

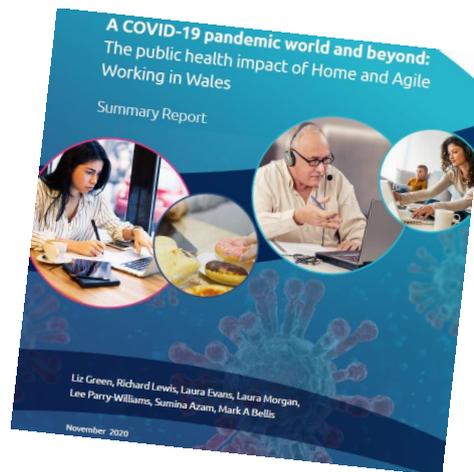


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Home and agile working have both positive and negative impacts on public health and well-being in Wales, including for mental well-being, the economy and environment



This new report, published by the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU), Policy and International Health, WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health & Well-being, Public Health Wales (PHW), has found that home and agile working policies can enhance mental well-being, by offering staff flexibility, autonomy and a healthy work-life balance, but also increase the risk of stress alongside ‘burnout’ and ‘homeworking fatigue’.

Many employees across Wales, our team included, are continuing to work from home or agilely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and are likely to continue to do so through the winter months ahead, so it is important to recognise fully the potential impacts on our health and well-being and for inequalities. The publication, ‘**A COVID-19 pandemic world and beyond: The public health impact of home and agile working in Wales**’, flags a wide-range of these positive and negative effects which are likely to be familiar with many of us since the initial ‘lockdown’ back in March.

Reviewing literature and interviewing organisations and representative groups has highlighted increased social isolation and loneliness as issues for many who work from home in Wales, as well as challenges around digital skills, digital literacy and connectivity. How many times have we talked to colleagues about broadband and navigating new digital platforms over the past months?

So, *what is the positive news?* Enhancing work-life balance, increasing employee efficiency and productivity, reinvigorating rural and local communities and economies, and promoting diversity and inclusion in the workforce are all highlighted in our report as benefits. With the health of our planet further threatened by climate change, these working practices can also deliver positive environmental impacts brought about by reduced car use for commuting.

Are we all affected, or specific groups? The report considers a broad range of groups within our population and assesses whether they are likely to be impacted positively or negatively (or both). We found men, older people, young people and young adults, and lone parent families can be impacted both positively and negatively, whilst women, particularly with caring responsibilities are impacted negatively.

What if we cannot work from home or agilely? Throughout this health impact assessment, the team were very conscious of people who cannot or do not have the opportunity to access home or agile working, including due to the nature of their work or not being able to access the necessary digital services. Unfortunately, some of the negative impacts could last for the long-term and further increase health inequalities. This point is heightened when acknowledging that many of our 'keyworkers' in this pandemic do not have the option of homeworking.

How can we use this report? The assessment helps to identify where we need to act to prevent or minimise the negative impacts talked about here, as well as maximising the positive impacts for the groups within our population affected. It also highlights a number of opportunities, actions and gaps in research and evidence, for example the long-term impact on productivity, for stakeholder organisations to consider progressing, including policy-makers, health professionals, employers and their representative groups, trade unions, and organisations in the third sector.

Where can we read more? This health impact assessment provides plenty to think about as we learn to live and work alongside COVID-19 and measures to address its transmission. You can access the Summary Report, Infographic and Supplementary Information here, and more information on health impact assessment and the Unit [here](#).



If you have any feedback, including how your organisation or business may be able to use the findings to ensure that the least harms and most benefits to health occur for home and agile workers across Wales, including as we keep Wales safe from Coronavirus, please send it to us. You can reach us on Twitter: @whiasu

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