

Is working from home a good idea?

I am not going to condemn all working at home. It would be hypocritical to do so, as I often work from home. That saves time battling bad transport systems and allows me to work without interruptions or distracting noise.

Going to the office regularly is needed to socialise ideas, keep in direct contact with colleagues, be there to mentor and advise new recruits and to have informal meetings to exchange ideas and keep up to date with problems.

Getting this balance right is difficult. Done well by people with a good work ethic part working from home raises productivity. As much office work is filling in and drafting things on a computer you can do that as well from home as the office without the wasted travel time. Done badly where home distracts the employee with many other things and they miss the trends, ideas and problems going to the office would let them pick up.

Each senior manager needs to work out when and where collaborative working in person is needed and when working from home might boost productivity. In a mixed business where some employees need to be the workplace every working day there is even more need to come to a fair settlement over home working for those who can.

My observation of central government post Covid was that offices were too empty. Meetings with Ministers often saw the MP, Minister and private Secretary in the same room but the senior officials at home. Clearly taxpayers are paying a lot of money for large swathes of expensive central London office accommodation which is not used. Use it or lose it.