

Call for evidence on home-based working Acas response

10 June 2025

This is the Acas Executive response to the [Call for Evidence from the House of Lords Committee on Home-based Working](#).

Our response

1. Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Lords Committee's call for evidence on home-based working.
2. This response focuses primarily on questions 1 to 4 of the call.
3. Acas is a statutory, non-departmental public body with a duty to promote the improvement of industrial relations in Great Britain. Working with millions of employers and workers every year, Acas has considerable practical experience of employment relations and of the issues that can be experienced across all areas of employment law and workplace practice, including flexible working.
4. Between April 2024 and March 2025, Acas handled approximately 650,000 calls from individuals and employers to our national helpline, of which nearly 11,500 related to flexible working. Over the same period, our website received around 20.5 million visits, of which nearly 130,000 viewed? [Acas's flexible working advice pages](#).
5. Insights from our services suggest that mismatches between employer and employee expectations and a lack of transparency in the handling of requests can be a driver of conflict and dispute within the workplace.
6. One of Acas's critical levers for promoting industrial relations is our statutory power to issue Codes of Practice that set out minimum standards of fairness in workplaces. Our revised [Code of Practice on requests for flexible working](#), published in April 2024, was developed following public consultation and extensive stakeholder engagement, including with the previous government's Flexible Working Taskforce. Insights gathered show the potential for flexible working to support both individual and organisational health and wellbeing, staff retention and wider labour market participation.
7. Revisions to the Acas Code in 2024 reflected not only legislative reforms, including the new 'day 1' right to request, but also significant societal and technological developments since our original Code was published in 2014. The overall aim of the revised Code is to encourage employers and employees to engage in an open and constructive dialogue about what may be workable for both parties.
8. Acas recognises that remote and hybrid working models are an important feature of the modern workplace. Notably, the covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has raised awareness of the potential for flexible working to foster sustainable working practices for diverse workforces. The return to offices since the peak of the pandemic has created a will for experimentation with remote and hybrid models in some industries. This reflects a recognition that both employers and employees might welcome more fluid working arrangements on a more permanent basis, to the mutual benefit of both parties.
9. In recognition of this changing landscape, in November 2024 Acas published a [case study research paper](#) exploring the different flexible working practices (including remote and hybrid working) of 5 large UK-based organisations across different sectors: a retailer, a local authority, a professional services organisation, an NHS Trust, and a bank. Through interviews with HR representatives, trade union representatives and individual managers, the research aimed to explore a number of themes of relevance to this inquiry.

10. Relevant findings are set out below. These include insights into flexible working practices in general, as well as those specifically related to remote and hybrid working. Where findings pertain only to remote or hybrid working, this is clearly indicated.

Q1 and Q2: Opportunities and challenges of remote and hybrid working for employees, and impacts on physical and mental health

11. The benefits of remote and hybrid working were highlighted by interviewees at both the personal and the professional level for different groups of employees. For working parents, for example, being able to work remotely enabled a better balance between operating effectively within their roles alongside their childcare responsibilities outside of the workplace.

12. In addition to caring responsibilities, other factors driving requests for homeworking included age (for example to manage menopause symptoms), disability and cost of living increases. For example, a manager in retail spoke about a staff member struggling with the significant increase in the cost of travelling into the office 2 days a week. Some managers observed that the cost of living was driving staff to plan amongst themselves where they worked on different days. Managers wanted to exercise sensitivity around these issues, particularly for their lower-paid employees.

Q3 and Q4: Opportunities and challenges of remote and hybrid working for employers

13. Flexible working had become part of the case study organisations' strategic thinking, central to recruitment, retention, and workforce wellbeing. All organisations reported experiencing ongoing severe workforce shortages and difficulties attracting staff, and all case study employers held the view that flexible working options could aid recruitment. Interviewees in the healthcare organisation noted that being seen as a flexible employer gave them an edge in a tight labour market. Similarly, some were concerned that employees could leave in larger numbers if not provided access to flexible working models that they desired.

14. Remote working has also enabled organisations to recruit people whose health prevented them from working on-site. Increasingly, organisations were exploring how hybrid and other forms of flexible working could enable them to tap into new labour sources, as well as enabling staff living with long-term health conditions to work for longer. This highlights the important role that different forms of home-based working can play in supporting the government's commitment to tackling unprecedented levels of economic inactivity, as most recently set out in the [Get Britain Working White Paper](#).

15. Managers from case study organisations also believed the potential for hybrid working to increase workforce diversity to be a benefit. For example, managers noted that disabled employees and mothers with young children who would not have previously applied for office-based positions were able to more readily commit to hybrid working.

16. Technological capabilities impacted the availability and effectiveness of home-based working. For example, in the healthcare organisation, electronic health records facilitated remote and hybrid working and simplified data sharing between teams. In banking, investments in technology enabled people to work from multiple locations across the globe.

17. Acas's research examined industry variations in access to flexible working across the case studies; the ability to work remotely or via hybrid arrangements was the most common arrangement showing differences within organisations. Whilst these issues reflect a particular snapshot in time (the immediate post-pandemic period), they reflect an enduring organisational challenge to balance the flexibility that people want from their employer with business needs. For example:

- in the retail firm, other than head office personnel (a group that also held the highest professional qualifications), in-person contact was essential for customer-facing staff
- in the healthcare organisation, very specific quotas such as the make-up of clinical teams meant they saw less opportunity for remote and hybrid working compared to non-clinical staff in corporate or administrative roles
- in the local government organisation, a 'two-tier' system had developed whereby office-based staff worked in hybrid patterns, while frontline staff (such as refuse collectors or cashiers) did not – this was partly due to the physical constraints of offering locational flexibility within frontline roles, but also existing satisfaction among many members of these teams with their own

existing schedules

18. While it was rare for the case study organisations to reject flexible working applications, this occurred when managers assessed the requested changes as incompatible with the role's requirements. Organisations often, however, sought to offer site-based staff alternative flexible working options that were not hybrid, but which could still enhance their wellbeing at work, such as term-time working or compressed hours, provided they aligned with teams' service provision requirements.

19. The research noted the importance of cultural openness to change and leaders' role-modelling of flexible working. Managers in case study organisations observed that some senior leaders were less receptive to hybrid working and remained unconvinced that remote working served the business's interests. In a financial services firm, for example, this was attributed to differences in generational perspectives and expectations about where work is best performed.

20. A primary issue for employers was whether staff could be trusted to achieve their targets when working off-site. Managers felt this was easier to manage when there was a longer relationship between a manager and staff member and therefore a track record of performance. However, it was considered more challenging with newer recruits who had yet to establish their reliability.

21. The experience of incorporating hybrid working into how organisations operated also brought new opportunities for learning and establishing good practice. For example, widespread use of remote working stimulated case study managers' thinking about jobs less in terms of time spent in a particular location or workplace, and more about outputs, which could have benefits around both efficiency and job satisfaction.

22. Managers also played an important role in curating patterns of hybrid working that brought teams together in offices at optimum times for collaboration. In this sense, managerial expertise was key to the effective use of space by teams.

23. Conversely, wellbeing and mental health issues were also becoming more visible to managers in terms of staff who would benefit from more office time. This was sometimes because they were isolated at home, or because they lacked suitable home workspaces. An important part of good practice was to prioritise this group's need for office space. This increasing emphasis on wellbeing was a significant change for the case study organisations.

24. This shift towards prioritising employee wellbeing also aligned with a broader trend observed by case study interviewees: hybrid meetings were enabling more inclusive participation. Meetings were providing opportunities for employees to engage in a broader range of discussions and learn from a wider network of colleagues than had previously been possible.

Concluding remarks

25. We look forward to continuing to share our practical insights to inform policy making and to support the delivery of any new policy in this area through our statutory Acas Code, guidance and wider training and advisory services.