

What do people want post COVID?

During this enforced lockdown period, just like everyone else, we've had to adjust our working practices and things that would have seemed impossible before, have now become common practice. As we start to emerge from this crisis, we've been looking at what we can keep from this experience and bring in to our 'normal' ways of working.

The start point was to ask our people. We did a survey across the business and then conducted some focus groups with Head Office staff to get a deeper understanding of what was working well and what was not. This helped us to identify common needs with a view to building a new normal that combined the benefits of the lockdown with the benefits of the old normal.

What was common was that no-one wanted to go back to 5 days per week in the office, but we're looking for a better mix, all for different reasons.

Groups

What we could see was that there were three distinct groups of people: People with Young children (Y6 and under), those Living Alone and Couples living together or with older children. Each group was coping differently with enforced home working and evidently had very different experiences.

There were also some similarities with the main influence being that personal life and working life are shaping each other more than in the past with the 'Office Clock' disappearing.

Other similarities include:

They all like the extra time at home and want to keep this, to an extent.

They all missed human interaction in the workplace, so they want to be in the office 1/2 days per week, albeit for different reasons.

They all felt they had a good connection with their immediate team but missed the wider company family feeling gained by the spontaneous 'Water Cooler' moments.



So, what next?

It's become obvious that we need to connect people more. Our internal Wellbeing Ambassadors, part of Culture Collective network, are working on plans to connect people through events virtually but also specific clubs that have no geographical boundaries (e.g. running clubs, cycle clubs etc. through apps).

As the three different groups work in different ways, we will bring in more tools for line managers to manage people remotely to help everyone to work together effectively.

Because people are having different experiences, mental health will be at the forefront of our thinking. We will, therefore, review the support we offer and give line managers the tools to spot potential concerns – working remotely requires a different mindset and working style, so we need to be proactive with the help we provide.

The office space is set to become a more collaborative workplace with the space outside of the office, such as homeworking becoming the space for concentration or quiet reflection. This agile and flexible working, we hope will improve not only productivity but also our people's work/life balance and satisfaction.