Today I dialled into the Alliance for Finance session on ‘The Future of Work’. This was really insightful and was great to hear what some external thoughts on what working practices will look like from June and beyond. I’ve shared some key points below, but an also happy to discuss the session if anyone would like.

There should be a recording available and slides from the session to follow – I’ll share these when they’re available.

**Unions 21**

As a general trend, unions have seen accelerated rates of membership in the pandemic.

Lots are evaluating their rates and focussing on member retention

Successful unions reflect

Challenges / benefits identified:

* How to continue to access workplaces
* Being visible when people are working remotely
* Are subscription rates and models fit for purpose going into a hybrid model?
* How representative of the workforce are the union / reps? Are we getting a skewed view of issues?
* Do we rely on interpersonal communication too much? Have we adapted to virtual? (e.g. can’t ‘kick member under table to tell them to stop talking’!)
* Zoom fatigue – how do we deal with this in formal meetings?
* People more likely to participate in the union (attend conferences etc.) if accessible virtually

Consider:

New agreements around right to disconnect, data

**Gregor Gall (professor in industry relations)**

Regular home working has increased from 6% to 12%. As move towards 21 June, it looks as though this will be the turning point where employers consider next steps.

No available data on home working by sector.

Pros / Cons of WFH

No commute, more leisure time.

Length or working day /intensity of work increased due to technology.

Degree of presenteeism taking place, e.g. feel should be available. Less breaks, informal chats. Socail isolation. Zoom fatigue.

Unions to be aware of:

* Hybrid models: how would these be agreed and how often would they be revised?
* Little evidence of engagement with the workforce on future plans
* What are the criteria for being allowed to wfh?
* What requirement will employers have for staff wfh, e.g. work environment, security? Will this favour middle class households over working class?
* What are you allowed to do at home that isn’t work. E.g. water cooler moments?
* What monitoring / tracking will there be?
* Will cameras be optional or mandatory?
* Reports that people are taking less sick leave now.
* Detriment to mental health / sleep patterns / work-home separation
* Potential for indirect discrimination, e.g. colleagues in the office might be seen more favourably, develop more
* Employers savings a lot on costs – need to make sure employees aren’t subsiding this e.g. with increased heating/electric
* Will there be a 2 tier workforce, i.e. home working (back office) and office/branch (customer facing) and how will this affect development?

Comment from someone at Santander:

Santander are closing 4 sites and reducing and subletting 4 other sites by the end of the year. Staff on those sites are being offered a dual location contract or VR. Dual location involves mostly home working with attending an office hub 1 or 2 times a month for team meetings/collaboration. We have negotiated a £500 allowance per year for colleagues signing up to the dual location contract, £500 in year 1 paid up front. Yr 2 onwards as a monthly payment to cover ongoing costs.

**Nationwide**

13k out of 18k colleagues wfh

57% Colleagues want to wfh permanently, and want a decision on future so can make big choices e.g. moving house

6% want office working permanently

The rest want a hybrid

Nationwide – future of work report (link)

Key themes:

Workplace inequality (e.g. quality of home office space)

Covid generation – new starters / graduates losing valuale on the job experience

Nationwide commitments

Be led by the work

Recruit where the talent is (historically HO roles were limited to HO locations)

Make meetings work, e.g. if one person has to be virtual, all should be virtual

Invest in workplaces – always provide a desk for those who need it

Wellbeing becomes a norm – don’t lose the focus

More we listen, the more we learn (employee feedback)

Nationwide trialled a ‘Teams free time’ in the winter where they blocked out time in the middle of the day for no calls / meetings.

Commitments are or everyone – don’t want to create a divide between customer facing and ‘knowledge workers’

Want to keep the great culture they have

Talking to colleagues every day / keeping the conversation going

Colleagues appreciating the openness