

House of Lords Select Committee inquiry on Home-based Working – submission by The Daphne Jackson Trust

Introduction:

The Daphne Jackson Trust is the UK's leading organisation dedicated to realising the potential of returners to research careers following a career break of two years or more taken for a family, caring or health reason. The Trust was established in 1992 in memory of Professor Daphne Jackson – the UK's first female Professor of Physics.

The Trust offers fellowships across all fields of research in universities, research institutions and industry across the UK and Republic of Ireland. It has supported over 500 individuals to return to research careers. Our fellowships are normally three years in length, part-time and based at universities and research institutes throughout the UK; we have worked with over 90 universities and research institutes. Fellows undertake a challenging research project and retraining programme. Up to 25 new fellowships are awarded each year, and over 60 are currently in place at host institutions, sponsored by a range of organisations. Without the Trust's Fellowship scheme, significant volumes of knowledge, talent and experience would be lost from the sector.

The Trust's responses to the questions raised in the submission are focused on the experiences of its fellows. All of our fellows work **part time** during their fellowship and a significant number of them continue to do when they return to work post-fellowship. Our submission focuses on questions 1 and 9.

Question 1 – challenges and opportunities of remote/hybrid working for workers

As returners to the workplace after time out for health or caring duties, the flexibility of remote/hybrid working allows our fellows to work effectively on a part-time basis. The demands of part-time work are rarely linear, and remote/hybrid working enables them to balance work with other life commitments.

Despite improvement in recent years (not least due to the impact of pandemic on patterns of work), too many individuals face push-back for wanting to work on a remote/hybrid or part-time basis, often expressed through familiar and regrettable tropes questioning commitment and an outdated focus on presenteeism over proven performance.

Question 9 – the wider consequences of remote/hybrid working at a national level

The adoption of and support for policies to facilitate flexible working enables employers to maximise the contribution of part-time workers both to individual organisations and the wider UK economy. This issue is particularly germane to research careers, most specifically those based within the subject areas of Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths, which face a significant and ongoing skills shortage.

The typical working life is changing significantly in response to societal and technological changes, with careers often extending to 45 years or more and punctuated by career breaks, the pivoting of individuals into new roles in other sectors and the necessary attendant retraining. In this scenario, society must embrace the reality that many more individuals may be part-time or adopt remote/hybrid working for elements for their careers, often before returning to full employment. All forms of work patterns and career evolution must be acknowledged and supported in order to ensure the full contribution of all to UK plc.