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# FLEXIBLE WORKING FOR ALL:
## ACHIEVING GREATER EQUITY FOR FRONTLINE AND SITE-BASED WORKERS

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Impact on Urban Health

**NHS**
Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

**Sir Robert McALPINE**

**Wickes**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# FOREWORD

As a leader and an advocate for 'flexible working for all', I am delighted to support the findings in this report which provide clear evidence that it is practically possible to implement and support flexibility in operationally 'hard to flex' roles, such as nursing, construction and retail.

Working in hospital and community healthcare environments for many years, and now working across an integrated care system with partners in primary care, hospitals, community, social care and voluntary sector, I understand the difficulties of widening access to flexible working for frontline and site-based staff.

The key to unlocking these barriers start with compassionate leadership and a willingness to listen to ideas, being creative and testing out options in operationally complex working environments. Staffing shortages and 24/7 service delivery can often be presented as barriers to increasing flexibility when they should be seen as drivers for change. There are many examples of good practice across a range of organisations, including self-rostering opportunities, 'anytime hours' rotas to plug gaps and extended hours working. These all started out as 'too difficult to discuss' and have now become operationally business as usual, with benefits to patients and service users and to organisations by boosting attraction and retention.

There is a strong demand for flexibility among workers. Employees want greater autonomy and control over their working pattern to better manage their commitments

outside of work and their health. The findings and personal stories from this action research programme show the difference it can make to individuals, improving their job satisfaction, work-life balance and sense of health and wellbeing which, in turn, support employee attraction, retention and engagement in a competitive labour market.

Given the findings from this programme of work, organisations should feel both informed and confident to pursue a 'flexible working for all' approach using the evidence, case studies and recommendations as a springboard to open conversations supported by 'good practice evidence'. And develop culture change programmes to introduce greater flexibility into site-based and frontline roles.

I look forward to seeing a future where all jobs can offer flexibility to enable a work-life balance that is happier and healthier for all.

**Lynn Demeda**

Director of South East London Integrated Care System Workforce Programme

# MESSAGE FROM THE FUNDER

At Impact on Urban Health, we know that where you work, and the type of work you do, can have a significant impact on your health. In recent years record numbers of people across the UK have been economically inactive due to ill-health, making the need to foster better health at work clearer than ever.

Health at work is also an issue of health equity. Where we work in South London, we know that the ways in which work impacts health are not always felt equally. People from minoritised communities already carry a greater health burden and are more likely to be working in low-waged, frontline roles that have a negative impact on their health.

We know that being able to work flexibly is a key element of healthier working conditions, bringing greater balance between work and life for better mental and physical health. This flexibility is not currently available to all workers, especially those who are in frontline jobs where employees must be physically present – like healthcare, retail, and construction.

Investigating how these roles can be made more flexible is key to better health for workers and improving overall equity in health. Led by our partners Timewise and the Institute for Employment Studies, we explored what flexible work looks like in frontline contexts with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Sir Robert McAlpine and Wickes.

The resulting report, Flexible working for all, demonstrates how employers can build a culture of flexible working, no matter what the job role entails. The report captures the innovations and strategies by the three employers to make flexible frontline work a reality and carries a clear call to action on how we can make work healthier for all.

This report would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and commitment from our participating employers, and the dedication and passion of their employees. Their experiences and incisive feedback formed the insights on what can and should be different to make frontline jobs healthier places to be.

Our hope is that 'Flexible working for all' will act as a catalyst for tangible change in how we think about health at work, and as part of a wider movement to make sure that everyone – no matter where they work – can enjoy good health.

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# INTRODUCTION

The pandemic amplified existing labour market inequalities in access to flexible working and we are still reeling from the effects of this. Most notably, in the context of health, with high levels of sickness absence and rising economic inactivity largely attributed to poor health.[1] While half of working adults were able to work from home at times during the pandemic, others were not afforded this option due to the location-based nature of their work.[2] Consequently, they were more at risk of exposure to COVID-19 and to workplace health inequity. The reality of a two-tier workforce – the 'flexible haves and have nots' – became starkly apparent along with the implications for worker health and wellbeing. Emerging from the pandemic, workers given home-based options have expressed a strong interest in maintaining them and working in a hybrid way in the future. Many employers have responded to this demand by developing hybrid policies and practice, recognising its value for attraction and retention. Yet there has been limited coordinated action to redress workplace inequalities by investing in innovation and design to organise work differently for frontline and site-based employees.

It is for this reason that Timewise joined with the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and three trailblazing employers – Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Sir Robert McAlpine and Wickes – in a two-year long action research programme to introduce flexibility into frontline roles and evaluate its impact, on both the individual and the organisation. In this report, we outline the findings from our journey together and set out recommendations derived from them to make access to flexible working more equitable within organisations, and across sectors with large concentrations of site-based and frontline workers.

We set out to test the idea that good quality flexible work improves employee health and wellbeing, leading to benefits for employers, such as improved retention. While it is much talked about, there is little hard evidence particularly in the context of site-based employment. We considered the impact on individuals from the point of view of their experience of health and wellbeing, work-life balance and job satisfaction, and on organisations from the perspective of levels of engagement, attendance and retention. Crucially, our programme shows that flexibility is both central to how people want to work in the future and is practically possible even in 'hard to flex' roles. Where flexibility is introduced with the support of senior leaders, and is driven by teams at a local level, it results in positive impacts for both individuals and organisations. Workers report improvements to health and wellbeing, work-life balance, increased levels of job satisfaction and performance, as well as a desire to stay longer with their employer. For employers, this means higher levels of employee engagement, lower levels of sickness absence and increased staff retention. Organisations that invest in implementing flexible working effectively for all will see a positive return on their investment.[3]

For the organisations involved in this programme, there is no going back to former ways of working. They have embraced the changes and are moving forward with plans to scale up to ensure all are able to benefit through increased input and control over their working pattern.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PROGRAMME CONTEXT AND IMPACT

Young people, those on lower pay and people from minoritised ethnic groups are overrepresented in frontline roles that can be physically challenging. Such roles typically afford less opportunity for autonomy and control over working patterns – factors that can impact negatively on health and wellbeing. In contrast, flexible working options are heavily concentrated in high paid and desk-based roles.[4] These structural labour market patterns are often replicated within organisations, with disparities between employees working in frontline and site-based roles and those who are more desk-based. These have become starker with the increased focus on location-based flexibility. Remote and hybrid working are often synonyms for 'flexible working'. Time-based flexibility, which is more feasible for those unable to change where they work, is being sidelined as a result.

For too long, flexible working has been overlooked, ill-defined or poorly implemented in site-based and frontline working contexts. Our programme created and tested solutions that addressed these inequalities and provides models and learnings to grow impact and drive change. First, by creating a set of guiding principles for the development of a more equitable and consistent organisation-wide approach to flexible working.[5] These principles were co-created with members of our steering group and relate to seven key organisational areas, including leadership, manager capability, recruitment, progression and communications. Second, by designing and testing practical solutions with our partner employers. And, finally, by building the evidence base to better understand the impact that flexible working has on individuals and organisations.

'Flexible working for all' was developed in partnership with employers who are committed to reducing organisational disparities and improving the health and wellbeing of their employees. Its success is a result of driven and expert people collaborating to solve a huge challenge for organisations that has wider implications for social justice and health equity. It has resulted in practical guidance to support other organisations looking to address inequality and improve the health and wellbeing of their employees.

All three employers have already scaled up their approach since the initial pilot, expanding it for different roles and parts of their organisation. Wickes, for example, has made all store management roles open to flexible working across the UK.

## KEY FINDINGS

Through our evaluation research we identified a range of notable impacts on both individuals and organisations. These key findings were found to be relevant to all three organisations.

» **Benefits for frontline and site-based workers.** Increasing flexibility in frontline and site-based roles improved health and wellbeing, work-life balance, and raised levels of job satisfaction. For example, before the pilot, half of survey respondents agreed with the statement 'my current working arrangements allow me to maintain a good level of personal health and wellbeing' (51%). At the end, 82% of pilot participants agreed.

» **Benefits for organisations.** Offering opportunities for increased flexibility resulted in organisational-level benefits. We found evidence of reduced sickness absence, increased organisational loyalty and improved performance.

» **Cultural change.** All participating organisations experienced a change process that prompted a cultural shift in the way work is done. Good practice change management processes emerged as highly relevant to implementing these flexible working policies successfully (such as piloting, monitoring change and internal advocacy).

» **Senior leadership commitment.** The engagement and support of senior leaders in the pilots was fundamental. This gave managers and teams the confidence and motivation to experiment with new ways of working.

» **Team ownership.** Devolving responsibility to individual teams was central to the approach taken by our participating organisations. This ensured that solutions were co-designed with those employees who would be affected by the changes, predicating success.

» **Autonomy.** Individual autonomy was central to accruing benefit from the flexibilities on offer. Where employees were empowered to choose approaches that worked for them and their team, they were better able to balance their work commitments with their personal priorities.

» **Latent demand.** Our research found a strong demand for flexible options among employees. Managers need to be encouraged to take a proactive approach to ensuring that employees in all roles are afforded flexibility.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

» **Establish clear leadership and accountability for addressing inequalities in access to flexible working arrangements.**[6] This must not be an agenda residing with, and driven by, HR but an organisation-wide ambition with measurable objectives.

» **Share messaging internally on the value of flexible working for all individuals and for the organisation across channels and networks.** Showcase stories and promote role modelling to disrupt the prevailing idea that flexible working is synonymous with home-based or hybrid working. Demonstrate that flexibility is an option in site-based roles through increased input and control.

» **Facilitate regular consultations with employees.** Employee voice and engagement are key to cultivate a healthy workplace where people are empowered through input and control over their working pattern and to make decisions on ways of working as a team.

» **Undertake pilots, and rigorously evaluate them, to explore new ways of working and assess their impact on individuals, teams and services.** These can contribute to workforce development programmes by providing insights to guide decision-making.



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# 2. HOW WE WORKED WITH EMPLOYERS TO INTRODUCE FLEXIBILITY INTO FRONTLINE ROLES

Timewise engaged with senior people leaders at each of the three participating organisations to embed the programme, ensuring that our activity aligned with existing priorities and initiatives and was not perceived as an 'add-on' intervention. This involved developing a process to socialise the programme and its purpose and on-board employees at all levels of the organisation. This contributed to the culture change required to embed a new approach to flexibility.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Engaged senior leaders** | Identified senior sponsors and stakeholders to oversee the programme and inform its strategic design. |
| **Agreed organisational programme objectives** | Embedded the programme in each organisation by developing a set of objectives – drawing on our principles – that aligned with wider activity on flexible working and health and wellbeing. |
| **Created operational teams to support delivery** | Our senior sponsors identified an operational lead to liaise with Timewise and ensure the smooth running of the programme internally. They played a critical role in socialising the programme with employees through internal communication channels. |
| **Co-created action plans to deliver impact** | With operational leads, Timewise co-created action plans to deliver on the objectives. This involved setting milestones and scheduling activity at a pace that worked for the organisation and participants. Each plan was distinctive to the needs and goals of the participating organisation. |
| **Delivered pilot activity** | Timewise worked with the operational teams in each organisation to deliver the activity set out in the action plans. |
| **Evaluated impact** | IES collaborated with Timewise and the three participating organisations throughout the programme to develop and implement an impact evaluation process. They took an agile approach, adjusting methods to recognise the different organisational cultures and proposed activity to drive change. |

**FIGURE 1: OUR PROCESS OF COLLABORATING WITH EMPLOYERS TO DRIVE CHANGE AND EVALUATE OUR IMPACT**

## WHAT WE DID WITH EMPLOYERS TO INTRODUCE FLEXIBILITY INTO FRONTLINE ROLES

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Sir Robert McAlpine and Wickes are all employers deeply committed to flexible working as a way of engaging and retaining their workforce and supporting their health and wellbeing. They recognised inequity in their organisations over flexible working options and the likely impact this was having on staff sickness-absence, engagement and retention. Consequently, at the start of the programme, they each had a strong sense of where the problems lay and what the possible solutions might look like. They also had realistic expectations given the challenges of introducing flexibility into 'hard to flex' frontline and site-based roles. They were at the ready with organisational data and employee voice to inform the objective-setting and action-planning process at kick-off meetings.

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## Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

### Organisational programme objectives

» Challenge traditional attitudes towards shift patterns among managers to accommodate a wider range of working patterns.

» Build managers' skills to implement flexible working arrangements and manage flexible teams through the roster.

» Trial different approaches and capture learnings.

» Monitor the impact of changes on staff wellbeing, engagement and performance.

### Co-designed activity

» Engaged with the Chief Nurses Office to identify a ward to participate in a pilot. Acute Admissions Ward (AAW) was selected.

» Undertook listening exercises with nurses and management team on AAW to understand working patterns, access to flexibility and rostering process.

» Findings revealed a tension between the individual flexible working request system and the expectations and demands of the roster. Nurses wanted more stability, security and control over their working pattern but found the individual flexible working request system limiting or even unfair in a team context.

» Pilot activity therefore focused on adapting the rostering process for a small group of nurses to give them increased input and control over their shift patterns. With the senior ward team, Timewise co-designed a trial with a roster group of 15 nurses to increase the number of preferences from 5 to 10 (five days off and five nights on).

» The pilot ran for three months. Check-ins with participants after one month were positive, with people reporting improved work-life balance.

» Notably, this pilot is not an example of self- or team-rostering, but a transitional model conceived to be more manageable in a large and fast-paced ward.

## Sir Robert McAlpine

### Organisational programme objectives

» Support senior leaders to understand the business benefits of widening access to agile working among site-based teams.

» Support middle managers to understand the value of flexible and agile working arrangements, and their potential to enhance employee wellbeing and productivity, and implement them effectively.[7]

» Explore the potential for some types of flexible working arrangements to reduce mental health challenges among site-based employees.

» Build a consistent approach to applying flexible and agile working principles across the organisation.

### Co-designed activity

» Senior leaders identified seven teams to focus on that represented different contracting terms, including client-driven and joint-venture.

» Undertook listening exercises with team leaders to understand their perceptions of flexible and agile working and any barriers to implementing it for site-based employees.

» Based on our findings, Timewise co-created and delivered two workshops for leaders and managers on implementing flexible and agile working in site-based teams. This was followed by coaching to provide tailored support.

» Finally, Timewise widened delivery to reach all commercial and project leads across the organisation in webinars to educate, making the business case and providing practical examples on implementing agile and flexible work and managing individuals and teams working in agile ways.

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## Wickes

### Organisational programme objectives

» Promote understanding of the benefits of, and opportunities for, flexible working in all roles.

» Improve wellbeing and work-life balance for store-based management roles.

» Improve employee engagement through increased input, control, and autonomy over working lives.

» Improve talent attraction and career progression opportunities by enabling people to balance flexibility and ambition.

### Co-designed activity

» 13 stores were identified to participate in the pilot to widen access to flexible working options among store managers, operations managers, and duty managers. There were 66 pilot participants who responded to our employee survey.

» Pilot principles and expectations were established and communicated to colleagues.

» The pilot ran for four months and included informal (flexi-time, split shifts, compressed hours) and formal flexible options (reduced hours, job share, fixed pattern).

» Participants took part in engagement sessions and were assigned a 'buddy' to provide support throughout the pilot.

» Participants reflected on their role and productivity through a time management exercise, 'do, delegate, defer or delete'.

» Monthly check-in sessions were held to assess progress, identify any challenges and troubleshoot.

» Participants were supported by their managers and teams to work more flexibly and efficiently. This led to increased delegation, upskilling and multiskilling.

**FIGURE 2: PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS' OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

# 3. IMPACT EVALUATION

## HOW WE EVALUATED IMPACT

To understand the impact of flexible working on employees in the participating organisations, three different methods of data collection were used: employee surveys, HR data collection and interviews or focus groups.

How we defined beneficiaries was dependent on the organisation and the nature of the intervention. At Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Wickes, beneficiaries were identified as those who had been given a clear opportunity to change their ways of working. At Sir Robert McAlpine the beneficiary group was made up of those who had recently adopted a new agile working approach.

### Employee surveys

A survey was conducted before the pilot period began to allow for a baseline to be established against which any impact could be compared. Across all three employers, 319 responses were received to the baseline survey.[8] This was followed with an endline survey which was conducted at least three months after the pilot period had concluded (flexibilities affecting the pilot beneficiaries remained in place following the pilot). A total of 306 responses were received to the endline survey.[9] As well as the target beneficiaries, responses were sought from the wider teams. In all, 94 of those responding to the endline survey were identified as beneficiaries.[10]

The surveys were designed to gather data on people's experience of input and control over their working pattern and how that intersected with their sense of job quality and health and wellbeing. The surveys also collected data on diversity characteristics such as gender, disability, caring responsibilities and age. The endline survey repeated some questions from the baseline survey so that the impact of flexible working could be tracked across the interventions.

The surveys were customised to suit the context of the participating organisations and respond to the bespoke nature of the interventions. For instance, in the context of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, the questions put to beneficiaries following the pilot used the term 'rostering request options' rather than 'flexible working'. While, at Sir Robert McAlpine, the term 'agile working' was consistently used to reflect informal agreements around ways of working.

### HR data

A request for anonymous data was submitted to the HR departments of each employer to gain insight on roles, working hours and pay, current flexible working arrangements, demographic details, absences, staff turnover, vacancies and key performance indicators. This information was sought for the pilot beneficiaries, an equivalent group of employees who were not participating in the pilot interventions and the whole organisation. Where data on comparison groups was provided, IES was able to review and control for external influencing factors. The reference periods included three months before and after the pilot activities.

### Interviews and focus groups

Finally, interviews and focus groups were conducted with pilot beneficiaries to better understand the impact of the pilot activities, including what worked well, not so well, and the effect that this had on themselves and their organisations. Topics that were discussed included their employer's historical or general approach to flexible working, key drivers for increasing flexible working, what the interventions had involved, the impact of increased flexible working on employees and the organisation, and any thoughts for the future of flexible working in their organisation. Experiences of three beneficiaries in each organisation are featured as case studies in this report to provide insights into the personal and organisational experience of increased flexible working. These have been anonymised using pseudonyms where requested.

Additionally, focus groups and interviews were conducted with managers of pilot beneficiaries as well as those responsible for implementing the flexible working pilot activities. These conversations allowed evaluators to better understand the process and the work that went into managing the pilot activities and changes.

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## WHAT CHANGED FOR INDIVIDUALS?

As previously described, our participating organisations all defined their own distinctive programme objectives, in response to their culture and strategic and operational priorities. Key changes for beneficiaries are summarised below.

» **Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust:** 15 one-year qualified nurses received five additional roster requests.

» **Sir Robert McAlpine:** 13 staff reported adopting a new agile working approach.

» **Wickes:** We observed a reduction in overall working hours and an increase in flexible working patterns among the 66 pilot beneficiaries who responded to our survey.

Our research explored how increased flexibility affected employees in terms of their health and wellbeing, work-life balance and job satisfaction. We also considered other impacts on individuals, such as potential conflict that may be caused by competing demands (e.g. from other individuals seeking flexibility).

While these sample sizes are small, we found consistent changes across all three organisations.

### Health and wellbeing

After the initial pilot period, pilot participants across all three organisations reported a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. We asked beneficiaries whether their current working arrangements allowed them to maintain a good level of personal health and wellbeing using a seven-point scale (where one is strongly disagree and seven is strongly agree). Figure 3 shows the baseline rating for all staff and how it compares to the endline rating for beneficiaries at each of the participating organisations.



**FIGURE 3: CHANGE IN REPORTED PERSONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**
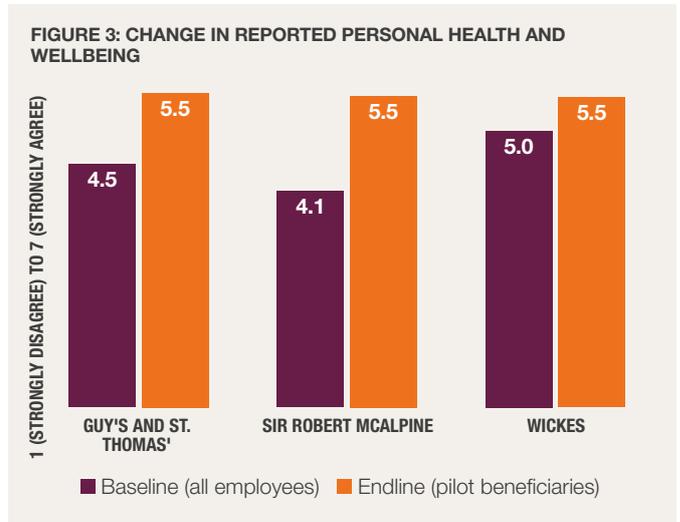
While the average endline response was 5.5, the number of survey respondents agreeing with this statement (rating it five 'somewhat agree, six 'agree' or seven 'strongly agree'), increased from 51% (of all at baseline) to 82% (of beneficiaries at endline). 14% of beneficiaries disagreed with this statement (rating it three 'somewhat disagree' or below), possibly a reflection of increased work intensity for some (see section on work intensity on p.13). At Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, pilot beneficiaries explained that having increased control over night shifts improved their sleep. Health and wellbeing benefits were also experienced by beneficiaries at Sir Robert McAlpine (see Alan's case study on p. 18) and at Wickes.
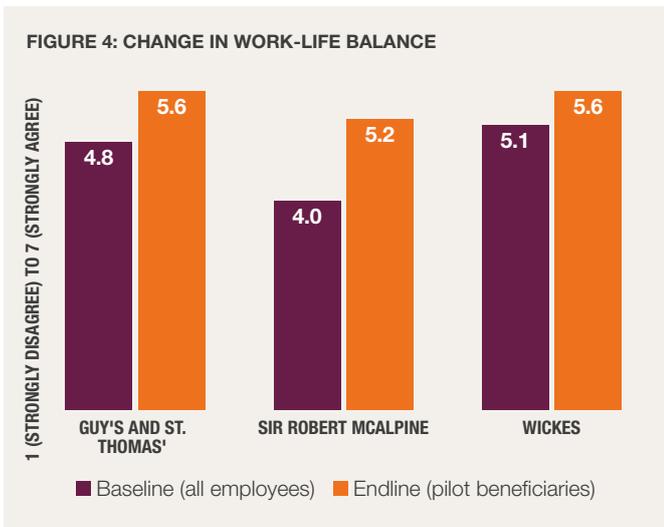
> *On reflection, I needed the respite more than I let on. More, probably, than even I realised I needed it. I had been struggling with my mental health. Now, I can go to the gym, I can do some crafting. I have always had Tuesdays off, as these tend to be hospital days [for my daughter who has a health condition]. But having Thursday off is really making a difference in my life. The girls are in school. It is my day for me.*
> **STORE MANAGER, WICKES**

### Work-life balance

For all three organisations, employee attitudes on work-life balance improved after the initial pilot period (see figure 4). Beneficiaries at Sir Robert McAlpine especially felt that their new agile working arrangement had helped to improve their work-life balance, with all reporting an improvement.

**FIGURE 4: CHANGE IN WORK-LIFE BALANCE**



Vertical axis: 1 (STRONGLY DISAGREE) TO 7 (STRONGLY AGREE)

GUY'S AND ST. THOMAS': 4.8 / 5.6
SIR ROBERT MCALPINE: 4.0 / 5.2
WICKES: 5.1 / 5.6

■ Baseline (all employees)   ■ Endline (pilot beneficiaries)

There was a notable increase in the number of survey respondents agreeing with this statement (rating it five 'somewhat agree' or above), increasing from 52% (of all at baseline) to 78% (of beneficiaries at endline). From our discussions with employees across all three participating organisations, we found that those with a new working arrangement commonly shared that they felt their work-life balance had improved, with some commenting that this allowed them to remain in full-time work while engaging in family life. As reflected in Mark's case study (see p.15), this kind of agility can be critical to support

those with caring responsibilities. For others, they were able to pursue their hobbies and spend more quality time with their family and friends outside work.

> *I was able to go to my son's Christmas play and [my team leader] wasn't expecting me to take holiday for that because they know I'm working long days on other days, so I'm still working the hours.*
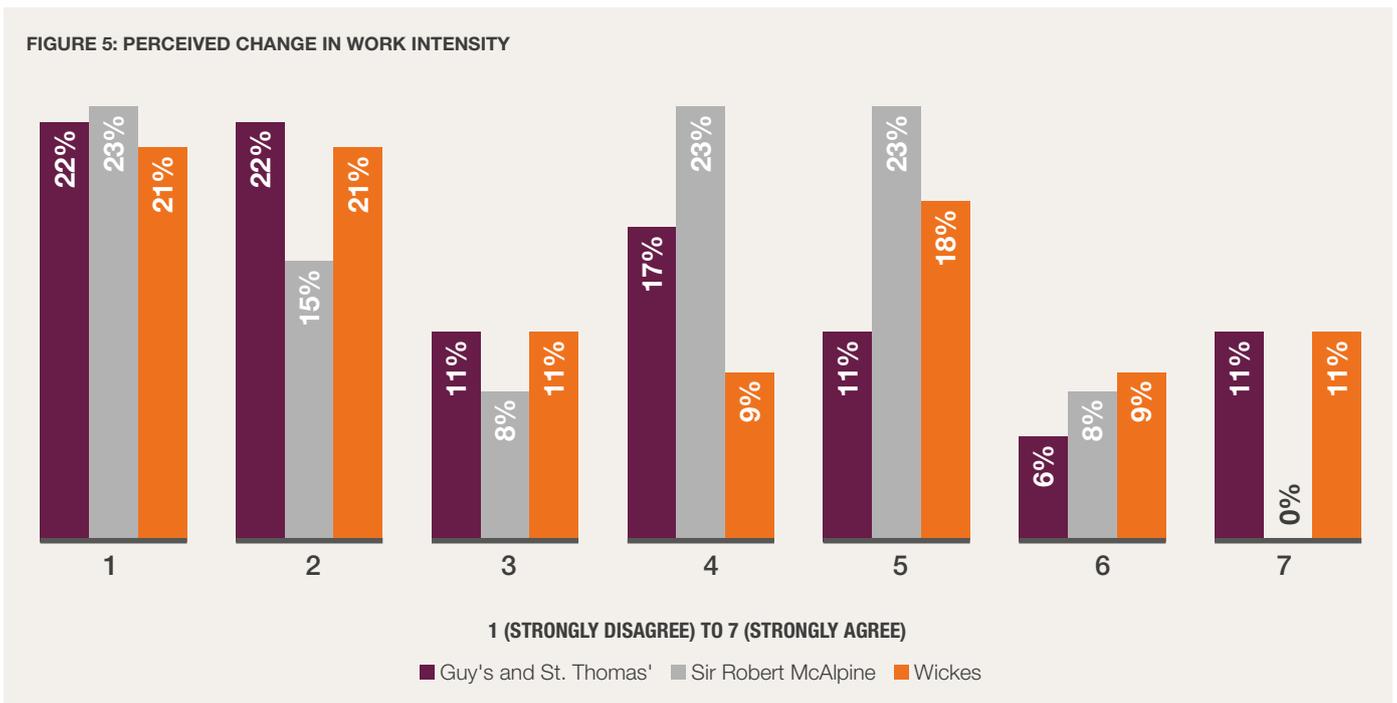> **MANAGER, SIR ROBERT MCALPINE**

Indeed, feedback from conversations with employees from Sir Robert McAlpine suggested that appetite for improved and statutory (contractual) flexibility had increased. This was a particular issue at Sir Robert McAlpine, as construction project teams were constantly changing, creating a level of insecurity and stress because informal agile working arrangements had to be re-negotiated.

**Work intensity**

Increased flexibility was associated with higher levels of work intensity for a minority of beneficiaries. Although 22% of beneficiaries across all three organisations strongly disagreed that their new flexibility had increased how intensely they work (rating it one), on average 7% strongly agreed that it had (rating it seven).

**FIGURE 5: PERCEIVED CHANGE IN WORK INTENSITY**



| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guy's and St. Thomas' | 22% | 22% | 11% | 17% | 11% | 6% | 11% |
| Sir Robert McAlpine | 23% | 15% | 8% | 23% | 23% | 8% | 0% |
| Wickes | 21% | 21% | 11% | 9% | 18% | 9% | 11% |

1 (STRONGLY DISAGREE) TO 7 (STRONGLY AGREE)

■ Guy's and St. Thomas'   ■ Sir Robert McAlpine   ■ Wickes

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Discussions with beneficiaries at Wickes surfaced the way that compressed hours can sometimes be detrimental to health and wellbeing, with some employees reverting to more traditional shifts after trialling. This may also be associated with a reduction in hours worked at Wickes, meaning that workload was squeezed into a shorter working week.

> *What we're seeing is that a number of people start on that four day week and realise it doesn't work for them … so, originally, I think a lot of people would have gone for that four day a week but actually, as we piloted different things, I think it's opened up people's thoughts of what flexibility is.*
> **HR, WICKES**

Further, our individual discussions revealed how compressed hours can be beneficial (even essential for some) and individual choice is key. This highlights the importance of creating a supportive culture to enable individuals and teams to adopt flexibilities that work for them (see 'critical success factors' on p.19).

### Job satisfaction

83% of beneficiaries agreed that their new working arrangement had increased their level of job satisfaction (rating their level of agreement at five 'somewhat satisfied' or above). This was further reflected in our discussions with managers and beneficiaries.

> *The more control people have over their [working] pattern would generally make people happier. Everyone operates differently and people need different rest times.*
> **STAFF NURSE, GUY'S AND ST THOMAS' NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**

At Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, beneficiaries rated their job satisfaction at 5.3, compared with 5.1 for all at baseline (where 1 is completely dissatisfied and 7 is completely satisfied). At Sir Robert McAlpine, those who had started a new agile working arrangement reported satisfaction with their job at 5.6, compared with 5.0 for all at baseline. At Wickes, positive levels of job satisfaction were unchanged, however the baseline was relatively high (at 5.4). Further, there was a decrease in the number of Wickes' pilot participants reporting low levels of job satisfaction, with those who rated their job satisfaction between one and three (down from 12% to 7%).

### Balancing individual and employer needs

The importance of balancing the needs of the individual with those of the business was identified by survey respondents as a critical success factor and a barrier for all our participating organisations (see 'critical success factors' on p.19).

It is important to note that a minority of respondents to our endline survey commented that their new flexible/agile working or rostering arrangements had led to conflicts, either with other team members or their managers. Our conversations with employees revealed that managers were often concerned about the potential implications of individual flexible/agile working or rostering requests on service delivery or other members of the team. However, the piloting process enabled managers to trial different approaches and build confidence in their staff's ability to work flexibly without disrupting service delivery.



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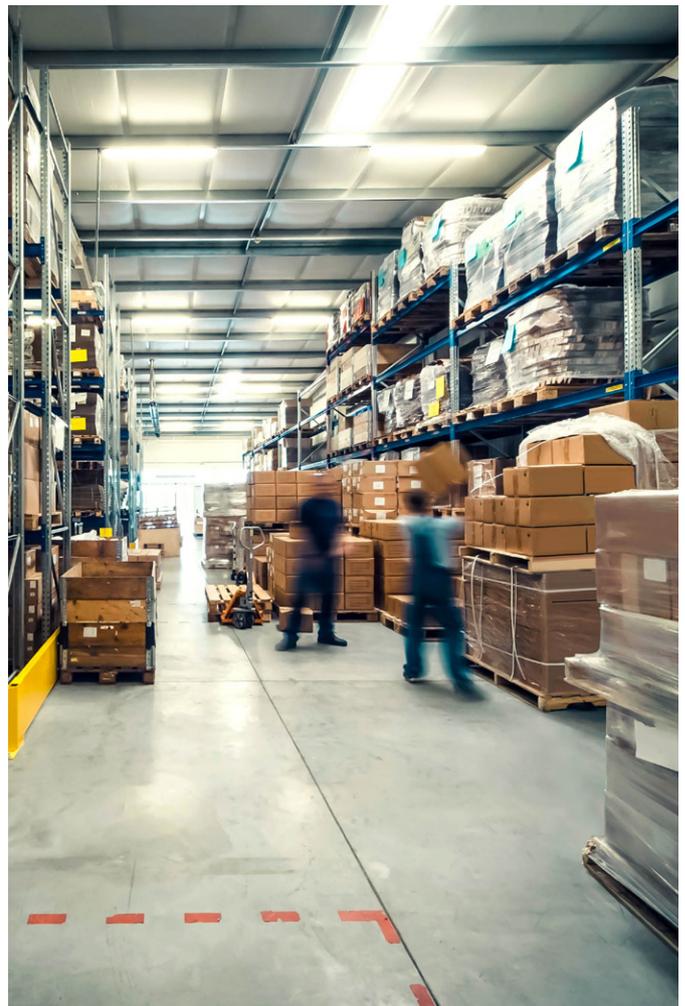
## Mark, Store Manager, Wickes

Mark has worked at Wickes for more than 10 years and been Store Manager for seven. He started his career with a part-time job at Somerfield while at school and became Deputy Manager at the age of 21.

Mark enjoys the variety that comes with working in retail. The store he manages is a self-service store with a high volume of trade customers. They open longer hours than most stores and have a multi-national workforce of 60. "I love the hustle and bustle of retail. Whether it's with colleagues or customers, you are on your toes and you probably cross paths with 300 people a day. You get to meet a really diverse group of people and you get faced with a new set of challenges all the time. It's never the same."

Mark has young children and, when the trial was first suggested to him, his long hours were taking their toll on family life. "I'd just won Store Manager of the Year at Wickes. But my home life wasn't great. My daughter was three and a half and my other was newborn. My wife was really struggling. She needed to go into work one day a week. We had little time together. I took the opportunity at my performance review to say I needed to make a change. Then the trial was presented to me. To me it was a no-brainer."

Mark started trialling a compressed hours four-day week. At first, he felt guilt and responsibility to the wider team, but gradually realised that he was setting a new norm. "It's a different way to live and work. A better one." He found that getting the processes in place to support this was not easy, but it was worth the investment.

The benefits to Mark and his family have been significant. As well as practical benefits, such as savings on fuel costs, he is spending more time with his wife, children, and friends. "I've developed a new phrase: happy home life, happy work-life. I am a happier me. I wasn't getting any time at home with my wife. She was getting no support from me. And I had started to drift from my friends, who always get together at weekends (when I used to always be working)."

Mark feels that he is part of a movement that will change the shape of future careers in retail. The store has created a WhatsApp group called 'Trailblazers', providing mutual support for flexible workers and Mark is doing what he can to support mothers in his team, looking at ways to retain them and help them onto the management track. He said, "make one small change and a thousand more will follow…" Mark predicts that, in four or five years, the kind of flexible working they have will be the norm in retail, allowing people to stay in their careers as their lives change. "It will level the playing field. I don't see any negatives whatsoever."

## WHAT CHANGED FOR ORGANISATIONS?

Increasing flexible working approaches is an investment. It requires dedication and resources to implement effectively. Our research found that the participating organisations experienced considerable benefits from introducing increased flexible working.

### Retention

Retention is a major concern for frontline and essential service sectors where staffing levels are critical and sometimes tight. Access to flexible working is a significant factor for many employees when considering leaving their job. Our baseline survey found that, across all three participating organisations, employees generally agreed that they would take a job with a different employer if it gave them a better working and non-working life balance, "even if it paid slightly less". HR managers at the participating organisations recognised that improved flexibility had the potential to retain and recruit staff.

> *There had been some comments [in the staff survey] around flexible working and the fact that there could be some more opportunities for flexible working … staff were saying that they didn't have much control over the roster and that the rosters could be quite variable.*
> **HR, GUY'S AND ST THOMAS' NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**

Baseline survey responses showed that 18% of the employees we consulted had considered leaving their job in the last three months "because of a lack of flexible/agile working". Further, 20% of female respondents shared that they had considered leaving their job in the last three months, due to a lack of flexible/agile working, compared to 11% of male respondents. We also found that those with caring responsibilities were more likely to take a job with a different employer if it offered a better work-life balance

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"even if they were paid slightly less". Notably, 63% of those with caring responsibilities were female so this is very much a gendered issue.

We saw a considerable shift on this position following the pilots. 76% of beneficiaries agreed that their new working arrangement made them want to stay with the employer for longer (rating it five 'somewhat agree' or above). At Sir Robert McAlpine, for example, no beneficiaries reported considering leaving due to a lack of agile working during the three-month period following the pilot (compared to 15% of all respondents at baseline). This was further supported by our conversations with staff.

> The flexible working trial has made me appreciate my job more, and (if possible) has made me even more loyal to Wickes, as I have the best work-life balance I have ever had in all the years I have been at Wickes.
> **STORE MANAGER, WICKES**

Our conversations with employees revealed that flexibility enabled some people to work more hours than they otherwise would have been able to. This is particularly significant for lower earners in the cost-of-living crisis. For example, in the context of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, one nurse reported that having greater autonomy motivated her to take on more shifts. At Sir Robert McAlpine one employee commented that, without increased flexibility, she would have likely reduced her hours, which would have also had a detrimental impact on her family's financial security and her mental health.

> If I hadn't been given this opportunity, I think the conversation would have been about going part-time. I couldn't cope with balancing childcare and a full-time job. Financially that would have had a very negative impact on me. I wouldn't have been in a good place mentally and I probably wouldn't be as productive.
> **QUANTITY SURVEYOR, SIR ROBERT MCALPINE**

Pilot beneficiaries also reported increased confidence that employees who work flexibly can progress in their organisations. Progression is a key motivating factor when it comes to staff retention. Those involved in pilot

delivery at Wickes also shared that the pilot led to a multi-skilling of staff (to ensure that the required skills mix was available onsite), supporting staff development and increasing potential for progression.

**Sickness absence**

Our baseline findings showed that 28% of survey respondents reported taking sickness absence in the past three months due to a lack of flexible/agile working. Notably, 33% of female respondents reported this, more than double that of their male colleagues (14%). However, age was an even bigger influencing factor here. 42% of those respondents aged between 18 to 24 and 30% of those aged 25 to 34 reported taking sickness absence due to a lack of flexible/agile working.

FIGURE 6: BASELINE RESPONDENTS' SICKNESS ABSENCE THAT COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED WITH BETTER FLEXIBLE/AGILE WORKING



Respondents by age
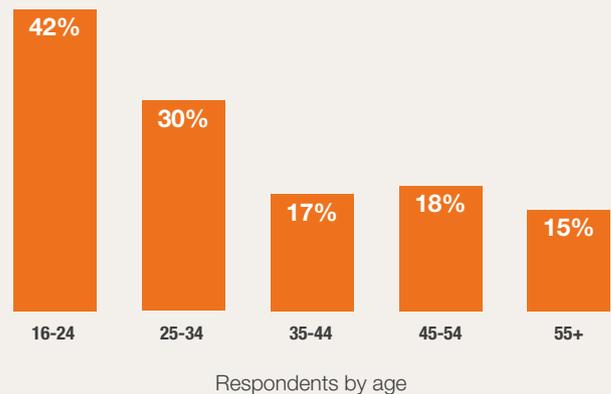
It is important that sickness absence is monitored to better understand the relationship between flexible working and health from the employee's perspective. However, previous research shows that small reductions to sickness absence can lead to significant financial savings for organisations.[11]

Some beneficiaries reported reduced sickness absence because of new flexible/agile working or rostering approaches. In the case of Wickes, 28% of respondents with a new flexible working approach reported taking less sick leave due to their new working arrangement. This was corroborated by HR data provided by Wickes, which showed that the pilot cohort had a lower rate of sickness absence than that experienced at comparative stores not participating in the pilot.

This represents substantial financial savings. For example, the 11 Wickes managers who said that they had less sick leave, estimated that this had reduced by a total of 17 days over a three-month period following the intervention. Applying a business cost of £95.98 per day absent (using data for retail from the aforementioned IES research), this provides an estimated saving of £1,631.66 to the business for this quarter. If repeated across a whole year, this would amount to £6,526.64 and a wider rollout across the organisation could realise an annual saving of £155,471. Creating opportunities for flexible working for store colleagues could deliver far greater financial rewards (our projections are limited to the managerial roles that participated in the pilot).
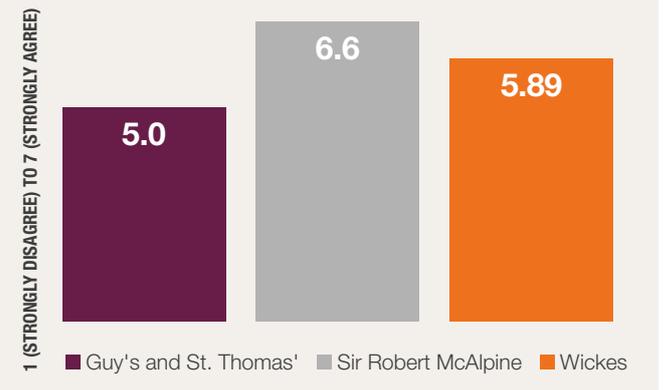
FIGURE 7: ESTIMATED SICKNESS ABSENCE SAVINGS AT WICKES

| NUMBER OF SELF-REPORTED SICKNESS DAYS AVOIDED | ESTIMATED COST PER DAY |
|---|---|
| 17 | £95.98* |
| ESTIMATED THREE MONTH SAVING FOR THE (13) PILOT STORES | PROJECTED ANNUAL SAVING FOR THE (13) PILOT STORES |
| £1,631.66* | £6,526.64* |
| PROJECTED THREE MONTH SAVING FOR ALL (230) STORES | PROJECTED ANNUAL SAVING FOR ALL (230) STORES |
| £28,867.83* | £115,471.32* |



### Employee performance

83% of beneficiaries agreed with the statement 'My new agile/flexible working or rostering arrangement has helped me to work in a more productive way' (rating their level of agreement at five 'somewhat agree' or above).

FIGURE 8: PERCEIVED CHANGE IN PRODUCTIVITY



1 (STRONGLY DISAGREE) TO 7 (STRONGLY AGREE)

5.0 — Guy's and St. Thomas'
6.6 — Sir Robert McAlpine
5.89 — Wickes

In conversation, one Regional Manager from Wickes commented that store key performance indicators had remained stable, if not improved, during the pilot period.

> *I've had quite a lot of audit and compliance activity on my region over the last four weeks ... and there's been no curveballs thrown in. There have been strong results in fact, not had a single non green result.*
> **REGIONAL MANAGER, WICKES**

Our conversations with beneficiaries suggested that being able to plan their work around personal priorities empowered them to work more productively. There were also reports of better management of workload following the pilots, with improvements made to how work and staffing was planned. Communication and planning emerged as key to the successful implementation of flexible/agile working and increased roster requests (see 'critical success factors' on p.19).
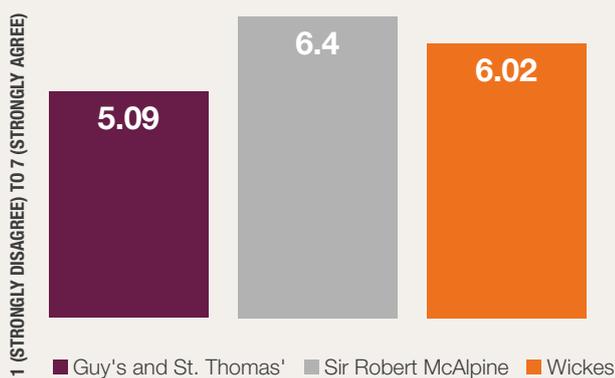
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## Scaling up and rolling out

81% of respondents to our endline surveys supported an organisation-wide roll out of their new approach. From our discussions with beneficiaries, we also found that although staff did not always take up the full flexibility offered to them, they welcomed the option and valued the positive impact this had on their colleagues. As identified in both Mark's and Alan's case studies (pp. 15 and 18 respectively) flexible/agile working is often seen as essential to the business to recruit and retain staff in the future.

All three employers have already scaled up their approach since the initial pilot, expanding it for different roles and/or parts of their organisation. At Wickes, for example, their flexible working approach is now available to all store managers across the UK.

There was a strong sense of 'no going back' for these employers and their employees. The pilots revealed a latent demand for increased flexibility and going back to how things had previously been done was not seen as a viable option. 84% of beneficiaries agreed that their new working arrangement is central to how they want to work in the future (rating it five 'somewhat agree' or above).

**FIGURE 9: BENEFICIARIES WHO SEE NEW WORKING APPROACH AS CENTRAL TO HOW THEY WANT TO WORK IN THE FUTURE**



1 (STRONGLY DISAGREE) TO 7 (STRONGLY AGREE)

5.09 — 6.4 — 6.02

■ Guy's and St. Thomas'  ■ Sir Robert McAlpine  ■ Wickes

### Alan, Project Manager, Sir Robert McAlpine

Alan is a Project Manager at Sir Robert McAlpine and has worked with the company for around five years. He is responsible for delivering projects to client expectations, as well as managing a team of site-based staff.

In his role, Alan enjoys "seeing the output, and what the team can achieve in terms of actually building something, and delivering outputs that meet and exceed client expectations." In terms of flexibility within construction, Alan feels that "there is a school of thought that you should be on-site every day, from 7am until 6pm" and clients often expect that a whole team will be present and on-site delivering on an output. Combined, these factors have made it difficult to shift the long working hours culture and lack of flexibility within the industry.

Alan appreciates that "SRM are taking the initiative to be one of the industry front runners in offering flexible and agile work." He thinks that embedding it into the company's values will do a great deal for protecting employees' wellbeing by reducing some of the impact of what can be stressful and labour-intensive work. On top of this, he noted the benefit that increasing the availability of agile working at SRM will have on "how we attract people into the industry, and how to entice the best people towards SRM".
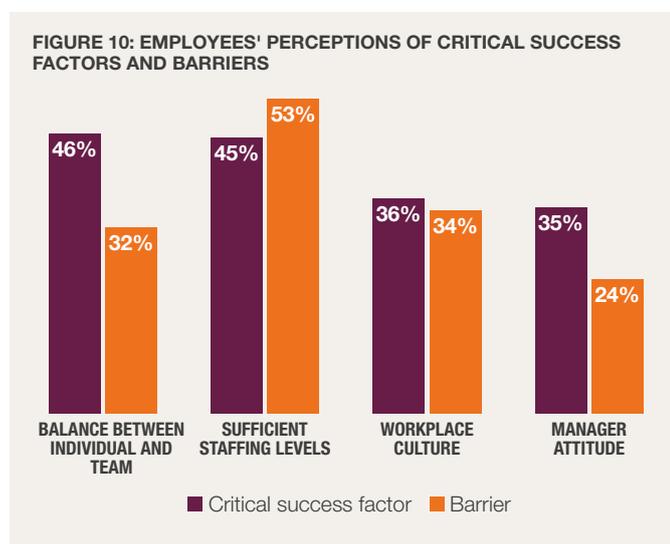
Even before the agile working pilot, Alan worked with his teams to ensure their working patterns allowed them to maintain a healthy work-life balance while meeting the needs of the project. He said, "I've never once said an absolute no, but I've not always been able to say yes to everything. I would like to, but it's about finding that compromise. I have the view that if it wasn't important to people, they wouldn't ask for it." This has included allowing parents time to do school runs (picking up additional hours in the evenings), and some staff working longer hours Monday to Thursday with an early finish on a Friday.

He feels that what makes this successful is the 'local' approach to deciding agile arrangements, as well as giving a sense of ownership to individuals and understanding that each team member has their own lifestyle outside of work. Conversely, Alan felt that a blanket approach to agile working would not work. Co-developing agile arrangements is key to ensure the right skillsets are always onsite. Alan said: "if someone comes to me and says I want to be flexible and another person comes to me and says they want to be flexible in the same area, but they both provide cover for the same thing, I can't accommodate both of those requests, so [we consider] how can we compromise together?"

# 4. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Our research identified several critical success factors that employees recognised as key to the successful implementation of good quality flexible work.

The graph below shows the most common critical success factors and barriers (for flexible/agile working or increased rostering request options) as identified by respondents to the endline survey, across all three participating organisations.

**FIGURE 10: EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND BARRIERS**



- BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM: 46% / 32%
- SUFFICIENT STAFFING LEVELS: 45% / 53%
- WORKPLACE CULTURE: 36% / 34%
- MANAGER ATTITUDE: 35% / 24%

■ Critical success factor ■ Barrier

Balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of the wider team emerged as the strongest factor influencing the success of these flexible working initiatives. Sufficient staffing levels were considered almost as important (and the biggest barrier to change), followed by having the right workplace culture and manager attitudes.

## A. Communicating and planning

Our discussions with those involved in the implementation of the pilots highlighted the importance of effective communication and planning when introducing new flexible working practices across teams. In the context of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, the process of sharing rostering duties emerged as key. As well as sharing the administrative burden, this built understanding among a wider group, enhancing communication and education on empowering employees through the roster. Our discussions with managers at Sir Robert McAlpine revealed the need to

consider different ways of working at the earliest project planning stages. While at Wickes, communication between staff to support handovers was essential to ensure operations ran smoothly.

Feedback from the pilots showed the importance of ensuring that staff were sufficiently skilled and/or experienced to cover for one another. As found from our conversations with staff from all three employers (and further highlighted in Christina's case study on p. 20), local ownership is critical to ensure that the right skill mix is onsite at the required times. This can be a real challenge for managers rolling out flexibility for employees in site-based roles, particularly when experiencing staff absence.

> " *It becomes more difficult when, particularly around summer, we've got lots of holidays or you're down a member for whatever reason, you might have vacancy. That's where you start to see, you need to be a bit more imaginative with how flexibility can still work.*
> **STORE MANAGER, WICKES**

It is also important to consider how 'flexible working' or related terms are perceived and understood by different employee groups. In the context of Sir Robert McAlpine, for example, 'flexible working' is seen as a contractual agreement that may result from a statutory request, whereas informal agreements are commonly termed as 'agile working'. Giving people greater input and control over their ways of working has a positive impact on their health and wellbeing and job satisfaction. How that process is described is context specific, for some it is about 'flexible working' whereas for others it is 'agile' or about input over the roster. Transparency and communication are key to ensure equality and inclusion is driving the change process.

## B. Building team ownership

Feedback from across the three participating organisations suggests that a locally owned and developed flexible working solution was fundamental to its success. Beneficiaries commented that they welcomed the opportunity to co-develop flexible working solutions that met their needs as a team.

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Some HR leaders also reported that this local engagement was central to their approach, with one commenting that employees would often develop new ideas that they would not have conceived. The engagement and support of senior leaders in this process, and the pilot structure itself, were critical in enabling (often stretched) teams to prioritise these new initiatives.

## C. Creating a supportive culture

An important factor is organisational culture and the role of the line manager, particularly their attitude toward flexible working. From our conversations with beneficiaries, we found that trust and support are critical.

> *Trust is massively important. You should trust people to do the work they are set. You know, if someone gives you a reason not to trust them then that's different, but you shouldn't start from a place of distrust.*
>
> **MANAGER, SIR ROBERT MCALPINE**

Some managers willingly supported flexibility for those individuals whom they had an established trusting relationship with but were less willing to do so for those they did not trust to perform in this context. As alluded to in Alan's case study, embedding new ways of flexible working and changing mindsets takes time.

In all three organisations, pilot beneficiaries reported increased agreement that they were more confident in their employer's recognition of the importance of flexible working arrangements. They were also more comfortable to approach their employer to discuss starting/altering a flexible working arrangement. It seems highly likely that there is a strong association between these two factors. In organisations where employees perceive flexible working to be valued there is greater confidence to approach managers to discuss working arrangements. This also suggests that the pilot process itself resulted in more positive attitudes around flexible working. Christina's case study illustrates this further.

### Christina, Ward Sister, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Christina is the Ward Sister on the Acute Admissions Ward at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. The ward is busy, with around 20 to 30 admissions and discharges each shift. With a ward of this size, there is a lot of responsibility for the flow of patients entering the hospital, with additional clinical and administrative demands.

One of Christina's responsibilities, along with two colleagues, is to create the ward staff roster. Staff are asked to work 50% day and 50% night shifts, with staff working a minimum of six night shifts in a roster. Feedback from staff highlights that "working three night shifts in a row is tough and staff get easily burnt out".

The pilot's aim was to provide more control, especially over night shifts, and to improve work-life balance by increasing roster requests from five to ten. Christina hoped that the pilot would raise awareness among staff as to what goes into making a roster and how hard it is: "I used to dread getting changed in the morning because I'd hear people moaning about their roster and we didn't have an open channel of communication about the roster." Christina was concerned about "the prospect that all of the people in the pilot might request the same shifts".

Once the pilot was rolled out, Christina realised that different people had different preferences for when they wanted to work. The unpredictability of the roster before the pilot had a negative impact on the staff, including on their sleep and ability to engage in hobbies. For Christina this was eye opening: "when I was a year qualified, I used to love doing three nights and having a long weekend, but now I have more awareness of the impact it has on people's lives." Channels of communication have opened up and people discuss their roster in a less negative way.

To ensure that the pilot runs smoothly Christina has had to be organised and send regular emails to pilot participants: "Just because you've told people once, they don't remember… it has to be followed up." She has also provided one-to-one support time to assist with the additional roster requests. This has made approaching management on the issue a lot easier for nurses. Staff are feeling more empowered with a good effect on the ward and fewer staff complaints observed.

Some pilot participants did not use any of their requests, while others have used all available. This depends on the individual, their responsibilities outside of work and their working preferences, especially with their night shifts. Around 70% of requests were accepted, similar to a ward which uses self-rostering to schedule shifts, which Christina was surprised to see as this was high for self-rostering. Following the success with the one-year qualified nurses, the pilot is now being rolled out to nursing assistants who may have different responsibilities and requests to the current pilot group.

# 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are a series of recommendations emerging from our findings which are relevant across sectors and have been organised thematically.

## LEADERSHIP

» **Secure executive and senior leadership alignment on the value of flexible working for the organisation and for all its people, not just those with caring responsibilities or health conditions.** This is key to overcome flexible working stigma and ensure flexible working options are made available to everyone across the organisation, regardless of their role, gender or personal circumstances.

» **Establish clear organisational principles and expectations on flexible working options and their availability in all roles.**[12] These will be vital to set the tone and standard and ensure leaders across the organisation understand the part they need to play in achieving equality in access to flexible working.

» **Establish clear leadership and accountability for addressing inequalities in access to flexible working arrangements, by service and by demographic characteristics.** This should include setting performance targets relating to the implementation of flexible working. This must not be an agenda residing with, and driven by, HR but an organisation-wide ambition with measurable objectives.

## CULTURE

» **Share messaging internally on the value of flexible working for all individuals and for the organisation across channels and networks.** Showcase stories and promote role modelling to disrupt the prevailing idea that flexible working is synonymous with home-based or hybrid working. Demonstrate that flexibility is an option in site-based roles through increased input and control. This approach will also disrupt the gendered stereotypes associated with flexible working

» **Ensure organisational strategies are aligned and flexible working is viewed in the context of work-life support and workplace health**. Flexible working has a key part to play in activity to support employee health and wellbeing.

» **Monitor flexible working in relation to workforce diversity data** and use data to guide action to address areas of inequality.

» **Create working environments where people feel able to talk openly about their working preferences.** This is important for inclusion and belonging as employees from marginalised backgrounds may be more likely to avoid opening conversations with managers about their working arrangements.

» **Adopt flexible working recruitment practices.** Some groups of workers, especially young people, have increasingly high expectations of autonomy in the workplace and therefore a flexible working offer is key for talent attraction and retention.

» **Share messaging externally to advocate for flexible working** and to influence good working practices across the supply chain.

## MANAGER CAPABILITY

» **Ensure managers are aware of the expectation for all employees to have some level of input** and control over their working pattern in the context of where, when or how they work; and, crucially, understand the value of this approach, both for individuals and the organisation.

» **Engage managers by introducing them to the evidence of impact of flexible working**, including case studies, and exposing them to the risks of inflexibility, in the context of worker health and wellbeing, staff satisfaction and retention.

» **Engage and support managers to take a team lens** and consider what flexibility is possible across a team by organising work and working patterns with more input from employees.

» **Facilitate regular consultations with employees.** Employee voice and engagement are key to cultivate a healthy workplace where people are empowered through input and control over their working pattern and to make decisions on ways of working as a team.



## CHOICE AND FLEXIBILITY IN WORKFORCE PLANNING

» **Undertake pilots, and rigorously evaluate them, to explore new ways of working and assess their impact on individuals, teams and services.** These can contribute to workforce development programmes by providing insights to guide decision-making.

» **Flexibility is possible in shift systems but may be better conceived in terms of 'stability, input and control'.** The language of 'flexible working' can sometimes deter rota managers and leaders of frontline services from innovating and trialling different ways of organising work because it is so often associated with individualised and place-based options.

» **'Flexibility' in working patterns can include offering choice, soliciting preferences and permitting shift swaps.** Advance notice of work schedules and transparent communication about the available choices are important to allow employees to plan their schedules around their non-working lives.

» **Rather than increasing the number of individual arrangements,** the rostering process (allocating shifts) can be used to enable all staff to access their preferred shift pattern through greater input and control – enabling greater equality.

» **In the context of tight staffing, flexible working should be seen as a solution rather than a barrier.** Implementing multiskilling – within competency expectations – alongside new ways of working in teams can aid lean staffing practices and resilience in the face of vacancies. Multiskilling combined with flexibility can also help to open progression opportunities for employees.

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# 6. CONCLUSION

The pilots delivered at the three participating organisations were successful, broadly meeting the objectives that were set out by each employer at the start of the process. The IES evaluation has shown that, even in roles which may be seen as hard to flex, it is possible to create greater flexibility and achieve positive outcomes for individuals and organisations.

Our research suggests that flexible working approaches that support individuals to give their best at work lead to happier, healthier and more satisfied employees. Resulting from this are a range of tangible business benefits, such as increased loyalty and reduced sickness absence.

Piloting new approaches is thus imperative to test a range of flexible options, and their impact, while building engagement with employees at all levels. When supported by senior staff and co-developed at a local level this has proved to be a successful approach.

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Sir Robert McAlpine and Wickes have demonstrated that listening to employees and taking the initiative to increase flexible working opportunities – despite the operational challenges of doing so – delivers rewards. They are vanguards of flexible working in frontline and site-based roles in critical sectors, providing much needed learnings for other organisations to benefit from. We hope their experiences will catalyse the wider change that is necessary to create parity of opportunity for flexible working, and redress some of the inequalities in job and health outcomes experienced by frontline workers. Flexible working is not just an option for knowledge workers who can work from home and at times that suit them, it is a way of working that should be and can be available to all.

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# APPENDIX

## EQUITABLE FLEXIBLE WORKING PRINCIPLES FOR EMPLOYERS

### Purpose of principles

To provide a framework for the development of an equitable and more consistent, organisation-wide approach to flexible working.

| FOCUS AREAS | PRINCIPLE |
|---|---|
| **Leadership** | We will foster an inclusive culture and lead by example; held to account through measurable action to ensure that flexible working arrangements are widely available, regardless of level or function. |
| **Policy & practice** | We will develop an accessible flexible working policy that responds to the needs of all stakeholders (employee groups, contingent workers, clients and service users), and is aligned with other key policy areas (health and wellbeing, ED&I, family), and will monitor its implementation. |
| **Manager capability** | We will train managers in flexible job design and managing flexible working arrangements so they can effectively support individuals and their teams. |
| **Recruitment** | Jobs will be designed to incorporate a level of flexibility wherever possible and, when advertised, will specify the available arrangement(s). Recruiters will initiate conversations on working requirements with applicants at all stages and pursue these with new hires to support work-life integration. |
| **Progression** | Flexible working arrangements will never prove a barrier to progression and performance evaluations will recognise outputs rather than hours worked. |
| **Advocacy** | We will advocate for flexible working in our sector and utilise available levers to drive change, such as procurement processes, and share good practice with other employers. |
| **Communications** | We will develop clear and consistent messaging on flexible working arrangements, so all feel confident and capable to open conversations on the subject, in their teams and with their managers. |

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## REFERENCES

**1.** 2.8 million people aged 16 to 64 are not working due to ill health. See The Health Foundation. (2024) Health Foundation responds to ONS update on economic inactivity due to long-term sickness.

**2.** ONS. (2022) Is hybrid working here to stay?

**3.** This is in keeping with the latest evidence showing that the most effective way to improve worker wellbeing is through workplace change rather than individual interventions. For example, see William J. Fleming. (2024) Employee well-being outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the United Kingdom. Industrial Relations Journal. Volume 55: Issue 3, pp 162-182.

**4.** Timewise. (2023) Flexible Jobs Index; TUC. (2021) The future of flexible work; Working Families. (2023) Working Families Index: Spotlight on lower-income families.

**5.** See Appendix 1 to view principles developed as part of the programme.

**6.** See Appendix 1 to view the Principles co-created with the steering group as part of this programme of work.

**7** Sir Robert McAlpine differentiates between agile and flexible working. With agile being associated with informal and adhoc arrangements and flexible working being associated with contractual arrangements, such as part-time.

**8.** 41 from Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, 144 from Sir Robert McAlpine and 134 from Wickes.

**9.** 42 from Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, 110 from Sir Robert McAlpine and 154 from Wickes.

**10.** 15 from Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, 13 from Sir Robert McAlpine and 66 from Wickes.

**11.** IES. (2022) Reaching a positive financial return on investment in flexible working.

**12.** See Appendix 1 to view the Principles co-created with the steering group as part of this programme of work.