

SUMMARY BRIEFING

SCSN 4-DAY WORKING

6 Month Pilot 2021/2022

BACKGROUND

In October 2021, after systematic consideration and discussion of gains and risks – to business and staff – the SCSN team began a 6 month pilot of 4-day working. Revised terms and conditions were agreed. The organisation’s principles and spirit of working were renewed and detailed in an updated ‘How We Will Work’ document. Directors, membership and strategic partners were consulted and informed of the conclusions.

Throughout the trial, staff completed regular short surveys. This recorded a baseline and, as the weeks progressed, measured changing perceptions of happiness and job satisfaction, physical and mental health, quality of work and environmental impacts. Staff also met periodically to share their experiences of the challenges and benefits.

In April 2022, SCSN completed the pilot and internal surveying was concluded. Partners completed anonymous questionnaires, speaking to their experiences. A social media poll was carried out.

EVIDENCE

Data collection was captured from several sources to help qualify findings and give confidence in conclusions drawn. But SCSN recognise the methodology could be improved with more time and resource, and some data are subjective. Evidence was collected from four perspectives: INTERNAL, EXTERNAL, ONLINE and ANECDOTAL.

- INTERNAL
70 unique staff surveys have been submitted by the staff team and assessed. Key insights include staff reporting **more motivation, increased wellbeing and better job satisfaction**. Perceptions of **quality of work and focus also improved**. There was a perception of slightly **increased workload and pressure**. More hobbies have reportedly been taken up and positive environmental activities were noted in free time.
- EXTERNAL
16 independent partners returned anonymous responses. The replies uniformly noted **no decreases in the quality, quantity or relevance of SCSN output**. Approximately 30% of respondents **reported an upturn in productivity**. Comments shared include:
 - *“I’ve not experienced a difference in the work - it’s as fabulous as it always was! From the outside I think there has been an improvement in the happiness levels of staff though.”*
 - *“I have not noticed any detriment to the service provided.”*
 - *“Any time I have had to contact the team I have had an immediate response and do not feel that the service has decreased in any way in the last 6 months - always excellent from the team!”*
- ONLINE
6 people took part in the online, anonymous Twitter poll of partners asking, ‘Have you noticed any negative changes in our engagement or output over the past 6 months?’. Zero replied ‘Yes’, 4 said ‘No’ and 2 picked ‘Not Sure’.

- ANECDOTAL

Day-to-day, staff received positive feedback from partners in conversation. The attitudinal reading of those with whom the team work suggests supportive, encouraging, positive reactions. But it is accepted that existing relationships may influence and skew these interpretations.

The two recent SCSN quarterly reports, 3 and 4 – and the annual core grant claim – were written and submitted during the trial period. Each document high volume, varied, quality work. This was noted in comments by the directors on their presentation, and is supported by the successful application of funds to government.

INFLUENCE

The staff understand that – done right; documented, evidenced and reported professionally – this pilot can reach others and influence change.

The team have published two blogs to date, with the final planned for release after presentation of this paper. Encouragingly, the Head of Operations at ‘WorkingRite’ – a Scottish charity with a staff of 22 – contacted SCSN after reading the blogs. They have since met with us, to learn about the practical application of 4-day working, and to use SCSN as a model for the implementation and design for their own pilot.

SCSN has spoken to the 4-day working experience at cross-sector webinars (hosted by Flexibility Works), sharing our learning and knowledge. And the team pro-actively engage partners, advocating where appropriate, a broad conversation on working culture and citizens’ relationships with work. It would appear that, since the global pandemic began, this is becoming increasingly important.

CONCLUSION

SCSN’s change to 4-day working has been successful. It demanded discipline and commitment from every staff member. Culture change is difficult. It was not easy in the early weeks, and it remains challenging at times today, but the costs are small when weighed against the improvements to life quality.

The staff team have met. They unanimously agreed, 4-day working has improved work and life satisfaction. They support that this change is made permanent.

SCSN is pleased to endorse 4-day working.