Welsh Government Hybrid Working Staff Survey 2023
Summary findings

Contents

1. Background

The Hybrid Working Survey was carried out online between the 5th and 25th July by social researchers in KAS. The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the hybrid working co-ordination group and Trade Union Side.

The survey was carried out just after the new SmartSpaces were opened and before the move to the new neighbourhoods.

The objectives of the research were to:

i)   Identify the benefits of office attendance and anything staff may be losing due to non-prescriptive office attendance:

- Compare and contrast experiences of working at home versus in the office to see if they are better for particular reasons e.g., for connection, collaboration, concentration, wellbeing and productivity
- Explore whether various tasks/ interactions work better online versus face to face

ii)   Understand staff behaviour regarding office use:

- Who is going into the office, how often, why, and which office(s) are they visiting?
- Barriers to office attendance
- Future intentions of office attendance
- How staff are using the offices spaces
- How staff travel to work
- Who is not going into office at all and why?

iii)   Seek feedback on spaces in the buildings to potentially improve the experience for staff

iv)   Staff Wellbeing:

- Re-run key metrics on staff wellbeing
- Understand the prevalence of the always on and always available culture
- Understand staff awareness of organisational support for wellbeing (including financial wellbeing)

The survey received a 55% response rate. Response rates varied by Group/DG area from 51% to 62%.

The following analysis is based upon the 55% of Welsh Government staff who responded to the survey. Whilst this provides a good indication of the views and working practices of staff, findings must be interpreted in this context.

The questionnaire was designed to understand two core groups of staff; those that work at least some time in office and those that work remotely/from home. Here:

- 71% of respondents reported that they spend <u>at least some time</u> in an office

- 29% of respondents reported that work remotely/from home all of the time

In some cases, these two groups were asked different sets of questions and, where this was the case, it has been highlighted throughout this summary. As the two groups are sub-sets of the survey sample of 55%, numbers are smaller and therefore findings may be subject to variation.

2. Feedback on and use of office buildings and space

Staff were asked a number of questions around their use and awareness of office space.

Awareness of office facilities

All staff were asked if they were aware of the following office facilities

- 77% of respondents were aware of SmartSpaces
- 70% of respondents were aware of Teams rooms

Access to office space

Staff who attended the office at least some of the time (71%) were asked about their use of offices space.

The majority of those attending the office found it easy or very easy to access the space they need to:

- Interact with colleagues informally (92%)
- Meet with WG colleagues (88%)

However, less staff found it easy or very easy to access the space to:

- Have sensitive conversations (68%)
- Concentrate on their work (67%)
- Meet with external stakeholders (46%)

Use of office facilities

Staff who attended the office at least some of the time (71%) were asked how often they used the following office facilities:

	Every time I come into the office	Often	Sometimes	Never	N/A
SmartSpaces	1%	6%	23%	61%	9%
Microsoft Teams rooms	3%	11%	31%	49%	7%
Standard meeting rooms	9%	26%	52%	11%	2%
Desk space	75%	17%	6%	2%	0%
Informal meeting areas (pods/breakout areas etc.)	9%	23%	43%	22%	3%
Kitchen areas	43%	21%	25%	10%	1%
Canteen/café areas	37%	24%	24%	7%	9%

Staff most frequently reported using desk space **every time they come into the office** (75% of staff), followed by kitchen areas (43%) and canteen/café areas (37%).

Areas reported as **used often** were Standard meeting rooms (26%), Canteen/café areas (24%), and informal meeting areas (pods / breakout areas etc.) (23%).

The following areas commonly reported as **never used** SmartSpaces (61%), Microsoft Teams Rooms (49%), Informal meeting areas (pods / breakout areas etc.) (22%).

Use of desks and desk equipment

Staff who attended the office at least some of the time (71%) were asked a number of questions around their use of desks.

- Staff were asked how often they were typically able to find a desk in the area they normally work / their assigned area over the past six months.
  - 83% were always able to find a desk
  - 11% were often able to find a desk
  - 3% were sometimes able to find a desk
  - 1% reported never being able to find a desk
- Staff were also asked how often the full IT kit was available at their desks
  - 57% said it was always available
  - 25% % said it was often available
  - 16% said it was sometimes available
  - 1% said it was never available

Feedback on meeting rooms

All staff were asked about their awareness and use of meeting rooms and video conferencing.

Meeting Rooms

The survey found that 66% of respondents knew how to book a standard meeting room using the MyBookings app.

When asked how often they were able to book a standard meeting room when needed:

- 24% reported that they were able to 'sometimes' able to book
- 26% reported they were able to 'often' able to book
- 16% reported 'always' being able to book.
- 3% reported 'never' being able to book.

Of those who had used standard meeting rooms:

- 72% used standard meeting rooms for in person meetings
- 70% used standard meeting rooms for hybrid or online meetings (with others in the room).
- 47% used standard meeting rooms for hybrid or online meetings (just myself using the room)
- 12% used standard meeting rooms for focussed solo work.

Microsoft Teams technology for video conferencing

Of those that had used Teams technology for video conferencing
- 46% reported that they had technical issues
- 84% of staff reported that they find the technology very or quite easy to use whilst 16% found it not very or not at all easy to use.

3. Exploration of the difference between working in the office compared to working remotely

Experiences of working in the office compared to working remotely

Two set of questions were developed to compare and contrast staff views on the differences between working in the office and working remotely. Those that indicated they attended the office at least some of the time were asked about their experience of working in the office and those that indicated they work at least some time remotely were asked about their experience of working remotely. Therefore, 'hybrid' workers were asked both sets of questions.

Connection, concentration and collaboration

The percentage of staff who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements in relation to working in the office and/or working remotely:

	Working in the office (Office Workers and Hybrid Workers)	**Working remotely** (Remote Workers and Hybrid Workers)
I feel connected to colleagues	74%	63%
I am able to initiate social interaction with colleagues if I want to	80%	75%
I feel connected to the Welsh government as an organisation	50%	70%
I am able to concentrate on the work I need to do	55%	94%
I am able to collaborate with the colleagues I need to	65%	92%

- Scores for feeling connected to other colleagues and initiating social interaction were highest in relation to working in the office compared to working remotely (74% versus 63%, and 80% versus 75% respectively).
- Scores for feeling connected to the Welsh Government as an organisation were higher when working remotely (70%) compared to working in the office (50%).
- Scores for being able to concentrate and for collaborating with colleagues were overwhelmingly more positive for working remotely than working in the office (concentration 94% versus 55%, and collaboration 92% versus 65%).

Staff wellbeing and productivity

The percentage of staff who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements in relation to working in the office and/or working remotely:

	Working in the office (Office Workers and Hybrid Workers)	**Working remotely** (Remote Workers and Hybrid Workers)
I take regular breaks away from my laptop	63%	71%
I take a lunchbreak	74%	79%
I have access to equipment needed to feel comfortable whilst working	78%	90%
I feel motivated to do the job	69%	84%
I am able to work productively	66%	94%
I feel I make a valuable contribution to the organisation	66%	85%

As can be seen from the table above, the scores for all questions on staff wellbeing and productivity were higher in relation to working remotely compared to working in the office.

- Positivity for remote working compared to office working was especially clear in the following areas:
  - I have access to the equipment I need to feel comfortable whilst working (90% remote versus 78% in the office)
  - I feel motivated to do my job (84% remote versus 69% in the office)
  - I am able to work productively (94% remote versus 66% in the office)
  - I feel like I make a valuable contribution to the organisation (85% remote versus 66% in the office)
- In addition, staff were more likely to report taking regular breaks away from the laptop (71% versus 63%) and taking a lunchbreak (79% versus 74%) when working remotely.

Exploration of the difference between online compared to in person working

All respondents were also asked to reflect on the differences between online and in person working.

Comparison of activities being carried out online versus in person

- Most activities were largely believed to work as well online as in person.
- However, Divisional meetings / away days were more likely to be reported as working better in person than online (62% in person, 10% online, 20% the same)

Attendance at Team and Divisional events

All staff were asked if they had attended a Team or Divisional either online, in person or both.

- 43% of staff had attended an event in person
- 9% of staff had attended the event online
- 25% had attended online and in person
- 22% had not attended

Experiences of online events and in person events

Most staff (85%) felt that hybrid meetings and events were effective in ensuring everyone can contribute.

Staff were asked the extent to which they agreed that in person and online events were useful for the following:

	In person event	Online event
Catching up with colleagues	92%	78%
Developing social networks	74%	54%
Keeping informed about work	67%	96%
Finding out what others were doing	75%	86%
Personal development	53%	69%
Wellbeing	65%	66%

As can be seen from the table above:

- In person events were more likely to be reported as useful for catching up with colleagues (92% versus 78%) and developing social networks (74% versus 54%).
- Online events were more likely to be reported as usual for keeping informed about work (96% versus 67%), finding out what others are doing (86% versus 75%) and personal development (69% versus 53%).
- The majority of respondents felt events were useful for wellbeing with little difference between online (66%) and in person (65%).

Feedback on Teams / online 'etiquette'

All staff were asked about pressures associated with working online and being always available.

- There was a strong feeling amongst colleagues that they should respond to Teams messages (70%) and answer Teams calls (80%) immediately during working hours.
- In addition, 61% of staff felt pressure for their Teams status not to show as 'away' for too long.
- Staff that worked all of their time remotely tended to be less likely to agree with the statements regarding pressures from online working.

SmartWorking Charters

All staff were asked if they had individual and team charters for SmartWorking.

- When asked if they had a team charter 77% of staff said yes, whilst 5% said no and 18% were unsure.
- When asked if they had an individual charter, 46% reported that they did have an individual charter, 33% did not have one and 21% were unsure.

4. Analysis of the staff who are Office Attenders

Of the staff who stated that they <u>spend at least some of their time</u> in an office:

- 60% - reported more time working remotely but some time in an office building
- 5% - reporting working equal amounts of time remotely and in an office building
- 4% - reported working more time in office building but some time working remotely
- 2% - reported working all the time in an office building.

Understanding how and when Office Attenders use the office

The 71% of staff who stated that they <u>spend at least some of their time</u> in an office building were further explored.

Frequency of office use

When asked about their use of the office:

- Most attend once a month/ a few times a month (38%) and 15% attend less than once a month.
- For those coming in more often, 21% attend once a week, 14% attend twice a week and 12% attend three or more times a week.

Reasons for attending the office

The most popular reasons for attending the office were:

- Socialising/networking with colleagues (58%)
- In person or hybrid meetings (51%)
- Anchor/team collaboration days (51%)
- Health and wellbeing (39%)
- Office admin/tasks (39%)

Factors that limit how often staff attend the office

The most common factors which limited how often this group attend the office were:

- My team/colleagues not being in the office (55%)
- The length of time to commute to the office (53%)
- I get more work done at home (53%)
- I have the flexibility at home to do other things around my working hours (50%)

Most frequently used offices

The most frequently used offices *were:*

- Cathays Park (71%)
- Merthyr Tydfil (15%)
- Llandudno Junction (10%)
- Aberystwyth (8%)

Office attendance for each DG area

Within each DG area, the percentage proportion of Office Attenders was as follows:

- CRLG (84%)
- OFM + PSO (84%)
- ESJWL (74%)
- COOG (73%)
- HSS (70%)
- CCRA (69%)
- ETC (67%)

For Office Attenders, the most common answer for each group on how often they attended the office was '*more time working remotely but some time in an office building*', with percentages ranging from 56% (ETC) to 63% (ESJWL).

The percentage of staff that reported spending '*equal amounts of time working remotely and in an office building*', by DG area ranged from 4% (CCRA and COOG) to 12% (OFM & PSO).

For all DG areas, the percentage of staff spending '*all the time in an office building*' was below 4%.

Office attendance by grade

Within each grade, the percentage proportion of Office Attenders was as follows:

- SCS (94%)
- Grade 6 (84%)
- Grade 7 (78%)
- EO (73%)
- SEO (69%)
- Team Support (67%)
- HEO (66%)

When broken down further, most Office Attenders reported spending '*more time working remotely but some time in an office buildin*g', and the percentage for each grade ranged from 55% (Team Support) to 71% (SCS).

Office Attenders that were most likely to spend '*all the time in an office building'* were Team Support (4%) and EO (4%) staff.

Office attendance according to parental or caring responsibilities

Staff were asked if they have childcare responsibilities as a primary care give (e.g. parent or guardian).

- 73% of those with childcare responsibilities were Office Attenders
- 72% of those with no childcare responsibilities were Office Attenders
- 71% of those with childcare responsibilities as a lone parent were Office Attenders

Staff were asked if they 'l*ook after or give any help or support to anyone because they have long term physical or mental health conditions, or illnesses, or problems relating to old age'.*

- 73% of those that answered '*no'* were Office Attenders
- 69% of those that answered '*yes'* were Office Attenders

5. Analysis of staff who are Remote workers

The 29% of survey respondents who reported that they spend all their time working remotely was further explored.

Exploring potential office attendance of Remote Workers

Remote Workers were asked if they would attend the office for certain activities/reasons (such as meetings, events, wellbeing, accessing services etc):

- 13% said they would not go in for these activities/reasons
- 16% said they were unsure about whether they would go in for certain activities/reasons
- 71% said they would attend the office for certain reasons. They were then asked which activities they would attend the office for.
    - The most popular reasons were anchor / team days (74%) and also, but to a lesser extent, in person or hybrid meetings (56%).
    - Almost half of these staff reported that they would attend to socialise with colleagues (46%) and many also said for induction or training (44%).

Factors affecting Remote Workers' decisions on office working

All Remote Workers were asked about which factors affected their decisions on attending the office. The most common factors affecting why this group spend all their time working at home/remotely were preferring it (75%) or getting more work (81%) or other things done at home (63%), the cost (66%) and time (72%) of the commute and health and wellbeing (62%).

Remote Working by contracted office

The following offices had the greatest proportion of their contracted staff who were remote workers:

- Bedwas (38%),
- Llandudno Junction (37%)
- Carmarthen (35%).

Some offices were excluded from the analysis due to low numbers.

Remote Working for each DG area

Within each DG area, the percentage proportion of Remote Workers was as follows:

- ETC (33%)
- CCRA (31%)
- HSS (30%)

- COOG (27%)
- ESJWL (26%)
- CRLG (16%)
- OFM & PSO (16%)

Remote Working by grade

Within each grade, the percentage proportion of Remote Workers was as follows:

- HEO (34%)
- Team support (33%)
- SEO (31%)
- EO (27%)
- Grade 7 (22%)
- Grade 6 (16%)
- Senior civil service (6%)

Remote working by parental or caring responsibilities

When analysing childcare responsibilities:

- 27% of those with childcare responsibilities were Remote Workers
- 28% of those with no childcare responsibilities were Remote Workers
- 29% of those with childcare responsibilities as a lone parent were Remote Workers

 Staff were asked if they 'l*ook after or give any help or support to anyone because they have long term physical or mental health conditions, or illnesses, or problems relating to old age'.*

- 27% of those that answered '*no'* were Remote Workers
- 31% of those that answered '*yes'* were Remote Workers

6. Analysis of staff who Would Not Attend the Office

The 29% of staff who reported that they spend 'no time' working in the office were asked *'Would you attend the office for certain activities/reasons (such as meetings, events, wellbeing, accessing services etc.)?'*. From this group of survey respondents, results were as follows:

'Would you attend the office for certain activities/reasons?'	Count	% of staff who spend 'no time' in office	% of total respondents
Yes	688	71%	20%
Unsure	150	16%	4%
No	**125**	**13%**	**4%**

The group of staff who reported spending 'no time' working in the office **and** who reported 'no' when asked if they would attend the office for certain reasons is defined as 'Would Not Attend'.

This section is a descriptive summary of staff who Would Not Attend the office for any activities/reasons. The number of staff is quite small, at 125, so the following analysis should be interpreted with caution.

Also, of the 125 respondents that indicated that they Would Not Attend the office for certain activities/reasons, 35% of them did indicate that they had attended a Team or Divisional event in person in the last six months. This could suggest that they may not be willing to work in the office but may be open to attending events.

Summary profile

Staff who report they Would Not Attend the office are most frequently:

- Contracted to Cathays Park (52%)
- HEO grade (24%) or SEO grade (23%)
- Working within ETC group (32%), COOG (22%), CCRA (21%)
- Have worked within their organisation for at least 5 years (78%)
- Aged 60-64 (16%)
- Male (48%, 44% female, 9% prefer not to say)

Additionally, staff who report they Would Not Attend the office most frequently:

- Do not have an impairment, mental health condition, are not neurodivergent, do not use British Sign Language, or have a long-standing physical condition or illness which can impact on their day-to-day life (66%). However, a slightly higher proportion of staff who reported they Would Not Attend have an impairment, compared to the overall sample.

- Do not have childcare responsibilities (59%)
- Do not have other caring responsibilities (61%)
- Rated their mental health as excellent (30%)
- Rated their physical health as good (29%)

Factors affecting staff decision making on office working

Staff who Would Not Attend the office were asked '*Do any of these factors affect why you currently spend all of your time working at home/ remotely as opposed to working in the office?*' Respondents most frequently stated that they get more work done (83%) and prefer (80%) working at home, as well as reporting their health and wellbeing as a factor (78%).

Reason	No. of staff who Would Not Attend the office	% of staff who Would Not Attend the office
I get more work done at home	104	83%
I prefer working at home	100	80%
My health and wellbeing	97	78%
The length of time to commute to the office	86	69%
The cost of commuting to the office	81	65%
I have flexibility at home to do other things around my working hours	70	56%
My team/colleagues not being in the office	48	38%
Other caring responsibilities	31	25%
The office doesn't meet my needs	27	22%
Availability in the staff car park	25	20%
Childcare responsibilities	24	19%
Other financial reasons	19	15%
I have a formal homeworker contract	12	10%
I have a workplace adjustments passport	10	8%

Would Not Attend open comments analysis

The open text responses regarding office working from the sub-group of staff who indicated they Would Not Attend was analysed. The key themes that emerged were:

Office environment – one of the most frequent types of comment on office working related to the challenges of the office environment. For example, several staff felt that it was too loud, disruptive and distracting in the office to work productively, especially with the number of teams calls being taken at desks. One respondent explained that open plan working can be overwhelming, especially for neurodivergent staff members. The lack of quiet spaces to concentrate or take meetings and calls was also highlighted. There was a feeling by some that the office had not been adapted to meet the requirements of hybrid working where most work activities are now undertaken virtually, even when in the office. The lack of a guaranteed desk was also a concern, together with the fact desks were not separate or personalisable. Some also struggled with the inability to control the temperature. Not having their team based in their local office was also cited as a reason for not going, with one respondent finding their local office 'empty', and some suggesting there was 'no benefit' in attending the office.

Commute – time and money spent travelling to the office was another common theme in the responses. A number of staff reported living quite far away, sometimes outside of Wales and therefore they were disinclined to travel to save money, time and reduce their carbon footprint.

Health and wellbeing – a range of health issues, both their own and other family members', were frequently cited as a reason for staying home. This could be due to the risks and challenges of travelling to the office, or the convenience and preference of managing these risks or conditions at home. Some also felt that there were opportunities to improve their wellbeing at home, e.g., join local walking groups.

Preference for working from home – accompanying the concerns around working in the office, there was a clear preference for working in a home set up where workstations could be set up as required, in quieter areas suitable for concentrating and having meetings. In addition, the flexibility to do tasks relating to caring responsibilities or other household tasks etc. whilst working from home was an important factor mentioned by some respondents.

7. Staff wellbeing

Further analysis was undertaken to explore measures of staff wellbeing. Results for Office Attenders and Remote Workers are compared.

Mental Wellbeing

All survey participants were asked '*In general, how would you rate your overall mental health now?*'.

	Remote Workers	Office Attenders
Excellent*	21%	12%
Very good	35%	34%
Good	29%	32%
Fair*	12%	17%
Poor	3%	5%

Remote workers were significantly more likely to describe their mental health as 'excellent' (8[1] percentage point difference), and significantly less likely to describe their mental health as 'fair' (5 percentage point difference). A significant difference between Remote Workers and Office Attenders is indicated by a *.

Physical Wellbeing

Staff were also asked '*In general, how would you rate your overall physical health now?*'.

	Remote Workers	Office Attenders
Excellent*	15%	11%
Very good	31%	30%
Good*	33%	38%
Fair	17%	17%
Poor	5%	5%

Remote Workers were significantly more likely to describe their physical health as 'excellent' (5 percentage point difference). Office Attenders were significantly more likely to describe their physical health as 'good' (5 percentage point difference). A significant difference between Remote Workers and Office Attenders is indicated by a *.

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[1] Not 9 due to rounding

Loneliness

Staff were asked 'how often do you feel lonely?'

	Remote Workers	Office Attenders
Often or always*	2%	5%
Some of the time*	9%	16%
Occasionally*	19%	27%
Hardly ever*	37%	32%
Never*	34%	21%

Remote Workers were more likely to report feeling lonely 'hardly ever' (5 percentage point difference) or 'never' (14 percentage point difference) than Office Attenders. Office Attenders were more likely to report feeling lonely 'often or always', 'some of the time' and occasionally' than Remote Workers. A significant difference between Remote Workers and Office Attenders is indicated by a *.

Work-life Balance: Office Attenders and Remote Workers

All staff were asked how far they agree with four statements covering work-life balance:

- I am able to maintain a good work-life balance.
- I feel able to fully disconnect from work.
- I regularly use my 'wellbeing hour' as part of my working week.
- I worry about work when I am not working.

	Office Attenders / Remote Workers		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
I am able to maintain a good work-life balance	81% / 89%*	10% / 6%*	10% / 5%*
I feel able to fully disconnect from work	64% / 78%*	16% / 12%*	20% / 10%*
I regularly use my 'wellbeing hour' as part of my working week	54% / 65%*	10% / 12%*	36% / 23%*
I worry about work when I am not working	36% / 25%*	28% / 28%	36% / 47%*

A significant difference between Remote Workers and Office Attenders is indicated by a *.

Remote Workers were more likely to be able to report having a good work-life balance (8 percentage points), feel able to fully disconnect from work (14 percentage

points) and using their 'wellbeing hour' regularly (11 percentage points). Office Attenders were more likely to worry about work when not working (11 percentage points).

Difference in grade can partially explain these results, with staff in higher grades being more likely to go into the office, but also having a lower work-life balance score. When controlling for grade, the trend of Remote Workers having a better work-life balance remains, although less strong. This indicates that grade does partly explain the difference between Remote Workers and Office Attenders, but that there are other factors that might influence this difference as well (such as carer status, etc.). The same held true for Remote Workers being able to disconnect from work better; taking their wellbeing hour more often; and worrying less about work at home.