

**Flexible Working Arrangements
The Challenges and Benefits for Organisations**

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Authorship declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of BA in Human Resource Management 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 acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Introduction

Flexible working describes various unconventional working arrangements that are now becoming increasingly available to workers in Ireland. Many organizations have introduced some form of flexible working arrangements. The recent pressure on the labour market has forced organizations to consider new ways of attracting potential candidates and introduce benefits which will ensure they are the employer of choice. A more enlightened approach to equality issues has also been a driver for the introduction of flexible working arrangements. Employers are now more conscious of the requirement to ensure equal access to employment and taking steps to remove barriers that may prevent sections of society from applying for jobs. The focus on work/life balance and family friendly policies in recent years has also required organizations to look at how they can accommodate staff with family and other commitments.

The purpose of this dissertation is to look at flexible working from the perspective of the organisation and to consider the experience of several organisations which provide flexible working options for their staff.

The literature review begins by first considering working conditions from an historical perspective. From the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century it will show how the working conditions for employees has changed. The literature review will also look at how the attitudes to workers has changed and developed over the last 200 years and how the work of various theorists and researchers has informed our attitudes to workers and how we can meet their needs while at the same time ensuring that they are productive contributors to organisational performance.

A review of current research will show the current trends in flexible working, look at the reasons why employers are introducing flexible working and the benefits to employers that have introduced these initiatives. The research will then look at the benefits for employees who can avail of flexible working. It will also look at some of the barriers to implementing flexible working practices and some of the issues and problems that can arise with the introduction of these practices.

The research will look at the experience of several organisations who have provided flexible working and identify the benefits that resulted from adopting flexible working policies and the challenges that they have encountered.

Literature Review

This literature review will begin with a look at how our understanding of work and employee motivation has evolved since industrialisation of work and how it now allows more autonomy for the worker in how they structure their working time. A review of current research will highlight some of the benefits, barriers to and challenges of flexible working.

Flexible working arrangements are the policies and practices that allow employees to vary when and where they work and differ from traditional working hours. The flexible working practices considered in this report are those that are implemented at the discretion of the organisation. Statutory leave and entitlements are not considered in this report.

Though flexible working appears to be a new development many of the flexible working practices have been around for a long time. Shiftworking, part-time and temporary working practices have been used throughout the 20th century and flexitime and job-sharing first arrived in the 1950's (Stredwick & Ellis 1998).

There are now many flexible working practices which an employer may consider offering to staff. Some of the more common forms of flexible working are:

Flexi-time - The start and finish times of the working day are flexible. Most systems will have a core period during the day when employees must be in attendance at work. There is usually provision for taking leave in lieu of additional hours worked.

Job-sharing – this is when two people take on responsibility for a full-time job and share the work between them. Each person has a contract and benefits comparable to their full-time colleagues. The sharing arrangements may vary depending on the needs of the workers involved and the organisation. The arrangements could be week-on/week-off, two and half days each week, mornings or afternoons only.

Work-sharing – this is a development of the job sharing concept which attempts to meet business requirements while allowing for a wider range of attendance patterns. The manager and job holders will agree a system of work attendance that will also meet the requirements of the staff.

Part-time - this means working less hours than a comparable full-time employee in the same organisation. The number of hours usually varies for each individual and organisation. It can be a permanent arrangement or an arrangement which is entered into for a short time.

Compressed hours - employees work the standard number of hours but over a shorter week. They may work longer days but only work 4 or 4.5 days a week.

Staggered hours - this allows employees to work a normal eight-hour day but to start or end the day earlier or later than the standard working hours. The working pattern is agreed with the employer and fixed so the employee works the same hours each day.

Annualised hours – the employees total number of hours to be worked in a year are calculated and divided unevenly over the 12 month period to accommodate fluctuating demand for their labour.

Term-time – the employee attends work during the school year but has time off during the school holidays.

Teleworking – working from home either full-time or part-time but maintaining contact with the office.

Flexi-place working - employees have the option of working from home when their presence in the workplace is not required and their work can be done from a remote location.

These are just some of the flexible work arrangements which organisations may introduce. In the private sector the decision to introduce these schemes is usually at the discretion of the management. For those in the Public sector there is greater

availability of many flexible arrangements, though it is usually at the discretion of local management whether to allow particular practices and will take into consideration business requirements. The current national partnership agreement, Sustaining Progress (Department of the Taoiseach, 2003) requires public sector organisations to increase the use of flexible work practices for the benefit of employees but also to allow wider access to public services (longer opening times) for improved customer service.

Historical Perspective

As I have previously mentioned many of the flexible practices currently available have been around for a long time though were usually only available to satisfy the demands of the employer with little regard for the needs of the employee. Looking back at the development of industrialised societies we can see the changing attitudes to work and workers and the changes in demands placed on them.

The Industrial Revolution began in England in the second half of the eighteenth century and it had a profound effect on work practices and work norms and on the way people viewed work.

Prior to the industrial revolution the majority of the working population were employed on the land or in related activities. For the majority of the population work was strongly connected to nature and the seasons. Those not engaged in agriculture were generally craft workers, shopkeepers and smiths with a small number of educated professionals. Those involved in production generally were home workers though their output was restricted as technological development was minimal and the production of goods was very labour intensive (Grint, 1998). For most workers there was little differentiation between work and relaxation. Work and domestic life were intimately and irrevocably linked. Work was an end in itself and not a means to an end (Grint, 1998)

The industrial revolution changed dramatically the working lives of most people. With the development of railroads, steam engines, advances in technology and the

establishment of factories there was a huge impact on all sectors. Where previously work was dictated by the seasons and by whether it was day or night now work could be performed regardless of natural events. The factory system made work an activity separate from social and family life. It also made feasible the measurement of work and the regulation of time spent at work (Béteille, 2002).

Working conditions in the factory were very grim and workers, including children, in the mid-nineteenth century were expected to work up to 12 hours a day. Accidents and severe punishments were also a feature of working life, with the most vulnerable suffering the worst effects. Early accounts of the working environment (Marx, 1954 cited in Béteille, 2002) describe the long hours and the neglect of even the basic human needs of all workers; men, women and children.

The success of the factory system was based on the radical division of labour. Domestic production allowed those with skills to charge more money for less work. By dividing the labour process factory owners created a fragmented workforce giving them more control and power and reduced the independence and power of the workers. The factory owners could use their power to get as much work as possible out of their workers.

Factory owners were not overly concerned with how their factories were managed as long as the output and profits were good. They were unconcerned with the welfare of their employees and their only interest in them was as productive workers. In managing workers the owners adopted either of two approaches – coercion or paternalism.

Coercion was the most common approach to dealing with workers. By the mid-nineteenth century observation and regulation were common practice to control the workers. There was a common belief that manual workers were beyond moral improvement and that the only way to control them was through intimidation and harsh punishments (Grint, 1998). It was common practice for fines, beatings and dismissals to be used to control workers and in many factories crimes such as talking, whistling and singing could incur punishment.

The alternative approach to worker control was the paternalist approach. This approach advocated a more humanitarian treatment of workers and recognised their needs. Incentives were used to encourage worker commitment and increase production. Though the brutal treatment of workers was frowned on by paternalistic factory owners there was still a strong element of control and regulation of behaviour.

Though both approaches are completely at odds with each other the main aim of both was to maintain high levels of production and encourage greater output from workers.

From the 1850's there was a period of ongoing technological innovation which resulted in larger and more efficient factories. The production of iron and the discovery of how to generate electricity and harness its power further led to the establishment of more industries. Advances in technology produced more sophisticated machinery and also saw the creation of aircraft and motor vehicles (Argyle, 1990).

During this time the unions were becoming more powerful and membership was growing rapidly. The unions were achieving improvements in working conditions for their members. With the increasing power of the unions and new government regulations employers were no longer able to wield power by coercion. The government introduced legislation which gave workers more protection particularly for children in employment. Though security in a job was not guaranteed, workers were less threatened by dismissal. It was now becoming easier for workers to find employment in other factories and people were now moving more freely around the country so workers could now move to another location to find work (Argyle, 1990).

It was not until the First World War that the government began to take an active interest in working conditions in factories. The generally poor physical health and education of army recruits highlighted the need for improved welfare and education services. The urgent need for munitions for the war also impelled the government to intervene in the management of factories and organisations. Good working conditions, with proper ventilation, lighting, rest breaks and improved working hours were promoted as a means to increased efficiency. At this time the needs of the workers were beginning to be recognised. There was a growing understanding that

monetary reward was not the only interest for workers but there was also an intrinsic need for satisfying work.

At the beginning of the 20th century F.W. Taylor began developing his theory of 'scientific management'. Through his own personal experience as a labourer, clerk and machinist he was able to identify the shortcomings in the common approaches to worker and organisation management. Taylor's recommendations were: a further division of labour with the breakdown of tasks into their constituent parts; a piece rate system with a related system of rewards and punishment (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2002). What Taylor recommended was the de-skilling of the workforce. This would limit the power of the workforce and allow organisations to employ cheaper, unskilled workers.

Taylor's 'scientific' approach identified the importance of the correct management and organisation techniques to increase worker output. This approach and the introduction of the assembly line in factories led to more efficient production but at the cost of stress and boredom for the workers. (Argyle, 1990)

While Taylor was developing his theory of scientific management another engineer, Frank Gilbreth was carrying out similar studies but concentrating on the movements of workers. In his book, *Motion Study*, which was published in 1911, Gilbreth outlined how studying the movements of workers can identify areas for improvement and devised techniques for measuring the correct movements required to deliver efficiency gains.

His wife Lillian Gilbreth was a psychologist who also had an interest in the performance of work and the working lives of employees.

In 1916 both Lillian and Frank published a study on fatigue. They had discovered that while all work produces fatigue it can be divided into necessary and unnecessary fatigue. Necessary fatigue is a result of effort required to complete a task. Unnecessary fatigue comes from the effort that goes into unnecessary movements that are not really required to complete the task. The Gilbreths sought to eliminate unnecessary fatigue and limit the effects of necessary fatigue by carrying out motion

studies to identify unnecessary movements and by looking at the general working environment.

The Gilbreths recommended significant changes to the working environment and the organization of work. They shortened the working day, introduced rest breaks and introduced paid holidays. They also introduced improvements to the work environment to make it more comfortable for the workers. The recommended providing chairs for workers, improvements in heating, lighting and ventilation, rest-rooms, canteens and music into the factory. The Gilbreths have been credited with being the first to realise the needs of workers. They also identified that a workers performance is as dependent on the right working environment as it is on the identification of the correct movements (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001).

The Hawthorne Experiments which were carried out in the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne plant from 1924 until 1936 provided a deeper awareness of the needs of workers and the factors that motivate and encourage improved performance. The experiments revealed the importance of the work group to the individual and the necessity for managers to understand and acknowledge the power of the group. Meeting the social and psychological needs of workers was also recognized as being an important tool for achieving greater commitment to work and improved productivity (Cole, 1995).

Soon after the completion of the Hawthorne Experiments the 2nd World War began. The War was an economic disaster for many countries and in its aftermath there was a renewed interest in management techniques which delivered greater productivity. The focus now was on re-building industries and finding the most efficient and cost effective ways to produce the required goods.

During the 1950's there was also renewed interest in the motivation of workers and there developed a greater concern for the needs of the workers. Workers were finally being acknowledged as more than just another piece of machinery. Though employers were still anxious to increase the contribution of all their workers they began to apply the knowledge recently acquired by studies into worker motivation and commitment and a more humanitarian attitude to workers was developing.

Through his research Abraham Maslow developed his theory on man's needs and deduced that these needs formed a hierarchy which needed to be met. Initially he maintained that the lower level needs (physiological, safety/security) had to be met before the higher needs (social affiliation, esteem, self-actualisation) could be satisfied but subsequently changed his thinking on this to be less rigid.

While Maslow's theory does have its critics and his work was not initially intended for use in the business context it did however influence managements thinking on worker motivation (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001).

Throughout the 1950's several researchers (Argyris, McGregor, Likert and Herzberg) were involved in the study of worker motivation and during this period there developed the 'social psychological approach' to the management of workers (Cole, 1995). The theories expounded by these researchers provided the impetus for further research leading to greater understanding of motivation and how this can be utilized in a business context to improve job satisfaction and thus improve performance.

The identification of motivators led to the development of the quality of working life (QWL) movement in the 1960's and 1970's. This movement focused on the employee's experience of work and the factors that influenced job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. During the 1960's Frederick Herzberg developed the concept of job enrichment. Herzberg's research led him to surmise that when designing jobs the issues that affect employee satisfaction need to be taken into account as neglecting these issues will negatively impact on performance, commitment to the job and organization (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001).

During the 1970's, as a result of very high unemployment, the Irish government was forced to consider more innovative ways of job creation and in 1978 the government initiated the debate on the merits of worksharing as a strategy for job creation (Humphreys, 1986). Though there was some opposition from the unions, due to the threat of loss of income, worksharing along with flexible working hours and career breaks were introduced to the civil service in the early 1980's with the intention of extending to the wider public service in due course.

Though initially considered as a means to create employment the benefits of these working arrangements were also identified. In a *Report to the Minister of Labour* by the Working Party on Child Care Facilities for Working Parents (cited in Humphreys, 1986) the advantages for employers and employees are outlined and both are urged to consider the benefits of reduced hours, improved maternity and parental leave, greater use of holidays, flexible working and career breaks.

The benefits of flexible working for the employer were also identified and it was suggested that flexible working arrangements could impact on employee's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ronen, cited in Dalton & Mesch, 1990). Extrinsic motivation may be improved by the changes in working arrangements that are more suitable to the employee. Problems caused by absenteeism and poor punctuality would also be reduced which could lead to improved relationships with supervisors and colleagues. Increased autonomy and choice of working arrangements can also be a source of intrinsic motivation.

The rapid development of information technology over the last few years has marked a change in industry. Traditional industries such as shipping, coal and other heavy industries have been in decline for many years and we are now seeing the emergence of more service based industries. Increasing numbers of workers are now employed in white-collar work (Argyle, 1989). Globalisation and the development of international markets has also increased competition in the market. Organisations have to work harder to achieve competitive advantage.

Social change has also influenced changes in workforce management. The number of women in the workforce has increased in recent years. Equality legislation has also required employers to remove barriers to employment and implement changes that will allow women greater access to work. Employees are also better educated with high levels of social awareness and have higher expectations of quality of working life.

With the emergence of Human Resource Management there is an awareness now of how employees can contribute to the achievement of organisation goals. Employee

management, reward and motivation are recognised as fundamental to achieving competitive advantage. From the early 1990's the focus has been on people and with the increase in service industries many organisations are now finally recognising that their people are their greatest asset and the key to business success.

The development of the HRM approach and in particular 'soft' HRM has focussed on the relationship between the employee and the organisation. It has been argued that employee commitment to the organisation along with high quality, flexibility and strategic integration are the key to high productivity and performance (Guest, cited in Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001).

Scholl (2003) has identified the components of employee commitment as:

- Identification with the organisations goals and/or mission manifested in pride in and defence of the organisation
- Long-term membership in the organisation and intention to remain with the organisation (loyalty)
- High levels of extra role behaviour, that is, behaviour beyond required performance

Developing employee commitment requires the implementation of policies and practices that appeal to the employees intrinsic and extrinsic needs that will build commitment to the organisation. But developing organisational commitment also creates employee expectations of the organisation.

The psychological contract is an important concept when considering the relationship between employer and employee. Each 'contract' is unique to each individual. It is a subjective concept which affects employees attitudes and beliefs.

"psychological contracts are implicit, involving an individual's beliefs of reciprocal exchange between two parties pertaining to trust, loyalty and the well-being of all involved"(The Psychological Contract).

Violation of this trust can result in a perceived breaking of the psychological contract which can damage the relationship between employer and employee leading to a decline in commitment and at its most extreme, feelings of betrayal. Therefore HR

policies that encourage high commitment and employee trust also require a commitment to the employee that they will be cared for and respected. This commitment to the employees welfare has been demonstrated in recent years by the increasing focus on work-life balance.

Work-life balance initiatives are based on mutual commitment and trust. It is about *'valuing your people for the work that they do and not the hours that they work'* (ICTU, 2002, p10). Implementing practices that support work-life balance such as flexible working arrangements indicates that an organisation is committed to practices that ensure the employees best interests and welfare.

In the mid-nineties when the Irish economy began a period of rapid growth and the labour market was struggling to meet the requirements of a rapidly developing economy, employers were frequently competing for talented staff, often from a very small pool. Employers had to look for ways of attracting and retaining valued staff. Those who could not compete on salary had to introduce other benefits and inducements to become an employer of choice.

In the 1980's flexible working was introduced in the Civil Service to create employment. By the mid 1990's the Civil Service was extending the flexible working options to attract and retain staff. Other public sector and private sector organisations also began to adopt flexible working practices realising that it was an asset when trying to attract and retain staff. Offering flexible working and work-life balance initiatives creates a perception of a caring employer, who values and respects their staff.

Current Research on Flexible Working

While many employers continue to offer the standard 9 to 5, five day week, there is growing interest in the introduction of more flexible work arrangements in both the public and private sector.

With recent pressure on the labour market and the pool of potential employees becoming smaller, organizations have had to look for new ways of attracting recruits. In order to recruit and retain staff many employers have been forced to consider the introduction of new working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements appeal to many people for a variety of reasons; family, educational needs, commuting, social and community commitments.

For the employer there can be many reasons for the introduction of these initiatives:

- the desire for competitive advantage through flexibility, innovation and speed to market has encouraged manufacturers to explore new organisational structures and working arrangements to support these capabilities
- In the service sector the increased focus on customer services has necessitated organisations offering greater access to services which usually means longer opening hours and providing excellent customer service requires a flexible approach
- Numerical flexibility allows employers to increase and decrease staff numbers in accordance with demand for their product/services. Some atypical work arrangements such as annualised hours can also accommodate the changing demands of the organisation.
- In a tight labour market, as experienced here in Ireland recently, there can be many organisations competing for a small number of talented people. In order to be the employer of choice many organisations are recognising the value of flexible work arrangements when trying to attract much needed staff. In a society where

the majority of couples with children are both working there is an increasing demand for jobs that will allow people to balance their job with their other commitments.

- Retention of valued staff by offering them flexible working arrangements for greater work/life balance and to meet family and other commitments.
- There is now a greater awareness of the need for work-life balance both for the employee and indirectly for the employer. Previously it was almost desirable to have staff that were willing to commit all their time to the job but research has shown that in organisations where there is an option to avail of flexible work arrangements, attendance, productivity and service delivery can be improved.

Benefits of Flexible Working for the Employer

Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell (2000) have outlined the following benefits for the employer who introduces flexible working arrangements:

- Ability to match work provisions more closely with customer/product demand
- Reduced fixed costs, for example in teleworking
- Aids recruitment and retention of employees
- Increases productivity and efficiency
- Improves staff morale
- Reduces stress and sick leave
- Reduces absenteeism
- Provides a wider pool of potential employees

Introducing flexible working can demonstrate an interest in the welfare of staff and a desire to accommodate their needs. The perception will be one of a caring organisation which can lead to improved public image which may have a positive impact on organisational performance.

Recent research by the National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003) has identified the benefits for organizations who offer flexible working arrangements. In a survey of 912 organisations the potential benefits were identified as employee satisfaction (85%), attracting/retaining employees (74%), employee productivity (58%) and improved reputation (56%). Reduced labour turnover (55%) and lowered absenteeism/sick leave (50%) were also cited as potential benefits.

The ability to recruit and retain employees is improved by the provision of flexible working practices such as flexitime, part-time working and career breaks (Crow, cited in Humphreys, Fleming & O'Donnell, 2000).

Employees are also more likely to have a greater commitment and loyalty to an organization that provides flexible working arrangements, even for staff who don't avail of them, as it is perceived that the organization values and cares for employees (Humphreys, Fleming & O'Donnell, 2000). It has also been suggested that by offering flexible and family friendly working arrangements employers have access to a larger pool of potential employees. Providing flexible working options allows candidates, who are unable to work full-time or the standard 9 to 5, apply for jobs that otherwise they would not be able to do (Humphreys, Fleming & O'Donnell, 2000).

In their report, *Flexible Working in the Irish Public Sector (2000)*, Humphreys, Fleming and O'Donnell cite several reports and research projects that have identified how employers are introducing teleworking both to meet the needs of employees but also as a means to reduce costs.

Research by Dalton and Mesch (1990) also indicates that flexible working practices can contribute to a reduction in absenteeism and staff turnover. They found that the introduction of flexible working arrangements reduces absenteeism because the flexible hours allow employees to attend to personal matters that would otherwise infringe on standard working hours. This leads to less conflict between work and personal life and will improve employee motivation and commitment.

A survey of managers and employers carried out by Flexexecutive (a consultancy firm that specialize in the area of flexible working) has identified the following benefits for organizations who introduce flexible working:

- Wider recruitment pool (91%)
- More attractive to employees (88%)
- Retain experienced and qualified personnel (86%)
- Creates positive PR (85%)
- Improved morale and motivation amongst staff (80%)
- Increased diversity within organization (79%)
- Increased employee commitment (75%)
- Reduced non-productive traveling time (70%)
- Reduced absenteeism (66%)
- Some tasks are more productively undertaken outside the work place (64%)
- Creates free office space (58%)
- Allows organizations to attract the best resources (54%)

(Work Life Balance Network, 2003)

A study carried out in the UK by Flexexecutive, *Desperately Seeking Flexibility*, (Work Life Balance Network, 2003) also looked at the impact on the work performance of senior managers who avail of flexible working arrangements. The results of the study showed there was an improvement in the performance of managers and 96% of managers were performing as well as and even better than a comparable group and 70% were performing at a considerably higher level than their counterparts on standard working hours.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions in their guidelines for Family Friendly Working & Work Life Balance (ICTU, 2002, pg 11) also report on research carried out by the Equality Authority that identified “*improved productivity and motivation*” as a result of the provision of family friendly work arrangements. They also outline the benefits for employers as improved staff retention, reduced workplace stress, reduced absenteeism and improved morale and commitment.

Benefits of Flexible Working For Employees

For employees there are many benefits to be gained from flexible working, increased motivation and job satisfaction and the ability to balance work with family and other commitments (Humphreys, Fleming & O'Donnell, 2000). While it may be argued that the introduction of flexible working arrangements leads to greater equality of opportunity for women some writers maintain that these arrangements just support the unequal treatment of women. If the option of flexible working is only available to certain low level grades those availing of these working arrangements may be forced to stay in them. It has also been suggested that availing of flexible working arrangements can limit an employees opportunities for promotion (Humphreys, Fleming & O'Donnell, 2000).

In his book, *Managing Work-life Balance*, David Clutterbuck (2003) cites many incidences of research showing that workers are experiencing increasing conflict between work and family life. When starting their career graduates from 11 countries all placed work-life balance at the top of their wish-list in selecting a job and career.

Compared to 40 years ago recent research has shown that there has been a huge decrease (46%) in the number of Irish workers who thought that work demands should take preference over family and personal needs (Clutterbuck, 2003).

A recent survey by the Irish Management Institute's Centre for Management Research found that the most difficult challenge for 135 Irish managers was achieving a work-life balance. The survey also asked respondents to consider a list of 15 HR practices that contribute to work-life balance and rate the impact on motivation, retention, productivity and recruitment. The results showed that term-time working was viewed as being the practice that contributed most to motivation; home or flexible working/telecommuting impacted most on retention and productivity and part-time working impacted most on recruitment.

In the report, *Off the Treadmill*, (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003) those surveyed identified the main advantages of flexible working to be: avoiding commuting, getting parking spaces, feeling more responsible for their own work, quality time with children and/or savings in childcare costs and being able to make personal appointments during the day. The report also found that for employees the main benefits of flexible working were increased job satisfaction, less stress, more time with family and better work-life balance.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (2002) have also outlined the benefits of flexible working arrangements for employees:

- A reduction in stress levels
- Greater control over working hours
- More job satisfaction and improved morale
- More discussion on how work is carried out
- Flexibility in hours worked
- More opportunity for education and training
- Better balance between work and outside responsibilities and choices
- Increased opportunity to participate in community and civic life
- Time to care for family and others.

Availability of Flexible Working Practices

Research by the The Irish Management Institute asked a large number of organisations across several sectors about their work-life balance policy. Of the 71 replies to the survey 32% of the organisations had a work-life balance policy while 68% had none.

Yet in a recent report, *Off The Treadmill*, (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003) commissioned by the National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies the research indicates that employers consider work-life balance arrangements as either very important (31%) or important (46%).

Research carried out by Hogarth et al (cited by Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003). found that though 90% of employers believed that people perform better at work if their working arrangements suit both their work and lifestyle the actual availability of flexible work practices was less than this statistic would indicate. While 62% of employers did allow a certain level of flexibility in the working time of employees in the majority of cases the only real flexible working arrangements in place was part-time work (Hogarth et al. 2001).

The availability of atypical work arrangements is also more widely available in the public sector (Evans cited by Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003) due largely to the absence of market pressure and the predominance of women in the workforce. Where atypical work arrangements are available in the private sector the organizations offering such work arrangements are usually large, unionized companies or companies with a high number of professional or technical workers (Evans cited by Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003) .

Kodz et al. (cited by Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003) have also found that in many organizations where atypical work arrangements are available not all employees have equal rights to avail of these work arrangements. Access to these work arrangements may be determined by grade or length of service. Some options will only be available to certain staff. Professional and managerial staff may be unable to avail of certain arrangements such as job-sharing as it may be considered not appropriate for the job that they are doing.

A 2001 study by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC cited by Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003) looked at the availability of flexible working arrangements in a sample of companies/employers (488) in the manufacturing and wholesale distribution sectors. The companies were asked about 9 different flexible working arrangements and whether they were in operation or under consideration for introduction to the company. Part-time work, shiftwork, flexible hours and job sharing were the most widely available work arrangements. The results of the study show that where flexible working arrangements are on offer the percentage of employees availing of these working arrangements is quite low. While 52% of companies offer permanent part-time work only 2% of employees were working to

this arrangement. The companies offering flexible hours (20%) and flexi-time (17%) also show a poor take up of these working arrangements (1% and 4% respectively).

In 2002 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) also carried out a survey to establish the availability of flexible work arrangements. The ICTU surveyed a sample of its members (the majority of which are public sector employees) to find out if they had access to flexible working arrangements and whether they were availing of them. The most widely available flexible work arrangements were: job sharing/work sharing (51%), flexitime (39%), employment/career break (38%) and shift work (30%). The flexible work arrangements most highly availed of were flexitime (69%), shiftwork (63%), part-time work (40%) and annualized hours (36%).

The report, *Off the Treadmill*, has also looked at the availability of flexible working practices in organizations and the percentage of staff who can avail of these working arrangements. Of those surveyed 45% of organizations have shift-working but 31% of the companies that have shift-working offer it to less than 5% of workers. Shift working is most widely available in manufacturing companies (51%) and in the public health sector (52%). The survey also showed that shiftwork was more common for manual workers and least likely for senior managers.

The survey also revealed that of 471 organisations which provide flexitime for workers, 47% of these organizations only made this option available to less than 5% of staff. Only 13% of organizations with flexitime provided it for over 75% of staff.

Recent research would indicate that while various flexible working arrangements are available in many organisations the number of employees actually able to avail of the options are quite low.

Barriers to the Introduction of Flexible Working Practices

Several reasons have been identified for the reluctance of employers to introduce flexible working practices. While many employers see these practices as important and beneficial to both the employees and the organisation the benefits are often difficult to quantify and therefore employers find it difficult to justify possible disruption caused by the change in practices. There are also concerns that the demand for flexible working arrangements will be unmanageable and lead to administrative and management problems.

Lack of awareness of the interest of staff in flexible working can also deter organisations from broaching the subject with staff.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions research in 2002 identified the following reasons for employers not introducing flexible working practices:

- caution
- perception that the nature of the work does not lend itself to flexible working
- perceptions about cost
- perception that the flexible environment is unsuitable
- administrative difficulties
- lack of external support
- organizations refusing to negotiate
- organizations using the introduction of flexibility as an excuse to remove other favourable conditions of employment
- barriers to promotion
- the hours being offered
- lack of quality jobs available with flexible working hours
- other concerns held by workers
- lack of affordable, suitable childcare

In the report, *Off the Treadmill* (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003), the main reasons identified for organizations failing to implement flexible working

arrangements were: the complexity of implementing the arrangements (60%), the lack of demand by employees (56%), competing organizational priorities (62%) and the size of the organisation (48%).

A report by the Work Foundation *Managing Best Practice – The Regular Benchmark* also provided data on the main reasons for opposition to the implementing of flexible work practices: management resistance (30%), greater pressure on other workers (28%), communication difficulties (23%), work scheduling (15%). The lack of cover (12%), less employee flexibility (12%), problems assessing performance (7%) and supervisory problems (7%)

Barriers to Availing of Flexible Working Practices

Despite having access to flexible working practices some employees have been unable to avail of them. The reasons why employees may be prevented from availing of these practices are:

- lack of awareness of the flexible working options
- lack of supporting infrastructure and technology
- heavy workloads – poor line management support
- concern regarding reaction of managers and colleagues
- concern for career prospects
- reduced income (for some of the flexible working options)

(Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003)

A research survey carried out by Flexexecutive (People Management, 2002) in conjunction with the Chartered Institute of Marketing and People Management discovered that while the majority of respondents (250 Marketing and HR professionals) welcomed the opportunity for flexible working they were unable to avail of flexible working options. The barriers to taking up the flexible working options were self-imposed. The reason for this was predominantly due to the fact that they believed that flexible working would have an adverse affect on their careers.

The majority of respondents (81%) believed that opting for flexible working would undermine their chances of career progression. The report on the survey also acknowledged that from the research it appeared that their fears were not unfounded (People Management, 2002).

Issues for Organisations that Provide Flexible Working Arrangements

The report, *Off the Treadmill* (Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003), looked at the issues for managers who are providing flexible working options for staff. The research identified a common understanding that the success of flexible working initiatives relies on the proper implementation and administration by managers and that in order to do this managers must be given the proper training and support to carry out this function. There was also uncertainty expressed about how much responsibility should lay with the line manager when decisions on flexible working were required.

Another issue which was identified was the effect on the team and the reaction of co-workers who might feel that they have to carry the burden of the work.

Research for the report on worklife balance, *Managing Best Practice – The Regular Benchmark*, shows that the main disadvantage of flexible working experienced by the survey respondents was resistance from management (30%). Greater pressure on other workers (28%) and communication difficulties (23%) were also identified as disadvantages of work/life balance initiatives. A large number of respondents (24%) replied that they did not know what disadvantages there were in providing measures to support work/life balance.

Susan Lewis, writing in the *International Review of Industrial and Organisational Psychology* (2003), has examined the issues around effective flexible working arrangements. In her report she writes that many of the flexible working

arrangements are implemented to accommodate staff with families. There has been some suggestion that this was a cause of resentment among colleagues, a 'work-family backlash', who were denied the same flexible options because they don't have children. Though on examination of research on this issue, she found that the evidence to support this idea was inconclusive.

Consultation was identified as essential for the effective implementation of flexible working. Consulting workers on the design of work schedules resulted in more positive attitudes to work and the new flexible working arrangements. Lewis also found that resistance to flexible working by managers can also result from a lack of consultation with them prior to implementation leading to lack of support for new flexible working policies.

Lewis also identified organisational culture and support as being crucial to the effectiveness of flexible working arrangements. Unless the culture and senior management supports flexible working it is unlikely many of the flexible working options will be adopted. Raising staff awareness is also essential so that all staff are aware of the opportunities and are familiar with any implications for their pay and benefits.

Managerial support for flexible working arrangements was also identified as crucial. On many levels the attitudes, behaviour and beliefs of managers can impact on the effective implementation and administration of flexible working. From her study of the research Lewis found that decisions by managers on whether to allow a flexible working arrangement was strongly influenced by their own beliefs and attitudes. There were also inconsistencies in their decision making which influenced their employees perceptions of fairness. Managers expectations of workers was also a factor in effective flexible working. They often expected the same output from staff on reduced hours as they had delivered while full-time. Though there is evidence indicating that workers on reduced hours or part-time can be as productive as their full-time colleagues, managers frequently assume that these workers are less committed than other workers. Managers also influenced the success of flexible working schemes by their own work patterns which can indicate support or rejection of flexible working practices.

Research Methodology

From the Literature Review we can see that there is growing interest and support for flexible working practices. While the number of employers providing flexible working is growing the provision of flexible working arrangements brings with it several problems for the organization.

The aims of the research is to look at the different experiences of organisations in providing atypical working practices with particular emphasis on the cost to the organization and the challenges in meeting the demand from staff. The research will consider the experiences of organizations both in the private and public sector.

In considering the appropriate research method it was decided that a qualitative approach would be most appropriate. The organizations involved in the research may not have carried out any internal examinations of the flexible working arrangements and the required information may not be available in the organizations involved in the research. Therefore the research will be relying on the experiences of those managers involved in the implementation and administration of flexible working and looking for their reaction to these working arrangements. There observations and assessment of flexible working in their organizations will be tapped into to identify the costs, challenges and issues for organizations which are providing flexible working arrangements.

The research will be carried out by conducting interviews with the most appropriate staff member in each organization. The interviews will be by phone and will consist of open questions (Appendix A) covering the following topics:

- what flexible working arrangements are available to staff and are there any restrictions on who can avail of them ?
- the reasons why the organisation has introduced such practices
- what benefit has the organization received through the provision of flexible working to staff
- what is the cost to the organisation in providing flexible working
- what are the challenges for the organisation in providing flexible working

This method of research was chosen as it would allow the researcher to introduce a topic and provide opportunities for further questioning and probing if required. A paper-based survey was considered but it was decided that an interview would be more appropriate as it would allow for clarification if required.

The research will be conducted on 7 organisations – 4 public sector and 3 private sector. The organizations were chosen to ensure that there was an input across several sectors, civil service, commercial state-owned, state agencies, banking, professional services and manufacturing. Each organization will be approached and asked to nominate a suitably experienced staff member to take part in the interview. The staff member should be someone with a depth of knowledge and experience in the implementation and administration of flexible working practices. It will also be essential for the interviewee to be aware of the experiences and attitudes to flexible working of other managers within the organization.

The organizations approached to take part in the research have requested that they remain anonymous. Therefore during this report they will be referred to according to the corresponding letter as in the list below. The interviewees will be known only by their role within the organisation.

The participating organisations and interviewees are:

A – Government Office (155 staff)

Interviewee: Higher Executive Officer in Human Resource Unit

B - Commercial State-owned Service Provider (10,000 staff)

Interviewee: Employment Equality – Project Manager

C – Public Sector Vocational Education Service Provider (700 staff in Dublin Region)

Interviewee: Administration Officer, Personnel Unit

D - State Agency (150 staff)

Interviewee: Human Resources Manager

E - Law Firm (400 staff)

Interviewee: Human Resources Manager

F - Banking Services Provider (8,000 staff)

Interviewee: Human Resources Administrator

G - Technological Manufacturing Company (120 staff)

Interviewee: Human Resources Administrator

The technique for analyzing qualitative data is one suggested by Hussey and Hussey (1997). The approach is one devised by Miles and Huberman (cited in Hussey & Hussey, 1997) and recommends the use of data displays for the analysis of qualitative research.

A display is a ' visual format that presents information systematically, so the user can draw valid conclusions' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.91).

The type of display I will use will be a matrix (Appendix B) which will allow me to record the output from the interviews in a format that is both logical and systematic. The occurrence of common perceptions and trends in the data will be analysed.

Research Findings

Availability of Flexible Working Arrangements

In analyzing the information collected through the interviews the first step was to establish what flexible working arrangements were available in the seven organizations. I asked each of the interviewees which, from a list of commonly used practices, of the flexible working arrangements were available in their organisation. The following table outlines the results.

Availability of Flexible Working Arrangements							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Flexitime	x	x	x	x			
Shiftwork		x			x	x	x
Teleworking	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Term-time	x	x	x	x			
Career breaks	x	x	x	x		x	
Worksharing	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Part-time		x	x		x	x	
Temporary	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Annualised Hours		x					
Compressed Hours							

The results of the research show that the public sector provides a wider selection of flexible working arrangements.

One organisation, G, which is a manufacturer in the technology industry has introduced no flexible working arrangements other than shift-work. Shift-work was introduced to meet a business need. When asked about the lack of flexible working options for staff the interviewee revealed that the perception was that flexible working was not appropriate for the work they are involved in. They had an option of reduced hours week available to some staff but it had recently been withdrawn as the administration of the scheme was too difficult.

Flexitime was available in all four of the public sector organizations but only in one organization (A) was it available to all staff with no restrictions or exceptions. In two

of the organizations (C and D) flexitime was available to the majority of staff. The exceptions to this were employees whose work demanded that they be in attendance at a certain time (e.g. instructors required to provide tuition according to a timetable). The fourth public organization (B) only allowed flexitime to a small number of staff working in clerical and administrative posts and only up to middle management level.

In all of the private companies flexitime was not available. In one company (E) flexitime was not officially available but over half of the secretarial and support staff have a degree of flexibility in their starting and finish times which are agreed with their line managers.

Shiftwork was available in only one of the public organizations (B). This organization is a state-owned commercial organization whose business requires shift work. All three private companies use shift workers and again it is available to meet the needs of the business.

Teleworking is provided in six of the organizations which were surveyed. Though the option to telework is restricted to certain staff in most of the organizations. In two of the organizations, A and E, the number of staff teleworking was very low, one and ten respectively. In these organizations teleworking was allowed for family and health reasons. In organization E staff were required to attend in the office at least three days a week but could work from home for the other two. Teleworking was introduced last year in a pilot scheme in organization B but was restricted to sales staff. It was also restricted in organization C and D to staff involved in specific work e.g. auditing.

Term-time leave is available in all four public sector organizations but was not available in any of the private companies surveyed. In organizations A, D and C all requests for term-time were granted subject to agreement of line manager. In organization B term-time has recently been introduced as a pilot scheme. The pilot scheme involved a broad representation across all grades and it is expected that the scheme will be extended in the future.

The option of taking career breaks was also available in all four public sector organizations but only available in one private company, F. A minimum number of years service was required in most of the organizations, ranging from two years in organisations A and F to four years in organisation D. Career breaks are also only granted for specific reasons e.g family commitments, travel, education and self-employment.

Worksharing is also available in all four public organizations and two of the private organizations. All the organizations that provide worksharing reported that while the option to work share is available to staff at all grades the majority of staff worksharing were clerical staff or low level management grades with a low take up by staff at higher levels.

While staff can request a worksharing arrangement for work/life balance in most of the organizations in two of the organizations E and F the option was only available to staff requiring it for family reasons.

Two of the organizations A and D did not differentiate between worksharing and part-time work but there were four organisations B, C, E and F which have staff working part-time. Organisation B only employed part-time workers for a specific operational task.

Temporary workers were also employed in six of the organizations. The reasons for taking on temporary staff are: seasonal work (B, E), requirement for specific professional skills (A), cover for statutory leave (C and D) and organizational flexibility (F).

Annualised hours were only available in one of the organizations (B). In this organization it was only available in one location and was to support seasonal work flow.

The compressed hours work arrangement was not used in any of the organizations surveyed.

Reasons for the Introduction of Flexible Working Arrangements

Several reasons were given for the introduction of flexible working in the participating organisations – civil service policy, retention of staff, support for work-life balance and meeting business requirements.

As we have seen from the literature review it has been government policy for the past 30 years to encourage and support flexible working arrangements. Successive national agreements have supported the introduction of flexible and atypical working arrangements.

The Civil Service has led the way in the introduction of many of the flexible working schemes: flexitime, career breaks, work/job sharing. Civil Service policies were the obvious reason for the introduction of many of the flexible working options in organization A, the government office. Two of the other public sector organization (B and C) also cited civil service policy as the main reason for the introduction of similar policies in their organizations. While they are not required to adopt civil service policies they “*generally follow trends in the civil service*” (C).

Retention of staff was the reason given by three of the organizations (B, D and E) for the introduction of more flexible work arrangements. The threat of losing valued staff was the catalyst for introducing working arrangements that would appeal to staff and allow them to meet family commitments while remaining in the organization.

Organisational and senior management support for work life balance initiatives was also a reason given for the introduction of flexible working. The culture of the organization, best practice and senior management support were a strong influence on the decision to provide flexible working.

“ it’s the ethos and culture of the organization to support work life balance ” (D)

One organization (B) reported that it was a business need that required them to introduce part-time working. Though this also occurred at a time when they wanted to increase the number of female employees and introduced part-time work schedules

which might appeal to women who, due to family and other commitments, may not be able to take up full-time posts.

One interviewee was unsure of why many of the flexible working arrangements were introduced. Though cost cutting in the 1990's was suggested as a possible reason for the introduction of part-time work.

Benefits to the Organisation from Flexible Working

The benefits identified by the research confirmed the findings in earlier research cited in the literature review. Improved staff retention, better quality recruitment candidates, reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, greater flexibility in meeting business needs and staff satisfaction were all positive outcomes from the introduction of flexible working initiatives.

Retention of staff was perceived to be one of the main benefits of providing flexible working. Four of the organizations reported that retention of valued staff was possible by offering more favourable work arrangements. Working arrangements that suit the lifestyle/family needs of employees gives them an alternative option to resignation. Offering flexible working options can create a belief that the organisation cares for and values staff which can lead to greater commitment to the organisation, even in staff who are not availing of the flexible working arrangements. *“perks not offered by other companies keeps staff in the organization.”*

Career breaks were also considered advantageous to the organization as one interviewee said *“it gives staff options to explore other careers”*. It was suggested that this was especially important if staff were not suited to the work or the organization they may be reluctant to resign. A career break allows them to try

something they may be more suited too but with the security that if it doesn't work out they have a job to return to.

Increased productivity of flexible workers was also identified as a benefit of providing flexible working. Several interviewees mentioned that frequently those on reduced hours, through work-sharing or part-time arrangements, are as productive as their fulltime colleagues. *"staff on four day weeks usually do 5 days work"*.

Staff satisfaction, improved motivation and less stress, also resulted from more flexible work arrangements.

Recruitment of staff was also improved by offering flexible working arrangements. It was also claimed that *"better quality candidates"* were also attracted to organizations that are people focused and support work life balance and flexible working. Offering attractive working arrangements also supported organizational efforts to becoming an 'employer of choice'.

Reduced absenteeism was also reported as a benefit of providing favourable work arrangements.

Business requirements can also be accommodated by flexible working. The 'peaks and troughs' in workload can be supported through flexible working.

Costs to the Organisation in Providing Flexible Working

It would appear that the costs involved in providing flexible working options was not a factor for the most of the organisations. Most of the interviewees said that the costs involved in providing flexible working were minimal.

The costs of equipment to support teleworking were the only real costs for most of the organizations and were generally not considered to be significant. Only one

interviewee felt that teleworking was a major drain on resources but most of the costs were attributable to travel and subsistence.

Administration of the schemes was not considered to be particularly onerous except when there may be difficulties regarding individual requests for flexible work arrangements.

Recruitment of staff to cover vacancies created by worksharing was an issue for one organization. Though not providing the option of worksharing may have resulted in the resignation of the staff member which would also mean recruitment activity to fill the vacancy.

The costs of providing flexible working options to staff is not a major issue for most of those interviewed and it would seem that the benefits of flexible working outweigh the costs.

The Challenges/Issues for Organisations who Provide Flexible Working

The attitudes and behaviour of line managers was an issue for five of the seven organizations surveyed. One of the difficulties identified was the common problem of managers agreeing to requests for flexible working arrangements without giving due thought and consideration to the impact on the work or colleagues of the staff member. A lack of proper consideration of the workload and impact on others can result in a heavier workload for other staff. This can then lead to 'bad feeling' within the team and cause resentment among the other staff.

Many managers were also resistant to implementing flexible working arrangements. In one private sector organization the managers were particularly resistant to introducing flexible working arrangements in their own areas and the interviewee stated that "*very few managers will agree to worksharing.*" The managers involved

had a 'traditional mindset' which prevented them from considering alternative working arrangements for their staff.

Several of those interviewed also felt that while many of the flexible working options were at the discretion of management, staff had an expectation that their request will always be granted. It was considered an entitlement rather than a privilege. In one organization where the demand exceeds the ability to facilitate all requests, it was reported that turning down a request can lead to poor morale and a decline in motivation.

The impact on the work was also considered an issue by several of the interviewees. The handover of work between worksharers was in some places problematic with some reporting a negative impact on service. Continuity was an issue, with the danger of tasks being overlooked or items mislaid, being a particular problem. The impact of this on other workers was also noted and can cause friction and resentment if other staff have to compensate for problems created by worksharing.

Staff awareness on the various flexible working options was also mentioned as an issue. Several of the interviewees mentioned that staff often felt that some options were only for family friendly reasons though all requests are equally considered and family reasons was not a necessary criteria for availing of those flexible options.

One public organization (A) recently carried out an internal review of their flexible working arrangements and identified a need for options, such as annualized hours and compressed hours, which do not result in a loss of pay. Staff awareness around the conditions attached to worksharing was also poor as many did not realise the implications regarding pay and benefits for those on worksharing arrangements.

The relationship between two jobsharers is also a situation where difficulties can arise. One public organization reported that they have experienced problems with worksharers. In that organization nearly 10% of their 700 staff in the Dublin region are worksharing. If two people worksharing are not compatible it can lead to problems if one is or appears to be doing more work than the other. It can lead to a

drop in motivation and can cause problems if the relationship breaks down and they 'fall out'.

This organization also found that term time caused a huge drain on resources. Temporary staff are recruited to cover the term-time leave. The resources required to process the 500 applications for 35 jobs was considered to be a significant strain on the HR unit and the resources of the organization for short temporary contracts.

The results of the research are in line with the issues previously identified in the literature review. It would seem from the research that a lot of the problems caused by flexible working arrangements are due to poor management by line managers. Many of the organisations interviewed had not provided training for managers in how to support flexible working. An effective training and awareness programme for managers seems to be required by many organisations to deal with the problems they are currently experiencing. Managers need to take responsibility for the flexible working arrangements in their areas, ensuring proper procedures are in place for dealing with the work, staff and measuring performance.

Senior management support of flexible working is also necessary particularly in organisations where there is resistance and a culture change is required to ensure acceptance of new working arrangements.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to look at flexible working from the perspective of the organisation and to consider the experience of several organisations who provide flexible working options for their staff.

The research revealed that the public sector is still leading the way with the introduction of flexible working initiatives and several schemes (e.g. flexitime, term-time and career breaks) have yet to be adopted in the private sector organisations involved in the research.

Civil service policy has also been identified as a major influence in the adoption of flexible working initiatives in the wider public service. The need to retain staff was also a primary reason for introducing flexible working.

The benefits of flexible working for the organisations confirms the findings of research referred to in the literature review. The introduction of flexible working has delivered many benefits - staff retention, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and improved staff satisfaction - and has overall been a positive step for the organisations surveyed and at minimal cost.

The research revealed that the challenges/issues for organisations are the result of just a few factors – organisation culture and inadequate training of managers. Many of the problems experienced by the organisations could be alleviated if line managers were provided with appropriate training and awareness programmes. Raising awareness of the benefits of flexible working may reduce resistance from managers. Ensuring staff are aware of the various flexible working schemes may also address some of the problems experienced in some of the organisations.

Introducing systems for measuring the performance of workers, both those on flexible working arrangements and those on standard working hours, will also give real

metrics which can be utilised to promote flexible working and dispel inaccurate perceptions of the output and contribution of flexible workers.

Private sector organisations should also consider benchmarking against public sector organisations to find out how more flexible working arrangements can be implemented to deliver benefits for both the organisation and employees.

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Survey of Flexible Working Arrangements

Name:

Organisation:

Role:

1. Number of staff in the organization:

Junior/clerical :

Middle management :

Senior Management :

Director :

2. What flexible working arrangements are available to staff:

	Available		Number Availing of by Grade			
	Yes	No	Jnr/Cler	Mid Mgt	Snr Mgt	Dir
Flexitime						
Shiftwork						
Teleworking						
Term-time						
Career Breaks						
Worksharing						
Part-time						
Temporary						
Annualised Hours						
Compressed Hours						

Any other flexible working options available?

Appendix A

3. Are all options available to all staff? Does the organization have a Work/life balance policy?

4. What were the reasons for introducing the available flexible working arrangements?

5. What benefit to the organization has flexible working delivered?

6. What is the cost to the organization in providing flexible working options?
Financial :

HR:

Training:

Equipment/Facilities:

7. What are the challenges/issues for the organization in providing flexible working.

Appendix B: Data Analysis Table

	Interview A	Interview B	Interview C	Interview D	Interview E	Interview F	Interview G
No of Staff	155	10,000	700	140	400	8000	120
Availability of Flexible Working	All staff can apply for all flexible working options	Flexi – up to HEO Grade. Teleworking – pilot scheme in one area Termtime – pilot scheme Worksharing – all grades Shift, part-time & Annualised hours – operational staff only	All options available to all staff. Exceptions are: Instructors work set hours unable to work flexitime. Teleworking – pilot in one area at present.	Available to all staff subject to managers agreement. Exception: One group who work outside of office.	Restrictions on most of the options. No gender barriers	Career Break – 2 yrs service required Part –time only up to Asst Manager position. (5 yr service req) Part-time/worksharing restricted to staff with family reasons.	Shiftworking for operational staff Temporary staff for holiday relief.
Work/Life Balance Policy	Yes	No formal policy but have many schemes. Will issue brochure and provide training for managers		Statement of support for W/L balance		Yes	
Reasons for introduction	Policy of Civil Service National agreements support flexible working	Inherited from Civil Service Business need (parttime working) Retention needs – employer of	Generally follow trends in Civil Service. Not sure of any other reasons Senior mgt support Culture of support	To formalize common practices in organization Best practice Ethos and culture of organization to support w/l balance	Job sharing introduced to retain valued staff. Teleworking – accommodate staff (family, health reasons)	Not sure many options have been available for some time. Part time work introduced mid 90's to cut costs but also to meet demands from	Flexi working – not suited to production environment Owner not supportive of flexible working

Appendix B: Data Analysis Table

		choice	for W/L balance	and equality.		staff.	
Benefits to organization	<p>Recruitment Retention</p> <p>Motivator</p> <p>Increased productivity</p> <p>Absenteeism reduced</p>	<p>Parttime work delivered significant savings in reducing o/t.</p> <p>Better quality candidates.</p> <p>More productive</p> <p>Cost reduction</p> <p>Increased employee satisfaction</p> <p>improved retention rates due to less stress</p>	Staff on 4 days usually do 5 days work.	<p>Staff retention.</p> <p>Options available if business requirements are met.</p> <p>Staff retention.</p> <p>Positive impact on staff satisfaction.</p> <p>Efficiency of staff improved.</p> <p>Accommodates 'peaks and troughs' in workload.</p>	Can't think of anything.	<p>Retaining talent – alternative to resignation.</p> <p>Reduces turnover of staff. Perks not offered in other companies – keeps staff in org. Career breaks give staff options to explore other careers. People not suited to org. can look at other options.</p> <p>Reduces work related stress. Supports worklife balance</p> <p>More productive – work harder when you work less days.</p>	
Cost of Flexible Work	<p>Minimal costs for equip/facilities</p> <p>Training costs for managers</p>	<p>Small cost but benefits outweigh</p> <p>Cost of time spent discussing individual cases</p>	Additional costs for bank holidays for job-sharers.	<p>Flexible working has allowed reduction in numbers – salary savings.</p> <p>Teleworking – costs of equipment and T&S are significant.</p>	<p>Recruitment costs when staff take worksharing.</p> <p>Minimal equipment costs for teleworking.</p>	<p>No significant costs.</p> <p>No significant additional admin work.</p> <p>Minimal costs for facilities to support teleworking.</p>	

Appendix B: Data Analysis Table

<p>Challenges/issues</p>	<p>Lack of thought by mgrs on impact of work arrangements causes bad feeling among staff left to carry burden.</p> <p>Lack of awareness amongst staff of implications on pay/benefits for those on W/L Balance options</p> <p>Staff not worksharing feel there is negative impact due to others worksharing.</p> <p>Need for more initiatives which do not result in loss of pay.</p>	<p>Jobsharers feel not equal to others Hard to tell if real barriers or self-imposed.</p> <p>Not always able to accommodate requests for flexible work.</p> <p>Statutory leave can cause as much problems.</p> <p>Problems generally at operational level</p>	<p>Managers find the worksharing difficult to manage</p> <p>Termtime- large demand. Loss of knowledge Operational difficulties Recruiting temps. very resource intensive</p> <p>Cost more to have two people doing one job</p> <p>Quality of work can suffer with worksharing if both not making equal contribution. Continuity of service can be issue. Can be staff difficulties if partners fall out</p> <p>Learning how to deal with problems Improving with experience.</p>	<p>No problems with the flexi working</p> <p>Cost of teleworking are significant for the office.</p> <p>Expectation of entitlement to flexible work arrangements Can cause problems.</p> <p>Managers need to take more responsibility for decisions on flexi options.</p> <p>Single staff feel options not really for them.</p>	<p>Difficulties with handover of work – things get missed/lost</p> <p>Few managers will agree to job sharing.</p> <p>Difficult to get two people who want to job share.</p> <p>Long serving staff more likely to be given permission to avail of flexi options.</p>	<p>Demand exceeds facility to allow. Can cause bad feeling and lead to lack of motivation.</p> <p>Can be resentment from full time staff.</p> <p>Feeling that there is favouritism for people with families.</p> <p>Resistance from managers in providing part-time work.</p>	
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