

SURGE

JISC LIW For Academics Pilot Project:
End of Cohort 1 Report, September 2008

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**JISC LIW FOR ACADEMICS PILOT PROJECT
END OF COHORT REPORT
COHORT 1: MAY – JULY 2008**

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Section 1: Introduction

As part of their participation in the JISC LIW for academics pilot project, staff were asked to provide feedback and testimonies regarding their experiences in a variety of different ways. Specifically, during their initial three month trial period, participants from **cohort one** were asked to take part in three face-to-face research interviews with evaluators from the Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration (SURGE). These interviews, which took place on campus, were scheduled to take place at the beginning, middle and end of the three month trial. The first interview focused on their LIW aspirations and expectations, the second on feedback and formative lessons and the third on a summative assessment of their participation and decision to remain LIW or return to office based working arrangements.

Evaluators from SURGE also interviewed the line managers of all participants from **cohort one**. These interviews were also conducted face-to-face and established experiences of managing staff who are LIW. Alongside qualitative evidence from interviews, participants provided a set of quantitative data regarding their trial period. These were collected through an online questionnaire survey at the end of the three month period, effectively updating information supplied when participants initially expressed an interest in adopting LIW working practices. These quantitative data are of limited value at this early stage of the project owing to the small number of participants involved in **cohort one**. However, once supplemented with responses from further cohorts, they will provide information valuable in determining the success of the BES pilot and in designing appropriate future LIW provision for staff at Coventry University.

This report provides an overview of emerging findings from interviews with participants and line managers involved in **cohort one** and offers an early assessment of whether LIW is an effective way of working for academic staff in BES, as well as a set of lessons which will be useful in helping to refine the implementation of the pilot scheme for subsequent cohorts. Quantitative data from the *'Expression of Interest'* stage is also summarised. Further qualitative data from the end of trial period questionnaire, whilst not presented formally in this report, has been used to triangulate interview findings.

Section 2: Analysis of pre-trial questionnaire

LIW participants were asked to complete an on-line questionnaire prior to them commencing the LIW scheme. This provides some useful benchmarks against which the success of the pilot can be measured. The results of the survey are presented below.

1. Travel & Transport

Distance travelled to work

Distance	No.
0-5 miles	2
6-10 miles	0
11-15 miles	1
16-20 miles	1
21-30 miles	0
31+ miles	3

Commuting time

Time Taken (Mins)	No.
0-10	0
11-20	2
21-30	1
31-45	1
46mins - 1 hour	1
Over 1 hour	2

- Three participants are typically travelling over 30 miles to the University with journey times over 45 minutes. Only two are travelling less than 5 miles.
- All seven respondents cite car as their main mode of transport to work, with one occasionally using the train as well
- Car Sharing would be considered by 4 of 7 respondents - reasons for not engaging include the distance to be travelled, a reduction in flexibility and external commitments
- All respondents indicated that while at work any journeys less than a mile would be walked
- Five respondents already work from home 2-3 days per week
- Five respondents indicated that less than a quarter of their job involves travel to meetings, the remaining two indicated 26-50%.

2. Office Environment and Equipment

- Six of seven respondents indicated they have enough space at home to establish a suitable working environment, the remaining respondent indicated that the space was potentially there

- **Current equipment includes**

Laptop	7
Mobile Phone	1
Computer	2
Other: Printer	1

3. Initial fears/concerns about going LIW

- Minor initial fears and concerns centre around storage space; and the potential for LIW to inhibit career development when being out of the loop and missing out on the day to day team environment.

4. Perceived initial benefits of LIW

- Work-life balance improvement
- Reduction in stress caused by commuting and parking
- Reduction in time spent commuting
- Teaching is delivered off-campus so no real need to come on-site
- Improved concentration as no longer in shared office
- Greater control over the hours worked/more opportunity to manage time to increase research outputs
- Improved efficiency through providing uninterrupted work time
- Improved focus on research outputs through a reduction in the number and frequency of interruptions
- Reduced driving costs
- Improved productivity
- More opportunities to balance time with the family e.g. walking children to school
- Less presentism

5. How can LIW contribute towards reducing carbon footprint?

- Reduced car travel
- Using public transports (bus/train) when required on site
- Satellite links to present conference papers instead of travelling to the conference

6. How will LIW contribute towards reducing travel costs?

- Less car travel therefore less expenditure on petrol
- No parking charges
- Reduced wear and tear on the car
- Estimates on potential annual savings on travel costs ranged from £400 - £2000.

Section 3: Summary of start of trial interviews

The following provides a summary of responses from all LIW participants at the commencement of their pilot. These were conducted between 28th April and 20th May 2008.

- 1. At the start of the LIW project what were your initial aspirations and expectations? Did you have any major concerns about going LIW?**

ASPIRATIONS PRIOR TO GOING LIW

- Improved work-life balance through working remotely more efficiently and effectively than at present
- Re-energising and legitimising home-working practices through improved support systems
- Being able to utilise comfortable working environments wherever they might be (e.g. outdoors)
- Reduction in commuting time leading to greater flexibility in work-life balance
- More uninterrupted time to develop an active research agenda and establish greater academic credibility

CONCERNS PRIOR TO GOING LIW

- Loss of office environment and space for storage of academic text books
- Perceived loss of academic status through giving up a permanent base on campus
- Reduced sense of belonging/attachment to the University
- Adequacy of touchdown space provided on campus
- Dislocation from colleagues and social networks on campus
- Concerns over ability to use LIW equipment effectively
- Possibility of greater monitoring and scrutiny of attendance compared to other (non-LIW) colleagues [e.g. through Outlook calendars].

- 2. How well informed were you during the LIW set-up period? Did you feel ready and prepared to go LIW on the start date?**

Feedback from participants was mixed, with some feeling more prepared than others.

Minor technical issues were noted in terms of the readiness and availability of LIW equipment, but support systems for resolving these issues were identified as

excellent. Some concerns were also expressed regarding the flow of information to participants prior to them commencing the pilot, leading to a lack of clarity about whether they were accepted onto the scheme, and if so when they would be starting. Some participants felt that they had to be proactive in order to obtain the information required.

3. What were your impressions of the briefings and training that you received? Did it adequately prepare you for LIW

- Participants found the faculty wide briefings to be helpful and encouraged them to sign up for the pilot scheme. However, it was felt that the subsequent training session provided little added value to the previous briefings designed to recruit faculty staff to the pilot. Specifically, it was thought to be too general and provided little information about the equipment which participants would be given and how they could use it effectively. Participants felt that the training should have been structured around the LIW handbook
- Training was perceived to be too focused on 'working from home' rather than working LIW
- Technical support provided at this stage of the pilot was regarded as very helpful
- There was felt to be too much emphasis in briefings and training on the need for participants to operate flexibly at the expense of stressing the importance of increased flexibility from colleagues.
- One participant suggested that part of the LIW experience was about the individual learning and developing ways of working that suited them and in that sense they should not necessarily expect a greater degree of hand holding.

4. How have you found the LIW set-up and process (a) when you are LIW and (b) when you come into the University?

WHILST LIW

- The general impression amongst participants is that working LIW is a positive experience – enabling them to undertake all the tasks that they would normally do from an office base on campus. At this early stage participants were still getting used to the equipment provided, and learning how to use it most effectively. However, a number of minor technical issues were noted. First, there was frustration about not being able to access local drives or send documents to

print directly from the Remote Desktop connection. Second, the version of Microsoft Office provided on participants' laptops is out of step with that on the general University network, creating problems of compatibility and usability. Familiarising participants with the new Microsoft interface should have been an element in the training provided prior to the commencement of the scheme. Third, some participants have also had connectivity and signal difficulties both in using Thin Client and their Smartphone. Fourth, participants were not briefed about the download limit warnings on the dongle, leading to fears that they were running up huge bills for the University.

WHILST WORKING ON CAMPUS

- Some participants were concerned about the lack of touchdown space in the George Elliot building.
- General feedback on the touchdown space provided in the William Morris building is that it is adequate and working well with the current number of LIW staff that are attempting to use it. It is also felt that the location of the touchdown room, adjacent to the William Morris staff room, is good. This makes it easier for LIW participants to maintain contact with other staff within the building.
- Not being able to print from the wireless network was identified as a problem by a number of participants. Having to log into a second (desktop) machine in order to print documents is not a desirable or efficient way of working.
- The impression gained from participants is that storage space provided on campus is sufficient at the moment. However, this may change when further cohorts of LIW staff enter the pilot.
- There is some confusion amongst participants about the availability of secure personal storage space where LIW equipment and other items may be left whilst on campus.

5. Since starting the LIW project have you needed to access technical support? If yes, has the support resolved the issues that you had?

Technical support provided to participants has been described as helpful, effective and efficient. In addition, the LIW blog is said to be very helpful. However, as identified in question 3 above, participants would welcome more detailed technical

training prior to commencing LIW. This relates in particular to the use of and costs associated with equipment which is new to them such the Smartphone and dongle.

6. What are your initial impressions and experiences of LIW in relation to your pre-project expectations? Have you experienced any immediate problems or been pleasantly surprised? Has your working behaviour (e.g. in terms of work-life balance) changed?

- There is some evidence that LIW is encouraging participants to incorporate online teaching methods into next year's programmes.
- Participants have made use of the e-learning flying squad and have been made aware of new techniques for delivering online interactive content to students.
- Even at this early stage in the pilot, a number of participants stated that LIW had already produced positive work-life balance and carbon-footprint effects.
- However, a number of negative psychological effects were also identified by participants. These included social dislocation and guilt about not being visible on campus. One participant suggested that the issue of social dislocation could only be negated if all members of a team were working in the same way (i.e. LIW).
- Some participants were also finding it difficult to place a boundary around the working day as the provision of new technology makes it easy and tempting to deal with administrative tasks such as email during the evening/night.

7. How do you feel your colleagues have responded to your going LIW? Have you had any formal discussions with them about your new working arrangements?

Most participants have informed their immediate colleagues that they are now working LIW, either in person or via email. Generally, colleagues have been very supportive and helpful, if not surprised and curious about individual participant's motivations. Others have also found that colleagues have enquired about the benefits of LIW with a view to putting themselves forward for inclusion within future cohorts. However, some participants report a perception that their managers are treating them differently to non-LIW staff, with a greater degree of control and interrogation concerning their activities and whereabouts. In addition, some participants felt that their manager saw the scheme as an additional burden on their managerial workload.

**8. How have your relationships with your students been affected by your going LIW?
Are they aware of any changes in your working arrangements?**

The fact that the pilot commenced towards the end of the academic year, when students had already completed the taught elements of their programmes, meant that generally, participants reported no obvious changes to date. Exceptions to this picture are first, that some participants report they are more accessible as students can now leave voicemail messages for them on their Smartphones (whereas previously there was no answer phone function on office land lines). Second, one participant felt that students may react negatively through not fully understanding the concept of LIW. This potentially requires briefings for students at the beginning of each academic year explaining that some faculty staff will be working LIW and that this should not impact upon the staff-student relationship.

9. Are you planning to introduce any changes to your teaching methods as a result of going LIW?

A number of participants were excited by the possibility of introducing changes to their teaching delivery methods. These include online delivery and podcasts, but are very much at the planning and exploratory stage. Where participants are exploring new ideas, they have received excellent support from the e-learning team.

Section 4: Summary of mid-point interviews

The following provides a summary of interviews with LIW participants at the mid-point of their pilot, between 9th and 16th June 2008.

1. What has been the impact to date of LIW for your work life balance? (i.e. have you changed your working patterns and behaviour?)

Feelings of guilt about working LIW off-campus are less than at the start of the pilot. Indeed several participants now note that they feel liberated from the formal 'nine-to-five' routine as a result of their involvement in the scheme. Other positive comments about the pilot's impact on work-life balance include:

- Greater flexibility, better quality of life and less stressed
- Not working longer hours but working more productively as a result of new flexibility and uninterrupted working time/space
- Necessitated better time management and organisation
- Improved personal energy levels as a result of a less condensed working day

However, in addition to these positive comments, two participants noted some negative observations:

- Obsessive checking of email out of hours
- For one participant there were concerns about the appropriateness and functionality of the technology, especially Thin Client

This last point emphasises the importance of managing participants' expectations of LIW before they join the scheme. This should involve more detailed demonstration of and training on the technology provided.

2. What has been the impact of LIW on the number and types of journeys that you make into campus? (i.e. have they decreased and do you find you are able to use different forms of transport?)

The majority of participants have found that they have reduced the number of journeys that they make into campus by at least one day each week. For those that haven't experienced a reduction, this has been caused by changing or non-typical personal and professional circumstances that have necessitated a greater number of journeys to campus than would otherwise be expected. A clearer picture of changing travel patterns

is likely to emerge over a longer period of LIW working. To date only one participant has altered their mode of travel towards public transport or walking.

3. At this mid-point stage of the LIW pilot scheme, do you feel that your Carbon Footprint has increased, decreased or remained the same? (prompt to clarify)

At this stage of the pilot scheme the Carbon Footprint impacts achieved are negligible. Reductions in Carbon largely stem from reductions in the number of car journeys made and in one case changing modes of travel. Little impact has been noted in terms of increased home energy use, largely due to the time of year. However, in one instance, a participant noted that working LIW provided an opportunity for positive health outcomes through reduced reliance on convenience foods, although these benefits may have a negative carbon effect through increased domestic energy consumption in food preparation.

4. What has been the impact of LIW on the way in which you deal with student enquiries, and what has been the reaction of students to your going LIW?

Participants' responses to this question need to be set in the context that the first cohort have joined the LIW pilot outside of normal academic term time. As such, they generally note no real change in the way in which enquiries by students are dealt with. For the majority, contact through email continues to be the preferred method of communication with students. However, in two cases, participants noted that they were in fact more efficient at communicating in this way as a result of having mobile access to their email via the LIW Smartphone.

5. What has been your experience of using hot desks and bookable meeting rooms on campus?

William Morris Building

Participants suggested that the hotdesk space provided is readily accessible and well located in terms of its proximity to the staff room, enabling regular contact with other faculty colleagues. However, concerns were expressed about the capacity of the room once further cohorts join the LIW pilot scheme. A further concern is that the printer provided is not wireless enabled and, therefore, users have to physically connect to the stand alone PC rather than print directly from their laptops. Limited use has been made

of the bookable meeting space. Storage emerges as an issue, particularly around module leaders green boxes.

George Eliot Building

For George Eliot staff, the lack of dedicated hot desk space has necessitated the use of different working environments. These have included the part-time lecturers room, libraries, cafes and colleagues offices. As the George Eliot hot desk room comes on stream from September an assessment of users experiences can be made from the autumn term onwards.

Futures Institute

The hot desk space provided in the Futures institute is open to all Faculty staff and not just LIW pilot participants. However, it is largely underused and, therefore, readily available. Some minor noise/disturbance issues were reported, primarily due to the area's proximity to the building's reception.

6. How has the relationship with your line manager and colleagues evolved during the course of the LIW pilot?

Participants' relationships with their line managers have either continued in the same fashion as they were prior to LIW or have evolved positively over the course of the pilot period. Participants did not report any negative comments or reaction from colleagues as a result of them working LIW. Indeed, a number of colleagues have been extremely positive in offering support in terms of storage and meeting space, whilst others have enquired about the experience of LIW with a view to putting themselves forward for inclusion in future cohorts. However, these perceptions need to be tested independently with managers and colleagues.

7. Is the equipment and support that you receive to allow you to work LIW fit for purpose? (What additional technology or support would help to improve your LIW experience?)

Aside from one or two minor glitches, participants are overwhelmingly positive about the LIW kit and its fitness for purpose. In addition, all participants noted the quality and responsiveness of technical support provided by Malcolm Taylor and his team. Technical difficulties that have been experienced typically relate to university wide IT

infrastructure such as poor connectivity to campus wireless networks and the functionality of Thin Client. However, some gripes were noted regarding the usability of the Smartphone, and its tendency to freeze up. Once again, part of the solution to such problems is the effective management of participants' expectations before they go LIW.

Several participants continued to express concern over the Dongle. Download limits appear to be reached very quickly, especially when working abroad. Clearer guidance needs to be provided about what the actual usage allowances are.

8. To what extent do you communicate and share stories with other LIW pilot participants?

Prompt: are you aware of the online LIW pilot 'blog', set up to allow participants to exchange experiences? If yes:

- a. have you made use of it?
- b. how useful do you feel this tool is?

For the most part, participants have not used the dedicated blog facility but have shared experience amongst themselves and with colleagues to some degree. However, where participants have posted questions and comments on the blog they have been disappointed by the level of response and engagement, especially from amongst the project management team.

9. Reflecting back over the past six weeks

- a. Do you feel that your initial concerns were justified?
- b. What do you feel are the principal benefits to you of working LIW (provide examples)
- c. How might the scheme be amended to improve the experience for future cohorts?

CONCERNS AND RESPONSES

Understanding and flexibility of colleagues: Non-LIW staff need to meet participants half way in terms of their flexibility around organising and conducting meetings, for example, in considering the use of online technology. However, this also requires that non-LIW faculty staff are briefed, trained and supported to be able to do this, and to

recognise and appreciate the benefits for everyone in these methods. At the same time LIW staff also need to be flexible and recognise such innovative methods of maintaining contact with colleagues may not always be appropriate, particularly in these very early days of the scheme.

Concerns about a culture of presentism: Participants' feelings of guilt about working off-campus have generally diminished over the course of the pilot, and they have become more positive and assertive about the concept of working off-site. Indeed, it was noted that LIW has provided a sense of empowerment and excitement from being involved in something that is pioneering and cutting edge. However, it is felt that management could do more to support this process from the outset and reduce the impression (false or not) that they are applying a greater degree of scrutiny to participants than their non LIW colleagues.

Diminishing social contact: Whilst the majority of participants have not experienced this to date, they are expressing concerns about the possibility of it occurring over time. Related to this point, one participant has raised concerns about the negative effect of spatial separation on the creativity and spontaneity that comes as being part of a co-located team. However, participants also recognise that the maintenance of social relationships is a two way process and that they can do more to mitigate this risk themselves.

The loss of office space: Initial concerns about the loss of office space have not yet been realised. However, this is perhaps partly a result of the fact that the first cohort joined the pilot scheme outside of term time. They have, therefore, had little student contact to deal with. A fuller test of this issue will take place from September as participants deal with the start of a new academic year. A linked point raised by almost all participants concerns the storage of Green Boxes. Further guidance on this point needs to be provided as a matter of urgency.

PRINCIPAL BENEFITS

- Freedom of mind, expressed in being able to have a deal of choice about when to come into campus and when to work LIW without the downside of guilt.
- Health benefits arising from eating more regularly and relying less upon quick to prepare convenience foods
- Quiet and undisturbed time linked to greater productivity
- Ability to plan and organise more effectively
- The ability to be able to send and receive email where and whenever you are
- Increased and quality of life and work-life balance
- Renewed motivation to do things outside of normal duties
- Possibilities for enhancing teaching through the utilisation of LIW technologies and, therefore, for positive impacts on students

IMPROVEMENTS FOR FUTURE COHORTS

- New participants need to be offered training in the use of the LIW equipment prior to them commencing the scheme. This should include simulated practice and focus on the differences between accessing university systems remotely compared to on-campus.
- Independently initiated meeting involving participants, their line managers and technical support to explore and practice new methods of communicating and holding meetings (i.e. web cams etc.). These will ensure that participants are fully up to speed with the new technology they will be using. This will be essential for the next cohort who will join the pilot at the start of a new academic year and, therefore, will have the pressures of teaching and student enquiries to manage alongside adjustment to a whole new set of working arrangements.
- Wireless printing facilities should be made available within hotdesk rooms. The current set up is potentially unsustainable over the longer term as numbers of LIW staff increase.
- Whilst Malcolm Taylor's team should be congratulated for the level of support that they have provided to LIW participants, management within the Faculty

have to consider whether it is reasonable or realistic for them to maintain this level of service to a greater number of LIW participants without the commitment of additional resources.

- Arrangements for the storage of Green Boxes, course files, marking and key text books need to be clarified
- A useful addition to the LIW handbook would be a list of commonly asked questions, problems and issues and how to solve them
- Preliminary meetings with line managers/colleagues to openly share and discuss what LIW is about and what it will mean for all parties
- A more open approach to the recruitment phase of the pilot scheme which utilises the experiences of current participants and presents the reality [not just the theory] to potential future participants.
- Explore the potential of creating a formal LIW community that will help in facilitating formal interaction between participants.

EMERGING LONG TERM ISSUES

(ASSUMING FULL-ROLL-OUT OF THE SCHEME)

- As more and more faculty staff work LIW it will be important for the Faculty Management Team to consider ways in which BES can retain its identity and community despite a diminishing physical presence on campus.
- Timetabling of student contact hours needs to be joined up with the concept LIW so that ideally no member of staff has teaching commitments every day of the week. Without this, potential benefits to staff in terms of flexibility and increased efficiency will not be realised.

Section 5: Summary of end of trial interviews

The following provides a summary of interviews with LIW participants at the end of their pilot, between 9th and 16th July 2008.

1. Reflecting back over the past twelve weeks how would you sum up your LIW experience?

The majority of participants [5 out of the 7] have found LIW a very positive and rewarding experience. They are adjusting well to new ways of working [especially the flexibility], exploring the possibilities offered by new technologies, and for the most part, not as affected by the loss of office space as was anticipated.

For two participants, however, the feedback was less positive. This is primarily related to disappointment with the functionality of the technology [see below]; the remoteness of LIW dedicated hot desk space from teams and departments; and that efficiency gains have not yet materialised.

[a] Does it represent an effective way of working for academic staff?

Overwhelmingly participants suggested that LIW is/can be an effective way of working for academics. Although after 12 weeks this was difficult to fully quantify, a number of examples of effectiveness were cited, as well as suggestions to make the scheme even more effective:

- The scheme can have a positive effect on time management and organisation
- The scheme can be effective provided that you are organised and do not isolate yourself. It is the role of the individual to maintain team contact and not rely on others.
- As currently implemented LIW can be especially effective if you work in small disparate teams. It can also be good for close knit teams as long as the team went LIW.
- LIW is effective for academics as it can provide better flexibility, productivity and work-life balance.
- In the pilot scheme too much emphasis was placed on the individual participant to drive the process/admin tasks associated with the scheme.
- The University can help the process with more effective timetabling.

- Non-LIW staff also need to be fully on-board and geared-up to communicate with colleagues.

[b] What in particular has been positive about working LIW?

The following 'positives' were identified by participants and are presented in no particular order:

- Undisturbed time
- Better time management and organisation
- Better work-life balance and flexibility
- Increased productivity
- Reduced presentism
- Reduced travelling to and from campus/office
- Greater sense of control and empowerment
- Increased time for research and hence positive in academic profile raising
- Greater job satisfaction
- Improved working relationship with manager/colleagues [NB: facilitated by close proximity of the hot desk area to the team]
- Better off-site communication e.g. through University mobile/dongle.

[c] What has been negative?

Some negative issues were identified, the majority of which are of a technological nature:

- Connection and download speeds [especially with Dongle], and more recently the functionality of CSV's new 'Connect' service.
- Inconsistent performance of wireless network on campus and lack of wireless printing facilities generally.
- Issues with connectivity/compatibility overseas [again through dongle]
- 'Clunkiness' of additional steps required to perform basic functions, such as printing and file management off-site
- Functionality of Remote Desktop e.g. printing directly and accessing foreign language email
- Awareness of LIW scheme and support needs of staff amongst central IT Services

- Flexibility in terms of the kit provided and the ability to adapt/change the kit to the on-going experience.
- Concerns over security of hot-desking area, especially in relation to facilities for locking away trolley-bags
- Not also having things to hand/in one place
- Some perception of a lack of managerial support for LIW staff and the scheme as a whole.

[d] Have there been any unexpected advantages or disadvantages of working LIW?

LIW participants identified a number of benefits and drawbacks that they had not anticipated from the outset of the Scheme. These are outlined below:

Unexpected ADVANTAGES

- The ease with which it has been possible to adapt to LIW, work productively at home and not be as easily distracted as anticipated.
- The degree of flexibility enjoyed.
- Discovering new ways of working e.g. on-line teaching methods.
- Feeling more energised at the end of an LIW day than is the case with an office-based day.
- Seeing and engaging with colleagues more regularly than was the case before.

Unexpected DISADVANTAGES

- Issues of negativity towards LIW staff from Faculty colleagues who do not really know what the scheme is about in reality.
- Some perceptions that Faculty management treat LIW participants' as less important staff because they are no longer office based.

These two comments suggest that better communication and awareness raising is needed within the Faculty.

- Some sense of disorientation with not having everything in the one location – difficult to get used to.

[e] Do you feel that you are settled into an LIW way of working?

This question provoked a mixed reaction from participants. For one it was a definite NO with a desire to promptly return to office-based working; for another despite making a big adjustment, they were still in a ‘transitional’ period; for two participants, they did feel settled into LIW ways of working but with some caveats e.g. not yet taking full advantage of the opportunities offered, and that the new teaching year might bring different challenges; and for the remaining three participants the answer was a definite YES. For example: *“LIW has opened up lots more scope and more opportunities that can be explored”...*, *“I have adopted a regular routine involving an earlier start and more regular checking of, and responding to, email”*.

2. If you were starting your LIW experience afresh in the September Cohort, are there any ways in which the scheme could be delivered differently to make it more effective?

Participants suggested a number of practical ways in which the scheme could be modified to make it more effective for future cohorts. Many of these are IT related:

- Need to address technical issues and get the set-up better from the outset
- Better transparency regarding decisions on equipment provided to LIW staff and degree to which equipment can be changed/adapted during the course of the scheme
- Provide printing facilities in the LIW dedicated *meeting* room and wireless printing in the touch-down areas.
- Simplify procedure for printing when using Remote Desktop Connection
- Involve participants from the first cohort, and provide better administrative support, in order to help smooth the transition for new cohort staff
- Place FAQ sheets on the dedicated web site.
- Better explanation of the IT kit provided to LIW staff, particularly how to get the most out of it and problem solve for yourself [e.g. the Smartphone]
- Focus more on practical-based LIW training rather than conceptual.
- Provision of hot-desking facilities across the Faculty [not just WM] and closer to teams/departments
- Set-up and deliver clearer/slicker communication/information channels
- Provide non-LIW staff with webcams to help facilitate virtual meetings.

3. Would you recommend LIW to colleagues?

If YES, how would you 'sell' the idea to them? [Would you be happy to provide this response as a testimony?]

If NO, why not?

Five of the seven LIW participants said that they would recommend LIW to colleagues. Their key selling points relate to the attractiveness of the package, flexibility, reduced presentism, increased work-life balance, undisturbed time and increased well-being.

"LIW offers flexibility and reduces presentism"

"...LIW enables participants to make their own [decisions] about how they deal with student contact, both in terms of their office hours and how they utilise online delivery methods. LIW is also useful in learning how to work smarter"

"LIW gives you more freedom in your mind. For many staff there would not be much difference in actual terms but you definitely feel less 'guilty', less thinking about should I be there in the office. LIW gives you this freedom".

"There are numerous benefits in terms of increased personal energy levels and well-being, reduced stress and less interrupted time...LIW also provides an additional benefit/perk to the job. It is an attractive package that is a good selling point for future recruitment."

"LIW has provided a better quality of life with my family without effecting the output and quality of my work; my productivity has increased and I am communicating better with my line manager and other colleagues"

"I haven't been working in this way for very long but I can't imagine ever going back to a fixed base"

"Generally I have found LIW to be an improved way of working. While it takes time to get used to new technology, it is wholly beneficial to my career and lifestyle"

In the case of the other two participants, whilst they would not directly recommend/sell the scheme to others, they would not 'rubbish' it either, feeling that LIW suits different people in different ways and that individual staff should really make their own minds up.

- 4. At the start of the scheme you told us that you were making 'X' journeys into campus per week, involving round trips of 'Y' miles per journey by mode 'Z'. Has this pattern changed as a result of your participation in the LIW pilot scheme? [If YES please specify details]**

Only two of the participants reported any noticeable reduction in journeys made per week into campus by car. For one it equated to 1 less trip per week, for the other, 3 less trips per week. In both cases the participants involved are also travelling in by public transport at least one day per week.

Four staff reported no real change in their travel behaviour over the course of the pilot, whilst one reported a 'marginal' reduction in miles travelled by car.

- 5. If the pilot scheme was longer than 12 weeks, would you envisage any medium or long term changes in travel patterns/behaviour?**

The majority of participants envisaged reduced number of journeys into the University over time as they adapt fully to LIW ways of working over a full academic year. Examples include:

- Reduce from 3-4 round trips per week down to 2 due to concentration of teaching afforded by LIW
- Reduce by 2 round trips per week [equivalent to 20 miles]
- Reduce journeys by a further trip per fortnight from January, if can deliver fortnightly podcasts sessions to students.
- Dependent on teaching commitments would ideally reduce to 3 journeys in per week across the year [with one of these being by bus]

6. Do you feel that working LIW has affected your domestic energy consumption?

[a] In what way?

[b] Is this likely to change over time?

In all but one case participants' reported that it was too early to tell at this stage whether working LIW has increased domestic energy consumption. The pilot took place during the summer months and most felt that the timeframe was too short to accurately quantify. At the same time one participant felt that energy consumption had increased due to a greater propensity to cook at home than was the case before.

Over time participants are more concerned, especially with the onset of winter and escalating energy prices. It will be interesting to monitor this impact over time and see how any increased costs off-set the savings made by reducing travel.

7. Do you think that you are going to remain LIW or do you intend to return to your former office based working arrangements? If the latter, What are the key factors affecting this decision?

SIX participants indicated that they would wish to remain LIW. This indicates that despite some minor, mainly technical, issues there is broad support for the scheme as a way of working for academic staff. Of course, it will be interesting to monitor this over time as participants move into a new academic year.

The one participant that wished to opt out of the scheme and return to office based working had major concerns over the functionality of the technology and over dislocation from his team.

8. Would you be willing to take part in a participants' focus group to explore key issues that have emerged through the evaluation and future improvements to the scheme?

All participants indicated that they would be willing to take part in a Focus Group

Section 6: Summary of Manager Interviews

Interviews with LIW staff line managers took place during July 2008

1. **As a Department Head, what were your initial feelings towards the BES LIW Pilot Scheme?**

[a] How appropriate is the concept of location independent working to your team situation?

In principal managers of LIW were supportive of the scheme although at the outset had some reservations. These related to issues such as: how other [non-LIW staff] would react, the extent to which contact with staff/students would be maintained, how team dynamics would be affected; and whether the complexity of middle managers' roles would increase.

There was also a view that the Pilot had 'missed a trick' by being applied cross-faculty rather than department based. The view was that the concept could have been better tested in this way especially in terms of impact on timetabling and staff/student contact.

Another view was that the concept provides a step in the right direction for the Faculty but to be truly effective it would need to be part of a longer term strategy of re-organising space [open-plan set-up combining academics and professional services] and changing the mind-set of staff. The policy of office lock-outs alongside the remoteness of the touch-down space was seen as detrimental to the success of the Pilot.

2. **Did you feel that the managers training sessions prepared you fully for the task of managing LIW staff: did it address your questions and concerns?**

All managers found the briefings / training useful by way of preparation for having a member of their staff working LIW. Whilst there was a view that the formal training session could have been scheduled earlier to permit more effective discussion with LIW staff, it was seen as productive in terms of providing a good opportunity for discussing and sharing ideas with other managers, as well as problem solving with the Project managers.

3. How has having a member of your team working LIW operated in practice?

[a] Experience of managing LIW staff [e.g. flexibility]

Generally the experience has been positive to date; LIW staff have been 'visible' and flexible, whilst non-LIW staff have been made aware of the situation through team meetings...etc. However, there was a view that the real experience could not be fully examined until the academic year commences when the full impact on staff/student contact can be tested and whether this has a knock-on effect for non-LIW staff. One manager also expressed a slight concern that LIW had detrimentally increased electronic communication at the expense of face-to-face contact.

[b] What difficulties/surprises have emerged?

Managers were able to identify several issues [both positive and negative] that they had not expected:

- The extent to which LIW necessitates better time management and increased efficiency on behalf of the individual
- The possibilities offered by LIW technology emerged as more promising/exciting than expected, although difficult to fully realise at the moment [e.g. the logistics and equipment requirements to facilitate remote attendance at meetings]
- Team sharing of Outlook calendars has been a positive bonus
- Evidence in some cases that LIW has re-energised staff
- Surprise in one case that a participant chose very quickly to return to office-based working following the end of the pilot. It was felt that the three month trial provided an easy opt-out that negated pro-active problem solving

[c] How has your working relationship with the participant evolved?

Despite the short timescale of the pilot some examples emerged where working relationships had evolved positively between line managers and LIW staff. This has been facilitated, for example, by actively promoting better team cohesion [including social events]; increased two-way communication e.g. through sharing of outlook calendars and increased email traffic; closer working relationship facilitated by proximity of touch-down space; and through both sides gaining confidence/trust as the pilot progressed without incident.

[d]How do you feel you are supporting the LIW participant? [is this any different to the way you would normally operate]

The only minor difference reported by managers, following the initial one-to-one meetings, has been some reported increase in email traffic either direct or copied in, primarily seen as a 'safety-net' for staff to maintain their visibility. Otherwise managers have not supported LIW staff any differently.

[e] Have you noticed changes in the well being [stress levels/ happiness/ productivity/ attitude to work etc.] of the LIW participant?

LIW managers were able to identify a number of examples where the LIW scheme has had a positive impact on participants. Staff were said to re-energised, much happier and more positive. In some cases this resulted from a positive change of working environment, [and/or] in others from the freedom and flexibility offered by the scheme. Only in one case did a Manager report a negative reaction, perceived to be borne out of the frustration experienced with the remote working technology.

[f] What has been the impact on the team as a whole?

This question generated a mixed-bag of responses:

- Negative, in terms of the loss of a phone line to a small office as this had to be diverted to LIW participant's mobile
- Negative, in that the benefits of the formal LIW scheme are not seen to be offset by the loss of office space [when academics can operate LIW 'informally' anyway]
- Positive, in that the scheme has provoked a great deal of interest in remote working amongst team colleagues
- Positive, in that non-LIW team members have sought to problem solve in other ways rather than rely on ever presence of an LIW staff member
- Positive, if only in the sense that has been no negative feedback from non-LIW staff
- Negative, in that the scheme has provoked jealousy in respect of perceived fuss made of LIW staff in terms of the kit that they receive. On the other hand, this may have a positive side-effect in that more staff may see LIW as a way forward
- Positive, in that staff have broadened their networks beyond their immediate team environment as a result of hot-desking

[g] What has been the impact on your own workload?

The impact on Managers workloads, following the initial briefings and preparation, is seen as negligible.

4. How would you sum up your experience to date?

In essence the message from LIW managers is positive, especially in terms of the benefits that LIW has brought to the majority of staff involved. However, there appears to be some consensus that, in order for the concept to be truly effective in the long-term, the Faculty has to plan for a more effective use of space that will allow for academics and professionals to work together in an open rather, than strictly office-based, departmental environment.

5. Would you consider making LIW generally available to all members of your team?

If YES, what implications would this have for the management function?

If NO, why not?

Generally managers are supportive of the notion of wider LIW opportunities across teams with some caveats:

- The future direction of LIW needs to be fully informed by the ongoing evaluation.
- LIW will not suit everyone. It needs to remain an informed choice, not imposed
- The structure and set-up has to be right to facilitate wider team-based LIW (see above)
- The process needs to, and should over time, become slicker and smoother

6. What additional support is need – policies/guidelines/resources?

The following suggestions were proposed:

- Increased admin support in dealing with student enquiries is the key to making LIW more widely available and effective for academic staff. The first line of student support within each department should come from an 'ever-present' officer. The second line of support could come from programme managers who are best placed to deal with generic issues, with the third line of support, reserved for specifics, available from lecturing staff via email and telephone.
- A structure that is fit for purpose – if LIW is to be taken seriously and work most effectively. This will have resource implications e.g. in terms of building layout.

- Greater investment in shared online resources and increased quotas on shared drives so that LIW staff can store all their files in one place and have access to them wherever they are working. In this respect, the development of 'CURVE' is a step in the right direction.
- To work most effectively LIW will require investment in building design that enables academic staff and professional support staff to work together in an open environment. The TechnoCentre and Futures Institute provide examples of how this can work.
- In order for staff to have confidence in working LIW the scheme needs to be backed and supported by all line managers, and consistent messages applied across the Faculty. If it is not this will lead to inequality of opportunity and discourage potential LIW staff from expressing an interest in this way of working.

Section 7: Overview, lessons and implications

Overview

From the perspective of individual participants (drawing upon the face-to-face interviews reported above and an end of trial questionnaire), the pilot scheme has been overwhelmingly successful. Individuals report a host of benefits as a result of working LIW, and crucially, these largely tally with their aspirations prior to the start of the scheme. Specific benefits noted are:

- Undisturbed time
- Better time management and organisation
- Better work-life balance and flexibility
- Increased productivity
- Reduced presentism
- Reduced travelling to and from campus/office
- Greater sense of control and empowerment
- Increased time for research and hence positive in academic profile raising
- Greater job satisfaction
- Improved working relationship with manager/colleagues [NB: facilitated by close proximity of the hot desk area to the team]
- Better off-site communication e.g. through University mobile/dongle.

Moreover, a number of unexpected positives also emerged. These include the ease with which participants felt able to adapt to new ways of working, the scale of flexibility enjoyed, the scope of opportunities provided for remote delivery of teaching, health benefits and increased interaction with faculty colleagues. Where negative issues emerged, they tended to relate to the functionality of technology. However, to a large extent these problems are minor and suggest the need to manage more effectively users expectations of the technology provided. In addition to technological concerns, some staff perceived negativity towards LIW from both faculty colleagues and managers. Again this suggests that better communication and awareness raising within the faculty.

The evaluation has uncovered some examples of good practice in relation to the effect of LIW in reducing participants' carbon footprint. These typically relate to changes in travel

behaviours e.g. reduced mileage and switching to alternative modes of transport. Substitution effects (i.e. increased energy consumption at home) are unclear given the short timescale of the pilot and the fact that it took place during the summer months. In order to fully evaluate these 'green' effects, participants' behaviour needs to be monitored over a longer period of time and incorporate a larger body of LIW staff.

Lessons

Throughout the evaluation, participants identified a number of useful lessons that can be applied to future cohorts of LIW staff in order to make an already successful scheme even more effective; especially if it were to be applied to greater proportion of Faculty staff beyond the lifetime of the pilot scheme. Specifically:

- Bespoke training on LIW equipment should be offered to new participants.
- Printing facilities in the LIW dedicated *meeting* room and wireless printing in the touch-down areas should be provided for LIW staff. In addition, the procedure for printing when using Remote Desktop Connection needs to be simplified.
- Consideration needs to be given to the capacity of faculty IT support to deal with wider roll out of LIW.
- Better transparency regarding decisions on equipment provided to LIW staff and degree to which equipment can be changed/adapted during the course of the scheme.
- Consideration of the extent to which non-LIW staff need to be provided with supporting technology such as web-cams.
- Arrangements for the storage of Green Boxes, course files, marking and key text books need to be clarified.
- A useful addition to the LIW handbook and website would be a list of commonly asked questions, problems and issues and how to solve them.

- Preliminary departmental meetings are required to openly share and discuss what LIW is about and what it will mean for all parties.
- Timetabling of student contact hours needs to be joined up with the concept LIW so that ideally no member of staff has teaching commitments every day of the week.
- Provision of hot-desking facilities across the Faculty [not just WM] and closer to teams/departments.
- Set-up and deliver clearer/slicker communication/information channels across the faculty to ensure that the LIW concept is fully understood.

Implications

At an individual level, the implications of the majority of lessons outlined above, revolve around the need to improve: communication and dissemination within the faculty concerning the concept and reality of LIW; and the efficiency of training to enable participants to make the most of the LIW opportunities provided. Other lessons, particularly those relating to the availability and use of technology, may have resource implications. This needs to be considered by the faculty particularly if the scheme is made more widely available.

Longer term implications relate particularly to ensuring that the faculty itself gains the maximum benefit from having staff working LIW. Whilst a degree of benefit is achieved through having happier, less stressed employees, full benefit in terms of space savings and efficiency gains for teams and departments will only be realised through a comprehensive reorganisation of space, and the change in mindset of staff that this entails. This requires a longer term strategy to develop open plan working environments that combine academics and professional service job roles. This will, in effect, help to diminish the dislocation effect that the current system of office lock-outs and remote touch-down space creates.

SURGE: Sustainable Regeneration

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