

<b>Session Title:</b>	<b>To Office or not to Office: Best practice in post-pandemic working</b>
<b>Speaker(s):</b>	<b>Andy - Keele University Michelle Terrell – University of Edinburgh (UofE) Nick Chambers – City, University of London (UofL) Sam Corbett – University College Birmingham (UCB) Leon Harris – University of Hertfordshire (UofH)</b>
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Andy</b>
<b>Reporter:</b>	<b>Suzanne Ewing</b>

<b>Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:</b>	<p><b>Andy from Keele Uni is now back in office 2 days a week. He has talked about the different set-ups, one at home and one in office and he wanted to the thoughts in the room about facing a hybrid work-life and how it will work.</b></p> <p><b>MT – currently in UofE a few depts have returned to campus working with some depts. Not having been near campus since the first lockdown. MT is wondering how the depts will work together if they are all following a different work structure.</b></p> <p><b>NC – Currently UofL requires all depts. To work a minimum of 2 days a week on campus. that is fine for employees with one job title, however, NC currently works in two different depts. And is unsure what that will mean for him. NC wonders if there is anyone else facing a similar situation.</b></p> <p><b>SC - UCB did not have a work from home policy in place pre-pandemic. Now employees are facign a gradual back to work period with a policy now inplace where people are allowed to work 2-days a week from home. Change of policy was welcomed, so a positive out of a difficult time. -</b></p> <p><b>LH – the job role he fulfilled meant that he was already working from home full-time (ft). The university wide policy already had that if there was an off-campus events the employees were allowed to work the remainder of the day at home if more convenient. Currently employees are working 2 days in office, with LH still based ft at home. Difficult situation when this required moving homes and not enough spaces to work around other family members working from home. Wanted to see how others in the</b></p>
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	<p>room found shared spaces and homeworking set-up.</p>
<p><b>Overview/Aim of session:</b></p>	<p>The aim of the session was for people to discuss what experiences they have had working from home and if they believed that they would still be doing so 2-years after the first lockdown.</p> <p>The panel also wanted to hear what other universities were looking at for a post-pandemic working model and wanted to hear if the people in the room thought a hybrid model of working would work well, especially when trying to organize on campus events etc</p> <p>The main question being “Can it work well if we work flexibly?”</p>
<p><b>Workshop Content</b></p>	<p>Table chat: What did you think would happen with working from home?</p>
<p><b>Case Studies/Examples:</b></p>	<p>Most people in the room did not expect the pandemic to impact for so long and were shocked to still be working from in any capacity.</p> <p>The set-ups were quite diverse from, Andy starting in a 1-bed flat to MT being very lucky as there was already a room set up as an office due to pre-pandemic flexible working.</p> <p>NC was living in a small flat and found that the bedroom became an office therefore there were 24-hour periods when the day went by, and NC never left the bedroom. This had an impact on motivation and wellbeing. NC now has a bigger place and is able to work in a different room, helping to separate work from home and has managed to set-up a space to emulate the office set-up. There were a lot of similarities echoed around as a lot of people were ill-equipped to work from home effectively without it impacting on their wellbeing. After 2-year’s a lot of people had worked to change some spaces at home to help them separate their workspace from their homelife spaces.</p> <p>SC has always worked in a separate space, however,</p>

	<p>found that home furnishings were not made for a work environment. After a little while there was some back, neck and shoulder pains and stiffness from not moving around as much, due to sitting in front of a computer screen for much longer periods. SC was fully supported by their university and adequate office equipment was delivered to SC so they were able to create a similar set-up to their office.</p> <p>LH was home-working pre-covid with a decent spacious set-up, there was some commuting between the midlands and London. However, the pandemic caused a permanent move to move back to the family home (London) where it was more cramped and working in a shared space sometimes meant family members/ pets made cameo appearances in meetings. LH is now getting ready to move back to the midlands to a home that is more spacious and will allow for an office set-up that does not impact on any shared family spaces.</p>
<p><b>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</b></p>	<p>There was a lot of people in the room who identified with having trouble in shared spaces, particularly those who had partners who also had to work from home.</p> <p>There were a few workers who also had children and found it difficult with slow internet connections and being able to be present to keep children motivated whilst trying to complete their own work.</p> <p>Some people saw a new family life transpire as partners moved in with each other as a way of trying to maintain a good routine for children whilst the impact and consequence of the pandemic impact was relatively unknown.</p> <p>There was lots of talk about the different approaches each university took to answer the homeworking issues for employees, with some people still only managing to work from a laptop at a kitchen table. A (keele) advised that completing the DSE module that is a core module employees need to complete yearly will help motivate universities. The room was advised that they need to highlight any part of their home set-up that does not satisfy the office equipment specification set out in the H&amp;S module, for example, a high back chair that has 5 wheels, a monitor that has the screen at eye-level height.</p> <p>Some talk went onto lockdown pets, some people gained lockdown pets as a way to keep themselves active and when they were unable to see other people. This was seen as a good thing as it keeps people moving and anyone who lives alone has</p>

	<p>company. Motivation was a topic that was touched on as a few people are now struggling to stay motivated in their day-to-day work, it has been a long time without regular social contact. A few people started their jobs in lockdown and have found it difficult to find their feet and gain a good work routine, it has taken longer to get to know other staff and there are feelings of isolation across the board now for a lot of workers.</p> <p>It hasn't been all bad!</p> <p>Due to moving to digital formats employees have found better and easier ways to gain student data, by using online forms like MS forms and Gecko. This allows data to be input into CRMs quicker and allows for faster responses to follow up events.</p> <p>Working digitally has allowed for outreach to reach farther afield groups, by putting events online the participants can attend from anywhere in the world giving prospective students a much more informed and diverse experience of the university options out there.</p>
<p><b>Questions and Answers:</b></p>	
<p><b>Summary/ Key takeaways:</b></p>	<p>Routine is important – finding a good working from home routine where you are not working 24/7 is a key aspect to working from home effectively.</p> <p>Presenteeism has become something we are obsessed with- you do not need to show as online from 9- 5 as office working would see employees moving around the workplace and having coffee catchups with colleagues.</p> <p>Be aware of the tasks you need to do, work to accommodate the task, if you can have music on in the background – do so!</p> <p>Walks away from something you are struggling with. If you were in the office, you would arrange a meeting with a colleague to discuss, why should working from home be different? it is not good for wellbeing to tackle all tasks alone.</p> <p>A lot of the universities in England are looking at an agile approach to working, allowing staff to find the best routine for them.</p> <p>If your office set-up is not suitable, raise it with the DSE or H &amp; S team.</p> <p>Create a social media chat group with colleagues and arrange for walking meetings to catch up and remind yourself you are part of a bigger team.</p> <p>Take time off from being online and put on an out of office letting others know when your work routine and</p>

	<p><b>when to expect a reply from you. Switch off from all digital platforms for a while to recharge!</b></p>
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