

13 Million Brits To Request Permanent Flexible Working Once Lockdown Is Lifted

- **44 per cent of workers plan to ask for permanent flexible working arrangements after coronavirus restrictions are fully lifted – more than 13 million people**
- **Saving time and money, along with prioritising family and health are key drivers behind the desired move to long term flexible working arrangements**
- **HR directors expect 70 per cent of the workforce will have some form of flexible arrangement after coronavirus restrictions are fully lifted – a 45 per cent increase on current levels**

More than 13 million people across the UK plan to ask their employer for changes to their long-term working pattern once the current coronavirus pandemic has subsided, reveals new research from [Direct Line Life](#)¹. Over two fifths (44 per cent) of workers are set to request their employer provides permanent flexible working arrangements after coronavirus restrictions are fully lifted.

With half (49 per cent) of the workforce across the country now working from home full time according to the latest official figures², new research shows millions hope to continue this trend post-lockdown. Working from home two days a week is the most popular option for those wishing to maintain long-term flexible arrangements once it becomes safe to return to their workplace, with one in eight (12 per cent) hoping to do so. Other popular options are working from home one day (10 per cent) or three days a week (10 per cent). With lockdown proving full time remote working is now extremely feasible, one in 12 people (eight per cent) are planning to ask their employer to work from home permanently.

Additional research among HR directors³ by the insurer found that companies are already preparing to receive significant volumes of flexible working requests once the pandemic has eased. HR directors predict there will be a 45 per cent increase in the number of their employees requesting some form of flexible working compared to before the pandemic. If their prediction is correct, this could mean 70 per cent of the workforce that are able to will work flexibly long-term after coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

In good news for employees, the coronavirus pandemic is making employers think differently about their response to flexible working requests and their office space needs. Over two fifths (43 per cent) of HR directors say they will offer some

employees the option to work from home five days a week, while one in five (20 per cent) will offer employees the chance to work from home three or four days a week. With office space being a significant cost base for most businesses, it is understandable that many may now be thinking differently about managing their costs once the pandemic is over.

Proving to their companies that they are able to work remotely is a driving force behind many employees, with more than a quarter (28 per cent) of those hoping for long-term flexible working requests to be accepted saying it is because they have demonstrated they have been doing so successfully during the pandemic. The cost of travel and being at work is another key reason behind changing working styles for around a third (31 per cent) of people, while the time it takes to travel to and from work is an additional important consideration (23 per cent) pushing people to consider extending flexible working arrangements even after restrictions are lifted.

For others, working flexibly would give them more time to spend with their children (22 per cent), partners (18 per cent) or their broader family (15 per cent), all of which may be seen as having greater importance once lockdown restrictions have been lifted and people are able to see their wider family again.

Health and wellbeing is another aspect many are hoping to improve with some flexible working arrangements going forward. One in six (17 per cent) wish to start working flexibly due to concerns over pollution levels, while one in seven (15 per cent) plan to spend more time exercising and becoming healthier. Health is something many will have been thinking more about during lockdown than usual, wishing to maximise daily exercise allowances and spend more time outdoors.

Table one: Top reasons why workers plan to ask for flexible working after the coronavirus pandemic

Reason	Percentage of people who list this reason	Number of people who list this reason
I can save money on travelling and other associated costs like coffee and lunch	31%	4.1 million
Coronavirus has proven that I can work from home effectively	28%	3.7 million

It has made me realise I spend too much time commuting	23%	3.0 million
I want to spend more time with my children	22%	2.9 million
I am more productive when working from home	19%	2.4 million
I want to spend more time with my spouse / partner	18%	2.4 million
It's better for my health in terms of pollution levels	17%	2.2 million
I want to spend more time with my parents / grandparents / broader family	15%	1.9 million
I want to spend more time exercising and becoming healthier	15%	1.9 million
It has made me realise I spend too much time at work	15%	1.9 million

Source: Direct Line Life Insurance 2020

Chloe Couper, Business Manager at Direct Line Life Insurance, commented:

“While the lockdown has been an incredibly difficult and disruptive time for many, it seems to have also had an impact on the mindset of millions of UK workers about the aspects of their life they want to change once it is over.

“Many people wouldn’t have considered their employer would accept a flexible working request, despite it being legal to make one, before the pandemic but now companies and employees have become used to home working as the ‘new norm’, it seems many hope to make part of the change permanent. Going through such a serious event as a pandemic will understandably make some people want to reassess their lives and priorities going forward. Protecting health and family are vital

and it is great to see so many wish to spend more time doing both.”

Direct line is part of Direct Line Group, alongside Churchill, Privilege and Green Flag. The majority of Direct Line Group’s 9000 office-based staff are currently working from home.

Direct Line Group supports staff with what matters most to them, to allow people to thrive. This is normally driven by stage of life, or external commitments and personal interests. The organisation chose to create an overarching lifestyle policy, promoting flexibility and choice, which is all encompassing, underpinned by diversity and inclusion. Direct Line Group’s policies are simple and flexible. They recognise the fact that everyone’s circumstances are different and enable employees to balance the things that matter in their life. All of our employees have the right to request to work flexibly. We’ll always do our best to be as flexible as possible.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

¹ Research conducted by Opinium among a nationally representative sample of 2,002 UK adults between 9th to 14th April 2020

² Figures taken from the Office for National Statistics Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain

Update on 23rd April 2020 –

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/23april2020>

³ Research conducted by Pure Profile among 100 HR Directors in the UK