

**An Investigation into the Practicalities of a Flexible Working Policy in the
Intellectual Disability Sector: A Case Study**

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of MA in HRM is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and the acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ABSTRACT

The research paper focuses on assessing the impact of a pilot flexible working/reduced hour's policy provided for employees in a service driven client focussed environment. While the findings will be of interest to primarily to organisations within the health care setting, the issues identified within it may have relevance for other non-health organisations.

The research concentrated on one organisation where the Pilot Part time/Flexible working (reduced hours) policy is currently under review. In order to ascertain the impact of a flexible working/reduced hour's policy on this organisation, the research adopted a qualitative approach to collate the necessary data. This included the analysis of a management questionnaire and employee interviews.

The findings were unequivocal regarding the benefits of the policy derived by employees who availed of the policy. The policy benefited these employees immensely by giving them more family time and contributing to a greater work life balance. However, it had a less than positive impact on employees that were not availing of the policy by increasing their workload. In addition it led to difficulties in finding replacements and had a negative impact on service provision in some cases. Management thought that the policy was meeting employees needs but in some cases it was impacting on staffing arrangements negatively, i.e. relief cover being used which wasn't the original intention of the policy and sometimes positions were left unfilled. All three groups had suggestions on how the policy could be improved and developed to make it work better.

It also presents an opportunity for further research to be conducted into the possibilities of other types of flexible working within the organisation.

Given the sensitive environment in which this organisation operates, the author has chosen not to disclose the name of the organisation in the content of this dissertation.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY USED WITHIN THE SERVICE

Service user/Client: A person that uses the service. In this organisation the service user is the person with intellectual disabilities who avails of the service.

Line manager/ Head of Unit: A person that has responsibility for running the unit/departments. They have subordinates that report into them.

Region: Services are delivered through a regionalised structure. Three regions exist and responsible for delivering services to service users and their families. Within each region, multi disciplinary teams provide supports and services to groups (clusters) of approximately 150 service users and their families. Services are structured in this way to ensure that they reflect the needs of individual service users and their families

Day Services: This service is offered between 9am and 4pm for people with intellectual disabilities. The aim of adult day services is to provide supports that enable adults with an intellectual disability to participate in community-based educational, training, employment, social and recreational activities, and to be able to make a meaningful contribution to their local community.

Residential Services: Residential services are made up of community-based houses located in residential areas and are renovated and extended to meet the needs of service users with physical and medical needs. Community homes are staffed by Nurses and Social Care Workers, depending on the individual and collective needs of those living in the house. The aim of community houses is to provide a home-like environment, with six service users sharing the house. All service users have their own bedroom and share

bathrooms, living room and kitchen. Staff support service users to live as independently as possible, and to participate in running and managing the house. Parents, family members and friends are welcome visitors to the houses and participate in social and recreational activities.

Respite: Respite is an important part of our support services offered to families. The aim of the service is to provide families with a much-needed break from their role as carers, while at the same time providing service users with an enjoyable experience away from home with their peers. Examples of respite services are:

- Community-based Residential Respite.
- Holiday Camps.
- Host Family Placement.

Relief staff: This is a panel of staff who are employed to cover employees who are absent due to annual leave, sick leave, compassionate leave, marriage leave, and jury duty.

Clinician: The main groups of Clinicians with the organisation include Doctors, Psychologists, Social Workers, Speech and Language Therapists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Play Therapists.

Acting Up: This is a type of allowance that an employee receives when they are taking up the responsibilities of a higher grade for a short period of time. This is not a promotion and the employee must be performing the role for more than a month to avail of the allowance.

Local Agreement: This is an agreement that is decided between the local manager and their staff.

Roster: This is based on a week period. Residential units use a roster to schedule employees hours etc.

Community Based Model: This organisation is based on a community based model of service which means that wherever possible the service users are integrated into the community. The residential houses are spread throughout the community rather than being located in a specific location.

1. INTRODUCTION

Flexible working as a concept has become more popular in recent times, according to (Holmes, cited in Equal Opportunities Commission 2007) 'Half of the workforce wants to work more flexible hours'. The changes in the traditional working week have come about in response to a buoyant economy, changes in family structure and technological developments. Flexible working is just one aspect of the broader concept of work life balance.

According to Drew, Humphreys & Murphy's research in Ireland in 2003, flexible working can benefit the organisation by increasing attendance, productivity and service delivery while also increasing employee motivation and satisfaction, improving equality by opening the schemes to all, acknowledging diversity in organisations and recognising a need for work life balance. However, barriers and disadvantages exist to flexible working these need to be addressed before the scheme can be a success.

The research will focus solely on a reduced hour's pilot policy and the impact that it has had on the organisation/service and its employees. It will aim to establish if the pilot policy is operating effectively in the organisation as a whole.

1.1.Organisational Context

This case study examines a voluntary organisation in the disability sector which is based in the Dublin Region. It provides services for both children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

The organisation is coming to the end of its flexible working/reduced hours pilot project and must make a decision as to whether a) the policy should be formalised and continue to be offered to staff or b) continue but with some changes or be discontinued in its entirety. The findings aim to provide management with concrete evidence on which to base their final decision.

1.2. Background to the policy

Prior to the introduction of the new pilot policy, the option of flexible working came in the form of 'part time/half time working' or flexi-time which is open to administration staff only. The organisation recognised that in order to meet the changing needs of both its employees and those of the business a more pro-active policy was required. Labour market conditions, shortage of RNID (Registered Nurses Intellectual disability) qualified nurses etc. had to be considered along with the profile of the organisation which was 80% female. In response to this, the HR Manager designed a flexible working/reduced hour's policy and application form (see Appendix A). This organisation operates in a service driven environment where the clients are critical so it is imperative that policies should not impact negatively on their care requirements.

The flexible working/reduced hours policy operates by offering two reduced hours options. Residential services and respite staff have the option of reducing their shifts by 1 shift or 2 shifts per week, while those in day services and administration can apply for a reduction of 1 day or 2 days per week.

From the business perspective these options gave managers the ability to cover full shifts /days rather than part of shifts or days which would prove more difficult. It was

anticipated that additional staff would not need to be recruited to cover the deficit of these hours. As it was expected that existing part time permanent and full time permanent staff would perform additional shifts to make up the shortfall; this would maintain continuity of care for service users. One of the reasons that this particular arrangement was introduced was to avoid a 'free for all situation' which had been the norm prior to the introduction of the policy. Flexible working existed throughout the organisation on an informal basis and was approved through local arrangements without being structured or formalised. The policy was purposely restrictive in order to control/limit the take up of the pilot policy.

The policy was introduced in January 2007 on a pilot basis for 2 years and is up for review in January 2009. It was introduced in response to requests from employees for a scheme that was more aligned to their flexible working needs and was designed to form part of the organisations overall retention strategy.

1.3. Project Plan

This Research Project does not aim to prove the business case for flexible working generally, the focus is in exploring whether this Pilot Flexible working policy meets both the needs of the service/business and the individual employees.

Chapter 2 will begin with an overview of the literature relating to flexible working generally and then move on to discussing the topic in the context of the health services.

Chapter 3 will identify the research question and it's supporting aims and objectives.

Chapter 4 will explain the research methodology and the rationale behind why this methodology was considered appropriate for the study. Chapter 5 will present a detailed

breakdown of the findings of the qualitative research (questionnaire and telephone interviews).Chapter 6 will provide an analysis of the findings along with a comparison of the findings with the literature. Chapter 7 is the final chapter of the dissertation and outlines the author's conclusions and recommendations which are presented for the organisation to consider. Finally, Appendices are provided which will contain appropriate supporting material.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.Introduction

In recent years there has been an increased interest in how organisations can attract and retain talented professionals, particularly from a health services background. Professionally qualified nurses are a scarce resource in many health care services today. In order to put this statement in an Irish context it is necessary to describe the reasons why this is the case;

- The cuts in student nurses pay in 1987, led to a reduction in the number of student nurses as pay was not sufficient
- The educational model for nurses changed from an apprenticeship based system to a diploma based program, of which the impact had a dual affect. It improved the quality of nursing care but because the points to get into nursing were so high the numbers accepted declined (Bowers, 2001)
- The cost of living in Dublin was particularly high, when compared to the rest of the country. i.e. the price of houses, scarcity of car spaces etc, this acted as a deterrent as it was more difficult to live and work in the Dublin area.
- In some instances nurses who actually qualified went into nursing positions in Ireland; this was because of better career opportunities abroad, financially sound positions in medical equipment companies for nurses and nurses preferring to attend teacher training college.
- The reduction in the number of places available for student nurses each year
- The stress of the position due to ward closures and increased waiting list etc.

- The hierarchical system that exists with limiting promotional opportunities.

Seanad Éireann (02 March, 2000), *Nursing in Ireland: Statements*. Available from
<<http://historicaldebates.oireachtas.ie/S/0162/S.0162.200003020004.html>>

[Accessed 20th May, 2008]

Statistics from the HSE (Health Services Employers agency) in 2005 state that nursing vacancies increased to 1,078 (Hunter, 2005). To solve this problem organisations have recruited from abroad (Philippines, India etc) a total of 761 nurses were recruited from abroad in year ending March 2005, agency nurses were employed which was financially expensive but the main way that organisations were trying to solve this problem was to try to recruit and entuse new staff as well as retaining key staff. (Hunter, 2005).Flexible working is one of a number of initiatives that have been adapted as part of a strategic Human Resource Strategy to address the difficulty. According to Field, (1996; p.5) flexible working conditions are a permanent feature of the modern employment market. This view is based on a UK employment department study which found that at present 10% of all employees are availing of flexible working and 8.5% of employers expect to introduce flexible working options in the near future.

Organisations are examining it as a possible option or as part of a wider approach to addressing this issue of attracting and retaining personnel, this in turn has the potential to increase employees work life balance.

Flexible work arrangements have the potential to ‘allow employees to meet various responsibilities and priorities in their lives in ways that conventional full time work arrangements do not permit.’(Gottlieb, Kelloway & Barham 1998, p.47)

Kippenberger (2000) suggests that flexible working is initiated by the employee but it has to suit the needs of the business or service for it to succeed. The phrase 'give and take' comes to mind, both the employer and employee must be satisfied in order for it to work. This industrial society agrees with this and suggests that flexible working must be driven by both employee situation and the business requirements. (The Industrial Society, 2001).

This chapter will identify the current thinking in relation to flexible working, from its many definitions to its actual evolution. The literature review will commence by looking at the wide-ranging definitions of the subject, types of flexible working that exist, its historical background and the reasons as to why it originated. The advantages and disadvantages of this form of working will be detailed from an organisational and individual's perspective. It will go on to show that flexible working can have clear strategic pay-offs for the business.

Following this, flexible working will be discussed in the context of the psychological contract which is 'the perceptions of the two parties, employee and employer, of what their mutual obligations are towards each other'. (CIPD, 2008). The obstacles to flexible working will then be discussed. The legislation or lack of legislation will be examined and then this topic will be looked at briefly in an international context. Finally the topic will be examined in an Irish context with a specific focus on the health care sector as the organisation chosen for this case study reports to the HSE (Health Services Executive).

2.2 Defining Flexible Working

Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000, p.11) state that flexibility has many meanings: in fact a myriad of meanings, some with a narrow focus and others with a broader ranging focus.

Nextra (2002, p.4) defines flexible working as 'the ability to adapt the individual's way of working to suit both the employee and the employer.'

The Industrial Society (2001, p.3) define flexible work practices as 'a wide range of methods aimed at building flexibility into the way people work'.

(The Industrial society was renamed The Work Foundation in 2002, it is a not-for-profit organisation, that brings all sides of working organisations together to find the best ways of improving both economic performance and quality of working life.)

Stredwick and Ellis (2005) are of the opinion that flexible working allows a business to be more reactive to a wide range of requirements/pressures and this motivates new staff and retain existing staff. They develop this further by saying that successful flexible working schemes have the potential to make a more content workforce and create a well-organised business. This is based on the view that it helps the business react in a cost efficient manner to increases and decreases in demand.

Finally, an explicit definition of flexible working practices as stated by Clutterbuck (2003, p.178) is 'flexible working is any working arrangement which is different from the traditional 'nine to five' working day'.

From reviewing the literature most of these definitions are in consensus about how to define the broad strategy of flexible working. Flexible working does not fit into a standard traditional working week and it must suit the needs of both the employee and employer for it to be a success.

2.3 Types of Flexible Working

Flexible working can be divided into categories to include:

- 'Working time; i.e. compressed working weeks, term time working and career breaks, reduced hours
 - Workplace locations ;working from home, teleworking and hot desking
 - Employment contracts; i.e. job sharing, fixed term agreements and seasonal hours'.
- (The Industrial Society (2001, p.3)

Wallace and Clifford (2000), use the Atkinson's flexibility model to explain the different types of flexibility that exist;

- Numerical Flexibility; this approach is dependant on the demand for labour and labour is adjusted to suit the business needs. i.e. atypical worker, part time, temporary.
- Financial/pay flexibility; this is concerned with pay being dependent on the businesses labour and market conditions. i.e. performance related pay, profit sharing
- Functional Flexibility; this is focussed on training staff on a number of tasks so that they are continuously learning new skills. The employee is then mobile within the organisation and can be deployed in different tasks and activities. i.e multi-skilling, cross training

- Temporal flexibility; this type allows for different hours to be worked based on both employer and employee needs. i.e job-sharing, flexi-time, annualised hours. (Blyton & Morris, cited in Wallace & Clifford 2000)

Hall and Atkinson (2006, p.2) suggest that flexible working can include, part time, job share, term time, compressed working week, home working, time off in lieu, flexi-time, annualised hours, self-rostering, shift swapping and sabbaticals.

As stated above there are many different types of flexible working, please see below table for an explanation for some of these.

Part-time working	Workers are contracted to work less than standard, basic, full-time hours.
Flexi-time	Workers have the freedom to work in any way they choose outside a set core of hours determined by the employer.
Staggered hours	Workers have different start, finish and break times, allowing a business to open longer hours.
Compressed working hours	Workers can cover their total number of hours in fewer working days.
Job sharing	One full-time job is split between two workers who agree the hours between them.
Shift swapping	Workers arrange shifts amongst themselves, provided all required shifts are covered.

Self rostering	Workers nominate the shifts they would prefer, leaving you to compile shift patterns matching their individual preferences while covering all required shifts.
Time off in lieu (TOIL)	Workers take time off to compensate for extra hours worked.
Term-time working	A worker remains on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays.
Annual hours	Workers' contracted hours are calculated over a year. Whilst the majority of shifts are allocated, the remaining hours are kept in reserve so that workers can be called in at short notice as required.
V-time working	Workers agree to reduce their hours for a fixed period with a guarantee of full-time work when this period ends.
Zero-hours contracts	Workers work only the hours they are needed.
Home working or teleworking	Workers spend all or part of their week working from home or somewhere else away from the employer's premises.
Sabbatical or career break	Workers are allowed to take an extended period of time off, either paid or unpaid.

Table 1: Types of Flexible Working (Business Link)

Business Link, *Benefits of Flexible working*, BERR Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. Available

from: <<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?type=RESOURCES&itemId=1073791178>> [Accessed 20 March , 2008]

Different types of flexible work practises suit different types of businesses and a ‘one size fits all’ method is not practical. (Phillips et al., cited in Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003, p.20)

The Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development conducted a survey on flexible working in 2004 in the UK; interviews took place with HR professionals in the public, private and voluntary sectors. A total of 585 questionnaires were received. The breakdown of these are a total of 120 received from the manufacturing and production sector, 218 received from the private sector, 59 received from the Voluntary, community and non for profit and 204 received from the public sector. The results of the survey / research indicated that most organisations surveyed offer part time 86%, 63% offer job-share, 55% offer flexitime and not that many offer term time at 38%. Some of these options are only applicable to a large formal environment, i.e. term time because there would be a need for replacement staff to cover. (CIPD, 2005b). According to ACAS and DTI-sponsored Workplace Employment Relations survey (WERS), cited in CIPD (2006) the number of employers offering staff the option of availing of flexible working has increased.

For the purposes of this study, the ‘working time’ element of the above definition will be concentrated on, the reason for this is that the case study being examined will explore the effects of a reduced working hours pilot policy on one particular

organisation, specifically on the service and the employees to ascertain whether flexible working in the form of reducing working hours can be mutually beneficial for both the employer and employee.

2.4 Historical Context

The historical context explored focuses on the evolution of work with a particular concentration on flexible working. Firstly the dramatic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution in eighteenth century Britain had a dramatic effect on the organisation of work. The factory system introduced a change from agricultural and craft production to a more industry based society where mass production was a feature. (Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley 2006, p.268). Mokyr (1999, p.68) defines a factory as a place where ‘many workers....assembled together under one roof to jointly produce an output and are ...subject to discipline and co-ordination’. Work practises were more structured and organised and the separation of work and family life became more apparent. This had a huge affect work practises and the attitudes of workers in Ireland.

In the 1970’s, Ireland experienced high unemployment rates and the government needed to look at ways to create more jobs. In these volatile times the concept of ‘work sharing’ was put up for discussion as a strategy to stimulate job creation. (Fynes et al.1996, p.15).’ ‘The aim of work sharing is to redistribute the total volume of work in the economy in order to increase employment opportunities for all those wishing to work’. (Humphreys 1996, p.2)

During the mid 1980's when recession was rife throughout the country, labour market flexibility in relation to job design was required in order to overcome archaic institutional rigidities such as demarcation.

This rigidity confined and restricted job design and meant that employees literally performed their job title to the letter without offering any form of flexibility in this regard. (Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley 2006; p.78).

In 1998 the Organisational Working Time Legislation was introduced in the format of the *Organisation of Working Time Act (1997)* (See Appendix B). This sets down a maximum working week, endorsed by the Act. Employees are not permitted to work more than forty-eight hours per week averaged over a rolling 17-week period. The legislation tried to address the long work hour's culture, which was evident in many organisations, including health care service providers. (Stredwick & Ellis 2005, p.122)

Fynes et al. (1996) state that collective bargaining played a huge part in regulating working time in Ireland. This was achieved through the use of infrequent general rounds from 1919-1990 that reduced the standard weekly working hours eventually to a 39 hour week.

The Programme for prosperity and fairness (2000) emphasises the importance of flexible working and states that:

'The emergence of a tightening labour market and increased emphasis on human resources as a key competitive element serve to underpin the importance of developing innovative ways of maximising available labour supply. (Humphreys, Fleming & O'Donnell 2000, p.91)

Examples of innovative ways of maximising available labour supply can include part time work, shift work, working from home and job sharing to name just a few.

According to Hughes (2001) the traditional working week of forty hours has become a thing of the past and is being replaced by more flexible working arrangements.

2.5 Rationale for Flexible working

2.5.1 Changing demographics in Irish Society

The changes in the family structure brought about an important shift from the typical 'nuclear family' which consisted of two adults with dependent children and a sole breadwinner to 'dual income, one parent, single person families' which changed the workforce considerably. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003). The CSO (Central Statistics Office) re-affirm this point by stating that according to the Irish census of 2006, traditional family households are in decline, less than 1/5 of households in Dublin city are classed as the traditional family household while there's a consistent increase in 1 parent family households, 22.4% of all households in Ireland. (CSO 2006b)

Where originally women were the sole carers and made adjustments to their work patterns to adapt to this, now men seek flexible working options and so do single people without caring concerns. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003).

Another important feature of the developments in the Irish labour market is the increase in women's labour market participation and employment. (O'Connell & Russell 2005) Johnson (2004) concurs with this view and states that with the highest ever proportion of women in the workforce it has created the need to more flexible terms and conditions

of employment. According to the census there were 595.8 thousand females in the workforce in 1999, compared with 850.7 thousands in 2007.(CSO, n.d).

In 1971 61.9%% of women over 25 described themselves as looking after family in the home while in 2002 there were only 26.6%.(CSO, 2005)

Another factor that also must be considered is the aging population of the OECD countries; employers need to be aware that employees have caring responsibilities in relation to old and infirm relatives. (eldercare responsibilities).Flexibility is critical issue for these people. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003).O'Connell and Russell (2005) agree that the proportion of older people in the population is rising therefore employees will have eldercare responsibilities in the not to distant future which will put pressure on the employer to be open to offering flexible working arrangements. According to the CSO in 2006, there were 161, 000 carers in Ireland (carers are defined as persons over 25 who provide regular unpaid help for someone with a long term illness or disability). More than 1 in 4 work more than 43 hours each week and two thirds of these are women. (CSO, 2006b).

Kodz et al (2002, p.ix) believe that

'Individuals with childcare and eldercare responsibilities clearly have particular needs. Nonetheless many employers now recognise that options to work flexibly should be available to all employees, not just those with caring responsibilities'

As mentioned previously this is due to the fact that the family structure has changed. Therefore flexible working schemes need to be suitable for single person households that don't have eldercare or childcare responsibilities. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy

2003). Chambers Ireland (n.d) concur with this view and state that flexible working schemes should be open to all staff not just parents with families.

Fitzpatrick (2005) emphasises that an increasing number of women have no other option but to find part time employment to deal with being the "sandwich generation" having to care for older people and children at the same time.

2.6 A new openness on the part of employer to embrace flexible forms of working

Trends in Human resources management have encouraged the promotion of flexible working. Organisations that have moved strategically from having personnel departments to now having HR which departments have supported and promoted the introduction of flexible working schemes. These organisations recognise the importance of their employees and believe that if they adopt a 'person centred approach', flexible working can be used as a tool for recruitment and retention and for making them an 'employer of choice'. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003, pp.23-24, p.127) (Beer, cited in Humphreys Fleming & O'Donnell 2000, p.9), agree with this view and suggest that by developing this employee centred approach it can result in a more dedicated and capable workforce.

Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000, pix.) make the point that the labour market is rapidly changing and state that there is constant competition between the public and private sector to be the 'employer of choice'. In the past the public sector couldn't compete financially with the private sector in relation to salary offerings, this was tied to salary scales. However because of the impact of benchmarking, salaries in the public service have become a lot more attractive. The constant competition between the public

and private sector requires a more flexible approach to working that needs to be promoted to appeal to employees. (Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell, 2000).

On the other hand, if a recession existed and unemployment was very high employers might be more likely to refuse flexible working applications as they can recruit suitable full time employees quite easily. Also employees may not want to apply for these work options as they may be fearful and want to hold on tight to their full time position. (*Flexibility and the Workplace; the battle to control working time*, 2006)

The traditional 'Cradle to Grave' mentality where the employee felt loyalty towards their employer and felt secure in their employment has been eroded somewhat. (Stredwick, cited in *Flexible working can benefit business and staff*, 2005, p.614) The reason for this is that the recession in the early 1990's and the effects of globalisation have destroyed the prospect of offering a 'job for life' because in many cases it is just not possible. The consequences of the employer no longer being able offer security reduced the employees commitment and loyalty to the organisation. (CIPD, 2008). In order to increase this commitment, employers can offer flexible working or work life balance initiatives in order to not only increase job satisfaction but also retain employees.

It is important for employers to be pro-active and develop policies and practises to cater for different stages of people's careers/life, i.e. 'join, leave and rejoin the labour market'. (*Flexible working can benefit business and staff* 2005,p.614).Barud (cited in Lockwood 2003) supports this view and suggests that people want and need different things at certain times in their lives.

Therefore, companies can use flexible working as a recruitment tool to attract the right candidates. Hughes (2001) makes the important point that 'on average it takes one year's salary to recruit an employee and up to twice that amount to replace that person' Hughes (2001, p.1) The basis for this statement is that O'Driscoll (Irish jobs Share Director) believes that at some point in everyone's lives they will need to avail of flexible working and will more than likely return to their full time position following a specific period of time, if an employer ignores an employees requests they will end up leaving. This will be more costly to the business than accommodating the individual for a specific time period. Hughes (2001)

Finally, developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have helped to create a climate conducive to flexible forms of working.

Due to particular developments in the internet; email and mobile phones, employees have been able to work off-site. E-working is a concept that covers teleworking, telecommuting, mobile working, hot desking etc. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003)

This has also give employees the opportunity to work from home rather than the workplace. Internet usage worldwide continues to increase. In February 2006, an estimated 867,500 Irish households (or 58.5% of all households) had a home computer. This was an increase of 69,800 households since June 2005, when 797,700 households had a home computer. Internet access also increased over this period, with 722,200 households (or 48.7%) having a computer connected to the internet in February 2006, compared with 655,000 in June 2005. Just over 83% of households who had a home computer used it to connect to the internet. (CSO 2006a).

In the context of health care, as many employees are front line working this type of flexible working, working from home would not be an option for them.

2.7 Benefits of Flexible working

2.7.1 The Employee

According to Minister Martin (2005) flexible working can give employees power over their working time. (Dept of Enterprise Trade and Employment 2005) This point can be developed further by describing that a voluntary reduction in hours can be beneficial as it can increase an individuals 'time sovereignty', this is their "autonomy over working hours which enhances their control over the boundaries and relationships between work and non work spheres, whether through co-ordinating, synchronising or integrating these spheres". (Webster, Felstead , cited in Sheldon and Thornthwaite 2004 , p238-239)

Emmot and Hutchinson (cited in Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell 2000 pp.24-25) comment on survey evidence which points out that flexible work practises can also improve employee motivation and job satisfaction. According to an article called '*How to implement a Flexible Working Strategy* ', written by goodpractise.net , lifestyle opportunities are rated extremely high by employees, and sometimes can be rated higher than salaries. (Good Practice.net, Available from<<http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=22003&Download=False>>Accessed on 7 August, 2007) McWilliams and Smith (1998) concur with the point that well-managed flexible working practises can increase employee job satisfaction.

Spending time with family seems the main reason why people want to reduce their hours. (*Flexibility and the Workplace; the battle to control working time* 2006) Branine (2003) agrees with this statement and emphasises family commitments as being paramount for employees. Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) also concur with this view and state that childcare responsibilities were the main reason why certain sections (mainly women) of the workforce availed of these types of work arrangements. ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) conducted a survey in (2002) that highlighted that 68% of respondents felt that childminding duties had an impact on their reason behind availing of flexible working arrangements. This they suggest is twice as likely the case for women as men. (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003, p.40)

In response to this they found that less than 4% of employees have employers who provided childcare facilities. Of this small percentage a larger proportion were public sector employers (28) rather than private sector employers. (4) (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003, p.40.)Based on the evidence above these figures seem to be extremely low. In Ireland, it is not commonplace to provide childcare facilities in the workplace. (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003, p.41)

Employees are better able to balance work/non work issues and this leads to reduced stress. (IBEC 2005, p.3). Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) agree with this and state that one of the advantages of working reduced hours specifically is because it reduces stress.

There are some other benefits of flexible working for employees. These include not having to deal with rush hour traffic. A study that was carried out among male and female senior managers in an organisation in Ireland in 2003 ascertained that one of the

primary reasons that male managers sought flexible working was because of commuting difficulties. (Drew & Murtagh 2005). Stredwick and Ellis (2005, p.154) emphasises that environmental benefits of home working and believe that they avoid the 'commute and pollute'. Employees also have greater opportunities to get involved in hobbies and interests which increase fulfilment for the individual both inside and outside of work. (The Industrial Society 2001).

2.7.2 The Organisation

The main reason that employers are interested in flexible working initiatives has been the benefits of recruitment and retention, the reason for this is that hours of work seem to be a bone of contention for employees and it is sighted as a reason as to why employees leave organisations. (Hall and Atkinson, 2005).

In relation to the retention issue, valued employees who have been with the organisation for many years may stay if they feel they are being cared about etc. CIPD Research found that 84% of employers believe that flexible working schemes have a positive effect on retention. (*Flexible working can benefit the business and staff* 2005, p.613).

The CIPD and BCC (2007, p.2) agree with this statement and use the term 'engagement' to describe the employees commitment to the organisation that can be linked with flexible working. Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000) also support this and suggest that not only can flexible working attract and retain employees but it can also decrease absenteeism.

Those employees who need more flexible working options are attracted to the organisation and this can make recruitment cheaper and less difficult.

(GoodPractice.net,availablefrom:<http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=41056&Download=False> accessed 7 August, 2007)

These employees can be known as ‘underused groups’. (*Flexible working can benefit the business and staff* 2005, p.613). IBEC agrees with this view and states that the offer of flexible working can bring experienced workers back into the workforce. (IBEC 2005, p.16)

Employers also felt that flexible working contained absenteeism and improved productivity. (Cresswell 2005).This was re-iterated by the Good Practise.net, who believes that the implementation of flexible working can reduce employee stress caused by them trying to juggle work and home life and this in turn leads to reduced absenteeism.(Good Practice.net, Available from <http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=41056andDownload=False>,Accessed 7 August, 2007)

The increased morale can lead to better performance and these impacts positively on productivity. (Good Practice.net, available from <http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=41056andDownload=False>,Accessed 7 August, 2007)

Employees also have more time to deal with their family/personal needs and they become more focussed at work. (IBEC 2005, p.3)

Employee’s motivation improves because they feel that the organisation has supported them so they want to give something back in return (Good Practice.net, Available

from:<http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=41056&Download=False>, Accessed 7 August, 2007)

Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) concur with this and suggest that this has the potential to lead to greater employee productivity and performance

It increases the positive perception (Corporate Image) of the organisation among its employees and customers and enhances equal opportunities policies. (IBEC, 2005, p.3) Skinner (1999) believes that if organisations offer flexible working options to employees, it is a valuable way to meet the diverse needs of the workforce with the goal of achieving equality of opportunity.

Field (1996) indicates that flexible working has the benefit of cost savings for the company. An example of this can be lower sick pay. (IBEC 2005, p.3) The costs of administration involved in setting up a flexible working scheme are nothing in comparison to the costs associated with losing the valuable employee (loss of skills and recruitment costs) .

Figure 1: Cost of Replacing an Employee



(IBEC, 2005, p.4)

Minister Martin (2005) promotes the idea of flexible working and believes that it has
Minister Martin cited in Dept. of Enterprise Trade and Employment, 2005)

‘Negotiation and compromise’ is essential for the employer and employee in order for
the initiative to be a success and to benefit the individual while not negatively affecting
the organisation. .

(Good Practice.net,

<http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=14743and>

Download=False, accessed 7 August, 2007, p.3). Nadeem and Hendry (2003) suggest the term “negotiating power” to describe the needs and demands on each side, employee and employer.

2.8 Potential Disadvantages of Flexible Forms of Working

2.8.1 The Employee

One of the most immediate effects of working reduced hours is the effect on the individual’s salary. Fitzpatrick (2005) indicates that not only is the individual financially disadvantaged but they can have fewer training and career progression prospects. On a more positive note these employees can reap some tax benefits of reducing their hours.

It has been suggested that colleagues can feel envy and resentment towards the person that is availing in flexible working; this could affect the long term feasibility of flexible working for the employee. (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003).A survey which was carried out among HR specialists from the Industrial Societies database in (2001), states that 27% of employees felt that resentment from staff that worked traditional full time hours was an issue. (The Industrial Society 2001, p.14).

Kippenberger (2000) conducted a survey on flexible working amongst male professionals and they felt strongly that there were not enough opportunities for those who availed of flexible working. (Kippenberger 2000, p.31). They even went further to say that availing of flexible working is a ‘route to career death’. They found from their research that there is a view that a flexible worker is less committed and that a senior position couldn’t be performed by a part time worker. This seems to be one of the

largest barriers in relation to employees availing of flexible working. Hall and Atkinson (2006, p.380) agree with this and state that the 'pigeon holing of opportunities' is one of the reasons why NHS(National Health Service , UK) employees do not avail of flexible working policies.

A certain 'stigma' can be attached to flexible working and the disadvantage that availing of such an opportunity could harm ones career, is a real concern. (Good Practice.net, Available from

<http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=42245andDownload=False>, Accessed 7 August, 2007)

In relation to promotions, job advertisements tend to be inexplicit about the suitability of the post for reduced hours working. Therefore, these employees often feel that they are disqualified from applying if they cannot commit to full-time hours. (Penny and Hyde 2006). Skinner (1999) elaborates by saying that managers often believe that senior positions need full-time commitment in order for continuity and to achieve the required responsibilities. Dobbins(2007) agrees with this point and goes even further by suggesting that the low take up of some of these flexible policies may be down to the view that partaking in these policies may hinder the individual's career progression. An article written by Managerial Law (2006) also supports this argument and contends that employees are afraid to take up flexible working options as this may risk their chances of a promotion and even make there position less stable. (*Flexibility and the Workplace; the battle to control working time* 2006).

Penny and Hyde (2006, p.345) advise that employees working reduced hours tend to suffer in terms of career progression because of 'institutionalised patterns of acquiring

developmental experiences that are deeply gendered' this can lead to line managers neglecting career growth for these employees. This is clarified by stating that there is a danger that women who avail of reduced working time may suffer poorer career prospects because of this. (Bergmann, Lommerod and Vagstad, cited in O'Connell and Russell 2005)

Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000, p.88) suggest that the main obstacles to flexible working are 'attitudinal and cultural'. They clarify this point further by making the point that manager's opinion/attitude and the long hours work culture that exists in organisations suggests that individuals that reduce their hours are not committed to the organisation; these deep rooted views can hinder flexible working.

Penny and Hyde (2006) suggest that professionals that reduce their hours do not have the same training opportunities as their full time colleagues. The reason for this they believe is that they are either not invited to attend training or they are unable to attend due to the mismatch between the hours they work and the hours of the training scheduled. (Penny and Hyde 2006) Skinner (1999) agrees with this view and indicates that flexible workers both professional and unprofessional expect to have the same training opportunities as their full time comparators however it is difficult for them to be able to avail of training especially when it's outside of their core hours of work. Drew, Humphreys and Murphy's (2003) state that if the flexible working employee is not in the office then they are simply left out of training.

Creagh and Brewster (1998, p.490) found in their research that employees that were availing in flexible working felt that their work had intensified and that they had very little rest breaks. O'Connell and Russell (2005) are of the opinion that those on reduced

hours may find that their workload doesn't reduced proportionately. This could be an issue for employees contemplating the option of flexible working, will their workload reduce appropriately or will they continue to work full time in their reduced hour's timeframe.

Field (1996, p.6) in the article entitled, 'The flexible workforce: redefining the role of Hr obtains the personal opinion of one manager of a large multi-national organisation on flexible workers, "On the surface everything looks fine but, in reality, the company treats them like second class citizens". Even though they are fulfilling key roles within the organisation". This opinion is based on the view that even though the structure of the work place is changing due to flexible workers, there are no HR systems or management systems set up to adapt to these changes.

2.8.2 The Organisation

According to Hogg and Harker (1992) offering flexible working arrangements can have disadvantages for the organisation including causing workload problems as employees are not in work when needed, they may require extra administration and planning by the manager, may not be suitable for supervisors and managers who are expected to work longer hours to get the work done, may cause problems with communication.

Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003, p.25) are of the opinion that employers are worried about setting a precedent in relation to flexible working policies and that general availability of the policies will 'open the flood gates to unlimited demand'. Employers also feel that employees will believe the policies are a general entitlement

which can itself cause huge issues for the organisation. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003). This is a genuine and legitimate concern

2.9 Flexible working as a Strategic Initiative

Stredwick and Ellis (2005, p.118) believe that far too often flexible working can be seen as being short term and quite restricted because it takes place in an detached unit in the organisation. Rather than being 'tactical' and 're-active' flexible working needs to be more 'strategic' and 'pro-active'. It must be introduced strategically as a 'deliberate planned step' with the aim of achieving 'increased competitiveness'. Fitzpatrick (2005) recommends that if flexible working is used in this way it can benefit the organisation in many ways including increase productivity, job satisfaction and staff retention. This information is based on information assembled by the (WLBN) Work life Balance Network which stated that the introduction of flexible work schemes create the following including:

- Employee satisfaction: + 85%
- Attracting/retaining employees: + 74%
- Productivity: + 58%
- Reduced labour turnover: - 55%
- Reduced absenteeism: - 50%
- Improved business results: + 48%

(Fitzpatrick, 2005)

Fitzpatrick (2005) believes that unfortunately not a lot of companies have taken this strategic approach.

In relation to recruitment, flexible working has the potential to attract new employees by offering the something extra and ultimately it can create a less stressed workforce. (Fitzpatrick 2005). Ultimately McCartney and Evans (2005) believe that, it can maintain a competitive edge within the industry by contributing to the business aims and improving business results. Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000) recommend that the public sector in particular they need to explore more flexible ways of working in order to increase their profile as being an attractive employer and keep pace with their competitors. More recently the private sector need to practise this also, as they are losing their job security with the multinationals pulling out therefore creating redundancies in private sector employment and not positioning themselves as an 'employer of choice'.

McCartney and Evans (2005 p.6) advise that in order for flexible working to be a success, it needs to be 'aligned with the organisations core business strategies' which are the core values, company mission, vision and philosophy. This they believe can be achieved through continuously examining operational and staff needs and strategically implementing flexible working policies with the buy in of both the employer and employee through the process of 'consultation'. This thinking is based on the case study of the Company Eli Lilly that is based in Indianapolis which employs over 43,000 people worldwide and is a pharmaceutical manufacturer. It believes that respect for people is of primary importance to its business and it does this by listening to its employees, creating consensus and offering employee choice. It began its flexible working program with a range of flexible working options and believed that in order to create the right culture to support flexible working as previously stated it needed to be aligned to its core business strategies. (McCartney and Evans 2005).

Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000 p.82) suggest that flexible working practises should not be ad-hoc in nature and short term. Instead, they need to be part of a longer term HR plan which in turn can be critical in developing an equality policy and overall Hr strategy.

In organisations where a flexible working policy exists more than likely an equality policy also exists, therefore these are related. Both of these policies are useful in promoting equality and diversity and achieving work life balance. The introduction of flexible working initiatives may be introduced particularly to promote gender equality and to respond to the increase in women's labour force participation. (Drew et al., Evans, cited in O'Connell and Russell (2005).Niall Crowley the CEO of the Equality Authority (2005) points out that in order for flexible working to achieve work life balance, it should be constantly reviewed to ensure that organisations and individuals needs are met as well as making sure that they avoid discrimination, otherwise work life balance will not be achieved. (Crowley,2006). Heylin(2004) agrees with the points above and suggests that unfairness needs to be removed from any flexible working policy in order for it to succeed. The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) contend that 'flexible working is a way of managing home and work life and a way of increasing equality of opportunity'. (OECD, cited in Skinner 1999, p.425)

A strategic approach to flexible working involves a harmonization between flexible working practises and HR policies such as equal opportunities, recruitment and promotion systems and training/development policies. Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000, p.84).Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000) suggest that

flexible working has the potential to increase equality in the workforce by providing greater access to employment for women. Others disagree with this and make the point that flexible working may encourage the unequal distribution of household responsibilities therefore re-enforcing the divide between men and women in the workforce. (Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell, 2000)

'Best practisesuggests that development and usage of flexible working arrangements should add value to the organisation in assisting in the achievement of its strategic objectives. Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000, p.82).

Flexibility needs to be advertised as a modern way to manage and encourage diversity and equality of opportunity in organisations, rather than concentrating on the gender bias perhaps in the take-up of flexible working. This will encourage fairness and open the policy to all staff. (Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell 2000).

Training and Development policies need to be designed to support flexible working so that employees are not given menial tasks to do just because they reduce their hours, they need to be trained and developed like their comparative full time colleagues and be given critical tasks because of their knowledge and experience.' high quality work, job rotation'. (Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell 2000 p.85). In an article written by Managerial Law (2006) , they concur with this view and believe that for some employees flexible working means 'poor quality part time temporary jobs with low pay and benefits'. (*Flexibility and the Workplace; The battle to control working time* 2006, p.538)

Wilson and Shelby (2002) suggest that because employees who work reduced hours or flexible working are not in the workplace all the time they can miss out on training. Managers may feel that it is too awkward to include them. (Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell 2000 p.85).

Performance management systems need to support flexible working and flexible workers need to be considered for promotional opportunities. Peacock (2008) expands this point by highlighting the research stating that in the UK, employees are not taking up their right to request flexible working because they are afraid that it will affect their career prospects. This research, *Flexible Working and Performance study of 3,500 employees* was carried out by charity Working Families (in association with the Cranfield School of Management). The research discovered that many employees believe that reducing their hours resulted in being disqualified from career progression opportunities. Cranfield researchers stated the reason that employees didn't want to formalise flexible working arrangements was because they felt that it would have a negative impact on their careers.

Working Families chief executive Sarah Jackson, believed that they were correct, employees that were office based in a full time capacity would be offered promotional opportunities rather than flexible workers. She felt that it originated from an archaic belief that managers think it's easier for them not to have flexible working within their departments as they don't have to worry about re-organising work for the employee that avails of it. (Peacock, 2008) The Henley Management College (2005 p.VIII) add that good performance measurement systems are needed to support flexible working and measuring results rather than inputs is critical to this process.

2.10 Flexibility and the Psychological Contract

Johnson (2004) state that new expectations within the psychological contract have been examined as a way of adapting to new ways in which working is being expressed. Examples of these are for employees are autonomy and control over their work while employers require more flexibility while maintaining elements of control over the employee. (Johnson 2004) Stredwick and Ellis (1998, p.279) comment on the complete one sidedness of flexibility and have warned that it needs to carry a 'health warning for employees'. The traditional fair psychological contract where employment for the employee was secure and 'a job for life' has become a thing of the past. Employers seem to manipulate flexibility in a way to suit the business and sometimes to the detriment of the employees for example longer working hours, increase in insecurity, transactional contract, lack of career progression and no choice over involvement. (Stredwick and Ellis 1998). This is why when entering into any flexible practice; it is advisable to make sure it's balanced for both the employer and the employee. According to a Managerial Law article 2006, one of the major challenges in relation to flexible working is to create policies that satisfy the needs to both the employer and the employee. (*Flexibility and the workplace; the battle to control working time* 2006).

Given the recent economic changes, the psychological contract may have changed a little to the advantage of the employer, many redundancies are being made in organisations, therefore employees may be more inclined to hold onto the jobs they have rather than maybe 'rocking the boat' and asking their employer for more flexible hours.

2.10.1 Responsibilities of the Employee

Johnson (2004) believes that employees also have responsibilities in relation to flexible working. An article written by the CIPD (2005a, p.21) called flexible working, the implementation challenge concurs with this view and recommends that every employee should take into account their responsibilities in relation to flexible working. They should take their application seriously and have a well thought out approach to flexible working rather than taking for granted that it's a right. They recommend three responsibilities for the employee in relation to flexible working;

- Think through effects of applying for flexible working might have on others in the organisation.(themselves, colleagues and the organisation)
- Suggest solutions that can overcome the negative impact
- Compromise in relation to the request for the benefit of the organisation, other staff etc in order to help defend the business.

2.10.2 Responsibilities of Employer

From the employers side, line managers are critical in the successful implementation of flexible working. Johnson (2004, p.726) makes that point that the line managers role is one of a 'Flexible architect seeking to construct, assimilate and integrate product, policy and practise more effectively via strategies geared at reflecting the changing nature of work'.

The CIPD (2005a, p.21) develop this point further by suggesting that the line managers have a number of responsibilities in relation to flexible working including;

- Informing the team of the flexible working opportunities
- To consider the request for flexible working realistically and to take ownership of the decision
- To make sure the needs of the business/service are priority
- To discover ways in which the organisation can benefit from flexible workers
- To give the individual who has be refused flexible working, a justification as to why they were refused at this time.

The manager's role is not an easy one and they must be trained and developed to be able to manage the flexible worker.(Stredwick and Ellis, 2005) CIPD (2005a, p.28) advise that 'management capability' is needed, this goes beyond the technicalities of processing a request to their attitude and ability to manage the impact of flexible working in a wider context. 'The biggest impact on the individual employees experience with flexible working will be their line manager and their attitude and approach'. (CIPD 2005a, p.21)

2.10.3 Managing Expectations

The needs and expectations of employees in the 21st century have changed considerably; both male and female workers want a different relationship with work that encourages career development and personal caring responsibilities. (EOC Equal Opportunities Employer , 2007).

Expectations need to be managed for example, from the organisations perspective there is a need for loyalty, commitment and trust in management while on the employees side, capable management, prospects and feeling a valuable member of the team. Johnson (2004, p.6).

2.11 Obstacles to Flexible Working

2.11.1 Incompatible with some roles

Some types of flexible working i.e. job sharing may not be compatible with some roles i.e. management. It is suggested that the reason for this is that a management role can only be carried out by a person who works full time hours only. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003, p.25). Drew and Murtagh (2005) emphasise that from their findings senior managers particularly male senior managers felt that flexible working was not compatible with their positions. They felt that a senior job could not be performed effectively on a part time basis. Another point worth noting is that both male and female senior managers indicated that working long hours and being 'visible' was the only way to show that they were committed to their role and the organisation. Drew and Murtagh (2005, p.273)

CIPD and BCC (2007) raise the point that not all jobs can be completed from home, therefore individuals requesting to work from home have to show that the job can be performed from home without any negative consequences.

2.11.2 Heavy Workload

Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) state that work pressures stop employees from applying for flexible working options. This can be seen in organisations where staff shortages are apparent and a long hours culture exist. According to Drew and Murtagh's (2005), research on work life balance, male senior managers believed that the excessive hours worked by managers was not helping to encourage flexibility in relation to work and home life.

Ireland has taken the UK's place as the hardest-working country in Europe according to Cowley (2006), who found that just over six per cent of male workers and more than four per cent of women who work, work more than 60 hours a week which is the highest proportion in Europe. This is particularly an issue for law firms where the employees are only seen as 'working hard enough' if they spend long hours in the office. (Taylor 2002, p.254) This long hours culture proves to be a constant obstacle to flexible working.

2.11.3 Financial Implications

Due to financial constraints it is not always possible for the employee to reduce their hours. This can be a particular issue for lower paid workers and single income families. Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003). It can however be an issue for all categories of employee.

2.11.4 'Presenteeism' Culture

It has been suggest that there is a cult of 'Presenteeism' existing in some Irish organisations; this in itself can have adverse effects on flexible working. (Murphy, cited in Kennedy, 2006)

Presenteeism can be defined as:

'The feeling that one must show up for work even if one is too sick, stressed, or distracted to be productive; the feeling that one needs to work extra hours even if one has no extra work to do'. (McFedries & Logophilia Limited 2000)

There is an opinion that suggests that 'being present' means 'working effectively' and efficiently, the line is muddy in relation to when a 'good days pay should end'. (*Forum on the workplace of the future*, p.4)

'Real work is still perceived as a full time job and job sharing as the only part time work option', such attitudes are out of date. (Humphreys, Fleming & O'Donnell 2000 p.83.)

Price Waterhouse Coopers acknowledged the difficulty of presenteeism in its organisation and has advised employees who are working too long hours to take time off in lieu, stating that the culture of presenteeism is not benefiting employees or the business. (Johnson 2004) Murphy states that presenteeism can impede people from availing of flexible working which can create efficiencies for the business. (Murphy, cited in Kennedy, 2006). For example a transport Users survey in 2005 found that 6 hours per month are lost per employee in Ireland trying to get to work, this rises to nine hours in Dublin, and in 2008 surely this has increased. By using this time in the morning for example to check emails and write documents and therefore miss rush hour

traffic, this surely would be a benefit for the company. (Murphy, cited in Kennedy, 2006)

2.11.5 Managers Opinion

Manager's attitude /opinion to flexible working practises can have a significant impact on whether the practises are successful or not. (CIPD 2005b)

Managers need to have the 'will' and the 'skill' in order to be able to manage flexible working schemes. The will is referring to manager's attitude which can encourage or hinder the process and skill is the manager's capability, this can achieved through receiving advice, education and coaching. (CIPD 2007 pp.28 – pp.29)

IFF Research in 2005, states that flexible working has been seen to be beneficial and agrees that there is a difficulty with it in relation to managers lacking training and being uncomfortable with the process. This emphasises the importance of training for managers.

2.11.6 Lack of Replacement Staff

According to the HSE (Health Service Executive) who conducted a survey on Flexible working within their service in 2005, one of the main reasons for refusing flexible working is due to a lack of replacement staff.

2.12 Culture that is supportive of flexible working

McCartney and Evans (2005) believe that in order for flexible working to be strategic a culture must exist that supports it. Three factors need to be in place to create this culture:-

1. Visible backing from the top leadership team
2. A 'champion' willing to increase its profile and keep it on the agenda
3. Senior Role models need to exist

Fitzpatrick (2005) concurs with this view and states that flexible working requires key cultural transformation. In the EOC article, *Enter the timelords*, (2007), it suggests that flexible working needs a 'culture shift' with employees been given trust to complete tasks away from the office and the autonomy to work differently free from 'micro management'. Research carried out by Henley Management College (2005) also supported the above idea and stated that it was established in the survey that flexible working required a culture shift from controlling to trusting.

2.12.1 Support from the Top

Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000) believe that there must be visible top management support of the policy in order for it to be successful and credible in the organisation. Getting board-room buy in is critical. Fitzpatrick (2005) highlights the importance of having the key players on board before a concept or policy is piloted within the organisation.

CIPD (2005b) produced a survey report entitled 'Flexible working: Impact and Implementation, employers survey the background of which was explained in detail previously suggests that senior management backing and support is critical when introducing a new initiative throughout the organisation as these are the people that make the decisions, this research states that this is challenge for a lot of organisations when introducing flexible working schemes. (CIPD, 2005b)

2.12.2 Critical role of the Line Manager

Research from Roffey Park¹ indicates that 'It's the attitudes, skills and behaviours of line managers which ultimately determine the success of flexible working arrangements'. (Steinberg et al., cited in

Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003, p.26)

Some managers may have a problem accepting flexible working schemes due to a number of factors including, managing the flexible worker, losing control of the worker, fear of impact on service. Stredwick and Ellis (2005)

Clutterbuck (2003) suggests three solutions to this problem:

1. "Patient explanation of the personal and business benefits
2. Patient explanation and demonstration of the benefits to their department or team

¹ Roffey Park is a charitable trust founded in 1946 which is internationally recognised for developing innovative learning approaches that help individuals to achieve their full potential at work and in their wider lives

3. Providing practical and relevant examples of solutions other managers have tried successfully,” presented by peers to increase credibility. (Clutterbuck, cited in Stredwick and Ellis 2005, p.136).

Stredwick and Ellis (2005) emphasise the importance of the line manager’s role in putting the flexible working scheme into operation and encouraging employees and managing any difficulties. Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) suggest that line managers experience problems implementing flexible working policies. For example, they have difficulty deciding who should have access or not to the policies and which approach to use to ensure equality, i.e. first come basis. The organisation used in this case study doesn’t have parameters/rules to guide managers in their decision making.

IBEC (2005 p.15) suggest that some employees may feel obliged to take on extra duties of the flexible worker, they recommend ‘planning and communication’ as important at the very beginning of the process in order to remedy this, this should take place between the employee availing of flexible working and their line manager.

Organisations need to support line managers in order for them to implement the policies effectively by ‘adequately staffing department, helping to create a culture where work life balance is respected’. (Steinberg et al., cited in Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003 p.1) Training is needed in order to help line managers manage the remote worker and to develop an environment to support flexible working. Stredwick and Ellis (2005)

2.12.3 Communication

The Industrial Society (2001) believes that:

Communication is vital in the successful implementation of any policy. Otherwise managers and employees may misinterpret each others needs and work from apposing sides rather than together. Good communication has the potential to develop into thorough planning and fusion of needs. (Good Practice.net, Available from <http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=14743andDownload=False>, Accessed 7 August, 2007, p.3)

Line Managers need to realise that communicating with their team is essential for the successful implementation of any flexible working or work life balance initiatives.

(Good Practice.net, Available from

<http://members.goodpractice.net/Pages/Display/DisplayInline.aspx?InlineVersionID=42245andDownload=False>, Accessed on 7 August, 2007)

According to The Industrial Society (2001) the biggest mistake made in relation to implementing flexible working policies is communication. McCartney and Evans (2005) agree with this point and describe how Eli Lilly used a number of different communication methods (the HR website, role models at the top, employee testimonials, induction programs emphasising flexible working) not only to communicate with staff but show them the work that has been undertaken so far and the work that is planned for the future in relation to flexible working.

Fitzpatrick (2005) emphasises the 'communication deficit' which can exist in some companies in relation to work life balance policies such as an explanation of what they are, the process in order to avail and if any, the effect that it will have on pension, holidays etc.

2.12.4 Support of Trade unions

In a unionised organisation, gaining union support for flexible working is important in its implementation. The reason for this is that they can encourage a positive culture in response to the flexible working policy by concentrating on employee performance and results rather than hours of work. Stredwick and Ellis (2005). Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) have a conflicting view by stating that unions are not generally supportive of family friendly policies. Sheldon and Thornthwaite (2004, p.239) agree with this view and believe that unions can be sometimes suspicious of the introduction of flexible hours schemes which are connected to part-time working as they think that management may be trying to control working hours, avoid overtime payments and buying out employees union participation..

Alternatively organisations without unions, the majority of private sector organisations may find it easier to get a policy through without their involvement.

2.12.5 Measurement

Measuring the success of policies is vital in order to track the positives and negatives of the policy so that it can be continuously updated. Eli Lilly uses indicators such as productivity, change outputs, change in employment costs, change in motivation, change in sick leave trends, metrics developed for approved and declines, and data analysis of retention, motivation, recruitment and career development to measure the success of flexible working policies. (McCartney and Evans 2005, p.7) Stredwick and Ellis (2005, p.141) recommend measures such as, take-up of flexible working policies

by employees, monitoring of turnover and absence rates, cost savings and staff satisfaction surveys.

It is important to mention that flexible working may not always fit with the needs of the business. McCartney and Evans (2005, p.7) have developed a list of business reasons for rejecting flexible working request;

- Extra expenditure that the business cannot support
- Negative impact on the company's ability to meet customer requirements
- The inability to re-assign work to current staff
- The inability to hire additional employees
- Possible damaging effects on quality and or performance
- Scarce work during the period the employee intends to work
- Planned structural alterations

2.13 Ideal Conditions for Flexible working to Take Place

- Organisational Needs
- Customer Needs
- Individual Needs

Optimum Conditions for Flexible Working



Figure 2: Ideal Conditions for flexible working to take place

Ideally all three above should be present in order for flexible working to be achieved.

The customer in this context would be the client/service user and their needs are paramount in this organisation.

2.14 Who is the flexible workforce?

According to IFF Research Ltd., (2005) who surveyed a sample of members of the CIPD in the UK in relation to flexible working, overall part time seems to be the most popular form of the application of flexibility on the workplace.

McWilliams and Smith (1998, p.8) make the point that there is a view that flexible working is for women only and that it is associated with low status, low paid jobs but they conclude that the evidence suggests that this is no longer the case. The authors believe that many flexible workers are men and that they are found at different levels within each organisation. They elaborate by saying that 'today's flexible workers are likely to be skilled data analysts as they are cooks and cleaners'. McWilliams and Smith (1998, p.8) This view is supported by the report 'Off the Treadmill' 2003, which states that flexible working may be perceived as being a women's matter but in fact it is more of concern for people in general. All employees would like to have more of a balance between home and work no matter what their family or personal circumstances are. (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003).

In an article called 'Enter the Time Lords', written in 2007 it states

'Its time to re-event flexibility in a way that demonstrates that it can be used at all levels , in all jobs from the factory floor to canary wharf in a way that enables everyone, women and men to balance work and life as well as being more productive employees'.(Enter the Timelords, 2007, p.18)

'Flexible working arrangements. practised informally are far more common in small organisations that is often thought' Joseph Rountree Foundation (2002 p.1).The CIPD

and BCC (2007) build on this and go onto say that flexible working in small companies is not recognised through the formal structures and policies developed by large organisations but is more individual and specific and is more concerned with the relationship between manager and employee. Formally flexible working practises tend to be more available in larger public/voluntary sector organisations. IFF Research Ltd., (2005) and the report 'Off the Treadmill support this statement and suggests that the option of flexible working in other organisations outside of the public sector is quite low. (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003)

2.15 Low Take-Up

In a study of more than over 400 companies in the manufacturing sector approximately three quarters of these had some form of flexible working scheme in place, while a study relating to financial, retail and the hotel sector in 2001 found high availability of at least one form of flexible working scheme in operation. However, even though there are a high proportion of employers offering these options; take up hasn't been high. (IBEC 2005, p.16).

2.16 The Legislation in the UK and Absence of Legislation in Ireland

In Ireland, there is currently no legislation specifically covering flexible working per se (there is however protective legislation re maternity leave, adoptive leave, parental leave, etc...). In the UK since 2003 the government has introduced a parents right to request flexible working from their employer, giving parents with a child under the age of 6 (or with disabled children under the age of eighteen) a right to apply. Since April 2007 this has been extended to carers of adults. (CIPD and BCC, 2007). Another development according to a recent article in People Management informs us that from April 2009, the right to request flexible working will be extended to parents of children aged up to 16. (Phillips, 2008) Grainger and Holt (2005, pp.1-2) discuss the results of the Second Flexible working Employee survey, the objective of this survey was to examine the changes in 'awareness' and 'take up' of the right to request flexible working since the law was introduced in the UK. The results were significant as there was an obvious increase in awareness since the right was introduced. Could this type of government policy be introduced successfully in Ireland?

It is important to mention however that some research suggests that employers in the UK, particularly small companies have introduced flexible working not in response to this legislation but because of the benefits that they believe it will achieve. (CIPD and BCC 2007)

2.17 Flexible Working Internationally

Part-time working seems to be on the increase, particularly in Australia. For example in 1973, 11.9% of workers were working part time compared with 23.9% in 1993. In Canada for example in 1973, 9.7% of workers were working part time compared with 17.2% in 1993. (Bratton and Gold. 2003 p.89)

O'Connell and Russell (2005, p.23) suggest that international statistics of flexible working arrangements are inadequate and originate from national surveys which because they are not 'harmonized may not be directly comparable' therefore it is difficult to find recent international evidence of flexible working. However, Evans cited in O'Connell and Russell (2005), shows a more detailed analysis of Australia, Japan, UK and US. The results indicated that at the organisational level availability of flexible working/family friendly policies is dependant on sector (public or private) and size of organisation. It also found that employees were more likely to have the chance to avail of the policies if they were highly skilled and had many years service working with the organisation. In the UK in particular large public sector organisations with recognised unions were more likely to offer flexible working options to their staff. (Dex and Smith, cited in O'Connell and Russell (2005)

According to research undertaken by The Foundations establishment on working time in 2006, the highest amount of organisation in Europe offering flexible working arrangements to their staff can be found in Latvia, Sweden, Finland and the UK.

At the other ends of the spectrum Cyprus, Portugal. Greece and Hungary have the least organisations offering flexible work options. Flexible working arrangements on average

exist in 48% of all organisations with 10 or more employees in Europe. (Eurofound, 2006)

2.18 Flexibility in an Irish context

Drew and Murtagh (2005) believe that senior managers appear to be frustrated with the long hours work culture and don't feel in control over their time and work flow. Normal hours were not a normal occurrence for them so this is why they had little support for reduced hours.

According to Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley (2006, p.83) Ireland is way behind its European counterparts in relation to part time workers, for example in 1996, 70% of female workers in the Netherlands and 45% of female workers in the UK were availing of the part time working option while only 12.3% of the workforce in Ireland are working part time. O'Connell and Russell (2005) state that 19% of employees in Ireland avail of flexi-time while an average of 25% of employees avail of it in all 15 EU countries.

2.19 Flexible working within the Health Service Setting

2.19.1 Recruitment and Retention

The primary reason for the creation of flexible working policies in the NHS appears to be recruitment and retention. (Hall and Atkinson, 2006) Robinson, Davy and Murrells (2003, p.422) concur with this view and believe that the aim of these policies is to improve the 'quality of working lives' for employees leading to better recruitment and retention and finally improving service provision. According to Mahony (2000) health

service employers have more reason than most to consider how they can attract and keep their staff, this is referring to the serious shortage of nursing professionals.

On the ground, the difficulties associated with recruiting nurses have been an ongoing issue. Back in 2000, the government launched a five million pound sterling flexible working package to retain nurses in the workforce. A survey undertaken by the HSEA (Health Services Employers Agency) revealed a total of 1,388 nursing vacancies nationwide. The new flexible working options aimed to 'keep our brightest and best in the nursing profession on their terms'. (IRN, 2000) Hall and Atkinson (2004) believe that due to the increase in turnover, employees leaving due to their unhappiness with their hours of work there is a real need to offer flexible working to these professionals. (Hall and Atkinson, 2006)

2.19.2 The Needs of the service

Lorman (2000), the deputy HR Director of the NHS Trust, cited in Mahony (2000) advises 'The overriding focus of the scheme has to be the best interests of the service – you don't have to give it to all employees just because you give it to one'. (Mahony, 2000) Branine (2003) in the article entitled, Part time work and job sharing in health care: is the NHS a family friendly employer?, states that when managers were asked to rank the disadvantages of part time working, 92% put the lack on continuity of care as the main disadvantage.

A HSE (Health Service Executive) survey carried out in Ireland in 2004 with 200 managers in the public Health service, produced the following results, 28% of managers stated that the reason that they refused applications for flexible working was due to lack

of guidelines on the operation on the scheme, 30% an even higher percentage of managers said that creating a precedent was the reason why they refused applications. Other reasons included due to applicants coming form a supervisory/management role (19%) concerns around patient/client care and service quality (13%) and lack of replacement staff. (10%) Health Service Employers agency (2005).

2.19.3 Barriers

Rana (cited in Hall and Atkinson 2006) describe a barrier to flexible working as its identification as a 'women's issue'. This in itself can prove to be a barrier for men wanting to avail of flexible working.

Another barrier in the NHS is the lack of awareness of what is available in relation to flexible working. (IRS, cited in Hall and Atkinson 2006)

Current organisational culture in the NHS Trust is also a barrier in this; managers were found to be the main part of this culture impeding the introduction of flexible working initiatives. (Hall and Atkinson, 2006). Branine (2003) agrees with this and states that working reduced hours is thought of an unimportant, low level work in the NHS.

As in many services, particularly the health services flexible working doesn't lend itself to all jobs, i.e. nurse cannot work from home. (Hall and Atkinson 2006)

Some research doesn't support the active promotion of equal opportunities through the use of flexible work practises. Branine (2003)

Corby (1995) discussing the health services in the UK, found evidence to support

‘A chill factor which discourages staff from applying for flexible work’. This is because of the affect that it might have on career progression opportunities.

The financial implications of availing of some types of flexible working (reduced hours, job-share etc) deem these options non-viable for many employees. (Hall and Atkinson 2005)

2.19.4 Criteria for flexible working

In some organisations the option of flexible working may be subject to certain conditions/criteria for example grade (there may be a maximum grade) or length of service(there may be a minimum number of months/years service in order to apply).Another interesting point made by the report off the Treadmill is that access to flexible working needs to be open to all staff including management level, they suggest that sometimes managers can be afraid to ask about flexible working for fear that it will be seen as a lack of commitment on their part. (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003)

2.19.5 Low Take-up

Lorman, Deputy HR Director of the NHS Trust believes that the reason for the low take up of flexible working schemes is that people are habitual in nature and just because options are available doesn’t mean that all employees are going to take them up, when there personal circumstances change that they may begin to consider it. (Mahony 2000)
The ‘take up gap’ can often be linked to the lack of awareness of flexible working policies and managers attitude towards the policy. (Kodz, Skinner, CIPD, cited in Hall and Atkinson 2005 p.379)

An important point to mention is that there has been a low-take up of flexible working in management level grades in the public service, this could be perhaps due to the 'long hours culture' in the public service or alternatively managers may themselves perceive flexible working as a lack of dedication or loyalty both to the managers career and the organisation as a whole. (Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell, 2000)

2.19.6 Disadvantages of Flexible working

2.19.6.1 Employee and Organisation

Part time workers in the health services tended to be in lower status roles, very few managers and doctors were working part time. (Branine 2003) This point was developed further by saying that particularly in times of economic downturn, employees were perhaps 'exploited' by their employer. (Branine 2003, p.54)

Some employees that availed of part time working /job sharing in the NHS felt that their full time colleagues didn't respect them. (Branine 2003) Lack of promotional opportunities was also a disadvantage for reduced hour's workers in the NHS. (Branine 2003). 64% of managers felt that a lack of replacement staff was an issue. (HSE, 2005)

2.19.6.2 Research from the Health and Public services sectors in Ireland

Research from Off the Treadmill, 2003 by Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) provides some indication as to why flexible working is not available to all hospital employees in Ireland?

The main reasons were; patient staff ratio and the necessity to ensure the provision of a minimum cover at (all/critical) times by nursing, medical, catering and other staff?

In this survey, The Public Service explained that;

- It was not available to senior management as it would require union agreement with the representative of Senior management or Unions representing other staff
- The need for senior staff to be in attendance.
- Restricted when service delivery might suffer.
- Staff shortages already a problem, i.e. in nursing.

(Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003)

2.19.6.3 Measurement

Only 15% of managers surveyed said that they carried out a review and evaluation of there flexible working arrangements. (HSE, 2005) Branine (2003, pp 66-67) recommends that if the NHS

‘is to succeed in attracting and retaining the quality staff needed to ensure high performance standards in the provision and delivery of health care its management should accept the diversity that exists within the workforce and take a more pro-active approach to promoting a variety of flexible working practises’.

2.20 Summary

In the current economic environment in Ireland perhaps flexible working will not be offered as much by employers as it has been seen in the past. However it is important for organisations to realise that childcare and work life balance issues continue to exist for employees. The literature has some common that are important to note. Work has evolved from the traditional ‘9-5 ‘ working week to flexible innovative practices which

can involve changes in working hours, working from different locations and having different types of employment contracts. Flexible working as a concept needs to involve an agreement from both the employee and employer for it to be successful and the expectations of both sides need to be managed. Advantages and disadvantages exist for both the organisation and employee in relation to flexible working. To incorporate it as a strategic initiative and to embrace a culture of flexible working is critical to its long term viability. Internationally, in some countries flexible working is on the increase while in other countries namely Ireland, the take up of flexible working is under the EU average. In a health services setting, the needs of the client/ service are paramount therefore continuity of care must not be affected as a result of flexible working practises. While flexible working can benefit the individual employee, the organisation needs to be mindful of the disadvantages and plan for them in advance of approving the employee for any flexible working scheme.

3. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this research investigation is to assess the impact of a pilot flexible working policy on an organisation and its employees in a service driven, client focussed environment.

The supporting objectives are:

To establish whether the (restricted) pilot flexible working policy has been a success from the employers view. This will be achieved by analysing the results of a management questionnaire which was designed to:

- Examine whether there has been an impact on service delivery
- Examine if there has been an impact on the staffing arrangements (covering relief, permanent staff working additional shifts).
- Investigate whether it is meeting employees needs and is operationally successful

To establish whether the pilot flexible working policy has been a success from the employees view, this will be achieved by interviewing employees who are either availing or not availing of the policy. The interview questions were designed to:

- Identify the different types of individuals who avail of the policy, job titles, grades etc.
- Establish if employees were communicated with in relation to the introduction of the pilot policy
- Identify the main reasons why employees avail of the policy
- Establish the primary benefits for employees availing of the policy

- Explore whether downsides exist for an employee participating in this flexible working policy, i.e. career progression and training opportunities,
- Identify if the individual employee has a responsibility to ensure that the service does not suffer in their absence
- Establish if there is an impact on full time employees
- Identify if there is a stigma attached to availing of the policy
- Established if this policy has retained key staff
- Identify the barriers for employees in availing of the policy
- Identify if there is a gender imbalance in relation to the uptake of this flexible working initiative
- To decide based on the feedback from questionnaires and interviews whether or not the policy needs to be changed or updated.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This section sets out to examine the research methodology that was used to address the research question and its supporting objectives. The section opens by defining the concept of research methodology, it then goes on to examine the research strategy employed and the principles used and finally it looks at the process chosen for the study. It will provide an explanation as to why the chosen methodology was considered appropriate for the study. The section will end by identifying some of the operational issues faced and lessons learnt throughout the process. (Limitations associated with the research)

Hussey and Hussey (1997, p.17) define research methodology as ‘An explanation of why you collect certain data, what data you collected, from where you collected it, when you collected it, how you collected it and how you analysed it’. This all encompassing definition which will be discussed in the chapter gives an insight into the decisions that had to be made and justified in this research. One important decision which followed was the definition of the research question which is ‘To assess the impact of a pilot flexible working initiative in a service driven client focussed environment’. This question was used as a driver and a guide to focus this investigation.

The supporting objectives are:

- To analyse the impact that the flexible Working pilot policy has had on the service. This will be achieved through examining the results of the self administered questionnaires which was designed by a colleague and distributed to service managers, clinic managers and administration managers who distributed it to their direct reports throughout the organisation.
- To explore through structured telephone interviews with both employees who avail and do not avail of the new policy, the impact that the implementation of the flexible working pilot policy has had on the individual employee's.
- Based on the feedback from the questionnaires and interviews to investigate whether the pilot policy requires further amendment.

There are many different ways and means to collect data/information; examples of these techniques are self completion questionnaires, structured interview schedules and participant observation. (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

4.2 Research Strategies

A case study approach was the research strategy felt most appropriate for this study, the reason for this decision was that the pilot flexible working policy was examined in the context of this particular organisation only. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), the main feature of a case study is a critical examination of one particular case. Robson (1993, p.146) expands on this point and suggests that this strategy 'involves empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using

multiple sources of evidence'. This approach enables the researcher to gain detailed, complex information about the particular case. (Bryman & Bell .2007).

The main advantages of the approach are that it provides a basis from which further analysis and examination can be made, people are more willing to take part if the information asked has direct effect and meaning for them and the recommendations and suggestions from the study can be implemented and put into practise. (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2001). Brannick and Roche (1997, p.100) believe that a limitation of this approach is that it can be viewed as 'soft' and 'unscientific' and particularly 'unrepresented' but its important to realise that some of the most critical cases in management are found in cases.

4.3 Principles

Principles according to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) refer to the relevance and usefulness of the work. Three principles exist for the evaluation of business and management research, reliability, validity and generalisation. (Bryman & Bell 2007).

1. Reliability; this is the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population. (Bryman & Bell 2007). Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001, p.221) recommend that the researcher must ask themselves the question, "if another researcher investigated the same question in the exact same location would they come up with the same answers?" If the answer is yes then the piece of work is reliable. If, on the other hand the answer is no, then there is a problem.

2. Validity looks at if the research really measures what it planned to measure. (Bryman & Bell 2007). It can however be undermined by research errors such as flawed research procedures, poor samples and misleading measurement. (Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.57)
3. Generalisations cannot be used in this approach as only one organisation will be examined. Therefore it is not possible to extend /apply the conclusions in a wider context. Bryman and Bell (2007, p.418), agree with this point and re-iterate that the 'evidence they present is limited because it has restricted external validity', they also develop this point further by saying that it is not the researchers intention to generalise or indeed surmise in any way that the findings have relevance outside the particular case. Another important concept to mention is context, as this research is very dependent on a specific context in which it operates. (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.418)

4.4 Process

To understand the research process, two theories, Deductive Reasoning and Inductive Reasoning must be examined further.

Firstly deductive reasoning follows the path from the general to the more specific. This is where a general theory is created. Arising from this a particular 'hypothesis' is developed and then tested. We can then either agree or disagree with our original theory. Deductive reasoning involves examining or confirming the research question. (Trochim 2006)

Inductive reasoning on the other hand follows the path from specific observations to more general theories. This enables the researcher to identify commonalities and trends in order to develop a hypothesis that can be investigated conclusions and subsequently allow conclusions to be drawn. This approach can be described as ‘open ended and exploratory’. (Trochim 2006).

Having reviewed both approaches, this study has both a mix of inductive and deductive reasoning. It is inductive as it involves investigating the views of managers and employees on the flexible working/reduced hour’s policy and looks for patterns and trends from the study to finally suggest conclusions and recommendations. It is also deductive as its aim is to test if the policy is working well from the employees and managers perspective.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Hussey and Hussey (1997) offer the following guide in relation to ethical considerations:

4.5.1 Confidentiality

It is important to be able to offer confidentiality to participants in your research, this encourages them to be more fluid in their responses and they can be more ‘honest’ and ‘open’. (Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.38) However, there can be problems in this regard, for example if one of the responses that are received needs to be relayed to a higher authority, should this be done? This situation could arise if an employee gives certain information that may need disciplinary action.

4.5.2 Informed Consent

It is necessary to inform participants of the nature of the research and its purpose and to obtain their consent to participate. But this in itself can cause its own problems because sometimes this can change their opinions and or behaviours, the reason for this is that if for example the respondents know that the information collected is being sent to the CEO they might have different responses than if the information is used solely in the researchers own dissertation. As a result this can give rise to questions concerning the validity of the responses/answers received. (Hussey & Hussey 1997)

4.5.3 Dignity

It is important to maintain the participant's dignity at all times. The participant may consider the researcher as a person in authority and feel obligated to take part in the study and their power of choice is taken from them to some degree. (Hussey & Hussey 1997)

4.5.4 Publication

This issue is around achieving publication and using unethical means to do so.

(Hussey & Hussey 1997) This would discredit the aim of the entire study. Hussey and Hussey (1997, p.38) emphasise the importance of 'common courtesy' and believe that the manner in which the researcher behaves must be honourable and avoid criticism. They must treat the participants with the utmost respect in this regard. Ethical issues must be taken into account and manners must be used at all times. Hussey (1997, p.39)

4.6 Research Methods

Both primary and secondary research methods were used in this research. Primary data is 'original data, which is collected at source' for example survey data while secondary data is information which 'already exists' for example books. (Hussey & Hussey 2001, p.149) The primary methods came in the form of qualitative methods and will be discussed in some detail in the next section. Secondary research that was used came from IBEC, CIPD, ESRI, Equality Authority, NCI Library, electronic databases, census and surveys undertaken by Department of Trade and Industry (UK), ESRI (Economic and Social research institute) in Ireland, HSE (Health Service Executive) and Department for Employment and Learning (UK).

Generally two basic types of data collection are most commonly used, quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (words). (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2001). To develop this point further quantitative research examines data in a numeric form, it is objective and quantifiable in nature and usually associated with large scale research. While qualitative research is more subjective and is associated with smaller scale research as it explores the detail and depth of the research. (Punch, cited in Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2001)

4.7 Qualitative Approach

According to Hussey and Hussey (2007, p.12) a qualitative approach draws from a more subjective approach which includes 'examining and reflecting' on views, with the goal of 'gaining more understanding of social and human activities'. It identifies people's real life experiences and seeks to obtain insights into these. This approach

however has a primary disadvantage; there are no defined and standardised principles or rules for analysis that are equivalent to those with quantitative data. (Robson, cited in Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.248)

Kane (1997, p.51) makes the following analogy by comparing the choice of research technique to 'fishing flies', 'you choose the right one for the fish you want to catch'. Each method is created specifically to get certain types of information while omitting other types of information. (Kane 1997)

The reason that qualitative methods were appropriate for this study was that insights into the participants (managers and employees) attitudes and feelings were needed in order to thoroughly examine and evaluate the research question and its objectives. Robson (1993) advises that qualitative methods of data collection are generally more associated with case study research.

There are many different types of qualitative methods that can be used for example interviewing, focus groups, surveys/questionnaires and participant observation. (Bryman & Bell 2007).

4.8 Structured Questionnaire/Survey

It is important to point out at this stage that when the researcher decided on the general topic for the dissertation (Flexible working/Reduced hours) they subsequently became aware that a colleague within the same department had prepared a structured questionnaire on the topic which had already been emailed to managers. The HR Manager felt that the feedback from this would be very relevant for this dissertation and the researcher was asked to be involved in the collection and analysis of this

feedback and to incorporate it into their project. The researcher discussed the reason for selecting the questionnaire, the design of the document and piloting with the colleague that designed the questionnaire.

Bell (1993, p.10) contends that:

“The aim of a survey is to obtain information which can be analysed and patterns extracted and comparisons made. In most cases, a survey will aim to obtain information from a representative selection of the population and from that sample will then be able to present the findings as being representative of the population as a whole”.

The reason that the qualitative questionnaire/survey was chosen, was in order find out manager’s opinion on the new policy and their experience of directly working with and managing the policy in their units/departments. Hussey and Hussey (1997), agree with this point and state that the purpose of a questionnaire is to find out what a particular group of participants, do, think or feel.

This questionnaire came in the form of a self-administered questionnaire. This gave respondents an opportunity to write their own replies and removed any pressure they may have felt in relation to someone perhaps watching over them while they completed the questions (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The questionnaire was structured, this meant that each manager responded to identical questions in the same order this reduced any potential error. To explain this further, any variations in the questions could potentially cause variations in the responses. (Bryman & Bell 2007, pp.219 –221)

The benefit of using a questionnaire was that it was cheaper and less time consuming than conducting interviews. (Hussey & Hussey 1997). The disadvantage however was that as the respondent wasn't receiving guidance or help if they had a problem with answering any of the questions this could lead to partially answered questions and missing data. Another potential issue was that the respondents can become bored and tired quite easily when completing a questionnaire compared with interviews this can affect the response rates and the quality of the answers. (Bryman & Bell 2007).

Piloting

According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001, p.135) piloting or 'reassessment without tears', is a process where you practise the research techniques and methods you are thinking of using and see how they work, adapting/amending accordingly based on the results of the pilot. (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001, p.135)

The questionnaire was trialled with a number of employees from the HR department before it was emailed to the sample. This pilot group was chosen to review the questions in terms of clarity and consistency. The benefit of this was that since the interviewer wouldn't be present to administer the questionnaire, it needed to be easily understood by the sample. (Bryman & Bell 2007). The disadvantage however was that they couldn't be considered representative of the sample group this could have affected the success of the pilot.

Target Population /Sample

The target population for the self administered questionnaire was selected. The type of strategy used was non probability sampling, this approach means that the method used to select the sample was not random, and some members of the population were more likely to be selected than others. (Bryman & Bell 2007). According to Trochim (2006) most sampling methods are purposive in nature because we usually have a plan or focus in mind. 'In purposive sampling, we sample with a purpose in mind, we usually would have one or more specific predefined groups we are seeking'. This type of sampling was used in this case because feedback was needed specifically from line managers within the organisation.

Service Managers, Clinic Manager and Administration managers (see glossary of terminology used within the service) and organisational chart (Appendix C) were the vehicle used to distribute the questionnaires to line managers/department managers (their direct reports).This gave credibility to the questionnaire and project and encouraged line managers/department manager to complete the document. The reason that line managers/department were chosen to participate in this study was that it was thought that they were in the best position to evaluate operationally if the policy was working as they had a critical role to play in the implementation of the Flexible working/reduced hours policy within the unit/department.

To be more specific, questionnaires were emailed to a total 18 Service, Clinic and Administration managers who in turn emailed /gave each questionnaire to relevant line managers/department managers. Relevant in this context means that they emailed it to

line managers/department managers who they were aware had employees availing of the policy. There was a closing date of one week to complete and return the questionnaire which was stated on the email. The reason the deadline of one week was given was to encourage quick responses, this was perhaps over ambitious and in reality the questionnaires were accepted for a number of days after the deadline in order to increase the response rate.

Questionnaire Design

The questions were text open-ended or narrative in nature which means that the each respondent had the opportunity to answer the questions in their own opinion.(Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.166)These questions linked back directly to the flexible working policy application form. While open questions have the advantage of giving the respondents views in their own words, they can be hard to analyse and because it could take longer to complete the questionnaire respondents might be put off by this. (Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.166)As explained previously the researcher had no involvement in the interview design as the questionnaires had already been sent out to managers before the researcher was involved in the project. The researcher was heavily involved in emailing respondents and following up with them to encourage them to complete the questionnaires. (see Appendix D for copy of questionnaire)

Respondents answered in their own way and from this different or 'unusual responses' might be expected to follow, this questionnaire catered for this as its aim was to receive rich data from these respondents rather than just yes/no answers. Questions were not suggestive so therefore respondents understanding of the issues could be identified. To explain further the questions were not leading, they didn't lead the respondents to

answer a certain way so it was clear to see from the answers of the respondent understood the questions being asked. Questionnaires could either be emailed or posted back to the researcher. (Bryman & Bell, 2007 p.259.)

Operational Issues/Practicalities

10 questionnaires were initially returned prior to or on the deadline. The researcher subsequently made follow up phone calls to a number of managers to encourage them to meet with their line managers and give them the questionnaire.

It was then necessary for the researcher to obtain a report from the salaries department of all employees that worked less than full time hours in order to cross check them with the surveys received. The reason for this was to ensure that the managers that were emailed the questionnaire had sent it to all the relevant line managers that had employees currently availing of the policy. The questionnaire asked the manager to state the name of the employee/employees from their unit/department that were availing of this policy, this is how the cross check was carried out. (Matching employee with relevant line manager)

Following this, the researcher specifically targeted line managers that had employees that were currently working flexible hours to ask them directly to complete the questionnaire.

A total of 22 completed questionnaires were received from line managers which incorporated a total of 17 employees across all regions who availed of the flexible working policy.

This questionnaire was concerned specifically with the impact that employees availing of the flexible working/reduced hour's pilot policy had on the organisation or unit or department. When the questionnaires were returned a number were completed with the names of part time employees meaning half time, (19.5hours in residential and 17.5 hours in day services, admin and clinicians) these individuals were not availing in the new flexible working policy so had to be disqualified. The questionnaire was specifically interested in employee availing of the pilot flexible working policy only. (reduction in 1 shift. 2 shifts or 1day/2days).

An email was sent with the questionnaire to explain the reason behind the questionnaires but no guidelines were issues to managers in relation to completing them.

Lessons Learned from the Questionnaire

The advantage of open questions according to Hussey and Hussey (1997) is that it allows people to give their opinions in their own words; however the results can be difficult to analyse. The advantages of closed questions are that since the range of possible answers is quite limited they can be quite simple to analyse. (Hussey & Hussey 1997). By using a mixed approach of both types of questions it was hoped that rich data would be obtained for analysis.

The questionnaire was only piloted amongst colleagues in the HR department; the disadvantage of this was that the questionnaire needed to be tried out on people who were representative/similar of the sample. (Hussey & Hussey 1997). The researcher piloted the interview questions both on colleagues from the HR department in order to

test if the questions looked right and a number of the representative sample to investigate if the right questions were asked.

The Delphi technique which will be explained in detail further on in the section was not used for the questionnaire, this technique was however used for the interview questions.

4.9 Structured Telephone Interviews

The reason that the second qualitative approach was chosen in the form of a structured interview was to explore the employee's views and get more detailed information on what their opinions were on the new policy, the reasons behind why they applied for flexible working and the take up and in general to get an individual perspective on the pilot policy.

Employees were interviewed over the phone, this was due to the fact that these individuals had reduced their hours; their time at work was quite precious so gaining access to them was quite difficult as they were incredibly busy, so they could ring the interviewer at a time that suited them over a set number of days. Also the respondents who were directly working with the clients/service users worked with them in their homes, this was quite a sensitive issue so it was felt that it would be inappropriate to go to the client's homes to interview the staff.

According to Bryman and Bell (2007) telephone interviews produce other benefits. Firstly the telephone interview is easier to direct and administer. The fact that the interviewer is away from the interviewee and cannot be seen removes the bias that could exist if the interviewer was present. For example class or ethnicity could have an

affect on the interviewee's bias to the interviewer and this could affect their answers. The point has to be made however that it is quite easy to recognise an individual's accent, this can also cause bias.

On the other hand, one potential disadvantage might be that the interviewer cannot observe the interviewee is unable to observe the interviewee in a face to face situation; he/she will be unaware of facial expression or gestures which can sometimes tell a great deal. There may also be an issue around whether the person you are speaking to on the phone is really who they say they are. Finally the interviewer cannot rely on visual aids in the interview to ask the interviewee to select their answers from diagrams for example. (Bryman & Bell (2007, p.215 and p.216)

Piloting

Before the interviews were conducted, the questions were piloted initially with a number of employees from the HR department to ensure that the questionnaire was clear and that there were no errors. It was then piloted with members of the representative sample to ensure that the right questions were being asked. This meant that the questions that the researcher intended to ask were interpreted correctly by the sample and that these questions could be linked back to the objectives and aims of the study. Bryman and Bell (2007, p.274) agree with piloting and go even further by saying that the reason behind piloting is to ensure questions are 'precise, accurate and understandable'.

Specific questions were removed/changed as a result of the pilot, these were:-

The trade union question was removed from both of the interview questions as it was felt not applicable for this case. This question was initially taken from an established survey but it was subsequently thought irrelevant.

Interview Questions (Employees availing of the Policy)

The following question was removed; financially has it been a burden for you to reduce your hours? The reason for this was that it was felt that this question was too personal and would make the interviewee uncomfortable and it was believed that the answer to the question could be established indirectly through other questions.

Interview Questions (Employee's not availing of the Policy)

The following question was removed; could the job you do be done if you reduced your hours? It was felt that this question was not appropriate as it was reasonable to suggest that in order to fulfil a full time position it was necessary for an employee to work full time hours.

Delphi Technique

Three academics reviewed the interview questions individually before they were posed to employees; this is known as the Delphi technique. It is a useful tool to develop consensus on the questions designed by the researcher. (Fisher 2007). Robson (1993 p.27) suggests that the Delphi technique is a creative way of encouraging 'innovation' in designing research questions.

Target Population/Sample

According to Kane (1997 p.94), 'Sample size is determined mainly by the type of sample, degree of precision required and the degree of variability of population'.

Again, non probability sampling was used for the of telephone interviews, all 20 employees that were participating in the policy were deliberately selected. The reason for this was that the data gathered from these employees would establish if the pilot policy was working for the employees perspective and who would be in a better position to respond to these questions than the employees that were currently availing of it. A letter was posted to each of the possible participants(See Appendix F for a sample copy) explaining the background to the review of the flexible working/reduced hours policy and asking them to call the interviewer at a convenient time for them over a three day time frame.14 employees out of a possible 20 participated.

A corresponding number of employees were selected from the employees that were not availing of the policy based on the number of employees that responded and participated in the telephone interviews. (14) These had the same titles as the employees already participating in flexible working policy. The researcher was advised by a statistician that it was necessary in order to generate statistics from the study that job titles, ages or length of service would have to be matched from both sets of employees. (Employees availing and not availing of the policy). Job titles were chosen as it was felt that this could possibly be the most interesting of the three. To explain further, some of the same questions were asked to both participant groups in order to be able to compare and contrast.

Interview Design

Having reviewed and analysed many surveys on flexible working and work life balance (HSE Flexible working Survey 2005), (Department of Trade and Industry, Results of the second Flexible working survey 2005), (Department of Employment and Learning, Flexible working employee survey 2006), (Department for Business and enterprise and regulatory reform, the third work life Balance survey 2007) and VHI work life balance survey). It was quite difficult to find questions that exactly matched the researchers requirements, the work life balance questions appeared to be too broad to use, i.e. ‘What type of flexible working do you have in your organisation?’, while the flexible working surveys looked at flexible working from the employers view rather than the employees so were not suitable. Finally two surveys were located, one extremely relevant which was the HSE Survey of Flexible working 2005, Ireland and the second the Omnibus survey undertaken by the central survey unit in Northern Ireland Statistics and Research agency, 2006.

Two sets of questions were developed, one for the employees that availed of flexible working and the other for employees that did not avail of it. It was decided that specific questions would be chosen from each of the surveys in conjunction with questions that would be designed by the researcher and would directly link back to the objectives set and research question posed. (see Appendix E copy of both sets of interview questions)

The questions used for the interview were structured,

‘A structured interview, sometimes called a standardized interview, entails the administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer.’ (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.210)

Interviewees receive the same questions in the same order and interview questions are quite specific. (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.210)

Operational Issues/Practicalities

In order to increase the response rate of participants the researcher emailed the interview questions to some of the respondents.

It was felt that there would be more of an enthusiastic response from employees availing of the policy to the interviews as they were actively availing of the policy. Therefore double the amount of letters were sent out to employees who were not availing of the policy to ensure that there were 14 participants and that they all had a matching job title to those availing of the policy.

Bryman and Bell (2007) make the recommendation of combining self completion questionnaires with structured interviews in order to gain the views of different groups of participants. The researcher applied this technique in order to gain the opinions of both the managers (business perspective) and employees (individual perspective).

Lessons Learned from Telephone interviews

It was important to offer confidentiality to employees as they feel much more open to giving more information to the interviewer and are more honest with their views.

(Robson 1993 p.251) The researcher used the cover letter to assure confidentiality to employees.

The researcher gave the interviewees a set number of days to call to partake in the study, perhaps the interviewer should have called them instead and tried to conduct the telephone interview there and then, if it wasn't a suitable time the interviewer could have called back when it was more convenient. This might have increased the response rate.

The author felt that the respondents may have been inclined to give the right answer rather than the honest answer, particularly the employees availing of the policy because they didn't want this form of flexible working to be taken away from them.

4.10 Recording and Transcribing

The possibility of obtaining a phone that would have the facility to tape conversations was investigated with the college and the organisation but unfortunately this resource was not available. This would have saved the researcher the inconvenience of having to book a room to tape the conversations with a dictaphone. Also putting the interviewee on speaker phone wasn't ideal as it was difficult to hear them at times.

The researcher wanted to audio record the telephone interviews but was quite restricted in relation to this. The reason was that the researcher was based in an open plan office so putting the interview on speaker and taping it with a dictaphone was not possible as it would be too disruptive for others in the office too much. Fortunately the interviewer was able to locate an office and a combination of audio recording/tape recording as well as note taking were used to record the interviews.

The advantage of note taking is that responses can be noted immediately, the disadvantage however is that it can take quite a lot of time to take notes and there is a danger that the note taker can omit important information. (Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.179)

Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001, p.175) make the point that interview tapes take a lot of time to transcribe. This did not become an issue for the researcher because the interviews would only last approximately 10 minutes each. The advantage however of using a tape is that it increases accuracy while allowing the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee.(Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2001, p.173) On the other hand tape recording can make respondents nervous therefore they might be less likely to reveal their true feels or confidential information.(Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2001, p.173)

Hussey and Hussey 1997 recommend using tape recording to supplement the note taking and this is the approach the researcher decided to take in this case.

The interviews took place over a number of days in April 2008 and interviews were transcribed within two days of their having taken place.

4.11 Limitations

This study is subject to single case analysis; therefore it is only representative of this one organisation in the intellectual disabilities sector and cannot be representative of the wider health service. Further research across a broader sample of organisations could help to identify the strength of the arguments presented in this paper. However these

findings can still be used as a basis for deciding whether to introduce a flexible working/reduced hour's policy.

4.12 Analysis

Hussey and Hussey (2001, p.4) define analysis as 'the ability to break down information into its various parts'. Qualitative analysis can prove less straightforward than quantitative however some view it as more of an 'art' than a 'science'. (Robson 1993, p.373)

Analysis can be a nerve wracking thought for any small scale researcher. (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001). This is why it is critical to focus on the research questions and concentrate on the analysis needed to find the answers to these.

4.13 Summary

This section outlines the types of research and methods chosen for this study and it provides a rationale as to why they were adopted. The researcher learnt some important lessons to be aware of when conducting research i.e. ethics committees and the time factor involved in the approval process etc. The reason service users were not involved in this research was that this would have had to be approved through the ethics committee which is a lengthy, time consuming process therefore only employees were used as part of this study.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to display the findings with as much clarity as possible, it is important to re-iterate that these findings cannot be generalised in wider context and are case specific. The chapter begins with an overview of the data received from the management questionnaire/survey (see Appendix D) on the flexible working/reduced hour's pilot policy which is divided into specific headings:-

- (a) Impact on service delivery
- (b) Impact on staffing arrangements
- (c) Covering /replacement issues
- (d) Meeting employee needs
- (e) Operationally viable
- (f) Additional comments

This section is followed by the findings from the employee interviews (see Appendix E), both from the sample of employee's that are currently availing of the policy and employee's that are not availing of the policy. The common themes are divided into the following headings:-

- (a) Personal Profile
- (b) Communication of the policy/Awareness of the policy
- (c) Main reasons for applying for the policy
- (d) Benefits of the policy
- (e) Downsides/ Negativities for the employee in availing of policy

- (f) Individual responsibility in ensuring that the service doesn't suffer
- (g) Impact on full time colleagues
- (h) Stigma (negative outlook)
- (i) Impact on career progression opportunities
- (j) Changed /updated suggestions

In order to gain more insight into employees availing of the policy, further data was collected from these employees, this was divided into the following headings:-

- (a) Length of time availing of the policy and expected duration
- (b) If policy wasn't available what would you have done?
- (c) Managers and colleagues support
- (d) Kept in the loop/updated
- (e) Role changed
- (f) Meeting employee's needs

Additional data was also collected from employee's not availing of the policy; these were divided into the following headings:

- (a) Knowledge of policy
- (b) Interested in applying in the future
- (c) Barriers
- (d) Difficulties for the service
- (e) Communication to other colleagues

The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the trends which are analysed and compared in greater detail in the next chapter.

5.2 Management Questionnaire/Survey Findings

General Information

A total of 22 completed questionnaires were received from managers which incorporated a total of 17 employees across all regions who availed of the flexible working policy.

Impact on service delivery

This section focussed on whether the policy's impact on service delivery was positive or negative.

Question: What impact does the introduction of the policy have on service delivery?

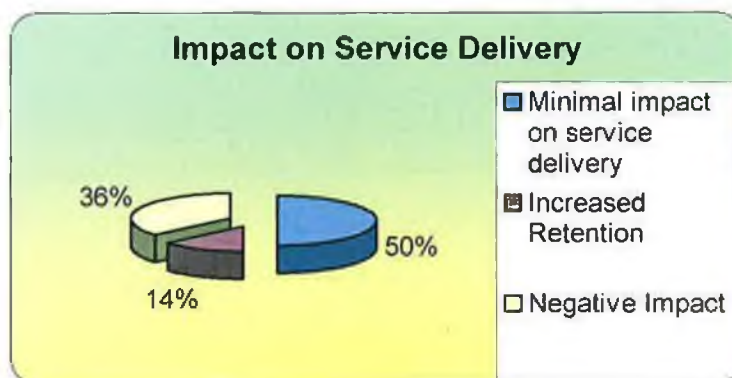


Figure 3: Impact on Service delivery

11 felt that the reduction in hours was working well and that it had minimal/manageable impact on service delivery. It should however be noted that some managers stated that if the volume of applications continued to increase there would be an impact on staffing.

3 felt that it has facilitated the retention of experienced employees within the organisation.

8 felt that it created a negative impact due to:-

- Relief staff being required to cover which had a negative impact on service users particularly when relief staff were unfamiliar with service users.
- Parts of positions were left unfilled and as it was more difficult to find replacements for parts of shifts this led to service deficits and longer waiting lists.²
- Reduced availability of staff to provide service

Impact on staffing arrangements and cover requirements

The purpose of this question was to establish if staff were affected by employees reducing their hours and if this was the case how this impacted on the staffing arrangements within the unit/ department. How was the deficit covered?

² The policy offered a reduction of 1 shift or 2 shifts in residential and 1 day or 2 days in day services, this meant that if an employee reduced their hours by 1 day a week and worked 4 days it was extremely difficult to find cover for 1 day every week rather.

Question: What impact has the introduction of the policy had on staffing arrangements? How was the reduction in hours covered?

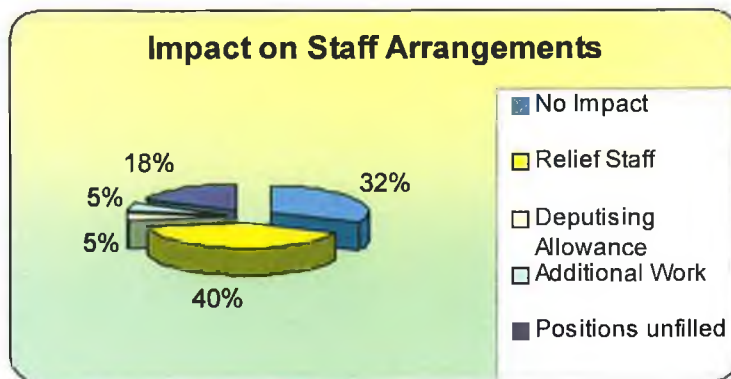


Figure 4: Impact on Staff Arrangements

7 felt that this has not caused an issue due to the fact that:-

- part time permanent employee's taking extra hours
- staff that normally worked days were pleased to be offered a night shift

9 stated that relief staff were used to fill the gap this;

- This worked well in some cases
- If relief staff were not available the programme for the day was cancelled this affected the service users negatively
- Relief was used in the interim as a number of employees reduced their hours and this amalgamated into a part time position, this position is being advertised at present.

1 stated that acting up arrangements were put into place, this is where an employee 'acts up' into the position of the reduced hours worker. The individual gets acting up

allowance as payment for this. It was however indicated that the employee who was acting up role suffered on the day that they were filling the other position.

1 felt that this caused additional work for the manager in relation to time spent organising cover etc.

4 stated that it was a real issue that parts of positions were left unfilled as it was too difficult to fill them. This had a negative impact on the service and other staff.

Meeting employee needs

This question focussed on manager's opinion as to whether the policy is meeting their employee's needs.

Question: Is the policy meeting employee needs?

22 felt that it is currently meeting employee needs as it;

- Creates better work life balance for the employee
- Retains staff
- Maintains continuity to the service

Operating successfully in the unit/department

This question wants to establish if the policy is operationally viable.

Question: Is the policy operating successfully?



Figure 5: Policy Operating Successfully

18 felt yes, it is however:-

- It was pointed out by a lot of these managers that they can manage it because only one employee is availing of it at present, but if more applied they don't know if they would be able to accommodate it.

4 felt no, the reasons appeared to be:-

- It only works if you unit have part time staff that can take on additional hours
- It has a negative affect on service provision
- Difficult to fill the remaining parts of position.

Additional comments/general Feedback

The purpose of this question was to give the manager an opportunity to give feedback on the policy that they felt relevant and important to mention that wasn't covered in the questions posed.

Question: Do you have any additional comments or feedback to give us in relation to the policy?

- The roster appears to be driven by employee requests rather than service delivery.
- Where part posts are not filled employee ends up doing full time work in their reduced hours in order to fill the deficit.
- Reduced hours appears to me more manageable in day services³
- The full staff team needs to be flexible in order for the policy to work successfully.
- May have been better to move the employee to respite house where there is a constant turnover of service users so it wouldn't affect continuity of service and also in respite it is not the service user's home.
- Maybe term time should be looked at as an option.
- HR support needed for manager in relation to re-calculation of bank holidays and annual leave for the reduced hours employee.
- Some of the remaining full time staff although supportive have voiced there concerns about having to train in all the new relief staff.
- Employees working flexible hours must be willing to give extra hours at times when the department is busy.
- There needs to be a cut off in the number of applications approved at a unit/department level as too many changes in staffing makes it difficult for service users.

³ The reason for this may be that there is perception that finding cover is easier for days rather than for night or shifts.

5.2.1 Summary

The questionnaire findings show us that even though managers believe that the employees are content with the policy it is having an impact on service delivery and staffing arrangements within the organisation. Relief staff are being used in a lot of cases to cover the deficit and this in itself is leading to problems such as relief staff being unfamiliar with service users (lack of continuity of care), if relief staff were not available which was sometimes the case service users programmes had to be cancelled for the day.

The thought behind the policy when it was introduced was that part time permanent or full time permanent staff would do additional shifts to make up the deficit but this only happened half of the time.

An important point to make is that managers were of the opinion that the policy was working well because they only had a manageable amount of people in their department/unit approved for flexible working/reduced hours, if however more employees began to apply they may not be able to facilitate their requests.

Managers suggested that HR support was needed for managers to help them manage their reduced hour's employees. All staff need to be flexible in order to accommodate the flexible worker and to ensure that the service doesn't suffer.

5.3 Employee Interviews Findings

5.3.1 Employee's availing of flexible working policy

It is important to point out that there were no set answers to any of the questions asked therefore the respondents had the freedom to answer the questions in the way they felt appropriate. All the responses below are quotes that came directly from the respondents.

General Information

14 employees out of a possible 20 took part in the telephone interviews.

Personal Profile

This was in opening section of the interview and since it wasn't apparent the demographics of the employees availing of the policy before this research was undertaken, this was a useful tool for establishing and building the profile of these employees.

Job Titles

The job titles of employees availing of the policy spanned across the entire organisation. It went from entry level positions i.e. Grade III Administrator, senior supervisor to top level positions i.e., principal clinician, Senior Social work practitioner and senior physiotherapist. (see Appendix C for organisational chart))

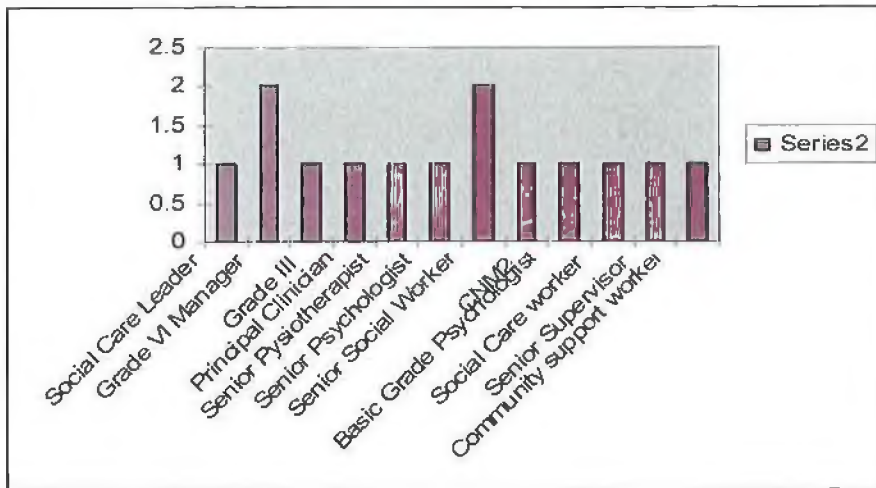


Figure 6: Job Titles

Gender, Age range and length of service.

The following charts provide a breakdown of the employee's gender, age range and length of service.

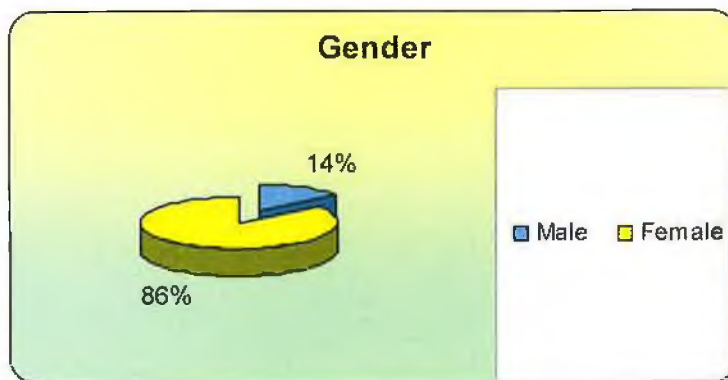


Figure 7: Gender

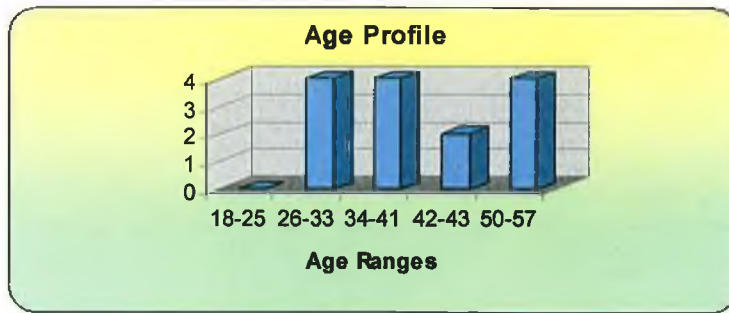


Figure 8: Age Profile

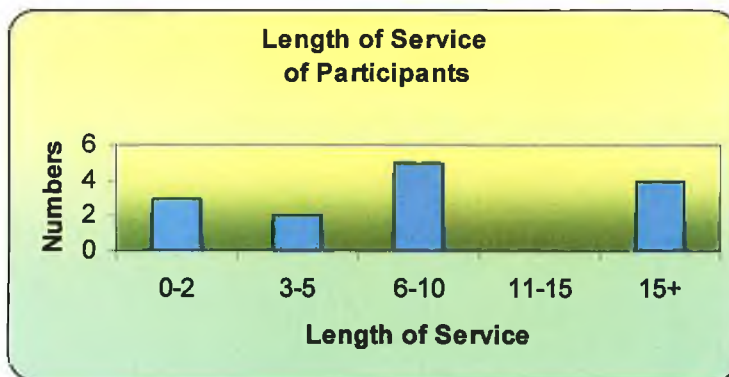


Figure 9: Length of service

Communication of the policy/awareness of the policy

The purpose of this question was to find out how employee's heard or became aware of the flexible working/reduced hours pilot policy.

Question: Were you aware of the policy on flexible working? If yes how did you become aware of it?

Yes: 11

No: 3

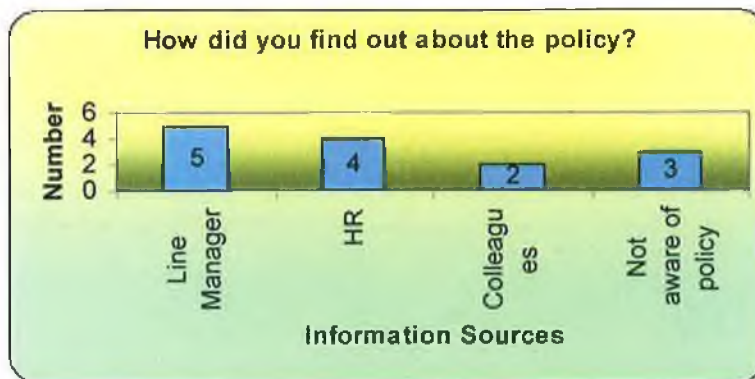


Figure 10: Information Sources

- 5 were told about the policy through their line manager
- 4 heard about the policy from the HR department
- 2 heard about the policy through their colleagues
- 3 didn't know that there was a policy. They investigated the option of reduced hours with their manager independently unaware that a policy existed.

Main reasons for applying for the policy

It was important to identify the main reasons why individuals were choosing to apply for the policy.

Question: What were the main reason/reasons that you applied for Flexible working?

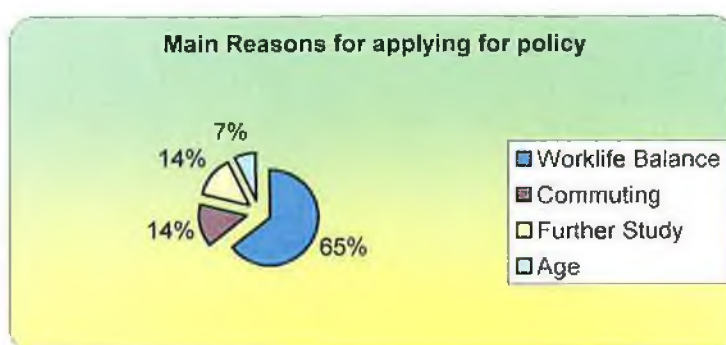


Figure 11: Reasons for Applying

- 9 stated that work life balance with young children, family reasons, childcare were the main reasons.
- 2 stated that commuting difficulties was the main reason
- 2 stated education/further study
- 1 stated that their age and that they were nearing retirement

Other reasons:

- Being able to pursue other interests
- Financial commitments

Benefits of the policy

The purpose of the question was to get a sense of what the employees valued most from availing in the policy.

Question: What are the benefits for you in availing of the policy?

- 5 felt the main benefit was more family time
- 5 felt that work life balance without the hassle of looking for another job
- 2 felt the benefit of being able to pursue further education
- 1 felt the benefit of avoiding commuting for 1 shift a week
- 1 felt the benefit of having a variety of work

Other reasons:

- Less pressure more energy
- Balance

Downsides/ Negativities for the employee in availing of policy

This section focussed on if employees felt there were any negatives/downsides to flexible working and to identify them.

Question: Since availing in the policy do you feel there have been any downsides for you associated with it?



Figure 12: Downsides for Employees

10 employees said No

4 said yes, the principal downsides were:-

- Missing out on meetings
- Pressure financially
- Negative affect on the pension
- Having to be more organised and systematic because of not being at work everyday

Individual responsibility in ensuring that the service doesn't suffer in their absence

This question was asked in order to establish if the employees themselves believed that they had responsibility/obligation in making sure the service didn't suffer in their absence. It was important to find out how they have achieved this.

Question: Do you believe that you have a responsibility to make sure that the service doesn't suffer in your absence? If yes, what steps have you taken to ensure that the service doesn't suffer due to your reduction?

Yes=11

No=3



Figure 13: Individual responsibility to ensure service didn't suffer

Yes

- 6 employees felt that they were doing '5 days in 4' or in other words doing their full time hours in their reduced hours which increase the workload for them when they are at work.

- 3 employees ensured that a handover is done with their manager/person who will act up in their absence and check voicemails
- 2 employees had to work on their time management and prioritise more
- 1 employee worked through lunch and stayed late in the evenings
- Further verification with their managers could be done to ensure that the steps above were actually happening.

No

3 felt that they had no responsibility as cover was brought in to fill shifts. i.e. relief

Impact on full time colleagues

The purpose of this question was to investigate if employees that availed of the policy thought it affected their full time colleagues.

Question: How do you think your other full time colleagues have felt or reacted to you availing of the flexible working policy and reducing your hours?

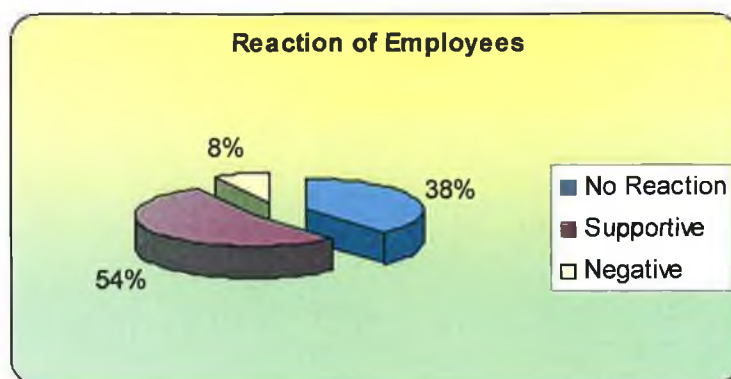


Figure 14: Impact on full time colleagues

- 5 felt that their full time colleagues had no negative reaction to it.
- 5 were supportive
- 1 felt that it was a bit of a nuisance for them i.e. not being able to attend meetings on certain days
- 1 felt that they initially it was difficult for them but they are fine now.
- 1 felt that they were accepting of it as others in the unit were working part time
- 1 felt that they accepted it when people did it for family reasons

Stigma (negative outlook)

'something that detracts from the character or reputation of a person, group, etc.; mark of disgrace or reproach '(your dictionary)

The focus of this question was to establish if people availing of the policy felt that in general they were negatively looked upon.

Question: Do you feel that there is a stigma/negative outlook attached to working flexible/ reduced hours?

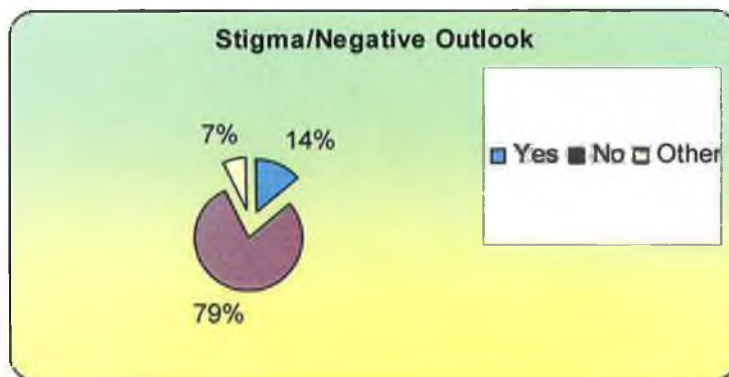


Figure 15: Stigma(Negative Outlook)

Yes: 2

- Maybe because I am a male, in general I get asked a lot of questions; I think it's quite unusual for a man to avail of it.
- Yes a little bit, full time people would love to do it, they are sometimes resentful

No: 11

Maybe in the past but not now

Other: 1

Too early to comment for me but I myself have asked the question of others how committed are they if they are never at work.

Impact on career progression opportunities

The purpose of this question was to investigate whether these employees felt that availing of this policy negatively affected their career progression opportunities.

Question: Do you feel that availing of the policy could affect your career progression opportunities?

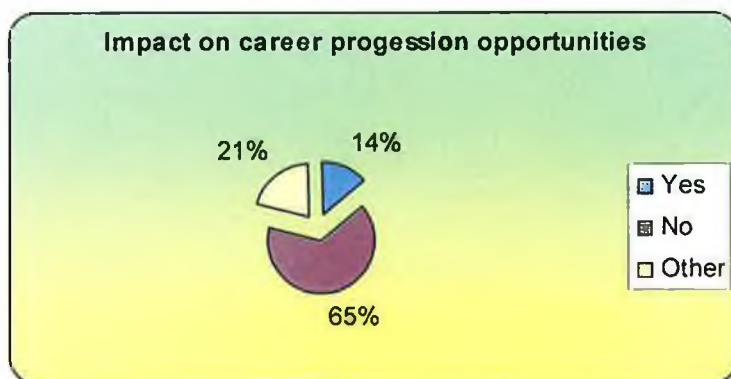


Figure 16: Impact on career progression

Yes: 2

- I could see how it could affect them.
- Yes I believe it would have if I wanted to progress but I am at a stage in my life where career progression is not a priority for me.

No: 9

Other: 3

- It's too soon for me to tell but I can see how it has affected others.
- Not applicable at my stage in life
- I don't know, could it affect an employee's training opportunities

Changed /updated suggestions

This question was posed to get suggestions on how the employees felt the policy might be improved to make it work better from the employee perspective.

Question: Can you think of how the policy might be changed/ updated in order to make the policy work better from your perspective?

- No change: 6
- The policy is fine as it is.
- 2 employees said that they didn't know that a policy existed.
- 5 had suggestions on the policy.
- 1 said that employees should be informed of the expected salary reduction and tax implications before they reduced their hours to help them decide.
- 1 said it was important to make it clear that the arrangement needs to suit the needs of the service and the employee in order for it to work

- 1 said that the wording of the policy was not specific enough in relation to the duration; the application form didn't specify start and finish dates. (This has been updated since)
- 1 said that information regarding pro-rata bank holiday entitlements would be appreciated and also the possibility of job sharing for certain positions should be investigated.
- I felt that term time as an option should be considered by the organisation and that there should be more flexibility around reducing by 1 day or 2 days, if an employee worked full time over 4 days or if they reduced their hours by an hour per day rather than a full day.

5.3.2 Employee Interviews Findings

5.3.2.1 Employee's not availing of flexible working policy

General Information

These employee's were chosen based on the job titles of the employee's availing of the position in order to be able to compare and contrast some questions asked to both groups.

Personal Profile

Gender, Age range and length of service.

The following charts provide a breakdown of the employee's gender, age range and length of service.

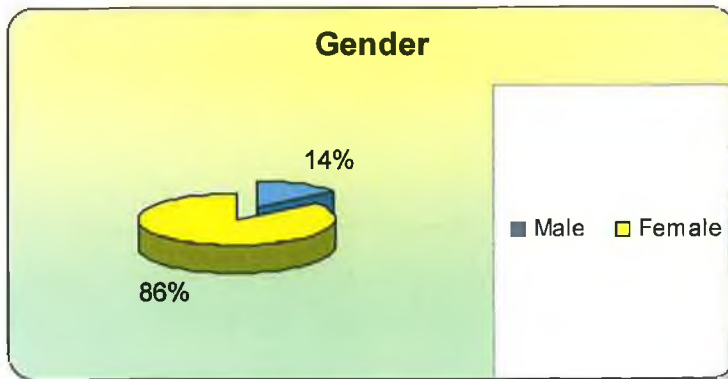


Figure 17: Gender

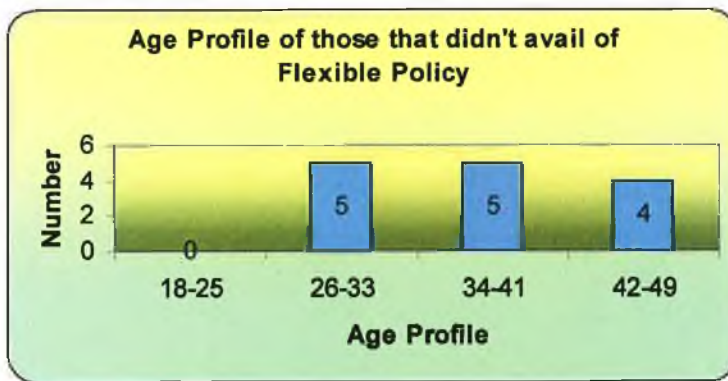


Figure 18: Age Profile

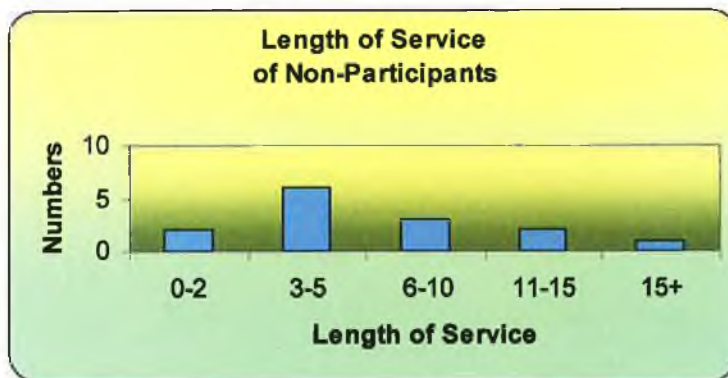


Figure 19: Length of service

Communication of the policy/awareness of the policy

The purpose of this question was to investigate if employees knew if the policy existed and if they were how they became aware of it.

Question: Were you aware of the policy on flexible working? If yes how did you become aware of it?

- Yes: 5
- No: 7
- 2: Know it exists but don't really know what it entails.

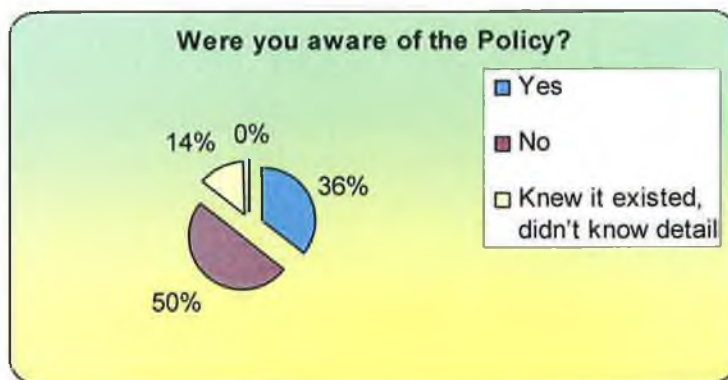


Figure 20: Awareness of Policy

- Out of the employees that knew it existed:-
- 2 heard about the policy through memos sent to them
- 1 were told about the policy through their line manager
- 1 heard about the policy from the HR department
- 1 heard about the policy through their colleagues

Main reasons for applying for the policy

It was important to identify the main reasons why employees who didn't avail of the policy thought other employees applied for it.

Question: What do you think are the main reason/reasons that employees apply for flexible working/reduction in hours?

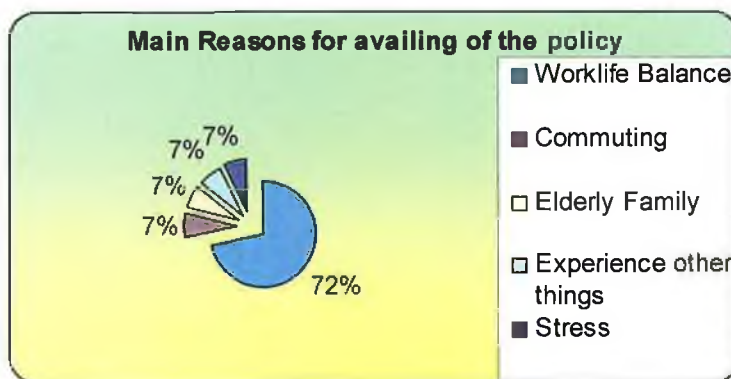


Figure 21: Main Reasons for the availing of the policy

- 10 stated that work life balance with young children, family reasons, childcare were the main reasons.
- 1 stated that commuting difficulties was the main reason
- 1 stated to experience other things
- 1 stated having elderly family
- 1 stated stress

Other reasons

Further study

Benefits of the policy

The purpose of the question was to get a sense of what the employees thought might be the benefits for employees availing of the policy.

Question: What do you think are main benefits for the employee of reducing their hours?

- 7 felt that it would be less stressful for the employee managing home and work life/better work life balance.
- 2 felt the main benefit was more family time
- 2 felt the main benefit is that the employee has a better frame of mind and is more enthusiastic.
- 1 felt the benefit of avoiding commuting.
- 1 felt the benefit was the opportunity for the individual to grow and develop in other areas/personal development courses.
- 1 felt that the main benefit was that it improved the quality of their life.

Downsides/ Negativities for the employee in availing of policy

This section focussed on if employees felt there were any negatives/downsides to flexible working and to identify them.

Question: Do you think there are any downsides for the employee associated with availing of the policy? If yes, please describe.

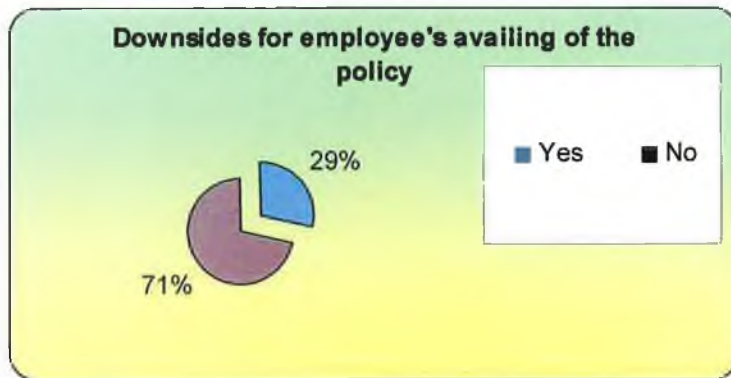


Figure 22: Downsides/Negatives for employees

10 employees said No

4 said yes these were:-

- Career restrictions
- Lack of training opportunities
- Impact on others
- Pressure of catching up when returning to work
- Employees feeling guilty ,missing out on meetings
- Handover issues with two people sharing a position
- Resentment from colleagues

Individual responsibility in ensuring that the service doesn't suffer in their absence

This question was asked in order to establish if the employees that don't avail of the policy believe that employees availing of the policy had responsibility/obligation in making sure the service didn't suffer in their absence. If yes, how would they do this?

Question: Do you believe that the employee that reduces his/her hours has a responsibility to make sure that the service doesn't suffer in their

absence? If yes, what steps do you think they should take to ensure that the service doesn't suffer due to their reduction?

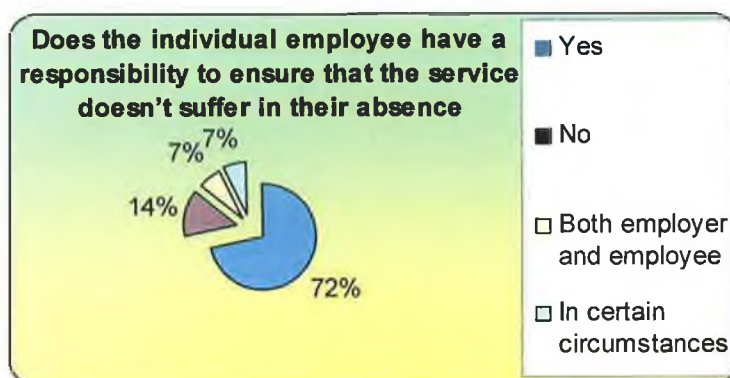


Figure 23: Individual responsibility to ensure that service doesn't suffer

Yes=10

No= 2

- 1 said both employer and employee have responsibility
- 1 said in certain circumstances, work preparation before leave, designate staff member to attend meetings ion their absence.

Yes

- Look at workload with manager, plan things in order to cover in absence and do handover
- Get update when they come back and leave names of contact people to provide service in the absence of the person who reduces their hours
- They need to be more organised, anticipate issues that might occur in their absence and good communication with others.
- Reports should be done before person goes, handover completed. Cannot leave people high and dry.

- Make extra effort. Cover must be organised before reduced hour's starts

No

They had no responsibility as cover was brought in to fill shifts. i.e. relief

Impact on full time colleagues

The purpose of this question was to investigate if employees felt that employee's who availed of the policy affected them.

Question: If a colleague is working reduced hours, what, in your view is its impact on you and other colleagues?

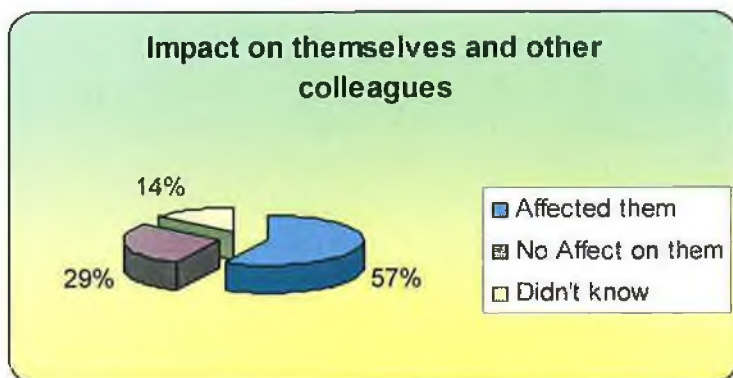


Figure 24: Impact on themselves and other colleagues

8 felt that it affected them as:-

- There would be pressure on the other employees to pick up the slack /work divided out amongst other staff/extra workload
- It would have negative impact on service if things weren't planned properly.
- There would be the need to ensure cover in the office and organise a rota at all times
- There can be problems with finding replacement staff and a lack of communication.

4 felt it had no affect on them.

- If there workload is managed properly then staff wouldn't be left to pick up the pieces so it shouldn't have a major impact.
- If it is approved then it can be accommodated

2 didn't know.

Stigma (negative outlook)

Something that detracts from the character or reputation of a person, group, etc.; mark of disgrace or reproach '(your dictionary)

The focus of this question was to establish if employees felt that availing of the policy would have a negative outlook on the employee.

Question: Do you feel that there is a stigma/negative outlook attached to working flexible/ reduced hours? If yes, explain.

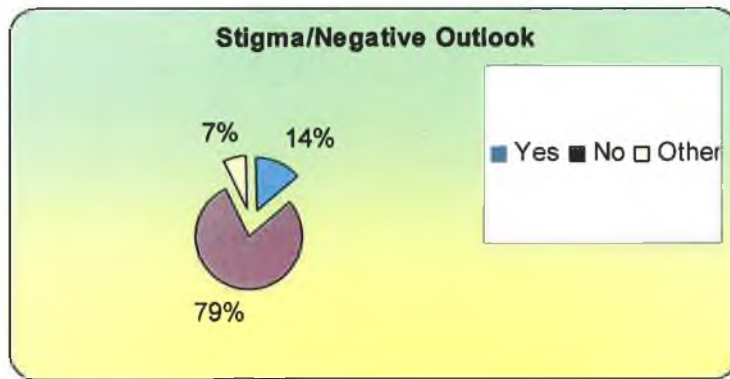


Figure 25: Stigma/ Negative Outlook

Yes: 2

Particularly if you're a manager

No: 11

Mainly people with children need to reduce their hours they have no other choice and have to reduce their hours due to their personal circumstances

Other: 1

Perhaps there could be a little jealousy and envy in the nicest way positive

Impact on career progression opportunities

The purpose of this question was to investigate whether employees felt that availing of this policy could hamper an individuals career progression opportunities.

Question: Do you feel that availing of the policy could affect your career progression opportunities?

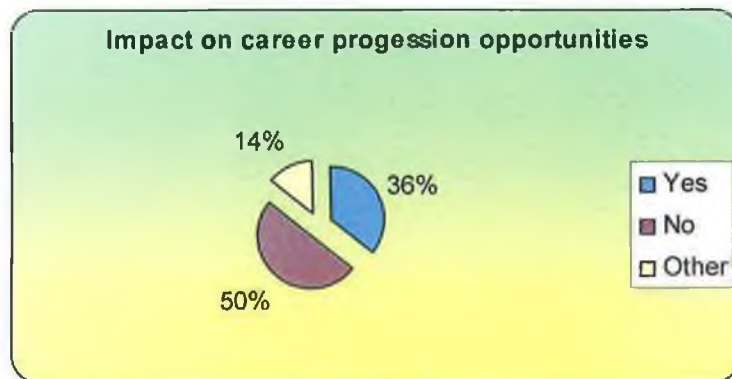


Figure 26: Impact on career opportunities

Yes: 5

- Most jobs are full time so if your working reduced hours you cannot apply and continue to work reduced hours, if you applied for a promotional position that was full time would you be considered if you only worked 3 days per week for example, would reduced hours workers be overlooked for these full time promotional positions
- Availing would be seen as a lack of commitment on the employees part and not being flexible enough
- If a junior came in on reduced hours it would take them longer to build up their bank of experience so this could affect their career progression prospects

No: 7

Not if you don't let it.

Other: 2

- Hope that it wouldn't but don't know really
- Don't think so depends on how much an employee reduces their hours by

Changed /updated suggestions

This question was posed to get suggestions on how employees felt the policy might be improved to make it work better from the employee perspective.

Question: Can you think of how the policy might be changed/ updated in order to make the policy work better from your perspective?

No: 1

1 felt that the policy was good as it stands and that it created a positive happier team with less burn out.

Yes: 13

- 5 felt that staff need to be made more aware that the policy existed i.e. via workshops
- 1 felt that the organisation should promote the fact that it doesn't have to be a permanent arrangement
- 1 felt that employees needs to be made aware that there always needs to be staff to cover in order for it to be a success
- 1 felt that managers need to organise cover before the employee is approved to ensure that the service doesn't suffer.
- 1 felt that the organisation needs to look at the way its impacting on other employees
- 1 felt the policy should be more flexible and too look at the possibility of home working
- 1 felt that the organisation should look at term time
- 1 felt that managers need to be supported to fill the deficits

- 1 felt that the policy should be made more accessible to staff

5.3.3 Other Questions for Employees availing of the Policy

(To get deeper insight)

Length of time availing of the policy and expected duration to continue

The purpose of this question was to establish how long employee's had availed of the policy and how long they would like to continue. (Policy introduced January 2007)

Question: How long have you been making use of the flexible working scheme?

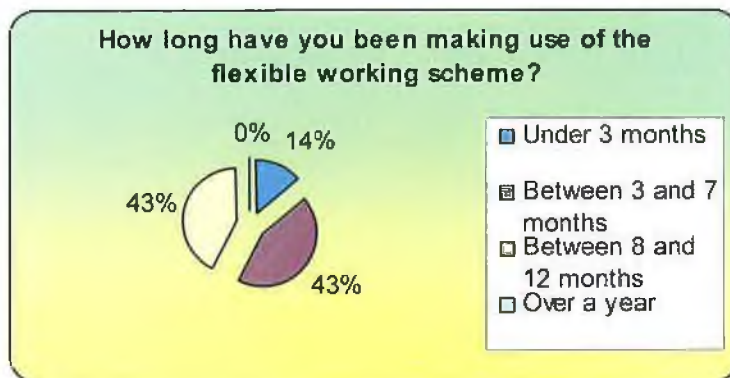


Figure 27: How long have you been on flexible working scheme?

- Under 3 months: 2
- Between 3-7 months: 6
- Between 8-12 month: 6
- Over a year: 0

Question:

If the organisation was to continue the flexible working/reduced hour's policy after the pilot, for what period of time are you likely to continue using it?

- Indefinitely/ Foreseeable future: 5
- Unsure as personal circumstances change: 4
- Very specific timeframe which has been stated (temporary):2
- Another few years: 2
- Don't know: 1

If policy wasn't available what would you have done?

This is to focus on the importance of the policy and what other options employees would have investigated if they didn't have the policy available to them.

Question: If the policy wasn't available what would you have done?

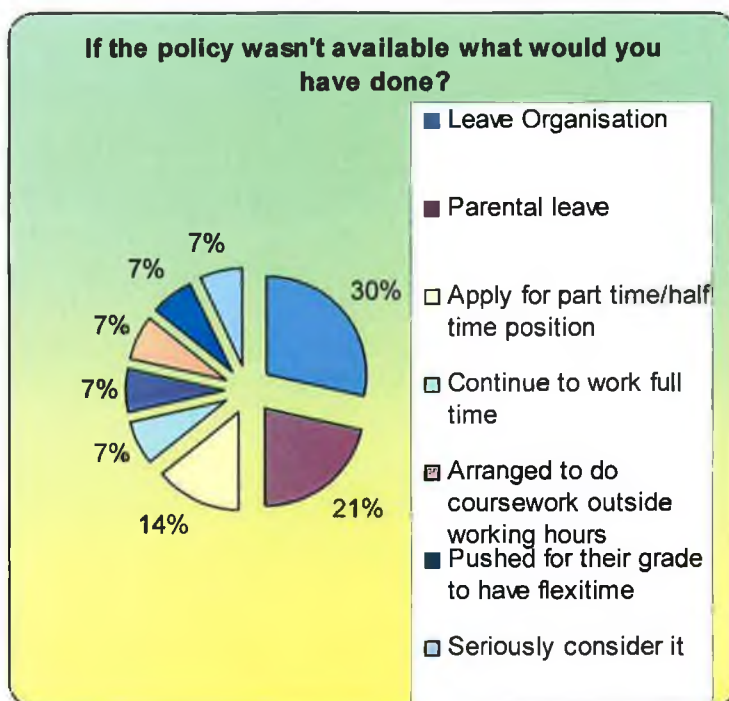


Figure 28: If the policy wasn't available?

- 4 employees said that they would have had no choice but to leave the organisation and look for flexible hours in another organisation
- 3 employees said that they would have used their unpaid parental leave
- 2 employees said they would have applied to work part time on a temporary basis
- 1 said continue to work full time
- 1 said that they would have re-applied again but it would have been difficult for them
- 1 said that they would have arranged to do course work outside of working hours but this would have been difficult and stressful
- 1 said they would have pushed for their grade to have flexitime
- 1 said that they would have to seriously consider it as they wouldn't be able to work full time.

Managers and colleagues support

The purpose of this question was to find out of managers and colleagues supported the employee availing of flexible working.

Question: Have you found your manager and colleagues supportive since your working hours were reduced?

Yes: 14

- Service manager oversees things when I am out of the office
- Manager offered advise in delegating
- Opportunity to discuss caseload with them
- It was hard initially but they got used to it.

- Yes but when it came down to it work didn't reduce.

Kept in the loop/updated on return to work

This question was to find out whether the employee was communicated with and updated on anything urgent that they missed when they were not at work.

Question: Do you feel that you are always kept in the loop when you return to work after flexible working? If yes please give an example of how this is done.

Yes: 13

- Briefed when arrive and if theirs a real emergency can be contacted by mobile.
- Very effective communication system, notes left
- Communication book is used

No: 1

The onus is on the staff member to update themselves.

Role Changed

This question is to find out whether the role has changed since the reduced hours.

Question: Has your role changed since you reduced your hours?

No: 14

On reflection the interviewer should have been more specific with this question, in order to clarify for employees that the role change was in relation to the tasks involved in the job rather than the working hours i.e. doing 5 days in 4.

Meeting needs

Question: Do you feel this pilot policy is meeting your needs?

Yes: 14

- However some employees felt they were still doing the same workload in reduced hours
- There is a need for more cover
- The policy needs to be a little more flexible around changing days for example

5.3.3.1 Summary

The majority of employees have been availing of the policy for between three 12 months. 64% of these employees would like to continue to avail of the policy for the next few years. 30% of the employee's would have left the organisation if the option of flexible working/reduced hours wasn't available to them. All employees found their managers and colleagues supportive since they have been availing of the policy. The majority of employees said that they were kept in the loop when they returned from their reduction in hours. The policy seems to be meeting the needs of all employees and their roles haven't changed since they began to avail of the policy.

5.3.4 Other Questions for Employees not availing of the Policy

(To get deeper insight)

Knowledge of Policy

This question was to establish if employees actually knew what the policy offered and the procedure for applying for it.

Question: What does the policy offer for employees? What is the procedure for applying for flexible working?

- 4 people believe that the policy offers work life balance. i.e. more home time, more balance between home and work.
- 3 people believe that it offered more flexibility
- 3 people said that you apply in writing and get approval
- 1 person said complete application form
- 1 person said apply through manager

Reason for Refusal

This question was to establish if employees had applied before and the reason for their refusal.

Questions: Have you ever applied to avail of the policy? If yes, why were you refused?

- No: 5
- Interested in applying in the future:
- Yes: 6

- Possibly: 5
- If personal circumstances changed: 3
- Children
- Health reasons

Barriers

The purpose of this question was to discover if employees were of the opinion that obstacles existed for them in relation to being able to avail of the policy. These barriers were significant enough that people thought they would stop them from reducing their hours.

Question: What do you feel might be the barriers for employees in availing of reduced hours/flexible working policy?

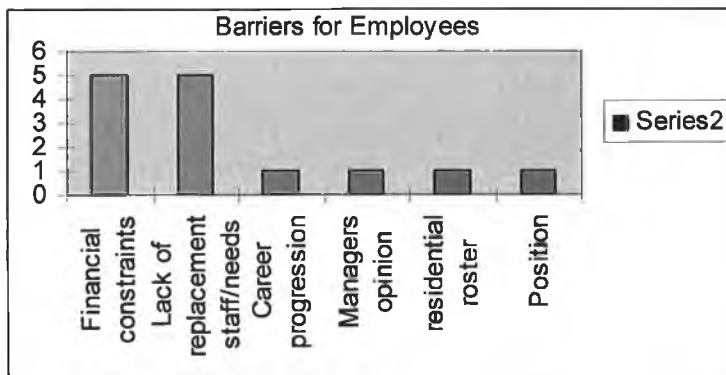


Figure 29: Barriers for Employees

- 5 said that financial constraints would be a barrier for them
- 5 said that a lack of replacement staff and the needs of the service would be a barrier for them in availing
- 1 said that there would be career progression barriers

- 1 said that their manager's opinion would stop them from availing
- 1 said the position, trying to fit the workload into the reduced hours wouldn't be possible.
- 1 said that in a residential setting an employee would not work the same shifts every week this could have been problematic.

Difficulties for the service

The purpose of this question was to find out if the policy causes issues for the service.

**Question: Do you feel that there are difficulties with the service to patients/clients resulting from the fact that some employees are availing of this policy?
If yes please describe.**

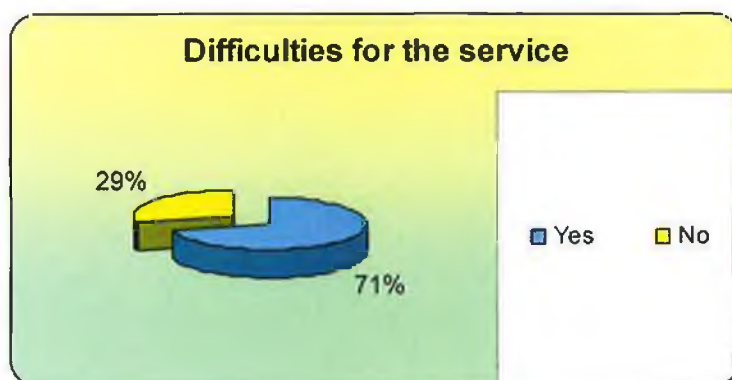


Figure 30: Difficulties for the service

- Yes: 10
- No: 4
- Yes
- Inconsistency for the service and the clients
- Lack of decision making authority with the individual acting up in the absence

- Significant covering difficulties: - lack of replacement staff, rostering, relief staff, filling part posts
- Time Management issues
- Lack of relief staff SAM trained⁴
- No
- The service will benefit as the staff are happier
- If situation managed shouldn't have negative impact on the service.
- Positives outweigh negatives.

Communication to other colleagues

The purpose of this question is to find out how the reduction is communicated to the staff team.

Question: If an employee has reduced their hours in your section, how is this communicated to you and other staff in the section?

- Staff meeting: 4
- Hasn't happened yet so don't know: 5
- Employee themselves: 1
- Manager: 3
- Other staff: 1

⁴ Safe Administration of medication. This is a training course that enables an employee to give medication.

5.3.4.1 Summary

Generally employees didn't know the detail of the policy, they knew that if offered work life balance to employees but didn't explain the specifics of the policy, i.e. the reduction in one day or two days or one shift or two shifts. One employee knew that there was an application form to complete in order to avail of the policy. The majority of employees said that they would possibly apply to avail of the policy in the future.

The main barriers for employees in availing of the policy are financial and the lack of replacement staff to cover them.

A critical point to note is that 71% of employees not availing of the policy were of the opinion that there were difficulties with the service to clients resulting from the fact that some employees were availing of the policy. The primary reason for appeared to be lack of replacement staff to cover. Communication of reduction of hours to other staff wasn't an issue.

5.4 Key Trends and patterns

Following an examination of the data above several trends and patterns begin to emerge.

These include:

5.4.1 Management Questionnaire

- Half of managers felt that the policy was working well and had a minimal impact on service delivery.
- All felt that the policy was meeting the needs of the individual employee.
- A high number of manager felt that the policy was operating successfully.

- A lot of managers felt that managing one employee availing of the policy is manageable but if more employees applied they would have difficulty accommodating them.

5.4.2 Employee Interviews

5.4.2.1 Employee's availing of the policy

- The majority of the employee's partaking in the policy were female.
- A lot of the employee's said that there were no downsides to availing of policy.
- All employees thought that the policy was meeting their needs.

5.4.2.2 Employee's not availing of the policy

- It was clear that a number of employees were not aware that the policy existed.
- The majority of employee's that do not avail of the policy feel that employees that avail of the policy have a responsibility to make sure that the service doesn't suffer in their absence. The employee's themselves that avail of the policy agree with this.
- These employees felt that if a colleague reduces their hours it impacts on them.
- Most of the employee's felt that there is not a stigma/ negative outlook associated with availing of the policy.

6 ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present an analysis of the information collected from the management questionnaire and the telephone interviews, the findings of which were presented in the last section.

The section will begin by examining the results from the management questionnaire and discussing the key points and trends that were apparent from this.

It will go on to compare the views of the employees availing of the policy and their relevant comparators (with the same job title) who do not participate in the reduction of hours scheme, highlighting the similarities and differences between the two.

Following this it will analyse the specific questions that were posed to the employees in order to obtain a deeper insight into their views on the policy.

The management questionnaire and the employee interviews will be examined together in order to see if any commonalities and differences exist between them both.

All the analysis will be carried out with a view to answering the research question which is 'to assess the impact of a pilot flexible working initiative in a service driven client focussed environment'.

The overall findings of the study will then be compared with the theories on flexible working which are put forth in the literature review. The section will conclude with a summary discussion of the most pertinent points of this analysis.

6.2 Management Questionnaire

A significant number of managers (64%) felt that the policy had either of minimal/manageable impact on service delivery or had a positive impact on staff i.e. retention. However, 36% believed that the impact to service delivery was quite negative. At the same time, the majority (68%) of managers expressed a view that the policy impacted negatively on staffing arrangements particularly in relation to the use of the relief panel to cover the deficit (40%) which wasn't the aim of the policy while a minority believed that it had not caused a negative impact on staffing arrangements.(32%).The statements above are conflicting because while on one hand a high percentage of managers felt that the policy had minimal impact on service delivery and on the other hand an even higher percentage said that the policy impacted negatively on staffing arrangements, it would be expected that these two statements would concur with in other in this respect.

Finally, all managers were of the opinion that the policy was currently meeting employee needs. The majority of managers (81%) thought that the policy was operating successfully at present but they were unsure as to how they would be able to manage any additional applications for the policy from staff within the same unit/department. To elaborate further on this point, it is important to state that at present the take-up of the policy has not been very high since its introduction in January 2007. However, if more than one person within a department or unit is approved to avail of the policy it may affect the running of the department due to difficulties with replacement cover etc. this can affect the department/unit negatively.

6.3 Employee Comparison (employees availing and not availing of the policy)

The profile of the flexible worker within this organisation is as follows: mostly female (86%), with between 6 to 10 years service in the organisation and between 26 and 57 years of age.

As would be expected, most of the employee's that were availing of the policy were aware of its existence(78%), however some employee's who wanted to reduce their hours did not realise that a formal policy was in place. To clarify this point further, employees approached their individual managers independently of the policy to request a reduction of hours without knowing that a policy already existed. By comparison, of those not availing of the policy 50% of these were unaware that a pilot flexible working/reduced hour's policy existed.

The prime motivating factor for availing of the policy was work life balance/ family reasons. The main benefit for those availing of the policy was more family time. Indeed, even those employees who had not availed of the policy believed that the main benefit was better work life balance.

Over 70% of employee's availing of the policy felt that there were no major downsides to working flexible/reduced hours while 29% believed that some downsides existed. The downsides mentioned were; loss of income, negative impact on pension, missing out on meetings and finally a pressure to re-organise work because of working reduced hours. Employee's who didn't avail of the policy held similar views in the same proportions.

A significant number of employees who were currently availing of the policy believed that the employee had a responsibility to make sure that the service does not suffer in their absence (78%), while a high percentage of employee's not availing of the policy concurred with this view. (71%)

57% of employees not availing of the policy believed that their colleagues who were working reduced hours negatively affected them. Examples of how this impacted on them were; by having to pick up the slack/extra hours of the reduced hours employee, negative impact on service if planning wasn't carried out properly, rota may have to be created to cover, problems finding replacement staff could negatively impact on the team and lack of communication could also cause issues for the staff. This is in contrast to the 85% of employee's availing of the policy who believed that that their other full time colleagues either had no reaction or were supportive to them in relation to their availing of the policy. It is important to note that just because staff feel that their colleagues availing of the policy will have negative affect on them, doesn't mean that they will not support the policy.

The majority of people availing of the policy felt that there was no stigma/negative outlook associated with working reduced hours. A dictionary definition of a stigma is 'something that detracts from the character or reputation of a person, group, etc.; mark of disgrace or reproach'. (your dictionary, available on:

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/stigma>> accessed 10th May, 2008)

This view was matched by employee's currently not availing of the policy. A majority of employee's (65%) availing of the policy believed that it hadn't and wouldn't affect their career progression opportunities while a smaller percentage (36%) of employees

not availing of the policy felt that it would affect their career progression opportunities (50% felt that it would not affect their career progression opportunities) and 14% were unsure whether it would or not. Both sets of interviews revealed that the organisation should investigate term time⁵, have more flexibility in the reduction of hour's policy and that the policy needed to be more widely communicated to staff.

In comparing the common questions asked to both sets of employees (availing and not availing), the CHI Square statistical test was used. The results of which suggest that the data there is no significant difference between the two groups according to the statistical test, while there were differences in one or two questions as you said below, overall attitudes don't appear to differ significantly. The reason for this is that the respondents might have been inclined to give the "right" answer and also the sample size was a little light. (see Appendix G for the statistical test)

6.4 Further Analysis of Employee Interviews

6.4.1 Employees availing of the policy

The majority of employee's have been availing of the policy for more than 3 months. Almost two thirds of them (64%) would either like to continue availing of the policy indefinitely or for some specific time in the future. Just under one third of participants (30%) of employees stated that they would have had to leave the organisation if the option of flexible working/reduced hours had not been available to them. While 35% of

⁵ Term Time; A worker remains on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays.

employees availing of the policy would have used parental leave or applied for a part time position in the policy wasn't available.

All employees have found their managers and colleagues supportive of them since they began working on a reduced hour's basis. The majority of employees (93%) felt that they were kept in the loop each time they returned to work after their reduced hours. All employees' believed that their role had not changed since they reduced their hours. It was however unclear if this meant that they were doing a full week's work in reduced working time or whether they interpreted the question to mean the actual tasks/duties that made up their role. It is thought that they interpreted it, the latter of the two.

All employees felt that the policy was currently meeting their needs. However, when they were asked if the policy should be changed or updated to make it better, almost all of them (92%) had suggestions to make in this regard.

The main suggestion was that HR needed to set up workshops throughout the organisation to communicate the policy to all staff. (36%)

Others included:

- making employee's aware that the reduction of hours can be a temporary arrangement
- the provision of replacement cover needs to be available
- the impact on other colleagues should be assessed as part of the approval process
- The reduction of hours and other flexible working options should be examined by the organisation, i.e. home working for administration employees and term time.

6.4.2 Employees not currently availing of the policy

Only one employee questioned knew that it was necessary to complete an application form in order to comply with the procedure of applying for flexible working/reduced hours. A number did however believe that it had to be put in writing and approved by management. None of these employees had applied for flexible working/reduced hours before.

A significant number (71%) of employees believed that there were difficulties with the service to service users/clients resulting from the fact that some employees are availing of this policy. Examples of these difficulties include; inconsistency with service for clients, lack of decision making authority for person acting-up, covering/replacement issues and lack of relief staff SAM trained.

Most employees felt that there was adequate communication to them if their colleagues were to avail of the policy.

The majority (78%) of these employees said that they could possibly avail of the reduced hours policy in the future; while (21%) said they would avail of it if their personal circumstances changed. Should this send warning bells to managers to discuss and design a process for refusing people in a non discriminatory fashion before more employees begin to apply or are employees just being cautious by saying possibly meaning that they don't want to exclude themselves from availing of the policy in the future even though they don't believe that they will.

6.5 Management Questionnaire and Employee Interviews

In light of the research question ‘to assess the impact of a pilot flexible working initiative in a service driven client focussed environment’, the aim was to consider the issue from the perspectives of management, employees availing and not availing of the policy. The results of the management questionnaire and employee interviews indicate that the policy has a positive impact (meeting their needs) on those employees participating in the scheme. However, the research did highlight some obvious difficulties associated with deficits in service provision that would have to be addressed were either the current policy to be continued or a revised one introduced as a replacement. Replacing or backfilling (finding cover to replace the employee on reduced hours) staff seems to be a key issue for management and employees. If the hours are not covered it can impact on staff availing of the policy, who may have to do more work in less hours and employees that are not availing of the policy may have to pick up the slack while the flexible worker is out. Both seem to be occurring in the organisation at present. Obviously service needs take priority but ideally a balance needs to be reached between accommodating employee’s work life balance needs and maintaining a high quality service for service users.

The suggestion of term time and more flexibility around the hours of the reduction is consistent with all three surveys/interviews.

6.6 How did the findings relate to the literature?

Some of these findings corresponded to those put forward in the literature review while others differed.

6.7 Communication

The literature states that communication is important to the successful implementation of the policy. It recommends that different methods such as using a HR website, role models at the top, employee testimonials and induction programs need to be used to communicate the policy to all employees. (The Industrial Society, 2001, McCartney & Evans, 2005) The results of the employee interviews show that 50% of employees not availing of the policy didn't know that the policy existed while another 14% knew it existed but were unaware of its detail. Perhaps if their personal circumstances were different they would have investigated it more but because they were not interested in availing of it at present they didn't see the need to find out the detail of it. None of the above methods of communication were mentioned by employees interviewed.

In terms of an overall summary approximately 20 employees out of a total of 1800 approx are currently availing of the policy. Therefore it is realistic to suggest that the reason that the policy is not being taken up by employees is because many of them were not aware that the policy existed. However, if all employees were aware of the policy this could cause major issues for the service as there would come a time when employees would have to be refused because of service needs.

6.8 Reasons for availing of flexible working

The literature highlights the main reasons for people availing of flexible working as being caring responsibilities i.e. for children or elderly relatives. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003). The research findings support the literature in relation to caring for children as being one of the main reasons for availing of flexible working. However,

there was no evidence to suggest that caring for the elderly was the main reason why those currently availing of flexible working/reduced hours have applied in the first instance.

6.9 Critical Role of Line Manager

As noted in the literature review, many authors believe that line managers are the people that make the policy a success or failure. (Steinberg et al., cited in Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003, Stredwick and Ellis 2005, CIPD 2005a, Johnson 2004) Just under half of the employees currently availing of the policy learned of the policy through their line managers. All employees participating in the research and currently availing of the policy found their managers supportive of them since they reduced their hours. In the case study, only one manager stated that the additional workload i.e. time spent organising cover, was an issue.

6.10 Responsibility of employee and employer

The view that the employee has a responsibility in relation to partaking in flexible working was posed by Johnson (2004); the research undertaken in this study supports this contention. Over 78% of employees availing of the policy feel they have a responsibility to take steps to ensure that the service doesn't suffer in their absence and 70% of employees that are not currently availing of the policy support this and believe that participating employees should take steps to ensure that the service isn't negatively affected in their absence. From the study examples of these are; ensuring handover is completed with manager before the employee leaves, prioritise, plan and anticipate issues that might occur in absence and communicate these to the relevant people, ensure

reports are up to date before the employee leaves, provide names and contact details of who to contact in their absence and work through lunch or stay late.

Stredwick and Ellis (2005) make the point that managers must be supported and educated in order to manage the flexible worker. The CIPD (2007) develop this point further by stating that managers need advice, education and coaching in order for them to have the skills to manage the flexible worker. The study agreed with the advice part of the above statement in that some managers in the study requested HR support in the form of information regarding annual leave etc. for the reduced hour's employee. However, coaching and education of the line manager didn't become apparent in the study.

6.11 Obstacles/barriers to flexible working

The literature points to certain barriers/ obstacles to flexible working, these include incompatibility with some roles, heavy workload, financial barriers, presenteeism⁶ culture existing in the workplace, manager's opinion and lack of replacement staff. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003, Kennedy, 2006, IFF Research 2005).

The findings concur with some of these barriers and omit others. For example, when employee's that were not currently availing of the policy were asked about the barriers,

⁶ Presenteeism; 'The feeling that one must show up for work even if one is too sick, stressed, or distracted to be productive; the feeling that one needs to work extra hours even if one has no extra work to do'. (McFedries & Logophilia Limited 2000)

most employee's indicated that financial constraints and lack of replacement staff were of utmost concern for them. Managers' opinion and the managing the workload were also barriers that were suggested by these employees. A small percentage of employees felt that flexible working only suited certain roles. The presenteeism culture element however wasn't supported by the study.

6.12 Benefits for the Employee

The results of the study show that employees believe that their main benefits of availing of the policy are more family time, work life balance without the hassle of looking for another job, being able to pursue further education, avoiding commuting difficulties for part of the week and having variety in the work they do/pursuing other interests .(one employee explained that they reduced their hours to work in another organisation and in a totally different role , this increased the variety in the work they did).

The literature supports the benefit of having more time for family commitments, it also concurs with the work life balance advantage, avoiding commuting and pursuing other interests.(Flexibility and the workplace 2006, Branine 2003, the Industrial Society 2001 and Drew and Murtagh 2003).It suggests other benefits that weren't apparent in the study which include having more control over working time, increased motivation and job satisfaction for the employee (Webster, 2001 and Felstead et al. ,cited in Sheldon & Thornwaite, 2004 and Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell, 2000).

6.13 Downsides for the Employee

The literature suggests that flexible working can have a negative impact on employees particularly in relation to their career progression opportunities and training

opportunities. Flexible working has financial implications for the employee and can lead to resentment from other colleagues because they can be jealous of the employee that can afford to avail of the policy, along with an increased workload for the employee that reduces their hours because their time at work is reduced so work intensifies for them they do not have many rest breaks (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003, Kippenberger 2000, Hall and Atkinson 2006, Penny and Hyde 2006, Creagh and Brewster 1998).

The results of the employee interviews did not provide any hard evidence to support the belief that availing of the policy affected their career progression opportunities. In fact, only 14% of employees interviewed felt that it was currently or could affect their career progression opportunities. Only one employee raised the issue as to whether availing of the policy would affect their training opportunities. The financial impact was not of primary importance for employees currently availing of the policy but employees not availing of the policy raised the financial issue as a potential barrier for them in availing of the policy. Resentment from other colleagues did not seem to be a major issue according to the findings. However employees availing of the policy felt that 35% of their colleagues had no reaction to them reducing their hours while they were of the belief that 35% of their colleagues were supportive to them. Yet when employees that were not availing of the policy were asked if the employee's colleagues were to reduce their hours would it impact on them, 57% of these employees felt that it would, the main impact was that there would be more work to do.

Employees availing of the policy did experience higher work intensity when they were in work, a number stated that they were doing '5 days work in 4 days' for example.

The majority of employees (availing and not availing) were content that no downsides existed for them or could exist for them in availing of the policy. (71.4%).

6.14 Disadvantages for the Organisation

The literature states that flexible working can have a number of disadvantages for the employer such as:

- extra administration for the managers
- being incompatible with some roles
- Issues with communication. (Hogg and Harker, 1992).

Only one manager suggested that additional work was created for him/her in administration duties, i.e. organising extra cover. One employee who was not availing of the policy who was a manager expressed the view that if he/she was to apply for the flexible working policy it would possibly have a detrimental affect on their career progression opportunities because it would be seen as being incompatible with their role and reflect a lack of commitment on their part.

The sample of those both availing and not availing of the scheme encompassed a variety of grades within the organisation. The majority of employees were clinicians (from basic entry level to senior level, please see glossary of terminology for definition) and front line employees, while the minority were administration and manager grades. We could pose the question are clinical roles more suited to this policy? Or are management roles not compatible with this policy? One employee who availed of the policy felt that it was a bit of a nuisance for other staff as they couldn't attend all meetings, meetings

may have to be re-scheduling which caused additional work and inconvenience for those employees that were available to attend.

The literature also raised the issue of the policy being more of an entitlement than an option for employee's causing huge difficulties for the organisation. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy 2003). The study undertaken didn't discover whether this was the case in this organisation but if more people were made aware of this policy and wanted to avail of it then there is a danger that the entitlement culture could occur.

An obstacle in the literature which could be looked upon as a disadvantage for employers is the replacement of staff/provision of cover. (HSE, 2005) The findings show that 36% of managers surveyed believe that the policy had a negative impact on service delivery. The reasons for this were that relief staff were used this was not ideal for service users, a major difficulty in filling proportions of positions (if employees reduced their hours by 1 day per week, then only that 1 day needed to be filled) and an overall reduction in the availability of staff to provide the service.

6.15 Benefits for the Organisation

Retention according to the literature is a core benefit of offering flexible working to employee's. Employees feel that their employers are taking an interest in them and this influences them to stay with the organisation. (*Flexible working can benefit the business and staff*, 2005). The findings show that 30% of employees availing of the policy would have left if it was not available. This is perhaps a little less than was expected. It is interesting to note that employees would have sought other options of the policy wasn't available to them, such as taking other types of leave (parental), applying for a part time

position, applying for flexi-time, carrying out additional study outside of work time which would have been challenging for them and continuing to work full time.

6.16 Who are the flexible workers?

As noted in the literature review, it is a belief that flexible working can be viewed sometimes as a women's issue but it is an important issue for people in general both male and female, this is because all employees want to have more of a balance between home and work no matter what their family or personal circumstances are. (Smith and McWilliams 1998, Drew, Humphreys and Murphy 2003).

The reality according to the study is that mainly women avail of it rather than men. It is important however to realise that the organisation studied which is in the caring profession is populated by 80% female and 20% male this has a significant impact on the gender ratio of the sample study.

6.17 Take-up of Flexible working

Another point worth mentioning is that according to IBEC, the take up of these types of policies hasn't been high from employees. (IBEC, 2005).IBEC doesn't offer an explanation for this. However, Mahony (2000) suggests that people are creatures of habit and won't change their ways unless their personal circumstances change. The study supports this view given that this organisation is made up of 1800 employee's and there are only 20 employees which is approximately 1% of employees availing of the policy. As mentioned previously it must be pointed out that all employees may not be aware of this policy this also would affect the take up.

6.18 Health Services Setting

6.18.1 Recruitment and Retention

The literature indicates that, particularly within the NHS the reason that flexible working schemes are implemented is because of the recruitment and retention benefits that result from them. (Davy and Murrells, 2003). Although the managers were not asked specifically about the benefits of flexible working to the organisation a number of managers agreed with this and stated that service delivery was maintained because of being able to facilitate the retention of experienced employee's within the organisation.

6.18.2 Focus on service -Impact on service delivery

The literature states that the needs of the service must be the main goal of any organisation within a health services setting.(Mahony, 2000).The study has mixed results in relation to this. From a management perspective, 36% of managers believe that the policy seems to be impacting negatively on service delivery. From the perspective of employees not currently availing of the policy 71% felt that there were difficulties with the service to service users resulting from the fact that some employees are availing of this policy. This negative impact to service delivery undermines the main ethos of the organisation therefore this issue must be examined and solutions if possible need to be found in this regard.

The majority of employees availing of the policy on the other hand believe that they take steps to ensure that the service doesn't suffer in their absence. It is reasonable to suggest that there is an obvious gap that needs to be filled, management and employees

need to work together in order to ensure that the service is maintained while employees are availing of the reduction on hours/ flexible working.

6.18.3 Covering /Replacement issues

The literature explains why the flexible working options are not available to all hospital employees in Ireland. The main reason is due to the patient staff ratio and in this regard it is essential to ensure a minimum cover at all times. (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003).

Throughout the entire study, replacement issues were raised as an issue, managers seem to have difficulties managing this, employee's that were not availing of it believe that this was a significant issue hindering/impeding them from being able to avail of the policy and employees that were availing of the policy believe that due to their hours not being filled/covered they would do extra work on the days that they worked to cover the deficit.

6.18.4 Access to Flexible Working

The literature suggests that managers may be nervous about asking for reduced hours or flexible working as this may be seen as a lack of commitment on their part. (Drew, Humphreys and Murphy, 2003). Only one manager interviewed felt that this would be the case.

6.19 Summary

The results of this study/research on flexible working support the following arguments put forth in the literature review:

- Main reason employees apply for flexible working stems from caring/family responsibilities
- Critical role of the line manager in the implementation of the policy
- The responsibility of the employee to take steps to ensure that the service doesn't suffer in their absence.
- Benefits for the employee derived from flexible working i.e family time and work life balance
- Obstacles/barriers exist to flexible working, i.e. financial, lack of replacement staff, managers opinion, workload, incompatible with some roles.
- Retention as a benefit of flexible working
- Low Take-up of Flexible working
- Retention
- Significant covering /replacement issues associated with the policy

The analysis indicates that there are mixed views between the literature, and research study on flexible working in relation to the following areas:

- Using different mediums to communicate the policy
- Caring for the elderly as a reason for availing of the policy
- Presenteeism as a barrier or obstacle.

- Downsides for the employee i.e the study doesn't support the literature which states that career progression and training opportunities, resentment from colleagues, are the downsides to flexible working
- Disadvantages for the organisation
- Who are the flexible workers?
- Focus on service
- Access to flexible working, there seems to be a noticeable amount of employees availing of the policy that are of senior grades.

The findings presented in this paper cannot be generalised as a predictor of flexible working in the wider context, however it does present opportunities for further research. Some comparisons could perhaps be drawn from other organisations within the national confederation of voluntary bodies, given that they all report into the HSE and have similar rules and regulations.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In attempting to assess the impact of a pilot flexible working initiative in a service driven client focussed environment, the author puts forward three different perspectives; that of a number of managers, a number of employees who were availing of the initiative in operation on a pilot or trial basis and a number of employees who were not.

The following challenges, conclusions and recommendations will be presented to management for consideration as part of the organisation's overall review of the policy.

The overriding conclusion from the research findings is that the organisation has two main decisions to make in relation to the continued operation of this pilot policy. The first concerns the adoption by the organisation of this policy on a longer-term basis and in the event of a decision to do so, whether any modifications to it are required.

An important point to mention at this stage is that in this case study we are looking at a service, a service that provides care to people with intellectual disabilities. The clients needs are critical and these must take priority over employee needs and business goals. This flexible working policy will only succeed if it takes account of this.

7.2 Challenges

A number of challenges exist that must be tackled;

From the management perspective; Because of the difficulty with replacing employees for 1 or 2 days a week only proportions of positions are left unfilled. As a result, there is a detrimental effect on service delivery for clients.

The over reliance on the relief panel to backfill staff must be addressed. Managers use relief panel to fill the reduced hour shifts (40%); the relief panel should only be used in an emergency situation as these employees more than likely will not know the clients which impacts on continuity of care. If employees are approved to avail of the policy, then the manager has prior notice of this arrangement and should ideally be able to organise alternative cover. The research findings point to the necessity of ensuring that adequate cover can, indeed, be provided before any request for a reduction in hours is approved. As a consequence, if this does not materialise then the arrangement will not be able to be implemented.

The feedback from those currently availing of the opportunity of reduced hours working; points to the majority intending to continue with it, given the opportunity to do so. In light of the above, this is likely to present a serious difficulty for the organisation in the event that other (currently non participating) employees seek to avail of the opportunity.

Many of the employees currently not availing of the reduced hour's initiative believe that its introduction has resulted in difficulties in service provision. In this respect,

impact on continuity of care, time management issues and lack of decision making authority with employees acting up in the absence have been cited. A number of these employees suggested that HR communication workshops needed to take place to make staff more aware of the flexible working/reduced hour's policy. The challenge presented here is that if the organisation the policies more effectively will the proportion of those participating increase significantly (open the floodgates) and how will this be managed?

7.3 Conclusions

Both sets of employees felt that flexible working/reduced hours did not have a stigma (negative connotation) associated with it. (Negative connotation-perceived to be less committed to the organisation and less career focussed).

Most felt that there is a responsibility on the employee to take steps to ensure that the service isn't negatively affected in their absence. The steps mentioned were , doing 5 days work in 4 days, doing a handover with manager, being more organised and prioritising more, stay late/work through lunch, leave listing of people to contact, make sure reports are completed, put in extra effort, ensure cover is organised before the employee reduces their hours. Some of these are not practical however and the employee needs to ensure that their rights are maintained while ensuring that the service doesn't suffer in their absence.

As discussed in the previous chapter and referred to on the previous page, the application of the pilot policy had more of an impact on staff not availing of it than one might have initially expected. This is in marked contrast to those availing of the opportunity believing that there were no negative consequences for their colleagues.

The research findings suggest that had this policy not been introduced, approximately one third of those currently availing of it would have terminated their employment with the organisation because of their family circumstances.

The findings also point to other employees who, while expressing the wish to participate, are unlikely to do so, mainly as a result of the financial impact on them.

To refer back to the research question;

‘To assess the impact of a pilot flexible working initiative in a service driven, client focussed environment’

The impact on employees availing of the policy is mostly positive, employees not availing of the policy have issues around replacement cover/staffing arrangements, and managers need more support from the organisation (employees and management) in relation to solving the replacement difficulties of staff to ensure that the service needs are not affected by employees availing of the policy.

A word over relied on perhaps in relation to flexible working is ‘best practise’. This term is used to encourage and entice all companies and organisations to introduce the initiative. Reality however needs to be considered, flexible working is contingent on the organisation that it is implemented in and not all organisations are suitable. Perhaps a better way of stating this is that just because flexible working is a success in one organisation doesn’t mean that it will immediately be a success in all.

7.4 Further Investigation/Ways forward/Recommendations

In light of the above conclusions and the evidence presented in this dissertation, the organisation should consider the following questions and recommendations when reviewing this flexible working/reduced hour's pilot policy:

1. Should the policy continue?
2. On what basis and with what constraints?
3. If it is to continue, should participation be open ended or have a time limit? i.e. the employee can work reduced hours for a specified period, subject to the other criteria being met.

The history of this organisation is that once a policy has been piloted there is a tendency for it to continue. The reasons for this are traditional in nature, somewhat union orientated and in essence involving employee attitudes. Once employees have been availing of a policy it is quite difficult to terminate this arrangement. Therefore in response to the question should the policy continue, the answer is that it most likely will.

To answer questions 2 and 3 above the following recommendations have been made:

7.5 Micro-Recommendations

A recommendation from the research suggests that a cut off point should exist for the number of approved applications for flexible working. This must be introduced to ensure a high standard of service to service users and to prevent a free for all situation from arising. Clearer guidance around acceptance and rejection of candidates for

participation in the scheme needs to be developed. Creating a reason for refusal checklist, as suggested in the literature review, would be a good starting point.

Applications should not be approved until replacement staff are found to cover the reduced hours. Applications should only be approved for a specific period of time and as part of the arrangement flexible workers need to be flexible (i.e. changing their days) as service needs are the priority.

A rota system could be introduced in individual units and departments for employees that avail of flexible working to ensure that the service does not suffer in their absence and that service users have as much continuity of care as possible. It could operate as follows; if three employees want to reduce their hours , there can be only one person working reduced hours at any one time so they alternate, one avails of the policy for a certain period then the second and then the third.

At present there are no established criteria in relation to making an application for reduced hours/flexible working. Perhaps the organisation could advise that employees applying for the policy must have the following in order to be eligible to apply:

- Successfully completed their probation period
- A fixed length of service (a year's continuous service)
- Specific pre-defined timeframe for which they would like to avail of the policy (not over 1 year)

This is to ensure that the policy operates in a fair and transparent manner throughout the organisation

7.6 Macro Recommendations

The organisation could consider promoting the existing job sharing option within the organisation more widely and to stipulate that if a suitable job sharer cannot be found within a designated timeframe then the job share arrangement cannot go ahead.

Although an in-house questionnaire was sent to management and employee interviews were undertaken as part of this dissertation, up to this point there were no metrics or measurement in relation to this flexible working initiative. As this policy has an ongoing impact on service delivery from an employee, manager and client perspective, detailed metrics need to be undertaken on an ongoing basis in the future.

It's important to remember that the needs of every unit and department will be different so the manager needs to design a system that works best for the running of the unit/department particularly the service users.

The organisation should do a benchmarking exercise with similar organisations to find out if they have a flexible working policy and compare and contrast the key processes involved in it.

As this organisation promotes itself on being client focussed perhaps the organisation could think about getting service users opinions and views on this policy and how it could work better for them.

Finally the author believes that the policy should continue but with more rigid rules and guidelines in relation to its application. Managers and employees need to work together

in order to tweak the policy to suit all their needs while recognising that the most important needs are those of the service users.

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Appendix A

POLICY ON PART-TIME WORKING ARRANGEMENTS JANUARY 2007

Definition of Part-Time Employees:

A part-time employee is an employee whose normal hours of work are less than those of a comparable full-time employee.

Purpose:

The part-time policy provides employees with flexibility in relation to working arrangements, under a reduced working hours arrangement. Part-time employees will be eligible for:

- Promotions.
- Job changes.
- Training and development opportunities.

The organisation's part-time policy adheres to the principles of *The Code of Practice on Access to Part-Time Working*, which implements Section 13 (5) of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act 2001. The organisation also operates a job-sharing policy as detailed in the HR Policies and Procedures Manual.

Applicability:

In principle, the option of part-time employment is open to all grades of staff. However, the move from full-time work, to part-time work will be at the **discretion of management**, and may be subject to an initial trial period of 24 months. Each employee must complete an application and forward to their manager. In the event of a number of employees applying from the same unit/section, applications will be processed on service needs requirements.

Service Delivery/Business Requirements:

The key determinant in making the decision to facilitate a request for part-time work will be an evaluation of the impact on the operation and service delivery. Management will complete an evaluation of the impact of reduced working arrangements on service delivery as part of the application process.

New Employees:

New employees are eligible for part-time work if it is felt that the nature of the work they will be required to do, is best done on a part-time basis. New employees will be subject to the company probationary period as stated in their contract of employment. In all cases the decision as to whether part-time work may be granted, will solely depend on management being satisfied that the service delivery and service business requirements will not be adversely affected.

Hours of Work:

It is proposed that the following will be offered on a pilot basis for a period of 24 months.

All Day Services (Monday – Friday):

Reduction from 5 Days to 4, and 5 Days to 3.

Residential:

Reduction in shift by 1, and reduction in shift by 2:

It is important to note that employees availing of part-time work as set out above must ensure that their working week is reduced by full days i.e. one or two full days/shifts a week. This policy does not allow for the accumulation of days or the carrying over of days on a week-to-week basis.

Employee Contracts:

Employees days and hours of work will be stated in their contract of employment. For existing employees moving to part-time work, their contract of employment will be amended or replaced to take account of new terms and conditions of employment. Employees will be notified in advance of any changes or variation to their hours of work.

The part-time contract of employment must also contain a provision on transfer from part-time work to full-time.

Salary/Benefits:

Employees salary and all statutory and company benefits (e.g. sick pay, pension, health insurance), will be pro-rated to reflect their new working arrangements.

The organisation's HR Policies and Procedures provides details on all company benefits. Please note that for new employees there may be a service qualification before gaining access to specific benefits.

Leave Arrangements:

The annual leave allowance for part time staff will be pro-rata to their contracted hours in relation to whole time staff. Where the minimum leave provisions of the Working Time Act, 1997 are relevant, they should be applied. Public Holiday entitlements will be in accordance with the Organisation of Working Time Act and relevant collective agreements.

Statutory Leave Entitlements (maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave) will be retained. Sick Leave provisions will be adjusted pro-rata to the individuals agreed attendance regime subject to the normal provisions governing the granting of sick leave.

Return/Move to Full-time Work:

An employee who wishes to revert to full-time work should apply in the normal way for full-time vacancies that occur. They should in the first instance inform their manager. The organisation may, in exceptional circumstances, (outside trial period) require employees to revert to full-time work. Where this occurs employees will be given 3 months notice of the change.

Should this situation occur the organisation will have substantial grounds to justify making a request for an employee to transfer from part-time to full-time or vice versa.

External Working:

Before taking up employment outside of the organisation, the company requires that all full-time and part-time employees contact HR in advance.

Emergency Cover:

The management reserves the right to ask employees to cover emergencies on a full-time basis.

Applications:

Employees who wish to move to part-time work must complete the organisation's application form and process this through their line manager or depending on grade/role to any member of the Senior Management Team as appropriate.

All applications will be discussed with the individual in terms of their personal needs and the needs of The organisation. The company will treat all requests seriously, and will explore, where possible, how the request can be accommodated.

The suitability of the application will be determined by objective criteria. Following the process of the application the employee will be informed of management's decision

within a reasonable timeframe. If the request is unsuccessful, management will inform the employee of the grounds for refusal. Every effort will be made to facilitate the employee's request.

Appeal of decision:

An employee has the right to appeal the decision to the Regional Director/the Manager of a Shared Service or member of Senior Management Team as appropriate

Non-Compliance:

Any employee who fails to comply with or breaches this policy may find themselves subject to disciplinary action, in line with the disciplinary procedures for The organisation, up to and including dismissal.

APPLICATION FOR PILOT FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS 2007/08.

Please note that employees wishing to apply for flexible working arrangements must complete Part A of this form and submit it to their Service Manager/Line Manager, who in turn will complete Part B.

Once approved the form should be returned to the HR Department

Part C will only be completed by Regional Director following an appeal of the decision in Part B

Employee Details:

Employee No.	Name	Grade	Service	Region

Role Performed – Key Duties:

Request for reduction in working arrangements:

Day Service: (Please tick appropriate box):

- 5 Days to 4
- 5 Days to 3

Residential: (Please tick appropriate box)

- Reduction in Shift by 1:
- Reduction in Shift by 2:

Total Number of Hours reduced by: _____

New Working Arrangement in hours: _____

Commencement Date: _____ **End Date:** _____

Reason for application:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPLICATION FOR PILOT FLEXIBLE
WORKING ARRANGEMENTS 2007/08.

Part B

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

Review of Application for reduction in working arrangements:

1. Impact on service delivery:

2. Impact on staffing arrangements:

3. Will additional staff need to be recruited?:

4. How will acting up arrangements be accommodated?:

Approval:

Application recommended for flexible working arrangements:

Application not recommended for flexible working arrangements:

Reason for non-recommendation:

Date for discussion with employee: _____

Signed: _____

Service Manager / Line Manager/Member of Senior Management Team

Date: _____

**APPLICATION FOR PILOT FLEXIBLE
WORKING ARRANGEMENTS 2007/08.**

Part C

APPEAL

Appeal of decision:

Result of Appeal:

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Regional Director / Head of Department / Member of Senior Management Team

Appendix B

The Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997

Since the 7th May 1997 the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 has become law. This piece of legislation will have a serious impact on the conduct of all businesses.

Its main terms are: -

1. All workers shall be entitled to 11 consecutive hours rest in any twenty-four hour period.
2. All workers shall be entitled to a rest break of fifteen minutes for each consecutive working period of four hours and thirty minutes, and a rest break of thirty minutes for each consecutive working period of six hours, which latter period may include the fore mentioned fifteen minute break.
3. All workers shall be entitled to a minimum uninterrupted rest period of twenty-four hours plus 11 hours for each seven-day period, which rest period shall in principle include Sunday. The employer may refuse to grant his employee the required rest period in one week; provided he gives the employee two rest periods of twenty-four hours in the following week.
4. All workers shall be prohibited from working on average in excess of 48 hours for each seven day period. The reference period for calculation of this rest period must be 4 months, in certain limited circumstances 6 months, or where agreed in a collective agreement, up to 12 months.
5. An employer must take an employee's "double-jobbing" into account when calculating points 1 - 4 above.
6. All workers shall be entitled to four weeks paid holidays.
7. All night workers' normal hours of work shall not exceed on average eight hours in any 24-hour period.
8. The employer is required to give 24 hours notice prior to the start of the working week of the times at which the employee will be required to start and finish his work for that working week, and of working days on which the employee will be required to work additional hours.
9. In respect of "zero-hour" contracts (where the employer requires the employee to make himself available for work, even though he may not be called in for work), an employee is entitled to be paid a minimum of 25% of either the contract hours, if specified, or the normal hours of work in a working week for that type of work.
10. In respect of working on Sunday, the employer is obliged to give the employee an increased rate of pay, allowance or paid time in lieu, such as is reasonable.

The legislation does not specify the body upon who shall rest the obligation to supervise and enforce these regulations, merely granting the Minister the power to appoint inspectors. However, it seems likely that the controlling authority will be the Health and Safety Authority.

The key point for employers to note is that they will be obliged to carry out the additional bureaucratic work to create and maintain the records which will demonstrate compliance with these regulations for a period of three years. However, it may gladden the hearts of already overworked employers that the proper maintenance of these records will afford them the only likely successful defence to establish compliance with these regulations.

Inspectors have been given the right to enter upon premises, make enquiries and request sight of these records, and failure to comply is an offence punishable on summary conviction by a fine of £1,500.00 and £500.00 for each day the offence continues. An Inspector may only exercise his right to enter upon an employer's premises on consent, or by production of a District Court warrant. In every case, the employer should require that the Inspector produce his certificate of appointment from the Minister prior to permitting him to enter. However, effectively, these provisions mean that the employer's own records can be used against him, and his right to silence is gone.

Proceedings under the legislation are by way of complaint by an employee or, on the employee's consent his trade union, to a Rights Commissioner within 6 months of the alleged breach of the legislation, with an appeal to the Labour Court within 6 weeks of the decision. The Rights Commissioner may declare the complaint well founded and/or require the employer to remedy the breach and/or compensate the employee by up to two year's remuneration. An intransigent employer, who does not abide by the decision of the Rights Commissioner or Labour Court, will be compelled to do so upon application to the Circuit Court.

The provisions, which will have the most intrusive effect on employers, are the 48-hour week. Ireland has not availed of the seven-year derogation period in respect of the 48-hour week, and this provision has the full power of law. Presently, the Government for the enforcement of these provisions has provided no additional funding. Employers may choose to continue their present practices in contravention of the law, or attempt to contract out of the provisions of the Directive, but they shall do so at their peril. Any attempt to avoid the 48-hour week provisions, as with the other provisions in the legislation, will be void.

If a dispute should arise between an employer and an employee, neither party will be able to rely on the terms of the contract or agreement between them as they relate to the hours of work. The employee is given some protection by a provision stating that the employee shall not be penalised for his refusal to co-operate with the employer in activities which breach the employer's obligations under this Act.

Unfortunately, the legislation states that if the penalisation by the employer constitutes a dismissal of the employee, the employee is not entitled to remedies under the Unfair Dismissals legislation. This is somewhat curious. Undoubtedly it was intended that the employer should not be entitled to dismiss the employee by reason of the employee's refusal to co-operate with the breach of the regulations. In that case, a preferable approach would be to deem such a dismissal an unfair dismissal, with the most appropriate remedies being reinstatement or re-engagement.

The legislation makes no provision for a very important provision in the grounding directive. Article 13 of Council Directive 93/104 requires that employers will need to adapt the working environment to alleviate monotonous work and work at a pre-determined rate. This obligation of the employer to adapt the workplace to the worker represented a clear shift in the emphasis of health and safety legislation to date.

Thus far, employers have been obliged to carry out risk assessments designed to disclose potential risk of physical injury or other accidents, and to draft a Safety Statement, which addresses these potential risks. However, the concern of the directive in this respect is for the mental and psychological well being of the worker. It was intended that the employer will not have to concern himself merely with whether a repetitive task has a potential risk of physical injury, but will have to implement measures to ensure that the functionality of the workplace encourages the psychological and mental welfare of the worker. Implied in this new duty of course is an obligation on the employer to consult with employees. Unfortunately, the legislation does not carry this proposal forward, and its wording in the directive is too imprecise to be directly effective. Hopefully, this will not be another example of the good intentions of the Commission floundering on the rocks of imprecision in wording and indecision in enacting.

Another noteworthy emphasis in the legislation is that it uses collective agreements as instruments to flesh out detail or provide exemptions. This indicates a clear preference in the legislation for dealing with trade unions. The relevant provisions are points 1, 2, 3, 4, and 9 as set out above. While there is not an obligation to recognise trade unions in order to negotiate with them (the Government may legislate in default), this is the clear intention.

The Garda Siochana and Defence Forces are exempt entirely from the legislation. The following areas are excluded from the working time sections of the regulations, but are subject to the provisions in relation to holidays: -

1. Persons with autonomous decision-taking powers in respect of their working time.
2. Family workers.
3. Persons engaged in sea fishing, other work at sea, or doctors in training.

The Minister may choose to exempt following areas from certain parts or the entire legislation: -

1. Transport industry.
2. Security, surveillance and civil protection industry.

Force majeure is also an exception.

Employees will welcome the implementation of this legislation, but employers will face the difficulties of managing the paperwork to comply with its provisions. It signals yet again, the advance of employee's conditions at the behest of the E.U.

You may or may not be aware that an important piece of legislation concerning the regulation of working time will soon be passed into law within the next month, which could have a very serious impact on the manner in which you conduct your business.

Its main terms are: -

1. All workers shall be entitled to 11 consecutive hours rest in any twenty-four hour period.
2. All workers shall be entitled to a rest break where their working day is in excess of six hours.
3. All workers shall be entitled to a minimum uninterrupted rest period of twenty four hours plus 11 hours for each seven-day period, which rest period shall in principle include Sunday. The reference period for calculation of this rest period must be 14 days or less.
4. All workers shall be prohibited from working on average in excess of 48 hours for each seven-day period. The reference period for calculation of this rest period must be 4 months or less.
5. All workers shall be entitled to four weeks paid holidays.
6. All night workers' normal hours of work shall not exceed on average eight hours in any 24 hour period.
7. Night workers whose work involves special hazards or heavy physical or mental strain shall not be permitted to work in excess of eight hours in any 24 hour period.
8. Employers will have a statutory duty imposed upon them to adapt work to the worker, and in particular to alleviate monotonous work and work at a pre-determined work rate.
9. There are additional provisions relating to the health and safety of night workers.

The following areas are excluded from the regulations:-

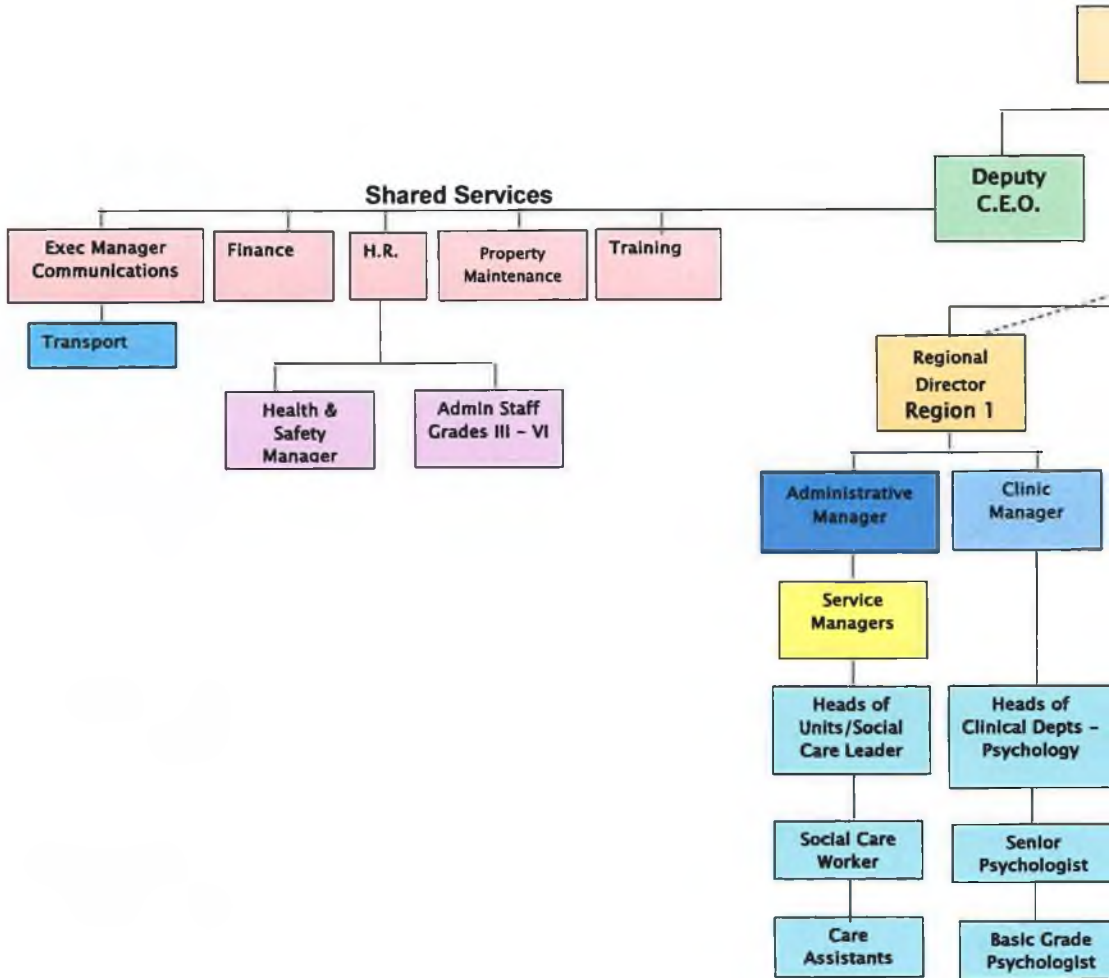
1. Managing executives or other persons with autonomous decision-taking powers.
2. Family workers.
3. Workers officiating at religious ceremonies.

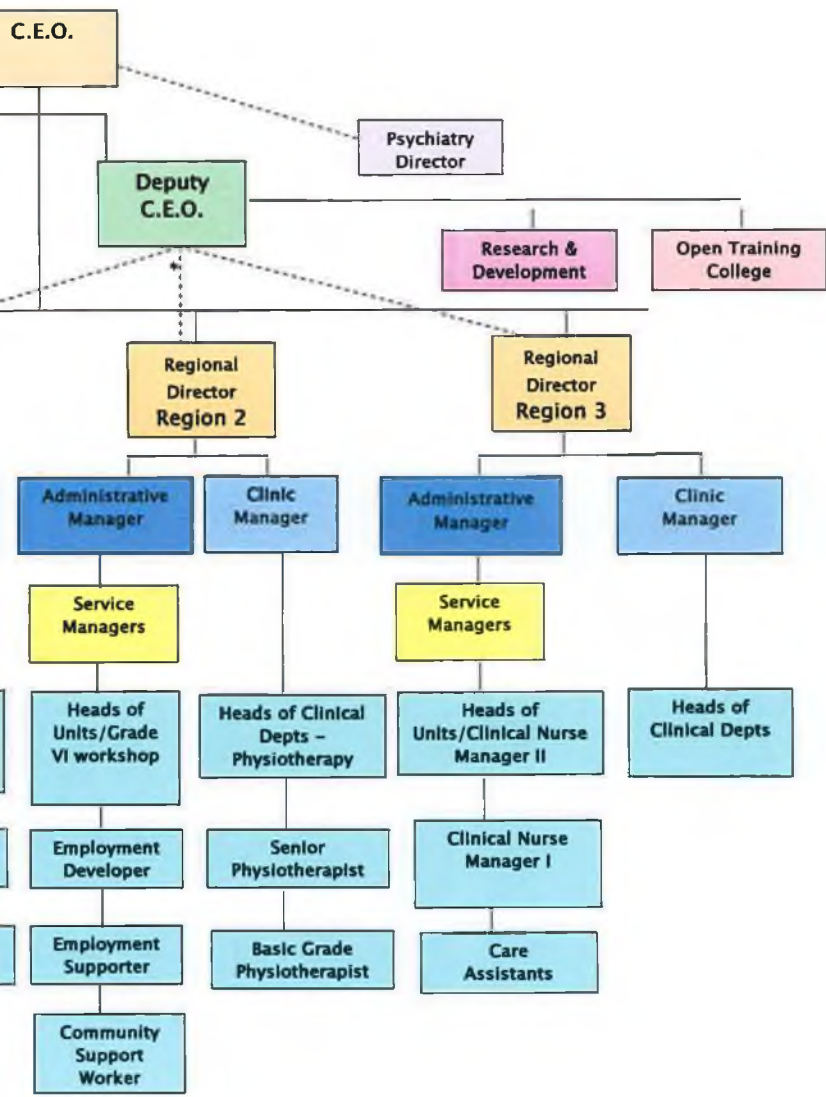
The following areas may derogate from the regulations by law or collective agreement:-

1. Security and surveillance activities.
2. Persons involved in reception, treatment and care in hospitals.
3. Dock or airport workers.
4. Press, radio, television, cinematographic production, postal and telecommunications services, ambulance, fire and civil protection services.
5. Gas water and electricity production, transmission and distribution, household refuse collection and incineration plants.

6. Agriculture.
7. Research and development activities, and technical grounds.
8. Where there is a foreseeable surge of activity in tourism, agriculture and postal services.
9. Where the worker's place of residence and place or places of work are distant from one another.

Appendix C





Appendix D

Pilot Flexible Working Arrangements 2007/2008

[Review – January 2008]

Many thanks in advance for your participation, we would encourage you to complete the questionnaire as comprehensively as possible, so that we have a full understanding and appreciation of the practical implications & operational impact that this policy has within the Units/Departments.

Please complete the questions as outlined below, and return at your earliest convenience to the Human Resources Department.

Day Service / Residential: _____
Service Manager: _____

Unit Name: _____
Number of full-time employees: _____
No of employees availing
Of Flexible Working Arrangements: _____

Names of employees working
Reduced hours & hours worked : _____

Impact on Service Delivery:

Impact on Staffing Arrangements / Budgeted Headcount for Unit:

Were additional staff recruited ? [How was the reduction in hours covered from an operational & scheduling perspective?]

Based on your experience, is the Pilot Scheme meeting employees needs / operating effectively?

Appendix E

Questions for employees who are currently availing of the Flexible Working/Reduced Hours Policy

Name:

Job Title:

Length of time with the organisation:

Male/Female:

Age:

1. How did you become aware of the Policy on Flexible working?
2. What was the **reason/reasons** that you applied for flexible working?
3. What are the **benefits** for you in availing in the policy?
4. **How long** have you been making use of the flexible working scheme?(HSE Survey on Flexible working)
5. If the organisation was to continue with the flexible working policy after the pilot, for what period of time are you likely to continue using it?
6. If the policy wasn't available what would you have done? for example, left the organisation, used other leave i.e. Parental leave, applied for part time).
7. Do you feel this new pilot policy is meeting your needs? If no, why. If yes, how.
8. What responsibility/steps have you taken to ensure that the service doesn't suffer due to your reduction?
9. Have you found your manager and colleagues supportive since your working hours were reduced? Y/ N If yes, please explain?

10. Do you feel that you are always **kept in the loop** when you return to work after flexible working? If yes, how is this done? If no, please give an example.
11. Do you feel there is a **stigma (negative outlook)** attached to working flexibly reduced hours? If yes why?
12. Has your **role** changed since you reduced your hours?
13. Do you feel that partaking in flexible working policy has affected your **career progression opportunities**? If yes, how?
14. Since partaking in the policy, do you feel there have been any **downsides** for you associated with it?
15. How do you think your other **full time colleagues** felt or have re-acted to you availing in the flexible working policy and reducing your hours?
16. Can you think of how the policy might be **changed/ updated** in order to make the policy work better from your perspective?

Interview Questions for Employees who are not currently partaking in flexible working

Name:

Job Title:

Length of time with the organisation:

Male/Female:

Age:

Part time **Full Time** **job sharing**

Length of time with the organisation:

Question for All

1. **Are you aware of the Pilot flexible working/reduced hours policy that was introduced in January 2007?**

If YES

2. How was the policy communicated to you?
3. What does the policy offer for employees?
4. What is the procedure for applying for flexible working?
5. Have you ever applied to avail of this?
 - If yes, why were you refused?

If no, if the policy is to continue after the pilot would you be in applying in the future and in what circumstances?

IF YOU ARE NOT AWARE OF THE FLEXIBLE WORKING/REDUCED HOURS POLICY

This policy offers a reduction in 1 shift or two shifts per week for residential/respite employees and a reduction of 1 day or 2 days per week for employees who work days.

2. Do you think you might be interested in applying to avail of the policy in the future?
If yes, in what circumstances might you be encouraged to apply?
3. Considering your personal circumstances would you like to work fewer hours for less pay?

Question for All

What do you think are the **main reasons** that employees apply for reduction on hours?

What do you think are **the benefits** for the employee of reducing their hours?

What do you feel might be the **barriers** for employees in availing of flexible working/reduced hours policy?

What do you think might be the **negativities** for the employee partaking in flexible working?

Do you feel that there are **difficulties for the service** to patients /clients resulting from the fact that some employees are availing of the policy?(HSE survey on Flexible working)

If an employee has reduces his/her there hours in your section, **when is this communicated to you and the other staff in the section?**

Do you believe the employee who reduces his/her hours has a **responsibility to ensure that the service doesn't suffer in their absence?** If yes, how do you think they might be expected to do this?

If a colleague is working **reduced hours, what, in your view is its impact on you and other colleagues affected?**
If yes, How?

Do you feel there is a **stigma** (negative outlook) attached to working reduced hours?
Y/ N
If yes, explain.

Do you feel that availing of the policy **could affect your career progression opportunities?**
Y/ N if yes how?

Can you think of how the policy might be changed/updated in order to make the policy better?

Appendix F

Date

Title Name Surname
Address 1
Address 2
Address 3

Dear Title Surname,

As you know, this organisation introduced a Flexible Working Policy last year on a pilot basis. A year has passed since its introduction, and we would like to conduct a review on the policy as part of the organizations Retention Strategy. We would welcome your views and feedback in relation to the policy and how you feel it's working for you.

I would appreciate if you could call me at a time that's convenient for you on:

Monday 31st March – (01 8840258 or 0879514175)

Tuesday 1st April – (01 8840258 or 0879514175)

Wednesday 2nd April – (0879514175)

I intend to ask you a set number of questions which I hope to record for transcribing purposes only and I predict that it should only last approximately 10 minutes.

In advance, I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this review.

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 0879514175.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely

Pamela Tyrrell
Human Resources Department

Date

Title name Surname

Address

Address

Address

Re: Flexible Working Policy

Dear ,

As you know, this organisation introduced a Flexible Working Policy last year on a pilot basis. **As an employee who currently doesn't partake in this policy, we would welcome your views and feedback in relation to the policy.**
This policy has been introduced to help employees enhance their work life balance.

A year has passed since its introduction, and we would like to conduct a review on the policy as part of the organizations Retention Strategy.

I would appreciate if you could call me at a time that's convenient for you on:

Monday 7th April – (01 8840258 or 0879514175)

Tuesday 8th April – (01 8840258 or 0879514175)

Wednesday 9th April – (0879514175)

The purpose of the conversation is to get your opinions on the policy. I predict that it should only last approximately 10 minutes and I hope to record for transcribing purposes only. The conversation will be treated in confidence.

In advance, I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this review.

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 0879514175.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely

Pamela Tyrrell
HR Department

Appendix G

The hypothesis is that there is no difference between the two groups in answering no to questions 1-6 => Therefore no difference in attitude is H0

the alternative hypothesis is that there is a difference between the two groups

Observed

	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response to Q6	Total	percentage split
Group 1	3	10	3	11	9	4	40	0.500
Group 2	7	10	7	11	7	8	50	0.500
Total	10	20	10	22	16	12	90	

Expected Presume the split should be consistent ie group 1 should be 14/28 of the answers; group 2 should be 14/28 of the answers.

	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Total
Group 1	5.0	10.0	5.0	11.0	8.0	6.0		45.0
Group 2	5.0	10.0	5.0	11.0	8.0	6.0		45.0
	10.0	20.0	10.0	22.0	16.0	12.0		

Observed - Expected

	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Total
Group 1	-2.0	0.0	-2.0	0.0	1.0	-2.0		0.0
Group 2	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	-1.0	2.0		0.0

O - E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² / E
-2.0	4.00	0.80
0.0	0.00	0.00
-2.0	4.00	0.80
0.0	0.00	0.00
1.0	1.00	0.13
-2.0	4.00	0.67
2.0	4.00	0.80
0.0	0.00	0.00
2.0	4.00	0.80
0.0	0.00	0.00
-1.0	1.00	0.13
2.0	4.00	0.67

Sum of = >>>>>>>>>: 4.78 Actual Chi-Square value

Degrees of Freedom = rows-1 * columns -1 = (2-1) * (6-1) = 1 * 5 = 5 degrees of freedom.

Looking at the Chi-square test as 5 degrees of freedom and at 5% level of significance, = 11.07

(If you want it at 1% significance at 5 degrees of freedom, it's 15.09

In either case the critical chi square value is greater than the actual 4.78 so we accept H0 - there is no overall difference between the two groups.