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OPTIMISED FLEXIBLE WORKING COULD ADD £BILLIONS TO UK ECONOMY

- New Flex Factor report shows how UK employers and workers could enjoy huge productivity gains and cost savings from enhanced flexible working
- Findings reveal a robust statistical link between adopting better ways of working and overall organisational performance

UK organisations could enjoy cost reductions and productivity gains running up to £8.1bn, or 0.5% of GDP, by optimising their approach to flexible working*, according to a report published today by the think tank RSA and Vodafone UK. The potential net value of £8.1bn is the same amount it would cost to build 400 new secondary schools or employ over 200,000 nurses per year.

The Flex Factor, based on a national survey of 2,828 employees and employers, finds that employees estimate they could gain on average five productive hours per week (for instance from commuting) through better ways of working, which equates to around £4,200 per employee per year.**

While the majority (77%), of UK employees work in organisations that offer some kind of flexible working, more than one in ten (13%) who want to work flexibly aren't being offered it, or don't know they can ask for it. The report reveals that better ways of working are a key driver of productivity, performance and organisational innovation as well as employee satisfaction and wellbeing. Sixty-four per cent of those with experience of flexible working say it has enhanced their job satisfaction – providing tangible evidence that personal and performance benefits are closely linked.

The Flex Factor challenges the private, public and voluntary sectors to invest in better ways of working to reduce costs and optimise space, time and resources.

Jeroen Hoencamp, Enterprise Director at Vodafone UK said: *"The traditional workplace is dead and British business needs to adopt a new mind-set and find better ways of working. Better ways of working means more than what business today has classed as flexible working. It is far more than just working from home it's about from wherever your business needs to be. These findings reveal that, with an optimised approach, businesses can overcome any downsides and greatly increase efficiency and productivity, as well as boost their bottom line."*

The report states that to realise the full benefits, there needs to be a culture of mutual trust and commitment between employers and employees. It's a psychological contract and success is achieved when both personal and organisational benefits are recognised.

Hoencamp, added: *"We want to see organisations and their employees work well and live well. In the global race for growth, organisations should embrace better ways of working consciously as a strategy for success as opposed to ignoring them. Companies can see real, tangible benefits by taking this approach, as this research demonstrates."*

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Julian Thompson, Director of Enterprise at the RSA added: *"Our report aims to capture some of the value better ways of working can bring at all levels of the economy. It's got to be something that organisations and employees develop together as part of a strategy to increase the value of their work."*

"Our findings show that there is no 'one size fits all' approach, and that there are costs to be considered. But enabling people to work flexibly can make a significant difference to our economic and social prosperity, both now and in the future."

The Flex Factor highlights some of the costs and downsides associated with flexible working, but also the real benefits, not just to the organisational bottom line, but also in terms of wider society and even the environment.

The research finds that better ways of working is linked to better use of employee skills, innovation and personal productivity. By harnessing this potential our economy could become more competitive, innovative and effective.

The report shows:

- In total, allowing the 13% of employees who want to work flexibly right now to do so has a potential net value of £8.1 billion to the UK economy, once costs are taken into consideration:
 - Productive hours gained: £6.9bn net potential gain per year (based on closing that 13% adoption gap and an conservatively estimated 50% implementation cost)
 - Workstation and printing savings: £1.2bn per year (based on closing the 13% adoption gap and an 11% reduction in office time, meaning reduced workstation and print overheads, at a conservatively estimated 50% implementation cost)
- 77% of employees work in organisations that offer flexible working, of which half have formalised their practices
- Investment in computing hardware and software is driving flexible working, enabling people to connect with colleagues, knowledge and ideas quickly and effectively wherever they are and whenever they need to
- 46% of employers provide their employees with access to a work laptop, one in four employers provide a smartphone and one in ten are now providing tablet computers

<http://www.vodafone.co.uk/cs/groups/public/documents/webcontent/vftst042192.pdf>

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