

Support Session - 15 March 2022



NEW WAYS OF WORKING

nww@admin.ox.ac.uk

Today's session

1. **Summary of the New Ways of Working Framework** (Miranda Reilly, HR Policy Officer – New Ways of Working)
 - Purpose
 - The four models of working
 - The eight stages of implementing the Framework
 - Resources available
2. **A case study: Physics** (Julia Lindon, HR Manager at Physics)
3. **Remote/hybrid working IT initiatives across the University** (Ian Teasdale, IT Services)
4. **Q&A and discussion**
5. **Your feedback from the 2021 HR data collection exercise** (Kate Butler, HR Policy Officer)

Put your questions in the chat, or raise a hand and we will come to you during the Q&A session. Or email NWW@admin.ox.ac.uk after the session

The New Ways of Working Framework

Speaker: Miranda Reilly, HR Policy Team and Sociology



Purpose of the Framework

- Thinking longer-term, beyond the Return to On-Site Working
- Learning from COVID-19: keeping the positives
- Enabling **professional services** staff to work effectively, whether on site or remotely while supporting the University's mission
- “The University is a complex place and whilst the Framework is intended to ensure consistency of opportunity, no single set of arrangements will suit all areas”
- “Leaders and managers are invited to adopt the Framework in a way that suits their area.”
- Initially created in response to staff survey, pilots and other input
 - Guidance, tools and support will be adapted in response to further feedback as more departments implement the Framework

Principles

- We work to **support the academic mission** of the University of Oxford
- We recognise the **value and benefits of in-person interaction** with colleagues and those to whom we are delivering a service
- We use our insights from the pandemic to **optimize the benefits** and opportunities associated with **remote** and online working, and we are **open-minded** about what work can be delivered remotely
- We support **decision-making** about New Ways of Working arrangements at **a local level** to fairly **balance the needs of the department with the aspirations of individuals**
- We arrive at these decisions through **inclusive, open, transparent discussions**
- We help people to be **fulfilled**, balancing their work and home lives, respecting and supporting individual differences
- We **learn from our experiences**, trial arrangements and evolve our working arrangements, workplaces and support for individuals

Four models of working

Intentionally broad to fit a range of individual patterns

- **On site** – fully on site
- **Occasional remote** – mostly on site but occasional remote working (e.g. on an ad-hoc basis)
- **Regular remote** – an agreed pattern of regular remote and on site working (e.g. 3 days per week on site, 2 at home)
- **Primarily remote** – 80% or more remote working with agreed on site activities

Implementing the Framework – 8 Steps

Summarised on the NWW webpage '[Framework and step-by-step guide](#)'
(PDF available)

- [Summary flowchart](#) available
- Not all steps may be needed
- Adapt to department's **circumstances** and roles' **operational needs**

Step 1 – Senior management team planning stage

- Think about the work of the department and its objectives
 - What working practices will support these most effectively?
 - Consider customer surveys or discussions at Departmental/Faculty Board
- Adaptations:
 - you may choose to discuss this as a whole department, create a working group, or run a workshop for departmental leadership groups instead

Step 2 – Team leaders preparation

- Read the NWW Framework and consider
 - local parameters set by the department
 - their team's work, objectives, operation and practical issues
 - which stakeholders and teams rely on their team,
 - how stakeholders could be consulted to ensure new arrangements meet their needs as well

Step 3 – Team meeting

- Team leaders should ask team members to read the Framework
- A team meeting/workshop should be held to consider service users, stakeholder needs, and team and department objectives
- The team leader should listen to everyone's insights and contributions
- NB include team members on long-term sickness absence and family leave

Step 4 – Review: previous, current and future working patterns

- Team leaders to review each team members' pre-pandemic and pandemic working arrangements, considering:
 - Did the team work effectively? Were objectives and customer expectations met?
 - Operational requirements – e.g. core hours
 - What should be retained?
 - Challenges for individuals (inc. disability – reasonable adjustments)
 - Trial periods
- Team members will need to consider:
 - Impact of place of work on colleagues and customers; what working arrangements would best achieve team objectives and customer needs?
 - What was good and bad about remote working? Are any aspects of your role performed better on site or remotely?
 - If you have a disability, have you discussed the benefits or challenges associated with this and place of work with your manager?
 - What is your preferred working pattern?

Step 5 – Informal individual meetings

- Team leaders meet each team member individually to discuss operational needs and individual preferences
 - as part of a regular 1:1 or a separate meeting
 - [checklist](#) is available
 - Include employees on family leave or other long-term absence
 - Consider reasonable adjustment for a disability as a priority
- Individual team members
 - explain how they expect their preferred arrangement will work in practice, and any challenges anticipated
 - Be honest about concerns

Step 6 – Record preferences

- The team leader records each team member's preference, using a simple table if needed
- In the case of uncertainty, the team leader should confirm they have understood preferences correctly

Step 7a – Team leader reviews operational needs and individual preferences

- Guidance available
- Seek advice from HR if a preference cannot be accommodated to ensure the decision is fair and non-discriminatory
- Consider a trial period of 3–6 months, with clear parameters (e.g. success measures and how to end arrangement if needed)
- Adaptations:
 - departments can require all new arrangements to have SMT sign off to ensure new practices would work across the department

Step 7b – (if required) Further meetings

- If it is uncertain whether a new working pattern can be accommodated, Team leaders should have further discussions with team members to
 - explain why they do not think the original request can be agreed to
 - consider alternative possibilities
- A brief note of the key points discussed should be kept

Step 7c – Confirm new arrangements

If agreement reached:

- A pro-forma [‘confirmation of change form’](#) is available to confirm in writing
- Team leader and employee should sign
- HR to file in the individual’s personnel file
- Contract amendment not required (formal place of work remains as per the employment contract)

If agreement can’t be reached:

- Template letter to notify, explain reasons and set out option to apply through formal flexible working scheme

Step 8 – Regular review of new arrangements

- Team leaders to:
 - Consider team performance, gain feedback, hold regular team discussions: are adjustments needed?
 - Consider how the arrangements are working for individual team members, discussing emerging concerns early on and recognising successes
 - At the end of the trial period hold 1:1 discussions and decide whether new pattern will:
 - continue (remains informal and changeable)
 - end (with notice)
 - be adjusted

Resources

All resources can be found on the [New Ways of Working webpage](#)

- [Full Framework and guidance \(PDF\)](#)
- [Step-by-step guide](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Templates](#): emails, confirmation of change form, letter to reject a place of work change application, PowerPoint slides for workshops
- [Guidance for team leaders on decision-making](#)
- New from POD: [eLearning on working remotely and managing remote workers](#)
- Contact: nww@admin.ox.ac.uk

Call for Case Studies

We now need case studies from departments who have started implementing the Framework

One to two Word document pages covering:

- Department context (size, division, unique features)
- How you implemented New Ways of Working
- Positives and difficulties – anything you would do differently now?
- Next steps

Alternatively: meeting can be arranged to discuss verbally

Contact nww@admin.ox.ac.uk

Case Study: Department of Physics

Speaker: Julia Lindon, HR Manager at Physics



Context

- Physics is a **large** department (562 staff; 677 undergraduates; 365 DPhils)
- **Lab-based**, with some roles which have to be carried out on site and some which can utilize hybrid working
- Part of the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences (**MPLS**) Division

Implementation: Steps

- First step: Physics Management Committee discussed and agreed to implement the framework for Professional and Support Staff – this ensured ‘buy-in’ from the Department in case there were local pockets of resistance
- Each administrative function was free to implement the policy according to the needs of the team and wider Department
- Department policy set out that a minimum of one day per week on site was required – team managers could require more on-site attendance according to business needs. Most teams agreed on a minimum of 2–3 days a week on site
- We canvassed teams for working pattern preferences, while managing expectations and trying to ensure fairness. Working patterns were then decided in consultation with teams on a trial basis

Implementation: Example - the HR team

- The on-site HR office has been open Monday to Friday within core hours, allowing flexibility around start and finish times while ensuring we are open between 9am to 5pm
- In HR, we have agreed on one day where we are all in the office together to engender team spirit, have team meetings and carry out training
- Communication has been key: all team members list what days they will be in the office in their email signature, a chart also shows this on the office door, and we make use of generic email addresses
- Team members are aware that they may need to come into the office on a day they would not normally for operational needs if a colleague is on annual or sick leave. We have emphasized that the contractual place of work is Oxford, and that changing days in the office should be rare to ensure agreed coverage

Implementation: Considerations

- Be dynamic: if something needs tweaking, it is better to do it quickly than wait for a formal review date
- Communicate to your team at an early stage that this might be a possibility
- Keep a record of completed confirmation of change forms in personnel files: this is invaluable if there is a dispute or a change of line manager

Positive outcomes so far

- Teams are happier when they are able to work in a way that suits them, and New Ways of Working has been going well within the administrative teams
- A reduction in sickness absence has been noticed (although it is still to be determined whether this is because absenteeism – taking sick leave without good reason – has decreased, or presenteeism – working while sick – has increased)
- Having at least one day where the whole team is on site has been invaluable

Difficulties so far

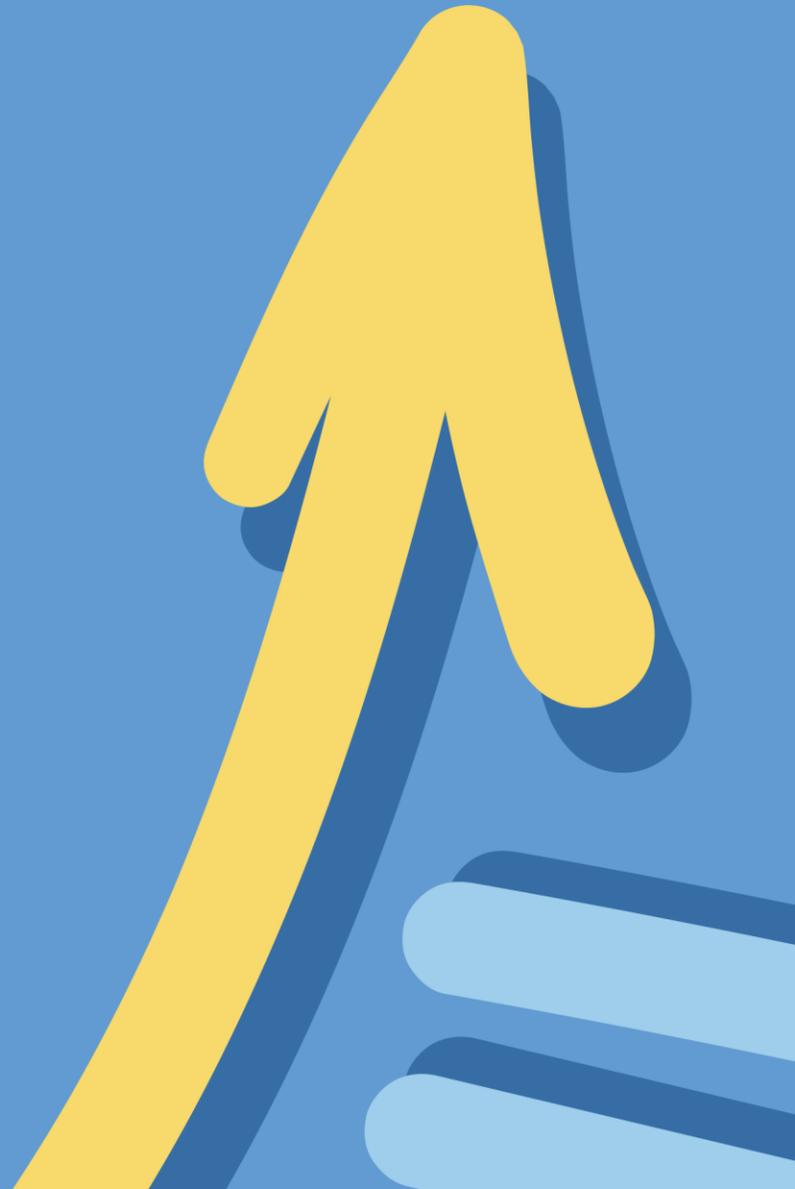
- Not every team is big enough to enable an on site 'office' to be open every day – this has resulted in a perceived lack of service, or pressure on staff to come on site more often
- Perceived unfairness between teams where managers have different expectations on percentage of on site working (not all agreements can be resolved informally, and formal flexible working requests have to be kept as an option)
- Physics have a sizable number of staff who have to be on site and cannot work from home due to their roles – this is causing resentment, and requests have been coming in for increased pay and shorter hours because of this
- Staff have not been returning a confirmation of change form to record changes to working location: this seems to be an issue for administrative staff who report to an academic rather than sitting within an administrative function; there is a perception that these staff are just 'picking and choosing' hours without discussion

Moving forward

- Formal review dates within teams have been set, and a formal review date for the whole of the Physics department has been set for Trinity term
- Planning to have a day when all administrative staff across functions are on site to encourage interaction across teams

IT Initiatives

Speaker: Ian Teasdale, Deputy Director of
Customer Services at IT Services



IT Initiatives

- Hybrid meeting room upgrades in University offices
- MS Bookings for hot desks
- Teams live for large meetings
- Hybrid events platforms
- Hot desk equipment
- Collaboration via whiteboards
- Content cameras for Teams

Useful Resources

- help.it.ox.ac.uk
- Recommended equipment – meeting rooms, teaching spaces and individuals
- Lots of how to guides for common activities
- it.ox.ac.uk/work-remotely
- governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/new-ways-of-working-committee-meetings-post-covid-19

Questions?

nww@admin.ox.ac.uk

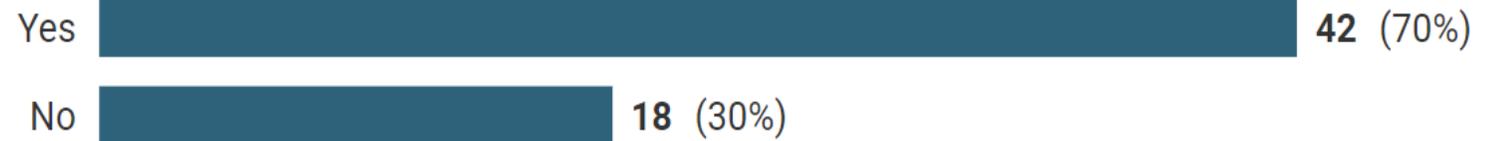


Your feedback from the 2021 HR data collection exercise

Speaker: Kate Butler



18 New Ways of Working: Has your department implemented the New Ways of Working Framework (or are you currently in the process of implementing)?



If Yes, did/do you have the support, guidance and tools you need? (Give details of any additional tools, resources or support you need/needed)

Of 42 who have completed or are implementing

- 30 departments = yes (or qualified yes)
- 7 departments = no
- Remainder = no comment

Requests:

“Finance for equipment for WFH”

“Worked examples/scenarios for different kinds of roles”

“More guidance for minimum requirements for working in the office”

Guidance on “how to monitor across the department so it is transparent”

“Exemplar text for why a proportion of on site working is preferable would be helpful “

“Justifications we can use as reason to refuse a request as based on the 8 reasons under ACAS”

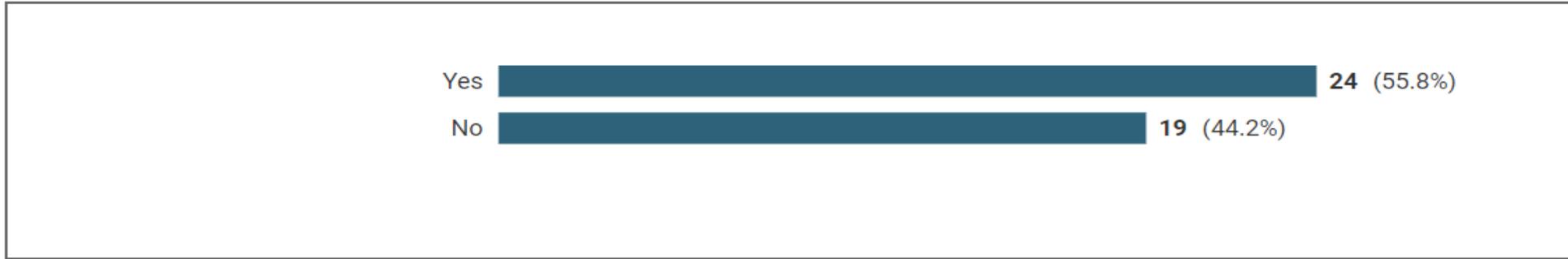
Other comments

- Guidance is complex for small departments without multiple layers of management
- “The guidance was overwhelming, and not all that helpful for the person who had to navigate their way through it and apply it in their own department”

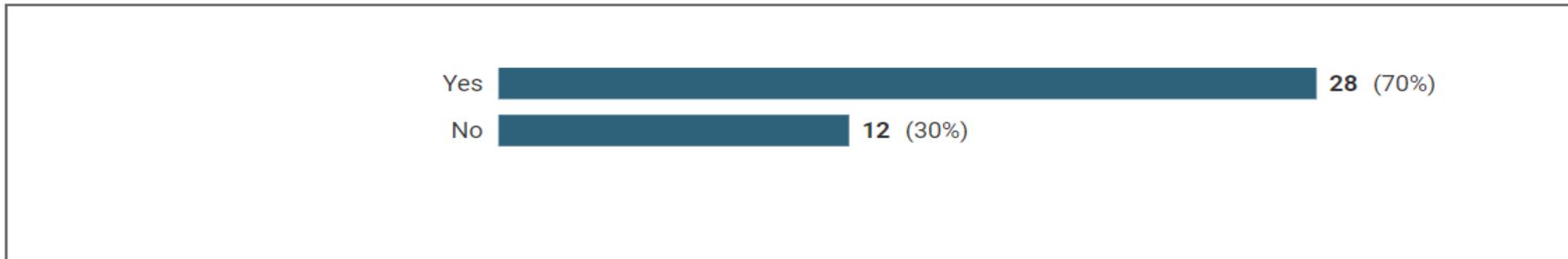
Perennial challenge – drafting sufficient guidance for all and not too much for some.

- “we have kept the conversations low key and with the ability for us to be able to change working patterns in line with the needs of the department. anyone wishing a perm change is advised to make a formal FWR [Flexible Working Request]”

18.b If Yes, are you using the confirmation of change template for any agreed changes?



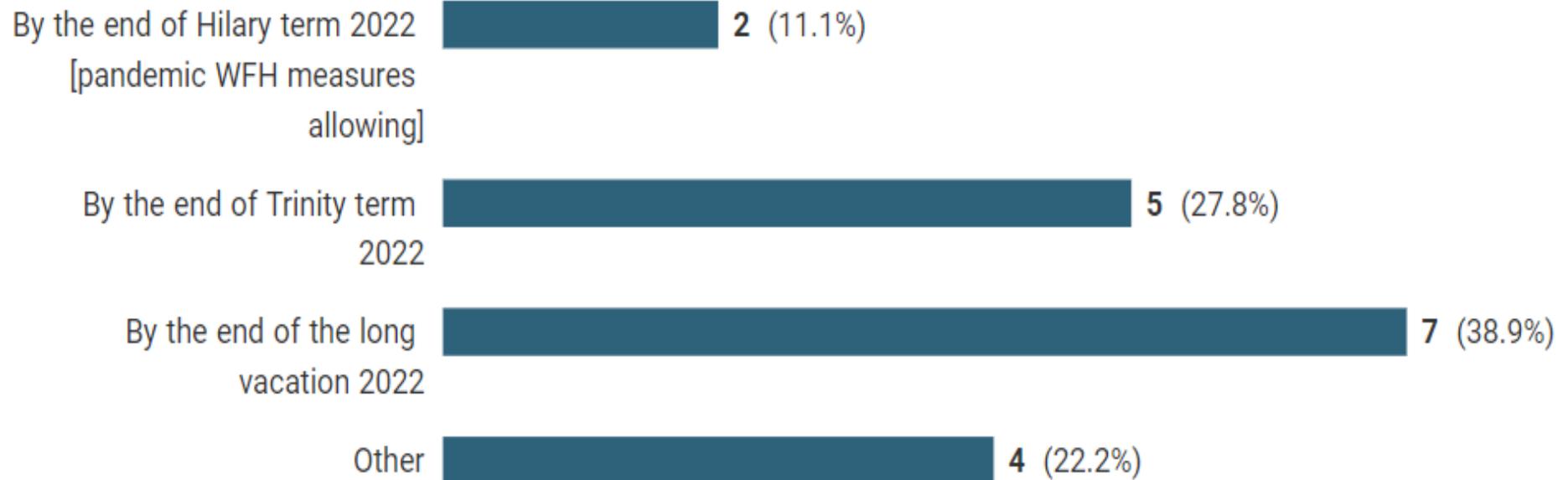
18.c If Yes, are you keeping central, departmental records of any new agreed working pattern?



18.d If Yes, and you have completed the process, of the requests for new working patterns have you been able to agree



18.e If No, when do you plan to implement the framework?



Related issues

- Recruitment difficulties starting to cite lack of flexibility (and travel difficulties and cost of living) as reason for not securing candidate
- Flexible working appearing in audit responses:
 - as key benefit to attract candidates
 - frequent 'reasonable adjustment' for disability
- Sickness – 9 departments report seeing less sickness absence directly correlated with home working (but presenteeism?)