



Acting as a champion of the CIPD flexible working campaign which aims to treble the current number of good quality jobs with flexible working options, United Living launched a flexible working pilot.

Flexible working is not new to the work place but is new within site based elements of the construction industry. Over a period of six months we piloted a scheme across several operational sites to prove the viability and to determine the potential benefits to both business and employees.

Flexible working for the purposes of this pilot was defined as; a type of working arrangements which gave a degree of flexibility on how long, where, when and at what times employees work.

The arrangement was informal and did not require a change in terms and conditions.

During the course of the pilot we challenged the belief that flexible working will not work within the construction industry.

Site based staff looked their working patterns and key tasks, having done so they adjusted their hours to suit their personal needs ensuring that core hours and site coverage was maintained.

Some of the key benefits of flexible working known within other industries are;

1. Savings on office space, for example, using technological advances to allow remote working and hot desking.
2. Workers on flexible contracts tend to be more emotionally engaged, more satisfied with their work, more likely to speak positively about their organisation.
3. Improved staff retention and a reduction in reported sickness.
4. Flexible working options can also be attractive for new talent, for whom work life balance is key.
5. Demographic changes affect employees' needs to balance their job with other responsibilities such as caring or other outside interests.

Some of the benefits we found following the pilot were;

1. Reduction in travel times and savings on carbon emissions. Working from home reduced time on the road, in some cases by several hours per week. Changing start and finish times enabled individuals to miss peak traffic periods reducing journey and engine idling times, both reduced our carbon emissions.

2. Reduction in personal travel costs. Less time spent in traffic and on the road created fuel cost savings.
3. Reduction in business travel costs. Less journeys reduced the number of claims for business mileage.
4. Increased work life balance. Minor adjustments to working hours and patterns gave individuals the opportunity to spend more time with their families, go to the gym or carry out tasks that would have normally led to an absence.
5. Reduction in absence. The ability to flex working patterns prevented instance where a reported absence would have occurred.
6. Increased productivity. Giving individuals the chance to change their working environment and work patterns enabled them to be more focused which in turn increased productivity.
7. General wellbeing. Despite the fact that in many cases the adjustments were small the overall consensus was that having the ability to work flexibly was a huge emotional and psychological benefit.

Engagement surveys were provided by employees and stakeholder prior to and on completion of the pilot. Neither party saw any down turn in performance or production.