Flexible Working – Evidence Review

- The NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook's section on flexible working can be found here.
- NHS Employers' *Guidance on flexible working for the NHS* can be found here.
- The BMA has guidance on part-time and flexible working here.
- The Royal College of Nursing has advice on flexible working here.
- The Royal College of Midwives produced *Guidance on flexible working 2018* which you can find here.
- Timewise produced a report *Flexible working in the NHS: the case for action* which you can find here.
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn's *Flexible working policy and procedure* can be found here.
- NHS Blood and Tranplant's flexible working policy can be found here.
- Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust have produced a *Flexible Working Guide for Managers and Staff* which you can find here.
- Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust have a strategic vision for agile working which you can find here.

Research review

- Galambos (Galambos & Walters, 1992) studied 96 couples where both partners worked and found that inflexible schedules were linked to stress in husbands and that long working hours in wives were associated with husbands' anxiety and depression. Wives' inflexible hours were associated directly with role strain and indirectly with depression and anxiety.
- Rodgers (Rodgers, 1992) analysed data collected on white-collar and service-sector jobs from 20 large corporations showing an enormous demand for more flexibility in the workplace and considerable resistance to it by supervisors.
- In 1990 the Australian government adopted a strategy to encourage family-friendly workplaces including standards and adjustments on working hours and accommodating employees by allowing them to work at home (Kramar, 1993).
- Ezra (Ezra & Deckman, 1996) found that satisfaction with work/family balance was a vital component of an employees' job satisfaction, and that the use of policies such as on-site child care and flexitime helped employees – particularly mothers – to face the dual demands of work and family life better.
- Kossek (Kossek, Barber, & Winters, 1999) studied 1,000 managers' attitudes to flexible schedules. She found that managers who were women or who had work-group peers who used flexible schedules were more likely to use flexible schedules themselves. Managers' productivity concerns were highest for flextime, then leaves, and least for part-time work. Kossek concluded that "organisational cultural change can occur if managers take the lead in their work group to use flexible schedules in order to remove social barriers."
- Houseman (Houseman, 2001) carried out a survey of employers. The most commonly-cited reason for using flexible staffing arrangements were to adjust for workload

fluctuations and staff absences. Many employers also used agency temps and part-time workers to screen workers for regular positions.

- Branine (Branine, 2003) examined part-time work and job-sharing in the NHS surveying 55 NHS Trusts. He found that the use of part-time work was a tradition that seemed to fit well with cost-saving measures but led to increased employee dissatisfaction. Job-sharing arrangements were suitable for many NHS employees – particularly women – but only a very limited number of employees had been offered them. He concluded that the NHS should "take a more proactive approach to promoting a variety of flexible working practices and family-friendly policies."

- An online survey by the Department of Trade and Industry of more than 350 public-sector job applicants found that half of them picked flexible working as the benefit they would most look for in their next job and a third said they would choose flexible working hours rather than have an extra £1,000 salary a year (Anonymous, 2003)

- Harris (Harris, Gavel, & Young, 2005) studied 4,259 Australian medical graduates. 56% said that flexible working arrangements contributed to their choice of specialty. Women were 2.6 times as likely to say flexible hours were important and doctors with partners were 1.3 times more likely than single doctors to say it was important.

- Hall (Hall & Atkinson, 2006) found that informal rather than formal flexibility was more widely used and valued. Staff did not see formal flexibility as relevant to themselves and informal flexibility generated an increased sense of employee responsibility.

- In a study of 3,504 workers Thompson (Thompson & Prottas, 2006) found that the availability of family benefits was associated with stress, life satisfaction and turnover intentions but that the availability of alternative schedules wasn't. Job autonomy and informal organisational support were related to all the outcomes and perceived control mediated most of the relationships.

- Cebulla (Cebulla, Butt, & Lyon, 2007) found that beyond part-time working older workers rarely take up additional or alternative flexible working arrangements.

- Thomson (Thomson, 2008) studied the business benefits of flexible working. The East Riding of Yorkshire made substantial measurable improvements to the level of service through the introduction of flexible working and turned a department around from failure to award-winning in two years. And people at Vodafone successfully found a work/life balance using flexible-working options.

- Hornung (Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008) examined the idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) workers negotiated with their supervisors. Two types of i-deals were studied: flexibility in hours of work; and developmental opportunities. Flexibility i-deals were negatively related to work-family conflict and working unpaid overtime whilst developmental i-deals were positively related to work-family conflict and working unpaid overtime. Developmental i-deals were positively related to increased performance expectations and affective organisational commitment whilst flexibility i-deals were unrelated to either.

- Grice (Grice, McGovern, & Alexander, 2008) studied 522 women going back to work after childbirth. The ability to change work hours and the ability to take work home were associated with increased home spillover to work whilst the ability to take time off was associated with decreased job spillover to home.

- Anderson (Anderson & Kelliher, 2009) found that flexible working had an impact on employee engagement through a positive relationship with organisational commitment, job satisfaction and employee discretionary behaviour.
- Tomlinson (Tomlinson & Gardiner, 2009) interviewed 12 equality and diversity managers in 10 public- and private-sector organisations. Flexible working was most evident as a significant field of equality and diversity practice where equality and diversity was linked into business strategy and was well-resourced. The key roles of equality and diversity managers in relation to flexible-working arrangements were policy innovation and monitoring. Four organisational rationales for flexible-working arrangements were identified which were: as an individual employee benefit; as a means of improving operational effectiveness; as an integral part of organisational strategy; and as a means of addressing social inequalities.
- In a study of 220 working-age adults McNall (McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2010) found that "the availability of flexible work arrangements such as flextime and [a] compressed workweek seems to help employees experience greater enrichment from work to home, which, in turn, is associated with higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions."
- Carlson (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Kacmar, 2010) found that schedule flexibility improved outcomes by reducing work-to-family conflict and increasing work-to-family enrichment. Changes in job satisfaction and performance produced by flexible scheduling were completely due to reduced family-work conflict and increasing work-to-family enrichment. Carlson also found that women benefited more from flexible working arrangements than men.
- Nadler (Nadler, Cundiff, Lowery, & Jackson, 2010) found that work-schedule flexibility affects future employees' perceptions of organisational attractiveness.
- Grawitch (Grawitch & Barber, 2010) found that participation in work flexibility had direct association with work-to-life conflict, work engagement, and life satisfaction.
- Atkinson (Atkinson & Hall, 2011) carried out interviews with 43 employees in an NHS Trust. She found that flexible working made them 'happy,' and that there were attitudinal and behavioural links between this happiness, discretionary behaviour and a number of performance outcomes.
- Meinert (Meinert, 2011) reported on a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management of 550 people which found that 86% of them said flexibility to balance their work and personal life was an important, or very important, aspect of job satisfaction.
- Moen (Moen, Kelly, Tranby, & Huang, 2011) examined the effect of a Results Only Work Environment (ROWE). 659 employees took part in the study which found that ROWE predicted changes in health-related behaviours, including almost an extra hour of sleep on work nights. The changes in health behaviours were due to ROWE increasing employee's schedule control and reducing their work-family conflict.
- Svensson (Svensson, 2012) found that people in positions where their employer demanded flexibility (i.e. temps, zero-hours contracts etc) displayed significantly-lower levels of generalised trust compared to employees on more standard contracts.
- An article in *Health Service Journal* describes how one Trust introduced agile working and saved £1.5m ("How flexible working saves trust £1.5m," 2012)

- Michielsens (Michielsens, Bingham, & Clarke, 2014) discusses the effect of flexible work arrangement in managing diversity. She found that flexible work arrangements were an integral part of 'diversity implementation,' but that organisational imperative, particularly management concerns about client interaction, constrain their acceptance and restrict their impact as a means to greater diversity.

- Benito-Osorio (Benito-Osorio, Muñoz-Aguado, & Villar, 2014) found that introducing work-life balance practices benefited companies with respect to talent retention and higher employee engagement as well as achieving a positive effect on productivity, costs and business results.

- James (James & Gerrard, 2017) interviewed 10 emergency-department consultants asking them what kept them in their current post and what might cause them to leave. Three main themes emerged from the interviews which were: early exposure to positive emergency-medicine role models; a non-hierarchical team structure; and the suitability of emergency-medicine for flexible working.

- Hyatt (Hyatt & Coslor, 2018) surveyed 779 employees about a scheme where they worked four ten-hour days a week (4/10). Employees' satisfaction with the scheme was influenced by previous 4/10 pilot experience; work-schedule preference and happiness with the 4/10 schedule's implementation. Sick leave figures and survey results regarding 'informal substitute work schedules,' suggested that worker fatigue could limit the overall organisational value of the 4/10 schedule.

- Uglanova (Uglanova & Dettmers, 2018) found that women who switched to an employer-oriented flexible time arrangement suffered long-term strain while men adapted. With an employee-oriented flexible arrangement women profited and got more satisfaction from their leisure time while men experienced decreased satisfaction from their leisure time and then adapted. Any effects of the changes on job satisfaction were short-lived for both sexes.

- Chung (Chung, 2018) examined the stigma and perceived negative consequences of flexible working. 35% of all workers agreed that those who work flexibly generate more work for others and 32% believed that those who worked flexibly had less chances of promotion. Women, especially mothers, were more likely to agree to the latter statement. Men were more likely to say they experienced negative outcomes due to co-workers working flexibly while mothers were more likely to say their own careers had suffered from flexible working.

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