emails. Id then start ringing people up if I'm organising CVs to go over and talking to clients too. Then it's a case of going through linked in and I probably spend most of my time now searching for candidates because we probably only get in a few decent CVs a week now".

P.J: "My working hours are meant to be 9-1.30 because usually at that stage then I had to go out and collect the kids from school but then once that's done I still continue going through emails and ringing people but then still find myself doing that in the evenings then I follow up with emails around 8 or 9 before I go to bed. I am constantly on and a bit of a control freak".

P.J: "I do work longer hours than I did before. When you're in the office you don't work as much as you do at home because of the distractions in the office and chats and coffee breaks etc.".

P.J: "I think your also under an obligation that you feel like you need to get more stuff done at home and be more productive to compensate for the fact that you're not actually in the office which is difficult anyway because you are essentially in a sales role like recruitment is placing people in jobs. To me that means I feel like I have to be available at any time".

R: In relation to that, would you find yourself taking calls outside of working hours?

P.J: "Yes all the time I'm really bad for the Saturdays and Sundays. It depends on the project or the role I'm recruiting for at the time but you do kind of have to do that sometimes".

Boundary management

R: How would you manage the boundary then between work and home life?

P.J: "I don't find it as difficult as I did before but I do find I have to stop myself when the kids come home from school to not do anything for at least an hour or 2 so I can help them with their homework and stuff and spend time with them. But I still keep an eye on my emails and they give out to me".

P.J: "It is really hard to set a boundary especially because you're at home as well there are lots of domestic stuff that needs to get done like ill just put on a wash while I'm waiting for someone to get back to me things like that".

P.J: Typically id work from 7.30am until 6 but it could be 8 or 9 when I stop looking at the emails".

P.J: "What I do find most difficult is finding time for me to chill out and not do everything"

P.J: "I find it really hard to switch off even on holidays I'm constantly on my emails".

R: How do you feel your stress levels have been impacted since remote working?

P.J: "I do sometimes feel more stressed for 2 reasons. 1 is because you're not physically part of the team and it's not deliberate but you sometimes feel because you aren't there every day being part of the team that sometimes you do get left out. There is that element of fear of missing out all the time".

P.J: "Sometimes it makes me feel frustrated and not wanted and appreciated and isolated".

P.J: "The second reason is that it's almost as if you are doing 2 jobs because when the kids are at home I am looking after them too".

Social well-being

R: How was the organisation supported you in working remotely?

P.J: "So I have my own laptop but the IT guys set it up so as that I can access everything as I normally would in the office at home and a hard drive so I could access everything and also a work phone. Someone came out to check my work environment too and that I had all the equipment I needed to work".

P.J: "It was difficult at the start because you have to get a routine so that first year was definitely the most difficult because when I started doing it there was stages where you didn't feel like you were a part of the team as you were away from all the action all the time.

P.J: "I wasn't sure at the time in my first year if I could do it and told myself if im going to do this properly I'm going to have to set myself discipline and a schedule of what I have to do. Ill go into the office 1 day a week and organise what I have to do on that day".

P.J: "Essentially then I got into a routine and it was easier after that I talked to a few people who had been doing it and told me to set a time frame and schedule everyday and you'll get this and this done. It was basically trying to copy what I do in the office without all the distractions of the office being there".

R: Would you say due to that did you miss the social aspect of the office?

P.J: "Oh definitely I felt really lonely and depressed for ages as It was only when I started working from home I realised that I actually do really enjoy company and I am a really sociable person and a bit of a control freak. I like to control my own desk and people I deal with and mix with and I think people liked me being in the office too. I think because now I only go in once a week it's like a novelty being there and everyone looks forward to me coming in".

P.J: "That's the thing I miss most the social aspect and being in town going out for lunch, all the stuff that I was usually used to".

P.J: "It is nice when I do go into the office once a week but because I'm not there all the time it's hard to get to know the new people".

R: How does the office support you when you are working remotely?

P.J: "I have a work phone. The best way I communicate with them would be by phone or email. Sometimes phone is better because email is only really good for short and to the point conversations. The phone would be better for more Informal chats."

P.J: "There are always social events that organised as well that I always make sure I go to".

P.J: "We are kind of still like a family which is nice. If I ever need anything or have any issues my manager would always support me and I can rely on them and have my back".

R: What for you are the main challenges with remote working?

P.J: "It's the social aspect and I would also say self-discipline. I set out a schedule and to do list everyday to keep myself motivated and disciplined. I normally update it at night before I

go to bed so I know what I have to do the next day. That keeps me going and I feel like now I am much better at self-discipline".

R: How do you feel remote working has helped your overall well-being?

P.J: "I feel like I'm in more control of what I do so I'm not as stressed in that way and I feel confident that I'm trusted to work from home. I think you gain a lot of self-discipline from remote working and I now know when I'm over doing it and I can now step back".

P.J: "I feel overall more productive but I do work longer hours".

R: A subject sparked debate in relation to remote working typically being a female thing. What do you think about that?

P.J: "People who I know who remote work are more women but you can find men who do work from home won't actually say they work from home".

P.J: "I think for career sake as well you will find that a lot of women have done it and know they will miss out on opportunities. For me there's no chance that I will go to another level or promoted in the company because I know I'm not present there and not seen. Whereas guys don't want to admit they work from home and they want to be seen to be in the office. It does come back to presenteeism issue and that does add to working harder and difficulty to switch off. And not being there you miss out on career developments and social aspects".

P.J: "In relation to career opportunities I do sometimes get resentful because I know I'm not going to get promoted or development because im remote working and not seen to be there".

R: What do you feel are the main advantages of remote working on your well-being?

P.J: "Being there and closer to the kids and having time with them and always available for them so that way it's been a huge benefit to me".

P.J: "I also tend to take few if any sick days because I'm working from home so I use literally no sick days unless I couldn't actually talk to anyone".

P.J: "Everything is so accessible now as well so if you are sick I would still work unless I was physically not able compared to before as well I can check my emails where ever I may be and it would be harder to turn around now and try take a sick day because everything is still accessible to me".

Interview 11: Participant K, Female, Recruiter

R: How long have you been remote working for and how often do you remote work?

P.K: "I've been remote working for 10 years now and I work remotely 2 days per week. I do every Monday and Tuesday at home". I've been working in this organisation for 15 years now".

R: How did it come about is it a policy in the company?

P.K: "No I say back then it wasn't a common practice at all, I was probably one of the first to do it in the company and there was a concern in relation to trust and how would it work but the benefits in terms of having more energy for the days you are in the office, being more productive at home, there was lots of benefits to it. There is a huge element of trust involved though and self-motivation and discipline involved. It's not for everyone and you have to want it to work for yourself".

R: In relation to that, how would you stay motivated and disciplined when you're remote working?

P.K: "I suppose because recruitment is a sales role your motivated anyway because it is to earn your commission so you have that self-drive and motivation anyway and then being at home I realise how lucky I am to be able to work from home so that is also a driver".

P.K: "I am very organised when I am remote working, the kids are in school or they're being minded and it's impossible to work at home when the kids are around you. I'm as strict at home as I would be if I was in the office the only thing that might change is my hours so if I can start early in the morning and finish a bit earlier or I might start later and finish later, take a lunch or sometimes not take a lunch it depends on what's on my desk".

P.K: "If a job comes in I won't take my lunch ill work the job so I might finish a bit early then but it also depends on the day too".

Psychological well-being

R: What attracted you to engaging in remote working?

P.K: "For me I have a huge commute every day, I drive to Enfield then get the bus and it can be a very long day. I'd be getting up at 5.45 and getting home from work at 7.30 so it was just such a long day. In the beginning I didn't think of it so much because I had no kids but now life's changed and I've kids now. When I first came back from maternity leave I started to do a 4 day week so now I still only work 4 days. It was just impossible still though having that commute 4 days a week etc with the kids so that's how I started to work from home 2 days a week then."

P.K: "It was really the commute and the kids that drove me to it".

R: How do you feel your work life balance has been impacted since remote working?

P.K: "I feel like its improved and I have so much more energy and I am very focused on my Monday and Tuesdays at home I am like tunnel vision ploughing through my work. And then when I come into the office the other 2 days I look forward to coming in as it is like a day out. I do miss the team when I'm working from home and I do feel like I am missing out when I'm not there especially for meetings and clients and candidates and getting things done, IT issues etc it can be difficult and you do kind of have to be here".

P.K: "I have arranged for Thursdays to be my meeting days so I would be much more selective in terms of how I plan the 2 days that I am in the office".

P.K: "In terms of my own well-being just getting more sleep is amazing and it's a huge difference. Having more time in the evenings with the kids and more overall energy. I used to never be there to do homework etc with the kids and now I really enjoy it".

P.K: "Also knowing you are in charge of your own availability and can work around things, the flexibility I suppose of it all has really helped me. The happiness and motivation is really improved for me".

R: What for you are the main challenges with remote working?

P.K: "I think for me I am used to it now so I don't find it as difficult as I did. For me it's being up and being on, organised and being committed, having everything planned for the day and a schedule planned out for the day so discipline as I mentioned".

P.K: "The work environment is important as well to make sure you've enough space for all your equipment etc to help you work so once you have that set up and being disciplined you can't just treat it as a day off and stay focused with your to do list".

P.K: "You have to treat it as a working day and be rigid about it and that's what it takes".

Physical well-being

R: Can you tell me what a typical day remote working would be like for you?

P.K: "I get up in the morning and get the kids out to school. I then try log on by 9 latest or sometimes if I'm up early I log in before the kids are up to see if anything urgent is coming in. Then I log in at 9 I work away, if the house is empty I work from the kitchen table because there's plenty of space and light there but if there are people in the house of if I think there will be distractions I have an office upstairs as well and id work from there".

P.K: "I am just working off my laptop and mobile so it doesn't really matter where I am but I do make sure I have a comfortable space and that there is light etc".

P.K: "So then I work through and I may or may not take a break depending on the day. If I take lunch I tend to also be catching up on house work or throwing on a wash or I might get out for a walk if it's a nice day. Then I am back in and keep going until about 6pm but I do find

it hard to switch off then because sometimes it can be later. I find it difficult to switch off then to go and get dinner ready etc because I'm sitting at the desk all day working away and I do try to be more strict in the evenings to get the benefit of working from home to try finish by 6.30 but it's not always like that".

R: How do you help yourself so switch off from work?

P.K: "If I haven't got out at all during the day I do find cabin fever starts to kick in so I try get out for a walk or a jog or something like that. It will depend on my husband too though because he works shift work nights or day. I try have a bit of time with the kids and have dinner with them. You do sort of switch off but I suppose in recruitment you never really do your always constantly on especially if a text comes in or a job etc".

P.K: "I do think nowadays people are more respectful of peoples work life balance and you don't get as many people in your face outside of hours as you would years ago but if there's things going on and something urgent and important I am just always on and especially because I have my phone with me 24/7. I suppose it isn't good in a way having emails on your phone so easily accessible as I could be lying in bed checking my emails but that's my own fault too".

R: How have your stress levels been impacted since working remotely?

P.K: "I do feel more stressed because we are perfectionists at the end of the day and you also have the pressure of also minding the kids as well. It's like you do have 2 jobs because I am double jobbing. Sometimes when I have good discipline and feel everything is good but I have to be more strict now in terms of making sure I do take a break during the day and not finishing too late because it is bad for my well-being".

P.K: "You need a window of a break or a rest to get ready to go again. Sometimes when I am double jobbing I find come that night I'm nearly falling down with tiredness".

R: How do you manage the boundaries between work and home life when you are remote working?

P.K: "It can be difficult and I suppose it's very much about self-discipline. I think that's every job and if you're working from home or not because we are so mobile now and available and accessible and were all guilty of having the phone constantly in the hand and being distracted and it isn't good for any of us or for the kids. I would try and be fairly disciplined but I think nowadays we are all hard on ourselves and the pressure is on for the man and woman to work so there is that pressure to work hard. I would have always been extremely hard on myself in the last 15 years but you work your day and do a good days work and you need to be proud of that and relax for 2 hours in the evening".

P.K: "You have to try switch off and relax I do try and do meditation in the evenings to wind down to just try and get that bit of discipline. I also try to read before I go to bed".

Social well-being

R: How do your colleagues support you working from home? Do you miss the social aspects?

P.K: "I do yes because I miss the craic and the banter of the office when I'm working alone at home. There's always something socially happening as well here so I do feel I miss out in terms of that too. I do feel lonely at times".

P.K: "I do try be present for the Christmas party and the summer party or if there's a team event."

R: What's the best way of communicating with the office for you?

P.K: "We email and also phone. We do zoom calls as well so I can dial in for a team meeting with a headset on and chat to the team and give them my update for the week so that's every Monday morning".

P.K: "We share candidates and updates on email and then it's just constantly on the mobile mostly".

PK: "A lot of the team are all remote so we are a remote team in a way".

R: How has remote working helped you with working in recruitment?

P.K: "Being focused at the end of the day my job is to fill jobs and there's a huge amount of distractions in the office, there could be 60 or 70 people in that one office so there are a lot of distractions they're all either on the phone or talking or chatting and then there's people who drop by your desk, making coffee, going for lunch, chats, and then ad hoc meetings and stuff that come up".

P.K: "If a job comes in though at the end of the day I have to focus on that job and it can be the challenge to manage your day".

P.K: "There's a huge amount of distraction in the office that you wouldn't get at home so I would feel 100% more productive working from home".

P.K: "If a job comes in at home that's all I'll do and ill focus on it where as if a job comes in and I'm in the office it could take me a few hours by the time I get to it with all the distractions".

P.K: "I leave my admin and meetings until when I'm in the office so that Mondays and Tuesdays are just purely sourcing candidates for jobs and chatting to clients".

R: Are there any additional comments you would like to make on remote working and well-being?

P.K:"I think everyone wants to get back a bit of time in their day and the whole issue of mental health and well-being are so important today and really on the agenda as well. I think if you can find something that works for you and talk to your manager about your situation you will be surprised how accommodating they can be".