

New Frontiers for Smarter Working – 2023 and Beyond

March 2023



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1.0

Overview/Introduction

It is hard to believe that three years have passed since the CV19 pandemic struck and many thousands of office-based workers across the world moved to working from home overnight, changing the way we work forever.

Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) New Frontiers for Smarter Working, Work and Workplace post COVID19 Report, issued in 2021 to coincide with the first anniversary of lockdown, set out a roadmap towards the future for work and workplace. Since then, many other issues have emerged to add to the complexity of the picture including global unrest, the rise in the cost of living plus the fuel crisis to name but a few.

As we move through this situation, things are still changing and the move from ‘enforced’ home working to hybrid has created another massive shift as workers get used to splitting their time between remote and office-based working. Organisations are still trying to understand how their new ‘future focussed’ model will look. For most of us, this phase is still very much about testing and trialling ideas to see what works.

It’s been quite a journey and as we said in 2021, we can’t go back now – the genie is well and truly out of the bottle. Instead, we need to focus on the future and move forwards. We need to move towards a hybrid, co-created future where customer, individual and organisational needs are all met in the best way possible. We need to see this as an opportunity and work together to create a truly exciting time for work and workplace by focussing on;

- The best places for people to work
- The opportunities of hybrid working and how it supports people and organisations
- The approaches that will help organisations to understand their new future

This addendum to the 2021 report is largely focussed on approaches for understanding how the office-based workplace supports the hybrid model for work. It very much builds on the thinking outlined in the original report.



As public bodies look to reduce costs and deliver on their net zero carbon targets, the opportunities offered by hybrid working are immense. A focus on less owned space and more shared / better quality work space would allow us to improve the effectiveness of our collective office estate.

It must be remembered however that the hybrid work model is a complex system for the future. It involves creating space for connection via a more effective work model that supports our human needs, the work we do, our culture and our wellbeing. It focusses on the delivery of a strategy for work which is people centred, task based and predicated on the creation of a robust and future proofed model for work and workplace.

As organisations start to move on from the re-occupy phase and further develop their future focussed models for work, the Home, Hub, HQ and Shared Workspace Models will start to naturally evolve. This will support twenty-minute neighbourhoods, work local initiatives, shared workspace initiatives and ensure that buildings are used to their optimal performance.

Our new hybrid work future is an exciting opportunity to build on all we have learned about work during the pandemic. It is an opportunity to do things very differently going forward but we need to understand it is going to take us time to get there.

2.0

The 2022/23 Office

2.1 Where are we now?

According to the Office for National Statistics, more than eight out of ten workers who had worked from home while the CV19 restrictions were in place said they were planning to embrace hybrid working going forward. Between February and May 2022, the proportion of hybrid workers increased from 13% to 24% while those exclusively working from home dropped to 14% in the same period. The proportion of those people intending to go back to their place of work full time dropped to 8% in February 2022. People were starting to understand what worked best for them and the role they delivered.

'25.7% of workers in the UK were in 'professional' jobs in 2021, making it the type of occupation with the highest percentage of workers'

Source: Gov.uk

Our office-based workplaces used to be essential for task delivery for the majority of roles but the last three years have definitely changed that.

It wasn't until early 2022 that the legal position changed and people in Scotland started to return to their non-essential offices again. A mix of organisational approaches emerged to support the re-occupy phase including;

- Continuing to maintain physical distancing to avoid potential risk of infection
- Opening only part of the workspace (e.g. priority buildings or temporarily closing off floors) to improve efficiency and support user experience
- Opening offices fully as soon as it was permitted and encouraging staff to decide how they were comfortable working

As things have moved on, some organisations have looked to 'mandate' presence for a set number of days per week. A softer approach has been adopted by others, focussing on the work that people do and encouraging people to find the place to work that suits both them and their role. Many organisations have waited to see how rising energy costs would impact remote working before making any decisions.

Hybrid working in some form or another has been the basis of work during the re-occupy phase as organisations navigate their way through the ever evolving situation.

Hybrid work is a flexible work model that supports a blend of in-office, remote, and on-the-go workers.

It offers employees the autonomy to choose to work wherever and however they are most productive.

Webex definition

The one thing that is agreed is that we will likely need less office-based workspace within the public sector but how much less is still up for debate.

It's clear, we all need to work together to understand our new 'hybrid' future and how it will evolve for our organisation. It is not going to be a one size fits all solution and we need to keep asking organisations and individuals how they want to work. We need to keep working with others to understand how thinking is evolving and keep trialling, testing and sharing different ideas.

2.2 What has changed since 2021?

The workplace experience that we see emerging is very different. As well as the pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis, higher energy costs influencing how we heat our homes, changes to public transport options and many other impacts are taking our attention (Figure A)

For individuals there are many factors to consider including where they are currently positioned with their career, their relationship with the organisation and their own 'work life' balance. From a financial perspective, for some it will be a cheaper option for them to go into the office and for others, transport costs will make it the opposite.

Some people might feel they are 'missing out' on the whole workplace experience piece while others might be enjoying the flexibility of hybrid, remote or home working. Some may be looking to support their own wellbeing while others may be feeling isolated and lonely. Such a diverse mix of experiences are in play at the moment which make generalisations around the situation difficult.

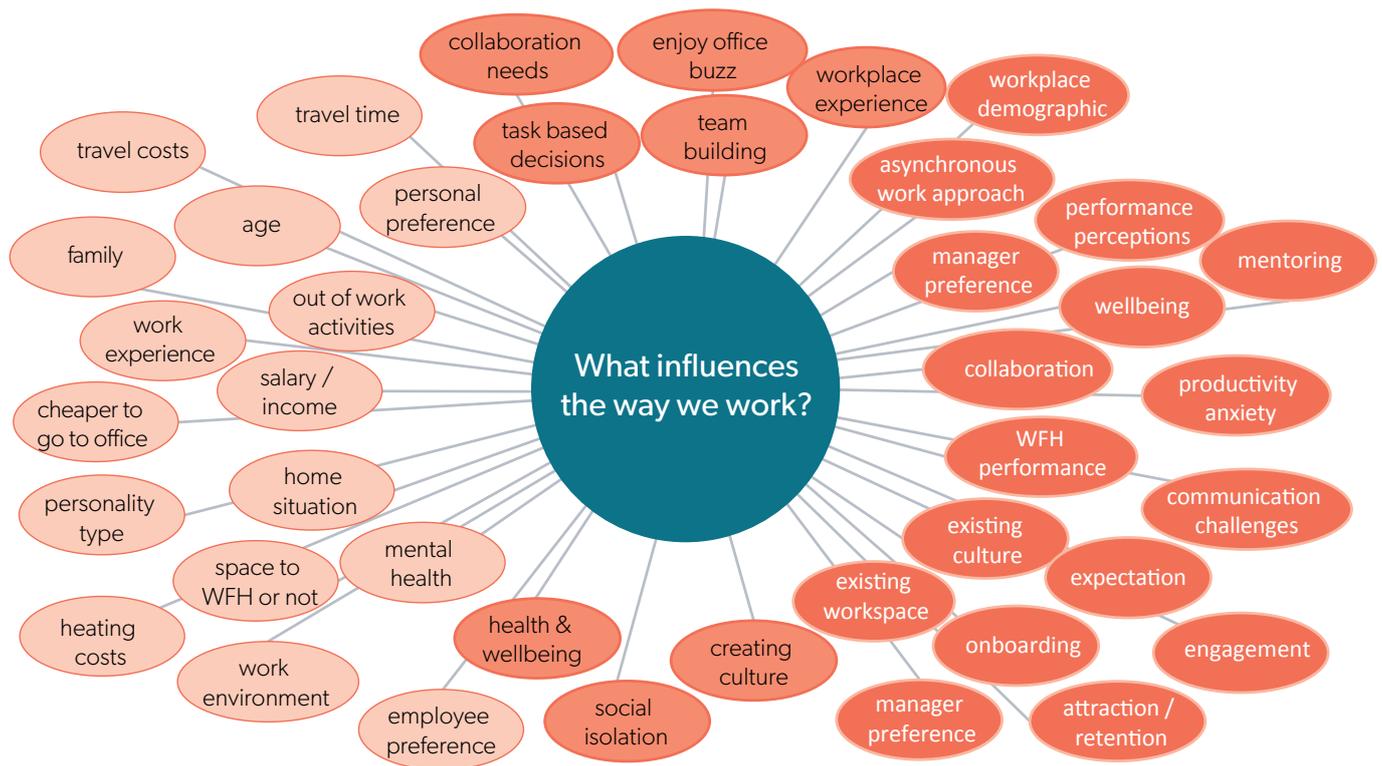


Figure A

Average attendance in offices is just 29%, with peaks in the middle of the week with just over a third of employees in attendance.

AWA Hybrid Index Report, Dec 2022

If we look at the situation from the organisational perspective, occupancy of offices is generally lower than prior to the pandemic creating that all important opportunity to do things differently.

There are concerns though. Anxieties that new starts and younger workers may not be getting the mentoring they need plus fears around negative impacts on organisational culture are influencing decisions. Preferred approaches might be coloured by the organisation’s relationship with physical space e.g. they have finances tied up in owned / leased properties or they have a culture that has a preference for onsite presence.

Whatever the situation, it is important to gather data and fully understand the issue:

- If your people are keen to work remotely, what is the reason for it? Is it related to their workplace experience, the work settings / physical environment, your culture, transport issues, etc? Is it more of a wellbeing issue and ‘home’ makes life easier? What would make the office work for your people?

- If your leadership are keen for people to be on site, what is the reason for it? Is predicated on confirmation bias, personal preferences, etc. Is it cultural, task based or performance based? Is it a real or perceived issue? What would make hybrid work for them?

Office utilisation studies are showing that office occupancy is lower than prior to the pandemic with even lower usage on Fridays. There is some evidence to suggest that presence on Mondays has picked up since the turn of the year but it will take time to see if that pattern continues beyond the winter months. It’s a complex picture that will only unravel with patterns settling through time.

In summary, where are we now:

- Hybrid working is in the process of embedding in most organisations with various levels of choice available
- Office utilisation on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays is higher than the other days
- The purpose of workspace is now something very different than it was prior to the pandemic
- Utilisation of office-based workspace remains lower than prior to the pandemic so organisations expect to change their workplaces
- Decisions around the way people work are being explored by many

3.0

Capturing Impact

SFT have been commissioning studies to understand how the situation is evolving. In 2020, we carried out some baseline analysis and revisited this in both 2021 and 2022.

The 2022 study involved a sample of eleven public sector organisations to understand their current position with regard to workspace. The methodology to date has been to ask organisations to share the information they have been gathering to inform their approach. The sample of respondents for each section will therefore differ depending on the information available.

- Five of the eleven public sector organisations provided evidence on hybrid working, with 44% of survey respondents still working from home most of the time and 30% hybrid working.
- Asked about their experience of hybrid work, employees tended to report a better work-life balance. However, compared to working fully remotely, they found hybrid work provides less flexibility; costs more time and money (this may vary depending on the relative costs of heating vs commuting) and; at times, feels unnecessary. From an organisational perspective, changes in working practices have provided an opportunity for a reassessment of space needs.
- Wellbeing provides a useful catch-all measure for how public sector workers feel about hybrid work. They are broadly satisfied, with 39% of respondents reporting a higher level of wellbeing, compared to 24% who saw a deterioration in their wellbeing.

The findings generally focused around the following points:

- Maintaining a positive hybrid work experience requires continuous thinking about how to adapt the workplace for the future, to maximise the benefits from home-working and enable collaborative working.

- The surveys show that workspaces need to account for a range of features, allowing both for cognitive work and more collaborative activities. Overall, individual-based tasks are more likely to require a quiet working environment, which makes them suitable for most people to be performed at home. Activities involving more extensive collaboration and the development of professional relationships require a place where people come together.
- Attitudes differ across demographics. For instance, young people early in their career find the office space more useful to build professional relationships and receive training.
- When asked about requirements to improve their current set ups, workers identified the need for equipment, better office spaces and improved working practices. This included the provision of spaces where hybrid meetings could take place; quiet areas; and guidance and training.
- While not directly comparable with the 2021 study, this analysis found sustained evidence for an improvement in wellbeing. Requirements have now shifted from bringing about improvements to the home office towards delivering more effective office spaces. The adjustment to hybrid has brought challenges for those with a preference for fully remote work.

3.1 Working Arrangements in the UK and Scotland

Hybrid working has been on the rise across the UK and by April 2022, 24% of workers were working in this way. The latest Scottish Business Insights and Conditions Survey found that 66% of businesses adopting homeworking reported improved staff wellbeing as the main driver.

Changes in working patterns have wider ramifications across the economy. For instance, choices about work patterns can have an impact on the high street and on floorspace needs for offices. This needs to be fully explored as part of any initiative.



Figure B Employee responses to hybrid working

3.2 Prevalence of Hybrid Working

A total of 1,014 responses were analysed for this question.

The data showed that 44% work from home the majority of the time, 30% predominantly work in hybrid ways and 26% work from the office most of the time.

In one of the organisations, 55% of respondents reported working 1–3 days in the office.

Five out of eleven organisations evidenced their implementation of new hybrid work policies. One of them noted that this had been their intention prior to the pandemic, but plans have been accelerated as a result of it.

Organisations also noted the differences in work location are largely dependent on the requirements of the specific role and that many offices are underoccupied.

Respondents also noted their choice of whether to go into the office or work at home depends on the nature of the task, with meetings and in-person training being preferred in the office.

3.3 Impacts of Hybrid Working

563 respondents reported an increase in work/life balance from hybrid working and the flexibility it provides with some comments included (Figure B & C). Still, there remain challenges:

- planning home/family life for a couple of days a week
- commuting costs and time (though the cost-of-living crisis may affect this, depending on the relative costs of heating and commuting)
- fear of catching Covid-19 at work or on the commute (this again may change over time)
- noise levels in the office and the impact on productivity
- lack of need, as they have a suitable workspace at home
- difficulty managing people across different locations

One organisation asked its employees to compare hybrid work to working from home, it found for 59% of respondents, hybrid working was more difficult than homeworking; and 61% of respondents found it more expensive.



Figure C Employee Responses to hybrid working

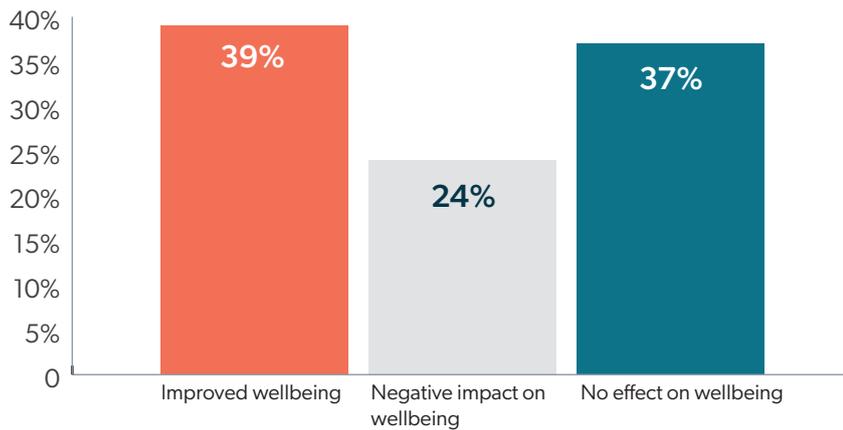


Figure D Impact of Hybrid Working on Wellbeing

3.4 Hybrid Working and Wellbeing

Wellbeing acts as a catch-all for all the dimensions that motivate people’s work-style choice. Hybrid working improved the wellbeing of 39% of respondents (Figure D).

For some, the freedom of having choice around where they worked improved their mental health to a better place than pre-pandemic and during lockdowns. Post lockdown, employees enjoyed being able to meet with colleagues and work with them from the office.

Others commented that while working from home was not a negative experience, the ability to be able to join colleagues in the office for a few days per week is enjoyable and enhances the work/life balance.

Others struggled with the noise levels of the office after working from home for so long.

3.5 The Hybrid Workplace

Hybrid work involves a shift towards the idea of work as “what you do, not where you do it”, and an organisational culture focusing on outputs, rather than physical presence. As shown, this move has had a positive impact on employees’ wellbeing and led to a series of other benefits. There remain organisational challenges, including:

- management of teams with different working preferences
- maintaining a core organisational culture in this flexible environment
- making best use of different spaces
- accommodating differences across demographics (e.g. time in the office was shown as being more beneficial to young people).

The surveys suggest a preference for home-working when tasks requiring high levels of concentration are performed. Office activity provides social interactions and was mainly linked to collaborative tasks, such as team meetings.



3.6 Changes to Physical and Digital spaces

The following approaches to physical and digital spaces were identified:

- increase availability of collaborative and meeting spaces (division of office space into quiet and noisy areas):
- allow for spaces suitable for private/confidential conversations
- meeting rooms to allow for ‘hybrid’ meetings
- improve digital connection
- maintain clean and safe workplaces

Equipment (provision of appropriate tools)

- provision of headsets and display screen equipment.

Procedural (development of policies and practice)

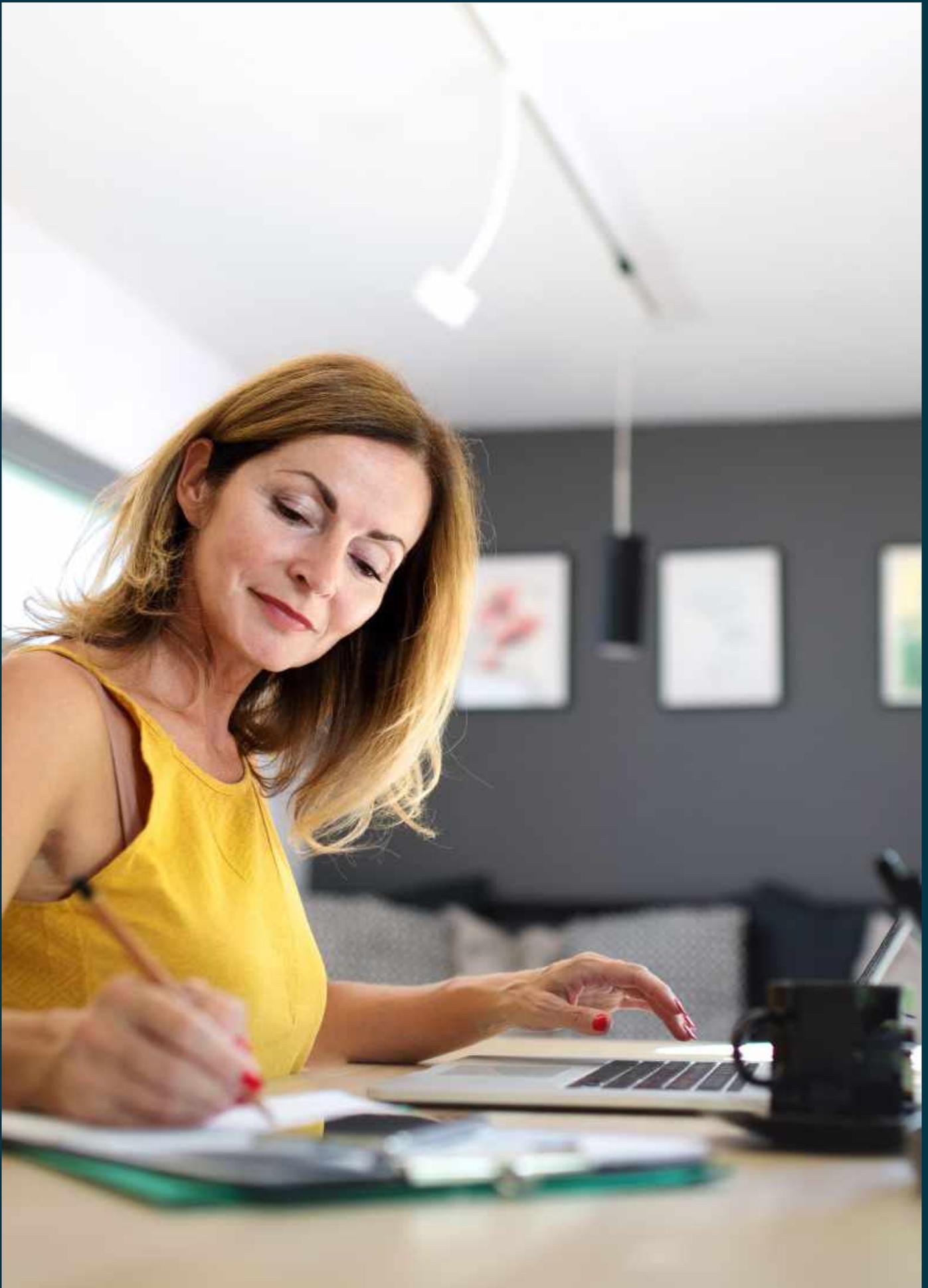
- etiquette for online meetings
- training around technology and hybrid meetings
- changes in opening/closing times
- guidance/direction on hybrid working

3.7 Changing Perceptions over Time

The key themes identified via the three studies to date are shown in Figure E.

Theme	2020 Study	2021 Study	2022 Study	Change
Working Patterns	65% of respondents would like a hybrid model after the lockdown	73% of respondents working mostly from home.	44% of respondents work from home most of the time; 30% work hybrid.	Changes to SG guidance on homeworking mean current working patterns reflect shifts in practice, rather than the reaction to an emergency.
Impact of Home/ Hybrid working	A mixed picture on productivity, improved for around half. Benefits to work-life balance. Challenges: appropriate workspace and equipment.	Benefits on productivity, work-life balance, finances and environment. Challenges: lack of space and office space better suited to certain activities.	Benefits: better work-life balance. Challenges: higher costs, distracting office, Covid risk.	Hybrid work is now compared to working from home, with the result that it performs worse on costs and flexibility. The social element of office work has importance for some, not everyone.
Wellbeing	Mixed impacts on health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to mental health.	Improved wellbeing.	Overall, positive impact on well being.	No change post pandemic (21-22): wellbeing remained an important reason for preferring more flexible working arrangements
Future Requirements	Equipment at home, IT support, training, and communication.	Lack of equipment for home working (e.g., chairs and desks; second screens and access to printers).	Improvements to collaborative spaces and guidance on hybrid work.	Increased focus on improvements of office space. Most of the requirements for home working have been met.

Figure E



4.0

Approach to Understanding Future Workplace

As always, it is useful to understand where an organisation sits on our maturity matrix ([link to full document](#)) which is summarised in Figure F.

It may be your organisation was largely office based prior to the pandemic. You may be hybrid working now and looking to deliver a more autonomous culture but asynchronous working may be a step too far. It is about understanding where the organisation is now and what will work for your organisation and your people.

What could ambition look like?

Baseline	Within our organisation, everything happens on site. All of our people are office based and work from home is only supported for our senior team
Evolving	Our work style is largely office based but we have some people who work remotely occasionally. Access to the office is mandated and controlled for the majority of our employees
Aspiring	We split our time between our main office and home working. We are requested to come into our office a few days per week and hybrid working is part of our culture
Innovating	We focus on outcome delivery rather than presence and hybrid working is core to our organisational culture. We choose how, where and when we work within the context of our role. We go into our office when we need to and have access to near home working options
Ambitious	Asynchronous working is the norm. We have the culture, technology and leadership style to allow us to choose how, where and when we work. As long as we deliver our outcomes within the context of our role, we can work from anywhere (UK or worldwide)

Figure F

There are four key phases to consider (see Figure G) which we will cover in a little more detail. The phases focus on ambition, need and workspace. The last phase, optimising the way you work, encourages you to keep checking in with your original vision as things adapt and change.

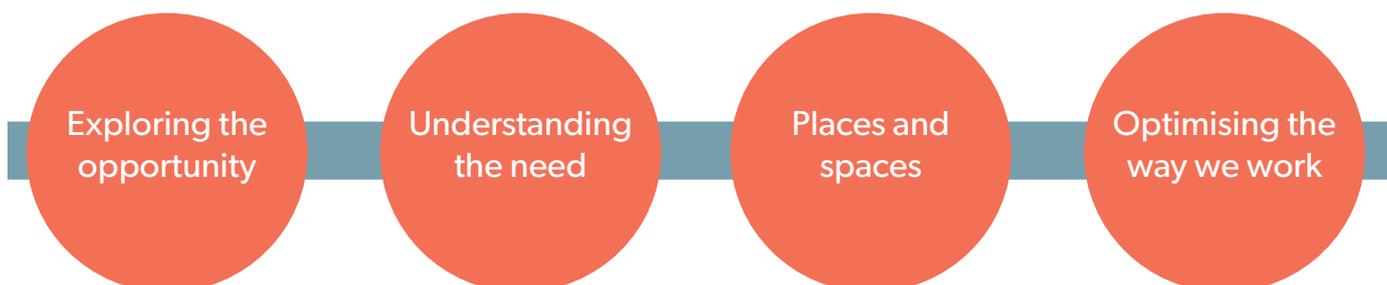


Figure G

4.1 Exploring the Opportunity

Leesman have undertaken research during the pandemic and their advice is to focus on the data. Understanding the roles people do and what home offers and what it doesn't is key. The Leesman Index offers access to data that can help inform organisational strategies. It is however important to understand your own people and what you as an organisation need to support the work that you do.

Delivering an exploration session which focusses on the organisation's ambitions and vision for the future is a useful first step.

There is much to learn from the speed at which organisations mobilised their work from home solutions. This may have already been considered but recognising what worked and what didn't during that particular phase is important. Consider:

- Was it a positive or negative experience?
- How were your customers or partners impacted?
- What range of wellbeing experiences did you capture?
- What innovations did you bring in to support your people and the work they do? How could they be adapted to support this next phase of hybrid working?
- How did your leaders cope and is training required to support this next phase of work?

Next, it is important to understand how hybrid working is currently supporting you. How ambitious do you plan to be going forward? Will your model focus only on home and main office or will more choice be built in such as work local, etc? This step focusses on:

- Separating re-occupy from future workspace phases
- Exploration of ambition levels
- Exploring choices and limits for your new model
- Understanding organisational preferences
- Creating an emerging vision for future workplace
- Development of high level guiding principles

Many organisations have been exploring this for some time and trying to understand what they need to do to make their workplaces work. Making a formalised (but flexible) 'decision' on the way forward brings clarity to the situation and allows organisations to hone their plans and adapt as the situation evolves.

It is important to have that clear but emerging vision for the future which focuses on the preferences of the organisation matched with the way people want to work. The development of guiding principles that clearly set out expectations is key. This would include clarity around the choices that are part of the model.

This is still a 'test and trial' phase so provide clear guidance at every step on the way forward and communicate to people that their 'new normal' might change as thinking evolves.

4.2 Understanding Need

The next phase is about understanding what you need to support the work you deliver. This includes the tasks people work on, your organisational culture and that all important 'connection' between people and across teams.

Re-analysis of work styles and how people are working is a great next step with 'Day in the Life' studies helping to support that thinking.

As the distributed work force starts to create their 'new normal', your workplace will become more about connection. You need to understand the needs of the various groups of workers that you have.

You need to understand the following:

- Purpose of your workspace – what type of connected workplace are you aiming for?
- Work style analysis and role profiling across office based, hybrid and field workers. How are you going to make sure everyone is included?
- How do people work and what does a day in their life look like?
- Preferences for connection e.g. customer, team, individual, etc.
- How do people across different work styles want to work together?



4.3 Places and Spaces

Organisations are now trying to dig deeper into their data to understand what their employees are telling them. For most, working from home will be a choice and some great guidance on work from home set-ups can be found at [Health and Safety Executive Guidance](#).

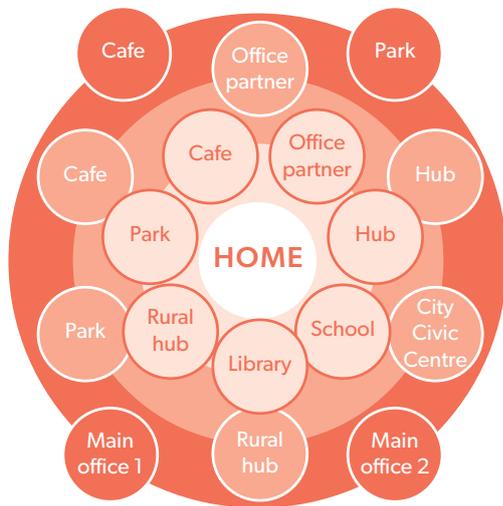


Figure H Distributed Work Model

As we move towards our future focussed model, it is worth clarifying which options are part of your hybrid working model. Are you focussing on home and office only or are you bringing in a wider array of choices (Figure H) to support your people?

Some organisations are choosing to mandate presence where others are looking to create a work environment that supports its users when they need it.

For those focussing on choice, the pattern of one to three days in the office with the remainder being delivered remotely seems to be the emerging norm.

Where organisations have more than one building, opportunities are emerging to support local working for some employees, to share workspace and/or support collaboration with likeminded partners. Being clear about your organisational needs first helps with shared workspace conversations.

This is still evolving for many but the building blocks include:

- Embracing home as one of the choices on offer for the roles that can support it
- Modelling of needs versus locations e.g. what, when and where?
- Exploring sharing opportunities e.g. which organisations could you share workspace with?
- Understanding collaborative v team v individual needs

- Development of spatial and workflow models
- Delivery of pathfinders that allow the physical and virtual models to be tested

4.4 Optimising the Way We Work

Focusing at team level, this is about really understanding what interventions would support ‘work’ being delivered in the best way possible. What can be adjusted to make things work even better?

- Where is remote working really supporting the activities delivered and where does access to workplace assist?
- Does it have to be access to the main office or would having access to something more local be useful?
- What technologies would assist?
- What changes to working practices would help things run more smoothly?
- Do people work different hours now? Are there asynchronous tools that could better support them to work across differing times and locations?
- Do managers and leaders need more training in how to support hybrid?

Clear communication of the guiding principles, organisational vision and ambitions to your people is key. This is supported by practical tools like team agreements around how, where and when you work to help individuals, teams and organisations to support each other in the best way possible.

As we have highlighted, it is about continuing to test and adapt the model while aiming to understand how we can move towards that optimal way of working in the best way possible (Figure I).

Measuring employee experience, listening to people and making changes based on their feedback will support this part of the process.

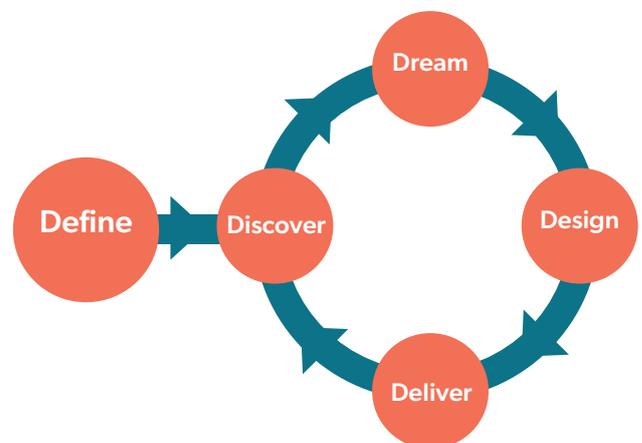


Figure I The 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Enquiry



5.0

Future Thinking for Workspace

5.1 Purpose of Physical Workspace

Offices need to provide a suitable work environment for those employees whose role is largely office based while still supporting hybrid ways working. It needs to be a place of:

- **Connection** for field, hybrid, remote and office-based colleagues
- **User Experience** where everyone can understand the culture of the organisation
- **Flexibility** through the work settings and protocols that support it
- **Belonging** for your people and especially new and younger members of staff
- **Autonomy** through the technologies and spaces that are provided

The office has a much more complex purpose now and being clear about how you plan to use it so that can be communicated to your people is essential.

5.2 Behaviours and Culture

Hybrid working requires teams to work together and communicate across different locations and times.

There are so many elements at play (Figure J) so it is important to have that clarity around the type of work culture you are looking to create.

The guiding principles will set out how the organisation would like their people to work, but what about the practicalities?

At team level, the creation of a working framework on how teams wish to work together is essential. This can be agreed verbally or via a formal agreement. A process for developing a team agreement can be accessed [here](#).

Some people may be working compressed hours, different start and finish times or delivering their role part-time. A technology enabled platform to support asynchronous working (where appropriate) is useful. This allows individuals to manage their own work patterns but easily catch up on progress when they log on.



Figure J

Knowing when people are planning to visit the workplace is also important. Some sort of system that indicates presence is useful. Booking systems are good but they tend to tie individuals to particular workstations so it is important to think through what would work best for your organisation. A passport type approach that both manages the occupancy and shows you who is on site may be more useful for some.

In the hybrid world, maintaining culture will require a little more assistance. Planning in ‘all staff’ interventions throughout the year really supports organisational culture. One solution is to develop a programme of pre-arranged all staff days throughout the year where everyone comes together.

Decision trees for various types of interactions helps teams and individuals to work out the best delivery model for particular interactions. A draft decision tree for meeting types can be seen via Figure K but this can be adapted to suit your own organisation. This particular tool has two main purposes.

Firstly, it encourages those attending meetings to think about the best approach for them. Is it something that will work well virtually or would it help to be there in person? If you are in the office, what type of work setting would best support that interaction?

- If you are leading the session, you might look for a more private space where you aren’t disturbing anyone. If you are in the office, you might want to move to a more suitable space after the session.
- If you are engaging in the session, it might be best to find a more secluded space. An open booth or a seating area with a headset would work for this activity.
- If you are mainly just listening in, you could connect anywhere with a headset. You will only be engaging with the session occasionally so it’s about finding somewhere that suits you.

Draft Decision Tree for Meeting Types (Extract)

Type	Description	All Virtual	Hybrid	All Face to face
All Staff Session	Session focussed around connecting at organisation level	Effective use of time and equity of experience. Not ideal for fostering connection	If dialling in virtually, consider the quality of the experience. Not ideal for fostering connection	Some things just work better in person. Try and meet face to face if you can
Interactive Workshop Sharing of online content and visual collaboration	Session focussed around discussion on a presentation and idea exploration via whiteboarding of ideas	Effective use of time and equity of experience. Make sure you have access to online collaboration tools	Supports choice. It may make sense that all meeting attendees link in virtually to ensure equity of experience	If travel is involved, consider if this is the best use of your time
Group Session Connecting in with others on a particular theme	Exploration session around a theme	Can be delivered via a fully virtual platform but some things just work better in person	Difficult to ensure equity of experience but not impossible.	Allows people to connect and bond as a group. If travel is involved, consider if a virtual session would work
One to One Connecting with one other person	Performance discussion or meeting with someone you know	Can be delivered virtually but some things just work better in person	N/A	Allows people to connect. If travel is involved, consider if a virtual session would work

Figure K



The second purpose of this type of tool is to make organisers think about the session itself. If you are planning a format which you would like to deliver in person, you have to make it an experience and include elements that are harder to support online.

You need to include analogue experiences into the session supported by more complex breakout discussions, topic exploration, etc. You need to include social elements such as bringing cakes, after work catch-ups, in person ‘post session’ coffee chats, etc.

You need to make the time spent worthwhile and it’s a useful check in to think of three things that have made your visit to the office worthwhile each time you visit.

Equity

Applying your smarter working principles across all role types helps prevent a two-tier structure emerging. While many roles will be able to embrace working from home, there are also many that can’t but there is always something that can be built in to support equity.

A short survey at one of our knowledge share events (Figure L) identified that the majority of those who responded were providing ‘all’ staff with kit to allow them to work flexibly within the confines of their role.

Whether it’s time or location, some flexibility can be defined for most roles and it’s just a case of identifying the opportunities and agreeing these with the individuals themselves. As we said in our first report, ask individuals what would help them deliver their role better and most people will have ideas they are happy to share.

How are you approaching equity in your organisation?



Figure L

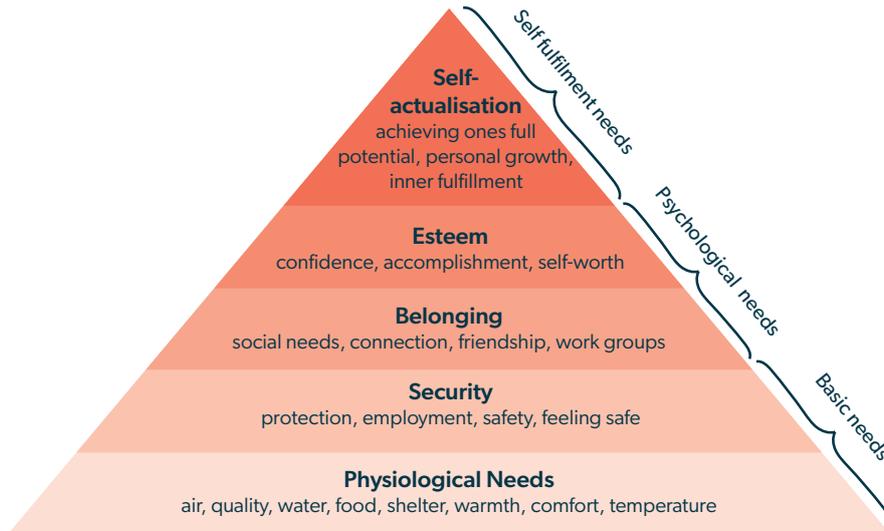


Figure M Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

5.3 The Hybrid Office

What do we need? - Our Human needs

So, what do we want from our office-based workplaces. They need to support our human needs and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs gives us a useful framework to focus on (Figure M).

We need to ensure that the air quality, lighting, acoustics, temperature and ‘look and feel’ of the environment are as supportive as possible.

It needs to communicate the culture.

People need to ‘feel’ like they ‘belong’ to help them find their place within the organisation.

It needs to communicate autonomy, flexibility and choice through the workspaces and the principles that support it.

The workplace, the culture and the hybrid way of working all need to work together to create a great user experience for your people. In summary, the office needs to feel good!

What do we need? – Our Space

For the ‘magnet’ approach, organisations are focussing on creating that very model outlined above. A user experience that supports our human needs and encourages flexibility and choice. Those mandating presence are communicating the portion of the working week the organisation expects their employees to be in the office. That doesn’t mean that they won’t create a great user experience but the focus will be slightly different.

A small sample of organisational representatives were asked about their expected approach at a recent event (Figure N). Ten of the seventeen organisations who responded (59%) indicated their organisation were leaving access to the workspace down to personal choice.

How are you approaching access to office based workspace in your organisation?

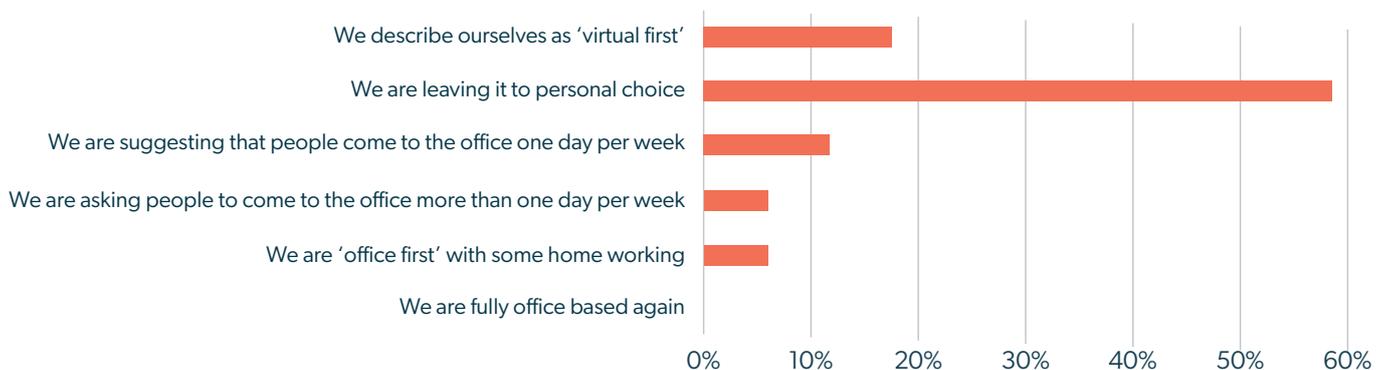


Figure N

Whether a mandate or magnet approach is being used, we still need to understand the demand for access to the office. Many organisations are reporting fairly low occupancy of their workspaces as people continue to deliver their tasks effectively from home.

JLL reported a peak occupancy of 49% in November 2022 in their Operational Update Occupancy levels across the portfolio July 2020 – December 2022 report and many public sector organisations in Scotland are suggesting reduced occupancy levels within their offices.

Articles and reports are emerging all the time around potential occupancy models for offices and the positives and negatives of non-office based working. These include these articles from **Owl Labs** and **Future Forum**. They reflect the complex situation and how individual preferences may be driving some of the decisions in the remote, home and office debate. Indeed, the Future Forum Pulse Study of October 2022 suggested that declining productivity was the topmost concern when it comes to flexible working. The data they presented shows that workers who have full flexibility report 29% higher productivity than those who have no ability to shift their schedule. They also report 53% greater ability to focus.

For some, it is easier to see things go back to how they were done prior to the pandemic but focussing our attention on going forward seems like a more sensible approach. We also know the pressure that public sector organisations are under to reduce costs and to deliver on their net zero carbon objectives. If hybrid working can be one of the tools to facilitate that, while still supporting the work we do and employee wellbeing, that can only be a benefit.

If it does emerge that we need less space to support office-based working, it gives us a great opportunity to support the creation of a positive workplace experience which is both efficient and effective and supports our journey to net zero carbon.

What do we need? – A Sample Methodology

This is a sample methodology designed for those organisations looking to deliver on the more ambitious levels outlined in the SFT New Frontiers for Smarter Working maturity matrix (see Section 4.0).

It focusses on the premise that if organisations embrace hybrid ways of working and deliver on its full potential, less people will be on site at any one time. Subsequently, less office space will be required. People will still be supported by their physical workspace but will have access to better quality workspace that fully underpins the way they work. They will have access to an improved mix of work settings to help deliver on that all important positive user experience and sense of belonging. Ideally, a hybrid working model should have ‘choice’ at its heart so the preferred model should focus on user preferences rather than any enforced home or office working policy.

For hybrid and more ambitious workplaces, testing is underway with an approach that focusses on the number of people expected to be on site at any one time. This combines with understanding how your people want to work, the needs of their role and the maturity level as outlined in Section 4.0.

The area per person selected needs to support the interactive and more social types of connected workspace that people are looking for when they are in the office.

At this point, we are suggesting a move from 8sqm to 10sqm Net Internal Area (NIA) per person based on that ‘at any one time’ occupancy to align closer to other thinking that is emerging. This figure is consistent with the recent BCO Guide to Specification Key Design Criteria Update 2023.

This change to NIA doesn’t mean that we need more office space and it could be quite the opposite (see figure O).

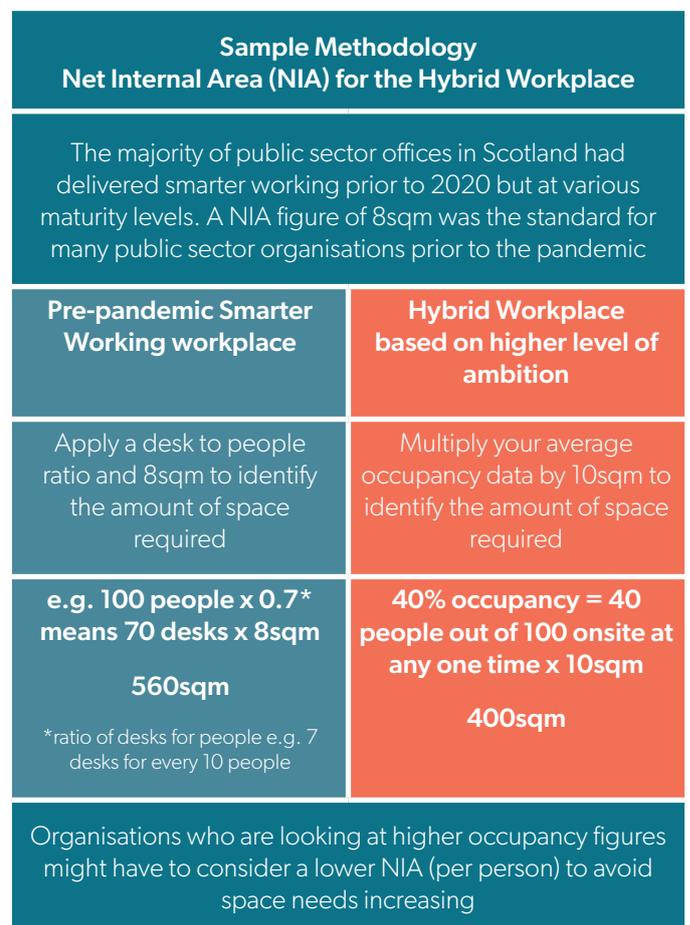


Figure O Sample Methodology

If organisations look to benefit from hybrid working and the occupancy levels they are experiencing and apply that to their workspace needs, they should be able to maintain or reduce the amount of workspace required. A 40% occupancy figure seems to be a reasonable figure to suggest as a starting point but organisations can explore their own occupancy data and adjust as required.

The amount of space an organisation saves or doesn't save depends on how they previously worked. If you had already delivered smarter working (and were using less space) prior to the pandemic, any savings on workplace space allocation will obviously be relative to that.

What should it look like?

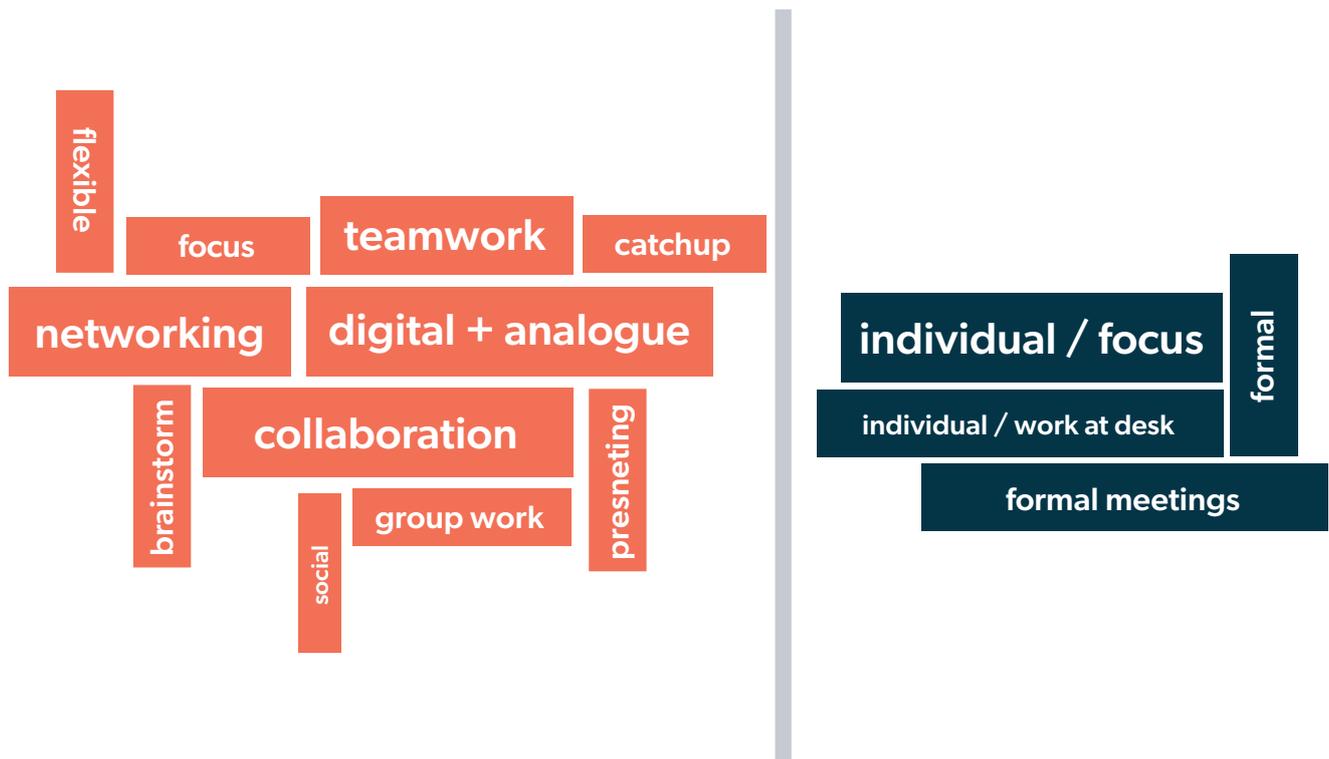


Figure P

The Future Work and Workspace and Case Studies sections of our 2021 New Frontiers for Smarter Working, Work and Workplace post COVID19 Report outline the type of workspaces we should be aiming for.

For this report, our plan is to just build on that thinking (Figure P) and to try and identify a baseline on 'how much' of everything we should include.

Leesman have also engaged in some fantastic research throughout the pandemic on the home v office debate.

They have looked at why 'home' has worked so well for the average worker and are using data to understand how we could improve the office experience.

If 'connection' is the focus for workplace, what does that mean for your organisation? How do you want your people to connect and what sort of settings will support that.

Does it include:

- Team tables that allow groups of people to work together and mentor each other for periods of time
- Booths that support hybrid calls and allow people to meet in small groups
- Workstations where people work in teams or individually
- Pods that allow individual working in between meetings
- Group working supported by a range of ancillary options enabled with good technology solutions

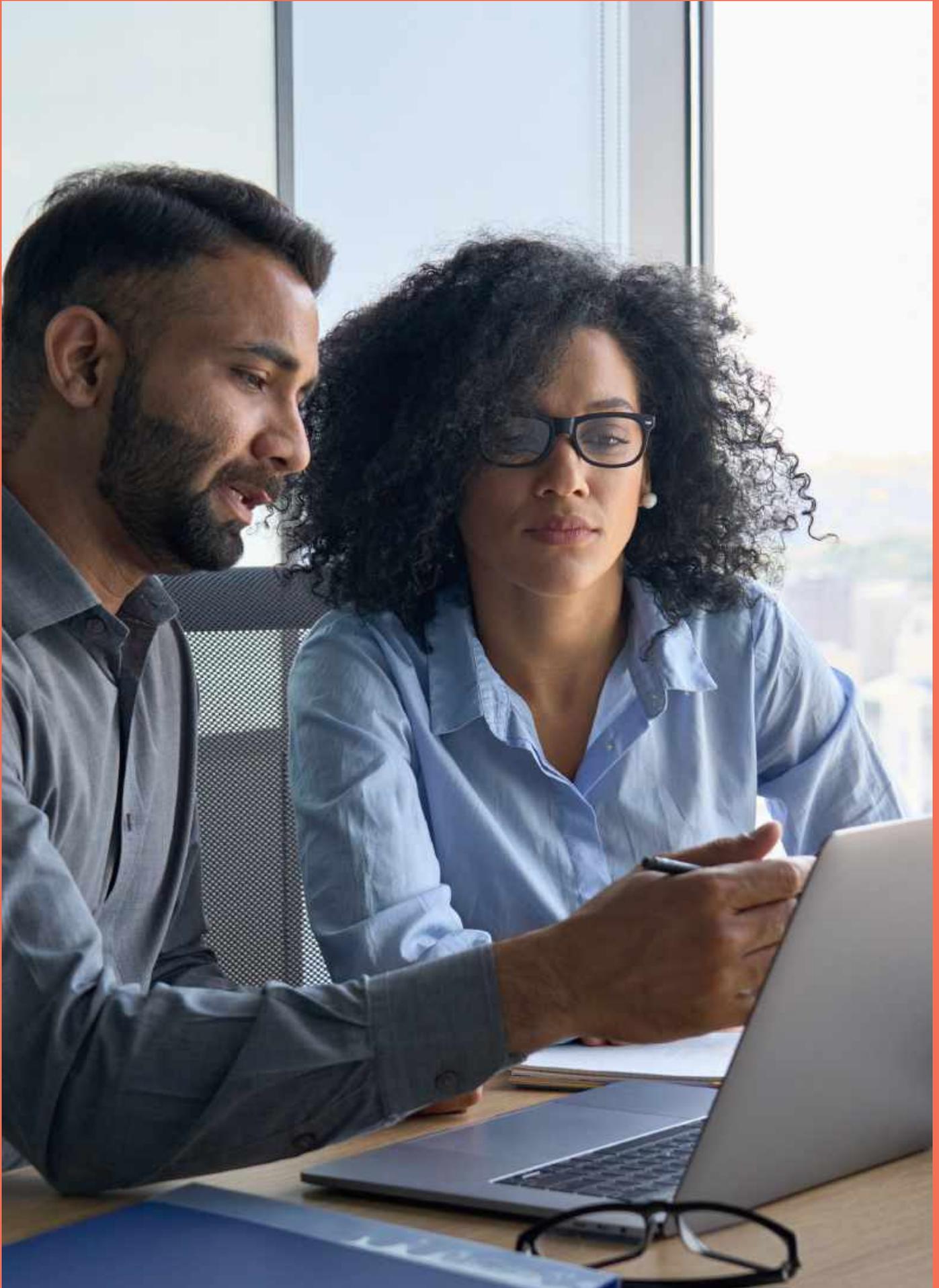
The likelihood is there will be a wider range of work settings to support the various types of work that take place e.g. individual working, collaboration, connection and hybrid.

The introduction of spaces for hybrid meetings or calls are key. These can be high backed meeting booths, desk-based work booths, meeting pods or rooms. Whatever works for you. Collaboration spaces that encourage the more social elements of work are also important so combining coffee and tea points within these areas will help support that.

For the workspaces and settings, the focus needs to be on activity-based working (Figure Q) and having the right work setting to support the various tasks that people undertake. Percentage allocations of each are suggested but these would be adapted to suit particular organisations.

Types of Work v Sample Space Allocation			
Collaborative and Connected	Individual and Focussed	Mentoring and Learning	Secure and Private
Aim for 60%	Aim for 28%	Aim for 10%	Aim for 2%
Open and closed meeting and collaborative spaces. Any space that fosters connection	Spaces that allow people to engage in work that requires concentration	Work settings that support team connection, learning journeys and mentoring	Spaces that support confidential tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting tables that are sized to fit the types of meetings that take place Hybrid meeting booths Hybrid meeting pods Ancillary settings Team tables to support team working Social spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desks of varying sizes Small work booths Quiet rooms Quiet workspaces Reading chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team tables to support learning from colleagues Formal training spaces Library spaces Social spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone booths Pods Quiet rooms Secure work settings that support legislative needs <p>The percentage of this may increase slightly in some organisations but it should always be explored to ensure it is required e.g. legislative v perceived</p>

Figure Q



6.0

Technologies

The creation of a positive employee experience is essential. Those working within the office need to be able to connect with those working remotely so a range of options are required to support this. If people are engaging in virtual calls within the office, the provision of headsets will widen the space options that can support them e.g. people won't have to book a room for a call, thereby embracing the benefits of being in the office.

The technologies selected need to:

- Provide an equitable and inclusive experience for everyone, wherever you are working
- Support connection across the organisation
- Be consistent and easy to use
- Support asynchronous ways of working
- Be predicated on protocols and training to support user experience
- Provide digital solutions that support working from any location

Tools to understand occupancy are useful and the SFT case study provides some ideas on how to approach that.

The introduction of sensors help measure the 'health' of the workplace and support understanding of the 'flow' through the work settings themselves.

Booking mechanisms or systems that allow people to make others aware they will be on site help individuals to plan their work week and again, support the development of occupancy data.



7.0

Home, Hub, HQ and Sharing with Others

The original purpose of Home, Hub, HQ thinking was to give employees choice around more local ways of working to support work life balance and equity. ‘Home’ works well as a remote workspace for many but some struggle with being able to access the right type of space at home.

Home, Hub, HQ thinking was therefore aimed at supporting both access to suitable remote working options and work local/ twenty-minute neighbourhood thinking.

Some organisations have opened up their estate to allow people to work in the place that best suits them while others have approached their public sector partners to understand what options are available in other areas. Once you understand what you need to support ‘work local’ opportunities for your people, you can start to think about the options that best support your organisation. Some useful information entitled ‘Work Local Hubs – Research’ is available via [Publications - Scottish Futures Trust](#).

As we move through the process, this concept is evolving into incorporating ‘Shared Workspace’ thinking where partners work together to make better use of public buildings by sharing a particular office or workspace.

Shared workspace opportunities generally fall into five categories (Figure R) and go beyond just offices. It is important that organisations focus on synergies and likeminded partners to maximise the benefits of the sharing opportunity. It is about much more than just sharing workspace. More information on how to support Shared Workspace models can be found on our website: ‘How to Develop and Operate Shared Workspace’ and ‘the Benefits of Shared Workspace’ which can be accessed via [Publications - Scottish Futures Trust](#).

As organisations start to understand their occupancy models and associated space needs, shared workspace models will start to emerge. We just need collectively to be ready to support them.



Figure R Shared Workspace Approaches

8.0

Case Studies

The following case studies outline the various different types of approach that organisations are exploring. These can be accessed by clicking on the links.

- **Forest and Land Scotland** – Scotland’s Largest Workplace
- **West Dunbartonshire Council** – Leading the way with Remote Working
- **Redress Scotland** – Scotland’s Fully Digital Public Body
- **Scottish Futures Trust** – Circular Economy in Action



9.0

Conclusion

We have been through so much change and we have this amazing opportunity in front of us to do things differently. Whether that is the way we work or the way we use our offices, the opportunities are there.

As organisations understand their space needs, we will see the opportunities to share offices increasing. The options for sharing are many and offer amazing benefits for hybrid and local working that support our people, our organisations and the customers we support.

It couldn't be a more exciting time for office-based work and workplace and let's hope by the end of 2023 we can see a clearer way forward.

References and Useful Links

- ONS link [Is hybrid working here to stay? - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)
- Webex definition [What is hybrid work and what are hybrid work models? \(webex.com\)](https://webex.com)
- AWA Hybrid Index Report, Dec 2022 [NEW: AWA Hybrid Working Index 2 - December 2022 - AWA \(advanced-workplace.com\)](https://advanced-workplace.com)
- [Leesman-Your_Workplace_of_the_Future-SP.pdf \(leesmanindex.com\)](https://leesmanindex.com)
- [Home working - HSE](https://www.hse.gov.uk)
- [Working Agreements Play | Atlassian](https://atlassian.com)
- [State of Remote Work 2021 | Owl Labs](https://owl-labs.com)
- <https://futureforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Future-Forum-Pulse-Report-Fall-2022.pdf>
- [Media - Scottish Futures Trust](#)



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