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**Hybrid working – Benefits and challenges for productivity and performance**

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Keywords:	Hybrid working, Productivity, Performance

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## Hybrid working – Benefits and challenges for productivity and performance

### Structured Abstract:

#### Purpose:

We explore the benefits and challenges for organisations using hybrid working practices during and post-pandemic, at both the individual and organisational levels. The implications for productivity and performance management of hybrid practices are currently not well understood but the impact for businesses is significant.

#### Design/methodology/approach:

Within this Reflective Practice work, we apply a dual-theoretic lens to a new Ways of Working tool and adopt a mixed methods approach. First scoping interviews were conducted with senior managers possessing strategic knowledge of their organisations' approaches to hybrid working. Secondly, a large-scale survey was administered to evaluate employees' perceptions of hybrid working, including their concerns for future impacts.

#### Findings:

Our data identifies several benefits and challenges associated with hybrid working. Reclaimed commuting time was deemed the most positive benefit, alongside greater personal time, work-life balance and (for the majority) less-interrupted workspace. Challenges were identified regarding the transparency of staff reward and recognition, the potential for masked burnout and purposeful team communication.

#### Originality:

Despite hybrid working having been possible for decades, extant literature describes benefits and challenges of formalised flexible working policies in discrete settings, making overarching observations difficult to identify. In addition, the imposed nature of remote working during the pandemic has presented difficulties in understanding productivity and performance, which has remained in the increasingly hybrid working modality adopted by many post pandemic.

#### Research limitations/implications:

Due to the unique context of the pandemic and widespread, but sudden adoption of home- and hybrid working, this study can be taken as a snapshot in time as organisations recalibrate the consequences of new ways of working.

**Keywords:** Hybrid working, productivity, performance

### 1.0 Introduction

The academic literature has historically focused on measuring discrete examples of organisational and individual benefits of formalised working arrangements, such as flexible working policies, typically adopting lens of 'reciprocal benefits' such as Social Exchange Theory (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). Despite the multi-disciplinary domains of such working arrangements in the literature, there remains very little that critically reflects upon organisational and individual productivity and performance. Correspondingly less is known about the impact on productivity and performance of more informal and personally negotiated working

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2 arrangements (Ramstad, 2009; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Furthermore, imposed remote working during  
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4 the recent 2020-22 pandemic is even less well understood (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020).  
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7 This paper offers insights into employee perceptions of organisational and individual productivity and  
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9 performance resulting from the adoption of hybrid working practices. Taking a Reflective Practice stance,  
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11 we explore perceptions of compulsory home-working and subsequent hybrid working, adopted in response  
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13 to the 2020-22 pandemic and as we move beyond it, which rapidly reshaped ways of working (Microsoft,  
14  
15 2021; Shirmohammadi et al, 2022).  
16

17 In this research we study the non-profit English social housing sector. The aim was to better understand i)  
18  
19 how employees perceived the sector had responded to the adoption of hybrid working practices, ii) the  
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21 resulting impact upon organisational and individual productivity and performance and iii) thoughts and  
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23 concerns for future ways of working. It is important to understand objectively any impacts of hybrid working  
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25 on organizational service performance in social housing because the recipients – the tenants – are typically  
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27 more vulnerable members of society. They experience reduced human agency to effect change (often  
28  
29 referred to as 'voice'), such as choosing alternative housing if feeling dissatisfied (Carr et al, 2001; Davis,  
30  
31 2020; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2020; Carr et al, 2022). These issues will be  
32  
33 described further in Section 4.0.

34 The pandemic has undoubtedly hastened the transition away from primarily office-based work but  
35  
36 simultaneously presented huge challenges for sustaining output volume and quality. Looking forward, we  
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38 are presented with the opportunity to work in new ways. Most see hybrid working as here to stay (Microsoft,  
39  
40 2021); others have publicized campaigns to return employees to the office as quickly as possible (BBC, 2021).  
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42 New items regularly report on the wider economic impact of employees working from home (for example:  
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44 Sherman, 2024). We believe that better understanding the impacts for productivity and performance will  
45  
46 enable organisations to make more informed choices about what is right for them and their employees.

47 By centralising the theme of non office-based working as both enforced, and more latterly sought through  
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49 choice, we adopt the following two research questions:  
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- 52 1. *How effectively did the non-profit English social housing sector adapt to hybrid working? and*
- 53 2. *How might this impact productivity and performance in future?*
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## 57 **2.0 Theoretical approach**

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2 Flexible working arrangements (FWA) is a broad term encapsulating ways in which employees may seek non-  
3 traditional modes of working, long advocated by the government as being beneficial for both employers and  
4 employees (DTI, 2005). Whilst FWA initially focused on parental requirements, its adoption has increasingly  
5 been for reasons of personal preference, health and well-being (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Taking FWA  
6 as an umbrella term, the format of the arrangement can vary from part-time work, remote working, adapting  
7 patterns of hours (e.g. annualised or compressed), hybrid working and so on. In addition, these may comprise  
8 formal policies or be negotiated at the individual level (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017).  
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15 Typically, FWAs are associated with motivational and behavioural benefits, which de Menezes & Kelliher  
16 (2017) note are usually investigated through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017) or the Theory of  
17 Affective Commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Such theories assume that FWAs are sought by the  
18 employee i.e. there is a personal benefit to negotiating ones working arrangements. The Covid context  
19 reversed this by instead *imposing* a new working arrangement – an unprecedented response to managing  
20 risks associated with the pandemic. This imposition, alongside other emotions such as anxiety and  
21 uncertainty linked to peoples' health, job security and access to basic goods and services, required  
22 consideration of a less 'reciprocal' motivational theory, focussing instead upon sustaining oneself and  
23 resilience.  
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32 Hence, we adopt plurality of theory here – motivational/resource and practice - because "*real world*  
33 *management problems often do not belong to a single discipline but are inter-disciplinary in nature*" (Walker  
34 et al, 2015, p. 1185). We look to the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al, 2018),  
35 which describes the stress people feel when resources or control of something is reduced or lost. We also  
36 adopt a practice theory lens, which considers:  
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- 42 • *entwinement* (how people, actions, technologies are all inter-related),
- 43 • how practices are *multi-faceted in nature* (simultaneously social, discursive and material),
- 44 • *contextual* (where the practice is taking place and is embodied) and
- 45 • *temporal* (how practices develop and are improved over time) (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015).  
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51 We apply these theories to Palvalin et al's (2015) and Palvalin's (2017) "Ways of Working" tool as a way to  
52 structure our investigation and research instruments (see Figure 5). Palvalin et al (2015) express that new  
53 ways of working (such as hybrid modalities) "deal with the application of non-traditional and flexible work  
54 practices and locations ..." (p.479) which we argue is relevant to the impact of government lockdown  
55 responses throughout the pandemic.  
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As such, the two theories constructs were used to inform our scoping interviews and subsequent survey instrument, alongside Palvalin et al (2015) and Palvalin's (2017) Ways of Working tool.

### 3.0 Literature Review

We consider the evolution of non-office based FWAs as facilitated by both technological and digital capabilities, as well as external causes. We interrogated three management databases (ABI / Inform Collection; EBSCO Business Source Premier; and Web of Science) to ascertain publication profiles over the past 20 years. The results were similar for all three databases.

#### *Remote working*

The term remote working first appeared in the literature around the 1980s and can be described as "frequently working from home (i.e. telecommute), in satellite offices, from neighbourhood work centres and on the road" (Barsness et al, 2005, p. 403). By the 2000s, the possibilities afforded by the onset of a new digital age were proposed, speculated, cautioned and futuristically labelled (such as 'the virtual organisation') in equal measure. The reality however, was much slower paced in terms of adoption. This is reflected in the academic literature, which indicates significant increases in the number of publications over the past five years and in particular, unsurprisingly, since 2021. Figure 1 illustrates the number of scholarly articles listed in the Web of Science database using the search string "remote working" (conducted on 12/04/23). Refining this search to include only management articles reduced the number of publications from 773 to 96, as illustrated in Figure 2.

PLACE FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

PLACE FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

#### *Hybrid working*

Hybrid working is a more recent term and is shared more equally with other academic disciplines, such as medicine and engineering. As a relatively new term, strongly associated with new ways of working post-pandemic, there is no clear definition for 'hybrid working' at the time of writing (Xu, 2023). It refers to employees working from office or non-office locations, potentially at different times and using digital devices. Hence there are substantial similarities with remote working, but with the expectation that staff will be office based as well as non-office based, and have a range of connectable devices to facilitate their work. Whilst these challenges were recognised by Dumas and Sanchez-Burks (2015) pre-pandemic, the phenomenon has been amplified significantly post-2020. Figure 3 illustrates the number of scholarly articles listed in the Web of Science database using the search string "hybrid working" (conducted on 12/04/23). These total only 95

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2 in total (compared to 773 for “remote working”), which is reduced to only 13 within the management  
3 discipline and starting only from 2019, as shown in Figure 4.  
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7 PLACE FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

8 PLACE FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE  
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### 10 11 12 **Literature themes**

13 The pre-pandemic literature associated with remote / hybrid working is relatively sparse, whilst post 2019  
14 articles are typically pandemic-focussed, as one would expect. Within the more recent literature however,  
15 the following two broad themes were identified (see Table 1):  
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20 PLACE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE  
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23 Many performance benefits, whether individual or organisational, are difficult to identify comprehensively  
24 due to the wide variety of FWAs available and different contexts in which studies are conducted (de Menezes  
25 & Kelliher, 2017). In fact, reflecting upon what is published within this journal, the International Journal of  
26 Productivity and Performance Management (IJPPM), we observe the following: the search string “hybrid  
27 working” generates zero hits and “remote working” identifies eight articles. Of the eight on “remote  
28 working”, three are two-page opinion-pieces (pre-2000) and five are full articles. Of the five full articles,  
29 three are concerned with employee behaviours and two with performance (see Table 2). The paucity of  
30 productivity research in hybrid working is a research gap we seek to explore.  
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42 The last publication above is Palvalin et al’s “Smarter Ways of Working Tool” (2015), which has been  
43 developed for, and applied to, knowledge work. The authors acknowledge that these new ways of working  
44 “deal[s] with the application of non-traditional and flexible work practices and locations ...” (p.479) which we  
45 argue is relevant to the impact of government lockdown responses throughout the pandemic. It has been  
46 further tested and refined by Palvalin (2017) to reflect the work location, different ways of working, well-  
47 being and outcomes, namely individual and organisational productivity. Although developed primarily as a  
48 quantitative tool, we use it here as scaffolding for our research, to which we apply a dual theoretic lens, to  
49 inform our data instrument and analysis (see Figure 5).  
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We discuss next the English social housing context, challenges around sustaining service delivery performance and why non-office based working matters.

#### **4.0 Research context: the non-profit English Social Housing Sector**

The non-profit English social housing sector is significant in size, comprising 4 million households (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2022); 17% of households are living in social housing across the UK. Social housing providers are predominantly managed by independent housing associations (non-profit public sector) as opposed to private landlords (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2020). This research focuses upon non-profit public sector social housing providers.

The sector supports more vulnerable members of society, many of whom have financial and other issues such as poor mental or physical health (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019). As such, regulation and performance within the sector are extremely important, with expected standards being established through national-level policy and regulation. This relates to the quality of housing stock and service delivery to tenants.

Historically the sector has been criticised for failing to listen to tenants. One does not associate social housing with tenant choice, for example, in the way that one might be able to choose goods from a variety of different retailers. Whilst this issue has been recognised at all levels, from front-line housing staff to policy makers, the reality of receiving, processing and acting meaningfully upon tenants' voices remains problematic.

Recent events such as the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, where 72 tenants lost their lives, and the death of a toddler in 2020 due to damp housing conditions have resulted in substantial criticism of the respective social housing organisations and their senior leadership (Grenfell Tower Inquiry, 2019; Booth, 2022; Housing Ombudsman Service, 2023). The latter has resulted in Awaab's Law, which requires "landlords to fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes. This will become an implied term in social housing tenancy agreements." (Shelter, 2024). In both Grenfell and Awaab's cases, tenants had raised concerns but action, if any, had been too slow. It continues to highlight the significance of needing to respond effectively to tenant's concerns and the social injustice of getting this wrong. The most recent Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) (Gov.uk, 2023; Shelter, 2023) reflects this, by substantially enhancing the role of the Regulator of Social Housing to regulate consumer (i.e. tenant) standards (Greenhalgh, 2023).

The pandemic placed considerable pressure on social housing providers to maintain service levels performance. Whilst 'front office' routine operations such as boiler servicing could be paused, emergency repairs could not and 'back office' processes had to be quickly adapted to home-office locations. This impacted Housing Officer visibility for tenants and had the potential to exacerbate challenges in the tenant voice being heard and acted upon. As hybrid working modalities become the norm, it is critical to understand



any impact upon the tenant to ensure that standards are aligned with regulatory requirements and tenants' needs both now and into the future.

## 5.0 Methodology

We adopt an abductive research approach (Saunders et al, 2019) whereby we explore the phenomenon of hybrid working. We select mixed methods for our research, identifying transformative, sequential procedures as explained by Creswell (2008). The 'transformative' refers to the selection of a particular theoretical lens that informs data gathering; 'sequential' refers to the qualitative data (scoping interviews) informing the quantitative survey, as opposed to both being administered in parallel. Specifically, we explore employee perceptions of hybrid working in social housing, to answer the following research questions:

1. *How effectively did the UK social housing sector adapt to hybrid working? and*
2. *How might this impact productivity and performance in future?*

Five social housing organisations in England took part in the research, two of which could be considered 'large' social housing organisations (each around 35,000 properties), two 'medium' (around 5,000 to 6,000 properties); and one 'small' (around 1,500 properties); this represents the management of approximately 85,000 properties (accommodating in excess of 160,000 tenants) or approximately 2.2% of the entire social housing stock available in England. Geographically the sample spreads from the North of England, to the Midlands, to the South West of England. The research builds on two earlier pieces of work for the sector (conducted 12 weeks after the first lockdown, around June 2020, and approximately one year later): the first explored employee perceptions of adapting to working from home in the early phases of lockdown and the second explored tenants' expectations and perceived experiences of service performance part-way through the pandemic. This third piece of work took place as we emerged from the pandemic regulations in autumn 2021. It began with scoping interviews conducted with each of the five housing organisations. These were held with either the Director or a Senior Manager, who had knowledge and awareness of their organisations' approach to hybrid working in strategic and operational contexts. Each interview lasted for a minimum of 30 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed, then summarized to a one-page document, anonymized and re-shared with participants in the form of a report.

The interviews were used to generate a questionnaire survey for social housing employees, in line with Palvalin et al's (2015) and Palvalin's (2017) Ways of Working tool, the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and Practice Theory (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015). The questionnaire consisted of up to 40 questions (depending upon question routing depending upon answers provided) of which 10 were free text questions and the survey was conducted online and created using Snap Survey software. Questionnaires

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2 were circulated as an online survey in-house by each individual social housing organisation. The sample size  
3 was 1754 employees and 723 responses were obtained for the final questionnaire. Of this, 614 responses  
4 were usable in the analysis following robust data cleaning; 515 responses were complete and 99 were partial,  
5 but answered the majority of the questions, hence 614 responses were used to conduct the majority of the  
6 analysis. This represents a 35% response rate overall and provides a  $\pm 3.19$  confidence interval based upon a  
7 95% confidence level. Additionally, a total of 1,335 free text responses were also obtained in the survey.  
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13 The scoping interviews elicited surprisingly similar views around the use of office space pre- and post-  
14 pandemic despite the relative differences in organisation size, as well as utilizing similar language / semantics  
15 and ongoing organisational challenges. All described pre-pandemic initiatives that they had undertaken to  
16 re-evaluate the office-based work location due to under-utilization and a desire to offer more flexible and /  
17 or agile work opportunities for employees. Most organisations used these two terms interchangeably but  
18 recognized that initially this had been envisaged locationally, whereas latterly it was accepted that flexibility  
19 of timing and hybrid working were also required. Examples of organisational responses include:  
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27 ***Quote from Organisation A***

28 “For us, the drivers of change are to provide better services and more flexibility for staff, but to also  
29 look at organisational flexibility – moving to a leased environment means we can more easily shrink  
30 or grow depending upon the needs of the business. So, the space becomes more agile too.”  
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33 ***Quote from Organisation B***

34 “Back in 2018, we removed the concept of core hours and flexi-time, and worked on the basis that,  
35 subject to business needs, people can organise their working patterns around their own  
36 commitments in a way they feel is most productive for them.”  
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40 ***Quote from Organisation C***

41 “The greatest realization on our journey over the last 18 months was that when we started, we  
42 thought agile working was all about location. But as we’ve progressed, we’ve realised that’s only a  
43 very small part of the overall offering, and it’s more about how people do their job most effectively,  
44 not necessarily where they do it.”  
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48 ***Quote from Organisation D***

49 “About 18 months before the pandemic, we had an agile working project looking at how we could  
50 work in different places to meet customers’ needs – from home, the office, or going out meeting  
51 customers. So we’d made in-roads into people working more flexibly before the pandemic, but it  
52 wasn’t across the board and it wasn’t anywhere near the level as seen during the pandemic.”  
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56 Four of the five organisations noted challenges in maintaining collaboration opportunities as staff worked  
57 remotely; some of them described the renovation of office space for ‘hot desking’ and ‘collaborative / hybrid  
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working' whereas the fifth recognized this as a challenge to be overcome. One organisation also noted leadership challenges due to its relative invisibility in being away from the central office location.

## 6.0 Results

The quantitative responses and open-ended questions were analyzed and grouped into the four constructs of Palvalin et al's (2015) and Palvalin's (2017) Tool (Figure 5), as presented below.

### ***Performance Drivers: Contextual Factors***

Employees reported working predominantly from home (93.9%); given the context of moving towards the end of the government-imposed lockdowns, this indicates that many staff were content maintaining this approach. Other locations such as a Head Office were reasonably popular too (41.9%) and interestingly, locations such as cafes, libraries and even cars were also identified. Such diverse locations require mobile technologies and potentially a mixture of both organisational and personal devices, although this was not explicitly asked. It does however, raise issues of cyber security for organisations.

### ***Performance Drivers: Personal Ways of Working***

The diversity of working location *preferences*, infers a strong desire for personal choice with the home featuring most highly (58.3%) and agile working being second (28.7%). Thus, these two account for 87% of the total preferred working approaches. Lone working appeared as both a benefit (increased productivity from fewer distractions, 76.6%) and a challenge (social isolation, 43.8%); those who found social isolation challenging were, paradoxically, more likely to reside in multi-person households (74%) and be in full time employment (82%). The nuanced interpretation of this would require richer qualitative methods to unpick individuals' concerns. These findings straddle the 'performance drivers' and 'outcomes' elements of the Tool in recognizing both personal choice and simultaneously impacts upon well being. This is supported by some of the open questions:

"... office work makes you feel more of a team whereas home working is lonely."

"If done incorrectly [it can be] bleak and isolated. If done correctly [it can be] a positive work-life balance."

Individuals' perceptions of their *own best practices* associated with hybrid working were captured via free text questions and were analyzed thematically around:

- Self organisation (e.g. work structure and ensuring down-time)
- Keeping in touch with colleagues
- Productivity (e.g. boundaries on scheduling team meetings and working on documents asynchronously)

- Effectiveness (optimizing when to work, e.g. around childcare, whilst also coordinating at the team level)
- Sustaining a customer focus and
- Data / IT security (e.g. if working in public spaces).

Many also reported working longer hours than contracted, with 40.7% stating that this happens on a regular basis. Whilst this is difficult to verify without further data, it likely reflects elements of working during traditional commute time with one employee noting a benefit of their adaptable working times as:

“Being able to meet a customer's needs by making a teatime telephone call due to not needing to commute”

Some respondents indicated challenges in switching off from work (22.6%), which longer term may raise issues around the risk of burnout and its invisibility outside of the traditional office environment. This links directly with work-based stressors as identified Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources theory. In particular, people in multi-person households reported such challenges (70%) together with full time workers (72%); twice as many women as men reported this.

### ***Results and Outcomes of work: Well-being***

By far the most significant outcome and perceived benefit of home-working was the reduction in commute time (85.8%). A further positive consequence of this was reported as increased personal and / or family time (63.0%). In addition, respondents noted increased productivity resulting from fewer distractions (76.6%) and increased personal / physical health (67.4%).

Overwhelmingly respondents indicated improvements to their work-life balance (WLB), with 473 (90.4%) reporting that hybrid working fitted their everyday life. Many also believed that hybrid working is now here to stay (58.7%) with expectations for the next 3-5 years manifesting in more hybrid working and collaborative office space being made available. For some, primarily full time workers, (1.7%) this did not fit well with their personal requirements and it is clearly important to acknowledge their challenges; possible sources of this included fuel poverty and family circumstances.

The suddenness with which individuals' work habits became invisible through home-working inevitably bred uncertainty. However, staff reported positively with respect to trust from line managers, as well as levels of autonomy over their own work. 456 respondents (87.4%) agreed that they felt trusted by their managers; only 19 (3.6%) disagreed, which is remarkable given the context of the pandemic. A sense of autonomy over

1  
2 one's work was also reported positively, with 68% agreeing that they perceive they do have autonomy  
3 compared to 5.9% who perceived they did not.  
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7 Interestingly, the level of support from managers was experienced more positively than the support provided  
8 from the organisational level (81.9% versus 75.2%). This likely reflects that organisational systems had not  
9 been designed for remote / home working en masse and some discontinuities were still being experienced,  
10 whereas managers were better able to support staff at a more personal level.  
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### 14 15 **Results and Outcomes of work: Productivity**

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17 Reflecting on our previous sector studies, we can report that respondents perceived increases in personal  
18 productivity from 59.8% June 2020, to 73.3% in September 2021. Perceptions of organisational productivity  
19 were much lower however, with only 44.9% indicating productivity increases at the organisational level, up  
20 from 40.8% in 2020. The perceived lower productivity figures at the organisational level are worthy of further  
21 consideration and are noted in our call for future research. It may reflect employees' lower awareness of  
22 organisational activity due to lower visibility and / or communication problems. For example, communication  
23 with co-workers was considered a key challenge of hybrid working by 46.3% of respondents and  
24 communication from the organisation (i.e. cascaded information) was considered challenging by 28.5% of  
25 respondents.  
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34 Respondents reported broad agreement (73.4%) that consistency of service output had been maintained  
35 firstly through the transition to home working, then more recently through the transition to hybrid working.  
36 However, overall service quality was perceived as having deteriorated by 26.9% and anecdotally (at the time  
37 of writing), the pandemic was still being used to explain any poor service levels or delays. The majority agreed  
38 that customer centricity was still the primary focus for their organisation (73.4%) however.  
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44 An issue worth noting is employee perceptions of inequity regarding the allocation of, or ability to choose to  
45 adopt, hybrid working arrangements (21.0% of respondents). This recognizes that some would have  
46 preferred to work this way but couldn't, as well as others actively preferring *not* to adopt hybrid working.  
47 This is quite concerning and important to review within a future research agenda.  
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52 Respondents' perceptions of the impact on career progression was less certain, with proportionately more  
53 (30.1%) expressing 'neither agree / disagree'. This may reflect that any impact upon employee progression  
54 would manifest over a longer period of time than reported here and could constitute a future piece of  
55 research. It would be important to establish whether the perceived inequity above is linked to perceptions  
56 of career progression, or something else. A shorter term perception of employee performance (including  
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things like reward schemes, for example) reported mixed views: 48.3% reported positively i.e. that they agreed, but 29.1% disagreed, which is arguably high. Of those that disagreed, more than twice the number of women than men held this view; 71% were full time and 74% lived in a multi-person household. This indicates that many employees shared concerns regarding performance evaluation in both the short and longer term.

## 7.0 Discussion

Our empirical analysis was used to answer the following research questions:

1. *How effectively did the non-profit English social housing sector adapt to hybrid working? and*
2. *How might this impact productivity and performance in future?*

The Reflective Practice positioning of this research contributes to both organisational practices and to theory, as shown below. The research illuminates several benefits and challenges to the adoption of hybrid working, which emerged from the remote working / home working instruction instigated during the recent pandemic. Our findings indicate that employees feel positive about hybrid working, but also caution against certain elements going forwards. Reclaimed time, primarily from reduced commuting time, was welcomed by the majority and was perceived to increase work-life balance whilst also resulting in feelings of increased personal productivity. In addition, employees indicated high levels of trust from managers that they would 'get the job done' and had reasonable autonomy to do so, something addressed by other scholars as being important (Pensar & Rousi, 2023; Wheatley et al, 2023).

Much as de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) reported over a decade ago, the precise impact of FWA on organisational and individual productivity and performance remain difficult to quantify beyond an individual setting. Employees perceived improvements in both of these following the adoption of hybrid working, but substantially more so at the individual level. The self-reported increase in productivity is most likely to reflect transference of the commute time into work activity, whilst also benefitting from fewer distractions outside an office-based environment (also noted by Palvalin et al, 2017).

Full time employees reported the greatest number of issues or concerns with hybrid working, presumably because the impact on them personally represented a greater proportion of their time. This ranged from social isolation, to difficulties switching off from work and concerns regarding equality of access to hybrid / non-hybrid modalities. Perhaps this reflects the greater proportion of non-work time afforded to part time employees, leading to increased opportunities for social interaction outside of work resulting in lower social isolation and also greater opportunity to switch off. Whilst some challenges were reported more

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2 emphatically by female employees than males, this was not consistent across all areas of the questionnaire  
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4 hence further work is required to understand this more explicitly.  
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7 Perceptions of organisational level productivity and performance improvement were modest. Alongside a  
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9 number of other findings, we infer that the relative invisibility of the wider organisation (from a non-office  
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11 location) is primarily to blame. A number of authors acknowledge the challenges associated with such  
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13 invisibility (such as Evans, 2022; Sampat et al, 2022) and our own findings echo this in terms of: organisational  
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15 productivity; peer-peer and organisational-employee communication; employee reward and recognition;  
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17 and risks to employee burnout going unnoticed.  
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20 As Sampat et al (2022) describe, further work is required to understand what work – and which employees –  
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22 are better suited to an office-based location and which are not. This clearly relies on strong engagement  
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24 from HR managers and we posit that a recent concept of “agile HR” (McMackin and Heffernan, 2021) may  
25  
26 prove instrumental in supporting this. Agile HR is beyond the remit of tis research, but it recognises the  
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28 increasing complexity arising from workforces operating remotely and / or in a hybrid modality.  
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31 We propose that the nature of hybrid working i.e. the ability to work from different locations and times,  
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33 requires an agile organisational response in the form of agile HR. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly,  
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35 although the terms ‘flexibility’ and ‘agility’ are frequently used together, we take Abdelilah et al’s (2018) view  
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37 that flexibility is a sub-set of agility, the latter having a more strategic and organisation-wide (or system-wide)  
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39 focus. Secondly, the concept of “agile HR” is relatively new and likely to be instrumental in supporting hybrid  
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41 working arrangements for the foreseeable future, due to the environmental uncertainty afforded by the  
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43 pandemic and the challenge of HR practices to adapt accordingly (McMackin and Heffernan, 2021). However  
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45 linking more broadly with longer term financial performance, the impact of hybrid working practices remains  
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47 unclear at the time of writing.  
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50 The organisational challenges of managing staff remotely, whilst delivering effective leadership and  
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52 transparent processes for career development and promotion remain substantial. Simultaneously, team and  
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54 organisational cohesion were acknowledged as requiring review. Both the qualitative scoping interviews and  
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56 quantitative survey results indicated the need to facilitate ‘purposeful’ face-to-face team time whereby staff  
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58 would arrange to meet in person when needed, but not be expected to work within the office ‘just in case’.  
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60 Perhaps this will pose one of the more challenging elements of hybrid working in future, with both direct and  
indirect impacts on organisational productivity and performance.

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2 Our findings have further impact for the non-profit English social housing sector in relation to customer  
3 service. Adopting a hybrid approach may enable social housing associations to tailor employee working  
4 preferences within individual tenants' needs, thus improving existing service performance by responding to  
5 and / or reaching out to tenants in more flexible ways. Furthermore, whilst our empirical focus has been the  
6 non-profit English social housing sector, Palvalin et al's (2015) / Palvalin's (2017) Tool has been tested for  
7 validity across public sector and third sector organisations. As such, we suggest it is an appropriate approach  
8 for sectors embarking upon hybrid models of working and wanting to better understand the implications for  
9 both individual and organisational productivity and performance.  
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17 Reflecting on Palvalin et al's (2015) and Palvalin's (2017) Ways of Working Tool, work 'invisibility',  
18 Conservation of Resources and Practice theories, and agile HR have a clear alignment around "well-being at  
19 work" and "productivity". Thus following our empirical findings, we call for future research to:  
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- 24 • More purposefully explore organisational productivity in the context of complex hybrid work  
25 modality
- 26 • The role of agile HR in supporting this, and
- 27 • The impact on burnout / career progression through the relative 'invisibility' of employees adopting  
28 hybrid working.  
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## 34 **8.0 Conclusion**

35 This research has investigated productivity and performance impacts associated with the adoption of hybrid  
36 working in the context of social housing service provision – a sector delivering significant impact to those in  
37 housing need. Our data demonstrates that employees are much more positive about hybrid working and  
38 individual productivity than at the organisational level. The relative invisibility of work in non-office based  
39 locations identified a number of concerns however, around communication, the risk of burnout and career  
40 progression. These points resonate with the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and Palvalin  
41 et al's (2015) and Palvalin's (2017) Ways of Working Tool.  
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49 It is important to note that hybrid working is clearly here to stay and understanding its impact for business is  
50 important. The relative complexity it affords for managing staff appropriately, particularly for larger  
51 organisations, will place new demands upon HR managers which best be supported through agile HR  
52 (McMackin & Heffernan, 2021).  
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57 Our context – that of supporting more vulnerable members of society through the provision of social housing  
58 – is an important one to study. Hybrid working will potentially affect service delivery and organisational  
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performance. Our study context is a sector that has historically struggled to respond effectively to tenant voice, thus impacting customer satisfaction. At the time of writing, the impact of hybrid working on social housing service delivery is poorly understood. The potential for hybrid working to radically improve service delivery is worth exploring, at both the individual and organisational levels:

- At the individual level, employees are able to work more flexibly. For example, Housing Officers can connect with tenants via video calls outside of 'traditional' work hours, facilitating better relationships and more timely responses to concerns. Comments from employees within the free-text part of our survey indicated potential for this within their own ways of working, for example.
- At the organisational level, the interconnectivity of multiple digital devices associated with hybrid working can support better data management, to capture the tenant voice more effectively whilst also tracking responses to it more reliably.

Finally, it is interesting to observe that the technological and digital capability to operate a hybrid modality has been available for decades. It took an imposed response to a global challenge for those capabilities to be adopted en masse. The challenge going forwards is to better understand how productivity and performance is impacted beyond simple time-based and location-based changes.

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## Figures and Tables

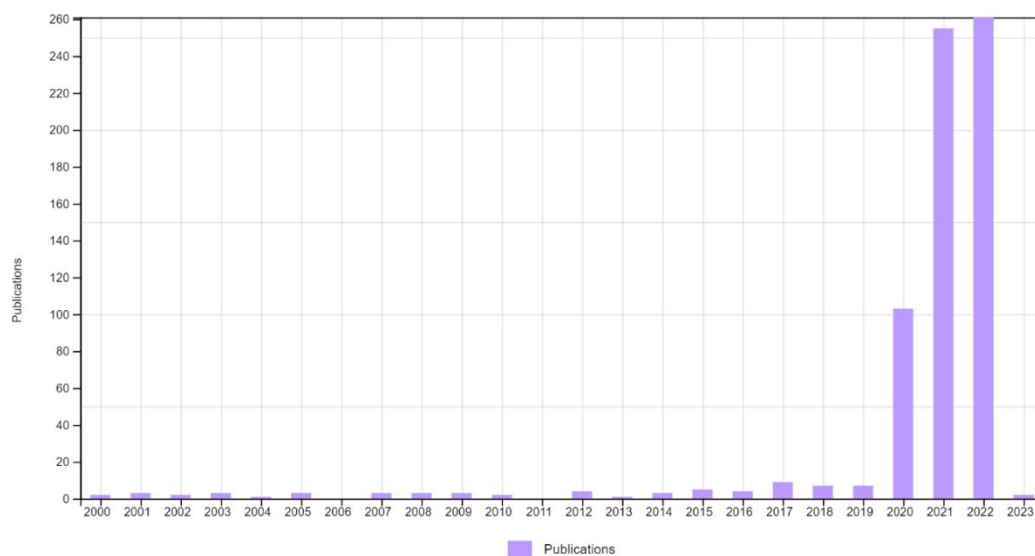


Figure 1: Numbers of publications per year using search string "remote working" in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23)

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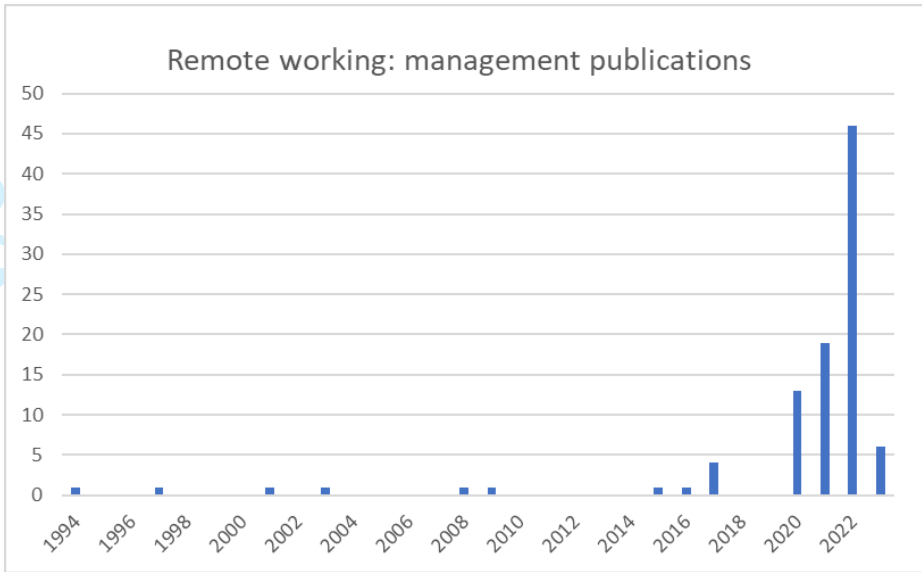


Figure 2: Numbers of publications per year in the management discipline, using search string "remote working" in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23).

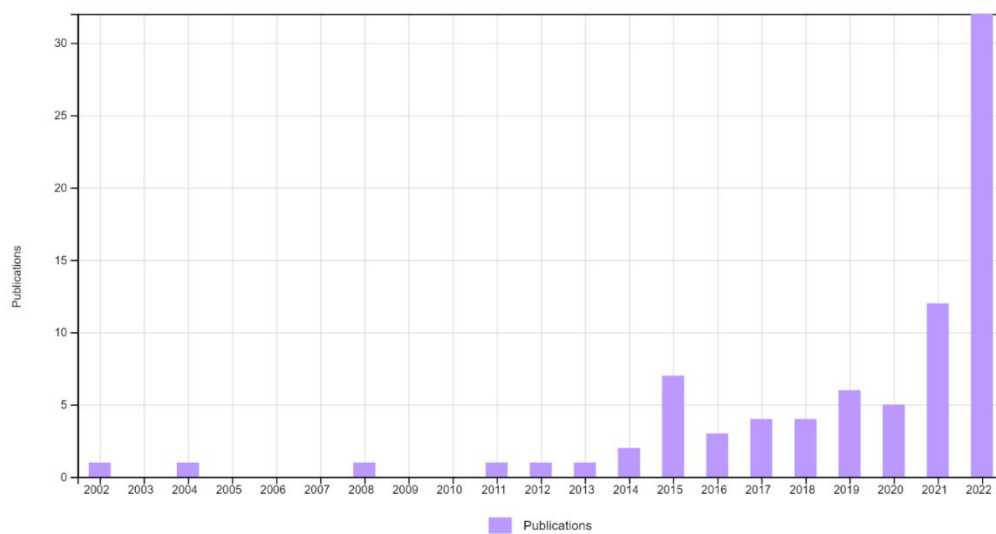


Figure 3: Numbers of publications per year using search string “hybrid working” in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23)



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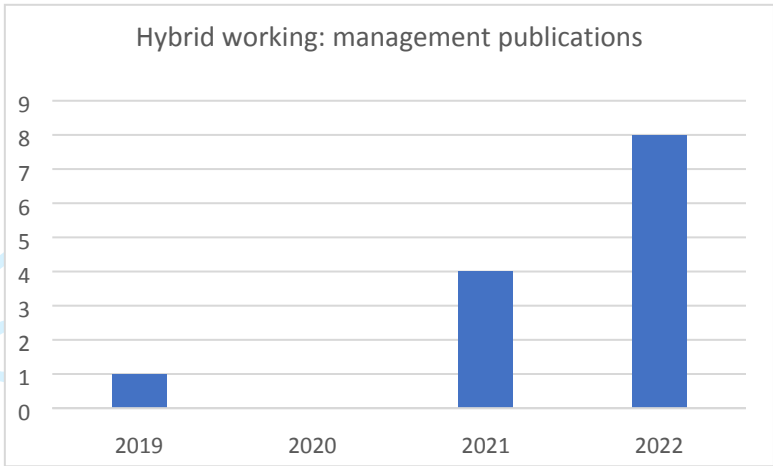
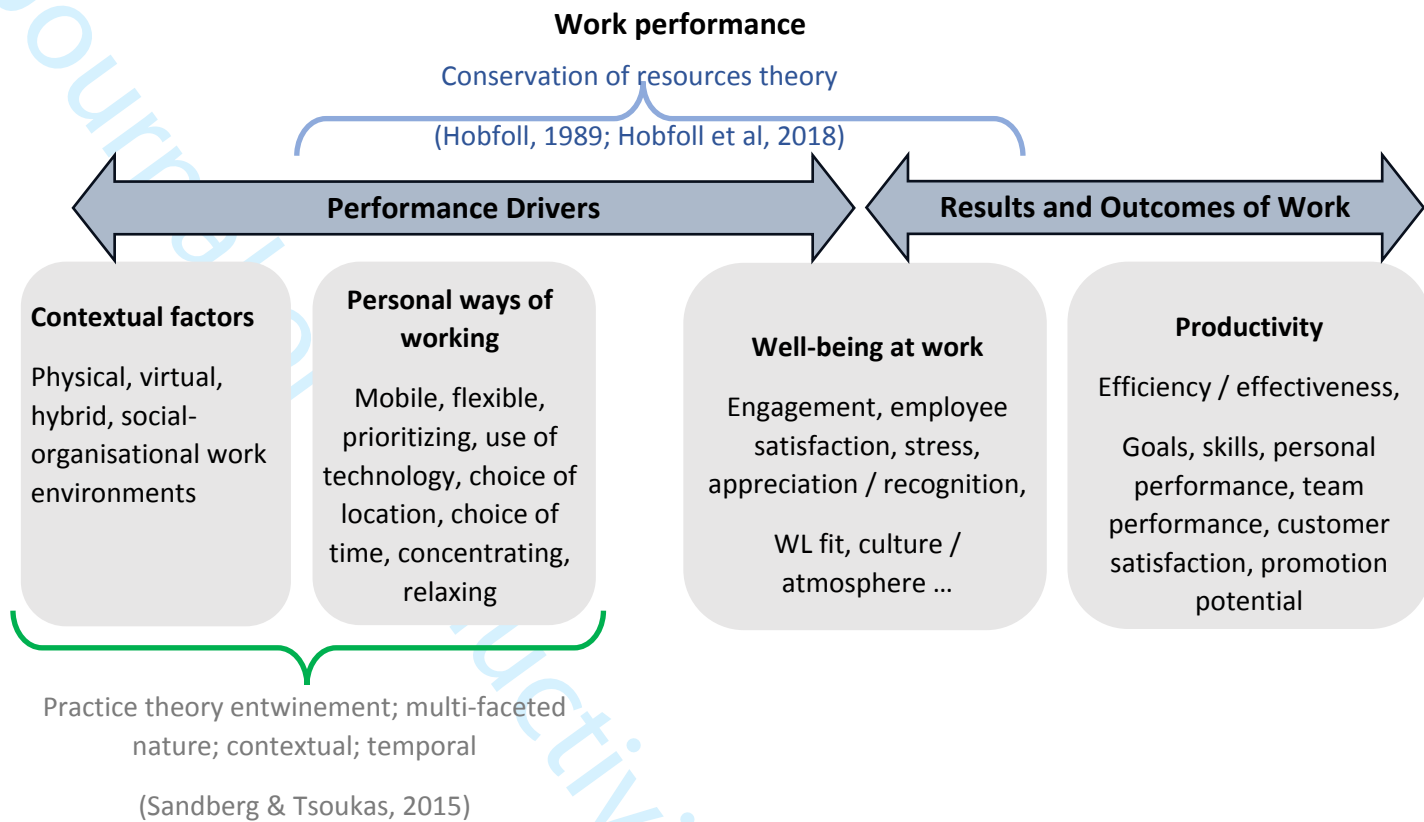


Figure 4: Numbers of publications per year in the management discipline, using search string “hybrid working” in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23).



Developed by the authors from Palvalin et al (2015) and Palvalin (2017).

Figure 5 – Smarter Ways of Working tool

**Table 1 – Synthesis of literature themes**

Theme	Authors
Employee well-being and work-life balance	Fernández et al (2023); Pensar & Rousi (2023); Wheatley et al (2023) [also discusses autonomy / control]; Adekoya et al (2022); Gopalan (2022); Adisa et al (2021);
Cross-cultural contexts	Evans (2022); Sampat et al (2022); Edwards (2020)

**Table 2 – Overview of publications from the *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management* on 'remote working'**

Two-page thought pieces	Franks, J. (1998)	
	Anon (2004)	
	Daniels, S. (1998)	
Employee behaviours	Helms & Raiszadeh (2002)	Managing teamwork & productivity
	Fernando et al (2022)	Employee behaviour
	Sandhya and Sulphrey (2021)	Employee engagement and turnover
Performance	Hinton & Barnes (2009)	Performance measurement
	Palvalin et al (2015)	Performance analysis

## **Response to reviewers for IJPPM-05-2023-0230**

Dear Reviewers,

Thank you for your comments. We initially tried 'Track Changes' but the final document became too messy to read due to the number of changes we have made. The manuscript has been substantially re-written in light of your individual comments and we make clear how we have responded to each of those comments below.

### **Reviewer 1 Comments:**

This article needs lots more effort. The author needs to cite more literature studies in the article. I can hardly see citations in the discussion part.

Other than that writing skills need improvements.

Need to put effort to produce better results.

### *Author response:*

Thank you for your helpful comments. We have included more references within the text and in particular, within the Discussion. However, we politely point out that this manuscript was deliberately targeted as a Reflective Practice piece, which resides more in the domain of practice than theory, as per Emerald's Author Guidelines.

We have performed a thorough copy edit of the manuscript, following the revisions suggested by reviewers, which we believe has now strengthened the grammar and flow throughout.

We have also tried to make clearer the results, discussion and conclusion.

### **Reviewer 2 Comments:**

1. The introduction offers a broad context for hybrid working but jumps between topics (like the pandemic's effects, the difference between remote and hybrid working, and the specific nuances of the social housing sector) without a clear narrative flow. Establishing a clearer sequence or structure in the introduction might help readers follow the line of argumentation more efficiently.

### *Author response:*

Thank you for raising this issue. We have reviewed the Introduction and reorganised the flow.

2. While the introduction acknowledges the multi-disciplinary nature of the research topic, it provides limited insight into why prior work might not have adequately addressed the topic. Beyond a paucity of performance measures, what are the inherent complexities or challenges that previous studies may have overlooked?

### *Author response:*

1  
2  
3 Thank you for your comment. We have included more articles to help support more clearly the  
4 outstanding gap in the literature. This now specifies the gap around informal versus formal flexible  
5 working practices, the variation in flexible working practices more broadly and performance. We  
6 also note the difference between remote and hybrid working being sought by choice as opposed to  
7 imposed during the pandemic.  
8  
9

- 10 3. The definitions of hybrid working seem to stretch too broad, from varied locations to outside  
11 9-5 working hours, and even to flexible schemes. While breadth can be informative, the lack  
12 of specificity might make it challenging to grasp the central focus of the paper and dilutes  
13 the unique essence of "hybrid" working.  
14

15 *Author response:*

16  
17 Thank you for your comment. We have provided an overview of the term Flexible Working  
18 Arrangements and where hybrid / remote working sits within that. This is positioned at the  
19 beginning of section 2.0 and leads into the description of how we chose Conservation of Resources  
20 and Practice Theories.  
21  
22

- 23 4. The introduction mentions the particularities of the social housing sector, emphasizing its  
24 unique customer profile. While this makes a compelling case for its study, the relationship  
25 between hybrid working and the characteristics of the sector's clientele (like the reduced  
26 human agency) isn't clearly drawn out. How do the specific needs and profiles of the  
27 customers impact or intersect with hybrid working models?  
28

29 *Author response:*

30  
31 Thank you for your comment. Tenants have relatively little opportunity to effect change where they  
32 experience poor service delivery. There is a good deal of research on the challenges in responding to  
33 tenant voice for example, and this is potentially amplified within a hybrid working model. In  
34 addition, tenants don't have the luxury of being able to 'take their business elsewhere' because they  
35 are bounded by geographic constraints and the social housing providers within it. This is more  
36 clearly outlined in a new and separate section, Section 4.0.  
37  
38

- 39 5. The theoretical approach dives straight into the conservation of resources theory and  
40 practice theory, providing brief definitions. While these theories are outlined, the  
41 introduction could benefit from explaining more lucidly why these specific theories were  
42 chosen and how they precisely intersect with the study of hybrid work in the context of the  
43 social housing sector.  
44  
45

46 *Author response:*

47  
48 Thank you for your comments. We agree that our choice of theories required greater justification.  
49 To do this, we linked with your point 3. above and described what flexible working is, which theories  
50 are typically associated with it, and why we believe this is not appropriate in this instance. This is  
51 stated at the beginning of section 2.0  
52  
53

- 54 6. The literature review heavily relies on statistical information from databases without  
55 providing a coherent narrative or synthesizing the literature's main findings or theories. A  
56 more comprehensive thematic review would offer readers better insight into the current  
57 state of knowledge on hybrid and remote working.  
58

59 *Author response:*

1  
2  
3 Thank you for your observations. We agree that the structure of the literature review, along with its  
4 focus on the statistics, were insufficiently coherent. We have now introduced a greater number of  
5 references, definitions of terms and a structure to represent a more thematic analysis of the  
6 literature.  
7

- 8  
9 7. The distinction between remote and hybrid working needs to be further clarified. While the  
10 authors touch upon the subject, diving deeper into the nuances, benefits, and challenges of  
11 each approach would offer a more robust foundation for their research questions.  
12

13 *Author response:*

14  
15 Thank you for your comment. By expanding upon the literature review and in particular, the  
16 headings within it, we have made clearer the distinction between remote and hybrid working, as  
17 elements of non office-based Flexible Working Arrangements.  
18

- 19  
20 8. The discussion on the non-profit English Social Housing Sector, although detailed, lacks  
21 integration with the main themes of hybrid and remote working. The link between housing  
22 challenges and work modalities is not well-established, making this section appear  
23 tangentially related rather than a direct reflection on the primary topic.  
24

25 *Author response:*

26  
27 Thank you for this observation. We agree that the description of the sector was not well aligned with  
28 the focus of the manuscript. This section has been removed from the literature review and put as a  
29 standalone section, Section 4.0. The section describes the sector, its customers (tenants), current  
30 challenges and why it is important to understand how the pandemic / hybrid working might impact  
31 those challenges.  
32

- 33  
34 9. The literature review could benefit from a clearer structure with subsections dedicated to  
35 key thematic areas, such as the impact of technology, employee well-being, and  
36 organizational control, in relation to remote and hybrid working. This would make it easier  
37 for readers to follow the flow of arguments and understand the research gaps the authors  
38 aim to address.  
39

40 *Author response:*

41  
42 Thank you for your comments. We agree that the structure of the literature review was previously  
43 lacking and have now increased headings to reflect the types of non office-based work, its impact  
44 and the social housing sector (the latter of which was present in the first revision).  
45

- 46  
47 10. The study relies heavily on modifying and extending an existing model (Palvalin et al, 2015).  
48 While leveraging existing models can be a strength, solely depending on a singular model  
49 might lead to a myopic view of the phenomenon, thus limiting the depth and breadth of  
50 insights drawn from the research.  
51

52 *Author response:*

53  
54 We agree that relying on a single model can be problematic. However, we have noted an updated  
55 and more widely-tested version of the model, which we now include (which is Palvalin, 2017). In  
56 addition, we make clear that we are using the model as scaffolding for our research only, extending  
57 it by overlaying our dual theoretic lens. The constructs within the model inform our research  
58 instrument and results.  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 11. The research sample appears to be geographically limited, encompassing only five social  
4 housing organizations within England. Such a narrow scope could hinder the generalizability  
5 of the findings. Incorporating a more diverse range of organizations from various regions  
6 might offer a more comprehensive view of the hybrid working phenomenon across the UK  
7 social housing sector.  
8  
9

10 *Author response:*

11 Thank you for your comment. Whilst the sample is five social housing organisations, they are  
12 responsible for in excess of 85,000 properties, supporting in excess of 160,000 tenants, and are  
13 sizable organisations in their own right. We have indicated this in the Methodology, together with  
14 information regarding the geographical reach of the sample.  
15  
16

- 17 12. While the scoping interviews provided valuable preliminary insights, a duration of  
18 approximately 30 minutes for each might not be sufficient to gather in-depth perspectives.  
19 Longer, more detailed interviews, potentially segmented across multiple sessions, could  
20 have offered a richer qualitative data set.  
21  
22

23 *Author response:*

24 Thank you for your comment. We agree that 30 minutes may be too short for an in-depth interview  
25 however this was the shortest duration which we have clarified in the text. However, we believe that  
26 as a *scoping* interview, we elicited sufficient information to develop our main survey instrument. It  
27 was felt that the degree of overlap between the five scoping interviews was sufficient to suggest we  
28 had obtained appropriate insight into key issues / concerns associated with the adoption of hybrid  
29 working. In addition, the research instrument design was also guided through our use of theory and  
30 by using Palvalin's Ways of Working tool as scaffolding for our instrument structure and analysis.  
31  
32  
33

- 34 13. The questionnaire, designed based on the scoping interviews, used up to 40 questions.  
35 However, only 10 of these were free-text questions, which may limit the depth of participant  
36 responses. Incorporating more open-ended questions might have enabled participants to  
37 share nuanced perspectives, possibly uncovering unforeseen factors or challenges related to  
38 hybrid working.  
39

40 *Author response:*

41 Thank you for your comment. The research instrument was designed as a quantitative survey in  
42 order to obtain the breadth of views from across a wide range of employees. It included some open  
43 questions to provide additional insight that we perceived would be useful, having been informed by  
44 the scoping interviews, our two theories, and the Ways of Working Tool. Obviously it would be very  
45 difficult to change the questionnaire at this point, particularly given that it was a 'snapshot in time',  
46 however we believe that our free-text questions were sufficient to provide richer qualitative data  
47 alongside our primarily quantitative study. We have now acknowledged within the text that a more  
48 qualitative approach would yield richer insights going forwards into future research projects.  
49  
50  
51

- 52 14. The results predominantly lean towards the positive aspects and benefits of hybrid working,  
53 which may introduce a response bias. There is minimal exploration into the negative  
54 implications, long-term effects, and the broader context of how these results translate  
55 across different demographics or departments.  
56  
57

58 *Author response:*

1  
2  
3 Thank you for your comment. We have looked back at the data in detail and found examples where  
4 certain groups appear to express greater challenges / dissatisfaction with different elements of  
5 hybrid working. However, not all questions were answered by everyone (given how the  
6 questionnaire was administered) and it is difficult to infer too much from the data. We have included  
7 within the Results and the Discussion details of where i) full time employees, ii) those in a multi-  
8 person household, iii) gender have expressed a substantially different opinion. We have also  
9 included this in our call for future research.  
10  
11

- 12  
13 15. The stark difference in perceived productivity at an individual level versus organisational  
14 level is intriguing but not sufficiently explored. The authors could delve deeper into this  
15 discrepancy to understand the root causes and potential communication or systemic issues  
16 within organizations.  
17

18 *Author response:*

19  
20 Thank you for your comment. Whilst we capture the perceived differences in productivity at the  
21 individual and the organisational level, and speculate as to the underlying reasons why (based on  
22 other elements of the data (such as lower awareness amongst employees due to lower visibility of  
23 the workplace and / or communication problems associated with early hybrid working), the precise  
24 differences for this are beyond the scope of this study. We briefly noted this as an area for future  
25 work with the Discussion and Conclusion sections already. However, we have now made this clearer  
26 and more precise within the Conclusion.  
27  
28

- 29  
30 16. While the study explores the implications of hybrid working within the non-profit English  
31 social housing sector, the authors make a bold assertion about the high generalizability of  
32 their findings. Given the uniqueness and specificity of each sector, it would be beneficial to  
33 draw upon comparative studies or engage with literature that supports this claim, instead of  
34 leaving it as an assumptive conclusion.  
35

36 *Author response:*

37  
38 Thank you for this observation. We agree that our statement was overstating our assumptions and  
39 we have adapted the statement within the Discussion accordingly. Palvalin's (2017) Tool has been  
40 tested for validity across public and third sector organisations; hence we are confident that our  
41 extension is appropriate for such sectors too.  
42

- 43  
44 17. The discussion appears to lean heavily on the concept of "agile HR", but it does not delve  
45 deeply enough into the practical challenges, limitations, and nuances of such an approach.  
46 Further elaboration on potential pitfalls, cultural changes, or training needs associated with  
47 agile HR in the context of hybrid working would make the discussion more robust.  
48

49 *Author response:*

50  
51 Thank you for your comments. We agree that the emphasis on agile HR is in hindsight, too strong,  
52 because that is not the focus of this research. We have therefore introduced agile HR as being  
53 relevant going forwards, to support the work already done using the Ways of Working tool.  
54

- 55  
56 18. The mention of integrating practice theory and the conservation of resources theory is made  
57 in the conclusion without a substantive explanation in the main discussion. Without  
58 elaborating on how these theories are specifically applied or offer unique insights to the  
59 study's findings, the theoretical contribution seems unsupported and potentially superficial.  
60

*Author response:*



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Thank you for your insights. We now present a more rounded interpretation of how we have used the theories as scaffolding to inform our research instrument and analysis. This is reflected in the Methodology, Discussion and Conclusion.

19. The paper acknowledges that tenant digital connectivity has historically been low, but assumes that in a few years this gap will be substantially reduced. Without supporting data or further discussion around digital inclusion strategies or infrastructural investments, this presumption may be overly optimistic and might not account for persistent digital disparities.

*Author response:*

Thank you for your observation. The intended meaning here was that over time new and younger tenants, with greater availability to digital devices, will seek social housing and hence the gap will naturally reduce. However, this is not articulated in the literature; instead the literature refers more to either opportunity and caution, or optimism and potential strategic response. This is now reflected in the Conclusion and supported with references.

## Hybrid working – Benefits and challenges for productivity and performance

### Structured Abstract:

#### Purpose:

We explore the benefits and challenges for organisations using hybrid working practices post-pandemic. We focus upon the non-profit English social housing sector, however this research is relevant to any organisation adopting hybrid working practices. The implications for productivity and performance management of hybrid practices are currently not well understood.

#### Design/methodology/approach:

We adopt and extend Palvalin's et al's (2015) new Ways of Working Tool in our mixed method research. Scoping interviews were conducted with managers possessing strategic knowledge of their organisations' approaches to hybrid working. Subsequently, a large-scale survey was administered to evaluate employees' perceptions of hybrid working, including their concerns for future impacts.

#### Findings:

Our data identifies several benefits and challenges associated with hybrid working. Reclaimed commuting time was deemed a positive benefit, alongside greater personal time, work-life balance and (for the majority) less-interrupted workspace. Challenges were identified regarding the transparency of staff reward and recognition, the potential for masked burnout and purposeful team communication.

#### Originality:

Despite hybrid working having been possible for decades, many articles describe typical benefits (e.g. less commuting time) and challenges (e.g. organisational culture) without fully understanding productivity and performance implications. To explore this, we extend Palvalin et al's (2015) Tool by establishing a theoretical foundation through the conservation of resources theory and practice theory.

#### Research limitations/implications:

Due to the unique context of the pandemic and widespread, but sudden adoption of home- and hybrid working, this study can be taken as a snapshot in time as organisations recalibrate the consequences of new ways of working.

**Keywords:** Hybrid working, productivity, performance

### 1.0 Introduction

This paper offers insights into employee perceptions of personal and organisational productivity and performance resulting from the adoption of hybrid working practices. Taking a Reflective Practice stance, we explore perceptions of hybrid working within the non-profit English social housing sector, adopted in response to the recent pandemic. There is no doubt that the 2020-22 pandemic has rapidly reshaped ways of working and accelerated existing moves towards remote, home-based and more recently, hybrid working practices (Microsoft, 2021; Shirmohammadi et al, 2022). Despite the multi-disciplinary domains of such

1  
2 working arrangements in the academic literature, there remains very little that critically reflects upon  
3 organisational productivity and performance.  
4

5  
6  
7 Previous literature on remote working and its impact on performance often focused on employee wellbeing  
8 and took only a short-term view or suffered from a paucity of specific performance measures (e.g. Ramstad,  
9 2009; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). The recent enforced remote / homeworking afforded by the pandemic,  
10 has led many employees to look for the 'best of both worlds' via a hybrid model of working. Hybrid is  
11 different to remote working because it refers to a mixture of locations for work, based partly in an office  
12 environment and partly another location of one's choice; whilst typically this has been the home, it could be  
13 literally anywhere. It also refers to staff working outside the norms of 9-5pm or schemes such as 'flexi-  
14 working' whereby hours per day might vary depending on convenience and / or customer need.  
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22 In this research we study the non-profit English social housing sector, exploring its transition to home working  
23 during the pandemic and to a more hybrid working model as we move beyond it. The aim was to better  
24 understand i) how employees perceived the sector had responded to the adoption of hybrid working  
25 practices and ii) the resulting impact upon productivity and performance. The social housing sector is an  
26 interesting context to study due to its customer profile, which often includes more vulnerable members of  
27 society with reduced human agency and as a result, higher dependence on the housing association within  
28 particular geographical constraints. These issues will be described further in the literature review.  
29  
30  
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34

35 The pandemic undoubtedly hastened the transition away from office work and presented huge challenges  
36 for sustaining output volume and quality. Looking forward, we are presented with the opportunity to work  
37 in new ways. Some see hybrid working as here to stay (Microsoft, 2021); others have publicized campaigns  
38 to return employees to the office as quickly as possible (BBC, 2021). We believe that better understanding  
39 the impacts for productivity and performance will enable organisations to make more informed choices  
40 about what is right for them.  
41  
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47 As such, we adopt the following two research questions:  
48  
49

- 50 1. *How effectively did the non-profit English social housing sector adapt to hybrid working? and*
  - 51 2. *How might this impact productivity and performance in future?*
- 52  
53  
54

## 55 **2.0 Theoretical approach**

56 Although predominantly a service operations management study, we adopt plurality of theory here -  
57 behavioural and practice - because "real world management problems often do not belong to a single  
58  
59  
60

1  
2 *discipline but are inter-disciplinary in nature*" (Walker et al, 2015, p. 1185). We look to the conservation of  
3  
4 resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al, 2018), which describes the stress people feel when resources  
5  
6 or control of something is reduced or lost. We also adopt a practice theory lens, which considers:  
7

- 8 • *entwinement* (how people, actions, technologies are all inter-related),
- 9 • how practices are *multi-faceted in nature* (simultaneously social, discursive and material),
- 10 • *contextual* (where the practice is taking place and is embodied) and
- 11 • *temporal* (how practices develop and are improved over time) (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015).

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16  
17 We have selected Palvalin et al's (2015) "Ways of Working" tool (see Figure 2 within the Literature Review),  
18  
19 developed through a constructive research approach (Jones et al, 2022), and extend it in a number of ways:  
20

- 21  
22 1) Palvalin et al's (2015) tool is developed for, and applied to, knowledge work. The authors  
23  
24 acknowledge that these new ways of working "deal[s] with the application of non-traditional and  
25  
26 flexible work practices and locations ..." (p.479) which we argue is relevant to the impact of  
27  
28 government lockdown responses throughout the pandemic. We are therefore extending the  
29  
30 model's application beyond the knowledge work sector.
- 31  
32 2) We go beyond individual productivity to include perceptions of organisational level productivity,  
33  
34 and
- 35  
36 3) By adopting the conservation of resources and practice theories, we extend the theoretical  
37  
38 contribution of the model.

### 39 **3.0 Literature Review**

40  
41 Scholarly articles on remote working within the management discipline precede those on hybrid working by  
42  
43 approximately two decades. We interrogated three management databases (ABI / Inform Collection;  
44  
45 EBSCO Business Source Premier; and Web of Science) to ascertain publication profiles for both "remote  
46  
47 working" and "hybrid working". The statistics were similar for all three databases; information from the  
48  
49 Web of Science searches are presented here by way of illustration in Figures 1-4.

50  
51 Remote working first appeared in the literature around the 1980s and was associated with teleworking at  
52  
53 that point. It refers to work being undertaken away from the office, be that in the home or another  
54  
55 location. By the 2000s, the possibilities afforded by the onset of a new digital age were proposed,  
56  
57 speculated, cautioned and futuristically labelled (such as 'the virtual organisation') in equal measure. The  
58  
59 reality however, was much slower paced in terms of adoption. This is reflected in the academic literature,  
60  
61 which indicates significant increases in the number of publications over the past five years and in particular,

1  
2 unsurprisingly, since 2021. Figure 1 illustrates the number of scholarly articles listed in the Web of Science  
3 database using the search string “remote working” (conducted on 12/04/23). Refining this search to  
4 include on management articles reduced the number of publications from 773 to 96, as illustrated in Figure  
5 2.  
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10 PLACE FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

11 PLACE FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

12  
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15 Hybrid working is a more recent term and is shared more equally with other academic disciplines, such as  
16 medicine and engineering. As a relatively new term, strongly associated with new ways of working post-  
17 Covid 19, there is no clear definition for ‘hybrid working’ at the time of writing (Xu, 2023). It refers to  
18 employees working from office or non-office locations, potentially at different times and using digital  
19 devices. Whilst these challenges were recognised by Dumas and Sanchez-Burks (2015) pre-pandemic, the  
20 phenomenon was amplified significantly post-2020. Figure 3 illustrates the number of scholarly articles  
21 listed in the Web of Science database using the search string “hybrid working” (conducted on 12/04/23).  
22 These total only 95 in total (compared to 773 for “remote working”), which is reduced to only 13 within the  
23 management discipline and starting only from 2019, as shown in Figure 4.  
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32 PLACE FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

33 PLACE FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

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36  
37 A systematic analysis of the literature review demonstrates that for both ‘hybrid working’ and ‘remote  
38 working’ the primary foci are:  
39

- 40 • the 2020 pandemic
  - 41 • employee well-being and work-life balance
  - 42 • cross-cultural contexts and
  - 43 • organisational control.
- 44  
45  
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49 There is comparatively little mention of productivity or performance management specifically. In fact,  
50 taking this one step further and reflecting upon what is published within the International Journal of  
51 Productivity and Performance Management (IJPPM), we observe the following: the search string “hybrid  
52 working” generates zero hits and “remote working” identifies eight articles. Of the eight on “remote  
53 working”, three are two-page opinion-pieces (pre-2000) and five are full articles. Of the five full articles,  
54 three are concerned with employee behaviours and two with performance (see Table 1). The paucity of  
55 productivity research in hybrid working is a research gap we seek to address here.  
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4 PLACE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE  
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7 Of particular interest to us here is Palvalin et al's "Smarter Ways of Working Tool" (2015) which introduces  
8 a new way to characterise the performance of knowledge work (i.e. 'remote' work). Having been  
9 developed as a "pragmatic managerial tool" (p. 479), we extend their Tool by incorporating two supportive  
10 management theories and applying it to a wider organisational context. We have selected the conservation  
11 of resources theory, to recognize that working practices have been strained due to the sudden changes  
12 imposed by the recent pandemic and that employees have had to personally manage that uncertainty in  
13 the ways they have managed their work time and effort. In addition, we have adopted a practice theory  
14 lens to reflect the associated changes to organisational and individual work practices associated with hybrid  
15 ways of working. Finally, we answer Palvalin et al's (2015) call to extend the use of their model to other  
16 forms of work, i.e. away from the traditional office where the context of virtual working environments,  
17 personal preferences, well-being at work and productivity become significant (see Figure 5).  
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27 Having reviewed what the academic literature says about remote and hybrid working, we now consider this  
28 in the context of non-profit social housing in England. It is important to understand the service  
29 performance requirements in this sector which are synonymous with the 'levelling up' government agenda  
30 aimed at redressing inequalities and increasing service performance expectations of vulnerable and digitally  
31 disadvantaged groups (Gov.uk, 2023).  
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### 39 *3.1 The non-profit English Social Housing Sector*

#### 40 *Brief Historical Context*

41  
42 The non-profit English social housing sector is significant in size, comprising 4 million households  
43 (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2022); 17% of households are living in social  
44 housing across the UK (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2020). The sector supports  
45 more vulnerable members of society, many of whom have financial and other issues such as poor health  
46 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019). Social housing providers are  
47 predominantly managed by independent housing associations (non-profit public sector) as compared to  
48 private landlords (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2020). This research focuses upon  
49 non-profit public sector social housing providers.  
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56 Some of the most influential drivers of the social housing sector's challenges in recent years has been  
57 government policies towards financial austerity and perceptions of poor service performance. To respond  
58 to financial constraints, social housing providers have faced pressure to increasingly use technology to  
59  
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1  
2 digitise services (Inside Housing, 2015a) driven by the financial cuts (Financial Times, 2015a), government  
3 digital transformation of services (Gov.UK, 2010), wider changes in consumer expectations (Vollero et al,  
4 2021), and opportunities for service innovation through embracing digital change (Jarrett, 2015). The  
5 challenge for social housing providers is how to *improve* services through increased digitisation without  
6 further disadvantaging tenants, many of whom experience digital inequality, as well as integrating with  
7 legacy systems and wider services. Applications of digitally facilitated process redesign to more service-  
8 oriented, and in particular third sector, organisations (such as non-profit social housing providers) are still  
9 under-represented in the academic literature and are often more problematic in representation (Kim &  
10 Raggio, 2023).  
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### 20 *The tenant voice*

21 Historically the sector has been criticised for failing to listen to tenants. One does not associate social  
22 housing with tenant choice, for example, in the way that one might be able to choose goods from a variety  
23 of different retailers. Whilst this issue has been recognised at all levels, from front-line housing staff to  
24 policy makers, the reality of receiving, processing and acting meaningfully upon tenants' voices remains  
25 problematic.  
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31 Recent events such as the tragedy at Grenfell, where 72 tenants lost their lives, and the death of a toddler  
32 in 2020 due to damp housing conditions have resulted in substantial criticism of the respective Social  
33 Housing Associations and their senior leadership (Grenfell Tower Inquiry, 2019; Booth, 2022; Housing  
34 Ombudsman Service, 2023). In both cases, tenants had raised concerns but action, if any, had been too  
35 slow. It continues to highlight the significance of needing to respond effectively to tenant's concerns and  
36 the social injustice of getting this wrong.  
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43 The pandemic placed considerable pressure of social housing providers to maintain service performance.  
44 Whilst routine operations such as boiler servicing could be paused, emergency repairs could not and  
45 processes had to be quickly adapted to home-based locations. In addition, any shift in the quantity and /  
46 mix of service demand from tenants (as a direct result of the pandemic) was challenging to predict but still  
47 had to be accommodated.  
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53 Prior to the pandemic, some social housing organisations were already divesting their city centre offices in  
54 favour of adopting more flexible and smaller locations as a way of reducing costs but maintaining  
55 standards. Increasingly however, senior social housing leaders were adopting the language of "hybrid  
56 working" and the increased agility / flexibility afforded by it (often using those terms interchangeably). This  
57 demonstrates the appetite to engage with such practices, but a lack of clarity regarding the organisational  
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benefits (beyond reducing asset costs) and challenges. Hence our research explores employees' perceptions of this experience and as a result, what organisational challenges might dominate in future.

#### 4.0 Methodology

We adopt an abductive research approach (Saunders et al, 2019) whereby we explore the phenomenon of hybrid working by modifying and extending an existing model (by Palvalin et al, 2015). We select mixed methods for our research, identifying transformative, sequential procedures as explained by Creswell (2008). The 'transformative' refers to the selection of a particular theoretical lens that informs data gathering; 'sequential' refers to the qualitative data (scoping interviews) informing the quantitative survey, as opposed to both being administered in parallel. Specifically, we explore employee perceptions of hybrid working in social housing, to answer the following research questions:

1. *How effectively did the UK social housing sector adapt to hybrid working? and*
2. *How might this impact productivity and performance in future?*

Five social housing organisations in England took part in the research, two of which could be considered 'large' social housing organisations (around 30,000 to 35,000 properties), two 'medium' (around 5,000 to 6,000 properties); and one 'small' (around 1,500 properties). The research builds on two earlier pieces of work: the first explored employee perceptions of adapting to working from home in the early phases of lockdown and the second explored tenants' expectations and perceived experiences of service performance part-way through the pandemic. This third piece of work took place as we emerged from the pandemic regulations in autumn 2021. It began with scoping interviews conducted with each of the five housing organisations. These were held with either the Director or a Senior Manager, who had knowledge and awareness of their organisations' approach to hybrid working in strategic and operational contexts. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed, then summarized to a one-page document, anonymized and re-shared with participants in the form of a report.

The interviews were used to generate a questionnaire survey for social housing employees, in line with Palvalin et al's (2015) Tool, the conservation of resources theory and practice theory. The questionnaire consisted of up to 40 questions (depending upon question routing depending upon answers provided) of which 10 were free text questions and the survey was conducted online and created using Snap Survey software. Questionnaires were circulated as an online survey in-house by each individual social housing organisation. The sample size was 1754 employees who were responsible for managing a combined total of 77,500 social housing properties across England.



1  
2 Overall, 723 responses were obtained for the final questionnaire. Of this, 614 responses were usable in the  
3  
4 analysis following robust data cleaning; 515 responses were complete and 99 were partial, but answered  
5  
6 the majority of the questions, hence 614 responses were used to conduct the majority of the analysis. This  
7  
8 represents a 35% response rate overall, which is considered a good response rate in survey research and  
9  
10 provides a  $\pm 3.19$  confidence interval based upon a 95% confidence level. Additionally, a total of 1,335 free  
11  
12 text responses were also obtained in the survey.

13  
14 The scoping interviews elicited surprisingly similar views around the use of office space pre- and post-  
15  
16 pandemic despite the relative differences in organisation size, as well as utilizing similar language /  
17  
18 semantics and ongoing organisational challenges. All described pre-pandemic initiatives that they had  
19  
20 undertaken to re-evaluate the office-based work location due to under-utilization and a desire to offer  
21  
22 more flexible and / or agile work opportunities for employees. Most organisations used these two terms  
23  
24 interchangeably but recognized that initially this had been envisaged locationally, whereas latterly it was  
25  
26 accepted that flexibility of timing and hybrid working were also required. Examples of organisational  
27  
28 responses include:

29  
30 ***Quote from Organisation A***

31  
32 “For us, the drivers of change are to provide better services and more flexibility for staff, but to also  
33  
34 look at organisational flexibility – moving to a leased environment means we can more easily shrink  
35  
36 or grow depending upon the needs of the business. So, the space becomes more agile too.”

37  
38 ***Quote from Organisation B***

39  
40 “Back in 2018, we removed the concept of core hours and flexi-time, and worked on the basis that,  
41  
42 subject to business needs, people can organise their working patterns around their own  
43  
44 commitments in a way they feel is most productive for them.”

45  
46 ***Quote from Organisation C***

47  
48 “The greatest realization on our journey over the last 18 months was that when we started, we  
49  
50 thought agile working was all about location. But as we’ve progressed, we’ve realised that’s only a  
51  
52 very small part of the overall offering, and it’s more about how people do their job most effectively,  
53  
54 not necessarily where they do it.”

55  
56 ***Quote from Organisation D***

57  
58 “About 18 months before the pandemic, we had an agile working project looking at how we could  
59  
60 work in different places to meet customers’ needs – from home, the office, or going out meeting  
61  
62 customers. So we’d made in-roads into people working more flexibly before the pandemic, but it  
63  
64 wasn’t across the board and it wasn’t anywhere near the level as seen during the pandemic.”

65  
66 Four of the five organisations noted challenges in maintaining collaboration opportunities as staff worked  
67  
68 remotely; some of them described the renovation of office space for ‘hot desking’ and ‘collaborative /

1 hybrid working' whereas the fifth recognized this as a challenge to be overcome. One organisation also  
2  
3 noted leadership challenges due to its relative invisibility in being away from the central office location.  
4  
5 These findings plus Palavalin et al's (2015) Tool, conservation of resources theory and practice theory, were  
6  
7 all used to inform the questions for the survey.  
8  
9

## 10 **5.0 Results**

11  
12 The quantitative responses and open-ended questions were analyzed and grouped into the four constructs  
13  
14 of Palvalin et al's (2015) Tool (from Figure 1), as presented below.

### 15 16 17 ***Performance Drivers: Contextual Factors***

18  
19 Employees reported working predominantly from home (93.9%); given the context of moving towards the  
20  
21 end of the government-imposed lockdowns, this indicates that many staff were content maintaining this  
22  
23 approach. Other locations such as a Head Office were reasonably popular too (41.9%) and interestingly,  
24  
25 locations such as cafes, libraries and even cars were also identified. Such diverse locations require mobile  
26  
27 technologies and potentially a mixture of both organisational and personal devices, although this was not  
28  
29 explicitly asked. It does however, raise issues of cyber security for organisations.

### 30 31 ***Performance Drivers: Personal Ways of Working***

32  
33 The diversity of working location *preferences*, infers a strong desire for personal choice with the home  
34  
35 featuring most highly (58.3%) and agile working being second (28.7%). Thus, these two account for 87% of  
36  
37 the total preferred working approaches. Lone working appeared as both a benefit (increased productivity  
38  
39 from fewer distractions, 76.6%) and a challenge (social isolation, 43.8%); this straddles the 'performance  
40  
41 drivers' and 'outcomes' elements of Palvalin et al's (2015) Tool in recognizing both personal choice and  
42  
43 simultaneously impacts upon well being. This is supported by some of the open questions:

44 " ... office work makes you feel more of a team whereas home working is lonely."

45 "If done incorrectly [it can be] bleak and isolated. If done correctly [it can be] a positive work-life  
46  
47 balance."

48  
49 Individuals' perceptions of their *own best practices* associated with hybrid working were captured via free  
50  
51 text questions and were analyzed thematically around:

- 52 • Self organisation (e.g. work structure and ensuring down-time)
- 53 • Keeping in touch with colleagues
- 54 • Productivity (e.g. boundaries on scheduling team meetings and working on documents  
55  
56  
57  
58 asynchronously)

- Effectiveness (optimizing when to work, e.g. around childcare, whilst also coordinating at the team level)
- Sustaining a customer focus and
- Data / IT security (e.g. if working in public spaces).

Many also reported working longer hours than contracted, with 40.7% stating that this happens on a regular basis. Whilst this is difficult to verify without further data, it likely reflects elements of working during traditional commute time with one employee noting a benefit of their adaptable working times as:

“Being able to meet a customer's needs by making a teatime telephone call due to not needing to commute”

Some respondents indicated challenges in switching off from work (22.6%) which longer term may raise issues around the risk of burnout being invisible until it is too late. This links directly with Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources theory.

### ***Results and Outcomes of work: Well-being***

By far the most significant outcome and perceived benefit of home-working was the reduction in commute time (85.8%). A further positive consequence of this was reported as increased personal and / or family time (63.0%). In addition, respondents noted increased productivity resulting from fewer distractions (76.6%) and increased personal / physical health (67.4%).

Overwhelmingly respondents indicated improvements to their work-life balance (WLB), with 473 (90.4%) reporting that hybrid working fitted their everyday life. Many also believed that hybrid working is now here to stay (58.7%) with expectations for the next 3-5 years manifesting in more hybrid working and collaborative office space being made available. For some (1.5%) this did not fit well with their personal requirements and it is clearly important to acknowledge their challenges; possible sources of this included fuel poverty and family circumstances.

The suddenness with which individuals' work habits became invisible inevitably bred uncertainty. However, staff reported positively with respect to trust from line managers, as well as levels of autonomy over their own work. 456 respondents (87.4%) agreed that they felt trusted by their managers; only 19 (3.6%) disagreed, which is remarkable given this context. A sense of autonomy over one's work was also reported positively, with 68% agreeing that they perceive they do have autonomy compared to 5.9% who perceived they did not.

1  
2 Interestingly, the level of support from managers was experienced more positively than the support  
3 provided at the organisational level (81.9% versus 75.2%). This likely reflects that organisational systems  
4 had not been designed for remote / home working en masse and some discontinuities were still being  
5 experienced.  
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### 10 **Results and Outcomes of work: Productivity**

11 Reflecting on our previous studies, respondents perceived increases in personal productivity from 59.8%  
12 June 2020, to 73.3% in September 2021. This was markedly less positive in the context of organisational  
13 productivity however, with only 44.9% indicating productivity increases at the organisational level, up from  
14 40.8% in 2020. The lower productivity figures at the organisational level are worthy of further  
15 consideration and are noted in our call for future research. It may reflect lower awareness among  
16 individual employees, lower visibility and / or communication problems. For example, communication with  
17 co-workers was considered a key challenge of hybrid working by 46.3% of respondents and from the  
18 organisation (i.e. cascaded information) was considered challenging by 28.5% of respondents.  
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27 Respondents reported broad agreement (73.4%) that consistency of service output had been maintained  
28 firstly through the transition to home working, then more recently through the transition to hybrid  
29 working. However, overall service quality was perceived as having deteriorated by 26.9% and anecdotally,  
30 the pandemic was still being used to explain any poor service levels or delays. The majority agreed that  
31 customer centricity was still the primary focus for their organisation (73.4%) however.  
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37 An issue worth noting is employee perceptions of inequity regarding the allocation of, or ability to choose  
38 to adopt, hybrid working arrangements (21.0%). This recognizes that some would have preferred to work  
39 this way but couldn't, as well as others actively preferring *not* to adopt hybrid working. This is quite  
40 concerning and important to review within a future research agenda.  
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45 Respondents' perceptions of the impact on career progression was less certain, with proportionately more  
46 (30.1%) expressing 'neither agree / disagree'. This may reflect that any impact upon employee progression  
47 would manifest over a longer period of time than reported here and hence, could again constitute a future  
48 piece of research. It would be important to establish whether the perceived inequity above is linked to  
49 perceptions of career progression, or something else. In a similar way, 'recognition and reward for good  
50 employee performance' was reported with mixed views. 48.3% reported positively i.e. that they agreed,  
51 but 29.1% disagreed, which is arguably high.  
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To summarize, Palvalin et al's (2015) Tool has proven to be a helpful way of structuring the data gathering as well as connecting with wider theories to strengthen our arguments. The next section will explore this further in terms of the implications of findings to practice and contribution to the wider academic literature.

## 6.0 Discussion

Our empirical analysis was used to answer the following research questions using a reflective practice approach:

1. *How effectively did the non-profit English social housing sector adapt to hybrid working? and*
2. *How might this impact productivity and performance in future?*

It illuminates several benefits and challenges to the adoption of hybrid working, which emerged from the remote working / home working instruction instigated during the recent pandemic. Our findings indicate that employees feel positive about hybrid working, but also caution against certain elements going forwards. Reclaimed time, primarily from reduced commuting time, was welcomed by the majority and was perceived to increase work-life balance whilst also resulting in feelings of increased personal productivity. In addition, employees indicated high levels of trust from managers that they would 'get the job done' and had reasonable autonomy to do so.

The organisational challenges of managing staff remotely, whilst delivering effective leadership and transparent processes for career development and promotion remain substantial. Simultaneously, team and organisational cohesion were acknowledged as requiring review. Both the qualitative scoping interviews and quantitative survey results indicated the need to facilitate 'purposeful' face-to-face team time whereby staff would arrange to meet in person when needed, but not be expected to work within the office 'just in case'. We suggest that this will pose one of the more challenging elements of hybrid working in future, with both direct and indirect impacts on organisational productivity and performance.

We propose that the nature of hybrid working i.e. the ability to work from different locations and times, requires an agile organisational response in the form of agile HR. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, although the terms 'flexibility' and 'agility' are frequently used together, we take Abdelilah et al's (2018) view that flexibility is a sub-set of agility, the latter having a more strategic and organisation-wide (or system-wide) focus. Secondly, the concept of "agile HR" is relatively new and likely to be instrumental in supporting hybrid working arrangements for the foreseeable future, due to the environmental uncertainty afforded by the pandemic and the challenge of HR practices to adapt accordingly (McMackin and

1  
2 Heffernan, 2021). However linking more broadly with longer term financial performance, the impact of  
3 hybrid working practices remains unclear at the time of writing. Reduced costs of owning or renting prime  
4 office space is clearly tangible. However, the financial impact of agile HR and other performance targets  
5 requires further research.  
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10 Our findings have further impact for the non-profit English social housing sector in relation to customer  
11 service. Adopting an agile HR approach may enable social housing associations to tailor employee working  
12 preferences within individual tenants' needs, thus improving existing service performance by responding to  
13 and / or reaching out to tenants in more flexible ways.  
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18 Furthermore, whilst our empirical focus has been the non-profit English social housing sector, our  
19 extension of Palvalin et al's (2015) Tool is appropriate for any sector embarking upon hybrid models of  
20 working and wanting to better understand the implications for both individual and organisational  
21 productivity and performance. Thus we argue that our findings are highly generalizable.  
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## 26 **7.0 Conclusion**

27 Here we present our contribution and central arguments. Theoretically we make two core contributions.  
28 Firstly, we answer Palvalin et al's (2015) call to extend their Smart Ways of Working Tool. We do this in two  
29 ways: i) by applying it beyond the knowledge work sector and ii) by extending it to perceptions of  
30 organisational level productivity, not just individual levels. Secondly, we develop theoretical underpinnings  
31 to Palvalin et al's (2015) Tool by integrating practice theory and the conservation of resources theory, as  
32 illustrated in Figure 5 which this has strengthened to Tool theoretically. In addition, our empirical data also  
33 impacts the HR discipline through the phenomenon of agile HR, which is currently still in its infancy  
34 (McMackin & Heffernan, 2021).  
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44 Our data demonstrates that implications for individual productivity are vastly more understood than at the  
45 organisational level. We therefore call for further research into the longitudinal affect of hybrid working on  
46 organisational productivity and performance. Organisational performance implications from hybrid  
47 working are still likely skewed by responses to both the speed with which home working had to be  
48 embraced and also the associated seismic shift in organisational work processes. Work backlogs and  
49 financial austerity are two clear legacies of the pandemic which, until they recede, make organisation-level  
50 outcomes more difficult to interpret.  
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56 Our specific focus here was the non-profit English social housing sector. Historically tenants have been less  
57 digitally connected, but fast-forward just a few years and this is likely to be substantially reduced. Thus,  
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59

1  
2 being able to offer digital services and greater access to out-of-hours services will drive service  
3  
4 performance improvement and benefit the tenant of the future. In fact, the opportunity to better serve  
5  
6 customers in this way could elicit a step-change in organisational performance at a critical time when the  
7  
8 sector is still reeling from highly evocative cases criticizing the lack of tenant voice.  
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Figures and Tables

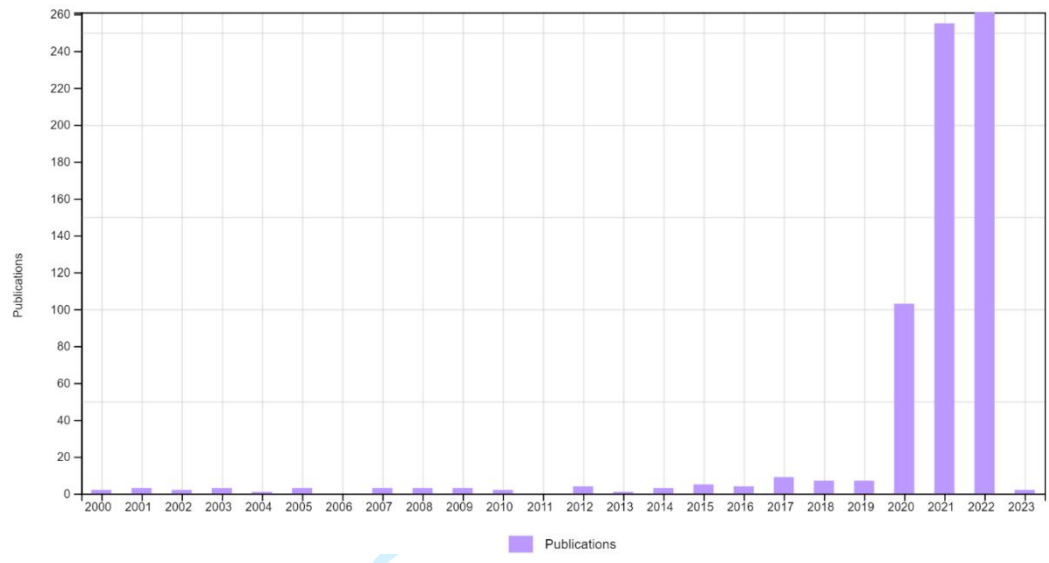


Figure 1: Numbers of publications per year using search string "remote working" in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23)

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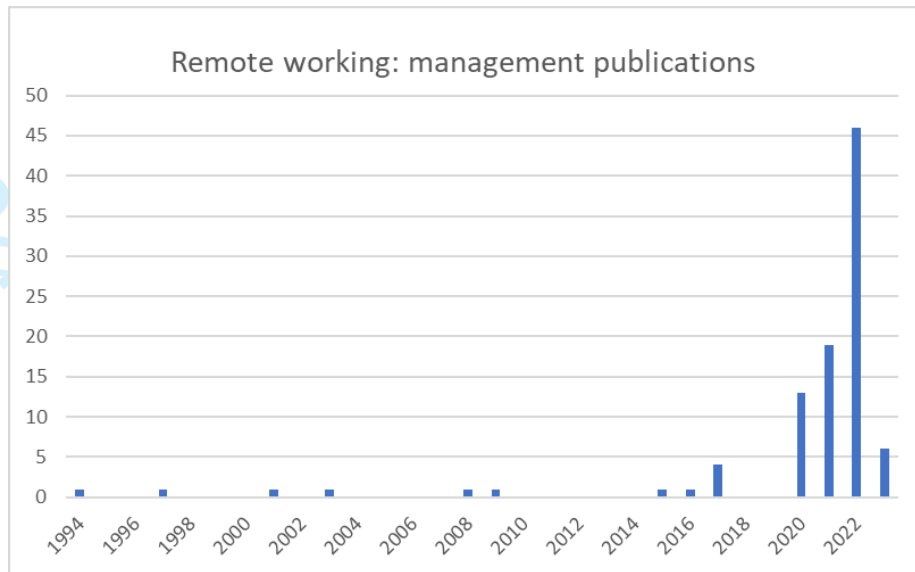


Figure 2: Numbers of publications per year in the management discipline, using search string "remote working" in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23).

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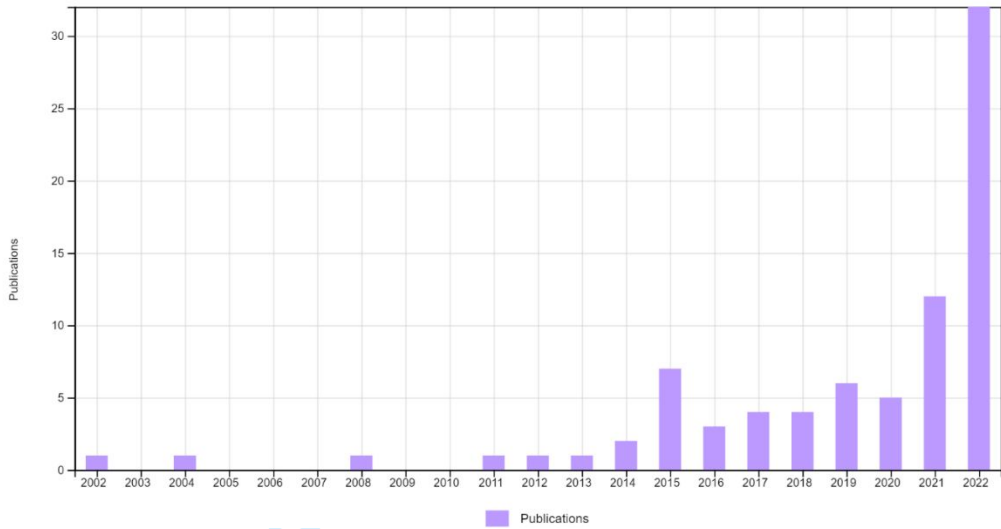


Figure 3: Numbers of publications per year using search string “hybrid working” in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23)

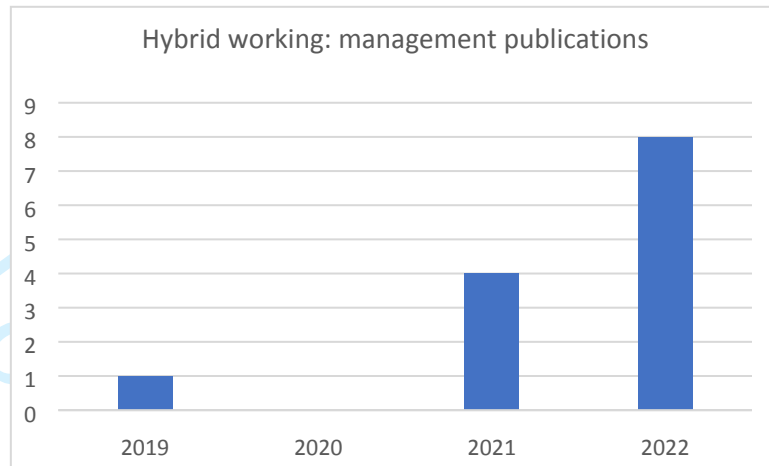


Figure 4: Numbers of publications per year in the management discipline, using search string “hybrid working” in Web of Science (searched 12/04/23).

PLACE FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

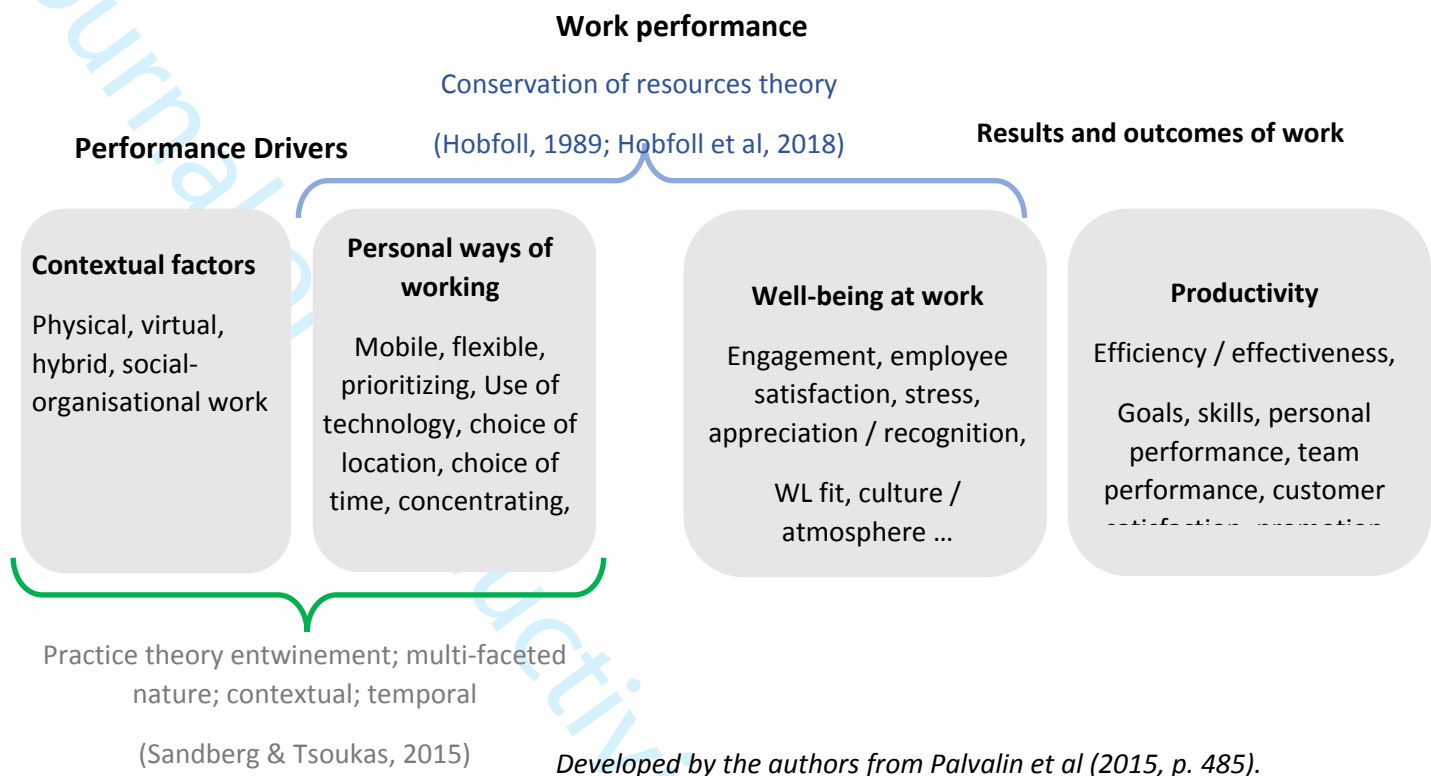


Figure 5 – Smarter Ways of Working tool

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**Table 1 – Overview of publications from IJPPM on ‘remote working’**

Two-page thought pieces	Franks, J. (1998)	
	Anon (2004)	
	Daniels, S. (1998)	
Employee behaviours	Helms & Raiszadeh (2002)	Managing teamwork & productivity
	Fernando et al (2022)	Employee behaviour
	Sandhya and Sulphrey (2021)	Employee engagement and turnover
Performance	Hinton & Barnes (2009)	Performance measurement
	Palvalin et al (2015)	Performance analysis