Home is where the work is:
A new study of homeworking in Acas – and beyond

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HOME IS WHERE THE WORK IS:
A new study of homeworking in Acas –and beyond

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homeworking is on the rise: just over 13% of the UK workforce performs some or all of their usual job-related tasks at home. The findings presented in this report are derived from data collected among Acas employees via in-depth interviews, a quantitative survey and a 14-day diary study, supplemented by a comprehensive review of the academic research literature. Homewokers, who conduct virtually all of their work at home, were compared to partial homeworkers, who work from home approximately 31% of the time; mobile workers, who spend about half their working time on the road and the rest divided between home and the office; and office workers.

Main findings

Performance and job attitudes

Contrary to assumptions that a constant physical presence in the workplace is required for maximum job performance, the study found that performance is slightly higher for partial homeworkers and mobile workers.

With regard to job attitudes, partial homeworkers and mobile workers report higher job satisfaction and engagement with their jobs than any of their colleagues. Office workers perceive having significantly lower levels of autonomy and control than did any of the other groups of workers.

Employee well-being

Work hours are shortest among office workers: homeworkers and partial homeworkers are more likely to work in excess of their contracted hours, while mobile workers work significantly more hours in excess of their contracts than all other groups of workers. While all groups report similarly high levels of satisfaction with their work-life balance, partial homeworkers, mobile workers and office workers are significantly more likely than homeworkers to perceive that their work has a positive impact on their personal life.

Homeworking and partial homeworking are linked to significantly lower levels of work-related stress than those experienced by office workers. When it comes to social isolation, a common concern associated with homeworking, partial homeworkers are less likely to report experiencing isolation than their homewoker colleagues. This and other findings suggest that, in the case of Acas, partial homeworking yields the best outcomes for employees in terms of minimising levels of stress and well-being.

Implications for employees

Blurred boundaries between work and home are often cited as an issue for homeworkers. Within Acas, the strategies that homeworkers adopt to create boundaries between home and work appear effective. For instance, a large majority (78%) of employees who work at least 20% of their hours at home do so in a room that is designated for that purpose. Partial homeworkers and mobile workers are most likely to be flexible when work demands threaten to spill over into personal time; these workers are the most likely to integrate their work and personal lives, rather than keeping them separate.
In terms of career aspirations, homeworkers are less likely to report having the ambition to advance in their careers and to agree that having a career is important to their sense of identity. Interview data suggest that this is due to a combination of homeworkers’ enjoyment of their current job roles, and the expectation that career progression would necessitate a greater amount of time spent in the office. Overall, line managers express more career ambition and have a more positive relationship with Acas than non-line managers.

**Implications for managers**

Four themes that dominate the literature on effective management of homeworkers are trust, performance management, communication, and training. Acas line managers report communicating more often, with more face-to-face interactions, with their office-based staff than with their homeworking employees. A substantial number of managers acknowledge that managing homeworkers is more difficult than managing office workers, but only one-third agree that it would be easier to manage homeworkers if they spent more time in the office.
1. INTRODUCTION TO HOMEWORKING

1.1 HOMEWORKING IN THE UK

Homeworking is an arrangement in which employees perform their usual job-related tasks at home rather than in a central workplace, and do so for a regular portion of their work schedule, using electronic media to communicate with others both inside and outside the organisation. It is a growing practice: according to the Office for National Statistics, just over four million people used both a telephone and a computer to carry out their work at or based from home in 2012. As of 2011, homeworkers constituted just over 13% of the national workforce, a growth of two percentage points since 2001. The majority of homeworkers reported themselves self-employed (63%), with 37% being employees.

Labour Force Survey data from 2009 found that relatively few UK homeworking employees, approximately 5% of the workforce, carried out the majority of their work at home. The number of employees who work part of the time from home has increased to approximately 20%, however. In 2006, the Industrial Relations Service (IRS) surveyed 66 employers about their homeworking policies and experiences. In an echo of the Labour Force Survey, IRS found that ‘intensive’ homeworking, where employees carried out the majority of their work at home, was the least common form of homeworking. More common forms were either regular, nomadic, or on an ad hoc basis. Many employers expected homeworkers to be in the office upon occasion, although the practice of this requirement varied widely among the organisations surveyed.

In Acas, approximately 11% of staff are officially designated as homeworkers, but homeworking is used on an ad hoc basis by a much larger number of employees. For example, of the 514 individuals who completed the employee survey conducted for this study, 46% worked from home on a regular basis. According to the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS), 30% of employers offer homeworking to at least some of their employees. This represents an increase since the 2004 WERS, when 25% of workplaces offered homeworking. In contrast, provision of other forms of flexible working arrangements fell during this same period: the percentage of workplaces offering job sharing decreased from 26% to 16% and those offering reduced hours decreased from 61% to 56%.

1.2 CURRENT DEBATES ABOUT HOMEWORKING

1.2.1 Is there such a thing as too much homeworking?

There are conflicting views among academics about whether homeworking works best as a moderate (one or two days a week) or a high-intensity (half the working week or more) activity. The practitioner-oriented literature is less equivocal, and tends to be of the opinion that to avoid the potential risks of homeworking (such as isolation, work-to-life conflict, and work-related stress), a non-exclusive homeworking arrangement is advisable for most organisations. A prospective counter-argument to this perspective derives from research findings that suggest that there is a learning curve associated with homeworking, and that as workers adjust to the arrangement, they adapt over time to its advantages and disadvantages and develop ways to maximise the former while reducing the latter. This can involve modifying one’s use of technology to communicate with others, and amending one’s work processes to better suit an environment free of office-based distractions but also lacking face-to-face contact and cues for taking
breaks or finishing work for the day. The research conducted for this report seeks to add to this debate by exploring ways in which Acas employees manage their homeworking experiences and by investigating the intensity and prevalence of isolation, work-life conflict, stress, and other potentially negative issues among both homeworkers and their office-based counterparts.

1.2.2 What makes a homeworking programme successful?

The research literature advocates a number of conditions to be met in order for a successful homeworking experience to take place. Some of these are technical in nature: job responsibilities must be able to be performed away from the office, and work spaces at employees’ homes should be safe, secure, and reasonably distraction-free. Some conditions are concerned with the homeworkers themselves: successful homeworkers need to be able to work without close supervision, should be able to separate their work from their personal lives, and must be capable of overcoming the threats posed by working in isolation. viii Finally, academics and practitioners emphasise that successful homeworking programmes are characterised both by broad institutional support, and by the presence of managers who understand the value of homeworking and have confidence in the benefits it can bring. ix These last two conditions may be more of a stumbling block for UK organisations than any of the other criteria listed above. The former Equal Opportunities Commission (now the Equality and Human Rights Commission) released a report in 2007 entitled Enter the timelords: Transforming work to meet the future, which draws upon the research of the Cranfield School of Management. x The report suggested that UK organisations continue to lag behind many of their European counterparts in offering flexible working arrangements to their staff, retaining a culture of fixed working hours and an emphasis on ‘face time’ within an office setting. Acas differs from these UK organizations by having an established culture of homeworking and few pressures to engage in presenteeism. By investigating homeworking within a comparatively supportive context such as this, the research conducted for this report aims to contribute to knowledge of what helps and what hinders successful homeworking experiences.

1.3 EVOLUTION OF HOMEWORKING AS AN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

Homeworking has a long history in the UK. As long ago as (if not longer than) the sixteenth century, the wool industry relied upon homeworkers to wash fleece and spin and weave wool. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the “domestic system” of working from home accounted for much of the manufacture of cutlery around Sheffield and the production of nails and chain in the West Midlands xi. Although much of this type of homeworking disappeared following the Industrial Revolution and the growth of factories, the shift of paid work into the factory system varied across sectors, and homeworking was still a dominant form of work organization in many industries during the nineteenth century xii. Even now, up to a million manufacturing homeworkers still exist in the UK, primarily in the clothing industry xiii. The spread of homeworking to office-based roles, using telephonic equipment to connect remotely to the workplace, has arisen as organisations make conscious decisions to provide greater flexibility for their employees and effect cost savings on office-related overheads for themselves. This deliberate modification to traditional working patterns has required a more structured approach to homeworking in order to accommodate business and employee needs.
1.4 HISTORY OF HOMEWORKING AT ACAS

Acas is a UK government organisation providing conciliation and advisory services to employers and individuals across Great Britain. It employs more than 900 people with local offices that are grouped into 12 areas. Its headquarters are in London. As in other organisations, homeworking at Acas started informally and grew organically in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1996, Acas set up a formal programme with a pilot, post pilot evaluation and subsequent roll out. Several factors have contributed to the initial adoption and subsequent expansion of homeworking at Acas:

- Nature of the work: Conciliation work is the core function at Acas; some staff conciliate *individually*, in Employment Tribunal cases ('Individual conciliation'); others do so *collectively*, in trade disputes ('Collective conciliation'). Both are individual (versus team) orientated jobs that require a high level of autonomy among employees. They can be performed from different locations, and in the case of collective conciliation, requires a considerable amount of travel between office and client locations. Homeworking was a practical solution to minimise this travel time.

- Funding pressures: Driven by reduced government funding, Acas began to rationalise its office space in the 1990s causing the closure of some offices. By facilitating homeworking, Acas was able to reduce some of their office costs.

- Work pressures: At the same time, increased demand for Individual Conciliation work in the 1990s drove the number of employees up, resulting in additional pressure on office space. Again, homeworking helped to alleviate this pressure.

- Employee demand: Offering homeworking at Acas was also a response to growing demand among employees for this type of working arrangement.

- Technology: Advances in communications and technology made it possible not only for Acas employees to work remotely but also for managers to co-ordinate the work without jeopardising the quality of services offered.

- Positive evaluation: A positive evaluation of the homeworking initiative by Huws, O'Regan and Honey in 1997 helped to create a national homeworking policy and justify the extension of a homeworking programme to the majority of Acas employees (subject to line management's discretion).
1.5 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS PROJECT

1.5.1 Aims of the current evaluation

The research conducted for this report had three main objectives: to understand what made for a successful homeworking arrangement at an individual level, to understand what made for effective management of homeworking from an organisational perspective, and to provide an updated review of existing Acas homeworking policy. Acas provides a unique context within which to explore the issues associated with homeworking. As mentioned previously, homeworking is well established at Acas and the culture is generally supportive of this type of working arrangement. Homeworkers at Acas run the gamut from those who perform all of their work-related tasks at home to those who carry out all their work duties at the office, allowing the project researchers to explore differences in homeworking-related issues across this spectrum. Acas was also unique in terms of the organisation’s total commitment to the project and willingness to make all of its staff available for several discrete phases of data collection. This enabled the researchers to construct a much more complete picture of homeworking practices than that which can be accomplished when, as is more usually the case, enthusiasm for original research is limited to one or two key personnel and not disseminated top-down throughout the organisation.

This project follows an earlier evaluation of homeworking practice within Acas undertaken in 1996 by Huws et al., since which time the prevalence and practice of homeworking has changed considerably (due in large part to innovations in technology enabling remote and mobile working). The current project differs from the earlier evaluation by taking a comparatively more outward-focused look at homeworking. In addition to studying homeworking within Acas, the research encompassed four case studies of external organisations renowned for their homeworking policy and practice, and also included a comprehensive literature review of academic research on homeworking published over the past 15 years. In doing so, this project has been able to examine homeworking in general by studying arrangements within Acas in detail and contrasting them to previous research findings and best practice within other relevant organisations.

1.5.2 Methodology

We carried out a four-step research project to study homeworking, with a focus on homeworking arrangements at Acas itself.

- **Literature review** – We carried out a substantive literature review on the extent and nature of homeworking in the UK, including examples of best practice in other organisations, as well as factors contributing to the effective management (and self-management) of homeworkers. In addition, we reviewed publicly available data for 97 UK government agencies on their homeworking policies and practices.

- **Acas data analysis** - Before conducting our primary research, we examined existing employee data and prior research conducted at Acas on staff engagement, internal communications, IT use and stress. In addition, LSE Enterprise was, in strictest confidence, provided with employee-level data on performance, sickness and conflict within Acas, in order to look at
- **Qualitative study** - A qualitative study was carried out with a sample of 40 Acas employees. One–to-one interviews of approximately one hour in duration took place with a range of homeworkers, partial homeworkers, mobile workers, and office workers, with different working functions and grades, in three locations.

- **Quantitative surveys** - This step consisted of two quantitative research exercises. The first was an employee survey, which was emailed to all Acas employees and completed by 514 for a response rate of 56.4%. The second effort comprised a 14-day diary study among employees who work from home at least 20 per cent of their working week. A total of 75 Acas employees participated in the diary study. Due to some non-responses during the 14-day study, a total of 51 cases were determined to have enough data to proceed with the analysis. These 51 cases provided a total of 611 data points for analysis over the course of the diary study. Further details of the quantitative research including response rate, respondents’ distribution, questionnaire, dates, reporting conventions, etc., are available in Appendix 8.2: Research method.

In July and August of 2012, we also conducted best practice homeworking case studies for four UK organisations in the private sector that are recognised for their flexible working practices. These organisations were Allianz Insurance, Ernst & Young and two other organisations that did not provide consent to disclose their names. These case studies are included in Appendix 8.2: Case studies.

The research was conducted from a normative perspective, and attempted to take into account both the viewpoints of individual employees and the outlook of the employer, including the business perspective on homeworking. The development of the interviews, employee survey and diary study was informed by academic research on homeworking and where appropriate, the findings of this project are presented in the context of the relevant academic literature. The case studies were introduced in order to compare Acas’ homeworking arrangements with those of other organisations. Each of the organisations was selected for the research because they have been recognised for their successful implementation of homeworking and flexible working practices. These ‘best practice’ organisations add value to the research by providing practical ideas for solutions to issues related to homeworking.

The practice of homeworking comes in various shapes and sizes across and within organisations, including Acas. As we began the research with Acas, one issue that arose was determining which employees were, in fact, homeworking. While each employee has an official designation of either ‘office-based worker’, ‘flexible worker’ or ‘designated homeworker’, it was suspected that there was quite a bit of overlap in terms of working arrangements among employees with these designations. Therefore, using data from the employee survey, we created four distinctive profiles of workers that more accurately reflected true working patterns within Acas. These categories will be used throughout this report to present the findings from this study. A description of each category, with some of their characteristics, is provided below:
Homeworkers - this group of workers held an official classification within Acas as either ‘homeworkers’ or ‘flexible workers’. In practice, this group of employees works an average of 90 per cent of their working time at or from home. The majority of these workers are in non-managerial positions. Most are so-called ‘Individual Conciliators’ – that is to say, they administer Acas’ ‘Individual conciliation’ (IC) function (Acas’ core service for promoting settlements where claims have been submitted to an Employment Tribunal; not to be confused with Acas’ other, celebrated ‘collective conciliation’ function for resolving collective trade disputes). Almost half (47 per cent) of these employees have children aged 18 or younger living at home.

Partial homeworkers - work some days at home and some days in the office. On average, they spend 31 per cent of their working time working from home and 63 per cent at an Acas office with the remaining 6 per cent spent working on the road or travelling. Of the 54 respondents, 17 (31 per cent) are Individual Conciliators and the remainder are distributed among different working groups (except for Helpline). A high proportion of these workers (50 per cent) are line managers and forty-two per cent of this type of worker have children aged 18 or younger living at home.

Mobile workers - spend an average of 54 per cent of their working time on the road or travelling, 24 per cent at home and 21 per cent at an Acas office. Their official Acas designation and job roles vary, with 47 respondents, 19 (40 per cent) working in ‘Good Practice Services’ (GPS is an umbrella term covering a range of Acas’ training and advisory functions) and 16 (34 per cent) have a 50/50 split role. Similarly to the previous category, most of them (89 per cent) do not manage others. While there are more female than male workers in the other categories of respondents (total average is 58 per cent female), mobile workers are mostly male (63 per cent). Seventy-eight per cent described themselves as the main earner in their household at present, which is the highest percentage of main earners among the other groups.

Office workers - spend the majority of their working time (an average of 96 per cent) in the office. The largest working groups in this category are Helpline (103 respondents, 37 per cent), Individual Conciliators (64 respondents, 23 per cent) and Administration (33 respondents, 12 per cent) from a total of 277 respondents. This group of workers has the largest proportion of junior grades and only twenty-seven per cent of office workers manage others. Twenty-nine per cent of these workers have children aged 18 or younger living at home. A large proportion of office-based workers work on Acas’ telephone Helpline. The Helpline allows the public to call and speak with professionals about queries relating to employment disputes. Helpline employees are not currently eligible for homeworking.

Statistically significant differences across these and other categories of respondents are noted in this report. The significance of these differences was assessed using t-tests for the comparison of means and z-scores for the comparison of percentages. The relevant cut-off value for significance at a 95% confidence interval was .05.
1.5.3 Structure of the Report

The findings from the Acas homeworking study are presented in the following chapters. In Chapter 2, we focus on the links between homeworking and employees’ job related attitudes and behaviours such as engagement, satisfaction and both individual and team performance. In addition, we examine the relationships between employees and their co-workers, and between employees and their organisation. Links between homeworking, social isolation and employee wellbeing are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 3 examines homeworking from the management perspective. We focus on four key aspects of managing homeworkers: trust, performance management, communications, and training. Since technology can play such an important role in helping to achieve a successful homeworking experience for both the employee and the organisation, we dedicate Chapter 4 to various technology issues related to homeworking.

In Chapter 5, we analyse the links between homeworking and attitudes toward career progression. Given that the use of homeworking may alter how employees experience their work-life balance, we explore work-life balance and work-life boundary management issues in Chapter 6. We conclude with a summary of the findings of the Acas Homeworking Study in Chapter 7.
2. LINKS BETWEEN HOMEWORKING AND PERFORMANCE, ATTITUDES, RELATIONSHIPS AND WELLBEING

The continued rise in the number of homeworkers in the UK increases the importance of looking at the way in which homeworking impacts both organisations and individuals. Commonly held outcomes associated with homeworking include improved performance (individual and team), improved job attitudes, such as satisfaction, employee engagement and commitment, changes to employee relationships and positive and negative impact on well-being. The following sections examine recent published research on these outcomes as well as the findings from Acas’ Homeworking Study.

2.1 PERFORMANCE

2.1.1 Individual performance

Homeworking is often associated with increased productivity in both academic and practitioner literature. For example, in a study of IBM’s alternative workplace programme, 87% of employees in the programme reported that they believe their productivity and effectiveness have increased significantly since they began to work from home. Similarly, in a UK study of homeworkers, 75% of those interviewed declared themselves to be more or much more effective when working at home than when working in the office. However, some researchers have questioned the relationship between homeworking and productivity, pointing out that many accounts are based on self-reported data and that because most homeworkers volunteer to work at home, they may be biased toward claiming success. These concerns can be largely refuted by a considerable amount of data showing that homeworking is linked to increases not only in self-reported productivity, but also in supervisor-rated performance. For instance, a longitudinal study of call centre workers in the USA found that over a five-year period, the homeworkers’ productivity increased by 154%, whereas the office-based staff’s productivity fell by 13%.

There are mainly two proposed explanations for any increased productivity resulting from homeworking. One is based on the frequent finding that homeworkers put in longer hours when working at home. For instance, in a qualitative study of 62 homeworkers in the UK, including some from a local government agency, 48% of participants reported having increased their working hours since having changed to homeworking from an office-based working arrangement. This explanation was supported upon examination of Acas’ own homeworking workforce. In the qualitative study, several partial homeworkers and homeworkers commented on this pattern.

I think I tend to spend more hours if I am working from home and I will work longer than if I am in the office and that’s fine. It does give you that great flexibility to be able to do that. (Partial homeworker)

In the quantitative survey of Acas staff, employees were asked specifically how many hours per week they typically spend working. This was compared to their contracted number of hours and the average difference for workers with different working patterns was examined. As seen in Figure 1, the data showed that homeworkers, partial homeworkers and mobile workers were significantly more likely to work in excess of their contracted hours than their office-based colleagues.
Employees who report greater productivity as an outcome of homeworking may therefore be conflating increased productivity with an increase in the actual amount of work performed\textsuperscript{xxi}. By eliminating or reducing commuting time to an office, homeworkers have extra time available to them, and may choose to spend this time engaged in work activities: This does not constitute productivity \textit{per se}, even though the end result may be a greater total output of work completed.

The second explanatory mechanism underlying the homeworking-productivity link is the lack of office-related distractions present in the home setting. Although there is some documented evidence of employees being distracted from their work when in their home environment\textsuperscript{xxii}, evidence also exists to suggest that productivity gains can be realised when distractions such as frequent phone calls or impromptu conversations with colleagues can be avoided.\textsuperscript{xxiii} This may be the case particularly for employees working on tasks that require extended periods of concentration. For instance, in a qualitative study of UK professionals, those who worked from home for part of the week indicated that they exerted greater effort when doing so because they were able to focus on their job tasks more effectively in the absence of distractions from the office; writing documents and analysing large volumes of data were identified as tasks that benefited the most from being performed at home rather than at the office.\textsuperscript{xxiv} The majority of these individuals described their homes as having fewer distractions than the workplace. This explanation also yielded strong support from the Acas study. In the qualitative study, the increased ability to concentrate at home was frequently cited as a core benefit to homeworking.

\textit{Because everyone wants a bit of you and if you are trying to do things like work with figures and do budget bids or business plans it’s very difficult when there is a constant interruption. (Partial homeworker)}
I think you are more focused when you are working from home because you don’t have the same distractions as you do in the office. It’s easier to concentrate. I guess when you are used to working in the office you don’t notice the distractions in quite the same way but I know when I come in to the office now I can find it quite difficult sometimes to concentrate and to hear what’s being said because there is so much background noise going on whereas when you are at home it is just me and there is no background noise. (Homeworker)

In an attempt to go beyond self-reports of performance, we examined supervisor perceptions of homeworker performance from the Acas data. Supervisor ratings (i.e. the annual ‘box markings’ assigned to staff by their manager as part of their performance appraisal) from 2010 and 2011 were aggregated and examined across working patterns. The data show that there are relatively small, non-significant differences between groups of employees. However, we do see that the average performance is slightly higher for mobile and partial homeworkers i.e. those individuals who achieve a variable mix of office and home work rather than being wedded to either. This is consistent with the analysis of other outcomes relating to Acas homeworking in which those working more flexibly seem to experience greater job satisfaction and less work-life conflict.

2.1.2 Team-related performance

Research examining the origins of manager and coworker resistance to homeworking arrangements has identified as a key factor the perception that teamwork will suffer when one or more team members is not office-based. Teamwork involving a high degree of task interdependence may indeed be affected to some degree by homeworking; there is evidence to suggest that higher levels of task interdependence are associated with lower productivity among homeworkers. As task interdependence involves a higher degree of communication and coordination between homeworkers and their colleagues, greater interdependence may hinder collaboration and performance due to reduced avenues of communication open to homeworkers. When jobs involve primarily sequential or pooled interdependence, however, homeworking is unlikely to produce any negative outcomes for teamwork. Empirical evidence also indicates that when workers with reduced ‘face time’ make themselves proactively available to their colleagues, team performance can be enhanced.

In Acas, the nature of the job roles for many of the homeworkers are highly independent – each conciliator, for instance, has his/her own caseload – and so research participants voiced few concerns relating to the impact of homeworking on team performance. In the quantitative employee survey, the data showed no significant differences in perceptions of teamwork by type of working arrangement, and, overall, workers report high levels of agreement with a series of positive statements about teamwork.

Some academics portray homeworking as having the potential to endanger an organisation’s knowledge base by threatening knowledge transfer between homeworkers and office-based staff. For instance, Taskin and Bridoux (2010) argue that organizational socialization is the key facilitator of knowledge transfer, and that homeworking may negatively affect various components of organisational socialization, such as shared mental schemes, language and narratives; identification with goals and values; and the quality of relationships among workers and between workers and supervisors. There is little research in
this area as of yet, but a recent study by Fonner & Roloff (2010) of 192 office-based workers and 'high-intensity' homeworkers who worked at home for at least 3 days per week sheds some light on the matter. Homeworkers reported significantly less frequency of information exchange with their colleagues than did office-based staff, but homeworking was not significantly related to the quality of information exchange with other organisational members. It can therefore be tentatively concluded that homeworking might not necessarily have a detrimental effect on knowledge transfer – at least not in all cases. This finding notwithstanding, other studies do occasionally report on homeworker perceptions that reduced communication with colleagues results in reduced information acquisition. For example, a worker in a qualitative study of local government employees is quoted as saying, “You pick up a lot of information just from informal chats and overhearing things in the office. You don’t get that when you work at home. I don’t think you can replicate that by working at home.”

At Acas, these concerns about information and knowledge transfer were noted by the participants in the qualitative study.

I don’t think that sending people to work from home encourages that knowledge transfer because the physical, seeing what happens in that job role and how people go about things and the opportunity to go with them and listen in and everything else, I think one of the biggest impacts of working at home, flexible working is that lack of understanding of what goes on in the other parts of the business within the local office. I think that is a very significant drain on resource. (Mobile worker)

So my worry really is that the people who get to the older end . . . then years of experience walks out without them even being physically present in the office for the last few years of that to pass any of that on. (Mobile worker)

Gajendran and Harrison (2007) speculate that organisational attitudes toward homeworking may help to predict any effects of homeworking on team performance. In work organisations that view homeworking as an idiosyncratic matter wherein individual employees adopt this working arrangement and bear responsibility for its outcomes, homeworkers may be compelled to conform to existing team norms based on all members being physically situated in the same location. For instance, homeworkers may be obliged to synchronise their work schedules with their office-based colleagues, or to work longer hours or put in extra effort in order to overcome perceptions from their colleagues that they are not as committed to the job as office-based staff. They may also experience a greater sense of psychological remoteness from their team members, because they are absent from formal and informal interactions within the team. By contrast, in organisations that have adopted homeworking as a normative practice, teams are likely to be required to develop new processes, and will have created team communication routines, schedules, and ways of working that will not only accommodate homeworkers but actively maximise the benefits to be had from the autonomous nature of homeworking. In this scenario, homeworking will benefit team performance and homeworkers are more likely to feel like legitimate, valued members of the team.

At Acas, homeworking has been accepted as a normative practice for several years and schedules, communications and technology have developed to support this practice. For example, one team of home-based IT workers utilises a shared electronic folder that all team members can access to troubleshoot issues that they might not be familiar with.
They’ve got a knowledge base that they all add to . . . The knowledge base is basically at the moment just a folder with everything that everybody needs to work. It’s electronic and they open that and if they’ve got a problem with Word they will have a look in the Word one and there will be all the documentation. (Homeworker and manager of homeworkers)

2.2 JOB ATTITUDES

2.2.1 Job Satisfaction

In the employee survey we asked Acas employees how satisfied they felt with their jobs. A high percentage (69 per cent) of all employees – home and office-based – reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs overall. As might be expected, responses varied across different aspects of job satisfaction. Satisfaction with line manager support rated the highest, with 77 per cent of the respondents reporting feeling satisfied or very satisfied with it. At the other end of the spectrum, 38 per cent of the participants reported that they felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their pay and 36 per cent said that felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their promotion prospects. For these job aspects, we found no significant differences in the responses among employees with different working arrangements. This may be the result of line management support and the pay and promotion system being applied consistently across the organisation irrespective of homeworking status. There was also no significant difference in the responses to satisfaction with time spent on paid work and other aspects of life.

However, when asked specifically about their satisfaction with current working patterns, office workers reported being significantly less satisfied with their current working patterns (i.e., the balance between time spent working at home and time spent working in the office) than their co-workers. Twenty per cent of office workers reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their working patterns compared with just four per cent of partial homeworkers or homeworkers. Results are presented in Figure 2.
One explanation for the lower levels of satisfaction among office workers may be that they perceive lower levels of autonomy and control over their working arrangements. One of the more consistent findings cited in the homeworking research literature is that of increased employee job satisfaction among those who participate in homeworking arrangements, compared to their office-based counterparts. This will be further explored in Section 2.2.4.

Another exception to the relatively consistent levels of job satisfaction among all employees is satisfaction with volume of work: homeworkers in Acas reported being significantly less satisfied with their workload than any other type of worker. For instance, as seen in Figure 3, 48 per cent of homeworkers report being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their workload compared to just 20 per cent of partial homeworkers or 22 per cent of office workers.

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1 Significance is based on z-score tests for significant differences across percentages at a p<.05 level.
There has been mixed evidence in the research literature regarding what degree of homeworking is optimal to achieve increased satisfaction; one recent study found that ‘high-intensity’ homeworkers (those who worked at home three days or more per week) reported higher levels of job satisfaction than office-based staff,xxxii whereas others have demonstrated that a positive relationship between homeworking and satisfaction takes place when employees work at home for up to 12 hours per week, but tails off somewhat as homeworking approaches 20 hours per week.xxxiii An important caveat to this finding is that the link between longer hours of homeworking and diminishing levels of job satisfaction did not take place for homeworkers whose work was more independent, as opposed to interdependent; their satisfaction levels remained high.

In the case of Acas ‘high-intensity’ homeworkers (those who work 90 per cent of their working time at or from home), their jobs are fairly independent (the great majority of them are conciliators). Therefore, before conducting the employee survey, we did not expect these homeworkers to report lower satisfaction than workers who spend less time working at or from home (partial homeworkers and mobile workers). However, responses to the employee survey seemed to support differences between employees who use homeworking moderately (partial homeworkers and mobile workers) and the ‘high-intensity’ homeworkers. In general, partial homeworkers and mobile workers reported higher job satisfaction than any of their colleagues. We found that partial homeworkers and mobile workers reported being more satisfied with the variety in their work and the opportunity to use their abilities than their co-workers. Ninety eight per cent of mobile workers and 87 per cent of partial homeworkers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the variety of their work versus the 53 per cent of homeworkers or 57 per cent of office workers, for example. Results are shown in Figure 4 below. This is partially explained by job role. The data show that Helpline employees report lower levels of satisfaction with work variety than other groups of workers.
Mobile workers also reported higher satisfaction with their job overall than office workers and homeworkers. Furthermore, mobile workers are more satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work than office workers and homeworkers.

### 2.2.2 Job engagement

The employee survey also measured the level of engagement that participants felt with their work in the few weeks prior to the survey. On average, respondents said that they frequently felt they were proud of the work they do and enthusiastic about it. Seventy-four per cent of the respondents indicated being proud of their work most or all of the time. Pride in one's job was also a recurring comment in the interviews we conducted with Acas employees.

Looking at the differences among the types of workers, partial homeworkers and mobile workers indicated that they felt more engaged with their jobs in the few weeks prior to the survey than their co-workers. These results were generally in line with the findings from job satisfaction. We also observed that managers reported significantly higher levels of job engagement than non managers. To illustrate some of the differences found among the different worker groups with regard to job engagement, while 47 per cent of office workers and 43 per cent of homeworkers reported occasionally or never feeling high energy levels at work (the phrase used in survey was 'bursting with energy at work'), 21 per cent of mobile workers and 26 per cent of partial homeworkers reported feeling this way. Results are presented in Figure 5.
2.2.3 Commitment to Acas

The link between homeworking and organisational commitment has been established in the research literature, which has found that homeworkers are less likely than office workers to express a desire to leave their employer or, in some cases, to change jobs within the same organisation. In at least one case, however, this relationship has been found to be contingent upon the degree of homeworking performed. In a study conducted in five hospitals in the United States, participants in homeworking arrangements showed significant increases in organisational commitment compared to an office-based control group, but for those who worked exclusively at home, levels of commitment were no different to those of the office-based staff.

Every organisation that participated in the homeworking best practice homeworking case studies also recognised the positive link between offering flexible working arrangements (i.e., homeworking) and increased attraction and retention of employees. Some of these organisations mentioned that flexible working arrangements helped them to achieve their objectives in terms of workforce diversity, particularly gender diversity (please see Appendix 8.2: Case studies). None of the organisations could actually measure the impact that their homeworking or flexible working practices had on their actual employee retention figures. However, Organisation Y did state that more than 95 per cent of their female employees return to work after maternity leave.

We examined the results of the Acas Employee Engagement measure from the Civil Service People Survey (CSPS), an annual Civil Service-wide survey of civil servants’ attitudes and experiences of work in which Acas participates. The figure below uses the 2011 data, which represent the responses of 667 Acas employees (77 per cent response rate). Scores with asterisks indicate statistically significant differences found between office-based workers and the combined mobile worker
partial homeworker / homeworker groups within Acas on employee engagement overall and its individual drivers. Each of the areas identified below represents a theme of Employee Engagement, and each theme is represented by multiple questions in the larger CSPS survey. Each question in the survey asks the respondent for their level of agreement with a positive statement on a 5 point scale, from 1 meaning ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 meaning ‘strongly agree’. The numbers below can be interpreted as “percent agreement with positive perceptions” of each theme. Results are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: From responses to Employee Engagement questions in CSPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive perceptions of...</th>
<th>Office-based workers (N=411)</th>
<th>Non-office-based workers* (N=242)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Employee Engagement Score 2011</td>
<td>.6305</td>
<td>.6958*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work</td>
<td>.6768</td>
<td>.8240*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational objectives and purpose</td>
<td>.8870</td>
<td>.9477*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My line manager</td>
<td>.6825</td>
<td>.7042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My team</td>
<td>.7581</td>
<td>.8257*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Development</td>
<td>.4868</td>
<td>.5420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and fair treatment</td>
<td>.7526</td>
<td>.8151*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and workload</td>
<td>.7888</td>
<td>.8040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay and Benefits</td>
<td>.3915</td>
<td>.3650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and managing change</td>
<td>.4231</td>
<td>.5003*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As defined in the CSPS (not current survey) (Source: CSPS) (N=667)

The findings above suggest that providing flexible working arrangements contributes positively to employee engagement. Contributing factors that may help to understand the difference in responses between office-based workers and their homeworking colleagues include:

- Alignment with organisational objectives – The employees most likely to be homeworkers are Individual Conciliators. The Individual Conciliator function is an integral ‘flagship’ Acas service, accounting for the largest single element of Acas’ funding. Perhaps for that reason, and due to their self-managed, close interaction with the parties in the disputes, Individual Conciliators may be more likely to see how their work impacts the end users, and therefore perceive greater alignment of their own work with overall Acas objectives.

- Perceptions of fairness and inclusion within the organisation – This may also be related to fact that certain groups of workers (e.g. Acas Helpline advisers and many of those in administrative positions) are not able to work as flexibly as others (for instance, they might be ineligible to work ‘flexitime’ or participate in regular homeworking) and therefore are more likely to report less positive perceptions in this area (although it is likely that other factors unrelated to work flexibility will also have some bearing on perceptions of fairness and inclusion for specific job functions).

- Perceptions of leadership and managing change – The higher scores among non-office based workers are in all probability related to the jobs held by respondents in these categories. Partial homeworkers and mobile...
2.2.4 Autonomy and Control

One of the most consistent findings cited in the homeworking research literature is that of increased employee job satisfaction among those who participate in homeworking arrangements, compared to their office-based counterparts. The greater satisfaction generally experienced by homeworkers versus office based workers can be explained by the propensity of homeworking to enhance perceptions of autonomy. Homeworkers are likely to feel greater freedom and discretion over how they perform their work tasks because they do not experience direct, face-to-face supervision. Working at home also permits employees to control their breaks from work, their work apparel, the layout of their workspace, lighting and ventilation levels, music, and other elements of the work environment, all of which contribute to increased perceptions of autonomy. In a recent mixed-methods study of UK professionals, those who worked at home for a proportion of their working week reported higher levels of job satisfaction than office-based workers because they were able to exercise discretion over where and how they worked. The fact that homeworkers frequently perceive having more autonomy than do office workers might explain the greater job satisfaction that homeworkers generally report experiencing. Consistent with the research literature, the employee survey results suggest that in Acas, office workers experience lower levels of autonomy and control than do workers who make use of homeworking practices. This has important outcomes at the individual – as well as the organizational – level.

The difference in perceptions of autonomy and control between office workers and their co-workers is significant with regard to every aspect of autonomy and control measured in the employee survey: work schedule, working methods and decision making. For example, thirty-six per cent of office workers report that they feel their job does not allow them to make their own decisions about how to schedule their work compared to just six per cent of the rest of workers. Fifty-one per cent of office workers feel they have control over their work schedule, versus 85 per cent of all other workers. The results are shown in Figure 6, below.
While a key explanatory factor for the difference in perceptions of autonomy and control between office workers and their non-office based co-workers may be the use of homeworking, other factors should be considered, such as the nature of the work performed by these two groups of workers. The largest working group among the office workers who responded to the employee survey is the Helpline group (37 per cent of office workers). Some of the characteristics of their job (e.g., rigid work schedule based on shifts, specific call protocols) may not allow these workers to perceive as much autonomy and control as their co-workers, regardless of where the work is being performed. To check this point, we re-ran the analyses with only the workers who indicated that their main occupation is Individual Conciliator. We found that the differences in perceptions of autonomy and control between office-based conciliators and non-office-based conciliators are much less accentuated than when workers from all occupations are considered.

2.3 RELATIONSHIPS

2.3.1 Co-worker Relationships

Academics and practitioners alike have occasionally expressed concern that an organisation’s culture may lose strength as a homeworking programme gathers speed, because inculcating that culture in homeworking employees will be more difficult than doing so with office-based staff whose frequent face-to-face communications sustain and reinforce organisational norms. This potential for a weakened culture will obviously depend on the organisation; research evidence suggests that some cultures can easily be kept alive and well if constant communication among employees is not necessary. This is perhaps the case with Acas, where the autonomy that comes with conciliation work means that job
interdependence is perceived as very low and that frequent communications with work colleagues may therefore not be essential.

In most organisations, including Acas, some degree of communication among staff is required. Research investigating effective managerial communication approaches has determined that managers should stay in close contact with homeworkers, but that this contact should emphasise information-sharing rather than close monitoring of work processes. Homeworkers who have managers using an information-sharing approach have been found more likely to report lower work-to-life conflict, better performance, and higher rates of helping their co-workers.\textsuperscript{xli}

We examined the level of information exchange and knowledge sharing among the respondents to the Acas employee survey. The results suggest that there is a reasonably good flow of information exchange and knowledge sharing among Acas employees. For example, the majority of respondents (91 per cent) report sharing their experiences of work-related success and failure and 83 per cent report discussing work-related problems with their teams.

There are very few differences in the responses of the employees using different working arrangements. However, when looking at the responses of line managers versus non-line managers, in most cases, line managers are significantly more likely to indicate higher levels of information exchange and knowledge sharing.

Concerns about the quality of relationships with co-workers have been reported in a number of studies involving homeworkers.\textsuperscript{xlii} The reduced face-to-face interactions with colleagues and diminished social presence associated with homeworking has been cited as having the potential to weaken interpersonal bonds between homeworkers and their co-workers and managers.\textsuperscript{xliii} Research evidence for this effect indicates that for individuals who work at home for only part of their working week, homeworking is unlikely to exert any negative effect on their relationships with colleagues. For individuals who work exclusively at home, however, research results indicate that homeworking may be linked to decreased co-worker relationship quality.

Co-worker relationships are undoubtedly important in predicting outcomes for both homeworkers and office-based staff. A recent study has shown that when high-intensity homeworkers like their co-workers more, the homeworkers are more satisfied with their informal communication with co-workers, more satisfied with their jobs, and more committed to the organisation.\textsuperscript{xliv} Social support provided by co-workers has been found to predict high-intensity homeworkers’ levels of organisational commitment and identification with the employing organisation.\textsuperscript{xliv}

We explored communications with co-workers in the qualitative study with Acas employees and, in general, found no differences in their communication with homeworkers versus non homeworkers.

\textit{No because if someone is on the phone in the office or they are on the phone working from home you still leave a message and you still wait for them to get back to you or you sent them an email and you wait for them to come back. It doesn’t make any difference. (Homeworker)}

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However, some employees working mostly at or from home feel that they are closer to the office workers because they see them more frequently.

*I get to see office-based workers more often. So I would probably say I am closer to admin and certain people on the helpline as I am to [my official homeworker buddy].* (Homeworker)

In some cases, homeworkers are rarely seen.

*There are a couple of people who you do not see from one year to the next and if there is an away day you might see them briefly.* (Homeworker)

In the case study research, several organisations were addressing the lack of face-to-face contact that can be caused by homeworking. At two of the organisations, different teams had a designated day of the week on which they were expected to work from the office. This ensured that there was adequate space for employees to sit as well as weekly face-to-face interaction with team members.

The fact that many of the interviewees have worked for Acas for several years helps them to co-ordinate their work with others.

*I think probably having been in it for such a long time and knowing people’s strengths and weaknesses and building a genuine rapport and understanding with an individual.* (Partial homeworker)

*I’ve been here a long time so you’ve got lots of friends. So they are all going to be sending you emails and phoning you. I get contact from both.* (Partial homeworker)

The exception is the need to co-ordinate for job coverage, and the Acas homeworker ‘buddy system’ seems to work well for that purpose:

*Like I said, [X] my buddy, I cover for her when she’s not there and she covers for me, very like minded people. We get on very well. We are very well matched in energy in terms of what we do for each other, I will sometimes phone her if I’ve got a query on legislation because she actually is far better at the law than I am but then I am better on things like tribunal procedures. So it is Yin and Yang.* (Homeworker)

The employee survey results largely agree with the research literature, which finds that, not surprisingly, employees who work mostly at or from home have less frequent communications with their co-workers. Homeworking does not, however, seem to have a negative impact in terms of frequency on the communications of employees who work at or from home some (but not all) of their working week. In fact, partial homeworkers in Acas seem to be the group of employees best connected with their colleagues – even more so than office-based staff.

A higher than average number of partial homeworkers reported having phone discussions with their colleagues (both planned and ad hoc) most days. The number of reported daily phone calls is higher with office-based colleagues than with others working at or from home. On the other hand, homeworkers report
having more daily calls with homeworking colleagues while office workers report
having more daily calls with office-based colleagues.

Looking at face to face interactions in Acas, results from the employee survey
echo findings from the qualitative study. The majority of homeworkers report
having face-to-face meetings with their colleagues (both homeworkers and office-
based) once or less than once a month. A considerable majority of partial
homeworkers (85 per cent) and office workers (74 per cent) report meeting their
office-based colleagues at least once or twice per week on an informal basis.
Curiously, 20 per cent of partial homeworkers report meeting homeworking
colleagues face to face at least once a week on an informal basis.

Interactions with others were also measured in the 14-day daily diary study
among Acas homeworkers. Participating homeworkers were asked how many of
each type of interaction they had over the course of a day. These totals were
summed and then weighted by type of interaction, with face-to-face interaction
receiving a greater weight than telephone interaction and telephone interaction
receiving a greater weight than email interaction. The weights were applied to
account for the richness of the type of interaction experienced by the employee
(i.e., face-to-face contact represents a richer form of interaction than email). A
total communications score was developed for each participant, on each day of
the diary study. Interestingly, the data do not show any links between type and
amount of communication, and isolation or job satisfaction, as has often been
noted in the literature xlvi. However, as the number of communications increases,
perceptions of job control, positive well-being and work-life facilitation decline,
and work-to-life interference increases. These results may be explained by the
earlier finding from the qualitative study, that it is the quality rather than the
quantity of communication with others that is important to homeworkers. 2

Some organisations attempt to proactively avoid professional isolation by
requiring face-to-face interactions with homeworkers. For example, Allianz, one
of the organisations participating in the case study research, requires all full-time
workers, including homeworkers, to meet, in person, with their managers at least
once per month (see Appendix 8.2: Case Studies)

2.3.2 Social Isolation

Social isolation is a recurring theme in the homeworking research literature, and
refers to the sense that one is out of touch with others in the workplace, both
physically and in terms of communication. From the existing literature we know
that social isolation is not a phenomenon specific to homeworking; employees can
experience social isolation even when working in the same physical location as
their colleagues. xlvi Conversely, some employees experience sustained
connections with colleagues despite regular absences from the workplace.
However, because homeworking does away with direct face-to-face supervision
and changes the nature and frequency of communication, coordination, and
feedback among workers, co-workers and managers, those who work exclusively
at home may find that identifying with their organisation becomes a more
ambiguous process than that experienced by office-based staff. xlvii

2 2-tailed Pearson correlations, significant at a .01 level.
In the interviews that we conducted with Acas employees, the subject of social isolation emerged spontaneously in nearly every interview, usually in the context of homeworkers or partial homeworkers’ accounts of the challenges associated with working at home. Homeworkers and partial homeworkers were not the only individuals to raise the topic of social isolation, however. Some of the office workers who participated in the interviews also spontaneously identified social isolation as an issue for those working predominantly at home. Some of these made the point that as office workers, they benefit from having colleagues physically present to speak to as the urge strikes, without incurring much or any effort on their part.

*If I were a homeworker I’d want a more regular system of meeting up with colleagues because I think some of them do feel isolated or can feel isolated. I think there should be more of a system for people getting together and networking a bit. ... I just think people are just left at home to get on with it.* (Office worker)

*It can still be isolating. I’ve been doing the job for a long time but there are still times when you want to just chat things through with someone and say, what do you think of this or you just discuss something about a decision. You wouldn’t have that dialogue with people and you wouldn’t pick up the phone to do that. When you are sat next to somebody or sat opposite somebody in a team you have that more natural flow.* (Office worker)

The employee survey asked specifically about social isolation among employees who spend a minimum of 20 per cent of their working time at home (in other words, averaging out at one day per week). We therefore received responses from all employee categories except bona fide office workers. We asked employees how frequently they feel isolated on a scale from one (meaning ‘very infrequently’) to five (meaning ‘very frequently’). The mean (average) response was 2.04, which suggests that employees experience social isolation infrequently. However, responses vary depending on the type of worker. Eighty-two per cent of partial homeworkers report that they experience social isolation infrequently or very infrequently compared with 65 per cent of homeworkers proper. Also, 30 per cent of mobile workers report that they experience social isolation occasionally versus 11 per cent of partial homeworkers. The number of workers who reported feeling socially isolated frequently or very frequently was very small across the different groups. The results are presented in Figure 7 below.
Social isolation was also an issue acknowledged by some of the best practice organisations we interviewed. Two organisations that are subjects of the best practice homeworking case studies (please see Appendix 8.2: Case studies) mention social isolation as one of the issues that homeworkers may face and, as a result, these organisations take measures to counteract it. For example, Organization X, has a designated employee that manages the homeworking programme. This employee sends out regular communications (mail and email) to check in with homeworkers, and organises social events that bring homeworkers and office-based workers together.

A number of existing research studies report first-hand accounts of homeworkers feeling isolated from the social environment surrounding the workplace. For example, homeworkers have described feeling like an outsider when they come in to the office for meetings or other work-related purposes. Several studies have found that social isolation is the most frequently reported drawback to homeworking, with the absence of a traditional workplace experience contributing to a sensation of being ‘out of the loop’.

Social isolation was discussed with Acas employees in terms of being removed from human contact:

I think the only downside [of homeworking] is a sense of social isolation sometimes. You are cut off from colleagues and you miss the social interaction you have of being an office-based worker. (Homeworker)

The employee survey revealed that experiences of social isolation differed between categories of worker. Homeworkers and mobile workers report missing informal interaction with others and emotional support from co-workers more frequently than partial homeworkers. For instance, 16 per cent of homeworkers report that they miss emotional support from co-workers ‘frequently’ or ‘very frequently’, whereas only two per cent of the partial homeworkers surveyed
report feeling this way. The results appear in Figure 8 below. Note that in Figure 8, office workers are a very small number of employees (14) who reported working at or from home at least 20% of their working time in a typical week.

Figure 8: From responses to ‘Please indicate how frequently you experience the following with regard to your work: I miss emotional support from co-workers’

Respondents were also asked to indicate how frequently they miss informal interaction with others with regard to their work. Here, as illustrated in Figure 9 below, mobile workers – those who mix home, office and ‘on the road’ – and homeworkers emerge as the most affected groups; 73 per cent of mobile workers and 72 per cent of homeworkers report that they miss informal interaction with others at least occasionally while 40 per cent of partial homeworkers report feeling the same. Unsurprisingly, mobile workers and homeworkers are also the most affected groups in terms of professional isolation as explained in 5.2: Professional Isolation.
Perhaps not surprisingly, the employee survey results seem to confirm that partial homeworkers have more frequent informal / ad hoc face-to-face interactions with both office-based and homeworking colleagues than do any other type of worker. Eighty-five per cent of partial homeworkers report that they have informal / ad hoc face-to-face discussions with an office-based colleague as often as once or twice per week or on most days. This percentage is higher than for office workers (74 per cent) themselves.

With regard to informal / ad hoc face-to-face discussions with homeworkers, 21 per cent of partial homeworkers report having them once or twice per week or most days, whereas only four per cent of homeworkers report the same. If we look at the responses of employees who engage in homeworking for at least 20% of their working time in a typical week, partial homeworkers are still the employees who have the most informal / ad-hoc meetings with office-based colleagues and homeworkers. These results suggest that the lower levels of social isolation experienced by partial homeworkers can be explained by the fact that partial homeworkers not only split their working time between home and office, but also communicate face-to-face more frequently with colleagues (both office-based and home-based) than other workers at Acas. Similar to other measures already illustrated in this report, partial homeworkers appear to be the most content among types of homeworkers, with their level of co-worker interaction.

Avoiding social isolation

In the interviews we conducted with Acas employees, a number of homeworkers and partial homeworkers spoke of taking special measures to avoid feeling socially isolated. These included making an effort to phone colleagues and managers in order to discuss work-related issues and also to communicate on a more social basis, and catching up with co-workers when visiting the office. Other homeworkers and partial homeworkers mentioned scheduling informal meetings
with homeworking peers in local coffee shops or each other’s homes, if they were living close enough to one another for this to be convenient.

*There is no reason to be isolated because you reach out. I speak to my buddy at least twice a week. We go and have lunch regularly. We keep in contact with one another.*  *(Partial homeworker)*

Some of these efforts to prevent social isolation appear to have been thwarted due to time pressures and workload. A few people’s comments seemed to suggest that there was a trade-off between social contact and the ability to complete a satisfactory amount of work during the day. This idea was echoed in a large number of comments that partial homeworkers made about experiencing much greater productivity when working at home compared to working in the office, which is supported in turn by considerable research evidence identifying the lack of office-based distractions as a key element in the higher levels of productivity often displayed by homeworkers.

*There are a couple of homeworkers that live quite near each other so we do meet up for coffee occasionally. I haven’t done in the past year now because we are just so busy. You feel if you take time off it is just going to make life more difficult when you go back in to the office.*  *(Homeworker)*

*[I was not prepared for] the loneliness. You are totally on your own. … we’ve been told because there is a group of us in the area, the ones that used to work together, we’ve been told we can meet up, we can go for coffees and things like that but obviously we don’t do it because we are busy and you don’t get the time but the isolation is still exactly the same.*  *(Homeworker)*

In addition to individual employees developing strategies to overcome some of the potential drawbacks of homeworking such as social isolation, managers can take steps to smooth the way. Academics have suggested that managers reduce social isolation among homeworkers by scheduling regular staff meetings to ensure that relationships between homeworkers and office workers can be built and maintained, providing intranet systems with which homeworkers and office-based staff can communicate with one another, and organising social events at which homeworkers and office-based staff can interact. In terms of practical examples, some organisations have created virtual ‘watercoolers’ online where employees can post jokes and photos, and comment on workplace social events, football matches, or television programmes. Organization X, one of the two anonymous organisations that participated in the case study research (see Appendix 8.2), attempts to reduce social isolation by having frequent communications with homeworkers such as postcards on top tips for homeworking, homeworker surveys, virtual team activities and other social activities.

Finally, another issue that arose in a few Acas interviews was the suitability of a given individual for dealing with the social isolation associated with homeworking. This topic did not come up frequently, but it was emphasised in a few workers’ accounts that some people may be more intrinsically suited to coping with social isolation than others.
I can think of a couple of people who, if I was managing them, there is no way I’d have them working on their own at home because that isolation is actually damaging to them. (Homeworker)

Indeed, some organisations believe that certain employees are more suitable than others for homeworking. Allianz Insurance, the subject of one of the best practice homeworking case studies, requires past experience with solitary, independent work when recruiting permanent homeworkers. This experience is not seen to be necessary for the appointment of ‘occasional’ homeworkers.

### 2.3.3 Relationship with the organisation

We further explored the type of relationship that employees have with Acas from a social and economic perspective. The majority of respondents (60 per cent) recognise that Acas has made a significant investment in them; homeworkers and office workers alike. Also, most of the respondents (78 per cent) disagreed with the statement: ‘I do not care what Acas does for me in the long run, only what it does right now.’. This seems to indicate that most of the respondents – irrespective of their different working arrangement – perceive or expect that their relationship with Acas is a long-term one. Moreover, this relationship is not purely transactional: 62 per cent of respondents do not believe their relationship with Acas is impersonal and 59 per cent of respondents feel their relationship with Acas is not a solely economic one. Results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: From responses to ‘For each of the following would you say...’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Office Worker</th>
<th>Partial Homeworkers</th>
<th>Mobile workers</th>
<th>Homeworkers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with Acas is strictly an economic one - I work and they pay me.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not care what Acas does for me in the long run, only what it does right now.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only want to do more for Acas when I see that they will do more for me.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch very carefully what I get from Acas, relative to what I contribute.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All I really expect from Acas is that I be paid for my work effort.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most accurate way to describe my work situation is to say that I give a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with Acas is impersonal; I have little emotional involvement at work.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acas has made a significant investment in me.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: N=514, All employee survey respondents)
Analysing the responses by employee groups who use different types of working arrangements, we see that they vary depending on the question. In general, office workers and homeworkers – i.e. the two groups who are most wedded to a fixed working location – both tend to report feeling less positive with regard to their relationship with Acas. For instance, office workers and homeworkers are more likely to feel that their relationship with Acas is an impersonal and strictly economic one, compared to their more flexibly-working counterparts (i.e. partial homeworkers and mobile workers). Here as elsewhere, it is moderate-level homeworking that can be seen to yield the best outcomes for staff in terms of their relationship with the employer (Acas) – in much the same way as was seen to be the case with regard to stress, wellbeing and job satisfaction. There were also significant differences in the responses when we compared the employees with and without people management responsibilities. Line managers view their relationship with Acas more positively than non-line managers.

Continuing with the analysis of employees’ relationship with Acas, Table 3 shows a summary of the responses to additional statements. The responses were more evenly distributed across the scale from strong disagreement to strong agreement. Most of the respondents (64 per cent) agreed that their relationship with Acas is based on mutual trust and just above half of the respondents (53 per cent) felt that their relationship with Acas is one of ‘give and take’. Looking at the responses by the employees with different working arrangements, there were no significant differences for most of the statements; instead, what mattered was line management status, with line managers viewing their relationship with Acas more positively than did non-line managers.
Table 3: From responses to ‘For each of the following would you say...’ (% agree or strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: From responses to ‘For each of the following would you say...’ (% agree or strongly agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Base: N=514, All employee survey respondents)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Worker</th>
<th>Partial Home-workers</th>
<th>Mobile workers</th>
<th>Home-workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The things I do on the job today will benefit my standing in Acas in the long run.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lot of give and take in my relationship with Acas.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that all my efforts on behalf of Acas will never be recognised.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t mind working hard today – I know I will eventually be recognised by my organisation.</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with Acas is based on mutual trust.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to look out for the best interests of the organisation because I can rely on Acas to take care of me.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even though I may not always receive the recognition from Acas I deserve, I know my efforts will be recognised in the future.</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 WELL-BEING

According to the academic literature, some important outcomes related to homeworking are employee well-being and burnout or stress. The general consensus in the research literature is that homeworking is associated with significantly lower levels of work-related stress than those experienced by office-based staff, and this link appears to strengthen as the amount of time spent homeworking increases.\textsuperscript{iv} Homeworkers who work at least three days a week at home report less stress generated by frequent meetings and interruptions by colleagues, and perceive less exposure to office-based politics.\textsuperscript{v} Other research has found that homeworkers encounter fewer job stressors, such as role conflict and ambiguity, than office-based staff, and that their resultant lower levels of work-related stress are in turn predictive of increased job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation.\textsuperscript{vi}

However, some academics have also found greater evidence of mental health problems among homeworkers, compared to their office-based colleagues.\textsuperscript{vii} Interestingly, our findings at Acas suggest that it is a moderate level of homeworking that yields the best outcomes for employees in terms of stress and well-being.

For example, some employees who work mostly from home report that the ability to eliminate commuting time aids in reducing work-related stress.
I think it removes so much stress. Life becomes so leisurely in terms of if I was commuting an additional two hours a day. I would have another £200 a month (in expenses)… (Homeworker)

However, others note that not being present in the office can contribute to other types of stress.

[T]he one concern I do have which I suppose is a slight stress is that other people who I call my colleagues see me as less available than the ones who are office-based. So I don’t want to be invisible or not included in agendas because it is too much trouble to organise a meeting that [I] can get to … (Homeworker)

If you had two bad calls which I did yesterday morning and afternoon, there is no outlet. The only outlet is your rationality and if you’re tired and if you’re busy and if people demand things of you your rationality dwindles … (Homeworker)

The quantitative employee survey assessed Acas employees using six established measures of emotional well-being. As seen in Figure 10 below, mobile workers are significantly less likely than homeworkers and office-based workers to report feeling tense (6.4 per cent all or most of the time). They are also significantly less likely than office workers to feel worried (4.3 per cent all or most of the time) and significantly less likely than homeworkers and partial homeworkers to report feeling uneasy (2.1 per cent all or most of the time).

Figure 10: From responses to ‘Thinking of the past few weeks, how often has your job made you feel the following?’ (% all or most of the time)

(Base: N=514, All employee survey respondents)

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3 Measure of well-being taken from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS)

4 Significance is based on z-score tests for significant differences across percentages at a p<.05 level.
Similarly, as seen in Figure 11, when examining positive aspects of well-being, mobile workers (61.7 per cent all or most of the time) and partial homeworkers (51.9 per cent all or most of the time) are significantly more likely than homeworkers and office-based workers to report feeling content. This indicates that, at Acas, those who mix office and home-based work tend to have the best outcomes (in terms of their emotional well-being). It is important to note that the mobile workers tend to have more senior roles within the organisation and tend to be the main earner in their household. The additional income support from the more senior role and/or support from others in the household may impact the relationship between worker type and worker well-being. In other words, factors other than homeworking status may explain this group’s relative contentedness.

Figure 11: From responses to ‘Thinking of the past few weeks, how often has your job made you feel the following?’ (% all or most of the time)

There is mixed evidence in the research literature regarding the nature of homeworkers’ work-related stress. In a qualitative study of UK homeworkers, the two main sources of stress that emerged were ‘working to deadline or tight timescale’ and ‘general work overload’. While neither of these is specific to homeworking per se, we do know that homeworkers tend to put in longer hours of work and may expend greater intensive effort on the job, as discussed earlier in this report, and these factors may lend themselves to work-related stress in a way not experienced by office-based staff. However, research seems to indicate that although homeworkers may work more overtime, they also report reduced feelings of time pressure compared to office-based workers, and this is particularly the case for those who spend more than one day per week working at home. A qualitative study of work intensification among UK homeworking professionals found that workers did not experience negative outcomes from this intensification; instead, homeworkers appeared to be voluntarily increasing their levels of effort in exchange for the privilege of being able to work at home. The element of choice, or autonomy, involved in this extension of the working day and intensification of effort may serve to counteract any potentially stressful

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5 Significance is based on z-score tests for significant differences across percentages at a p<.05 level.
effects of longer work hours. This sense of reciprocity was reflected in the qualitative study with Acas homeworkers.

It’s got to be give and take... at the end of the day if I’m having to work over to do something it just saves me doing it the next day anyway so it is swings and roundabouts. So if I stay behind thinking I’ll get this finished then at least I haven’t got to face it the next morning. (Partial homeworker)

The Acas quantitative employee survey also measured employee ‘burnout’. Burnout is defined in the literature as being characterized by “high emotional exhaustion (feeling drained from client contact), high depersonalisation (feeling negative about or alienated by clients), and a sense of low personal accomplishment (a lack of work-related fulfillment or esteem)”.

Similar to the findings for emotional well-being, we find that Acas employees who are predominantly home-based tend to report higher levels of work burnout. As seen in Figure 12, homeworkers and office workers tend to report higher levels of burnout than partial homeworkers and mobile workers. This indicates yet again that employees performing moderate levels of homeworking record better outcomes than their counterparts.

Figure 12: From responses to ‘Thinking of the past few weeks, how often have you felt the following about your job?’

(Base: N=514, All employee survey respondents)
3. MANAGING HOMEWORKERS

Managers play an important role in creating a successful homeworking environment. Academics have argued that a flourishing homeworking programme is more a function of leadership than of technology, with a creative and progressive leadership mentality being required to design and implement homeworking schemes effectively. The consensus in the homeworking literature is that managers must be willing and able to relinquish traditional notions of how best to manage performance – usually based on direct supervision – and adopt new ways of motivating and monitoring their staff. Four themes that dominate the literature on management of homeworkers are those of trust, performance management, communication, and training.

3.1 TRUST

In order for an organisation to adopt a homeworking programme, management must exhibit at least some degree of trust in employees. That having been said, managing homeworkers does represent a special challenge for managers, especially those who prefer to engage in direct supervision of their staff, with their employees in sight as often as possible. Managers may be concerned about their loss of direct control over homeworkers, and may not be able to detect if or when an employee is experiencing difficulties, is working too much, or is not working enough. Research has found that the greatest barrier to homeworking success is management trust, and traditional managerial attitudes about employees needing to be seen to be considered productive can often be quite resistant to change. Despite the advent of communications technology that enables individuals to work anywhere, at any time, many organisations continue to value and reward ‘face-time’ and operate under the assumption that visibility equates to productivity and commitment. Relatively few organisations take the time to develop new management approaches geared toward alternative working arrangements such as homeworking.

The theme of trust emerged during the qualitative study in Acas with managers of homeworkers as well as homeworkers themselves.

*I suppose it goes back to the trust issue and as long as people do their job and are doing a good job and it’s what the service is all about I guess to a certain standard then I haven’t got a problem with how they do it whether they do that working from home or from the office. It’s not a problem at all.*

(Partial homeworker and manager)

The theme of trust also carried through to the results of the employee survey. When asked about their relationship with Acas, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of employees agreed (strongly agree or agree) that their relationship with Acas is based on mutual trust. Perceptions of trust did not vary by homeworking status.

Aligned with trust, the notion of reciprocity between employees and the organization also emerged in the research. As noted earlier in the section on well-being (see Section 2.4: Well-Being), Acas homeworkers discussed a sense of reciprocity in terms of their willingness to be flexible regarding working additional hours, due to the flexibility provided to them by the organization. This was also
reflected in two of the case studies (see Section 8.2: Case Studies). At the anonymous Organization X, the expectation of flexibility ‘goes both ways’ between homeworkers and the organization. Employees have access to a range of flexible working options to meet their needs; however, they are also expected to be flexible in order to meet changing organizational needs. Similarly, at Ernst and Young, the reciprocal obligations relating to flexibility are clearly outlined in their flexible working policy (see Section 8.2).

3.2 MANAGING EMPLOYEES’ PERFORMANCE

To adapt effectively to a homeworking programme, managers often need to change their monitoring strategies from behaviour-based to output-based controls. Behaviour-based controls refer to the relatively common practice of assessing performance based on employees’ observable actions, whereas output-based controls involve assessing performance based on output, products, or other deliverables of the work rather than on the process or behaviours used to generate the output.

The Acas employee survey assessed manager experiences of monitoring the performance of homeworkers. Managers who indicated that they manage homeworkers (N=52) were asked about the challenges they perceive with this task. As seen in Table 4 below, overall, managers perceive limited challenges to monitoring the performance of homeworkers. While a substantial proportion (40.4 per cent strongly agree or agree) acknowledged that managing homeworkers is more difficult than managing office-based staff, the majority found it easy to monitor the quality (58.6 per cent strongly agree or agree) and amount (61.5 per cent strongly agree or agree) of work performed by homeworkers. This may be attributable to the fact that some of the jobs in Acas where homeworking is a popular arrangement (for example, Individual Conciliators) feature output that is easily measurable (e.g., number of cases completed), and therefore lend themselves to output-based controls. More than two-thirds (69.2 per cent neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree) indicate that it would not be any easier to manage homeworkers if they spent more time in the office. Interestingly, managers who are office-based are significantly more likely to agree with this statement than those who homework.
Table 4: From responses to ‘For each of the following, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree:’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree or strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree or strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing homeworkers is more difficult than managing office-based staff.</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could manage homeworking staff more effectively if they had a more frequent presence in the office.</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy for me to manage the working hours of the homeworkers I manage.</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy for me to monitor the work quality of the homeworkers I manage.</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy for me to monitor the amount of work completed by homeworkers I manage.</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: N=118, Employee survey respondents who indicate they manage homeworkers)

Some organisations do actively attempt to monitor homeworker activity. For example, at Organisation Y, one of the organisations participating in the case study research, managers require homeworkers to keep a diary of the time they spend working at home (see Appendix 8.2: Case Studies). In addition, at Organisation Y, one-to-one meetings between employees and their line managers are held on a monthly basis in order to review performance, work progress, health and safety or career development issues.

3.3 COMMUNICATIONS

Managers were also asked about the frequency, format and content of communications with their employees in the employee survey. As seen in Figure 13 below, managers reported more frequent communications with their office-based employees than with their home-based staff.
As might be expected, managers who are based in the office themselves are significantly more likely to report frequent communications with office-based colleagues than those managers who work on the road or at home some or all of the time.

When asked about the methods used to communicate with their employees, managers were asked in the employee survey to select up to three primary methods with which they communicate most frequently with their home and office-based workers. Perhaps not surprisingly, those managing office-based workers are much more likely to use face-to-face methods of communication, while those managing homeworkers are much more likely to utilise telephone discussions. Email is used consistently across both groups of employees. In addition, managers are more likely to use informal, ad hoc communications than formal, planned communications with both groups of workers.

Last, the employee survey asked managers about the frequency of communication with their employees on particular subjects. The majority of managers reported sharing work-related information (71.2 per cent) and having social interactions (51.4 per cent) most days. However, communications regarding working arrangements and performance feedback happen much less frequently. Of note, managers who are office-based share work-related information with their employees significantly more often than those who work on the road or at home some or all of the time, indicating that homeworking does have some impact on levels of knowledge sharing.6

One aspect of homeworking that may impact the level of communication between managers and homeworkers is the experience of the homeworkers when they go into the office. Data from the employee survey found that some homeworkers report difficulty working when they come into the office. More than two-thirds

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6 Significance is based on z-score tests for significant differences across percentages at a p<.05 level.
(68%) of homeworking employees report that they don’t get as much work done from the office as they do at home and more than one-third indicate that they have trouble finding a seat.

### 3.4 TRAINING

Manager training on homeworking and partial homeworking was explored briefly during initial interviews with senior managers at Acas and during the qualitative study with managers. Currently, specific training on managing homeworkers is not a part of Acas’ training programme. However, managers are trained on how to perform a Health and Safety assessment for employees who are transitioning to homeworking. The case study research on best practices yielded some evidence of training for managers specifically relating to flexible working. For example, Organisation X provides training for both new homeworkers and managers of homeworkers. The latter encompasses written guidelines on topics such as health and safety, the necessity of two-way flexibility, core hours, expenses, technology, and security procedures. For further details on these findings, please see Appendix 8.2: Case Studies.
4. TECHNOLOGY

Technology plays a central role in the success of homeworking at Acas – this was evident during the qualitative study with its staff. There are multiple areas related to technology that are important considerations for organisations that offer homeworking. This chapter examines homeworking technology provision, common technology issues related to homeworking, technology support for homeworkers, the interface of homeworking technology and working from the office, and new technology resources for homeworking. A key finding from both the qualitative and diary studies was that technological issues can be exacerbated when individuals are working remotely and can impact their work performance.

I suppose you are always very reliant on the technology that the phone works and the computer works whereas if you're in the office and your phone breaks you just go to another desk and use that phone or another computer. When you are at home you are at the mercy of the technology. (Homeworker)

There are occasions when the telephone system goes down, not that often recently but we would have days when you would think, I can't use it this afternoon. You can't do anything then. We would have days when the computer went down for an hour, two hours, three hours, you are completely adrift. It's like being a peripatetic engineer. (Homeworker)

There also seems to be an emotional impact on those who experience difficulties connecting while working from home.

I know people have said to me they feel really guilty when, through no fault of their own, the technology fails them and well everybody in the office is working now. I think that can be quite a powerful emotion for people especially if you are working in quite close teams even though you might be physically removed because people feel that they are letting their colleagues down or somehow they are going to be perceived to be not pulling their weight within the team. (Office worker)

It goes down quite a bit and that is quite isolating as well. If the computer goes down you think, is it just me, is it the whole office, is it the whole world? So you don't know. They are trying to do that by sending you texts on your phone and sometimes they do that but sometimes they do it too late and it's gone down and you've got back in again by the time you get a text. So it is sometimes difficult but I think the office do try and ring you up and keep you updated but it is a problem that is difficult to resolve I think really. (Homeworker)

4.1 HOMEWORKING TECHNOLOGY Provision

The role of technology in predicting satisfaction among homeworkers has been addressed in a number of studies, which often find that homeworkers are unhappy with the technological resources and related support available to them. Homeworkers who report receiving adequate technological support have, unsurprisingly, been shown to be more satisfied with their working arrangements than those receiving insufficient levels of support.
Overall, the results of the Acas employee survey indicated that its employees experience relatively high levels of satisfaction with the technology support they receive from Acas: Acas provides individuals who work from home some or part of the time with a technology kit that includes either PCs or laptops, docking stations, desks, chairs, printers and headsets as requested. Individuals doing more flexible work, or who work on the road, are more likely to have laptops with dongles that give them 3G access to the internet and remote connections to Acas networks.

_I have the whole kit. I have a cabinet for files. I have a desk. I have a very expensive chair, the name escapes me, an ergonomic keyboard, mouse, everything._ (Homeworker)

Almost all Acas employees, indicate that they have the ability to access their emails from home. Many do this via their personal computers.

Some workers carry Blackberries. The interviews conducted with Acas staff suggest many have been able to choose whether or not to carry a Blackberry. Several workers note that they declined having a Blackberry in order to prevent work interruptions to their personal time.

_I don’t want a Blackberry... I don’t want to be too contactable. It’s bad enough that I pick up things at home. That is one of the things that some people feel difficult to let to go, it’s homeworking and they feel they have to._ (Office worker)

_I have a Blackberry which is both a good and a bad thing because it gives me access to all my emails in one handy little, devilish package... I’ve had it for some time because of the flexible working that I’ve done. I have a laptop with mobile 3G and a secure ID token to get on to Acas servers and services securely from wherever I am. So with a couple of minor exceptions I can basically work anywhere as I would in the [Acas] office._ (Office worker)

When asked what technology resources are not currently provided that might be useful to their jobs, the findings from both the qualitative study and the employee survey were highly consistent and the most frequently mentioned items include:

- A tablet / iPad to replace heavier, unwieldy laptops
- Videoconferencing / Voice over IP service (e.g., Skype)
- Improved broadband connection that would enable better connection to the Acas network
- Improved telephony including features such as caller ID and improved noise-cancelling headsets

Other suggestions specific to working from home include provision of scanners, larger monitors and printers with dual-sided and/or photocopying capabilities.

Clearly, technology provision is job role dependent, and these findings cannot be generalized beyond the job roles found among Acas employees. However, they provide direction as to the core elements of a homeworking technology set-up.
4.2 COMMON TECHNOLOGY ISSUES RELATING TO HOMEWORKING

The most commonly mentioned technology issue relating to homeworking at Acas is the speed and reliability of internet/network connections. This emerged both in the qualitative interviews as well as in open-ended questions in the quantitative employee survey. The quality of the broadband connection can vary significantly among workers depending on their location.

I have a homeworker who if it rains or if it snows or if it’s cold her entire phone line crackles. Her computer system doesn’t stay online all day because her phone line crackles and it knocks the broadband out. So there are definite problems with the systems that we have that we can’t do anything about. (Homeworker)

In addition, mobile workers can often be connecting from locations other than their home or an Acas office. They mention difficulties accessing the Internet using their dongle as well as difficulties with the portability of some of the Acas equipment.

I also think we need to start looking at tablets rather than laptops for staff who travel a lot because they are better to use on trains, could replace our Blackberries and are much, much faster than the slow processing and Internet speeds we currently get on the go. (Mobile worker)

Another area of concern among those working from home is communications when IT issues arise. While employees in the office might share information verbally relating to a particular system being down, those at home are not always notified, which seems to add to the stress of the problem.

Well it’s crashed a few times . . . and the frustrating thing then is nobody tells you. In the office they know, they are all sitting there and they all know and somebody will phone whoever it is they need to phone and they say, yes, I’m looking at it now and it will be done by two o’clock or something and that is not cascaded... So, for me, I ring my little friends or my little group that I’ve got, are you on, has yours crashed and things like that. It did the other day and we weren’t told at all. (Homeworker)

Technology issues were also measured in the diary study among homeworkers. Each day, homeworkers were asked ‘Did you have any issues with your homeworking technology today?’. The findings indicate that issues with technology occur quite frequently, with study participants reporting having a technology issue on 35.5 per cent of the days worked (N=424). When asked how the issue impacted their work that day, the findings in Fig. 14 below indicate that homeworkers can be significantly disrupted by technology issues. However, the majority of the issues experienced were relatively minor and resolved quite quickly.
In addition, the diary study showed that having technology issues clearly impacts the daily experiences of homeworkers.

As seen in Fig. 15, workers who indicated – as part of the two-week ‘diary’-type daily study – that they had experienced a technology issue were significantly more likely to report lower levels of job satisfaction, work-life facilitation – which is “a form of synergy in which resources associated with one role enhance or make participation easier in another” lxxiii - and negative measures of well-being.

Figure 15: From responses to ‘Did you have any issues with your homeworking technology today?’

(Base: N=424, Diary responses for workdays only)
Similarly, diary study respondents also report significantly higher levels of isolation and negative measures of well-being (such as feeling tense, worried or uneasy) on days where they experienced technology issues, as seen below in Fig 16.\footnote{To calculate measures of isolation and negative well-being, composite scores were calculated using the average scores among the multiple measures for each item. Significance is based on z-score tests for significant differences across percentages at a p<.05 level.}

Figure 16: From responses to ‘Did you have any issues with your homeworking technology today?’

The above issues were examined in order to understand the way in which technology can impact employee experiences of homeworking. Homeworkers can find that they are more strongly impacted by technology issues, because they are in their own environment without the resource of other colleagues or alternate technology to rely on. However, it is important to note that overall, the technology provision within Acas is well-regarded by employees and the majority of employees are highly satisfied with the technology provided.

4.3 TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT IN THE EARLY STAGES OF HOMEWORKING

Technology set-up is an important aspect of an employee’s transition to homeworking. Overall, Acas employees were highly satisfied with the IT support they received when they began working from home (76.9 per cent report being satisfied or very satisfied). When asked in the quantitative employee survey which types of interactions occurred when employees began homeworking at Acas, a strong majority report that they received in-home support from IT to set up their computer and telephone equipment as seen in Figure 17.
4.4 ONGOING TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT FOR HOMEWORKING

At Acas, many IT workers are homeworkers themselves and therefore are familiar with the issues experienced by their homeworking colleagues. When asked about the differences between supporting homeworkers versus office-based workers, the IT group acknowledges a few key issues.

Generally the calls are longer if it’s a homeworker. We did a little bit of a compare study on it... The general consensus seems to be these people are on their own and they’re not having their human contact so they might ring us about a quick password change that takes ten minutes but they might want to talk to you for a lot longer than that because they just need some support... Homeworkers ask more questions . . . you know I’ve got this little thing on my machine, what can I do with this? What does this do? Am I doing this right? In an office I think they generally talk to each other. (Homeworker)

IT workers also noted that the newer remote access technology that they have allows them to better serve both those working from the office and from home.

If a server needs restarting I can do that after eight o’clock when our helpline stops working so it doesn’t affect users then during the day or business systems. So, yeah, that’s another good part of being a homeworker. (Homeworker)
I do like remote connections because I can sit there and be doing something and they can sit and watch... So if you see it again especially if it is something really simple that they can do themselves. A lot of them would love not to have to contact the service desk because they feel silly. They’ve got no need to feel silly because things happen. So we just say to them, I will remote in and show you... (Homeworker)

Another common theme among employees working from home is difficulty managing IT issues and updates in their home environment.

It is unrealistic to expect us to spend half a day unplugging things and bringing the computer into the office and then getting back and not knowing which wire goes in where and getting in a right state about it. I think that if you want people to work from home you should actually provide the IT technicians and everyone to come to that individual’s home. (Homeworker)

### 4.5 HOMEWORKING TECHNOLOGY AND WORKING FROM THE OFFICE

An important aspect of technology to consider for homeworkers is how their technology will work on days that they come in to the office. This is an issue that was raised frequently by homeworkers at Acas. In general, while Acas homeworkers enjoy their days in the office due to their ability to connect with their colleagues, some do indicate that they find it difficult to do their work from the office. This was attributed to several factors including issues with technology, time spent in meetings, lack of access to their case files, not enough work spaces, and other office-based obligations.

Today I came in for a team meeting and I wanted to do a bit of work in between the team meeting and that other meeting that I had and there was nowhere to sit. There was no phone that I could use. There was no computer that was working. Forget it. (Homeworker)

As seen in Figure 18, when asked in the employee survey about which factors might prevent them from coming in to an office to work, more than one-quarter (28.5 per cent) of employees who spend 20 per cent or more of their time working from home indicate that they have difficulty accessing the technology they need in the office.
This was also noted in the qualitative study at Acas.

*There was a lot of discussion, initiated by myself and a couple of others that we should come in a bit more often. We’ve tried that but actually working here isn’t particularly easy... Well you’ve got to log in to the system in a different way. My computer wouldn’t go on this morning. I had to keep on attaching the lead to the monitor. It’s a faff to get on to the phone.* (Homeworker)

While many of the issues noted in Fig. 25 above are not related to technology, they may have technology-based solutions. For example, several organisations that have been recognized for homeworking best practices make use of room and desk booking software that allows employees to pre-arrange a place to sit prior to coming in to the office. Similarly, several organisations have incorporated noise reduction technology into their office design, which may help to cut down on the noise distraction noted by employees in the employee survey.

### 4.6 NEW TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES FOR HOMEWORKING

As new communication-based technologies continue to emerge, it becomes important to examine those that may further facilitate the ability for workers to engage in homeworking. One example of this that was investigated in the Acas study was videoconferencing. While current use is limited, when probed qualitatively about videoconferencing, Acas employees report mixed perceptions of and experiences with Skype and other forms of traditional videoconferencing.
already used in some Acas offices. Some employees felt that it would add value to internal communications to be able to see others’ facial expressions.

*I think we are missing [out] and I've mentioned this on a number of occasions, it would be useful to have some sort of Skype system. I've mentioned that a couple of times because you could see a face.* (Homeworker)

*I think it could be a benefit. I find when you ring in sometimes if your other colleagues are here when you are on the phone you can hear what’s going on but I suppose you don’t feel part of it because you can’t read people’s expressions or anything to see a problem. So maybe video conferencing would be a benefit for that.* (Homeworker)

Similarly, some Acas employees who work from home also indicate some interest in using more group texting or instant messaging technology on the job. One IT working group has already adopted a group messaging system in order to facilitate communication among their fully homeworking team. The employees in this team log in to the group message system – which is analogous to popular IM services such as Windows Live Messenger or Google Talk – along with the other Acas systems at the beginning of their work day and use this system to communicate in real time with their colleagues throughout the day. The information shared includes allocation of service requests, knowledge sharing on technical issues and other general team information. This form of communication seems to have replaced ad hoc face-to-face interactions that might occur between colleagues in an office-based environment.

*We did find it was quite isolating at first but we are different from other teams that have homeworking staff in that we’ve got group-wise messenger. So it’s a little bit like MSN. So they are in a chat room, they talk to each other all day, they can talk to each other privately.... constantly all day from eight o’clock in the morning until eight o’clock at night... they talk to each other constantly about stuff. So it makes them less isolated.* (Homeworker)
5. CAREER PROGRESSION

As described in Section 2.2.4 on job attitudes, the homeworking research literature has consistently found that the perception of higher job autonomy among homeworkers can lead to increased job satisfaction. Research has also shown that this autonomy frequently translates itself into greater commitment to the employing organization; employees feel loyal to their employer for accommodating their working arrangements, and those with highly individualised working arrangements have expressed the belief that they would have difficulty accessing a similar arrangement at another organisation. Practitioners have also recognised this link between homeworking and increased commitment to the organisation.

Consequently, employees’ relationships with Acas were explored in both the qualitative study and the employee survey. We looked at employees’ career ambition, their level of commitment to Acas and the nature of this commitment. We also analysed the results of the Acas’ Employee Engagement measure from the Civil Service People Survey (CSPS). The results from these methods support some of the findings from the research literature and practitioner experiences. Overall, we did find that the flexibility that homeworking provides to Acas employees may be a valuable tool to keep them loyal to the organisation.

5.1 CAREER AMBITION

The employee survey assessed how Acas respondents characterised their career ambition.

If we examine the data by employees using different types of working arrangements, we see considerable variation in the responses (with the exception of the responses to the ‘ability to reach a higher position’ question). Employees who work mostly at or from home are less likely to have the ambition and the willingness to advance in their careers and to state that having a career is important to their sense of identity. Table 5 shows the percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements listed. We also found that line managers agree or strongly agree with these statements more than non-line managers.
Table 5: From responses to ‘career ambition’ employee survey questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed</th>
<th>Home workers</th>
<th>Mobile workers</th>
<th>Partial homeworkers</th>
<th>Office workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have the ambition to reach a higher position in my line of work or organisation.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the ability to reach a higher position in my line of work.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be challenged in my work.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a career is important to my sense of identity.</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to achieve the highest possible position in my line of work.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: N=514, All employee survey respondents)

Mirroring the differences in the responses above, employees who work mostly at or from home are more likely to feel that the major satisfactions and important things in their lives come from their life outside work and that their career is not a priority in their life. For instance, a strong majority (81 per cent) of homeworkers reported that the most important things that happen to them involve their life outside work compared to just over half of partial homeworkers. This disparity cannot be attributed to differences in family structure between homeworkers and partial homeworkers, which are insubstantial (47% of homeworkers have children under the age of 18, vs. 42% of partial homeworkers). It is difficult to know if, in this scenario, participation in homeworking contributes over time to lower levels of career ambition or whether employees with pre-existing low levels of career ambition have deliberately chosen homeworking arrangements. Again, we found differences between line managers and non-line managers: non-line managers agree or strongly agree more often with these statements.

We explored the career aspirations and turnover intentions of the participants in the qualitative study. Many of the interviewees did not express any aspirations in terms of career development. Most of the employees that we interviewed who do conciliation work would like to continue the work they are currently doing. The main reason given for this was that the conciliators enjoy the work and also the flexibility that goes with it.

...to me with all the flexibility, couldn’t get this and I know in reality I couldn’t get this anywhere else not now. (Partial homeworker)

So I am not sure I would so that is a consideration in terms of career progression because, for example, the next step up for me is either to be a senior conciliator or to be a manager. To be honest I wouldn’t want to be a manager because I wouldn’t want to come in here and it’s not worth the aggro. It’s too comfortable where I am. That’s probably why I’ve been in the job for 14, 15 years. (Homeworker)
A reluctance to make major lifestyle changes for the sake of career advancement was not limited to homeworkers or partial homeworkers; there were a number of office-based workers who perceived that the trade-offs required for a more senior position, in terms of travel time, responsibility, or longer work hours generally, were too steep.

The employee survey asked Acas employees who make use of homeworking whether they would be willing to switch to become office-based workers for the purpose of career advancement. Consistent with the findings from career ambition, partial homeworkers were by far more likely to respond affirmatively to this question than any other group that engages in homeworking. Over 20% of the partial homeworkers compared to less than 10% of mobile workers and homeworkers report they would be willing to switch.

5.2 PROFESSIONAL ISOLATION

Earlier in the report, we discussed social isolation and the potentially negative psychological impact it may have for homeworkers. A number of prior research studies have also identified isolation from the work environment as being a significant career-related issue for homeworkers. This experience of remoteness from the ongoing activities in the workplace is referred to as professional isolation. In many organisations, homeworkers have concerns about the impact of professional isolation on their career prospects, fearing that they are not only ‘out of sight’, but also ‘out of mind’ when it comes time for managers to allocate key assignments or nominate candidates for promotion. Employees who choose to participate in a homeworking arrangement may indeed find their loyalty and commitment to the job doubted by managers. In a study by Veiga & Dino (2008) of 261 homeworkers and their managers, self-reported professional isolation among homeworkers was negatively related to their job performance, as rated by their managers. This effect was particularly pronounced for homeworkers who worked extensively at or from home and engaged in limited amounts of face-to-face interaction with colleagues and managers. Effects such as these may be explained in part by homeworkers’ lack of access to informal development opportunities.

Professional isolation was discussed with Acas employees in terms of having potentially negative effects on workers’ ability to perform the job. The effects of professional isolation that line managers raised often revolved around disengagement.

I think disengagement is one of the big things because it puts [homeworkers] very much back in terms of working in a silo and narrow mindset. So then it makes it difficult if you want them to do something differently, they are very quickly taken out of their comfort zone and very resistant therefore to change which you perhaps don't get with office based staff to quite the same extent. (Partial Homeworker)

According to the literature, professional isolation has the potential to reduce an individual’s career prospects. This was explored in the employee survey; participants were first asked how frequently they felt they miss out on activities and meetings that could enhance their career and on opportunities to be mentored. On average, respondents feel they miss out on these activities and
opportunities infrequently or very infrequently and there were no significant differences in the responses among different categories of employees. This is consistent with the responses we received with regard to communication and information exchange with co-workers on job-related issues (see Section 2.3.1 on Co-worker relationships). Respondents feel that, on average, they are comfortable seeking help for job-related problems from people in their teams and that such communication with colleagues is useful for their jobs.

However, when the workers who engage in homeworking at least 20% of the time were asked whether they felt 'out of the loop' in their work, there were some significant differences in the responses by type of worker. Homeworkers and mobile workers feel out of the loop more frequently than partial homeworkers. Results are presented in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19: From responses to 'Please indicate how frequently you experience the following with regard to your work: I feel out of the loop'

A follow-up question asked whether working at or from home has a positive, negative or no impact on career advancement opportunities at Acas. On average, most of the respondents (64 per cent) reported that working at or from home has no impact on their opportunity to advance in their careers at Acas. However, 22 per cent of the homeworkers and 23 of the mobile workers surveyed feel that it has a negative impact versus 9 per cent of partial homeworkers. This suggests that the greater amount of time spent in the office by partial homeworkers yields benefits in terms of perceived career advancement opportunities. On the other side of the scale, 31 per cent of partial homeworkers feel that homeworking has a positive impact on their careers, versus 17 per cent of the total number of respondents. Table 6 below shows the full results.
Table 6: From responses to ‘Do you feel that working from home has a positive impact, negative impact, or has no impact at all on your opportunity to advance in your career at Acas?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive impact</th>
<th>No impact at all</th>
<th>Negative impact</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeworkers</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial homeworkers</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile workers</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>17%</strong></td>
<td><strong>64%</strong></td>
<td><strong>19%</strong></td>
<td><strong>211</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: N=211, Employee survey respondents who work 20% or more of the time at or from home)

Avoiding professional isolation

The interviews yielded evidence of some homeworkers making particular efforts to avoid any potential damaging effects of professional isolation. Similar to homeworkers’ tactics for evading social isolation, these efforts involved reaching out to colleagues by phone, email, and in person. A few workers spoke of making sure that they had a visible presence in the office on a regular basis in order to maintain connections with colleagues and subordinates and to raise their own profile.

Again it goes back to the fact that you are, potentially, away from hearing and subconscious learning. Lifting your head up and asking a question. ... It was just a case of me taking control of that. Me taking time. Me speaking and making sure I contacted my colleagues, making sure that when I came in to the office I talked to colleagues. I didn’t lock myself away. (Homeworker)

Sometimes I don’t need to come in [to the office] for the whole week but I will still come in a couple of days just so that people see that you are still around. (Partial homeworker)

The employee survey results show that a high proportion of those who work mainly at or from home go to the office less than once a month (50 per cent). Of the total number of respondents to the employee survey, 29 per cent report going to the office less than once a month. The survey results also suggest that employees go to the office to engage in both social interaction and information exchange; respondents who work 20% or more of the time at or from home singled out the most important reason for coming into an Acas office to work as being ‘to gain / share work related information with colleagues’. Table 7 shows the average (mean) rating among all survey respondents for the importance of different reasons to go to an Acas office using a scale from one meaning ‘very unimportant’ to 5 meaning ‘very important’.
Table 7: From responses to 'Please indicate how important each of the following reasons are in your decisions to come in to an Acas office to work. (scale from one meaning 'very unimportant' to 5 meaning 'very important')'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To attend an area meeting</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet with my line manager</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet with clients / parties in a dispute</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To catch up socially with Acas colleagues</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find out more about what is going on at the organization</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain / share work-related information with colleagues</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: N=225, Employee survey respondents who work 20% or more of the time at or from home)

Suggestions from academics regarding ways in which managers can prevent professional isolation among homeworking staff include the scheduling of regular staff meetings to ensure that homeworkers and office workers receive key work-related information at the same time and in the same way, providing intranet systems with which homeworkers and office-based staff can communicate with one another and keep up to date with relevant information, and releasing information bulletins to keep all employees informed of work-related news. Some have argued for the creative use of communication technologies to substitute for face-to-face interaction, such as telephone conference calls, video conferencing, and Web-enabled meetings.

The best practice case study research revealed that in some cases, organisations specifically require their homeworkers to have a regular presence in the office to avoid issues associated with professional isolation (please refer to Appendix 8.2: Case studies). For example, Organisation X requires that homeworkers work from the office at least one or two days per week. These days are agreed with the line manager to ensure that team members come to the office on similar days and that days in the office alternate between teams in order to ensure sufficient space.

Among the organisations participating in the best practice case studies, those in which homeworking or flexible working was seen as the norm were of the view that these arrangements would not impact the individual’s career (for more information, please refer to Appendix 8.2: Case studies). For example, although monitoring methods at Ernst & Young are identical for homeworking and non-homeworking staff, some employees report feeling as though they need to be seen in the office in order to be recognised for their work. In contrast, no such views were reported at Organisation Y, where having the flexibility to work from home is embedded in the organisation’s culture.
6. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

Assisting workers with achieving work-life balance is a key motivation for many organisations that offer homeworking and flexible working options. This is particularly true of Acas, whose stated aim is ‘to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations’. This chapter reports on the findings of the Acas Homeworking Study related to work-life balance and to conflict between work and personal life. It also explores the preferences that employees demonstrate regarding the boundaries they enact between their work and their personal lives, and how rigid or permeable these boundaries are. In addition, the tactics that employees use to create and sustain the boundaries surrounding work and home are examined.

6.1 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

As seen in Figure 20, in the quantitative employee survey, Acas employees most frequently cite ‘balancing (my) home/family and work commitments’ as the main reasons they began and continue to work at or from home.

Figure 20: Percentage of employees citing ‘To balance my home/family and work commitments’

According to the employee survey, Acas workers are satisfied with their work-life balance, regardless of whether they are homeworkers, partial homeworkers, mobile workers, or based in the office. This remains the case even when they acknowledge that their work does interfere with their personal lives upon occasion, and vice versa.

Research on homeworking frequently demonstrates that this working arrangement is linked to lower levels of work-to-life conflict, and that the more often individuals work at home, the lower their work-to-life conflict is likely to be. For instance, a survey of 454 professional-level employees who divided their work time between an office and home found that the more time per week individuals worked at home, the lower their work-to-life conflict. This effect was even more pronounced for employees reporting higher levels of job...
autonomy and scheduling flexibility, which presumably allowed them to arrange their work tasks in such a way as to accommodate their family or other non-work commitments. The lower levels of work-to-life conflict experienced by homeworkers have been found to predict, in turn, higher job satisfaction, reduced intentions to leave the organisation, and decreased levels of job-related stress for homeworkers.\textsuperscript{lxxxii}

Qualitative research helps to explain why homeworking has such beneficial effects on work-to-life conflict. Homeworking saves employees time, because it reduces or eliminates commuting time that cannot be used for work, family, or leisure activities.\textsuperscript{lxxxiii} It also allows employees to determine the timing of their task completion; for instance, interviews with 47 dual-earner couples with children found that many of the participants chose to work at times when their children would be busy with other activities or already asleep for the evening.\textsuperscript{lxxxiv} By doing so, participants could complete greater amounts of work without having job-related obligations interfere with their family time. This has knock-on effects on family relationships.

Acas results were reflective of these earlier findings. The qualitative study with homeworkers revealed benefits to work-life balance including saved commuting time, ability to drop off and pick up their children from school and the flexibility to fulfill non-work obligations during the work week.

\textit{The biggest benefit is time to me. I mean I've now got another young family and I want to be involved. I can think of nothing worse than sitting on a train for ten hours a week when I could use that time for something else. (Homeworker)}

\textit{You can look after people when they are not well. You can participate more in your children’s upbringing or look after your parents or whatever it is your responsibilities are. You can do that and it doesn't influence your working life as much as it would do if you were based in the office. (Homeworker)}

\textit{So I was lucky that I was probably the only dad who went to one of my daughter’s school plays at two o'clock in the afternoon and I was able to go because I worked around what I had to do and took my lunch from two till three ...if I was working in London I would never have gone unless I had taken the day off. (Homeworker)}

In the Acas research, work-life conflict was measured as a multi-dimensional and bi-directional concept. Work-life conflict can be ‘multi-dimensional’ insofar as it included the following different dimensions of conflict\textsuperscript{lxxxv}:

- Time-based conflict: this can occur when an employee experiences scheduling clashes or, for example, if they need to work longer hours which is difficult due to their family commitments.
- Strain-based conflict: this can occur when a person expends such a large amount of physical or emotional energy on the job that they have less of that energy for family or personal activities
- Behavioural conflict that relates to differences in the behaviours that are required for home and work roles.

In addition, work-life conflict can be bi-directional, meaning that work activities can contribute to conflict at home, and activities at home can contribute to conflict at work\textsuperscript{lxxxvi}. As seen in Figures 21 and 22, each of these dimensions and directions was measured among Acas employees in the employee survey.
As seen in the figures above, Acas employees generally experience more work-to-life conflict than life-to-work conflict. Specifically, strain-based work-to-life conflict is reported most frequently (25.9 per cent agree of all employees, strongly agree or agree).

When comparing homeworking and partial homeworking employees to their office-based colleagues, no significant differences emerge, although, as seen in Figure 22, there are some slight variations by type of conflict. Mobile workers are the most likely employees to report that they experience time-based work-to-life conflict (29.8 per cent of them), while office-based workers are the most likely employees to report that experiencing strain-based work-to-life conflict (30.0 per cent of them). Acas employees report very low levels of work-to-life behavioural
conflict. Those least likely to report this type of conflict are those who make more frequent transitions between home, work and other environments: partial homeworkers, 11.1 per cent and mobile workers 8.5 per cent. This is consistent with other results from the study indicating that those who divide their working time between home and the office experience the best outcomes with regard to well-being.

As seen in the figure above, few employees report experiencing time-based, strain-based or behaviour-based life-to-work conflict.

In the qualitative study, some of the antecedents for work-life conflict were explored. One of the key issues identified by homeworkers was that of longer working hours. This is consistent with the overall findings of the research literature and is also supported by data from the Acas quantitative employee survey. As noted earlier in Section 4.1.1, homeworking and partial homeworking employees are more likely to work in excess of their contracted hours than office workers. Mobile workers work significantly more hours in excess of their contracts than all other groups of workers.\(^8\)

\[I\ do\ compressed\ hours,\ so\ four\ days\ that\ I\ work\ and\ I\ work\ from\ 8.30\ a.m.\ to\ 6.15\ p.m.\ with\ half\ an\ hour\ for\ lunch\ but\ I\ normally\ don't\ have\ any\ lunch\ break\ at\ all\ and\ I\ normally\ finish\ later\ than\ 6.15\ p.m.\ and\ I\ normally\ work\ on\ the\ day\ when\ I\ am\ not\ supposed\ to\ be\ working\ as\ well.\ (Homeworker)\]

The longer hours appear to be a combined function of the omnipresent nature of homeworking, in which work can always be done regardless of the time of day, and of the nature of the work itself, which is never complete. Time that would be spent commuting if an employee worked in the office is often reallocated to work tasks.

\[The\ thing\ about\ the\ conciliating\ job\ is\ that\ you\ could\ sit\ there\ all\ day,\ every\ day\ and\ work\ because\ the\ work\ never\ gets\ fully\ done.\ There\ is\ always\ something\ you\ can\ do,\ a\ phone\ call\ you\ can\ make.\ (Homeworker)\]

\[You\ probably\ do\ more\ hours\ because\ I\ am\ meant\ to\ finish\ at\ six\ but\ I\ never\ finish\ before\ half\ past\ six\ because\ there\ are\ always\ things,\ you\ just\ think,\ oh\ I\ will\ just\ do\ this\ because\ you\ are\ there.\ It\ is\ not\ as\ if\ you've\ got\ to\ catch\ a\ train.\ (Homeworker)\]

6.2 BOUNDARY PREFERENCES

Despite the work-life benefits associated with homeworking, homeworking does not appear to be a quick ticket to better work-life balance for all employees. Because work is taking place in the same physical space allocated to an individual's personal or family life, it can sometimes be difficult to erect and maintain clear boundaries between work and non-work domains. The time and place separations between home and work that exist for office-based workers do not arise as naturally for homeworkers; homeworking increases the permeability of boundaries between life domains, making it easier for one domain to intrude

\(^8\) Significance is based on t-tests for significant differences across means at a p<.05 level.
Suppressing work-related thoughts, emotions, and behaviours can be challenging, because the simultaneous presence of work and non-work cues can blur the boundary between the two domains.

For example, a study of over 1,000 workers in the Netherlands found that men who worked at home more than one day a week reported having more trouble enjoying their personal and leisure time, as they found it difficult to stop thinking about work. (This effect was not found for women.) Several Acas homeworkers expressed similar sentiments in the qualitative study.

“[T]here’s a danger when you are working from home that you could actually work all the way through. The thing is with our job is it’s never done. There is never, ever a situation when you could say, I’ve done all my work today, ever because you could always, always ring more people and you should be ringing more people. There are always other cases that you haven’t dealt with and other case law that you haven’t looked at.” (Homeworker)

An important consideration when examining work-life boundaries is the preferences of the employees. Some employees prefer to keep their personal and work lives separate, while others prefer to integrate the two. Stronger boundaries between home and work are needed if one prefers to keep these roles separate, while more flexible boundaries are necessary in order to integrate them. In addition, employees may have different preferences for their personal boundaries compared to their work boundaries. For example, some employees may desire flexible boundaries related to their work, but prefer more inflexible boundaries surrounding their personal lives.

In the Acas quantitative employee survey, we measured these preferences by looking at ‘flexibility-willingness’, or the amount of flexibility a person prefers, as well as ‘flexibility-ability’, which is the amount of flexibility a person actually has in each of their roles. We found that, on average, Acas employees are more willing to be flexible with the boundaries surrounding their work than those related to their personal lives. In addition, employees perceive that they are more able to be flexible with work boundaries than with personal ones.

When examining these factors by type of worker, we see some genuine differences between groups. As seen in Figure 23 below, mobile workers report the highest levels of life flexibility-ability (mean of 3.56 on a five-point scale where 1=low flexibility-ability and 5=high flexibility-ability) and flexibility-willingness (mean of 3.48 on a similar five-point scale). This makes sense because these workers often work varying hours and in different locations, likely necessitating flexibility in their personal lives. Office workers report the lowest levels of life flexibility-ability (mean of 3.43) and flexibility-willingness (mean of 3.43), suggesting that these workers prefer to maintain very strong boundaries between their work and personal lives. The factors were also examined looking at employee gender and commitments outside work. Interestingly, female employees were significantly less likely to report work flexibility-willingness (mean of 3.78) and work flexibility-ability (mean of 3.54) versus their male counterparts (means of 3.72 and 3.91, respectively). There were no significant differences among employees based on marital or parental status.

Looking at boundary preferences at work, office workers report significantly lower levels of work-flexibility ability (mean of 3.43) than homeworkers (mean of 3.83) and partial homeworkers (mean of 3.94). This is likely due to the office-bound
nature of their jobs. As seen in Figure 27, generally, all groups of workers report willingness to enact flexible boundaries around work; however, partial homeworkers (mean of 3.94) and homeworkers (mean of 3.82) report the highest levels of work-flexibility willingness. As homeworking tends to be viewed as a working arrangement that requires higher-levels of integration between work and non-work activities, this suggests that there is alignment between employees’ preferences (willingness) and their actual working arrangement. Some academics argue that this alignment between preferences and working arrangements can lead to the best outcomes for employees.

Figure 23: From responses to ‘For each of the following, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree:’

![Graph showing work flexibility willingness and ability across different groups (Office workers, Partial homeworkers, Mobile workers, Homeworkers)]

(Base: N=514, All employee survey respondents)

6.3 BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT TACTICS

Although homeworking is generally believed to exert positive effects on work-life balance, increased participation in homeworking has also been linked to higher levels of work-to-life and life-to-work conflict, particularly for those individuals with heavier caregiving responsibilities for children or adult dependents, which can intrude upon work activities more easily when the workplace is also the family home. Research on how people manage the boundaries between their work and personal lives has found that homeworkers who prefer to integrate their work and non-work activities – for instance, by switching back and forth between work and personal tasks throughout the day – are more likely to experience work-to-life and life-to-work conflict as a result of blurred boundaries.

Work-life conflict is not an inevitable outcome of homeworking, however. Some homeworkers deliberately develop specific boundaries between their work and their personal lives, in an effort to avoid ‘blurring’ between the two. For example, techniques used involve restricting access to home-based work space by family

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9 Significance is based on t-score tests for significant differences across means at a p<.05 level.
members, dressing for the office even when working at home, and taking breaks at specified times in order to replicate the timekeeping and physical sensations normally experienced in an office setting. Another solution may involve tying homeworkers more closely to the organisation via communication and peer relationships. Some research has found that the more connected workers feel to the organisation, in terms of strong social bonds and frequent information exchange, the less life-to-work conflict they tend to perceive. This was found to be especially the case for those who worked more frequently at home, compared to those who were primarily office-based and worked at home only a day or two per week.

One of the critical issues associated with homeworking is ensuring that the home environment is adequately set up for work. Acas employees were asked in the quantitative employee survey where they perform their work when they are working from home. The majority (76.5 per cent) of Acas employees who spend time working at home sit in a separate room or office that is only used for work. However, a substantial proportion (21.9 per cent) report that they sit in a room that is not necessarily designated for work.

Acas workers who performed any of their work tasks at home were asked directly about the tactics they used to separate their work from their personal lives. The majority of participants identified having a separate room for a home office as an integral component of their ability to establish a boundary between work and home, with the physical separation appearing to contribute to a psychological one.

I work in the back of the garage looking out at the garden. So to me when I shut that door and go indoors that is like leaving the office. So it is quite separate for me. I mean I don't hear the phone or anything like that because it’s at the end of the garage and that’s my office. (Partial homeworker)

I am one of the lucky ones, I actually have a dedicated office. I've got a door and a lock. So I didn’t have to do the mental changing of shoes, it’s a case of switching my computer off and closing the door. (Homeworker)

However, there are some employees who report that they were not as fortunate to have a separate space for work-related materials.

So for two years whilst we had dinner, tea, lunch, the computers and my files sat next to us. It was far from ideal especially if the children had time off. (Homeworker)
As seen in the figure above, in the employee survey, homeworkers (77.9 per cent) report they are the most likely to sit in a room designated for working while those working less frequently from home, partial homeworkers (69.2 per cent), are less likely to have a designated space.

Aside from designated working areas in the home, Acas employees were asked in the qualitative study about the other tactics they used to establish a boundary between work and home. Some of these tactics involved setting personal rules about answering emails and phone calls after regular working hours. Again, physical separation seemed to play an important role, with workers making a number of references to having separate phone lines for work and personal purposes, and keeping computers used for work purposes out of sight of the main ‘family’ areas of the home.

\begin{quote}
On the weekends ... I try to turn off emails to my phone and I suppose I try and keep it separate like that sometimes where I make an effort to log off when everything is fine. I don’t log in then from that PC all weekend. I’ve got a separate laptop to do personal surfing on. So I try not to think about work then. (Homeworker)
\end{quote}

Despite the use of these tactics, which in most cases were considered successful by workers, there was a pronounced sense of temptation being difficult to resist when it came to maintaining the work-home boundary. Interview participants seemed quite self-aware in terms of their predilection for crossing their own boundaries, and in some cases had developed techniques to ensure they would not do so, such as turning off the ringer to their home office phones or turning off the computer completely rather than just logging off. However, the omnipresent nature of homeworking was acknowledged in a number of workers’ accounts, and in some cases was explicitly contrasted with the more temporally structured nature of office-based work.
I can’t hear the phone ringing in [my office] from that main part of the house. That is probably a good thing because otherwise I think I probably would answer the phone. (Homeworker)

I think it is much easier when you are office-based to walk out the door and switch off which I always found with other jobs. It was never a problem, I’d walk out the door and work has finished until you walk back in again. It’s not quite the same with homeworking because you are almost always there. (Homeworker)

In several accounts, the role of the homeworker’s self-discipline in maintaining a clear boundary between work and home was identified. In the main, self-discipline was raised in relation to efforts not to let work encroach upon personal time.

I think that is one of the big things about being a homeworker. I think you do need to have that self-discipline and I’m not that good at it. ... Last night I had a spare half an hour and I was checking through some of my files and my wife came in and said, why the hell are you working? ... I’ve got the [work] space to lock it away and do it but I still go in there but that’s not Acas saying, go in there at eight o’clock because the phone has rung. That is me, that is my curiosity so it is down to me to manage myself better. (Homeworker)

I’m very disciplined. I have a separate work space and even when I didn’t I still was very disciplined in psychologically feeling I was in a separate work space. I managed to emotionally block out all the stuff that needed doing at home and just focus on work. I think a less self-disciplined person might find it difficult. (Homeworker)

Some people’s accounts suggested that evening or weekend working was less a matter of inadvertently blurred boundaries, and more a deliberate tactic for scheduling work to fit in with personal hours of peak productivity, or with other activities such as exercising or fulfilling domestic responsibilities. For instance, one interview participant spoke of ‘not being a morning person’ and so preferring to prepare case notes the night before rather than the morning of a hearing.

Several individuals indicated that working in the evenings or at weekends allowed them to take time out of the regular workday to collect their children from school or take them to medical appointments or extracurricular activities.

I think if you adhere to the principle of flexibility then sometimes family life, especially if you are the person at home, would impinge on the daytime routine a bit but equally there is quite often the facility for you to work and even if you want at the weekend. (Homeworker)
7. CONCLUSION

7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

An analysis of the research, which was conducted in four steps (literature review, Acas data review, qualitative study, employee survey and diary study), has brought to light a number of key findings:

Outcomes of Homeworking for the Organisation

- **Performance** - Homeworking is often associated with increased productivity, mainly because homeworkers report working longer hours – which in any case is associated with the amount of work a person produces rather than their productivity *per se* – and having fewer distractions at home. Using 2010 and 2011 Acas performance ‘box markings’, we found that individual performance is very strong among Acas employees across the board. Looking at these performance data by working patterns, we see that average performance is very slightly higher for mobile and partial homeworkers. Acas employee performance is significantly correlated with positive aspects of employee well-being and negatively correlated with work burnout – that is to say, those who are the least stressed or ‘burned out’ and achieve a good work-life balance perform best.

- **Job Satisfaction/Engagement** - Results did not show significant differences between homeworkers and office workers in terms of job satisfaction. The exceptions are that a) homeworkers report less satisfaction with the volume of work than do their office-based colleagues, and b) office workers report being less satisfied with working arrangements than their home-based colleagues. In general, it is partial homeworkers and mobile workers – i.e. those who homework *moderately* – who report the highest job satisfaction and engagement.

Outcomes of Homeworking for the Individual

- **Co-worker relationships** - According to the literature, communication with co-workers and colleagues is important because it not only helps to avoid isolation but can also have a positive impact on job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job performance (as reported by line managers). We found that there is a reasonably good flow of information exchange and knowledge sharing among employees at Acas irrespective of the different working arrangements in operation.

- **Isolation** - Isolation is one of the drawbacks of homeworking identified by both researchers and practitioners. We found that at Acas, on average, employees who engage in homeworking experience isolation infrequently. So-called partial homeworkers are less likely to suffer from social isolation than their colleagues who homework intensively. They are also the employees who are best connected with their co-workers and line managers.

- **Autonomy and Control** - According to the research literature, perceptions of higher levels of autonomy and control by homeworkers versus office-based workers are generally associated with higher job
satisfaction. At Acas, office workers perceive having significantly lower levels of autonomy and control than their co-workers with regard to every aspect of autonomy and control measured in the employee survey: work schedule, working methods and decision making.

- **Work-life balance** - Many organisations offer flexible working (including homeworking) to assist their employees to achieve a better work-life balance. In general, Acas workers are satisfied with their work-life balance, regardless of their working patterns. Acas employees experience more work-to-life conflict (work activities interfering with activities at home) than life-to-work conflict (activities at home interfering with work activities). There are no significant differences among employees, despite the fact that homeworkers and partial homeworkers are more likely to work in excess of their contracted hours. Mobile workers work significantly more hours in excess of their contracts than all other groups of workers. Partial homeworkers, mobile workers and office workers are significantly more likely than homeworkers to experience work-to-life enrichment (i.e., their work has a positive impact on their personal life). In addition, office workers are significantly more likely to experience life-to-work enrichment (i.e., their personal life has a positive impact on their work) than homeworkers.

- **Stress** - Homeworking is generally associated with significantly lower levels of work-related stress than those experienced by office-based staff. Our findings suggest that, in the case of Acas, it is a moderate level of homeworking that yields the best outcomes for employees in terms of stress and well-being. Mobile workers and partial homeworkers report higher levels of well-being and lower levels of burnout than all other workers. This may be attributable to mobile workers’ and partial homeworkers’ ability to achieve the “best of both worlds” – they spend enough time in the office to sustain strong relationships and frequent communications with co-workers and managers and to stay abreast of work-related developments, but also enjoy the opportunity to spend time working at home with fewer distractions, greater autonomy, and no commute. It may also be the case, particularly for mobile workers, that “variety is the spice of life”; experiencing a mix of work environments may help to stave off monotony and/or fatigue, and thus be beneficial to well-being.

**Implications of Homeworking for Managers**

Managers play an essential role in creating a successful homeworking environment. Looking at key management attributes that make a difference in fostering a homeworking environment, Acas managers rate well on trust. A considerable majority of Acas employees (64 per cent) believe their relationship with Acas is based on mutual trust. With regard to performance management, a substantial number of managers acknowledge that managing homeworkers is more difficult than managing office-based staff and one-third agreed that it would be easier to manage homeworkers if they spent more time in the office. Acas line managers report communicating more often with and having more face-to-face interactions with their office-based employees than with their homeworking employees.
Implications of Homeworking for Individuals

- **Career Progression** - Results from Acas’ Employee Engagement measure of the CSPS suggest that providing flexible working arrangements contributes positively to employee engagement within Acas. This is supported by the employee findings, where office workers and homeworkers tend to report feeling less positive than those who work more flexibly (partial homeworkers and mobile workers) with regard to their relationship with Acas. In terms of career aspirations, employees working mostly at or from home are less likely to report the ambition and the willingness to advance in their careers and to state that having a career is important to their sense of identity.

- **Boundary Management** - Because homeworking can blur the boundaries between work and non-work domains, the research literature finds that it may increase work-life conflict and, as a result, will not necessarily have the desired positive effect on work-life balance. At Acas, we found that, on average, employees are more willing and able to be flexible with the boundaries surrounding their work than those related to their personal lives. Mobile workers and partial homeworkers are most likely to indicate that their personal boundaries are flexible. Consistent with their preferences, partial homeworkers and mobile workers are the most likely to integrate their work and personal lives (as opposed to keeping them separate). While there are no significant differences between employee groups regarding the levels of permeability of their work boundaries, it is interesting that homeworkers report the lowest levels of permeability. This suggests that the strategies that homeworkers have adopted to create boundaries between home and work are quite effective.

### 7.2 THE STUDY’S RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

**Objective One: What makes for a successful homeworking arrangement at an individual level?**

The results suggest that employees who use homeworking moderately show higher levels of well-being than both office-based workers and employees who work mainly at or from home. This conclusion is supported by the findings in different areas. Partial homeworkers and mobile workers have higher levels of job satisfaction, job engagement and lower levels of burnout. As they enjoy the flexibility that comes with homeworking, they perceive having enhanced autonomy and control in their jobs, which is also linked to higher job satisfaction than their office-based colleagues. Working at or from home in a moderate fashion also protects employees from some of the drawbacks of intensive homeworking such as isolation. Isolation is not likely to be an issue for partial homeworkers who, of all Acas employees, are the best connected with their colleagues and line managers. A potential increase in work-home conflict due to homeworking is not an issue for Acas employees who have put in place work-home boundary management tactics.

In terms of performance, we did not find differences among the employee groups significant enough to draw any substantial conclusions. The data does not indicate that either homeworkers or office workers are disadvantaged by working status in their performance ratings. However, results from most of the measures
used in this study lead to the expectation that partial homeworkers and mobile workers are slightly more likely to show higher performance levels than their colleagues. Mobile workers and partial homeworkers also feel more positive about their relationship with Acas and partial homeworkers report having greater career aspirations than their colleagues. We would like to note that the performance data made available for this study were the 2010 and 2011 Acas performance box markings, where the variation in the markings among individuals is limited.

**Objective Two: What makes for effective management of homeworking from an organisational perspective?**

The research literature suggests that an organisation has a good chance of managing homeworking successfully when managers trust their employees, when the performance management system is based on results, when communications between managers and employees are effective, and when comprehensive training on the different aspects of homeworking is available for managers and homeworkers.

Based on the best practice homeworking case studies conducted (shown in Appendix 8.2), we found that there are additional elements that help organisations to manage homeworking effectively:

- **Homeworking (or flexible working) policy / guidelines**: having written policies or guidelines that a) cover the main elements of homeworking (Eligibility, Health & Safety, Expenses, etc.), b) allow the majority (if not all) of employees to be eligible for homeworking, and c) are visible and easily accessible to the individuals in the organisation.

- **Programme management**: active management of homeworking as a programme with measurable objectives that are aligned to the organisation's strategy, ongoing monitoring and measuring of results against objectives, and regular reviews of policy and practices.

- **Technology**: provision of technology support to ensure homeworkers can do their job at or from home with minimum disruption.

- **Physical office space**: physical workplace environment adapted to the needs of flexible working arrangements, for instance, hot desks, flexible meeting areas, clean desk policy, effective noise control and efficient room booking system.

- **Social support**: dedicated communications with homeworkers and their line managers to address their concerns and questions, obtain their feedback, provide guidelines and information, and create a sense of community.

From the qualitative study, we found that the ‘trust culture’ required for successful management of homeworking was recognised as particularly good by Acas employees.
7.3 CONCLUDING NOTE

Despite the benefits associated with homeworking as detailed in this report and statistics indicating that homeworking as a flexible working practice is on the rise, we have noted in our research that the adoption of certain flexible working practices can be quite tenuous. Our case study research initially comprised five organisations, each of which had been recognised in the media as a leader in flexible working practices. By the time of the publication of this report, two of the organisations had scaled back or altered their homeworking provision and asked to be anonymised in this report, and a third organisation requested that its case study be retracted entirely. This suggests that the adoption of homeworking may still be quite fragile in many organisations, even those publicly lauded for their successful implementation of flexible working practices.
8. APPENDICES

8.1 APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative study

- Description: One hour interviews with Acas employees conducted by LSE Enterprise researchers mostly at Acas premises.
- Sample: 40 interviewees (purposive sample).
- Interview process: Each interview was recorded and a subsequent transcript was produced in order to facilitate the analysis.
- Content: Interviewers used an interview guide that was agreed with Acas. The questions cover an agreed set of topics (such as job satisfaction, technology, working patterns, etc.), with specific questions for employees who regularly work at or from home and for line managers.
- Dates: Interviews were conducted between 7th March 2012 and 4th April 2012.

Employee survey

- Description: Online questionnaire for all Acas employees.
- Sample: 514 respondents (response rate of 56.4%).
- Sampling process: The questionnaire was pre-tested by a selected group of 12 Acas employees. Email notifications were sent to all Acas employees prior to the survey in order to inform them of the questionnaire, its purpose, dates, etc. A total of 514 employees participated in the survey (including the 12 pre-testers). Characteristics of the survey respondents such as gender, job grade, region of employment and official homeworking status were compared to the characteristics of the overall population of Acas employees and the data showed that survey participants were highly representative of all Acas employees.
- Content: The questions of the survey covered an agreed set of topics (such as job satisfaction, technology, working patterns, etc.) and demographic information. When possible, the measures used in the survey were already validated measures from prior research. The survey had two subsections: one for employees who work at least 20 per cent of their working time at home and another one for line managers.
- Dates: The employee survey was launched on 7th of June and was opened for 3 weeks.

Diary study

- Description: Online survey over a course of two weeks (including weekends) for employees who work at or from home at least 20 per cent of their working week.
- Sample: A total of 75 Acas employees participated in the diary study (response rate of 33% based on eligible employees from the employee survey). Participants were recruited following their participation in the
employee survey. In order to qualify for the diary study, employees had to indicate that the worked at or from home more than 20% of the time. Due to some non-responses during the 14-day study, a total of 51 cases were determined to have enough data to proceed with the analysis.

- **Sampling process:** One of the questions in the employee survey asked if the respondent would volunteer for a diary study. Those employees who volunteered were then sent a daily email with a link to the diary study over the course of two weeks. A total of 87 Acas employees volunteered.

- **Dates:** The diary study was launched on 11th June 2012 and was completed on 15th July 2012.

**Reporting conventions**

Statistically significant (with significance level of at least p>.05) responses to the employee survey are reported in the study. Responses by type of worker (homeworkers, partial homeworkers, mobile workers and office workers), by line manager / non line manager status and gender are analysed.
8.2 APPENDIX 2: BEST PRACTICE HOMEWORKING CASE STUDIES

8.2.1 Case Study - Allianz Insurance UK

General information

Part of Allianz Group, Allianz Insurance UK has approximately 4,300 employees working on 25 different sites with the head office located in Guildford (England).

Allianz Insurance UK provides non-life insurance products and operates in two main business areas: Commercial (business to business, dealing with brokers) and Retail (directly dealing with clients or via corporate partners). Allianz Insurance UK is currently number six in turnover (£1.6bn) in the UK insurance market.

Awards / recognition for homeworking policies

Allianz was named one of the Top Employers for Working Families in 2011 and 2012 by Working Families.

Methods / sources of information

This case study was compiled by reviewing publicly available information and written flexible working documentation and an interview with Mike Collins, Senior HR Manager at Allianz Insurance UK.

Description of homeworking policy

There are two types of homeworking:

- Full time homeworking: employees that are officially assigned to base their activity outside of an Allianz office. The types of jobs that they hold are suitable for work at or from home or at different sites. They typically go to the office once a month.

- Occasional homeworking: employees have access to different flexible working arrangements and working at or from home is one of them. There are written general guidelines for flexible working arrangements that are applied by line managers on a case by case basis. Depending of the nature of the job, line managers agree flexible working arrangements with the employees that request them.

Implementation and management of homeworking policy

- Length of time policy has been in place: Current flexible working guidelines were written 4 or 5 years ago. Flexible working practice has been available for longer. Flexible working guidelines are revised regularly.

- Number / percentage of workers who are using policy: Between 650 and 700 (15%-16%) employees are full time homeworkers. These employees hold jobs that are designed for full time working at home or working from different sites, such as engineers, business development or motor insurance inspectors. Other employees have access to flexible working arrangements that may include working at or from home occasionally.
Because these arrangements are not very formal and are agreed on a case by case basis with the line manager, the number of flexible workers is difficult to quantify.

- Criteria for eligibility to be a homeworker: Full time homeworking jobs are well defined. Employees applying to these jobs need to demonstrate experience in working independently. Occasional homeworking, as part of flexible working arrangements, is discussed and agreed by the employees with their line managers. Flexible working is part of the conversation between employee and line manager at the time of joining, at the time of appraisal or when a situation changes. Even though it is a fairly informal process, Allianz has formal procedures and paperwork relating to their flexible working application. There is a template in the paperwork for the individuals to discuss with their line managers when they are applying for flexible working. This template lists the considerations to be taken into account such as reason for request for flexible working, likely impact on the requesting individual, coworkers, clients, the individual’s job, barriers, potential advantages and disadvantages. The last question in the template is whether the requesting employee would have any flexibility for the business, indicating that bi-directional flexibility would minimise impact on the business. If application is successful, there is a trial period of 3 months. Flexible working applications may be declined for statutory reasons such as ‘too expensive to implement’ or ‘it does not fit with client requirements’. Certain roles are not suitable for homeworking, such as Call Centre jobs, because they are rota based and the technology required to perform the role at home is not supplied by Allianz.

- Transition / training process for homeworkers: Homeworkers need to go through some training (system, health & safety). Managers of homeworkers do not have to take a specific training programme to manage homeworkers or flexible workers. However, they need to ensure the appropriate Health & Safety checks are undertaken on a regular basis.

**Methods for monitoring homeworkers**

There is no difference in the monitoring methods for homeworkers and office-based workers.

- 75% of the performance evaluation of all employees is based on the “what” has been achieved: specific objectives based on output.

- 25% of the performance evaluation of all employees is based on the “how” it has been achieved: client focused (feedback form), people focused (how collaborative is the employee with his/her team, based on an appraisal by line manager), change focused (how innovative is the employee, based on an appraisal by line manager).

**Termination of homeworking**

Allianz reserves the right to review homeworking as well as other flexible working arrangements at any time. If they are no longer working, Allianz can change the arrangements.
Homeworking technology (IT and communications resources)

Individual employees that have been granted homeworking status have their broadband connection at home plus a laptop and mobile (sometimes a blackberry) paid for by Allianz. Travel expenses at or from home to business sites are not covered.

Employees that work occasionally at or from home do not have their broadband connection paid by Allianz. They may have a laptop, mobile and/or blackberry.

Reasons for implementation of homeworking policy

Allianz identified three main reasons for the implementation of homeworking:

- The innovation culture of the organization allows it to offer working arrangements that help employees be more productive (i.e. a mother, rather than take 2 days/week to care for her children, may be able to work at or from home some of that time)
- the current market for staff is very competitive and flexible working helps to attract and retain valuable employees
- staff diversity, especially gender, is a high priority in Allianz. Flexible working arrangements are seen as an important enabler to achieve a diverse workforce.

Recognised outcomes for homeworking policy

It is difficult to link particular outcomes to homeworking (or flexible working) arrangements. Allianz does not have specific homeworking (or flexible working) questions in its Annual Engagement Survey.

Anecdotal information suggests that full time homeworking is linked to high levels of engagement and very low turnover. There are no specific outcomes linked to occasional homeworking (or flexible working) other than attracting and retaining employees (also based anecdotal evidence).

In its flexible working documentation, Allianz mentions, among others, the following benefits from flexible working:

- potential to increase usage of company premises
- can help support clients’ needs around the clock
- improved employees’ morale (with lower absence levels, lower turnover and higher commitment)
- improved employees work-life balance
- decreased strain from commuting

Steps taken to build a culture supportive of homeworking

Homeworking (and flexible working, more generally) is more accepted now. There are still some areas in Allianz that are more traditional (where they place more value on employees working at the office) and are not totally convinced about working at or from home. HR tries to ensure that employees using flexible working practices are treated fairly during appraisal or promotion. Allianz heavily
promotes flexible sites and occasional homeworking during recruitment and the ongoing management of employees.

**Recognised issues with homeworking – What has gone wrong and how will the policy look in the future**

For those employees who work at or from home occasionally, no issues directly related to flexible working conditions have been identified. For permanent homeworkers, Allianz requires past experience with solitary, independent work. Potential issues are also reviewed as part of the appraisal process.

Full time employees keep in touch with monthly face to face meetings. There is also a big push for volunteering at Allianz. The organisation encourages team involvement in external activities, perhaps with a local charity.

Allianz’s approach is “don’t do one size fits all” for flexible working arrangements. Keeping an open mind is very important and using the latest technology to adapt flexible working arrangements to both the organisation’s and the employees’ needs. A few years ago their focus was more about part-time working, now it is about offering flexibility in terms of location and time.

**Other flexible working arrangements**

In the introduction of its flexible working documentation, Allianz defines flexible working as "whatever you want it to (be), whether you want to vary your hours, location or pattern of working". Therefore, there is not a definitive list of flexible working arrangements. Current flexible practices available to Allianz employees include the following:

- Job sharing
- Compressed hours
- Term-time working
- Home or remote working
- Part-time working
- Annual hours (working hours defined over a whole year instead over a working week)
- Career breaks or sabbaticals
- Split shifts
- Voluntary temporary reduction or increase in working hours
- Employee self-rostering or shift swapping
8.2.2 Case Study – Organization X (organisation has requested anonymity)

General information

The subject of this case study is a large international consultancy whose operations in the UK and Ireland encompasses 5000+ employees. This case study focuses on its UK and Ireland support functions such as HR & Finance.

Awards / recognition for Homeworking policies

The organisation has received recognition for its working conditions in the last few years:

- Ranked by The Times as one of the Top 50 Employers for Women in the UK in 2012.
- Included by Working Mother magazine in its 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers for the past nine consecutive years (2003-11).
- One of The Times of London’s 100 Best Companies 2011 list of 25 Best Big Companies.

Methods / sources of information

This case study was compiled by reviewing publically available information, the organisation’s homeworking guidelines and interviews with two of their managers in the UK Homeworking Programme.

Description of Homeworking policy

For this organisation, homeworking is defined as when an employee lives and works in the same place. Employees use technology (excluding broadband) provided by the organisation to enable them to do their job at or from home. Homeworkers typically spend an average of two to three days per week working at or from home. They are required to work from the office at least one or two days per week. These days are agreed with the line manager to ensure that team members come to the office on similar days and that days in the office alternate between teams in order to ensure space efficiency.

For the organisation, homeworking is not only a policy but also a programme and it is managed as such by:

- ensuring homeworking is aligned to their business objectives
- creating guidelines and processes (application, Health & Safety) for the organisation and employee to follow
- setting up and maintaining a website with relevant information for Homeworkers
- communicating on a regular basis with them to provide support and create a sense of community (hints and tips on virtual teaming, new collaboration tools available, postcards) and get their feedback (annual homeworking survey)
- providing appropriate technology infrastructure (Telephony and IT equipment)
- conducting ongoing research to keep abreast with regulatory and industry changes
Implementation and management of Homeworking policy

- Length of time policy has been in place: Homeworking, together with other flexible working practices, have been available to the organisation’s employees for more than a decade. The current homeworking framework was implemented as a trial in late 2008 and rolled out to the full organisation in the summer of 2010. The steps that the organisation took for the implementation involved an assessment of existing policies and practices, setting up the key elements (policy, process, training) for pilot testing followed by full implementation and monitoring of results to drive continuous improvement.

- Number / percentage of workers who are using policy: Currently 85 per cent of the employees are using the policy.

- Criteria for eligibility to be a homeworker: To be eligible, employees need to put in a request for homeworking to their line manager. The request gets accepted or rejected at their line manager’s discretion. Manager criteria include that the nature of work should not require the employee to work from the office 100% of the time, the employee must have completed a minimum of 6 months service and not have any performance issues. Also, according to company guidelines: "employees returning from maternity leave or leave of absence are advised to work full time in the office for a period of 4 – 6 weeks upon their return. This is to ensure a sufficient induction back to work and, in the case of maternity returners, allows opportunity for a structured break from home and child care. The appropriate period of induction will depend on role / level / first time return. This time period can be extended should the individual require more time to settle back in."

- Transition / training process for homeworkers: Training materials are available via the organisation’s intranet. In addition, when required, the organisation can provide dedicated group training. There is a homeworking website containing links and advice and a mailbox for any queries and questions.

- Transition / training process for managers of homeworkers: the organisation has written guidelines for line managers to help to support their homeworkers. The document includes advice on Top Tips (flexibility on both sides, connectivity, core hours), Health and Safety, expenses, furniture requirements, technology (training, broadband links, rules if technology fails), eligibility and security procedures for storage and disposal of the organisation’s data.

- Methods for monitoring homeworkers: According to the homeworking guidelines: "there should be no difference in evaluating an employee that works in the office every day from one who works virtually. This process should include planning work and setting expectations, monitoring performance, developing employee skills, appraising performance, and recognising employees for their accomplishments."

The organisation also uses annual surveys for Homeworkers to learn about their feelings, productivity, engagement, etc.
• Termination of Homeworking: Homeworking can be withdrawn if performance decreases as a result of days worked at or from home. As the Homeworking guidelines state: "an employee with performance issues should come back into the office in order to manage his/her performance more appropriately. This also recognises that homeworking is a benefit and if the employee is not performing to a high enough level this benefit should be withdrawn."

• Homeworking technology (IT and communications resources): Homeworkers are equipped with what they need to do their jobs at or from home. This typically involves laptops, keyboard and mouse, and phone. The homeworking guidelines specify that "managers need to ensure that each employee has the appropriate technology and that this has been set up correctly. They encourage employees to attend technology training sessions. If a role requires a fast broadband connection, then this needs to be obtained or the employee should go in to the office to work. If technology goes down at home and cannot be fixed within 1 hour then the employee should go in to the office or as directed by their line manager."

Reasons for implementation of Homeworking policy

Homeworking enables the organisation to drive down their cost base and increase the engagement of their people. Benefits listed by the organisation include:

For the organisation

• Able to reduce property portfolio and associated costs
• Allows the organisation to attract and retain the best people
• Supports efforts to reduce carbon emissions
• Ensures business resilience during times of disruption. For instance, it helps to support business continuity during times of travel disruption (inclement weather, travel strikes, London 2012 Olympics).
• Keeps the organisation competitive and innovative in the external market place by increasing attraction and retention of employees that expect flexible working

For the individuals

• Improved work-life balance from greater flexibility
• Less commuting time and costs
• Sickness reduction – Annual average sick days per employee per year is 50% less for homeworkers
• Increase in productivity, job satisfaction and engagement. An example of this is 94% of people have an improved work-life balance as a result of working at or from home (according to feedback from the organisation’s annual homeworking survey)
Steps taken to build a culture supportive of Homeworking

The organisation believes that the factors that make for a successful homeworking arrangement are the following:

- Output based performance process – culture of work is something you do, not a place you go
- Clear guidelines and policies available to homeworkers and their managers
- A dedicated UK team to manage the programme
- The right technology to ensure homeworkers have reliable access to the Organisation’s network
- Training to support homeworkers and line managers

The organisation holds regular communications with homeworkers (postcards of top tips, survey findings, etc). They are introducing virtual team activities and they provide quarterly face-to-face community events, an annual Christmas party etc.

It is also worth noting that the expectation of flexibility ‘goes both ways’. While employees are able to utilize flexible options to meet their needs, they are also expected to be flexible in order to meet changing organizational needs. For example, if a new project comes up that requires additional days in the office for a short-term basis, employees are expected to change their work patterns to meet that need.

The London office of the organisation that we visited is fully flexible with hot desks and flexible meeting facilities. The room booking system also helps to ensure efficient use of the space.

Recognised issues with Homeworking – What has gone wrong and how will the policy look in the future

The key issues the organisation sees with homeworking are technology (access to networks/broadband set up, etc), feelings of isolation, lack of support and difficulty with virtual team building. All of these issues have been recognised and there is a continuous programme to monitor and where necessary make improvements as required.
8.2.3 Case Study – Organisation Y (organisation has requested anonymity)

General information

Organisation Y is a leading technology services company - operating worldwide. They have over 40,000 employees working in the UK and more than 10,000 employees working in other regions.

Awards / recognition for homeworking policies

Organisation Y is a leader in the UK for its adoption of flexible working practices (including homeworking) and sponsors several awards related to flexibility and homeworking.

Methods / Sources of information

This case study was compiled by reviewing publicly available information, a review of Organisation Y’s Homeworking guidelines and an interview with a senior HR manager at Organization Y in the UK.

Description of homeworking policy

According to Organisation Y’s homeworking policy in the UK, there are three types of employees who can work at or from home:

- **Home-Based Workers**: They spend at least 60% of their time working from their home in the UK. They must keep a diary to show the amount of time spent working at home.

- **Agile Office Workers**: They are based out of a company office, and work there, on average, for more than one day and up to four days a week. Normally, they will not have an allocated desk at the office. When an Agile Office Worker regularly works from home (on average for more than one full working day per week) he/she is provided with the necessary equipment and technology that enable him/her to work from home.

- **Mobile Office Workers**: They are also based out of a company office, working there, on average, for no more than one day a week. They do not normally require allocated Organisation Y’s office space because they travel regularly for their job to other Organisation Y’s buildings and/or customer premises. When a Mobile Office Worker regularly works at home (on average for more than one full working day per week) he/she is provided with the necessary equipment and technology that enables him/her to work at or from home.

Implementation and management of homeworking

Length of time policy has been in place: The Homeworking policy has been in place for more than 10 years, and is regularly reviewed and updated.

Number / percentage of workers who are using policy: Currently, 10 per cent of Organisation Y’s workforce are homeworkers and over three quarters of employees are working flexibly in some way.
Criteria for eligibility to be a homeworker: Operational and business needs have to justify homeworking. Employees need to put in a request for homeworking or flexible working to their line manager. Additional approval from a second line manager approval and their assigned HR manager is also required.

General criteria to be eligible: employee is expected to be fully competent in his/her job and not have performance issues.

Transition / training process for homeworkers: Homeworkers must have a contract variation to confirm their home address as their place of work. Training and guidelines for managing virtual and remote teams homeworkers are available online on an intranet.

Transition / training process for managers of homeworkers: Managers of homeworkers do not have specific training to manage homeworkers or flexible workers. However, they need to ensure the appropriate Health & Safety checks are undertaken on a regular basis. Guidelines and training are available online on an intranet portal.

Methods for monitoring homeworkers: The performance objectives of all employees at Organisation Y are based on achieved versus agreed targets. One to one meetings of employees with their line managers are the norm. These meetings usually take place monthly, face-to-face and are used to discuss performance, work progress, health and safety or career development issues. Line managers also aim to get the team together once a month. Technology is also used (e.g. instant messenger) to maintain communication channels and to ensure social interaction among teams is facilitated.

Termination of homeworking: Organisation Y is entitled to terminate any homeworking arrangement at any time. Normally, in the case of Home Based Workers, three months notice will be given when either Organisation Y or the employee want to stop home based working.

Homeworking technology (IT and communications resources): Employees who work at or from home are provided with the necessary equipment and technology. This usually comprises office furniture, broadband access, a dedicated business phone line, a desktop computer (or laptop), printer and shredder. Homeworkers may require additional technology support and IT staff may need to go to the employee’s home.

**Reasons for implementation of homeworking policy**

The implementation of homeworking and other flexible working arrangements was mainly driven by:

- Globalisation - customers requiring 24/7 service both in the UK and abroad.
- Economic savings from needing less real estate and allowing Organisation Y to use property more strategically.
- The need to retain the widest talent base.
Recognised outcomes from homeworking

At an individual level, employees working at home tend to be more productive (the time they save by not commuting can be used for work), take less sick leave, report lower stress levels and are more satisfied with their work-life balance. Organisation Y does not have specific surveys to measure specific homeworking outcomes, but obtains feedback through line managers and HR.

At an organisational level, homeworking brings property savings and employee attraction and retention, among other benefits. As an example, 95% of mothers at Organisation Y return to work after maternity leave.

Steps taken to build a culture supporting homeworking

Every employee has the right to ask to work flexibly. Because of its size, Organisation Y has the scale to be able to accommodate many of these requests. Employees often have conference calls instead of face-to-face meetings and having flexibility in terms of timing and location of work is common.
8.2.4 Case Study – Ernst & Young

General information

Ernst & Young is a professional business services company that provides assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services to its customers. It operates globally with 152,000 employees. Their business units are grouped into four geographic areas:

- Americas - Comprises 29 countries and nearly 45,000 people.
- Europe, Middle East, India and Africa (EMEIA) - Employs 73,000 and covers 90 countries across Europe, the Middle East, India and Africa.
- Asia-Pacific - Has 27,000 people working across 20 countries.
- Japan - Employs more than 6,500 professionals.

This case study focuses on their UK & Ireland unit within EMEIA. The UK & Ireland business employs about 11,500 people.

Awards / recognition for homeworking policies

In the last few years, Ernst & Young have been regularly recognised for their working practices. Some of the awards and accreditations they have won recently include:

- Named one of the Top 50 employers for Women in 2012 by the Times in partnership with Opportunity Now (the gender equality campaign by Business in the Community).
- Named one of the 2011 Top 30 organisations for Working Families in recognition of their flexible working and family friendliness.
- Awarded gold standard in the 2010 Opportunity Now gender diversity benchmarking for their commitment to support women in the workplace.

Methods / sources of information

This case study was compiled by reviewing publicly available information and flexible working documentation and an interview with Sally Bucknell (Director, Diversity & Inclusiveness at Ernst & Young LLP, UK).

Description of homeworking policy

Homeworking is part of the company's UK Flexible Working Policy. According to this policy, employees can choose two types of homeworking arrangements:

- Informal homeworking: day-to-day, not fixed type of arrangement that may be due to, for example, waiting for a delivery at home. In principle, this type of flexibility is available to everyone in the company. Employees wishing to use it may need to agree with their manager or counsellor the type of arrangement and how it would be reviewed.

- Formal homeworking: longer-term type of arrangement that may be due to, for example, caring responsibilities. It is not restricted to people with caring responsibilities. The line manager or partner needs to agree any change in the terms and conditions of employment of the individual
requesting formal homeworking. The HR Shared Service Centre will also need to confirm the arrangement in writing before it can start. Once the request is approved, the employee needs to notify the Health & Safety team.

The policy demands accountability from employees that use flexible arrangements. The flexible working principles as described by the policy are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The company will...</th>
<th>The employee will...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for the employees to take control over where, when and how to work</td>
<td>Be accountable to his/her clients and teams for meeting his/her work obligations efficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust they deliver, perform and contribute to the highest professional standard</td>
<td>Build the trust of others by ensuring the work gets done on time and to the highest standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be open-minded and trust the employee's judgment and personal organisation</td>
<td>Be pragmatic, recognise that sometimes it's not possible for him/her to work the way he/she wants</td>
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**Implementation and management of homeworking policy**

- **Length of time policy has been in place:** Current flexible working guidelines have been in place for more than a decade. Flexible working guidelines are revised regularly. The policy is currently under review and a pilot for new flexible working practices will be launched by the end of the year.

- **Number / percentage of workers who are using policy:** Only a very small number of employees have a formal homeworking arrangement. However, about 50% of employees report using some informal flexible working arrangement on occasion.

- **Criteria for eligibility to be a homeworker:** Homeworking is available to all employees in principle. Employees and their line managers or partners need to take into consideration the customers, the team and the employee's personal situation when deciding on a homeworking arrangement.

- **Transition / training process for homeworkers:** There is not any specific training for homeworkers or their managers that they need to go through. Policy and guidelines are available via the company's intranet.

**Methods for monitoring homeworkers**

There is no difference in the monitoring methods for homeworkers and office-based workers. The performance evaluation system at Ernst & Young is based on achievement against an agreed objectives scorecard. Employees have two
performance reviews per year. They also usually have monthly meetings with their managers.

Homeworkers have the facility to assess their workspace online.

**Termination of homeworking**

Ernst & Young reserves the right to review homeworking as well as other flexible working arrangements at their discretion.

**Homeworking technology (IT and communications resources)**

The company provides an equipment allowance which consists of a keyboard, mouse, laptop riser, laptop power cable, printer and cartridges. It provides other equipment such as chair, desk and footstool subject to Health & Safety assessment and approval.

The company does not provide Business Broadband. It provides a Mobile Signal Booster if a business case is approved by the Functional Lead or Service Line Operations Director.

The company provides flexible workers (informal homeworkers) with the same equipment that they provide to formal homeworkers except for chair, desk, footstool, printer and cartridges.

**Reasons for implementation of homeworking policy**

In their UK Flexible Working Policy, Ernst & Young clearly state that the main drivers for this policy are:

- it is a means to provide their employees with more control over their working patterns which, in turn, Ernst & Young considers will make them more engaged and productive in the workplace
- it helps them to attract and retain the best people in the market

**Recognised outcomes for homeworking policy**

Apart from the reasons stated in the previous section, Ernst & Young recognises that homeworking helps to retain high performing female employees and, recently, male employees. The awards received are also an outcome from this policy.

**Steps taken to build a culture supportive of homeworking**

The following factors contribute to make homeworking a successful arrangement:

- individuals taking responsibility for good communications with their team
- clear objectives
- good managers
- role models - influential senior leaders that use flexible working arrangements and clearly communicate this verbally and/or behaviourally to the rest of the staff
Recognised issues with homeworking – What has gone wrong and how will the policy look in the future

The main barrier to homeworking is cultural. Some employees still feel that they need to be seen in order to be recognised. Some managers are more technical managers than people managers. They tend to assign new projects to the employees that they see at the office.

Other barriers may have been of more practical nature, such as technology pitfalls. But these are generally easy to overcome.

Other flexible working arrangements

For Ernst & Young, “flexible working can be any change to your current working times, work location or number of hours”. Apart from homeworking, there are other different types of flexible working arrangements available to Ernst & Young's employees.

Informal arrangements:

• time flexibility - employees can vary their working times or hours each day, providing that the contracted working hours per week are maintained
• location flexibility - employees can work in the locations they feel suitable. This includes not only the employees' homes but also different Ernst & Young offices or client sites.
• ad hoc time off - similar to Time Off In Lieu, it can be used with employees who are not eligible for paid overtime or time off in lieu as a way for managers to recognise employees going the extra mile at busy periods.

Formal flexible arrangements:

• Part-time – "arrangement where you work less than the normal full time hours usually on agreed days and at agreed times”.
• Annual days working – "arrangement when you work a certain number of days each year rather than each week”.
• Term time working – "arrangement where you work during school term times and to take time off during school holidays”.
• Job sharing – "arrangement where two people share one position”.
• Career break – “enables people with at least one year of continuous service to take a break from employment of up to two years”.
• Reduced hours working: “a form of part-time working. It enables people with caring responsibilities to reduce their hours for up to a maximum of ten hours per week for a fixed period”.
• Compressed working hours: "arrangement where contracted hours of work, whether full or part-time, are worked over fewer and longer days, working more than the standard 7 or 7.5 contracted hours in one working day".
8.3 APPENDIX 3: ENDNOTES


