

Institution: 10007822
Unit of Assessment: 19
Title of case study: Flexible working for all: shaping international policy and UK legislation
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research at Cranfield School of Management has shown that, contrary to preconceptions, flexible working arrangements for employees do not adversely affect an organisation's performance. As a direct consequence of our research, and its unique and fundamental contribution to the Walsh Review, in 2009 the UK government extended the legal right of parents of children up to 16 years of age to request flexible working arrangements, affecting 4.5 million people.</p> <p>The government also announced in 2012 plans to extend this right to all UK employees in 2014.</p> <p>These findings have influenced policy debates and developments internationally through reports by the ILO and expert meetings of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This research at Cranfield School of Management examined the impact of flexible working on an individual's performance at work. It also explored the factors influencing successful implementation of flexible working practices.</p> <p>Cranfield research challenged the idea that providing flexible working arrangements was simply a cost to the employer, by demonstrating that through offering these arrangements to all employees firms could generate performance benefits [R1, R4, R6]. Our work identified a number of factors influencing successful implementation of flexible working practices, indicating that organisational benefits were gained where flexible working was implemented into an appropriate environment and where other HR policies had been altered to reflect the changed arrangements of flexible workers [R3, R5].</p> <p>The findings showed evidence of a positive association between flexible working and individual performance [R1, R6]. Flexible workers, managers and co-workers of flexible workers reported a generally positive effect on the quantity and quality of work performed, with very little evidence of a detrimental effect. In comparison to those on standard working arrangements, flexible workers had significantly higher scores on organisational commitment. The higher levels of work effort and commitment arose from a form of reciprocation or exchange from employees grateful for the ability to exercise some control over their working patterns [R1, R2, R6]. Higher levels of job satisfaction were derived from the ability to pursue a career and achieve a more satisfactory work-life balance [R1, R2].</p> <p>The research uncovered the prevalence of informal flexible working in many of the case organisations [R1, R2, R3]. With the exception of reduced hours working, informal arrangements between an employee and their line manager were more common than arrangements which had been agreed via the formal request process.</p> <p>The research demonstrated the need to review existing HR policies when introducing flexible working. Policies designed for employees on 'standard' working arrangements could inadvertently disadvantage employees with flexible working arrangements [R5]. The conclusions suggest a training need both for those moving to different working arrangements and for those managing them [R3].</p> <p>Cranfield conducted the research in partnership with the charity Working Families and a consortium of seven companies that sponsored the research (Centrica, Citigroup, KPMG, Lehman</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Brothers, Microsoft, Pfizer, Rolls Royce).

The research comprised seven case studies, 123 semi-structured interviews, 10 focus groups and a 93-item electronic questionnaire (3580 responses). It examined how changes to the place, timing and amount of work influenced both direct (quantity, quality, ability to work in team) and indirect (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, stress) outcomes for employee performance. Types of flexible working included in the study included reduced hours working; remote working (where employees worked in a different location for some of their working time); flexitime arrangements where employees worked at different times from the normal hours for the workplace.

Cranfield School of Management (2008). *Flexible Working and Performance: Summary of Research*. London: Working Families. <http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/new-thinking/published-research/our-published-research-and-papers>

Project timing: November 2005 – April 2008

Key Researchers and roles for the research

Dr Clare Kelliher, Senior Lecturer
Deirdre Anderson, PhD student

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Kelliher, C., and Anderson, D. (2010). Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations*, Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 83-106. Accessible in REF2 (this article was the 2nd most downloaded paper in *Human Relations* in the year Dec 2010 to Nov 2011.)

[R2] Kelliher, C., and Anderson, D. (2008). For better or for worse? An analysis of how flexible working practices influence employees' perceptions of job quality. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 419-431. Accessible in REF2

[R3] Anderson, D. & Kelliher, C. (2011) 'Spatial Aspects of Professional's Work-Life Integration, in Kaiser, S., Cunha, M. & Eikof, D. (eds.) *Creating Balance? International Perspectives on the Work-Life Integration of Professionals*, Springer Publications.

[R4] Kelliher, C. & Anderson, D. (2006) 'Flexible Working and Performance: balancing the needs of the employer and the employee' ACREW/Kings College Conference, July, Prato, Italy.

[R5] Kelliher, C & Anderson, D. (2007) 'Different Workplaces, Different Work Day: an examination of the impact of remote working on lives' EGOS, Organisations and Lifestyles theme, July, Vienna.

[R6] Kelliher, C. & Anderson, D. (2009) 'Flexible Working and Work Intensification: trading choice for effort', Academy of Management Conference, Chicago, August.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

This case demonstrates **impacts on public policy, law and services** through our '**Pathway to Impact**' – **No. 2 (Research Clubs)** by stimulating policy debate and legislative change.

Cranfield's research into the impact of flexible working on an individual's performance at work has demonstrated that offering flexible working arrangements to employees brings performance benefits to organisations **[S9]**. This has informed debate in policy and professional organisations in the UK and internationally. A number of policy documents have also cited our research as evidence.

The research was the sole source of evidence for the government to introduce legislation

extending the right to request flexible working first to parents of older children, then to carers and finally to all employees. The government introduced a series of legislative amendments broadening the scope to cover all employees in the UK. Until the first change only parents of children aged up to six, or up to 18 if the child was disabled, were eligible to apply for flexible working arrangements.

Policy

Cranfield research influenced debate and policy development in national and international organisations by providing evidence about the implementation and outcomes of flexible working. These organisations have included the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (an independent statutory body with a mandate to challenge discrimination and protect and monitor human rights), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Eurofound (the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations.

The research is cited in two documents published by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission [**S1**, **S2**] demonstrating the business case for flexible working. The ILO also cited our research in a report on working time and productivity [**S4**]. The CIPD used our work in a Factsheet for members on Flexible Working.

Cranfield researchers presented the project findings and participated in Expert Groups at the European Foundation, 'Eurofound' (Dublin, June, 2011) [**S3**] and the United Nations (New York, November, 2010). The purpose of the Eurofound expert meetings on 'organisation of working time: Implications for productivity and working conditions' was to feed into the foundation's work in the field and to help identify priority areas for future Eurofound research.

The purpose of the United Nations Expert Group on Work-Life Balance Policies and Practice was to identify good practices and lessons learned and to develop recommendations for policies and practices to strengthen the implementation of work-life balance policies, including flexible working arrangements, in the United Nations system globally.

Legislation

In April 2009 the Flexible working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) (Amendment) Regulations came into force [**S6**]. These regulations extended the right to request flexible working arrangements to parents of children up to 16 years of age – offering this opportunity to an additional 4.5 million people (Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. (August 2008)). Prior to this change the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), Rt Hon John Hutton MP, commissioned Imelda Walsh, HR Director of J Sainsbury plc to conduct an independent review and to examine the case for extending the case for extending the right to request to parents of older children. She consulted the key researchers on this research project.

The report to the minister, the Walsh Review, published in May 2008 [**S5**] drew extensively on our report, "*Flexible Working and Performance: summary of the research*" (see section 2), as providing important and exclusive evidence of the benefits which employers can gain from offering flexible working practices to their employees, such as better retention and improvements to productivity. The subsequent consultation document commissioned by BERR [**S7**] during the autumn 2008 also cited our research report.

The government subsequently accepted the recommendations proposed in the Walsh Review and amended the legislation to put them into effect.

In 2012 the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, announced plans to give every employee in the UK the right to request flexible working arrangements [**S8**]. These will come in to force in February 2014.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**Policy:**

[S1] Equality and Human Rights Commission, Research Report 16. Flexible working policies: a comparative review. March 2009. Ariane Hegewisch.

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/16_flexibleworking.pdf

(pages 44,48 and 75)

[S2] Equality and Human Rights Commission, Meeting the changing needs of families, workers and employers in the 21st century Working Better. March 2009.

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/working_better_final_pdf_250309.pdf

(pages 54, 55 and 77)

[S3] Eurofound Expert Meeting 2-3 June 2011.

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/events/2011/workingtime/index.htm> (See June 2 2011 for evidence of participation – presentation by Dr Clare Kelliher).

[S4] Golden, L. (2012). *The effects of working time on productivity and firm performance: A research synthesis paper*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_187307.pdf (see pages 5 and 12).

Legislation:

[S5] Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. (May 2008). Right to request flexible working – A review of how to extend the right to request flexible working to parents of older children. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file46092.pdf> (pages 8 and 23)

[S6] Flexible working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) (Amendment) Regulations, 2009

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2009/595/contents/made>

[S7] Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. (August 2008). Consultation on implementing the recommendations of Imelda Walsh's independent review.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file47434.pdf> (pages 10, 37)

[S8] Deputy Prime Ministerial announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/flexible-parental-leave-to-revolutionise-parents-lives-at-work-and-home> (dated 13 November 2012)

User Beneficiary:

[S9] Director, Working Families. Statement confirming the research and its influence on legislation, policy and practice.