In May 2020, in response to the COVID-19 situation, we asked you for your feedback on what good things – and not so good things – were happening as a result of working under lockdown.

Our objective was to look at ways of working during the COVID-19 crisis in order to achieve an understanding of:

- What has gone well?
- What has not gone so well?
- How can we do things better?
- What are the challenges to be addressed?
- What should we retain?

A short questionnaire was produced which simply asked for up to four good things about working under lockdown and up to four not so good things. To support this, several contextual questions were also asked: role type, role location, caring responsibilities and gender identification.

### Understanding the feedback

This summary is presented under the following themes, which were formed during analysis of feedback:

- **Wellbeing**
- **Ways of Working**
- **Professional Development**
- **Practical/Environmental**
- **Personal**
- **Social**
  - (key findings included within Wellbeing)
- **Organisational**

### Participation

- A total of 1,955 individuals responded – equating to approximately 16% of the headcount of the University.
- A total of 13,519 comments were received from 1955 people.
- Analysis of the responses shows that most respondents had at least one positive response (97%) with 76% giving four positive responses.
- Only 53 people (3%) could not provide one positive response. Most respondents had at least one negative response (98%) with 76% giving four negative responses. Only 34 people could not provide one negative. There were no significant differences between the groups in this respect.
Wellbeing

75% of people have been negatively impacted by lack of social contact at work or have experienced loneliness/isolation.

Top 4 ‘Good’ and ‘Not so good’ response types, with response count

- More relaxed pace/less stress or pressure: 206 responses
- Improved health/wellbeing through exercise, diet: 163 responses
- Better work/life balance: 135 responses
- An opportunity to focus on wellbeing: 56 responses

Increased anxiety, stress: 412 responses
Boundaries between work and home life blurred: 397 responses
Feeling lonely and/or isolated: 290 responses
Impacted diet/exercise: 222 responses

Only 23% of these comments are from colleagues with caring responsibilities
66% of these comments are from colleagues with no caring responsibilities

Overall, 72% of all responses relating to wellbeing were negative, and more detailed analysis has been passed to the Staff Task Force for review.

Ways of Working

Meetings are more
effective: 278 responses
Meetings are less
effective: 127 responses

However...
267 people complained of too much screen time and/or meeting fatigue

Effective meetings work is underway, responses to feed into this work.

571 responses claimed increased productivity whilst remote working. Conversely, 259 responses said that productivity had decreased.

877 responses – from 41% of respondents - celebrated increased flexibility and control of one’s working day, including breaks, from remote working.

138 stated that this period of remote working has proved that working from home is effective and should be an option in the future where possible.

However, the survey included 1,440 comments relating to issues with home working environment or equipment, technical problems or roles not able to be performed well remotely.

179 responses acknowledged effective use of IT tools and technology for remote working, with many acknowledging the successful roll out of MS Teams.

However, 220 responses expressed frustration with technical problems and lack of support, plus challenges with the range of tools in use.

Professional Development

356 responses said that remote working has offered an opportunity for professional development

"Remote Working has offered an opportunity for professional development" - proportion of responses by role

- Support staff
- Manual team member
- Student
- IT
- Technician
- Senior management
- Manager/Supervisor
- Administrative team member
- Academic/Researcher

Increased confidence with new IT tools and technology
Adaptability and resilience
Expanded professional networks
Online learning and more accessible webinars and conferences
Innovative or creative ways of working

All of the above development opportunities were mentioned within the feedback
Analysis of travel responses has been passed to the Environment and Energy team for review.

**Practical/Environmental**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other positive responses under ‘Practical/Environmental theme’</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More comfortable/suitable working environment</td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying garden, outdoors, nature</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to dress casually</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of safety, security</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower emissions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1,266 (61%) of ‘Practical’ themed responses were ‘No commute or site travel’ as a positive result.

**And the not so good?**

There were 630 comments relating to unsuitable home office space, including lack of equipment, internet unreliability and increase in household bills. Comments also mention lack of space and/or privacy, ‘makeshift’ office set-ups and physical discomfort.

There were also negative comments relating to additional costs from having to buy equipment, including laptops and furniture.

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**Good things – Top 4:**

1. Time with family, pets (567 comments)
2. Able to balance family or household responsibilities (124 comments)
3. Saving money (117 comments)
4. More personal time (116 comments)

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**Personal**

Not so good things – Top 4:

1. Hard to balance caring responsibilities, no personal time (333 comments)
2. Lack of personal motivation (259 comments)
3. Less variety leading to monotony and boredom (141 comments)
4. Lack of freedom and normal routine (116 comments)

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As a post-survey, additional question we asked those with caring responsibilities what kind of experience they had during lockdown. We received 161 responses, and these will be passed to the HR team for review.

“Did you have a negative experience balancing caring responsibilities during lockdown/remote working?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, 29%</th>
<th>No, 20%</th>
<th>Sometimes, 51%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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**Organisational**

Although no specific questions were asked about organisational factors, topics such as peer support, empathy and effective communication from the university were raised within general feedback.

167 people commented on an increased feeling of peer support and empathy from their colleagues.

And 70 people remarked on a new-found appreciation of their role, or a feeling of having their value realised.

109 people raised concerns with management, leadership and high-level communication.

Nearly half of these comments were from those with management responsibility, and included concerns about not feeling able to manage as effectively while remote working.

96 people commented that they felt an unreasonable expectation and pressure from their manager and colleagues to deliver more than they are able.

This is in addition to 336 people stating that they are working longer hours, with fewer breaks and more stress, albeit not explicitly linking to management expectation.
## Conclusion and next steps

Responses to this survey have shown that whilst many people have thrived within a home-working environment, this has been balanced by those who have struggled. In some cases this is due to the lack of suitable workspace/equipment or the balancing of caring responsibilities with the demands of work. The issue of wellbeing and mental health must remain a priority and any work going forward must take the responses in context with the global situation.

Below is a list of key questions and considerations coming out of the analysis. The aim of the survey was to gather information and data about what and how current processes need to improve/change, and also feed into the development of what our ‘new normal’ might look like.

Attached to each comment is an action, many of which are already underway with the relevant teams.

? = Query for further review
⚠️ = Risk or issue

### Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are responses on both sides for Ways of Working – we must ensure that future flexible/agile working policies build on the ‘good’ and address the ‘not so good’</td>
<td>Data and analysis to be passed to Flexible Working team within ourcambridge to feed into work that is already underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact on social interaction and environment issues shows that one size does not fit all when it comes to working at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The second most common positive response was around flexibility and control of working hours – including being able to commit time to having effective breaks. 206 responses also mentioned a more relaxed working pace. However, a considerable number of people are experiencing increased workload or finding it difficult to maintain control of clear working hours/patterns</td>
<td>Guidelines around workload management would help those experienced increased workload or loss of control. Identify candidates for best practice videos from positive responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re: Paperless working - Further investigation and link with Green Impact</td>
<td>Tie in with Ways of Working focus and link to Green Impact – potential focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have caring responsibilities added to increased anxiety?</td>
<td>Further investigation completed – forwarded to Staff Task Force for consideration as part of priority review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the key things that have resulted in increased productivity – particularly for administrative processes?</td>
<td>Set up focus group to investigate further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is there a split between effective use of IT and technical problems?</td>
<td>Set up focus group in conjunction with remote working support group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can we ensure that colleagues have clarity and support on tooling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re: Feedback about meetings - Effective meetings work is underway, responses to feed into this work</td>
<td>Feed into Effective Meetings work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do some roles not recognise this [professional development] opportunity? Why has it taken lockdown to make this possible?</td>
<td>Discuss with PPD – potential focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re: Wellbeing analysis - This data to be reviewed by Staff Task Force</td>
<td>Analysis shared with Staff Task Force - will be considered when developing new policies related to new ways of working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are these responses (about health and exercise) indicative of where people live?</td>
<td>Further analysis would be required as this question was not asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why isn’t this (peer support) consistent?</td>
<td>Cultural implications – possible focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a particular reason why more women than men responded?</td>
<td>Feed this information to Equality and Diversity team – is it worth investigating further?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Analysis and reporting by ourcambridge.