Business as Usual?
Recovering from Covid-19

September 2020

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Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted all areas of life. Lockdown measures introduced to control the outbreak resulted in a seismic shift in where and how we work, with many organisations having to rapidly adopt remote working or place large numbers of people on furlough.

While the pandemic has affected everyone, it has not affected everyone equally. Evidence has shown that some groups are at greater risk from the virus itself, and others remain particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts, that we are yet to see the full extent of.

In a crisis, it can be easy for the focus on equality to diminish as governments and organisations focus on responding to what are regarded as urgent issues.

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Introduction

This loss of focus on equality is a significant issue. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted how unequal our society, workplaces and economy still are. These inequalities are not inevitable, but do leave groups such as women, people of colour and the disabled, at greater risk.

£13.6 BILLION
could be added to Wales' economy through gender equality

It's therefore all the more important to consider how our immediate response to the crisis, and plans for longer term change, will impact on different groups and how we can seize this opportunity to tackle the root causes of inequality.

Not only will this help to ensure that in the future such crises do not impact unfairly on some parts of the population, but it will also enable us to harness the full potential of equality, boosting our economic resilience and delivering greater well-being for all.

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5%

UK employers putting diversity and inclusion in their top three HR priorities during lockdown, compared with 14% previously (CIPD, 2020)

27%

of Inclusion and Diversity leaders reporting that their organisation's have put all or almost all Inclusion and Diversity initiatives on hold due to the pandemic (McKinsey & Co., 2020).

The impact of Covid-19 on Women

68% Of key workers are women in Wales

77%

98%

There are over 3 million people in jobs at high risk of exposure to Covid-19 in the UK, and 77% of these are women, and of the million of these workers that are low-paid, 98% are women (Women's Budget Group, 2020).

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The impact of Covid-19 on Ethnicity and risk

ONS data shows that people from Black, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian and Mixed and Multiple ethnic backgrounds are more likely to die from Covid-19 than people from White ethnic backgrounds.

48%

Female BAME workers are 48% more likely than female White workers to be employed in an occupation with a higher female mortality rate (ITV, 2020).

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Responding to the crisis

In April 2020 46.6% of people in employment did some work at home. Of these, 86% did so due to Covid-19. In Wales 40.7% worked from home. (ONS, 2020)

This move to home working has not been experienced in the same way by everyone.

According to McKinsey,
80% of people report that they enjoy working from home
41% say they are more productive
28% say they are as productive.

However, a study by GetApp reports that many people lacked proper technology for remote working that hindered success and productivity, with internet performance identified as a critical issue (Forbes, 2020).

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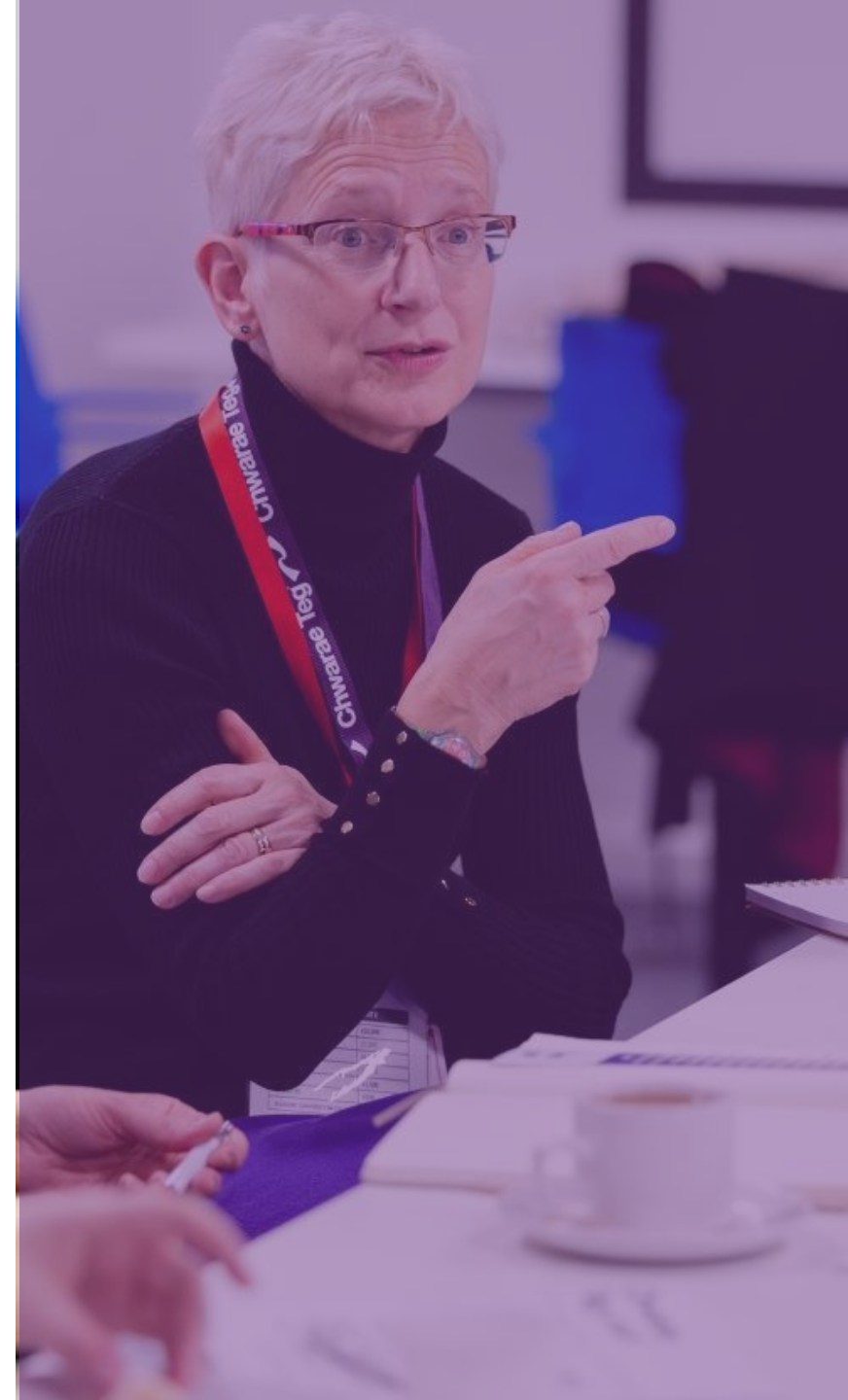
Challenges

- Technology
- Suitable Workspace
- Employee Engagement
- Remote Management
- Health & Safety
- Care
- Wellbeing & Mental Health

Opportunities

- Output focused approach
- Shift from presenteeism
- Increased productivity
- Increased resource
- Increased talent pool
- Inclusive approach and culture
- Reduce overheads for real estate

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Building back better for a fairer Wales

As the immediate impact of Covid-19 starts to recede thoughts have naturally moved to what we do next. People have begun to question whether a return to the old business as usual should be the goal, or whether we should think about how we can build back better.

The #buildbackbetter discussion cuts across many different issues including the climate emergency and equality.

We therefore need to seize this opportunity to shape a new normal for our post-Covid world, one based on flexibility, equality and inclusion.

We need to reimagine what our workplaces can and should look like, and embrace new ways of working that can contribute to wider efforts to break down barriers and tackle inequality.
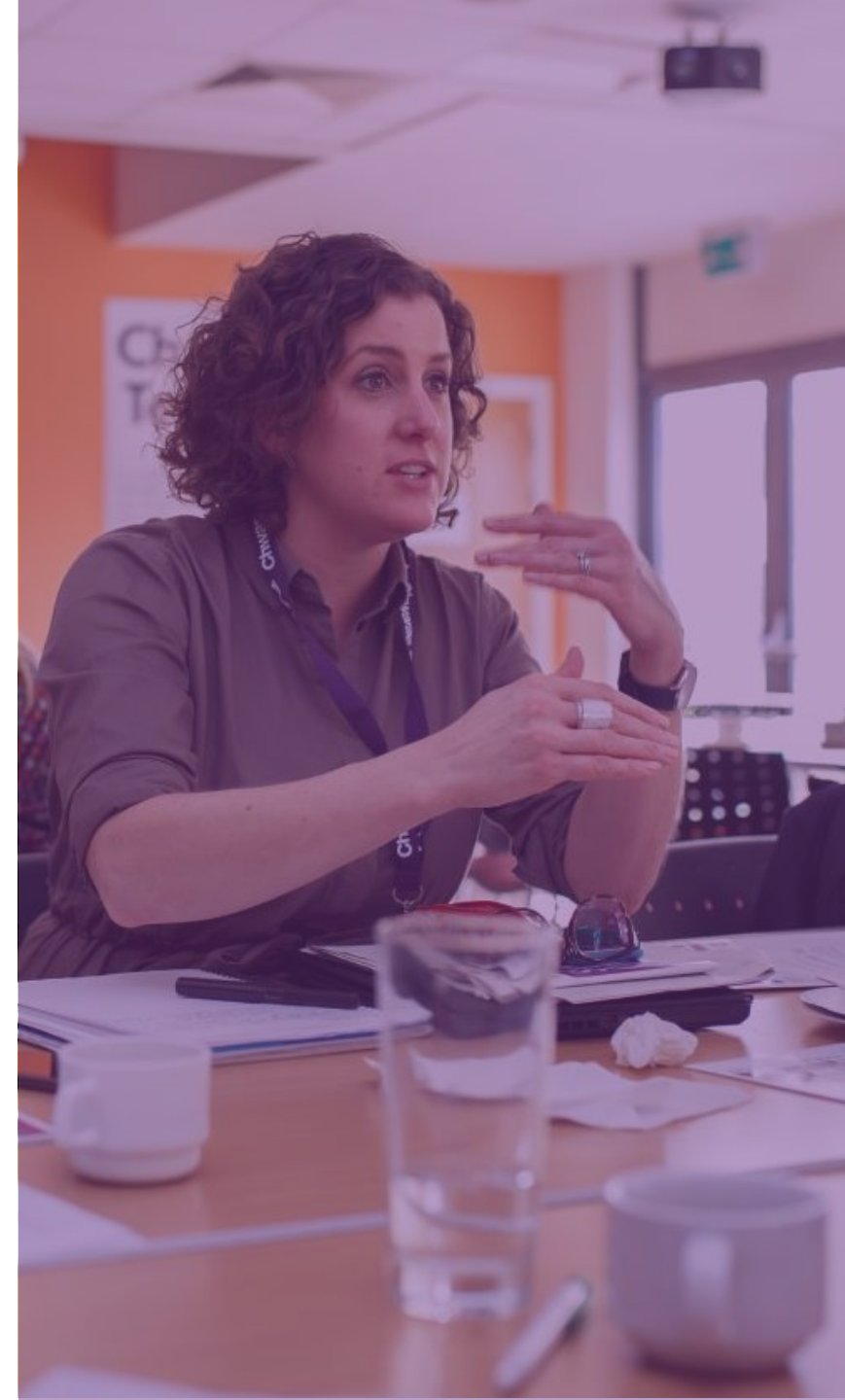
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How can we
#BuildBackBetter?

FAIRPLAY EMPLOYER AWARD

An innovative programme to support, connect and recognise organisations leading on inclusive growth

FAIRPLAY EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS

Empowering organisations with innovative best practice for inclusive growth and development

FAIRPLAY EMPLOYER LEADERSHIP

Inspiring and empowering equality driven leaders

Foundations for Success

The experiences of employers in Wales align with this wider thinking and help identify key areas for consideration as we ask fundamental questions about how we organise and structure work.

A focus on equality and inclusion

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on different groups is clear. Our recovery from the crisis must therefore address the causes of this unequal impact and do more to embed equality and inclusion into our new business as usual.

Flexibility

Hybrid working is likely to become the new normal, with many people being able to deliver their role through a mixture of home and office working. Moving from our old one-size-fits-all approach of being 100% office based, to a new one-size-fits-all of being 100% home based is unlikely to provide the flexibility needed to respond to different people's needs. Investing in a culture that empowers all staff to work in the way that enables them to be most productive will deliver huge benefits to employees and employers alike.

A focus on well-being

There has rightly been a focus on well-being during this crisis. This has not been simply a case of working from home. People have been at home working during one of the largest public health crises many of us will see in our lifetimes. The anxiety created by the pandemic, has been exacerbated for some with concerns about losing their jobs, the challenge of working while home-schooling and the difficulties of being isolated at home from friends and family. This focus on well-being must continue, to ensure that changes in how and where we work enhance well-being and do not disadvantage anyone.

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Foundations for Success

Leadership and Management

The importance of leadership and management in this shift cannot be overstated. Leadership styles will need to adapt, moving away from command and control and towards trust and empowerment. Managing remote teams is very different, and managers will likely need to be supported to adapt to this new normal. To achieve a seismic shift in how and where we work, there will also need to be wider changes in behaviour. Leaders will have a key role to play in modelling this behaviour.

Communication

In a remote working or hybrid environment, communication is key. Many informal connections and conversations take place in an office environment, which support collaboration, creativity and productivity. People can quickly feel isolated without interaction with colleagues and well-being can be negatively affected. New, and more frequent ways of communication may need to be implemented. This also presents an opportunity to break down silos between teams and different levels of management, and improve the visibility of senior managers.

Repurposing physical offices

This shift in how we work doesn't necessarily spell the end for the office. There are many benefits to be gained from enabling colleagues to come together. The purpose of the office will likely change though, to become a space more focused on collaboration and social connection. This should inform how we repurpose, and redesign these spaces.

Employee engagement and evidence-led approaches

For some, these kinds of changes will feel significant. People's home and work situations will differ and therefore changes to their workplaces will affect them differently. Employee engagement will be critical to ensure that changes are positive for the whole workforce, and to inform impact assessments. Evidence is our friend, to help us understand how various approaches are impacting people, and to prioritise changes that will support equality, inclusion and well-being.

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Checklist: Shaping a new normal

✓ Review changes made due to Covid-19 – engage staff and do an equality impact assessment

✓ Consider what the purpose of any physical office space should be

✓ Adapt policies and practice to support and empower staff to work more flexibly

✓ Train leaders to ensure they are able to model positive behavior and lead in an empathetic, trust-based way

✓ Train staff to ensure they are able to thrive in a new work environment and have the digital skills to engage with colleagues effectively

✓ Focus on culture and inclusion – changes in policy and practice alone will hinder success and risk leaving people behind

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Case Examples

Review

Stage 1: Process & Policy Review
Initial reviews of current policy and processes, including:
- Inclusive working practices process & policy review
- Focus Groups & Interviews with relevant parties i.e. employees, line managers, HR, SMT.
- Report & Feedback with suggestions for improvements

Stage 2: Implementation of amended Policy & Process
Implementation of updates and new policies, processes, including;
- Consultation to make improvements
- Process changes
- Policy Updates
- 1-1 Support for implementation

Stage 3: Training & Development
Training provided for staff and managers
- Workshop – Inclusive Working Practices – All Staff
- Workshop – Managing Inclusive Working Practices - Line Manager Training

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Case Examples

Focus Group

Embarking on a journey to implement inclusive working practices across your organisation can be daunting. Each business is unique and there is no off the shelf solution that can deliver what is best for your organisation and your employees.

Determine what is best for your organisation:

- Presentation – Understanding Inclusive Working Practices
- Focus Group – Determine where you are right now and as a leadership team discuss what options may work best for your organisation
- Report & Suggestions – Detailed and bespoke report summarising focus group discussions including suggestions for implementation and guidance for next steps.

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Case Examples

ROW Rollout

Establish and set up a results only working environment within your organisation.

Set up ROW environment
- Review Job Descriptions
- Agree SLAs
- Review Performance Management Policy & Process
- Write and embed ROW Policy

Launch ROW
- Overall introduction to ROW to all staff
- How to manage ROW teams to all managers
- How to manage self and well-being working on ROW to all staff

Establish a Charter for ROW
- Focus Group
- Charter

Case Examples

Benchmarking

Fairplay Employer Award

An innovative programme to support, connect and recognise organisations that are leading on inclusive growth.

- Equality & Diversity Survey
- Benchmark & Award
- In-depth Assessment Report & Feedback
- Action Plan
- Dedicated Account Management Support throughout journey
- Bespoke Consultancy - 10 hours
- Senior Leaders Forum
- Best Practice Reports
- Equality & Diversity Policy Review
- Fairplay Employer Award

FAIRPLAY EMPLOYER GOLD AWARD

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To start your FairPlay Employer journey, we will meet with you to discuss how we can work with your organisation.

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