Transport for London

Smarter Working Guide

Contents

MAYOR OF LONDON

WORKWISE UK
working smarter : living better

Transport for London

1. Introduction

As businesses strive for sharper service, more efficiency, lower costs and higher motivation, Smarter Working is demanding the attention of employers as a proven set of techniques for delivering tangible improvements in performance in the short, medium and long term.

Smarter Working describes practical methods that help employers move away from a rigid view of how and when people can work effectively. By introducing new flexible working practices employers can put themselves in a stronger position to:

Become an employer of choice:

- Attract and retain staff
- Appeal to a wider pool of talent
- Reduce time spent on journeys to meetings and for commuting
- Provide a better work/life balance for staff

Become more efficient and productive:

- Fulfil customers' expectations
- Turn around orders more quickly and reliably
- Reduce overheads on property
- Bring down levels of absenteeism
- Save on the costs of fuel and parking
- Emit less carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases

For employees, there are also powerful attractions to switching from the traditional nine-to-five routine as they can:

- Improve work/life balance
- Reduce stress
- Reduce long hours
- Find more effective ways of travelling on business than the traditional car journey

Who is this guide for?

Produced by Work Wise UK, the not for profit organisation promoting Smarter Working initiatives, and Transport for London (TfL), this guide is designed to be a source of practical help in framing an appropriate strategy for Smarter Working, and then implementing it in a way that delivers the full benefits to employers and employees alike. As well as highlighting the gains, it addresses the organisational challenges and legal issues that occur in carrying through a change in working practices.

While the guide is aimed primarily at employers who wish to plan their first steps in Smarter Working, it also provides useful frameworks for organisations which have already started to embed Smarter Working practices into their operations and are looking to make the next round of improvements.
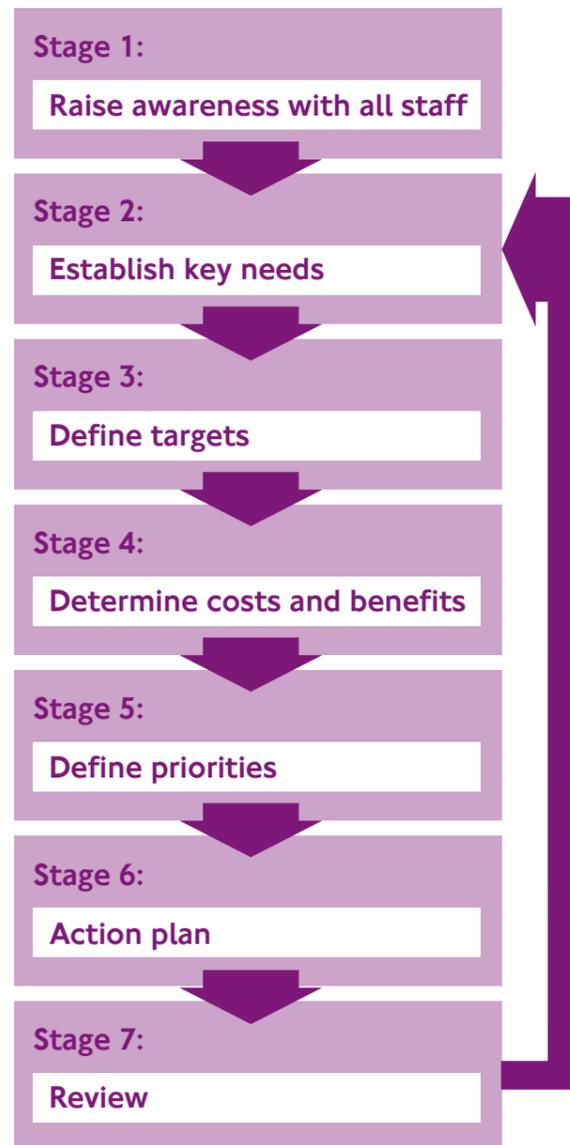
How to use this guide

This guide provides quick and easy access to the relevant information for the task in hand. The diagram on page 4 outlines the implementation process.

There are a number of measures detailed in this guide to allow you to choose those best suited to meet the needs of your business. Which measures are appropriate and deliverable will depend on the particular circumstances of the business and not all the options may be suitable or practical for your organisation to implement.

Figure 1 – Process for planning and adopting Smarter Working

Stage 1:
Raise awareness with all staff

Stage 2:
Establish key needs

Stage 3:
Define targets

Stage 4:
Determine costs and benefits

Stage 5:
Define priorities

Stage 6:
Action plan

Stage 7:
Review

'Flexible, Smarter Working is here to stay. Nine out of ten requests from staff to work flexibly have been accepted by employers and the UK leads the rest of Europe in numbers of part-time workers. New technologies will help more people in the future to 'telework' from home or on the move.'

Sir Digby Jones, UK Skills Envoy

'Many businesses are already reaping rewards from more flexible and smarter ways of working, achieving improved productivity and staff recruitment and retention. Local communities and the environment benefit too. The right balance must, of course, be struck between employees having maximum flexibility and businesses remaining competitive and meeting customers' needs.'

Richard Lambert, Director General, CBI

'The British workforce work the longest hours in Europe and this isn't helping their firms become more productive, nor is it good for the health of these long-hours employees or the happiness of their families. Unfortunately too few employers have yet to grasp the concept that flexible working not only makes for sound business sense but is also good news for overworked individuals.'

Brendan Barber, General Secretary, TUC

2. What is Smarter Working?

Smarter Working can take a number of forms; some very simple with few cost implications in terms of initial investment, through to full organisation-wide workflow reviews. It can apply to any business or organisation from large multi-national companies and the public sector to small businesses and the self employed.

In the past decade, a whole range of Smarter Working arrangements have become increasingly common. A number of key drivers are responsible for this, but the main ones cited are:

- As a response to meeting recruitment difficulties
- To improve motivation
- To retain experienced staff
- To support equal opportunities

In addition, there has been pressure from employees battling to maintain a satisfactory balance between their work and other commitments, often referred to as 'work/life balance', which has been supported by the Government via the introduction of legislation and guidance.

The specific deployment of Smarter Working in any given organisation is limited only by the corporate imagination. It means different things to different employers, and many solutions can be combined to meet the requirements of various industries, sectors and skill sets.

Organisations may already be running some Smarter Working practices that are not explicitly recognised as such, but could form the basis for planning new initiatives.

The techniques that are most widely adopted break down into three main types:

Flexible working

Flexible working empowers the employee to structure their own working week within a framework of strict parameters. They are able to dictate start and finish times, and with some options even the days worked. The benefit of this is that staff are able to deal with family and other commitments without it impacting on their work. For example, many hours have been lost in the past due to GP, hospital, optician appointments etc. Those using flexible working practices, however, tend to arrange their appointments outside of core hours (the hours when it is essential that staff are present at work), and therefore lost time is made up.

There are a variety of solutions that range from:

- **'Flexi-time'**: an employee can choose how weekly or annual hours are worked (also called 'self-rostering')
- **'Flexi-hours'**: an employee is allowed to come in and leave earlier or later
- **'Flexi-working'**: enables an employee to work overtime and then take that time off in lieu
- **'Condensed hours'**: an employee works the week's hours in just four days, taking the fifth day off

There are many different variations on each of these that accommodate the particular requirements of the employee and employer, such as 'shift working', 'staggered hours' and 'term-time working'. Table 1 on page 10 gives a much more comprehensive definition of the approaches.

Home working

Home working can be a far more productive and efficient approach for many employees.

According to a survey by networking technology firm Mitel in April 2007, two-thirds of workers have stated that home working allows them to be more flexible, with 41 per cent believing that it can boost productivity.

Mitel's managing director Graham Bevington claimed that while a number of businesses assume that home working technologies tend to be slow and unreliable, new advances and the availability of fast web connections mean that firms should think again.

He said: 'With high-speed broadband currently accounting for 70 per cent of all household internet connections and a wealth of telecommunications technologies, such as IP telephony, now an affordable business standard for seamless connectivity to the office, the technology to enable home working is now more sophisticated than ever.'

A recent survey by BT Business suggested that 82 per cent of small businesses think that having broadband can help to achieve a better work/life balance.

Advances in technology and wide availability of broadband means many people can now work from home very effectively. The benefit of this is that employees remove the need to travel, therefore saving time, which equates to a more productive, less stressed and happier employee.

Home working is proving increasingly popular, and this is beginning to have noticeable effects on congestion and public transport, especially in major towns and cities. Even choosing to work from home one day a week can have a significant impact on work/life balance and productivity.

In the UK, there are 5.4 million employees who work through some kind of formal or informal flexible working agreement, of which 2.2 million are men and 3.2 million are women. Of these, 3.3 million work from home in some form.
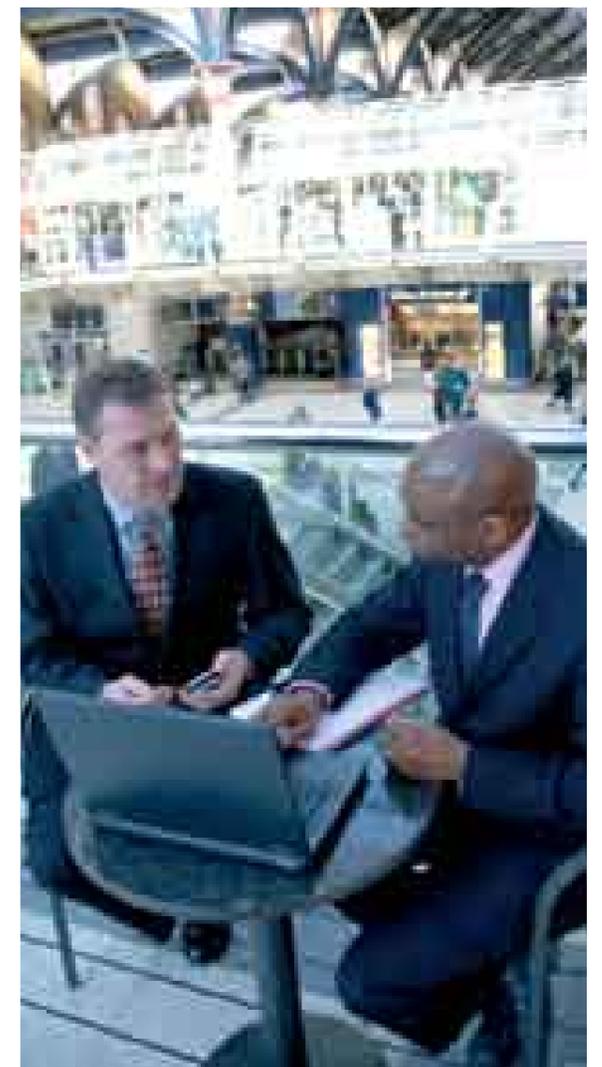
Remote working

Another approach to reduce time spent travelling is remote working. This is where an employee works on the move, reducing the need to come into the office. This could be working using:

- **'Satellite offices'**: the term satellite office typically refers to employees working from a remotely-located, high-technology office environment

- **'Hot desking'**: permanent workstations that can be used on a temporary basis by different employees as and when required

- **'Touchdown solutions'**: for example business centres or internet cafes. The benefit of these are that IT costs are spread across various organisations as space is often rented

- **The car**: (while stationary) with the latest mobile communications technology: mobile connectivity allows employees to use laptops and handheld devices wherever they are, dependant on coverage. However, this is an area of great debate with regard to health and safety implications and advice should be sought.

For a more in-depth definition of flexible working practices, see Table 2.

Table 1 - Common flexible working practices

Term	Description		Typical roles	Benefits
Flexi-time	Flexi-time (or flextime) is a variable schedule as distinct from the nine-to-five day. Under flexi-time, there is typically a core period of the day when employees are expected to be at work, for example between 10:00 and 16:00. The rest of the working day is on flexi-time. Employees can choose when they work, as long as they meet the total of daily, weekly or monthly hours expected by their employer and they get the necessary work done		Providers of customer service and can range from administration workers to maintenance staff	Reduced premises costs Reduced staff turnover Access to expanded labour market
Part-time work	Part-time work is defined as employment that is less than a full-time organisational commitment on the part of the employee. For example, 'half-time' would involve working two-and-a-half days a week		Working parents or carers may particularly welcome this	Lower absenteeism Reduced work related stress
Job share	Job sharing is an arrangement where two or more employees share the duties and responsibilities of a single full-time job. Each job sharer has broadly the same responsibilities, although their contractual terms and conditions of employment may differ. Sharing might also include shift swapping within groups of employees who carry out the same task		Useful as a way of combining part-time and flexi-time	Lower recruitment costs Improved staff effectiveness
Time off in lieu (TOIL)	TOIL or 'banked hours' is similar to flexi-time. Workers are credited for extra hours worked and then allowed to take them off at another time. Unlike flexi-time, time taken off usually has to be agreed in advance and time may have to be earned or banked before it can be taken		Can be used to deal with seasonal demand patterns	Staff retention Improved capacity planning
Annualised hours	Working annualised hours means an employee is contracted to work a number of hours per year, which are worked flexibly and not in a fixed way		Helpline staff	Allows business costs to be defined Helps budgeting
Zero-hours contracts	Workers with zero-hours contracts are not guaranteed work but are 'on call' to work according to the short-term needs of their employer. They are then paid an agreed level for the number of hours for the period worked		Useful in managing pre retirement planning or where there are wide fluctuations in demand	Retain skills and therefore reduce recruitment costs
Term-time working	Term-time working is most common within the education sector, it allows people who have children of school age to be at home during the school holidays. It is also found in other sectors where this pattern fits the demands of the workload		Parents and carers in all types of roles	Improves staff retention
Compressed hours	Compressed (or restructured) hours result in work taking place in fewer and longer blocks during the week or month, for example, a nine-day fortnight or a four-day week		Maintenance work where significant disruption might be caused IT project staff Lifestyle employees who would like fewer, but longer breaks	Reduces overall time for project Allows loyal staff some flexibility
V-time working	This is a voluntary agreement in which an employee's hours are reduced for an agreed period, with a guarantee that full-time employment will be available again at a specific date		This might be in response to either the needs of the employer or the employee Any role	Allows the employer to retain skills but reduce costs in the short term
Breaks from work	This could be the more traditional issue of time for the birth of children, but can also be extended into unpaid sabbaticals or career break schemes, which allow the organisation to retain staff, while extending a high degree of flexibility for a short period of time		Maternity, paternity and care responsibilities All roles	Retains staff

Table 2 – Common remote working practices

Term	Description		Typical roles	For the benefit of
Hot desking	Hot desking refers to permanent workstations that can be used on a temporary basis by different employees as and when required. The work surface could be an actual desk or just a terminal link. No-one has their own personal domain		Financial services Administrative posts Customer service Consultancies	Anywhere staff work with different teams of people or where staff are not predominantly office-based
Working from home	Activities and functions are mainly performed at home and typically require the establishment of a suitably equipped workspace to allow full, regular contact with colleagues and customers		Professional and knowledge workers Technical experts Sales staff	Knowledge workers and can be helpful if covering different time zones or round-the-clock cover
Teleworking	Teleworking refers to jobs and assignments performed from a distance, typically over a network such as the internet, as opposed to work performed directly on site		Sales Customer support Technical helplines	Where most work is conducted by telephone
Mobile working	Mobile workers may have a permanent base, but spend most of their working time in other locations. Suppliers of business services, in particular, are mainly on site with clients. These workers can communicate with their office and stay away from base for long periods by using mobile phones, wireless internet enabled laptops and personal digital assistants (PDAs), a handheld device that combines computing, telephone/fax and networking features. A typical PDA can function as a mobile phone, fax sender and personal organizer. Many PDAs incorporate handwriting and/or voice-recognition features. PDAs are also called palmtops, handheld computers and pocket computers. This can also provide significant savings when coupled with other Smarter Working techniques such as hot desking		Sales staff Auditors Field technical staff Regional managers Trainers HR managers Project managers	Employees who have to make face-to-face calls and can use time between appointments to manage administration
Virtual teamworking	In virtual teams, people collaborate on joint projects, but rarely or never meet face-to-face. Developments in video conferencing, virtual private networks and collaborative-project software are making such work possible. Where physical items have to be exchanged, courier services are used		Copywriter Editor Illustrator Graphic designer	High skill level work where teams might work together for a short period of time

Case study: the Nationwide Building Society

In moving towards flexible working Nationwide Building Society considers itself to be ahead of the legislative process and sees the impetus coming from the business and employees. In the past 10 years, well in advance of any legislation, it has started offering career breaks, the ability to buy extra holiday entitlement and to work from home.

Nationwide sees a number of specific advantages at a corporate level to flexible working:

- More efficient use of existing office space and better asset utilisation
- Meeting customers at a time and location to suit them, for example, in their own home in the evening
- Improved employee productivity by reducing stress related to commuting
- Higher levels of motivation

Nationwide also recognises the advantages for employees in a better work/life balance that allows them to structure work commitments around family or other personal commitments. Nationwide accepts that as a result of changing social attitudes, employees may be more reluctant to move location because they want to give higher priority to the needs of their partners and children. As a result, Smarter Working practices address this need and ensure skilled and qualified employees remain with the company as part of an overall travel plan strategy, which is explained in Section 4.

Figure 2 – Londoners working from home

The graph below shows the increase in home working over the past five years

Working from home (thousands)
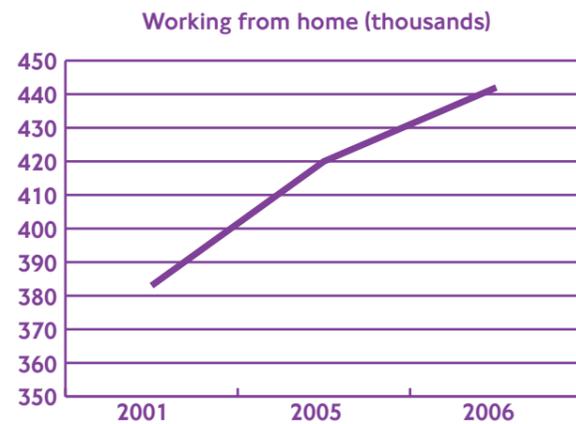
Source: Office of National Statistics, labour force survey, microdata service, spring quarters.

Base: all in employment (employees and self-employed); working from home includes working at home and using home as a base.

Figure 3 – Availability of different types of smarter working within organisations

The graph below illustrates recent uptake and availability of Smarter Working practices within organisations and demonstrates the wide range of solutions that are being adopted
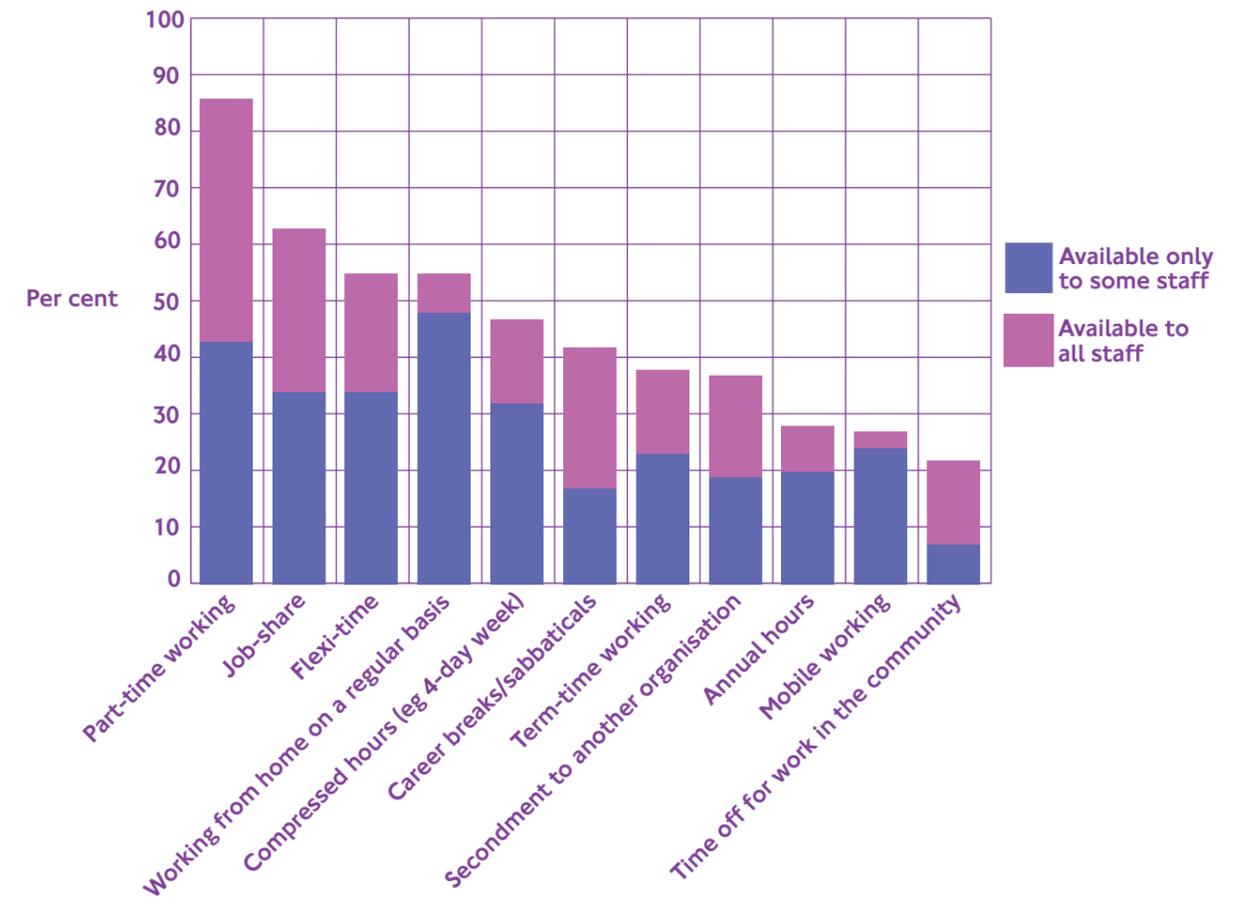
Per cent

Available only to some staff

Available to all staff

Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Flexible working: impact and implementation, survey based on a sample of 574 organisations, February 2005.

3. How to implement Smarter Working practices

In deciding which types of Smarter Working apply best to a particular organisation, managers in consultation with employees and unions should first review the competitive pressures under which they are operating and decide on what degree of flexibility can realistically be offered given the constraints of the business.

The technology, skills and regulations, which will be necessary for any changes to take effect, need to be assessed. It is also necessary to take into account the cultural shift that managers are going to experience and retraining that may be required to address a differing managerial approach.

In this section the implementation of Smarter Working from a Human Resources (HR) perspective is discussed, a flow chart of the planning process is provided, and a summary given of the main points to consider in changing working practices.

In addition, on the WorkWiseUK website (www.workwiseuk.org), there is an adoption ladder that helps organisations determine, in a structured way, the techniques for Smarter Working that are most appropriate to them. Managers might also like to consult the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform's guide to changing work practices produced with the CBI and TUC in 2005 (see Section 10).

Process for planning and adopting Smarter Working practices

1. Raise awareness with directors, managers, staff and employee representatives in the organisation and get their buy-in

Awareness of the potential business benefits, the new skills required by managers and employees and the role of any technologies, is vital to setting objectives for improvement. Consultation with employees, unions and other representative bodies is important.

Commitment and securing management support from the outset is imperative. If managers are aware of what a Smarter Working Policy can achieve, they are more likely to buy into the process and be flexible in their approach to staff training and management. The business case in Section 5 can be used to gain this support.

As changing staff working arrangements is based on cultural and behavioural change, it can be alien to managers, and so training needs must be taken into consideration. These concerns can often be allayed by working alongside an organisation that has already implemented a Smarter Working Policy. TfL supports various Travel Plan Networks and provides schemes which focus on issues such as Smarter Working as part of a wider travel plan. This enables businesses to pool resources and gain valuable experience as to what best works and the support needed to implement a policy and measures.
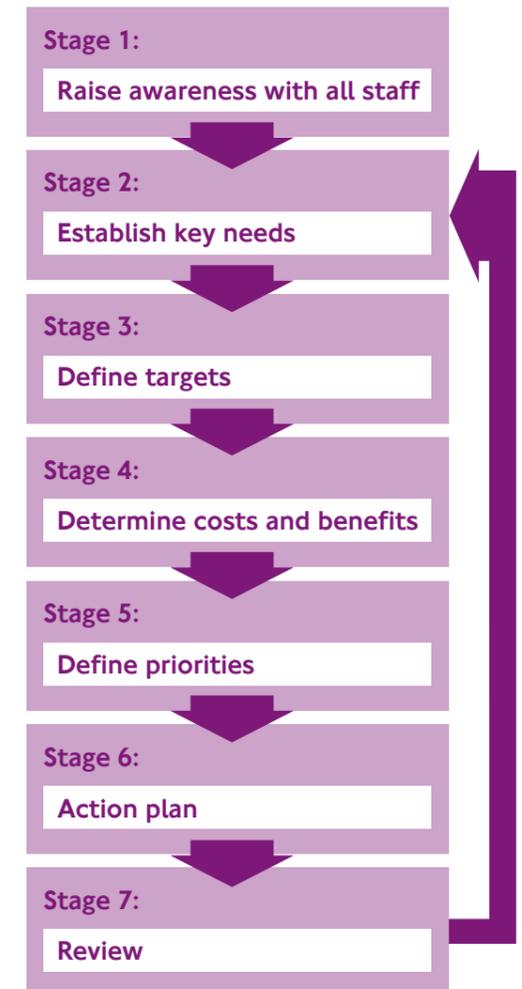
Managers may also be worried about employees not being available at core times in case a client rings. However, in reality, an extended service is often provided.

Furthermore, a flexible working policy may enable you to retain valued staff by offering them choices to suit their lifestyle demands. Smarter Working is a strategy for better managing your workforce, so guidelines are required based on your business needs and what measures can be implemented and restrictions that may apply.

2. Establish key needs

Your organisation will have key priorities for its market place. Collect data through surveys and establish what is possible, practical and desirable. The management group should assess the current adoption of Smarter Working and review significant pressures on the business. It can then define which of the techniques discussed in this document could and should apply. The information in Table 1 can be used to identify those techniques that are likely to be of most use.

Process for planning and adopting Smarter Working

Stage 1:
Raise awareness with all staff

Stage 2:
Establish key needs

Stage 3:
Define targets

Stage 4:
Determine costs and benefits

Stage 5:
Define priorities

Stage 6:
Action plan

Stage 7:
Review

Business needs

Many departments within an organisation will have an impact on Smarter Working practices; how they are, or can be, employed. These need to be identified to fully understand both business and service implications. By engaging with the various departments early in the process it will be possible to identify what is really required in terms of on-site cover, technology and support.

Some examples may be:

- **IT Department**: It is important to know what equipment is in place, what is possible and what is needed

- **HR Department**: A change of working practices may require union and staff negotiation, new contracts and a change in advertising policy or administrative processes. Individual roles will need to be assessed for suitability. For example, Information Technology support, administration and reception, tend to be areas where the degree of individual flexibility may be limited due to face-to-face contact and so may need to be excluded from certain options

- **Production or Service Department Heads**: It is important to ensure that work flow is not affected and improvements and savings are seen. Therefore, it is imperative to take into account operational requirements and future plans

If your business case for Smarter Working is that of staff retention and recruitment, then engage with others in your industry to find out what obstacles they faced and which techniques gave best value.

Staff needs

It is important to assess business needs first, as production and service delivery dictate to a degree the choices that can be offered to staff. It is also equally important to find out what employees would appreciate and value. Imposing the solution from above without catering for staff needs could result in low morale and dissatisfaction among the workforce. Therefore, within a survey only ask for comments on the areas in which action can be taken. It should be made clear to employees that the review is a two-way process and that their views are valued, but only changes that will benefit the business (even indirectly), as well as the individual, can be accommodated.

Flexible working is a cultural shift for many organisations that places more trust in employees. Consider what is of value to the individual and to your organisation, as it is a policy based on personal flexibility and needs that will build a strong, loyal workforce. Once the survey response has been collated, feed back the results of the research to employees, including a firm timescale to evaluate suggestions and make decisions.

Transport for London (TfL) has an automated survey tool to help organisations implement a travel plan. Contact the Workplace Travel Planning team at TfL or email worktp@tfl.gov.uk

Other needs

Health and safety

As a consequence of Smarter Working there are implications for the health and safety of the workforce, such as longer opening hours, people working alone, security provisions and risk assessments for home and mobile workers. An example of a risk assessment form is in Appendix 2. For further guidance contact the office of the Health and Safety Executive or a local representative.

Current working patterns

Current practices such as routine meetings need to be booked to ensure that all workers can be present together when necessary, and that workers remain well informed and involved. One of the possible drawbacks of lone working is the feeling of isolation from the team. Team meetings, if handled appropriately, can overcome this.

A policy may therefore be required regarding facilitating meetings to maximise attendance in line with 'core hours' and not to place unnecessary strain or pressure on those with remote working practices. The policy needs to be fair and equitable to all in order to be inclusive.

Evaluate flexible working requirements

If considering flexible working, parameters may need to be decided:

- Which levels of staff are to be involved?
- How much work may be done at home?
- What roles are suitable?
- Whose permission is required?
- What are the health and safety implications?

Also look at the technology required to enable it. If, for example, your organisation intends to spread the scope of home-working widely (rather than just allowing it on an occasional basis to meet deadlines), then there will be ongoing implications and considerations. An assessment should be made of business needs:

- What equipment is available or will be required?
- Are networks and servers accessible or are there cost implications?
- Is IT security robust enough to provide effective cover?
- Will staff need training eg health and safety or IT?

3. Define targets

Before launching the scheme set targets to measure its success. Target indicators for key operational areas could be productivity, turnover and staff satisfaction. To set targets, it is suggested to use the SMART principle, in that all targets should be:

- Specific: Say exactly what you mean
- Measurable: You can clearly show what you have achieved
- Achievable: A realistic but stretching target within the availability of resources, knowledge and time
- Relevant: It needs to be the main goal and a clear defined goal of the project
- Time bound: A period needs to be specified within which the target will be met

Once a system for monitoring the effectiveness of the scheme is decided on, consider a trial period. Most important, however, is to make sure employees are informed of your decisions and agree a suitable start date, and to discuss and resolve any problems which arise.

You may wish to ensure that your organisation has the right to return to previous working practices if the new scheme does not work satisfactorily.

4. Determine costs and benefits

Each activity will have implementation costs and benefits expected. These have to be quantified, although some will overlap. Do not forget to consider communication and training issues, as these can increase timescales and costs.

5. Define priorities

Prioritise actions and define the plan. Consultation with staff, unions and other staff representatives is critical. The outcome of surveys will define the most popular and beneficial measures. There could be several to choose from, and to maintain momentum towards achieving the plan's goals it is best to focus initial efforts on those that will gain the highest level of take-up.

It is far more effective to promote a few key measures, and implement and market these well, than promote several poorly. However, make sure that staff are aware that these are just your key priorities and that other measures could be implemented at a later stage.

6. Action plan

Implement the agreed action plan with time lines and responsibilities for set tasks. Often there will be capital expenditure requirements, so it is important that the budget is available to meet requirements. As with all projects, allocating individual responsibilities is key to ensuring success. These could be broken down to IT issues, Staff Liaison, Marketing and Awareness.

7. Review

The review process ensures momentum is maintained and objectives are achieved. The implementation process should be regularly reviewed.

Any review process should feed back into Step 2 and will enable future targets to be set and new measures introduced as appropriate.

Figure 4 - Main constraints to Smarter Working (per cent)

Issue	Not Important 5	4	3	2	Very Important 1	Mean	Don't Know
Operational pressures	36	41	14	4	3	4.1	1
Customer/service requirements	37	36	15	4	4	4	4
Managers' ability to effectively manage flexible workers	30	38	20	7	3	3.9	2
Line management attitudes	27	40	20	8	4	3.8	2
Existing organisational culture	24	34	24	9	7	3.6	1
Lack of senior level support	20	25	28	16	10	3.3	2
Financial restraints	15	21	29	19	14	3.1	3
Technological constraints	8	19	27	22	20	2.7	5
Employee lack of interest	3	15	27	28	23	2.5	4
Employee resistance	2	9	23	30	29	2.2	7

Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Flexible working: impact and implementation, survey based on a sample of 574 organisations, February 2005.

Table 3 – Summary of issues relating to the implementation of Smarter Working

Issue	Benefits	Costs		Cost savings (BT metrics)	Change management
Staff effectiveness	Savings can be made by improved staff retention and reduction in recruitment costs as a result of Smarter Working	Investment is required in training, management reporting, communications and time recording		20% less absenteeism than national average	Staff satisfaction is specifically quantified and staff feel enabled to work smarter, therefore minimising the effect of absences from work
Premises costs	Smarter Working can reduce the direct and indirect maintenance costs of facilities: • Direct: rent, rates, heat light, power • Indirect: maintenance, insurance, security	Smarter Working requires technical support and training for new methods of working, which often include the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment and furniture costs must be considered. Cost of representative workstation set-up in home office is £2,500–£5,000. Health and safety is of paramount importance		At BT, £300,000 saved on face-to-face meetings saved per annum (BT metrics). Ongoing savings on heating, IT and light are typically 30%	Training must be arranged for Smarter Working and for health-and-safety issues in home offices and remote-working environments. Staff must still be able to access appropriate on-site resources, desks, meeting rooms and equipment
Travel costs	Smarter Working can reduce business and commuting travel costs and time	Investment is required in training, management reporting, communications and time recording Clear policies required		At BT, every home worker represents a saving of £6,000 a year. In 12 months, commuting time saved across the workforce equated to 1,800 years in total working time	Staff must have flexibility to organise work routines to reduce business travel. Use performance reviews to identify ways in which employees can reduce work-related travel time and total distance travelled
Productivity	Reduce overall input and output costs as a result of Smarter Working	Clearly define strategic vision Empower staff		At BT, home workers are sick three days a year and 15–30% more productive	Output measures are defined and clearly understood by managers and staff. The aims of 'working smarter, not harder' are reinforced by performance reviews
Customer benefits	Product or service quality, delivery compliance and customer satisfaction can be improved	Time for management to establish clear definition of output goals Communication of results to staff on performance		–	Staff feel able to deal with customers' enquiries when working smarter. Staff are confident that they can deliver high-quality service to customers even when working flexibly, remotely or smarter
Staff benefits	–	–		7% improvement in job satisfaction versus office-based staff	–
Staff retention	–	–		99% on maternity leave return to work against a national average of 49%	–

Smarter Working adoption ladder

An adoption ladder has been developed that describes the steps and building blocks to consider when making development plans. At the back of this guide (Appendix 1), there is a planning tool which can be used to help set targets and prioritise actions.

The adoption ladder has been split into four levels. Aim to work up the levels as Smarter Working becomes more comfortable within your organisation. Refer to other sections of this guide to get more information on managing the changes.

Adoption level one

At level one consider if some tasks could be done in new ways. For example, increasing the use of mobile phones and portable computers with mobile internet might be appropriate.

Consider job sharing for employees who need more flexibility, or allowing an employee to work from home for part of the week, which might help deal with customers in different time zones. These types of flexible working practices start to make savings on time lost to employer and employee. It is important to try a range of techniques to see which are most helpful. These methods are described throughout the guide.

Make sure that staff are still able to access appropriate on-site resources, desks, meeting rooms and equipment. As confidence grows, give staff more flexibility to organise work routines, which can help reduce business travel. As more techniques are implemented, organisations need to have confidence in their ability to deliver high quality service to customers even when working flexibly, remotely or smarter.

Adoption level two

At level two the planning becomes more structured. Managers become more able to advise employees on the full range of appropriate smarter working techniques and work routines. As more significant changes are introduced, the organisation will need to consult unions or staff representation bodies about proposed changes to working practice. Senior management communicates the vision for Smarter Working and staff have a good understanding of the issues that are relevant to them. The wider introduction of appropriate new management practices and technology to support Smarter Working is encouraged.

It is important to ensure equality for all staff in accessing smarter benefits within job types, and that the organisation complies with legislation and promotes awareness in the workforce, particularly health and safety.

Adoption level three

Level three brings a higher emphasis on technical, legal and HR training for all managers on aspects of Smarter Working. Staff receive appropriate training and the organisation carries out its own research into new technologies and management approaches. Pilot schemes for newly identified opportunities are run and the inputs of staff at all levels are sought. Consider providing alternative workplaces, called hubs, where teams can work together on a flexible basis.

Ensure that employee performance measures are clearly defined. These measures centre on output and effectiveness, rather than attendance.

Adoption level four

By level four the desire for Smarter Working is firmly embedded in the organisation. All new employees receive an induction, and existing staff are provided with information about the range of options available to them, on an on-going basis. The benefits of Smarter Working are promoted on a regular basis to all staff. A comprehensive travel plan exists, and policies and practices exist to reduce the overall number of journeys made by staff.

With this in mind, work through Figure 1 which describes the process for planning a Smarter Working project. This flowchart will outline the overall planning cycle. Then use Figure 5 to pinpoint those techniques which seem most likely to help your organisation.

Each subsequent section in the guide highlights the main areas of benefit that can result from implementing the techniques.

Figure 5 - Business applications of smarter working

The Business Issue. We need to:	Applicable techniques available to your organisation to solute the business issue												
	Job share	Flexi-time	Term-time working	Tele working	Breaks from work		Hot desking	Working from home	Mobile working	Travel planning	Remote working	Video conferencing	Teleconferencing
Improve staff effectiveness	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		
Reduce premises costs		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduce business travel costs							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduce staff business travel time		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve customer service				✓				✓					
Lower our recruitment costs	✓	✓	✓		✓								
Reduce our staff turnover	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Reduce delivery time scales													
Lower absenteeism rates		✓		✓				✓		✓	✓		
Access new or additional labour markets	✓	✓	✓					✓			✓		
Reduce work related stress	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓		
Comply with corporate/social responsibility	✓									✓			
Comply with disability legislation		✓		✓						✓			
Comply with age legislation		✓								✓			
Comply with equality legislation		✓	✓							✓			

4. How Smarter Working links to workplace travel planning

A travel plan is a policy of measures aimed at reducing transport impact associated with your business. Smarter Working practices are essential within a travel plan to meet organisational needs and provide benefits to staff and employees alike. A travel plan can provide environmental, time and even fiscal savings to your staff and organisation.

The introduction of Smarter Working practices can significantly reduce the need for travel as part of an overall strategy to reduce a business' carbon footprint. As well as less commuting and fewer business trips, journeys can be staggered throughout the day, relieving congestion at peak times.

For employers, there are two main routes for working and travelling smarter:

- By encouraging staff to work from more convenient locations, such as at home or on the move, organisations can significantly enhance productivity, reduce staff travelling time and improve quality of life. Even providing access to satellite offices, hot desks, touchdown centres or other facilities can significantly reduce distances travelled and time lost

- By allowing workers to arrive and leave at different times, the stress and delay caused by road congestion and the burden on public transport can be reduced. This approach can also encourage the use of other alternatives such as cycling

Looking ahead, the population of London is expected to grow by 800,000 over the next 20 years, placing even more demands on the transport network. To cater for the increased demand on transport infrastructure, the network needs to be improved and increased.

This can be achieved if demand is managed in a sustainable way, by employers and employees taking full advantage of Smarter Working practices.

Smart measures as part of a travel plan. Case study: BAA

BAA introduced its workplace travel plan at Heathrow in 2000 to ease congestion, cut the pressure on parking and reduce emissions. As well as improving its operational performance, it has also made significant savings. By 2002/03, demand from staff for parking spaces had fallen by 500 a day and BAA was able to defer spending £8m on the construction of a multi-deck car park.
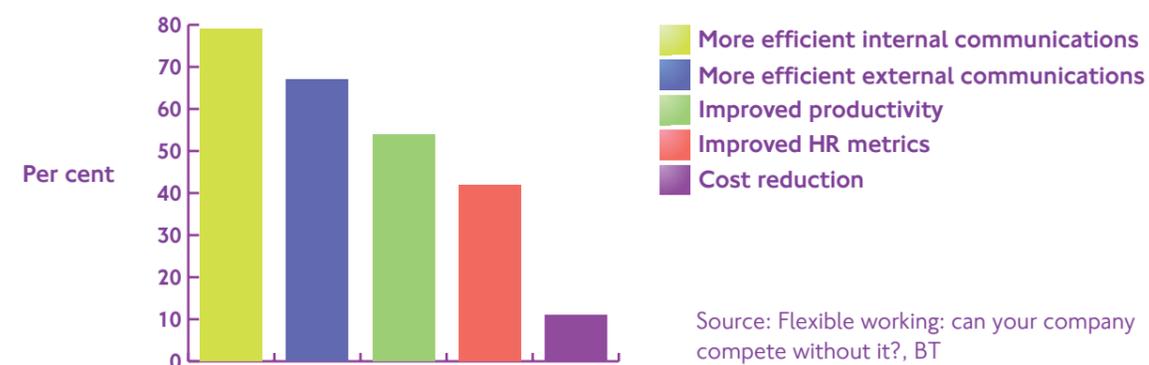
Video conferencing was subsequently introduced across the BAA group at a cost of £150,000, which was recouped within a year. Alternative work styles, such as hot-desking, have also allowed the release of accommodation, saving £400,000 a year.

In April 2001, in consultation with the unions, BAA launched a car-sharing initiative for employees at seven airports in the UK. By April 2005, 7,800 workers from 436 companies had registered. Based on two people sharing a car three days a week and making a round trip of 45 miles they estimated that:

- A total of 4.8 million litres of fuel have been saved, equating to £4,900 per person

- Twenty eight million fewer miles had been driven by staff

Figure 6 - Benefits of Smarter Working

The graph below demonstrates that some of the key benefits of Smarter Working are provided by improved communications

Per cent (y-axis: 0 to 80)

- More efficient internal communications
- More efficient external communications
- Improved productivity
- Improved HR metrics
- Cost reduction

Source: Flexible working: can your company compete without it?, BT

For more assistance with implementing workplace travel plans, contact the TfL Workplace Travel Planning team by email: worktp@tfl.gov.uk

5. The business case for Smarter Working

Smarter Working has the potential to create efficiencies, reduce costs and allow work to be completed more quickly. For organisations already offering 24-hour cover or operating in different time zones, flexible working gives staff the time to meet deadlines in a professional manner. As the world becomes more demanding about levels of services, such responsiveness is becoming the norm in all areas of work. This is helping to bridge the gap between a global economy and the Working Time Directive.

Expecting people to work excessive hours is no longer realistic, particularly in an economy close to full employment, where many workers are shifting their focus to quality-of-life issues. As a matter of competitiveness, more and more employers will consider flexible working patterns. Those that fail to apply such thinking run the risk of losing ground in markets operating on tighter deadlines and with more demanding customers and employees.

So, whether an organisation wants to make itself more efficient or more responsive, there are a number of benefits to be gained from Smarter Working.

Lower cost of premises

Work routines that do not require all employees to be in the office at the same time mean fewer desks, particularly for administrative work. If attitudes towards the territorial aspects of desk ownership in office environments can be changed, then the requirement for floor space will fall. This can be achieved by improved office design and work environment.

By linking staff through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) costs can be cut in the medium term in direct proportion to the amount of space released. Expanding organisations will save even more, if the introduction of Smarter Working practices reduces the pressure on space and removes the need to relocate. Lease periods should be carefully considered, however, as not all savings can be realised within a financial year.

Lower cost of business travel

As part of Smarter Working, people can be encouraged to use ICT to replace business travel – or at least to take a new approach to how they travel. Technology is already dominant in the use of email for routine written communications, but improved speeds for internet connection now make video conferencing a real alternative to face-to-face meetings.

A workplace travel plan enables employees to viably consider transport that is environmentally sound or less expensive.

Shorter timescales for delivery

Manufacturing plants traditionally work in shifts to maximise output. Staff are required to work around the clock to keep the presses rolling. If plant was only used for the conventional eight hours in a working day, then production would take three times as long.

The same principles apply to any task where delivery depends on a number of linked processes, whether in manufacturing or in services. Where hold-ups occur, additional staff can be present or on-call to prevent any slippage.

Improved customer response

Customers now expect to make contact at almost any time. By offering extended opening hours or longer on-call times through the use of effective scheduling and technology, the demands placed on organisations can be evened out. Through email, the distribution of tasks becomes easier, allowing employees to vary their work hours to the benefit of both employer and customer, and often leading to increased sales.

Better productivity

Employees who have a degree of control over their own work routines are more motivated, more inclined to hit deadlines set by their organisation, and more responsive to customers operating on a 24/7 global basis.

Lower recruitment costs and lower staff turnover

In an environment where the economy is close to full employment, recruitment, training and other disruption costs can be reduced by having specific policies to facilitate Smarter Working that give staff a degree of self-determination. This promotes organisations as an 'employer of choice' for potential staff.

Less absenteeism

After a change in domestic circumstances, employees on flexible working hours are more likely to take a couple of hours off rather than calling in sick at the loss of a whole working day.

Case study: ihotdesk

In offering IT support to small and medium enterprises, ihotdesk operates a comprehensive national service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It keeps its overheads low by running as a virtual enterprise in which employees work flexibly in widely dispersed locations throughout the UK.

'Flexible working is very important to our company,' says Managing Director David Horwood, 'We have a number of staff who work mainly from home and a number that do so on a regular basis. For example, our financial controller lives on the South Coast and works from home, travelling into the London office once or twice a week.'

'Recently, we were able to continue employing another senior member of staff when he decided to relocate with his family away from London, meaning that daily commuting to the London office would no longer be possible for him. Our use of technology enables us to recruit and retain the best people for our business, regardless of where they live.'

Figure 7 - Effects of flexible working on employers (per cent)

The graph below shows the main impact that Smarter Working can have on staff effectiveness

Issue	Positive effect			Negative effect			
	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Don't Know
Retention	27	47	17	1	0	4.1	7
Motivation	22	48	20	0	0	4	9
Recruitment	17	34	28	1	0	3.8	19
Psychological contract	14	42	23	2	0	3.8	18
Productivity	10	35	35	2	1	3.6	18
Absence	10	36	36	4	0	3.6	14
Customer service	8	19	44	17	1	3.3	22
Teamworking	7	18	45	15	1	3.2	15
Knowledge-sharing	3	13	45	13	1	3	25

Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Flexible working: impact and implementation, survey based on a sample of 574 organisations, February 2005.

Case study: BT Workstyle

To remain competitive and responsive, BT has adapted the way it manages people and the way they work. The company has what it believes is one of the largest flexible working projects in Europe called 'BT Workstyle'. Flexible working is available to almost everyone and the company now has more than 70,000 flexible workers.

'Flexible working is business as usual,' says Sir Christopher Bland, Chairman of BT Group. 'Already seven out of 10 people work flexibly and nearly 10 per cent are home-based. It has saved the company millions in terms of increased productivity and cut costs. It has also motivated our people and released more potential.'

Figure 8 - The BT model for flexible working

BT identified that their workers fell into three categories: mobile, home-based and office-based. Each of these categories overlap and a procedure based on flexibility as opposed to grade, job function or location is the best approach
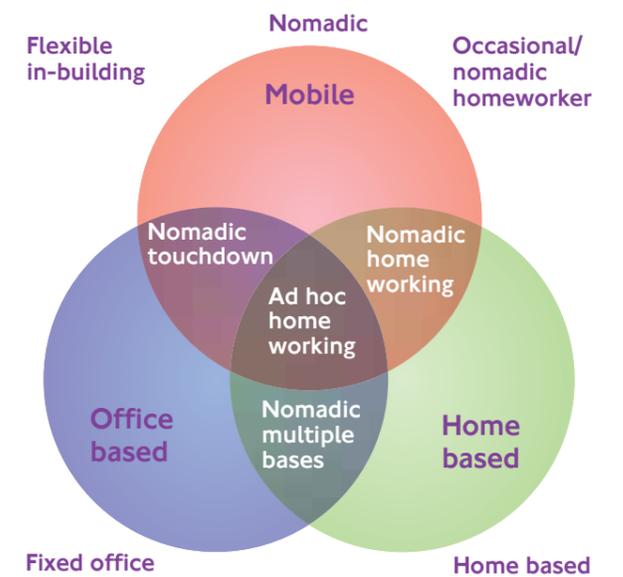
6. Access to a wider employment market

Smarter Working policies can put an organisation in the position of being an 'employer of choice'. It can widen its recruitment pool, and potentially reduce recruitment and absenteeism costs.

Smarter ways of working can remove some of the barriers to employment and can take some pressure off those workers who might struggle to maintain a regular work routine, but, given an agreed degree of flexibility, can make a positive contribution.

As an employer, it is vital to take steps to retain staff whose circumstances might change so they can continue to work in the organisation after taking a break, eg following parenthood or recovery from major illness.

Working from home

London has the UK's highest percentage of women working from home:

Thirty-eight per cent of those that work from home in Inner London are women. The figure for Outer London is the UK's second highest at 33.8 per cent and the South East (excluding London) is the third at 33.3 per cent. This compares with the national average of 31 per cent. London has 120,000 people who work from, or are based at home, which is around four per cent of the working population. There are clearly already many employers engaging employees on contracts that do not require routine regular commutes, which in turn helps reduce congestion and wasted time.

Workers with disabilities, and disabled people excluded from the workforce

According to Scope, the disability charity, there are around one million disabled people in the UK who want to work but are prevented from doing so as a result of rigid work routines. In addition, disabled people are twice as likely to be unemployed than their non-disabled peers.

A major obstacle is employers not being adaptive or responsible when it comes to staff who have impairments. But firms that adopt flexible working practices, based on reasonable adjustments, will be helping people to work more productively, while fulfilling their legal responsibilities as an employer. For example, working from home, even for part of the working week, will be a major benefit to those whose journey to and from the place of employment can be the greatest barrier. Taking care to consider the design of work tasks, so that they can be completed by workers of all abilities, is vital to solving labour supply problems.

Older workers

The workforce is getting older and life expectancy is increasing. Improved healthcare means that, on average, people are able to work longer. The demographic shift in age and reduced economic stability in pension arrangements means many workers who reach retirement age are increasingly willing to continue either in full or part-time flexible work arrangements and their rights to do so are protected under the Age Discrimination Act 2006. These changes in our society are beneficial to business as, again, it means that more experienced staff can be retained for longer and valuable experience not lost.

Equal opportunities

The Equal Opportunities Commission's (EOC's) January 2007 report, Working outside the box, reveals that 6.5 million people in Britain could be using their skills fully if more flexible working was available. It warns that rigid working practices are driving highly qualified workers into jobs below their skill level so they can achieve a work/life balance.

The report goes on to say:

'Outdated workplace cultures are further damaging the economy by increasing pressure on an over-stretched transport system. Overcrowded rush-hour trains and motorways are causing misery for commuters and wasting time for employers.'

7. Use of technology

We live in a world where technology develops at lightning speed. We are now able to connect to remote locations easily and cheaply all over the world. This provides a crucial infrastructure for sharing information and reducing costs.

Although the latest advances in mobile technology and the continuing widespread growth in broadband are enabling us to adopt Smarter Working practices, it is not just a question of ICT. Smarter Working is also about changing culture, reorganising the way people work, and giving them the right skills.

ICT may allow us to connect workers wherever they are, but is an enabler, rather than a solution. Technology is not a substitute for good management in adapting to the new challenges of a more flexible workforce.

Mobile telephones

Mobile telephones have been a part of the work environment for around 20 years. We no longer use mobile phones just for voice calls. We are now able to use mobile technology to connect mobile workers to an organisation's information systems in a variety of ways – this is known as 'technology convergence'.

We can now use 'smartphones' (such as the Blackberry) to allow staff to collect e-mail and text alerts on the move, and provide internet connections either to their office base, or just allow access to internet-based information. Some mobile devices provide full keyboards with the many features of full-size laptop computers, but a size that fits in the pocket.

Connection speeds have improved to the point where there is no visible delay in collecting data, which, when coupled with the new configurations of keyboards and improved screen technology, makes the whole prospect of mobile handheld computing a reality. Tailored solutions using this mobile technology now mean that we can connect delivery drivers and remote workers all the time, so making efficient use of time on the road.

Portable computers

Along with the reduction in price of portable computers in recent years, improvements in speed and capability mean that they are no longer a compromise in computing power. There are two main ways of connecting a portable computer when on the move:

- Connecting to a public wireless network, often called a 'hotspot' in urban areas. These are now provided on a free or subscription service by a range of organisations ranging from telephone operators to hotel chains and coffee shops

- The use of mobile technology now allows us to connect to the internet on the move. This is usually in the form of an add-in mobile data card, which provides broadband quality connections via a mobile network provider

Home offices

Workspaces at home are becoming increasingly common. In a home office, the employer provides ICT equipment and connections, as well as a printer and the appropriate office furniture. Often the employee uses a secure connection to the company information system, called a virtual private network (VPN), so that confidential or sensitive information is secured on the company system, and the employee is not responsible for backing up data.

A VPN is a private data network that makes use of the public infrastructure while maintaining privacy and security. It is therefore a cost-effective and secure option for connecting Smarter Workers.

Hub working

Hub working combines the use of portable computing and remote-work locations outside the home. A hub is a centre where shared desk space is provided for workers who might spend a high proportion of their time with clients, but need a base to carry out administrative work or write reports. These facilities can be dedicated to one organisation or they can be shared.

Hub locations are a rapidly expanding business and space can be rented as a one-off or a regular booking, as facilities are provided by independent companies. Employees can connect to a wireless network using the same portable equipment that they use in their main office. A key benefit is the opportunity to reduce work and personal travel time by having access to a network of hubs closer to clients and to staff at home.

One way of making mobile or home-based teleworking a practical option is by creating 'touchdown centres'. Essentially, touchdown centres enable location-flexible employees to drop-in and have access to corporate systems or specialist facilities, meeting rooms, secretarial services, and so on. They can be based at an organisation's own premises and this is, by far, the most common approach. However, they can also be at third party premises, and this second approach delivers most benefit if it is accompanied by a significant reduction in property.

Case study: ihotdesk

ihotdesk uses internet telephony to respond to incoming calls as if it were an organisation in one large building. In fact, the receptionist works at home and routes the call to the appropriate person wherever they are in the country. If they are not available, the request does not go through to an answerphone, but is automatically switched to someone else who is able to help. By using a virtual private network on wireless broadband, engineers can then diagnose and fix problems for smaller companies without having to go to their offices.

Technological alternatives to client meetings

Travel to client meetings can now be reduced in many ways, including:

- **Video conferencing**: Internet connections are used to provide live video links using webcam or satellite connection technology

- **Internet-based telephone calls**: Known as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), these are excellent value for money as calls are usually free. To access this you need specific software and hardware. However these are relatively low-cost in comparison to the savings made

- **Instant-messaging**: Chat sessions using internet-based chat rooms, such as Yahoo and MSN. Previously these were more for personal use. However, many businesses are seeing the benefit of allowing staff to utilise instant-messaging to avoid unnecessary telephone calls. They allow you to develop ideas and multi-task. Employers must define specific policies to ensure users are aware of acceptable use and that other users are known to them as security and file sharing can be an issue

- **Telephone conferencing**: Groups of workers can be linked quickly and easily using internet based networks. With the right software additional individuals can be introduced to a conference at the touch of a button. This is of particular benefit to project meetings when using a dispersed team. Physical objects that need to be viewed and discussed are often delivered to participants by courier

All these techniques are becoming increasingly acceptable in the world of business and are very much the norm for many.

8. Employee benefits

Smarter Working gives employees more control over their hours and patterns of work. It offers them the chance to improve their quality of life and reduce their levels of stress by cutting down on excessive hours, fitting other activities or responsibilities into their routine, and reducing their journey times to work.

Reducing long working hours

Today, the UK's average working week is among the highest in Europe. Nearly five million employees are working on average an extra day a week. One in six employees works more than 60 hours a week, as opposed to one in eight in 2000. According to the TUC, more than 10 million people regularly work overtime, although only half of them are rewarded with extra pay or time off in lieu.

'A rigid nine-to-five work structure from a central location is wasteful in terms of time and resources, damaging in terms of the environmental impact, and harmful in how it increases stress levels. Smarter Working is a win-win situation. Any costs will be outweighed by an increase in productivity, and the social benefits of an improved work/life balance for employees will be far-reaching.'

Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the TUC

Adapting to personal commitments

For people with demanding lives, employers which offer flexible working are much more attractive than those with fixed routines. In particular, it makes life easier to manage for those with caring responsibilities. By increasing the use of Smarter Working, there is the potential to reduce absences from work.

Reduced journey times and trips

Workers in London spend an average of eight hours a week commuting. The figure for the UK as a whole is seven hours a week, the equivalent of 47 additional working days per year.

By not travelling, or travelling outside of peak hours, workers save time wasted in congestion, reduce stress and help to cut emissions.

Financial benefits

Recent developments in the car insurance industry acknowledge the needs of commuters and indeed sporadic usage, representing further savings for the individual. While utility bills may be higher, tax breaks are available. Further advice should be gained by the employee from their tax office. Increased costs are further offset by employees due to the ability to prepare their own sustenance.

Further benefits

Much focus is placed on the Corporate and Social Responsibility of the business but as individuals we too have psychological needs. A company with a clear environmental policy, which also addresses work/life balance, is increasingly becoming part of the individual's employer selection criteria. A well thought out policy will satisfy the individual's needs and impact on their loyalty and corporate pride.
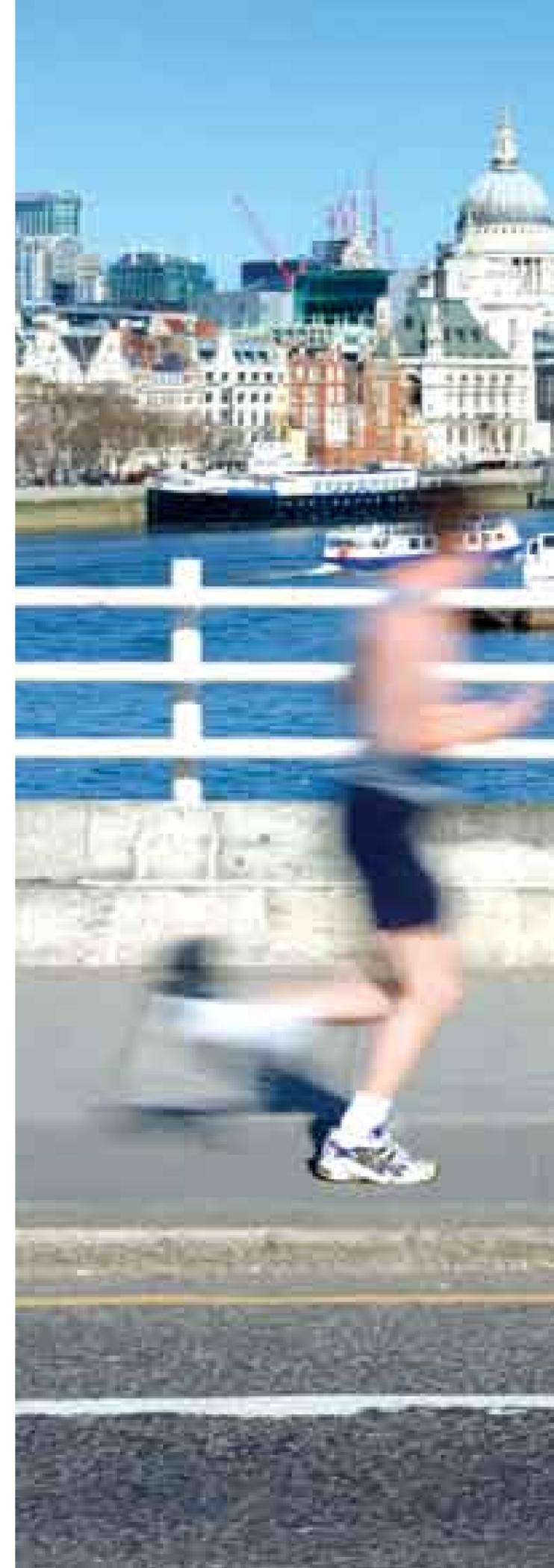
9. Legal and compliance issues

Any change in working practices has implications for an organisation's legal responsibilities and risk management. Unless appropriate steps are taken, liabilities and claims can arise.

Requests for flexibility

As the law stands, parents of young children (under six) or disabled children (under 18) and carers of adults have the right to request (but not insist on) flexible working.

In considering requests from employees for flexible working, legal difficulties might arise if the full personal circumstances and individual needs are not assessed in a fair and equitable manner. The following is a non-exhaustive list of potential consequences should this not occur:

- A refusal of a flexible work request may leave you liable to a sex discrimination claim, if it is perceived that other approvals are providing an unfair advantage on grounds of gender

- A disability claim can be made if any employer fails to make a reasonable adjustment by refusing a request for flexible work from a disabled employee

- Workers with particular religious or other beliefs may claim discrimination if an employer refuses a reasonable request for flexible work in order to permit religious observance

- Part-timers must not receive less favourable treatment than full-timers

Terms of employment

When working practices change, it should normally be possible not to have to vary an employee's contract, as long as the job remains substantially the same. Some contracts have clauses allowing for variation and, more often, there are implied rights that enable changes to be made.

But care needs to be taken. A contract of employment is legally binding and any changes must be reasonable. If not handled appropriately, employees who object to the changes may refuse to work under the new terms, or bring a claim of breach of contract or constructive dismissal.

It is essential to consult employees before altering their contract. If more than 20 people are going to be affected, then a formal process of consultation is required about revoking their contracts and re-hiring them on new terms.

If an employee does not consent to the changes, then an employer's final choice is to terminate the existing contract and offer re-employment on the new terms. If refused, the employee will have been dismissed, but the employer has to prove that any action was fair and lawful.

Health and safety

Employers are required to assess the risks that home workers might face. They have to complete an assessment that identifies any hazards relating to the pursuit of work activities at home or on the move and, depending on the level of risk, decide whether enough is being done to eliminate or reduce them (See Appendix 2).

Activities that may heighten the risk to the health and safety of flexible workers include:

- Handling loads that are heavy, bulky, unstable or difficult to grasp

- Repetitive handling of loads without sufficient rest

- Using work equipment at home

- Using substances and materials that may be hazardous

Employers must ensure that any equipment they provide is the right equipment for the job and is properly maintained. It is also a requirement that staff receive training for all equipment, manual handling and usage of hazardous materials.

Working with Visual Display Units (VDUs)

Working with VDUs is the main area that most employers will have to deal with. They have a duty to make sure that the display screen equipment used by homeworkers is safe and does not affect the user's health. When working with VDUs it is important for homeworkers to adjust their workstation to a comfortable position and take breaks from work. This will help prevent undue tiredness.

Remember to advise employees to stretch and change position regularly to help reduce tiredness and prevent pains in the hands, wrists, arms, neck, shoulders or back. VDUs need to be placed in a position where lighting will not cause reflections or glare on the screen. It is also important for homeworkers to view the screen comfortably.

Employees may need different glasses for VDU usage and homeworkers should consult their GP or an optician if in doubt. Legally they are entitled to request an eye test and to receive reimbursements from their employer of any costs incurred.

Employers' checklist for home workers using VDUs

- Is the screen clear and readable, and without flicker?

- Is the screen free from glare and reflections?

- Are the 'brightness' and 'contrast' controls properly adjusted to prevent eyestrain?

- Is there suitable lighting so that the fine detail on the screen can be seen and read?

- Is the keyboard placed in the right position to allow the home worker to work comfortably? Is the screen and computer clean? is it free from dust and dirt?

- Can the chair be adjusted to the right height so that work can be done comfortably?

- Is the VDU positioned to allow work to be done comfortably, for example without having to make any awkward movements?

- Is there enough space under the desk to allow free movement?

- Is there enough space in general so that the home worker can move freely between the work on the desk and the VDU?

Source: Homeworking: guidance for employers and employees on health and safety, a report by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Table 4 - Legal compliance checklist

This guide should not be considered definitive and legal advice should be taken on up-to-date legislation. Wherever possible, websites have been provided in Section 10 which allow the latest information or details to be checked

Insurance	Ensure your insurance providers are consulted to cover any changes in workplace or routines, as well as personal and public liability. Consider the following: • Should insurance cover be extended to include work equipment not kept in the office? • An employee's home insurance must cover changed use - has the employee been advised to inform the home insurer and mortgage holder (if any) of the change in usage of the home? • Access by loss adjusters • Planning regulations
VDU regulations	The main points for employers to consider in workplace design are to: • Ensure that workstations are designed to be fit for purpose, assess risks and take steps to minimise those risks. This covers the whole workstation including equipment, furniture, the work environment and job • Ensure workstations meet minimum requirements according to a schedule that is available on the HSE website • Plan work so there are breaks or changes of activity • Arrange eye tests, provide glasses if special ones are needed, and provide further tests at regular intervals • Provide health and safety training and information so that employees can fulfil their shared responsibility for health and safety This is particularly important when staff are working at home, where they will have a relatively high degree of control of break periods.
Working time regulations	The basic rights and protections that the regulations provide are: • A limit of an average of 48 hours a week that a worker can be required to work (though workers can choose to work more if they want to by signing an opt-out agreement) • A limit of an average of eight hours work in 24 which night workers can be required to work (48 hours per week) • A right for night workers to receive free health assessments • A right to 11 hours rest a day • A right to a day off each week • A right to an in-work rest break if the working day is longer than six hours • A right to four weeks paid leave per year (the Government plans to increase this entitlement to 4.8 weeks in October 2007 and 5.6 weeks in October 2008) The current position in the UK is that legislation is going through a negotiating process in Europe, although the UK law remains unchanged at this point and workers are still able to opt out of the 48 hour limit on weekly working time.

Disability Discrimination Act	Disabled workers share the same general employment rights as other workers, but there are special provisions under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) that need to be observed. It is unlawful for employers to discriminate against disabled people for a reason related to their disability, in all aspects of employment. The Act covers:
	• Application forms
	• Interview arrangements
	• Proficiency tests
	• Job offers
	• Terms of employment
	• Promotion, transfer or training opportunities
	• Work-related benefits such as access to recreation or refreshment facilities
	• Dismissal or redundancy
	• Training for disabled employees
	• Reasonable adjustments in the workplace
	Under the DDA, as an employer you have a duty to consider making 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure the employee is not put at a substantial disadvantage by employment arrangements or any physical feature of the workplace.
	Examples of the sort of adjustments you could consider include:
	• Allocating some work to someone else
	• Transferring an employee to another post or another place of work
	• Making adjustments to the buildings where they work
	• Being flexible about their hours
	• Providing training
	• Providing modified equipment
	• Making instructions and manuals more accessible
	• Providing a reader or interpreter
	Smarter and flexible working practices can clearly help manage some of the issues raised above. If jobs can be re-designed to be carried out in a home-office environment with the appropriate assessments, then many of the accessibility and workplace design issues can be dealt with.

Parents and carers	The DDA gives eligible employees the right to request a flexible working pattern and places a duty on employers to consider their requests seriously. Eligible employees are:
	• Parents with children under six or disabled children under 18 (ie those entitled to Disability Living Allowance)
	• Carers of certain adults
	To be eligible to make a request under this right, a person must:
	• Be an employee
	• Have worked for their employer continuously for 26 weeks at the date the application is made
	• Not be an agency worker or a member of the armed forces
	• Not have made another application to work flexibly under the right during the past 12 months
	• Employees have the right to be accompanied at the meetings
	Parents
	• Be the parent of a child aged under six, or under 18 where disabled. Have responsibility for the upbringing of the child and be making the application to enable them to care for the child
	• Be either: the mother, father, adopter, guardian, special guardian or foster parent of the child; or married to or the partner of the child's mother, father, adopter, guardian, special guardian or foster parent
	Carers of adults who are in need of care
	• Must be or expect to be caring for a spouse, partner, civil partner or relative; or If not the spouse, partner or a relative, live at the same address as the adult in need of care.
	Guidance can be found at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform's website at http://www.berr.gov.uk/employment/workandfamilies/index.html
Tax	Home working may have tax implications for an employer:
	• Home workers may be able to claim a tax allowance for expenses for working at home, provided there are no appropriate facilities available to the employee on the employer's premises and the employee has no choice between working at the employer's premises or elsewhere
	Be aware that other tax legislation may apply. The current regulations are defined on HM Revenue and Customs website: www.hmrc.gov.uk
Compliance	Ensure that your organisation does not breach any compliance regulations, for instance the National Minimum Wage, as a result of changes to working practices

10. Where can I go for additional help and guidance?

- Transport for London – www.tfl.gov.uk
- WorkWiseUK – www.workwiseuk.org
- Business HR – www.businesshr.net

Further reading

Work-related stress, a guide to implementing a European Social Partner agreement, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, 2005 (Further Details: www.berr.gov.uk).

Work-related stress: a short guide, Health & Safety Executive, 2001 (Further details: www.hse.gov.uk).

Flexible working employee survey, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, 2004 and 2005 (Further Details: www.berr.gov.uk).

'Workers wake-up call', an article by Alison Millen, Opportunities, 2005 (Further details: www.opportunities.co.uk).

'Health and psychosocial effects of flexible working hours', an article by Daniela Janssen and Friedhelm Nachreiner, Revista de Saúde Pública, December 2004 (Further details: www.scielo.br).

'Work smarter not harder', an article in Risks, number 223, TUC, September 2005 (Further details: www.tuc.org.uk).

Older workers and options for flexible work, a research report, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005 (Further details: www.eoc.org).

Working hours, a factsheet, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2007 (www.cipd.org.uk).

The Second Work/life Balance Study: Results from the Employer Survey, National Centre for Social Research, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, 2003 (Further Details: www.berr.gov.uk/publications).

Flexible working: can home workers and their managers make it work?, Knowledge Ability, 2005 (Further details: www.knowab.co.uk).

Homeworking: guidance for employers and employees on Health and Safety, a report by the Health & Safety Executive (Further details: www.hse.org.uk).

Managing change: practical ways to reduce long hours and reform working practices, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform in association with the CBI and TUC, 2005 (Further Details: www.berr.gov.uk).

Flexible working: the right to request and the duty to consider, a guide for employers and employees, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, 2003 (Further Details: www.berr.gov.uk).

Telework guidance, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform in association with the CBI and TUC, 2003 (Further Details: www.berr.gov.uk).

Flexible working: can your company compete without it?, BT, 2007 (Further details: www.btglobalservices.com).

Flexible working: impact and implementation: an employer survey, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2005 (Further details: www.cipd.co.uk).

'Employment rights and the Disability Discrimination Act', an article on DirectGov (Further details: www.direct.gov.uk).

Homeworking: equipment or services at the employee's home, a briefing by HM Revenue & Customs (Further details: www.hmrc.gov.uk/employers).

'Knowing your rights: keeping up with the law of equality', a portal produced by Royal Mail (Further details: www.royalmailgroup.com).

'Mobile and teleworking initiative for a smarter South East', the MATISSE website produced by Hampshire County Council (Further details: www3.hants.gov.uk/matisse).

'Working time regulations', a briefing by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (Further Details: www.berr.gov.uk/employment).

'Enabling your workforce through flexible working', a portal produced by BT (Further details: www.btinsights.co.uk/flexibleworkingresources).

Working with VDUs, a briefing by the Health & Safety Executive, 2006 (Further details: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns).

About Work Wise UK

Work Wise UK is a not-for-profit initiative which aims to make the UK one of the most progressive economies in the world by encouraging the widespread adoption of smarter working practices.

An increasingly complex world means that employers and employees have to strive to use their resources effectively; one to gain better productivity, the other to balance work–life pressures.

Work Wise UK provides a central information service for the UK workforce and champions the dissemination of key information and best practice. Organised by the IT Forum Foundation, the initiative unites UK society, including the public and private sectors, professional bodies and trade unions and supports the broader use of smarter working as a modern day approach to working life.

Appendix 1 – Smarter Working adoption ladder

Smarter Working Adoption Ladder		Extent to which we do this High/Medium/Low	Actions we could take to increase the use of this technique	Priority High/Medium/Low	Savings	Costs
Adoption level 1						
Home working						
Mobile working						
Flexible working						
Job sharing						
Staff can access appropriate on-site resources, desks, meeting rooms and equipment						
Staff have flexibility to organise work routines to reduce business travel						
Staff are confident that they can deliver high quality service to customers even when working flexibly, remotely or smarter						
Staff are confident that they can meet delivery targets even when working flexibly, remotely or smarter						
Performance reviews identify ways in which employees can reduce organisation work-related travel time						
Adoption level 2						
Technical, legal and HR training is provided for managers on aspects of Smarter Working						
The organisation consults unions or staff representation bodies where changes to working practices are proposed						
Staff are able to discuss work patterns and Smarter Working at performance reviews						
The organisation communicates the vision for Smarter Working						
The introduction of appropriate new technology to support Smarter Working is encouraged						
Staff receive information about the potential of Smarter Working						
Equality for all staff exists in accessing Smarter benefits, within job types						
The organisation complies with legislation and promotes awareness in the workforce particularly health and safety						
Staff have a good understanding of the issues that are relevant to them						
Adoption level 3						
Managers in the organisation counsel employees on the full range of appropriate Smarter Working techniques and work routines						
Staff receive appropriate training on Smarter Working						
Research into new technologies for Smarter Working is carried out						
Pilot schemes for newly identified opportunities are run and the input of staff at all levels is sought						
Risk assessments are carried out, including at the employees home if appropriate						
Staff are aware of their rights to have risk assessments carried out						
Use of Hub working						
Adoption level 4						
All new employees receive induction, and existing staff are provided with on-going awareness as to the range of options available to the individual						
The benefits of Smarter Working are promoted on a regular basis to all staff						
Staff are aware of equal opportunity issues						
A comprehensive travel plan exists						
Policies and practice exist to reduce the overall number of journeys made by staff						

Appendix 2 – Sample risk assessment

Five steps to risk assessment

Company name:

Date of risk assessment:

Step 1 What are the hazards?	Step 2 Who might be harmed and how?	Step 3 What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?		Step 4 How will you put the assessment into action?			
Spot hazards by: • Walking around your workplace • Asking your employees what they think • Don't forget long-term health hazards.	Identify groups of people. Remember: • Some workers have particular needs • People who may not be in the workplace all the time • Members of the public • Say how the hazard could cause harm	List what is already in place to reduce the likelihood of harm or make any harm less serious.	You need to make sure that you have reduced risks 'so far as is reasonably practicable'. An easy way of doing this is to compare what you are already doing with good practice. If there is a difference, list what needs to be done.		Remember to prioritise. Deal with those hazards that are high-risk and have serious consequences first.	Action by whom	Action by when	Done
Step 5 Review date:	Review your assessment to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back. If there is a significant change in your workplace, remember to check your risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it.							

adapted from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg 63.pdf

Appendix 3 – Working with VDUs

Making adjustments to suit your needs

What can I do to help myself?

Make full use of the equipment provided, and adjust it to get the best from it and to avoid potential health problems. If the regulations apply to you, your employer should cover these things in training. If the regulations don't apply, it is still worth setting up your workstation properly, to be as comfortable as possible.

Here are some practical tips:

Getting comfortable

- Adjust your chair and VDU to find the most comfortable position for your work. As a broad guide, your forearms should be approximately horizontal and your eyes the same height as the top of the VDU

- Make sure you have enough work space to take whatever documents or other equipment you need

- Try different arrangements of keyboard, screen, mouse and documents to find the best arrangement for you. A document holder may help you avoid awkward neck and eye movements

- Arrange your desk and VDU to avoid glare, or bright reflections on the screen. This will be easiest if neither you nor the screen is directly facing windows or bright lights. Adjust curtains or blinds to prevent unwanted light

- Make sure there is space under your desk to move your legs freely. Move any obstacles such as boxes or equipment

- Avoid excess pressure from the edge of your seat on the backs of your legs and knees. A footrest may be helpful

Keying in

- Adjust your keyboard to get a good keying position. A space in front of the keyboard is sometimes helpful for resting the hands and wrists when not keying

- Try to keep your wrists straight when keying. Keep a soft touch on the keys and don't overstretch your fingers. Good keyboard technique is important

Using a mouse

- Position the mouse within easy reach, so it can be used with the wrist straight. Sit upright and close to the desk, so you don't have to work with your mouse arm stretched. Move the keyboard out of the way if it is not being used

- Support your forearm on the desk, and don't grip the mouse too tightly

- Rest your fingers lightly on the buttons and do not press them hard

Reading the screen

- Adjust the brightness and contrast controls on the screen to suit lighting conditions in the room

- Make sure the screen surface is clean

- In setting up software, choose options giving text that is large enough to read easily on your screen, when you are sitting in a normal, comfortable working position. Select colours that are easy on the eye (avoid red text on a blue background, or vice versa)

- Individual characters on the screen should be sharply focused and should not flicker or move. If they do, the VDU may need servicing or adjustment