



# Adapting to hybrid working

Top tips for businesses making the long-term shift to hybrid working

March 2021

A practical guide exclusively for members

# The case for hybrid working

The country has experienced an unprecedented situation where millions of people have been working from home. This amounted to nearly half of those in employment (46.6%) doing at least some of their work from home in April 2020.<sup>1</sup>

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is a shock that has fundamentally changed the way we think about work and the workplace, shifting expectations of what's possible for both firms and employees. While some are eager to get back to normal, businesses can see that many employees may want to permanently adopt some degree of flexible or hybrid working when workplaces reopen and are back up and running.

## Get started

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# 76%

of businesses say that they expect flexible working to become more common within their organisation following the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>



# 47%

of businesses expect most of their workforce to adopt hybrid working beyond 2021.<sup>3</sup>



While hybrid working isn't new, the vast scale of businesses looking to make a long-term shift away from the 'in-office 9-5' model is unprecedented. Hybrid working helps to mitigate a lot of the challenges associated with full remote working – including those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic – like how to effectively collaborate, or replicate training and support for junior staff. When done right, hybrid working can offer several competitive advantages. But the challenge for businesses is how to find the right balance between home and the workplace to make a sustainable shift that works for both the business and employees over the long-term. Doing so requires businesses to consider their approach to health and wellbeing, managing, training, engaging, and leading their teams, and the practical support needed to achieve it.



### What is hybrid working?

A hybrid working model involves a mixture of both remote and office or onsite working, with management, engagement and development of a workforce split between different locations.

1. Coronavirus and homeworking in the UK: April 2020, ONS, July 2020

2. People at the heart of the recovery: The 2020 CBI/Pertemps Employment Trends Survey results and what they mean for business, December 2020

3. No Turning Back, CBI/Ipsos Mori, October 2020



## **This practical guide will help you to make the long-term shift to hybrid working**

It can be difficult to know where to start – or what to consider – when thinking about a long-term change to your company’s working model. That’s why we’ve created this practical guide: to give you insight into the way other businesses, across different sizes and sectors, are evaluating and planning their adaption to more hybrid working and what to consider along the journey. Some firms haven’t finalised their hybrid working plans internally yet, but we’ve gathered anonymous insight on their direction of travel and the challenges associated with transitioning to hybrid working to help inform your plans. Helping you identify the key questions every business should ask itself to make hybrid working a success, this guide also gives you top tips based on strategies other firms have put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to make remote and hybrid working work for staff and the business alike.

# Could hybrid working benefit your business?

Hybrid working can mean different things to different businesses. For most employers it means fewer staff working in a shared workplace at the same time. This has a number of practical implications, such as learning how to adapt to managing teams and individuals remotely and how to use a mixture of in-person and virtual communication to engage and meet with teams. What this looks like in practice is up to businesses and their employees, whether that means designating certain days for workplace team meetings and collaboration, and remote days for individually focused work; or giving employees the flexibility to decide which days they plan to be in the workplace or at home. Whatever your business decides, ensuring the flexibility afforded by hybrid working suits both parties and is agreed in consultation with employees is fundamental to making the change sustainable. When done right, hybrid working can bring a number of advantages.

## Increase productivity and employee engagement by offering employees flexibility over where they work

While mandated full remote working – as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic – can leave some people feeling isolated, drained and demotivated, many employees say they feel as, or more, productive working from home than in the workplace. This could be attributed to not commuting, fewer workplace disruptions, or more flexibility to work at times that better suit them. This has been felt on the employer side too, with many saying they've been pleasantly surprised by team productivity and engagement.

Businesses have been tapping into the positive benefits of flexibility on employee engagement for a long time. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, flexible workers were found to have a higher level of job satisfaction and commitment to the company compared to non-flexible workers.<sup>4</sup> Having an engaged workforce has been shown to bring significant productivity advantages too, with the potential to improve an individual's performance by 20% compared to their less engaged colleagues.<sup>5</sup>



58%

of workers in the UK said they have been more productive working from home.<sup>6</sup>



41%

of businesses believe staff working from home beyond 2021 will have a positive impact on the company's productivity.<sup>7</sup>

4. Modern Families Index, Working Families & Bright Horizons, 2018

5. People and the bottom line, Institute for Employment Studies & The Work Foundation, 2018

6. Lockdown Lessons Report, Talk Talk, September 2020

7. No Turning Back, CBI/Ipsos Mori, October 2020

To realise these productivity and engagement benefits, businesses must consider how their approach to management, communication and operations needs to adapt. There is a risk that employees feel isolated or less effective when working remotely, and less engaged as a result. To mitigate these risks, firms should consider what technology and equipment employees need to work effectively, how leaders communicate and how managers change the way they engage and develop their teams to foster a sense of shared purpose and team-culture.

## Attract and retain talent by embracing hybrid working

Putting hybrid working into practice, with policies and a culture that encourages it, is an effective way firms can widen the pool of talent they're able to attract. Advertising as an employer with hybrid working practices can attract people and skills from a wider geographical area, as whether someone can regularly attend the workplace becomes less important. Businesses anticipate this is a long-term shift, with 63% of firms expecting to receive more job applications from people living one to two hours away from their head office.<sup>8</sup>

 **53%**

of businesses believe staff working from home beyond 2021 will have a positive impact on the company's ability to attract and retain staff.<sup>9</sup>

 **91%**

of office workers show preference to working from home at least part of the time.<sup>10</sup>



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 81% of people said they were likely to choose an employer offering a more flexible working package.<sup>11</sup> This figure is likely to be higher now that remote working has been shown to work at scale, with some studies suggesting this preference is as high as 91% of office workers.<sup>12</sup> Tapping into employees' preferences for hybrid working allows firms to attract the best candidates. But it's essential that firms retain their talent too. This requires businesses to adapt their onboarding, training and development processes for all staff and to support leaders and managers to adapt how they manage, engage and develop hybrid teams to enable everyone to give their best.

## Build diverse and inclusive workforces through hybrid working

A culture that embraces hybrid working can build more diverse and inclusive workplaces. Hybrid working can help employees better balance their parental or caring responsibilities with work. Enabling staff to work flexibly can also reduce absence rates<sup>13</sup> and help employees manage disability and long-term health conditions. Opening up opportunities to hire people from a wider geographical area can also increase firms' ability to recruit candidates from more diverse backgrounds.

8. No Turning Back, CBI/Ipsos Mori, October 2020

9. Ibid.

10. 'Coronavirus: Why some people want to keep working from home', BBC News, 2020

11. 'Hiring Top Talent', Total Jobs, 2017

12. 'Coronavirus: Why some people want to keep working from home', BBC News, 2020

13. 'Effects of work-family human resource practices', Giardini & Kabst, November 2008



86%

of working parents want to work flexibly.<sup>14</sup>



91%

of workers with caring responsibilities regard flexible working as highly important or essential.<sup>15</sup>

To seize these benefits firms must establish inclusive policies and practices for all staff. There are some risks attached to hybrid working that businesses need to think carefully about, such as avoiding the creation of a two-tier workforce: those who are often present and visible in an office and those who, by choice, work from home more often as part of a hybrid working policy. Firms should consider how to train their managers to evaluate staff's performance based on outputs rather than presenteeism and invest in technology to make meetings and organisational communication as inclusive as possible regardless of working location.

### Transforming the workplace into a shared workspace

Hybrid working aims to retain the benefits of working remotely while recognising that full time remote working doesn't work for everyone. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many teams struggled to collaborate and connect with each other, individuals missed the social side of work, junior staff struggled to develop the soft skills they'd normally learn from being in the workplace, and many people experienced periods of mental ill-health and feelings of isolation while working and living in the same place.

Enabling staff to come into a shared workplace helps to counteract some of the downsides associated with full remote working. While the workplace may not look exactly the same as it did before, it still plays a vital role in how businesses operate.

Harnessing the benefits of hybrid working relies on businesses considering what practical things need to change to transform the workplace into a shared workspace. This can involve fundamentally rethinking why your business has offices, what they're used for, and whether re-evaluating commercial property portfolios can bring potential cost-savings. While the office isn't 'dead', it's likely to be reimaged, with businesses expecting their office space to reduce by 18% on average by 2023 compared to 2019.<sup>16</sup>

Most businesses are re-evaluating the purpose of their offices, expecting them to be used more for collaboration and training and less desk-based activity. Firms must therefore consider what aspects of employees' roles need to be done in a workplace and what can be done remotely. Solving that puzzle means employers can begin identifying what flexibility they can offer employees that will allow them to achieve the same, or better, commercial outcomes.

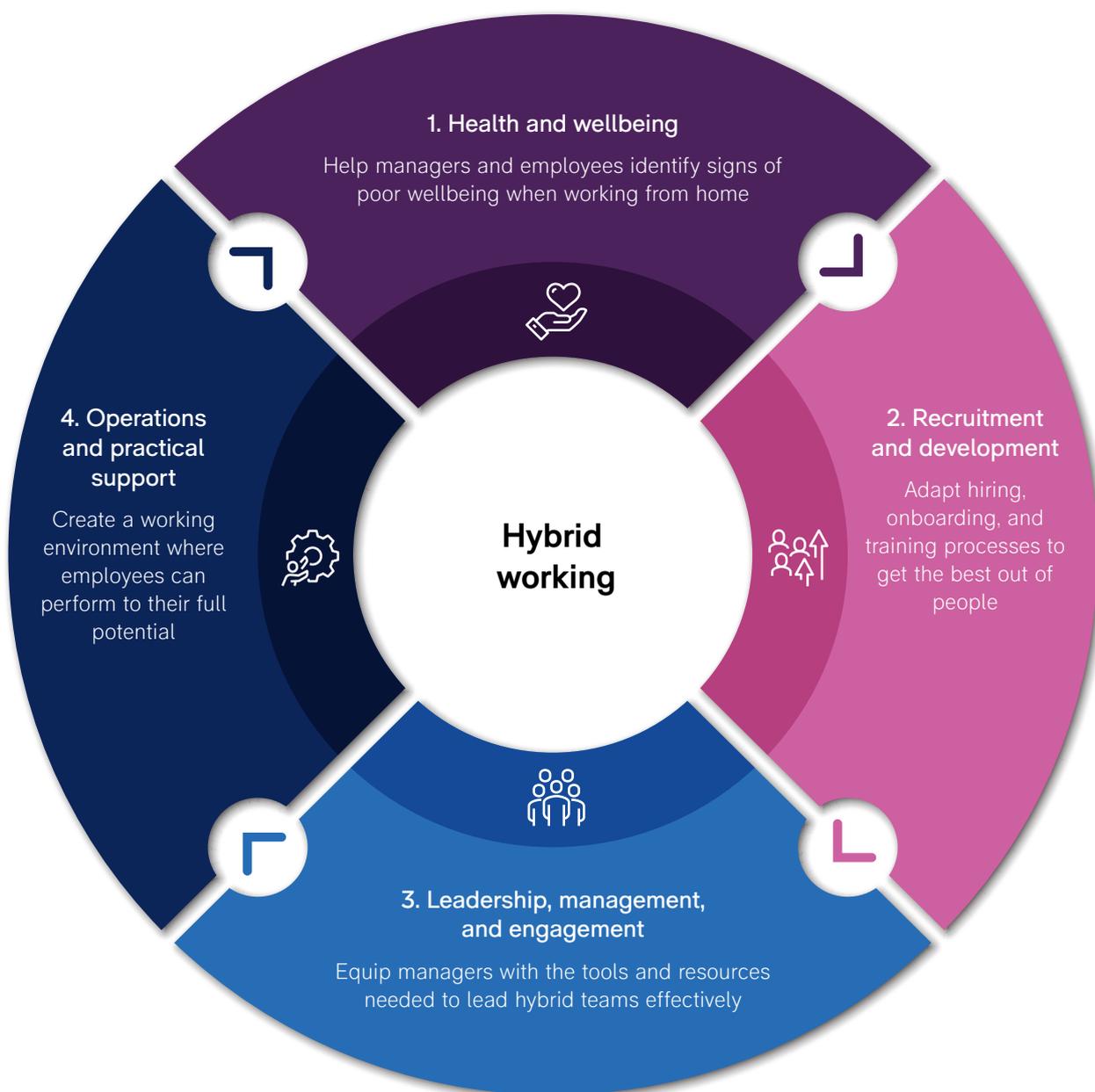
14. Modern Families Index 2019, Working Families and Bright Horizons, 2019

15. Flexible working: a talent imperative, Timewise, 2017

16. No Turning Back, CBI/Ipsos Mori, October 2020

# Four considerations to unlock hybrid working

Changing working practices isn't easy – there's a lot for employers to consider, and it can be difficult to know where to start. The good news is that sharing how some firms have achieved it, or are preparing to make this change, can help others identify the key questions their business needs to consider to successfully make a shift to hybrid working. Drawing together the experiences of several businesses, we have identified four areas where businesses should focus their efforts to effectively transition to hybrid working: health and wellbeing; recruitment and development; leadership, management, and engagement; and operations and practical support.



# 1. Health and wellbeing

## Help managers and employees identify signs of poor wellbeing when working from home

Supporting health and wellbeing benefits employees and employers, as firms perform better when their staff are happier, healthier and more engaged. Employees working in businesses that invest in health and wellbeing say it helps reduce stress and creates a positive working environment where they can perform at their best. Employers say that health and wellbeing initiatives lower absence rates and lead to greater company performance and productivity.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, good workplace health and wellbeing, whether an individual is primarily at home or in the office, minimises factors at work that cause or contribute to poor mental or physical health and maximises the support available for them to perform at their best.

This can include increasing opportunities for home-working, which can benefit employees' mental health through greater flexibility to work when they perform at their best or to help balance caring responsibilities, or by limiting workplace distractions. But working from home doesn't benefit everyone. While isolation and poor mental health is unlikely to be as widespread as during the COVID-19 lockdowns, more home-working presents different mental health risks for employers to look out for, particularly when it is required rather than freely chosen. In these circumstances, employers should be even more proactive given that it's harder for colleagues to spot hazards or signs of poor wellbeing and because intervening early to give individuals the knowledge and support to improve their wellbeing is linked with better health outcomes.<sup>18</sup> Employers should therefore consider how the ways they support employees' mental health and wellbeing may need to change. This could include creating new channels for employees to reach out and discuss their mental health. **Bloomberg** has found that strategies such as an anonymous hotline, and monthly roundtables with mental health first aiders has increased engagement with mental health content across the business. Similarly, **Grae Matta Foundation** has adopted a messaging service which allows employees to send their colleague or manager a notification indicating that they're not OK.

### Questions every business should ask

- How should my business think differently about our mental health strategy to account for home workers?
- How should my business communicate mental health support to everyone in the business?



Working remotely is an extension of the traditional workplace, so employers will need to consider how their legal obligations to ensure a safe working environment may change and what their duty of care looks like – even if staff are working in the office for the majority of their working week. This means employers need to consider how they will manage any hazards effectively, including how policies and communication channels ensure that employees know they can return to the workplace if their home environment is unsafe or detrimental to their wellbeing. With more people working from home, domestic abuse is a heightened safety risk. Employers should particularly take this into account if remote working days are mandated, rather than freely chosen. Find out more about what your organisation can do to support those at risk of domestic abuse at **Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse**.

17. Front of Mind, Prioritising Workplace Health and Wellbeing, CBI, September 2018

18. The case for investing in public health, WHO, 2014

## What you can do for your business

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### Create additional ways employees can discuss mental health when working remotely:

- Set up virtual roundtables with Mental Health First Aiders, instant messaging services, anonymous hotlines, or launch employee assistance programmes.
- Use workplace networks to communicate the different ways employees and managers can start a mental health conversation.
- Encourage managers to establish a mental health action plan with their teams.

### Establish organisational norms that support staff's mental and physical wellbeing wherever they work:

- Encourage flexible working around core working hours, limit call times to 25 or 50 minutes to give employees breaks or encourage them to take a walk during the day.
- Encourage managers to consider employee wellbeing when organising meetings, including setting a precedent that employees can join meetings while walking.
- Create an expectation that managers should regularly communicate with individuals in their team. Suggest the first five minutes of 1-2-1 meetings are spent discussing their wellbeing.

## Bloomberg's Communities (employee networks) hold virtual mental health roundtables for employees

Bloomberg is a US headquartered company delivering business and markets news, financial data, and analysis to organisations around the world. Throughout the pandemic, Bloomberg has created new avenues for employees to discuss and support their mental health while working remotely, which they'll continue to use in the future.

### Establishing new ways for employees to discuss how they're feeling while working from home helps to open up conversations about mental health

It's harder to spot the signs of poor mental health while working remotely, so Bloomberg created new ways for employees to talk about their mental health in a virtual environment. This centred on expanding their online mental health resources, including the creation of dedicated online mental health content. The company has seen higher engagement with their online offering since more people started working remotely and believes it gives everybody an equal opportunity to engage with the content. Because of this success, much of this content will remain online and accessible when offices fully reopen.

Bloomberg recognises that working from home can make it harder for people to raise concerns, so they also explored different ways for individuals to vocalise any questions or concerns they might have and introduced different channels of feedback including instant messaging, resilience training workshops, and anonymous hotlines.

One of Bloomberg's employee networks – known as their Abilities Community – offers monthly mental health roundtables to all employees. The roundtables focus on a particular theme, such as coping with distance and separation or tackling burnout and are set up to drive conversation in smaller groups to increase engagement. They centre on discussing how everyone is feeling and what support they might need. Each group is led in partnership with a mental health first aider so they can provide immediate support where necessary. Bloomberg also worked with their other networks to ensure an intersectional lens was adopted when discussing mental health. So far, they've seen high take up of the sessions and will continue to offer them in the future.

### Using employee networks and leaders to communicate mental health offerings helps to spread and scale up messaging

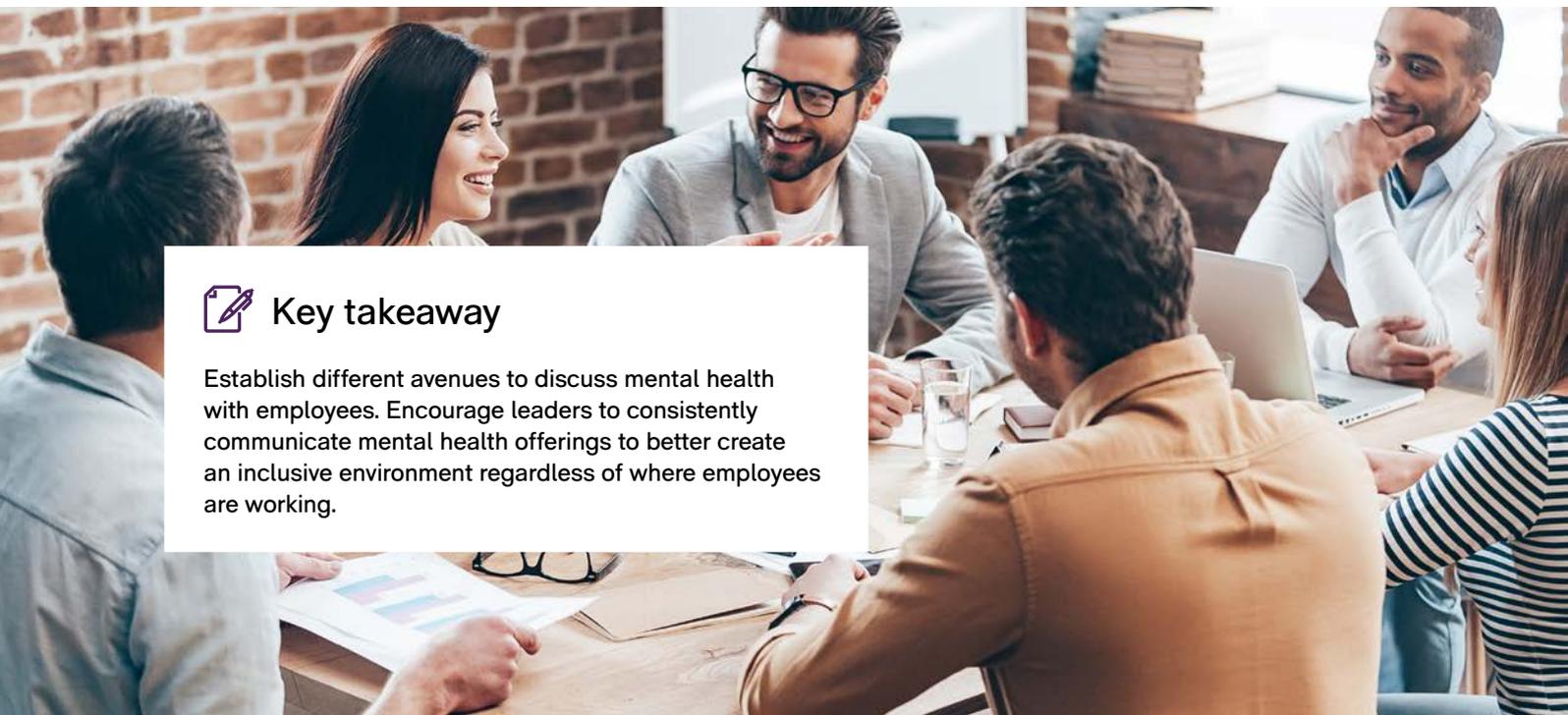
To promote their mental health offerings, Bloomberg worked with their communications team and employee networks to look at ways to spread the message across the business while everyone was working from home. This included circulating interactive and static opportunities and resources for employees to engage with, such as resilience training webinars.

Also key to communicating the message was the role of leaders in the organisation and the consistency of their messaging on mental health. Bloomberg's Chairman Peter Grauer, who has long made mental health a priority for the company, continued to lead from the front as an active and visible advocate for mental resilience and wellbeing.



#### Key takeaway

Establish different avenues to discuss mental health with employees. Encourage leaders to consistently communicate mental health offerings to better create an inclusive environment regardless of where employees are working.



### **Grae Matta Foundation encourages employees to limit meetings and working hours as part of remote working health and wellbeing strategy**

Grae Matta Foundation works with businesses and higher education institutions to provide mental health guidance and expertise. As a business that has embraced hybrid working since its inception, they have put several mental health techniques in place to support staff who are working remotely.

#### **Having a specific avenue for employees to voice concerns from home helps open up conversations about mental health**

To help spot the signs of poor mental health, Grae Matta has a process in place known as 'Beacon' which is used for employees who are working remotely and not immediately visible to colleagues. Employees can send a notification to another member of staff indicating that they're not feeling OK to help them start a conversation with a supportive colleague. Key is that employees can start conversations with any member of staff, not just managers. That way employees can feel comfortable opening up about how they're feeling. Grae Matta encourages employees to use this service whenever they need to and all staff are trained to talk to and support one another. They believe this is key to embedding a culture of communication around mental health.

#### **Limiting call time and implementing core hours helps staff manage the distinction between work and home**

To combat the feeling of being 'zoomed-out', Grae Matta encourages staff to limit the number of calls per day and keep them under 30 minutes long after finding that staff working remotely were feeling drained and less engaged after back-to-back virtual calls. Leaders role modelling these behaviours have been key to establishing them as organisational norms. The company has also found implementing core working hours has helped staff find a manageable distinction between home and work life while working remotely.

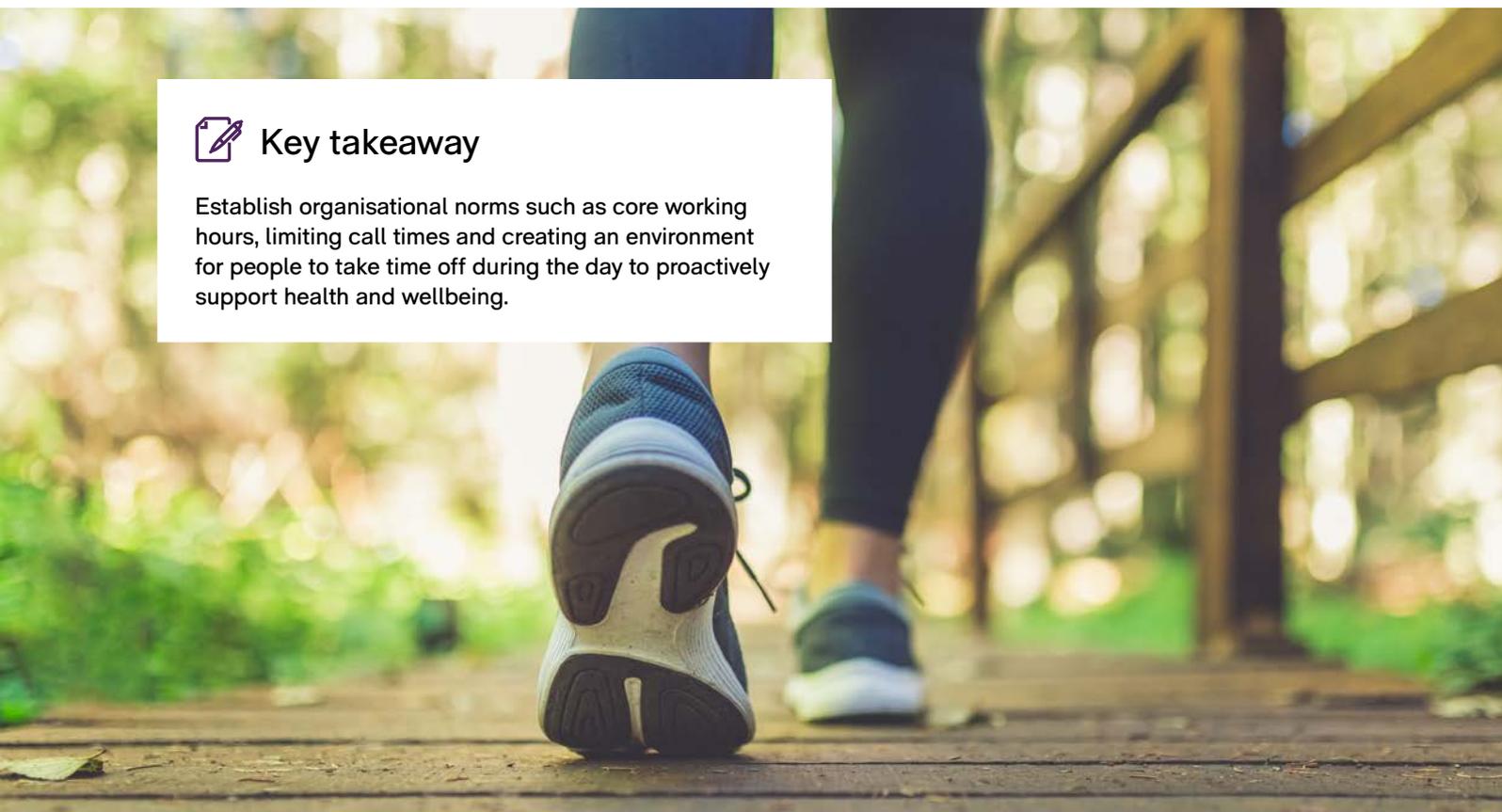
#### **Employees are encouraged to go outdoors at least once during the day**

As part of their mental health strategy, Grae Matta encourages employees to go outside during the day – emphasising the significant mental and physical health benefits of being outdoors. This is especially prominent for staff working remotely who may be missing out on outdoor activity, such as the daily commute. As part of their wider wellbeing strategy, they also hold Zoom fitness and stretching classes. Not only does it aid general wellbeing but it also helps to add variation to employee's days.



#### **Key takeaway**

Establish organisational norms such as core working hours, limiting call times and creating an environment for people to take time off during the day to proactively support health and wellbeing.



## The CBI uses employee surveys to inform health and wellbeing strategies for remote workers

The CBI is the voice of UK business and represents over 190,000 firms across the country. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we conducted regular employee surveys to help target mental health support for employees - a practice we'll continue in a hybrid setting.

### Surveys allow businesses to create targeted mental health strategies

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we regularly used employee surveys to better understand how individuals were feeling and ensure they had a way to voice mental health concerns while working remotely. This helped us identify cross sections of staff who were struggling and create specific targeted support for these groups – such as parents and carers. This included several enhanced policies around time off for dependants and flexible working, and a partnership with an external organisation where employees can access resources, support, and speak to specialists. This was essential as a one-size-fits-all approach to mental health overlooks different circumstances that impact an individual's wellbeing and work. When offices fully reopen, we plan to continue using regular surveys to help us identify what mental health support employees may need, regardless of working location, and target support and guidance.

### Drop-in sessions and virtual coffees help employees voice mental health concerns and reduce feelings of isolation while working remotely

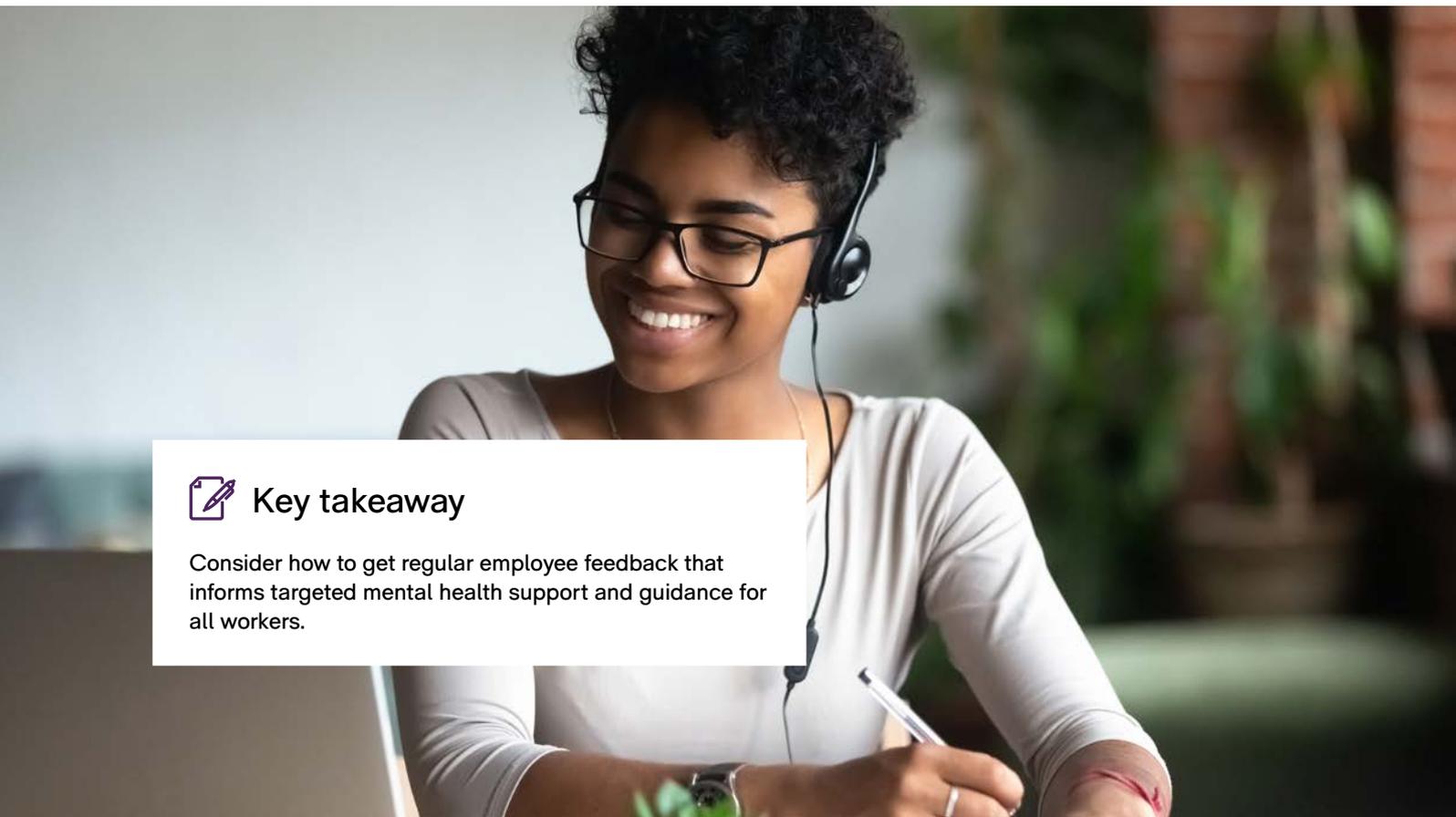
As it's harder to spot the signs of poor mental health while working remotely, our employee networks hold monthly drop-in sessions for employees to discuss their mental health and wellbeing. As well as supporting individuals during the session, network leads engage with HR and the leadership team to give live feedback on staff health and wellbeing. This helps to ensure leaders are connected to the issues staff are facing while out of the office. These practices will continue in a hybrid environment to encourage staff to discuss their mental health while helping to build trust and connections with colleagues who they may not normally see.

Surveys also revealed that employees were missing the social interaction associated with the office. To reduce feelings of isolation, we introduced 'Coffee with Colleagues' - informal virtual get-togethers, allowing colleagues to take a break and catch-up with others across the organisation. After receiving positive feedback from employees, we will look to continue this practice as a way to reduce feelings of isolation and increase whole-organisation engagement and morale when offices fully reopen and employees work in a hybrid way.



### Key takeaway

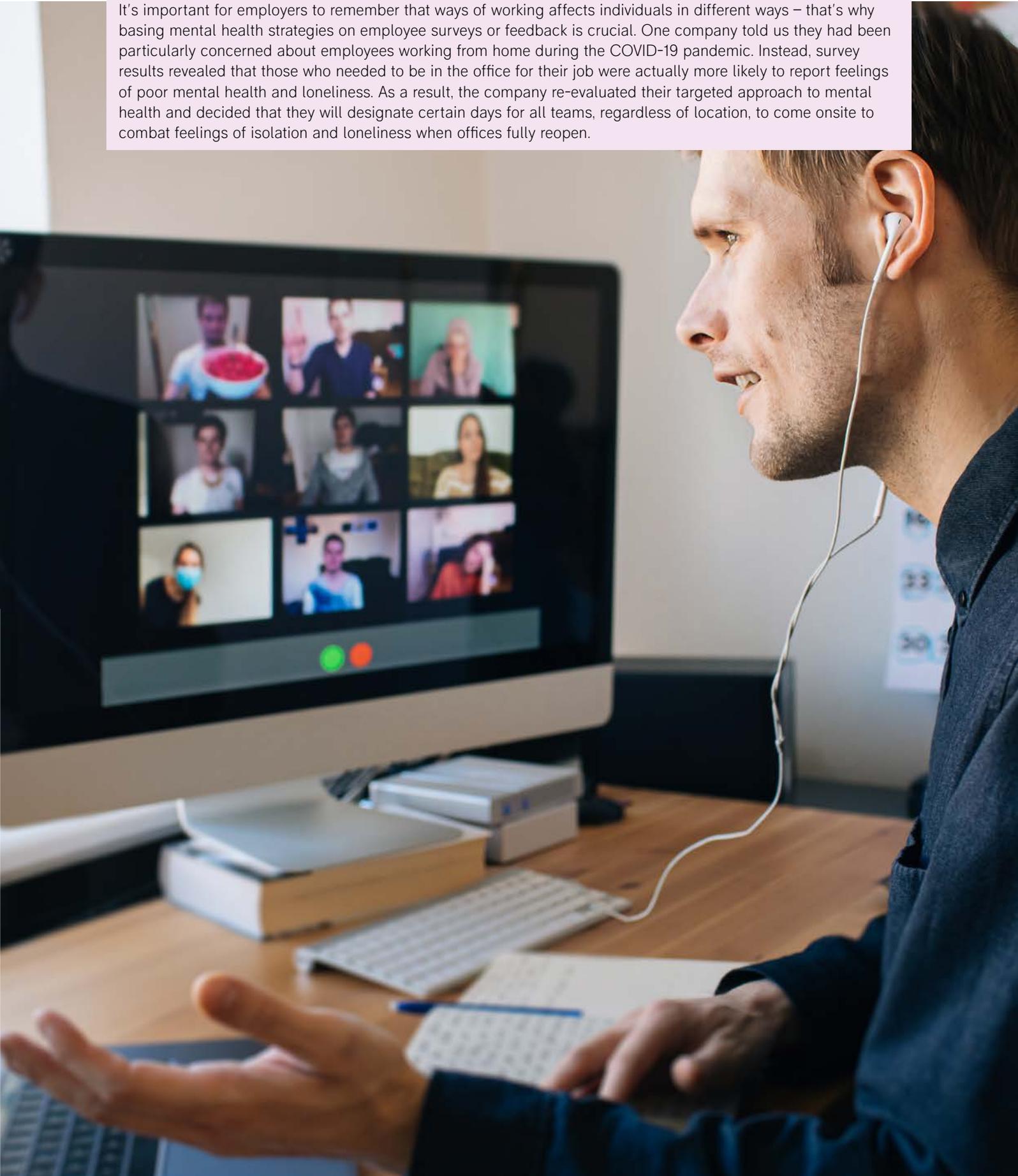
Consider how to get regular employee feedback that informs targeted mental health support and guidance for all workers.



### Anonymous insights from other businesses:

More home-working presents different mental health risks to look out for. Part of thinking differently about mental health strategies involves considering the impact of remote working on those who prefer to work in the office for the social benefits it typically brings. For a business in the manufacturing sector, this means designating certain days for teams to come together:

It's important for employers to remember that ways of working affects individuals in different ways – that's why basing mental health strategies on employee surveys or feedback is crucial. One company told us they had been particularly concerned about employees working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, survey results revealed that those who needed to be in the office for their job were actually more likely to report feelings of poor mental health and loneliness. As a result, the company re-evaluated their targeted approach to mental health and decided that they will designate certain days for all teams, regardless of location, to come onsite to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness when offices fully reopen.



# 2. Recruitment and development

Adapt hiring, onboarding and training processes to get the best out of people

Effective recruitment and development practices are strongly associated with better business performance and employee satisfaction. Not only is there a high cost for poor recruitment practices, hiring the right people and matching their skills to job criteria has been found to generate 40% higher productivity in operational roles, and 49% higher profit in management roles.<sup>19</sup> Providing new employees with a good onboarding experience is vital to retain the right people too, with 69% of employees likely to stay with a company for at least three years after a great onboarding experience.<sup>20</sup> Having good opportunities for development is also core to an individuals' experience of work, with a lack of career progression among the top three reasons that UK employees feel unhappy in their jobs.<sup>21</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many firms have struggled with onboarding new starters in an all-virtual environment. While most companies were able to swiftly arrange delivery of equipment and technology and introduce structured virtual induction plans, integrating new team members and helping them build relationships has been harder, with new starters needing continued support and engineered opportunities to engage with colleagues for longer. Creating development opportunities for employees has been difficult too – especially for junior staff members. While a lot of classroom learning can be moved online, the soft skills that younger employees pick up on the job are harder to replicate in an all-virtual environment.

Businesses should consider how the way they hire, onboard, develop, and train their employees may need to change with more hybrid working. While businesses and individuals have become accustomed to recruiting and attending training sessions virtually, firms will need to future proof their approach by thinking about what types of development, recruitment, and onboarding practices are best delivered in the virtual environment versus face to face. **BT**, for example, has found that moving knowledge-based learning online has widened access to their content, while sessions focusing on practical or behavioural skills are best done in person. For onboarding, **Schneider Electric** plans to ask managers to designate certain days for their teams to meet in-person as new starters join. To help junior staff pick up soft skills normally learned on the job, **Eversheds** has introduced a virtual shadowing scheme to help replicate the experience.

## Questions every business should ask

- What training sessions can be delivered remotely and what learning is best completed on location?
- How can my business provide effective training and development sessions remotely?
- How can my business replicate on-the-job learning, especially for younger employees?
- How do onboarding processes need to change for home workers or members of hybrid teams?

19. War for Talent, Part II, McKinsey Quarterly, 2001

20. 6 Engagement Strategies for the First Year, O.C. Tanner

21. Investors in People, Job Exodus Trends, 2018

## What you can do for your business

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### Evaluate comparative learning experiences to inform whether your business delivers more training virtually:

- Moving learning for knowledge and theory-based courses online can increase participation and engagement.
- Training focused on practical skills, or requiring a behavioural shift often have better outcomes if held in person. Firms may want to consider prioritising face-to-face sessions for these types of courses.
- Gather feedback from individuals on training courses to compare the effectiveness of delivery methods.

### Establish practices that ensure new starters can integrate with the team and build organisation-wide relationships:

- Consider designating in-person days for all team members to come into the workplace when new starters join.
- Utilise technology to give new starters the opportunity to meet and connect with employees working in different locations.
- Establish a virtual buddy system to help new starters meet new people and build relationships.

### When developing new starters or junior colleagues, establish ways to replicate informal 'on-the-job' development discussions:

- Use technology to enable junior and senior colleagues to reflect on work and share advice in real-time as they would in the office, rather than wait for less frequent team or management conversations.

## BT delivers comparable virtual learning experience for knowledge-based courses, but practical skill sessions are harder to replicate

BT is one of the world's leading communications services companies, serving customers in around 180 countries. Full remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic gave BT the opportunity to evaluate where they're able to create a comparable learning experience online – informing how the company will continue to deliver training in a hybrid environment. They recognised that more leaning and development can be conducted online but that some training still requires face to face contact.

### Moving knowledge and theory-based courses online has opened up access to learning

Since the pandemic, BT has seen a large increase in the number of employees engaging with learning material online. An advantage of uploading e-learning material, and one of the reasons BT plans to keep this element of virtual learning in the future, is because it opens up access to all types of workers. One of the previous challenges for the company was how to engage their geographically dispersed staff in a way that works for them. Rather than travelling to attend a course in a set location far from home that did not always suit employees, there is now ready-made instant access to resources for employees to engage with at any time.

For apprentices and employees taking knowledge and theory-based courses, BT believes they have created a comparable learning experience, covering an estimated 90% of the apprentice's curriculum. The success of the change has been shown through the company's Net Promoter Scores which have remained stable since introducing the training virtually. Due to feedback from employees saying that it would have been nice to meet other people on the course face-to-face, BT designed the sessions with breakout rooms to give participants the chance to engage with each other. For most, the disadvantages of not meeting face to face were outweighed by the benefit of not having to travel to attend the classes. As a result, BT will look to permanently move these courses online.

#### Three top tips from BT on successfully delivering virtual training sessions:

- Get to know and feel comfortable with the technology before you start. Experts leading training sessions can make the most out of the time if they feel confident in how to use different features, such as managing breakout rooms and running polls.
- Upskill those hosting the sessions on skills such as co-hosting. It's helpful to have clear distinct roles between the person administering the technology – such as running breakout rooms and chat function – and the moderator facilitating the session.
- Work with HR or wellbeing teams to create the right conditions for learning, such as taking regular breaks and varying delivery of the training between presentations, live demonstrations, and breakout discussions.

### But teaching practical and leadership skills has been harder – or near impossible – to replicate virtually

BT have found that some courses are much harder to replicate virtually – such as leadership development programmes that require a deeper emotional connection and behavioural mindset shift. The company has found that using technology has been an inhibitor to its success and will prioritise face-to-face contact for these sessions in the future – asking employees to come onsite for the training, even if they would otherwise work from home. As a result, BT anticipates that they'll run around 70-80% of their training virtually in the future to give employees greater flexibility but will require in person attendance for more immersive trainings, such as the leadership development programme.

BT's apprentices are required to learn a number of practical skills during their training and some have been difficult or near impossible to replicate virtually - such as learning how to climb telegraph poles. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company opened COVID-safe buildings for trainers to film and broadcast live practical demonstrations to help apprentices learning from home, receiving positive feedback. While some skill sessions can be replicated virtually as more apprentices work in a hybrid way, BT plans to ask their apprentices to be on site to give them the best practical learning experience possible.



### Key takeaway

Evaluate what learning and development training is beneficial to run face to face in the workplace and move other content online to make it more accessible for employees across the business.

## Eversheds Sutherland launches a virtual shadowing scheme to help train and mentor junior lawyers while they're working from home

Eversheds Sutherland is a global law firm headquartered in London. With the prolonged period of all people in the UK working from home, the firm recognised that junior lawyers might be missing out on the day-to-day learnings that come from being around senior colleagues in the office. Eversheds Sutherland decided that the firm needed to replicate some of the informal conversations that naturally occur in person between junior and senior lawyers, as a priority for junior lawyer development. As a result, the firm introduced a virtual shadowing scheme to ensure junior lawyers were still getting the training and development opportunities they need while working remotely.

### Junior lawyers are invited to attend virtual meetings between clients and partners in the firm.

The intention is to try and replicate the working style and expertise of the senior lawyers on the call for junior lawyers, while also giving them more opportunity to network with senior colleagues. The meetings are followed by a 'de-briefing' call with the partner. This was introduced by the firm after identifying the value of the time given for informal feedback and reflection time for junior lawyers' development, which happened organically when meetings took place face to face in the office. The scheme aims to create a new process to replicate the learning opportunities junior lawyers would receive such as on the journey back to the office from a client meeting, where they would set out next steps for the client matter and provide feedback on the meeting.

### To ensure the scheme became part of the firm's BAU, Eversheds Sutherland made clear that the scheme was one of the top three priorities for the business

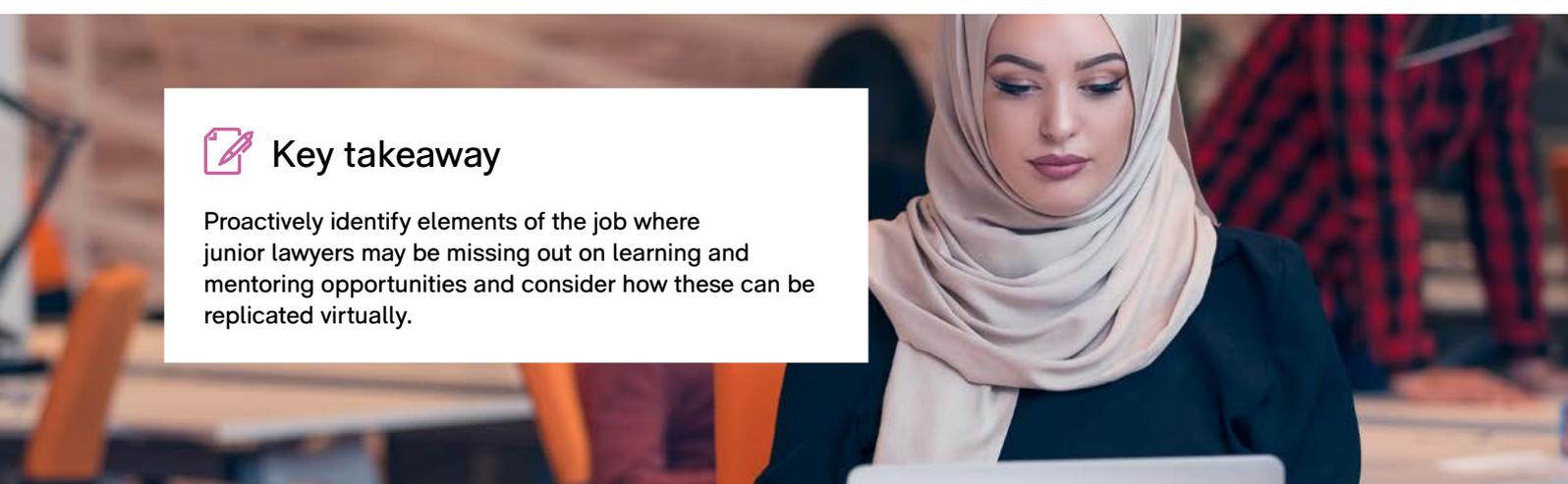
It did so by launching a firm wide communication campaign that emphasised the value of the scheme for peoples' wellbeing and development and as a core priority for the business. The firm felt that clear communication of its importance empowered individuals to ask senior colleagues to join their meetings. The campaign also made clear to senior colleagues that including junior colleagues was the standard expected of them.

While being essential in the short term to support junior lawyers' development during homeworking, the firm has reflected on the importance and success of the scheme as it looks towards introducing a more flexible blended working model.



### Key takeaway

Proactively identify elements of the job where junior lawyers may be missing out on learning and mentoring opportunities and consider how these can be replicated virtually.



## Schneider Electric encourages managers to prioritise in-person team days when new starters join the business

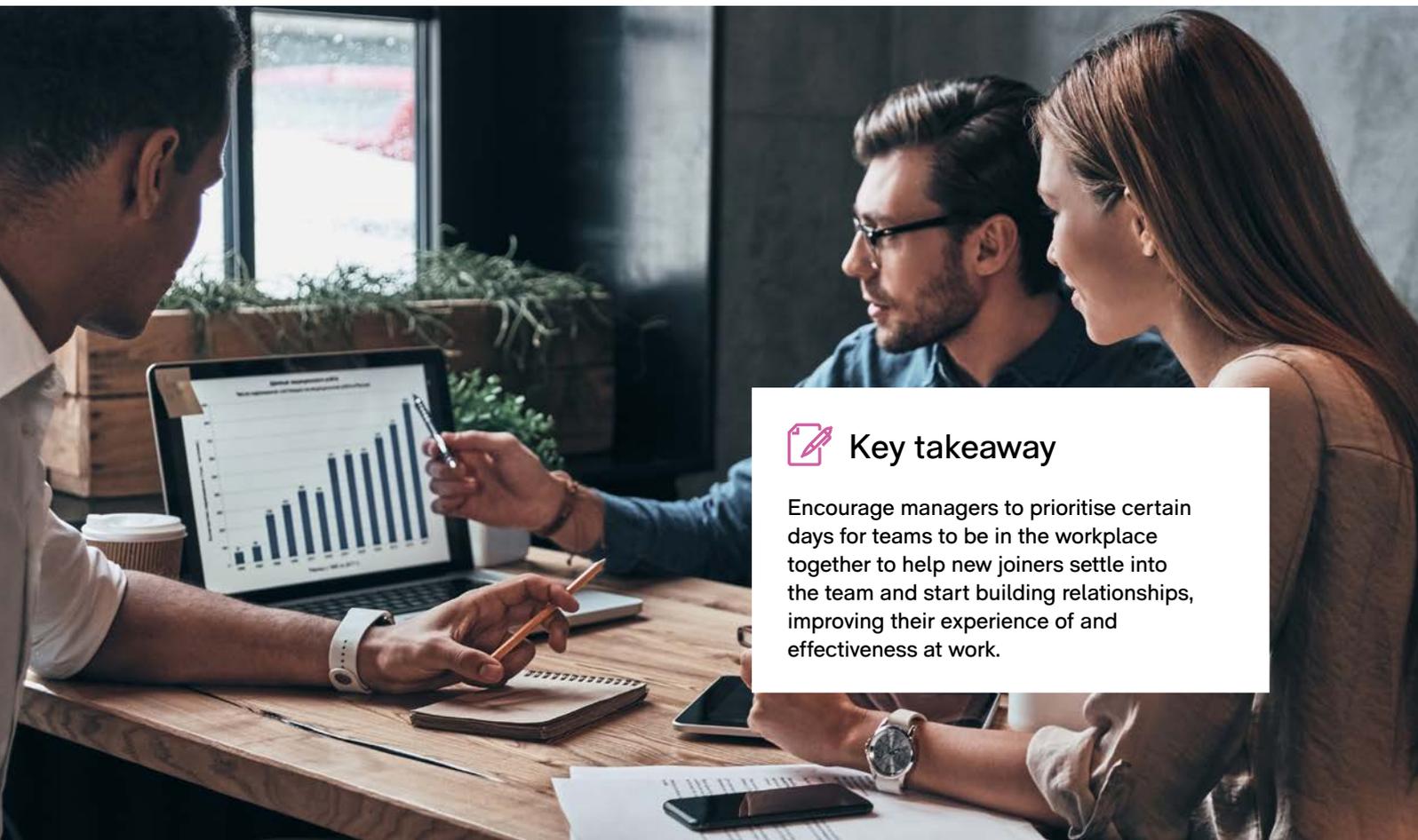
Schneider Electric is a multinational company providing energy and automated digital solutions to homes, buildings, data centres, infrastructure and industries across the world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company adapted their processes to best onboard new joiners, informing their long-term approach to support new joiners as more people work in a hybrid way.

### Managers are encouraged to think about how team integration can be done virtually

Schneider Electric encourages managers to think about how best to support new joiners. They decided not to mandate any centrally based activities after managers found them less personal and effective. Instead, the company will continue to suggest different virtual team-bonding and wellbeing activities – such as mindfulness sessions, virtual escape rooms or pub quizzes – that can be done in teams where more people work from home. They will also continue to send out reminder training about the different collaboration technology available and how to use it to make team meetings as interactive and inclusive as possible for new starters, such as using shared whiteboards, virtual post-it notes and team mind maps.

### The company will ask new joiners to come onsite for 2-3 days a week to physically meet the team

Schneider Electric reflects that while they successfully adapted their formal processes for new joiners during the COVID-19 pandemic, it doesn't get around the benefits of physically meeting the team and the rest of the organisation. They found that new joiners weren't able to get up to speed or gel with the rest of the team as quickly or meaningfully as they would have in the office. That's why the company aims to make the workplace safe for new joiners to have the opportunity to meet their manager and team face-to-face. They have had to be flexible and reactive with this through different COVID-19 lockdown measures, as safety of employees comes first. As more people work in a hybrid way, Schneider Electric expects to ask new joiners to come into the workplace for 2-3 days a week initially and then work flexibly according to individual needs thereafter. Focusing on core days allows individuals to manage their unique work and life balance, whilst maintaining the critical mass required for the benefits to be seen. While they plan for employees to be able to choose the days they work onsite, they will encourage managers with new starters to deliberately align their team to be in the workplace on the same days so they can coordinate activity and foster team bonding.



### Key takeaway

Encourage managers to prioritise certain days for teams to be in the workplace together to help new joiners settle into the team and start building relationships, improving their experience of and effectiveness at work.

### AECOM hosts virtual networking sessions for junior staff to meet colleagues and build working relationships

AECOM is a multinational engineering and infrastructure firm. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company introduced virtual networking events and mentoring schemes for staff early in their career to help them build relationships and feel integrated – informing how the company will think about junior staff development in a hybrid environment.

#### **More people working virtually provided an opportunity for new starters to meet people across the country**

AECOM created new ways for junior staff to engage with others across the business and build their network after recognising that without the office environment, it was hard for junior staff to establish key workplace skills and build relationships. The company has connected new starters with mentors from different regions, taking advantage of the fact that everyone is working virtually. This has helped junior staff learn more about the whole company, as well as giving them opportunities to engage with someone in the business who can help to drive their professional development.

The company has established regional early careers networking events where graduates can meet on a virtual call. To increase engagement, they make use of breakout rooms so people can have conversations in small groups. This has proved to be popular amongst new starters to meet people from different teams across the business and build relationships while at home.

#### **Recording career development sessions has increased take up and engagement**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, AECOM organised live presentations from senior staff about their career journeys to inspire those early in their careers to think about their personal and professional development. These sessions have since been recorded and moved online for employees to access at any time. The instant availability has increased access to more people across the business who may have previously been too busy to attend a live session.

Accompanying these are monthly webinar series, covering topics such as career confidence and building relationships. The webinars enable AECOM to touch base with those in their early careers, providing them with relevant information about the business and some practical tools and tips for their professional development.

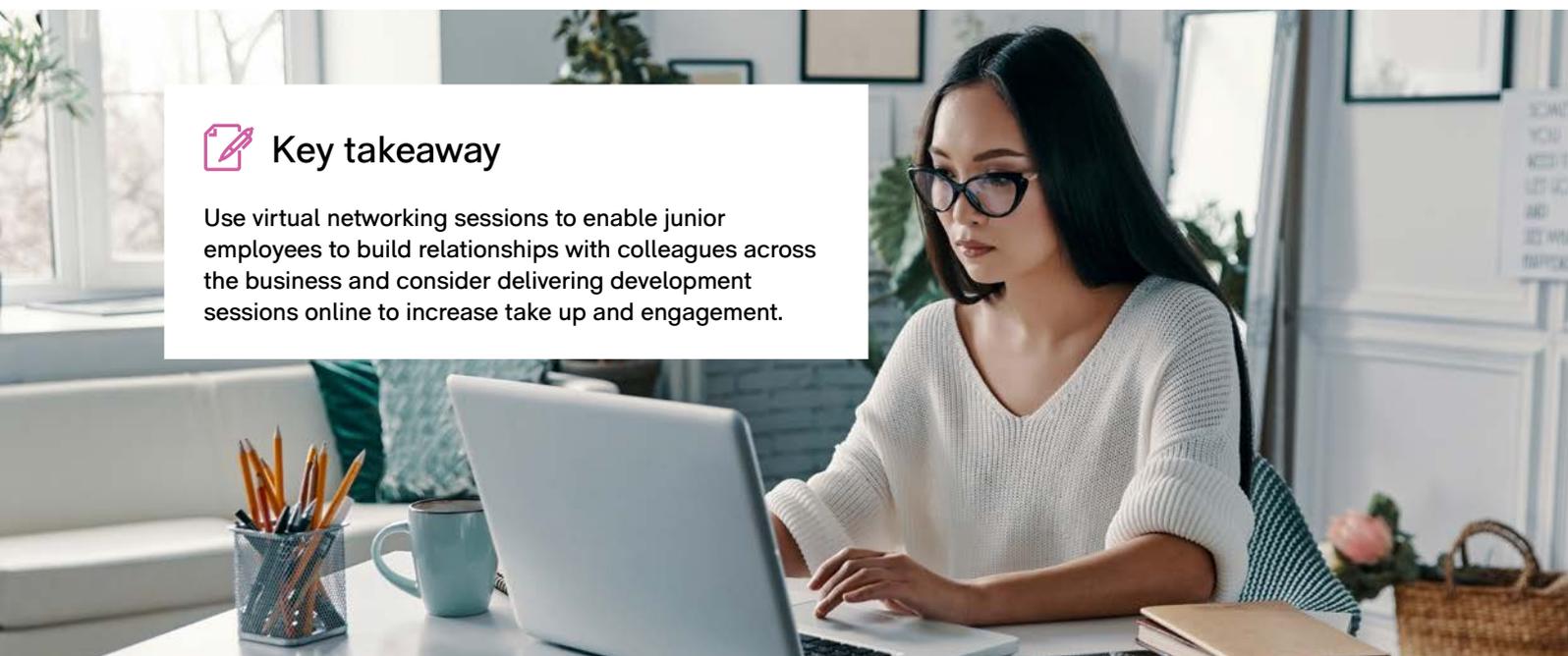
#### **Learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic will be implemented in the new working model**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, AECOM had started to move to a flexible model known as 'Freedom to Grow' which gave employees flexibility to choose where they worked if it suited them, the team and clients. AECOM expects the whole organisation to work in this way as offices reopen with employees coming into the office 2-3 days per week. In this new model, AECOM plans to adopt the learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as connecting employees from different locations and widening access to development sessions.



#### Key takeaway

Use virtual networking sessions to enable junior employees to build relationships with colleagues across the business and consider delivering development sessions online to increase take up and engagement.



### Anonymous insights from other businesses:

Offering options to work remotely or in a hybrid way can help attract people and skills from a wider geographical area, as whether someone can regularly attend the workplace becomes less important. This can have a positive impact on D&I too, as wider recruitment pools increase firms' ability to recruit candidates from more diverse backgrounds. Some firms are looking at how they can seize this benefit in practice:

One company has started hiring individuals as home-based workers in parts of the business after identifying the ways in which it could open up their recruitment talent pools beyond within-commuter distance of their office. The decision was made after seeing how successfully individuals were able to do their job effectively from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The company now offers more jobs on home-based contracts, with plans to review anecdotal feedback of how well it's working. Not all roles will be recruited remotely but they consider it to be a positive step to demonstrate the flexibility available in the business.

Similarly, another company have been looking at how they can widen the type of job contracts they offer employees and new hires because of research indicating that offering home-based or hybrid contracts could open up recruitment pools. The company has since offered both types of contract to new hires who weren't willing to relocate for the job or commit to travelling five days a week. The company has agreed with new hires that there may be certain times during the year where they need to come into the office for training purposes.



# 3. Leadership, management, and engagement

## Equip managers with the tools and resources needed to lead hybrid teams effectively

Leaders are essential to driving meaningful changes within businesses, from setting expectations of new ways of working to role modelling desired changes. This has lasting effects too, with organisational transformations being over four times more likely to succeed with leadership role modelling.<sup>22</sup> Good management practices are vital and have the greatest impact on an individuals' experience at work. Effective line management is the primary driver of employee engagement, bringing a host of commercial benefits – firms in the highest quartile for engaging employees see 41% less absenteeism and 22% higher profits than those in the lowest quartile.<sup>23</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, managers had to quickly adapt to organising, engaging, and developing teams virtually full time and supporting employees without seeing them face to face. This has been particularly difficult for teams that require a high degree of collaborative and creative working to effectively deliver work. Firms have consistently pointed to the challenge of keeping up engagement and morale when colleagues don't meet socially, with businesses particularly pointing to the engagement benefits of 'water-cooler moments'.

A hybrid model brings different considerations. Businesses should consider how the relationship between employer and employee will change. With more people working from home, managers will need to adapt to managing individuals and teams who split their time between home and the workplace and consider how they foster team engagement and motivation if employees don't have the same face to face and social contact. To do so, **BAE Systems** has invested in training encouraging managers to change their approach to team organisation and engagement as more people work in a hybrid way. At **Thales**, managers are encouraged to engage with their teams to develop a set of guidelines for working effectively together as a hybrid team. Managing a hybrid workplace requires leaders to consistently communicate the organisations' dedication to new ways of working, as well as role modelling key behaviours to embed a strong organisational culture. The Global Chief Executive of **Siemens** demonstrated his commitment to organisational change by sending personal emails to everyone in the organisation. Businesses will need to consider the impact of introducing a hybrid model for staff who can't work remotely and consider what flexible working policies can be put in place to mitigate feelings of 'us versus them'. **Henry Boot** plans to do so by launching a flexible working policy for all workers and sharing stories of how different people use it.

### Questions every business should ask

- How should my business change the way it leads, manages and engages with employees?
- How should my business support people managers to make this shift?
- What is the best way to maintain a strong organisational culture?
- How do I create an environment that fosters creativity, innovation and encourages idea sharing?
- How should businesses ensure that managers effectively assess employee performance based on outputs, rather than working time?

22. Beyond Performance: How Great Organizations Build Ultimate Competitive Advantage, Scott Keller and Colin Price, 2011

23. The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organisational Outcomes, 2016 Gallup Business Journal, How Employee Engagement Drives Growth, 2012

### What you can do for your business

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#### **Invest in management training to support managers to change their approach to team organisation and engagement:**

- Consider guidance focused on supporting employee wellbeing, staying connected and inclusive, changing approach to performance assessment, and embracing technology to foster team collaboration.
- Use webinars to roll out training and make information easily accessible, such as on an employee app, a shared intranet, or through LinkedIn Learning.

#### **Encourage managers to recontract with teams about how they'd like to work more flexibly:**

- Consider guidance for managers and employees to develop a set of guidelines for working effectively as a hybrid team. This could include working hours and preferred frequency and methods of communication.
- Learn from and engage with other teams to inspire ways of working differently that balances organisational needs with employee preference.

#### **Establish how hybrid working affects employees who can't work remotely and take actions to mitigate feelings of 'them vs us':**

- Consider what types of flexibility can be offered beyond home working, such as flexible hours or shift swaps.
- Share stories to help colleagues understand what flexibilities are available to them and how they can be used.

## BAE Systems invests in targeted training and guidance to help managers and teams transition to hybrid working

BAE Systems provides advanced technology-led defence, aerospace and security solutions to customers around the world. During the pandemic, the company worked with its customers, employees and trade unions to identify common priorities and maintain business critical operations – both on site and remotely. As a result, the organisation realised the need to step up, innovate and adopt a different way of working – hybrid. Instead of a formal ‘one size fits all’ approach, BAE Systems empowered employees to consider how they would like to work, providing a range of online training, tools and guidance to help.

### Being clear about what good management and team culture looks like helps managers and employees to adapt

BAE Systems created a guide, intended to support managers and employees in sustaining and enhancing engagement and performance in hybrid teams. This went beyond process and focused on broader culture and behaviours, including how to maintain an inclusive and connected workforce, harness technology effectively, maintain motivation and performance and overall health and wellbeing.

#### Performance assessment

- Focus on employees demonstrating both outcomes and company behaviours.
- Hold regular performance conversations with all team members, paying particular attention to words and tone when they are unable to meet face to face.
- Ask open questions to prompt the other person to share any questions or concerns.

#### Staying connected and inclusive

- Focus on creating an inclusive environment and experience, particularly for those dialling in to meetings. Avoid it becoming a ‘second class’ experience for those unable to attend in person.
- Stay connected to everyone in your team, including informal phone calls or check-ins. Pay specific attention to those who may be at higher risk of feeling isolated or excluded, or managing difficult home circumstances.

### Encourage managers and individuals to have conversations about how they'd like to work in the future

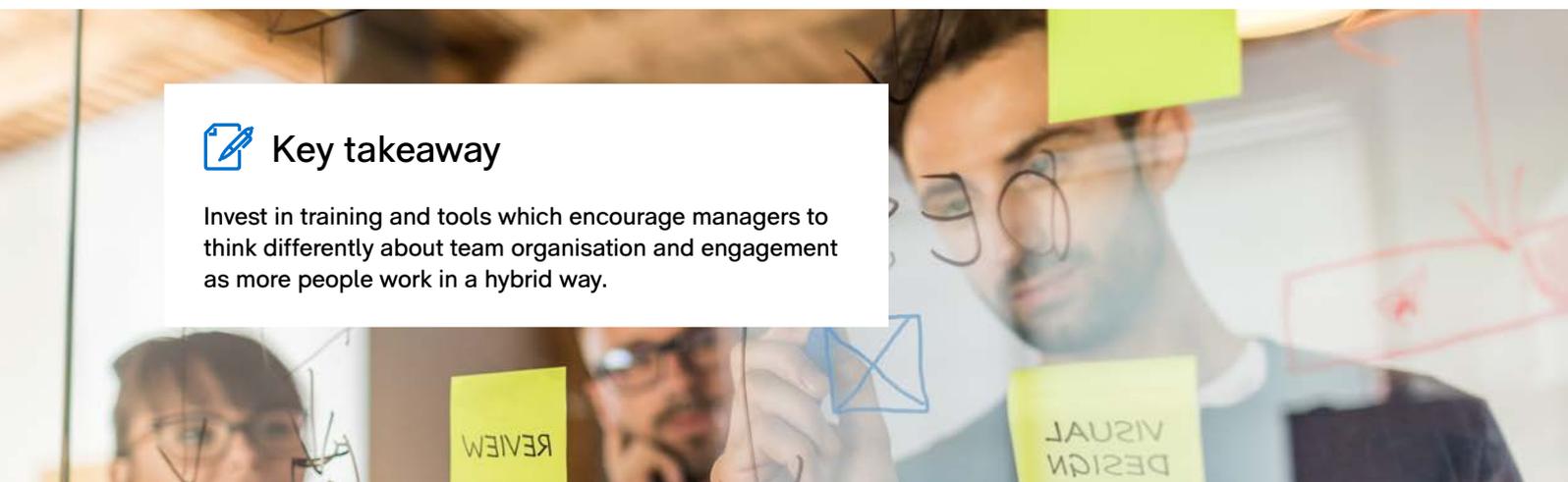
Instead of creating a formal ‘one size fits all’ hybrid working policy, BAE Systems is encouraging managers and employees to think innovatively and have open, honest conversations about how they would like to work in the future, whether that's on site, at home or working in a hybrid way. With their managers, individuals are encouraged to think about four key questions:

- Are there core hours you need to be available?
- Can you be equally or more productive at home; do you need to be on site for some activities?
- What combination of when and where will help you be most effective, efficient, and responsive to customer needs?
- How will changes to your ways of working affect your colleagues and customers?



#### Key takeaway

Invest in training and tools which encourage managers to think differently about team organisation and engagement as more people work in a hybrid way.



## Thales alters their management and performance management approaches to create an organisational culture based on outputs

Thales is a global technology business operating across aerospace, defence, digital security, transport and space. In 2017, Thales rolled out its Smart Working Initiative in response to more staff wanting to work flexibly, and a business objective to become more agile. The success of the initiative has helped to inform their approach to hybrid working.

### Training for managers focuses on setting smart objectives and evaluating how objectives are achieved

One of the biggest challenges faced was cultural - how to shift from a presenteeism culture to an organisation based on outputs. Key to doing so was specific training for managers around how to set objectives and evaluate performance based on outputs. This focussed on working with employees to set SMART objectives, and specifically evaluating "how" – how employees will achieve these objectives by working with their key stakeholders. Managers and team members are encouraged to think about the following questions to ensure their team's objectives are focussed on outputs:

- What will success look like for this objective?
- How will these objectives stretch you?
- What specific outcome will these produce?
- Are the timescales realistic?

### Frequent check-ins are better suited to evaluate organisational behaviours

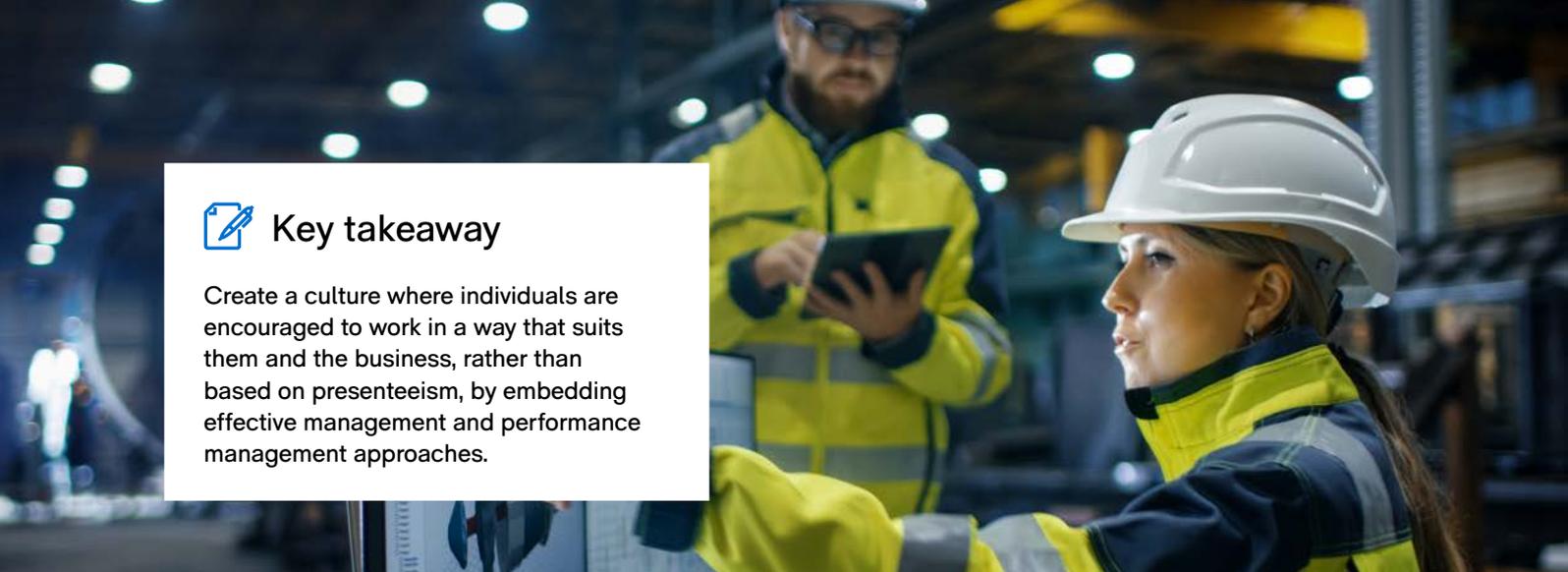
Thales also adapted their appraisal system to better reflect an organisation based on outputs. Instead of operating formal and structured appraisal systems once or twice a year, the organisation moved to operating frequent check-ins, with guidance for managers about how to evaluate employees' performance. The organisation found that frequent check-ins are better suited to evaluate organisational behaviours and how objectives are achieved to deliver agreed outputs.

### Managers are encouraged to engage with their teams to develop a set of guidelines for working effectively together

Thales recognised that there's not a 'one size fits all' approach to hybrid working that works for everyone in the business. Instead, managers are encouraged to engage with their teams to suggest ideas for ways their teams could work differently – whether flexibly or in a hybrid way – with their team objectives and customer needs in mind. Specialist HR support was available to support managers and their teams to decide what smart working could mean for them and to develop a "smart working charter" – a team framework designed to ensure that the balance of remote and onsite working is suitable and sustainable. The aim is not to create prescriptive rules, but to create a set of guidelines for working effectively together as a hybrid team. Thales points to the tools for managers as being vital in achieving this, as well as creating 'employee champions' to act as change agents and promote the benefits across the business.

#### Teams are encouraged to consider the following questions

- What are our team arrangements for working more flexibly?
- Are we enhancing the ways we deliver for customers?
- How do we ensure our work is available to other people we work with?
- How do we ensure our data is secure when we work remotely?
- How do we ensure everyone is working in healthy and ergonomic ways?
- Do we need to have any agreements about frequency and method of communication?
- How do we share space and make best use of the different settings available in the workplace?



## Key takeaway

Create a culture where individuals are encouraged to work in a way that suits them and the business, rather than based on presenteeism, by embedding effective management and performance management approaches.

## Henry Boot shares stories about different types of flexible working on offer to avoid feelings of 'us versus them'

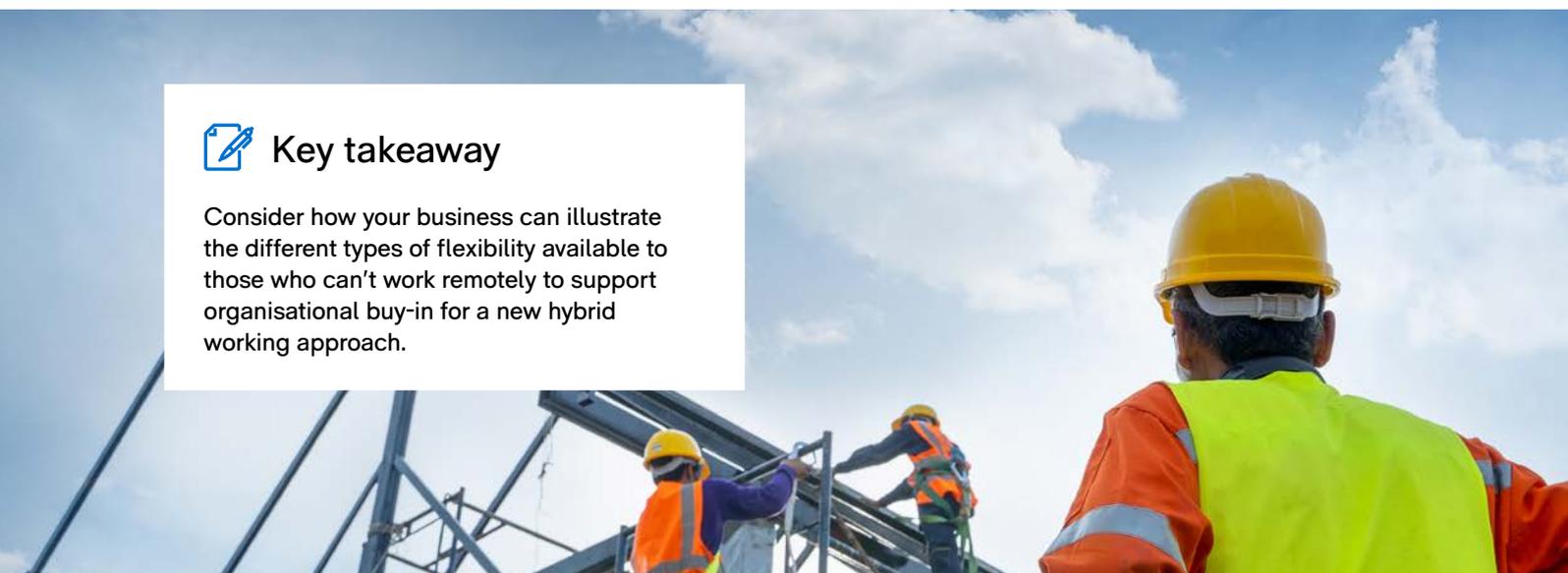
Henry Boot is a business working across the built environment sector. After increasing the opportunities for employees to work flexibly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company was eager to retain the benefits of flexible working. This was a reaction to feedback from staff who felt happier and more productive not having to commute and travel to meetings, as well as the potential organisational benefits flexibility can bring to attract and retain individuals. As a result, Henry Boot plans to roll out a formal agile working policy across the business. Given the majority of site-based staff can't work remotely, ensuring that any new policy works for the whole company and avoids creating a 'us versus them' culture is key.

### **The new agile working policy emphasises the flexibilities available beyond remote working**

As for many site-based working environments, Henry Boot's workforce is split between those able to work from home and those that need to be onsite. This can lead to the perception that those who can work from home have more freedoms and flexibility. To try and overcome this, Henry Boot's agile working approach recognises that new flexibilities are not all about location, and that their working environment can support other forms of flexibility, such as varying start and finish times and flexible shift patterns, to allow everyone to work in the way that best suits them.

### **Sharing examples of a range of flexible working arrangements helps to drive uptake and foster a whole-organisational culture**

Henry Boot expects that by emphasising the variety of flexibility that can apply across the business – instead of just focusing on working from home – everyone will feel included in the agile working offer. They recognise that communicating personal stories of people's experience of using the flexibilities on offer – whether that's hybrid working, flexing starting hours or choosing between rotational or permanent shifts – is a powerful way to translate policy into practice and drive uptake. This helps to boost people's understanding of how different parts of the business work and fosters an organisational culture that tries to minimise feelings of 'us versus them'.



## Key takeaway

Consider how your business can illustrate the different types of flexibility available to those who can't work remotely to support organisational buy-in for a new hybrid working approach.

### Leadership support and role-modelling central to Siemens' organisational shift to hybrid working

Siemens operates in the digital and manufacturing space, focusing on electrification, digitalisation and automation. It has long had a flexible working policy but perhaps due to the more traditional engineering culture, take up was low relative to the length of time the flexible working opportunity had been in place and was still typically used by working mothers. After successfully operating during the COVID-19 pandemic and with more employees expressing interest in working remotely, Siemens' leadership team decided to affirm their commitment to a hybrid working model to encourage organisational-change.

#### Announcing a new hybrid working model came from the very top...

Leaders are essential to driving new organisational changes and making them successful. Demonstrating their commitment to a new policy helps to instil confidence amongst employees that the company is committed to change. At Siemens, messaging about hybrid working came directly from the top. Global Chief Executive at the time, Joe Kaeser, announced that everyone across the business could work flexibly, including those on manufacturing sites who don't have the ability to work from home. For example, varying work patterns and hours. The starting point for those who can work remotely, when offices fully reopen, is for employees to work 2-3 days of their choosing from home or elsewhere. The company reflects that getting a mandate from the very top of the organisation has been vital to changing people's mindsets about flexible and hybrid working. It also set a clear expectation for culture and behavioural change at every level of the organisation and that managers are required to engage with their teams to make it happen.

#### ... with leaders using personal emails to show commitment to a hybrid working model

How leaders communicate with the rest of the organisation is important to demonstrate this commitment. To further embed the company's commitment to developing a hybrid working culture, Joe sent every employee a personal message. The intention was to be as transparent as possible with employees about driving culture and behaviour change at every level of the organisation, and to hold the company to account. Country specific CEO's were then asked to reinforce this message.

#### Employee involvement in the design of new policy is essential to make sure changes are effective

Specific project groups were set up with employees to tease out what needed to be put in place to make the new working model effective for employees, the business, and clients. Involving employees in the design and creation of the new policy has helped to further increase engagement amongst staff as they were involved in every stage of the process – from looking at what technology and equipment would be needed to what the future of the office should look like. Creating the new model with employee input and getting whole-organisation buy-in has given the company confidence that the move will represent a long-term sustainable change.



#### Key takeaway

Use the power of leadership voice and role-modelling to fully embed a new hybrid working policy by giving employees confidence to work in different ways. Involve employees in the design of new ways of working to ensure a long-term sustainable shift.

**Anonymous insights from other businesses:**

To ensure the sustainability of a hybrid working model, businesses are looking at how they can maintain a strong organisational culture while offering employees flexibility in a hybrid model. For many, this means evaluating the purposes for which the office is used – whether that’s collaboration, internal meetings, or for encouraging creative thinking. For others, it’s about encouraging managers to consult with their teams to ensure new working arrangements suit all parties.

One company plans to keep elements of flexible working but believes it’s important to ask teams to spend part of the week working in the office together for collaboration purposes. The business is most likely to set core hours or days that teams have to be onsite so they’re better able to collaborate at least once or twice a week.

At another firm, senior leadership is planning to ask staff who want to work in a hybrid way to come into the workplace three days a week, with the option of working from home the remaining two days. As certain company roles require people to work onsite, the move will be paired with an informal flexible hours policy which asks each team to look at what flexibility they can manage within their own team, recognising the different demands of the business.

Another business in the tech sector wants to avoid a centrally determined flexible working policy, asking leaders and managers in different business areas to consult with their teams instead. This recognises that departments have different uses for a shared workspace, which a centralised policy isn’t able to capture. As a starting point, the company is encouraging leaders and managers to consider specific purposes individuals should use the office for – whether for collaboration, product development, or team meetings.

Remote working has worked well for many businesses during the pandemic, and one firm in the leisure industry plans to primarily stick with it. Their intention is for staff to work remotely at least four days a week, with one day designated for meeting in a rented workspace, either for formal meetings or casual get togethers. To maintain team engagement, the company is looking at new technology and interactive platforms to facilitate socialising throughout the week. The firm reflects that it won’t be able to provide those ‘water-cooler moments’ but it will provide some level of corporate interaction that has been missing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A potential drawback of more hybrid working is that those not working in the office may not feel included or engaged in discussions – such as on conference calls, which have the tendency to favour people speaking in the room. To try and avoid this problem, one company is looking at different technology to conduct conference calls – which involves employees joining both collectively and individually – including cameras that move towards the people who are speaking to try and give a more immersive and inclusive experience for those working remotely.



# 4. Operations and practical support

## Create a working environment where employees can perform to their full potential

The modern workplace has gone through a number of changes in the last few decades – from individuals working in cubicles to wide open plan offices. The reason to adopt change is clear: an employees' surroundings has a significant impact on their job satisfaction and employees need to feel comfortable in their physical setting to work at their best. An unfit environment can be as much of a source of strain as poor work-life balance or heavy workload.<sup>24</sup>

Given the importance firms put on the workplace environment when employees are in the office, it's essential that they continue to do so in the hybrid environment. This means ensuring employees have the right equipment and technology needed to work effectively at home or in a shared workplace. Having the right equipment to operate improves health and safety too. The cost of getting this wrong is high: an estimated 6.9m working days were lost due to work related musculoskeletal health in 2018/19.<sup>25</sup>

Businesses should consider the costs associated with operating a hybrid model, such as what equipment and practical support employees will require to work effectively. For example, **CPI** has decided to provide hybrid workers with health and safety compliant furniture at home on a needs basis. Similarly, **Schneider Electric** provides equipment uplifts to employees based on their health and safety assessment results. Firms should consider what the future of their workplace looks like and what facilities changes would complement their new working model. This could mean completely re-evaluating office spaces, with hybrid working costs potentially being offset by saving on commercial property rents. Ultimately, employees need the right technology and equipment to make hybrid working a success, so firms must decide how additional expenses will be funded, while considering the potential long-term benefits of doing so.

### Questions every business should ask

- What practical support should my business offer to hybrid workers, such as extra equipment and financial support?
- How should I ensure fairness in the process?
- How should my business create a hybrid working policy and roll it out across the business?

24. The impact of physical environments on employee wellbeing – topic overview, Public Health England, 2015

25. Work related musculoskeletal disorder statistics (WRMSDs) in Great Britain, Health and Safety Executive, 2019



### What you can do for your business

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#### **Determine what level of support your business can provide employees based at home for equipment and furniture uplifts:**

- Consider allocating additional equipment or furniture on a needs basis, determined by health and safety assessments results or through staff discussions.

#### **Establish what changes should be made to the workplace to make the most of the space as more people work remotely:**

- Increase the amount of collaboration space to enable people to work together effectively when they come into the office. Consider hot desking instead of individual workstations to adapt to a flexible workforce.
- Implement a booking system to manage space in the office, especially where employees can choose which days they come onsite or into the office.

#### **Create a clear plan for creating and rolling out a new hybrid working policy across the business:**

- Involve managers and employees in the design of a new policy to test what would work well in practice.
- Use the power of leadership voice and role-modelling to help embed a new hybrid working policy.
- Hybrid working is new for most businesses, so it's vital to establish a framework to evaluate how well the policy is working. This could include comparing engagement survey results, net promoter scores, or data on how likely employees are to recommend the business as a place to work.

## CPI shares ideas of how to create, launch and evaluate a new hybrid working policy

The Centre for Process Innovation (CPI) is a leading technology innovation centre based in the north east. After feedback showed staff's preference for working from home but with the option of working in the office, CPI launched a cross-functional project team to establish how they could transition to a permanent hybrid working model when offices fully reopen.

### **It helps to be clear about your aims and objectives from the outset**

For CPI, the aim was to give people the choice of where to work to be most productive. CPI also had the objectives of improving the safety, sustainability, and health and wellbeing of the organisation; and increasing access to more diverse talent pools beyond the North East. The company felt that full home working would only be successful if everyone did so. Given that the company operates with onsite laboratories and various facilities, hybrid working made sense as a way for employees to choose their default place of work, with the option of coming into the workplace when it made sense for their or their team's work. To put policy into practice, CPI created a cross-functional project team that included employee representatives to ensure workability and uptake of the new policy.

### **CPI have set out a three-stage process for launching and evaluating the long-term success of the policy**

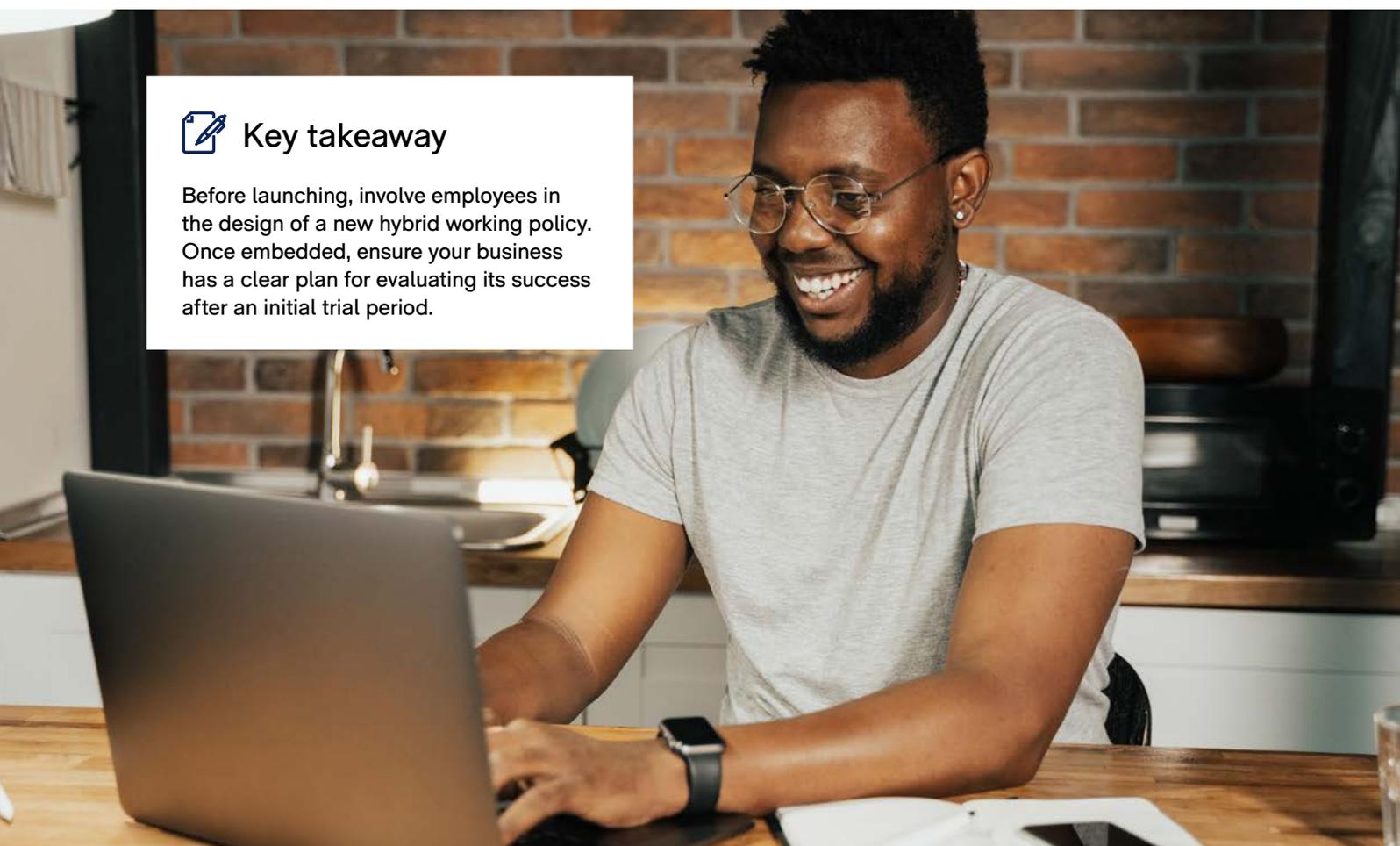
The purpose of the first 'launch' stage was to share information about the new policy across the company. For CPI, this involved holding a series of webinars to outline the policy and what it means for employees. During this time, leaders and managers were expected to recontract with their teams about how they would like to work in a hybrid model. The second 'embed' stage, spread across six months, focuses on giving staff access to tools and resources to make it work effectively – such as running a series of webinars and trainings for managers on how to lead hybrid teams.

Evaluating how well its hybrid working policy is working is fundamental for CPI to make the shift sustainable in the long-term. CPI will rely on data from their quarterly pulse survey, as well as reviewing performance development reviews (PDRs) to determine whether there has been a change in overall employee performance. They also plan to monitor their net promoter score for engagement and how likely employees are to recommend CPI as a place to work.



### **Key takeaway**

**Before launching, involve employees in the design of a new hybrid working policy. Once embedded, ensure your business has a clear plan for evaluating its success after an initial trial period.**



### CPI provides hybrid workers with health and safety compliant furniture at home on a needs basis

To implement its move towards hybrid working CPI had to decide what technology and equipment was needed to make the transition, and how the onsite workspace would change as a result.

As employees would be working in both the office and at home, having adequate technology and the ability to operate in a safe working environment was vital. While CPI thought about giving financial compensation to hybrid workers to purchase additional equipment, they decided that this would unfairly disadvantage employees, such as laboratory staff, who are unable to work in a hybrid way. CPI also factored in that employees able to work from home were likely to be saving money by cutting down their commute. Instead, CPI decided to provide all employees with a health and safety compliant desk, chair and IT equipment for their home set up, if needed based on virtual DSE assessment results. Their rationale was that it would be a one-off cost but provide long-term advantages, the most fundamental being helping employees work more productively, as well as the potential savings on overhead costs. It also supports the business' environmental objectives by contributing to reducing carbon emissions from people working from home.

More people regularly working from home means CPI's office is likely to be used in different ways. CPI will operate large areas of the office as hot-desking and have installed a robust and easily accessible booking system to manage workspaces. CPI is also looking at how to create the right in-office collaboration spaces in areas previously taken up by individual desk spaces. They plan to invest in the office's physical environment in the most effective way to encourage collaborative conversations.



#### Key takeaway

Evaluate what additional technology and equipment staff need while working from home and consider its impact on the existing workplace to inform how changes are made.

## Schneider Electric will provide equipment uplifts to employees based on health and safety assessment results

To make hybrid working sustainable, Schneider Electric is focusing on some of the practical operational challenges – such as providing equipment for employees to work effectively at home and managing a flexible workspace.

### Linking uplifts to health and safety assessments has allowed the company to allocate equipment on a needs basis

Like any move towards hybrid working, Schneider Electric had to consider their long-term approach to funding and grants for home equipment. Several principles underpinned their cost-benefit analysis to determine the right balance of support and investment. This included providing equipment on a needs basis to enable all employees to work effectively regardless of location and creating a policy fair to all employees, including those already home working. This had to be weighed up against the significant cost of providing equipment to work in multiple locations. Schneider Electric decided that as everyone already worked from a laptop, and considering the potential savings from reducing office overheads, the costs of providing equipment was reasonable and worth the investment.

Schneider Electric have since developed a system for managers to consult with employees about what equipment or furniture they may need based on the results of a DSE assessment conducted from their remote working location. They then ask employees to purchase this with recommended suppliers, after which employees claim back the cost. This allows the company to effectively target investment in equipment based on what employees need to do their job effectively, regardless of location.

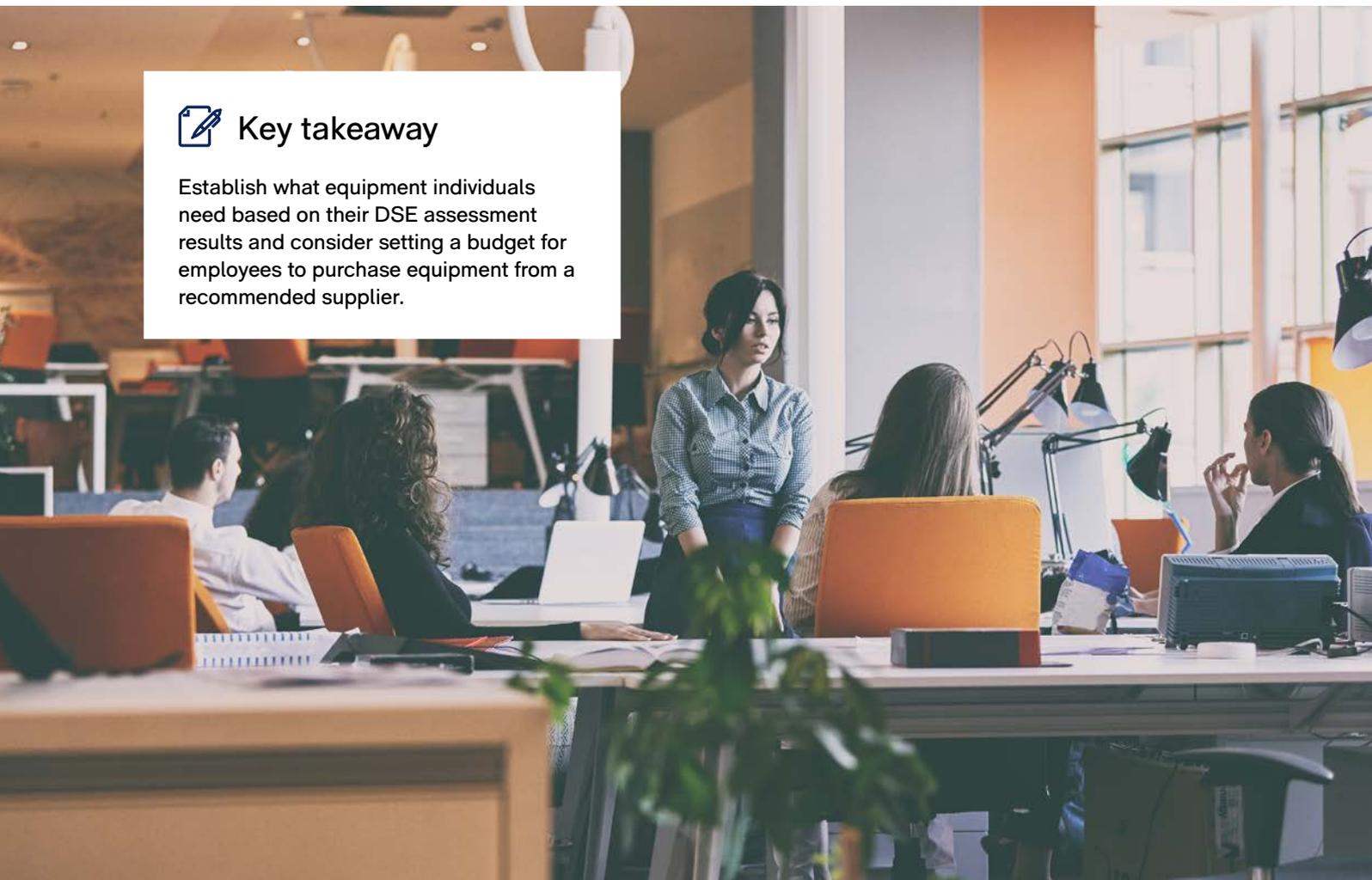
### Centralised booking systems allow the company to manage their workspaces

Giving employees the choice of when to come into the office makes it harder for Schneider Electric to manage their workspace. To help, they are auditing the company to better understand what equipment and space is available across different sites. For staff that need specialised equipment to perform their role, they have allocated enough proportionate provision across each workplace so that anyone who needs specialised equipment will be able to access it onsite should the whole workforce book in for the day.



### Key takeaway

Establish what equipment individuals need based on their DSE assessment results and consider setting a budget for employees to purchase equipment from a recommended supplier.



### Vodafone plans to experiment with office layout to increase space dedicated to collaborative and team working

Vodafone UK is a technology communications company that connects people, businesses and devices to help its customers benefit from digital innovation. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the vast majority of Vodafone's employees worked from home if they could. This included enabling all customer service agents to work remotely and to redeploy retail agents to customer care when shops were closed. This experience and feedback from Vodafone's employees have helped inform the company's perspective on how teams work together, the future of work and the role of the office.

#### Vodafone seeks to retain the benefits that remote working brought during the pandemic

Vodafone expects that for many of its employees their future working patterns will see an increase in remote working, giving employees the best of both worlds: the benefits of flexible working, with its reduced commuting time and costs, as well as the benefits of physically coming together with colleagues when needed to help teams be more creative, collaborative and social.

Positive feedback from employees has been the main driver behind Vodafone's ambition to adapt to more blended office and home working. Feedback so far has focused on how the flexibility and empowerment, as experienced during the pandemic, has enabled employees to get their work done in an optimal way and better manage their time: allowing them to balance childcare or caring responsibilities, or just giving individuals more free time by not commuting.

Roles vary hugely across the company and Vodafone's working patterns will reflect that. One size won't fit all – for example, the type of work undertaken by field engineers and retail store employees is very different to those in more desk-based roles. At the same time, some employees may not feel they can work as effectively at home, and Vodafone's future working structures will also strive to reflect that for those team members. Overall though, Vodafone hopes that this model will help attract more people with different perspectives, cultures and skills, and allow them to access a wider geographical pool of talent, supporting the business goal to become an even more diverse employer.

#### Experimenting with office space will help Vodafone decide what set up is most conducive to blended working

Before the pandemic, Vodafone's office spaces were predominantly filled with hot desks with a range of meeting rooms and break out areas for people to use. The company has now started looking at the role of the office and the potential for it to be more of a space used to collaborate and create. Whilst there will still be hot desk areas available, Vodafone will look to increase the amount of floor space for team working, designed to enable teams to work together collaboratively, either in a more formal 'meeting room' style or in a more relaxed environment designed to enable thoughts and ideas to be shared and developed.

Once the government is able to relax social distancing measures, Vodafone plans to trial a number of new physical space arrangements and expects to evolve its building usage models over time, as the new way of working becomes the "new normal" and further lessons can be learned.



#### Key takeaway

Evaluate the purposes for which your organisation uses office space to inform what changes could be made to support collaboration and engagement among teams.



**Anonymous insights from other businesses:**

Hybrid working can come with increased costs if employers need to provide duplicate equipment. For that reason, some companies are planning to avoid mandating certain work from home days, while others are looking to offer other types of flexibility to those working in roles that require expensive specialist equipment. But hybrid working can offer potential cost savings too, with some businesses looking to close certain parts of the worksite on days employees work from home to save on overhead and operational costs.

There are many drivers informing the design of hybrid working policies. For one company, the most important was recognising the benefits of seeing and building connections with colleagues for collaboration and team engagement. To reflect this, teams are encouraged to designate a certain day when the whole team is in the office together. The company also wanted to avoid mandating certain work from home days, as they felt that this wouldn't work for employees who prefer to work in the office and comes with increased costs through obligations to provide duplicate furniture and equipment.

A firm in the financial services sector is considering putting together standardised remote working packages for everyone who wants to work in a hybrid way when offices fully reopen. Ideas include going above and beyond the required laptop and screen, providing equipment like adjustable standing desks to help individuals work comfortably and effectively at home.

One business hopes that hybrid working will allow them to close certain parts of the worksite on certain days, allowing them to save on overhead and operational costs. If the company sees that most people are working remotely on certain days, for example, they'd look to ask individuals working onsite to move to one part of the building and close the rest. It's considered a potential long-term benefit of a shift to more hybrid working.

Another company has found that a hybrid model is harder to put into practice for some roles. For instance, some roles need specialist equipment that is very expensive and difficult to transport from one location to another and providing a whole suite of duplicate equipment isn't possible. To help be as flexible as possible, and in line with staff preferences, the company intends to give staff the choice to work either full time at home or in the office, rather than mixing between locations.



## Useful resources to help you on your journey

To successfully transition to hybrid working when offices fully reopen, it's important for firms to start thinking about these practical questions now. The good news is that there are plenty of useful resources to help you on your journey. If you'd like to find out more information, you can:

### 1. Discover more useful CBI resources to help you plan

- Eager to learn more about employee engagement for virtual teams and how to support employees working from home? Our factsheets on **employee engagement** and **remote working** are regularly updated with the latest information and real stories from businesses.
- Looking to invest in your people to help them adapt to new ways of working? Our **Great Job** report highlights the productivity benefits of improving business' people practices and sets out seven key habits that businesses can adopt to effectively lead, engage and develop their staff.
- Looking for new ways to prioritise health and wellbeing in your workplace? Our **Front of Mind** report draws on evidence from other businesses to set some basic principles for how firms can invest in their employees' health and wellbeing with confidence.
- Visit **My CBI**: the CBI's online hub is your go-to place for further information on a range of people and skills topics. Visit **Ideas Forum** for more inspiration.

### 2. Explore the topic further using external resources

- Timewise has published several articles about the future of hybrid working on their **knowledge hub**.
- **Grae Matta Foundation** features a number of articles on the importance of good mental health in the workplace.

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