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Introduction

1. We are responding to the UK House of Lords Committee's call for input on home-based working. We believe the best policies come from listening to people's real-life experiences. This report shares what we have learned to help make home-based work more practical, fair, and supportive for everyone.

2. Over the past four years, our team has studied home-based work through four major research projects. We interviewed 56 people in the UK, US, China, Iran, and Malaysia—families where both parents worked from home while caring for school-age children. We included children's voices through drawings that captured how they experienced their parents working from home.

3. We also reviewed nearly 90 research papers to understand the broader picture—how working from home affects people's well-being, work–life balance, and job performance across different countries and industries.

4. Our focus is on collective home-based working—when more than one person in a household is working from home, often while also looking after children. This became a reality for many during the COVID-19 pandemic and continues today for families juggling hybrid work and childcare.

5. Although most of our study focused on full-time remote work during the pandemic, many of the lessons still apply. We looked at how this kind of work affects not just individuals but whole families. We do not cover other types of flexible working like compressed hours or job-sharing.

What Is Home-Based and Collective Home-Based Working?

6. Home-Based Working means doing your job from home instead of at an office. You stay connected with colleagues through phone calls, emails, and video meetings. Some people do this all the time, while others split their time between home and the office.

7. Collective Home-Based Working is when two or more people in the same home are working remotely at the same time—often while also managing care responsibilities and sharing space and/or digital tools with others.

What Families Told Us: Realities of Working from Home

The Ups and Downs of Home-Based Work

8. Families working from home together faced some tough challenges. They lost access to things like quiet workspaces, fast internet, and daily social contact. Parents had to juggle work meetings with school schedules and childcare—often without enough support.

9. Cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, and laundry increased dramatically. Without access to cleaning or childcare services, families found this change hard. But families with more space, flexible work hours, or asynchronous school schedules managed better.

10. It was not all bad. Skipping long commutes and office prep saved time, money, and energy. Many families enjoyed more meals together and less stress from rushing around.

11. They also saved money on things like petrol, public transport, work clothes, and personal care products. Being close to loved ones provided emotional support during stressful workdays—something hard to get in a traditional office.

12. These examples show that with the right support and tools, working from home can boost both personal well-being and family life.

How Families Made It Work: Strategies and Solutions

13. Families did not just cope—they adapted. They tried to be supportive of each other, focus on well-being, stay emotionally connected, share responsibilities, and make compromises when needed.

14. The most effective techniques families used include:

- *Repurposing shared spaces:* Families rearranged furniture, created makeshift desks, or designated quiet corners to create a functional division of space.

- *Rotating schedules:* Household members took turns using high-demand areas or tools (such as internet bandwidth or shared computers), and created informal time blocks for meetings and focused work.

- *Setting up informal boundary roles:* Some families designated one person (often a parent or older child) as the 'boundary governor' to help manage transitions between work, learning, and caring time.

- *Revisiting and reassigning responsibilities:* Families adjusted domestic tasks and caring roles based on who had more flexible or intense work demands each day.

- *Aligning schedules and live agreements:* Households used visible calendars or messaging apps to align work and care duties and revised these plans regularly.

- *Increasing communication:* Families scheduled regular check-ins to coordinate needs and reduce misunderstandings.

- *Using reinforcement:* In some cases, families introduced small rewards or reminders to encourage respect for work time or shared responsibilities.

15. Families managed their time, space, routines, and devices through trial and error. They learned how to make remote working work as a team—often without much external support.

16. We think guidance and training from the government and employers should reflect these realities. Home-based working works best when the whole household is supported—not just the individual employee.

Helping Employers Support the Transition Back to the Office

17. Employers can make the shift back to the office easier by offering flexible options and understanding that employees may need time to adjust household routines.

18. Training managers to be more understanding and flexible is key—especially for families who are still working from home. This could include giving employees time to plan, test what works best for their family, and adapt their workspace.

19. Practical support—like help with childcare, home office equipment, or adjusting workloads—can make a big difference.

20. When employers understand that home-based working is a shared responsibility, they can better support their staff and help everyone thrive in a hybrid work world.

Learning from Abroad: What the UK Can Learn

21. Our research across five countries shows that families everywhere faced similar challenges when working from home—lack of space, shared devices, blurred boundaries, and more domestic chores.

22. UK families stood out for prioritising emotional well-being and family time. They found ways to set clear boundaries and coordinate schedules to protect both work and relationships. UK policymakers can build on these strengths. We suggest promoting home-based working strategies that focus on the household as a unit.

23. By treating the household—not just the employee—as the centre of adaptation, policies can better support the reality of modern working families and help make home-based work more sustainable and inclusive.

24. Other countries offer practical lessons the UK can build on. For example, in Malaysia and China, families used after-school virtual tutoring and support from extended relatives to manage childcare and learning when parents worked from home. In the US, flexible job structures allowed some parents to split shifts between mornings and evenings to accommodate school schedules. Iran and China saw increased father involvement in household tasks to support working mothers.

25. These global examples show that small policy nudges—such as subsidising virtual tutoring, offering support for dependent care, or promoting shared caregiving options—can support home-based working.

26. The UK can draw from these ideas and adapt them to local housing conditions, care services, and cultural expectations to create an effective remote work strategy.

How Can Government Support?

The following recommendations draw on lived experiences and international examples to suggest how public policy can better support families navigating the realities of working from home.

27. **Support Families at Home:** Provide publicly available resources and infrastructure that help households manage the practical realities of collective home-based working. This could include:

- Online toolkits with customisable templates for family schedules, task rotations, and shared device management.

- Digital guides and video tutorials on setting up workspaces in small or shared living areas, managing overlapping routines, and maintaining boundaries when multiple people are working or studying at home.

- Public co-working support, such as partnering with libraries, children's centres, and local councils to provide quiet, bookable rooms

or drop-in co-working spaces for families lacking adequate space at home.

- Awareness campaigns that normalise household-level coordination and offer tips for shared remote work set-ups.

28. **Prepare Employees with Practical Strategies:** Provide training for employees on practical, evidence-based strategies for working from home alongside family members. Training programmes could include illustrated examples, testimonials, or short videos to model how strategies work in real homes. Supporting employees with these skills helps reduce household conflict, builds resilience, and improves the long-term sustainability of hybrid or remote work models.

29. **Train Managers to Support Household-Level Flexibility:** Equip managers with practical tools and awareness to lead teams where employees are balancing remote work with family responsibilities. Effective training should include:

- Recognising household-level strain, such as signs of fatigue linked to simultaneous caring, school support, or shared space constraints.

- Planning for flexibility, including staggered hours, asynchronous task options, or temporary workload redistribution based on family needs.

- Fostering open communication, by building a team culture where employees feel safe discussing home-related challenges and asking for support.

- Using team-based scheduling tools, such as shared calendars, boundary coordination boards, or "focus time" trackers that account for caring rhythms.

  To strengthen uptake, the government could:

- Partner with professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to co-design certified training programmes for remote work management.

- Fund pilot programmes that test and evaluate family-friendly team practices.

- Develop a central repository of case studies, templates, and proven strategies to guide employers in supporting work-from-home realities.

30. **Encourage Flexibility:** Incentivise employers to adopt flexible work practices that support employees managing both work and caring responsibilities within their households. This includes promoting asynchronous work—where employees can complete tasks outside standard hours—as well as offering adjustable start and end times that allow families to coordinate around school drop-offs, caring routines, or shared device use. The government can reinforce this by:

- Offering financial incentives (e.g. tax relief, grant funding) to organisations that adopt and maintain flexible, care-sensitive scheduling policies.

- Supporting pilot schemes within the public sector or funded organisations to model how asynchronous work can be structured to benefit both employees and service delivery.

31. These supports would help employers move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches, recognising that successful remote and hybrid work often depends on how well it fits the needs of individual workers and their family circumstances.

32. These supports would help normalise flexibility as a structural strategy that enables equitable participation in remote work.

Conclusion

33. Families across the UK—and around the world—have shown remarkable creativity and resilience in adapting to home-based working. But they shouldn't have to figure it out alone. Our research highlights that the success of home-based work often depends not just on individual habits or employer policies, but on how well

households are supported to manage space, time, caring duties, and digital access together.

34. Government has a key role to play. By providing household-level resources, supporting flexible management, and reinforcing practices that reflect the realities of family life, policymakers can help make remote work more workable and sustainable. With clear guidance, shared tools, and smarter incentives, the UK can lead in shaping an effective approach to home-based working that fits how people actually live today—one that values the home not just as a private space, but as a vital site of productivity, care, and connection.

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