

# Your Working Experience Survey

March 2021



# Summary

## 1. New insights support what we knew about staff experience

- The most recent staff survey provides detailed insights from a large data-set, enabling us to have increased confidence in our initial research.
- We have confirmed staff views about the benefits and limitations of remote working, the impact of remote working on physical and mental wellbeing and ultimately, calls for more choice in when and where staff work going forward (to the extent possible within their roles).

## 2. Some difficulties experienced by staff have become more pronounced over time

- Staff are more likely to disagree that **relationships with colleagues and managers** had improved since working remotely now than in the previous staff survey in May 2020.
- While more staff report having **access to the equipment they need** than in May 2020, staff who have not (due to lack of space and other reasons) are now reporting an impact on their physical health (back pain etc).
- In previous research, a few staff had noted the **financial impact** of working from home. This was more pronounced in the October 2020 staff survey: many staff were concerned about heating and lighting costs as winter approaches.
- Staff are now asking for communication about longer-term plans for remote-working (summary point 6).



# Summary

## 3. Most staff are able to work remotely, but this varies greatly by function and by role

- 85% of surveyed staff said they could perform 'all' or 'most' of their role remotely; but 90% of staff in Organisation Development and People said they could perform 'all' of their remotely, compared to 35% in Children and Families.
- More than 1 in 5 (22%) of staff in Children and Families reported working predominately in an ECC office over the past three months, much higher than in other functions, which is causing anxiety and frustration for some of these staff.

Not all staff are working remotely; 7% reporting working predominately in ECC offices.

## 4. While staff attribute many benefits to remote working, there are also limitations

- The top benefits reported by staff were: lack of commute (73%), less safety risk - Covid (73%), flexibility (71%), saving money (65%) and an increased work-life balance (63%).
- The top limitations were: excessive screen time (60%), reduced social interaction (56%), limited relationships with colleagues (52%), limited access to printing (49%) and working more than set hours (39%).



# Summary

## 5. Working remotely works best when its by choice and not everyday

- Staff who report being instructed to work all of their time in an ECC office or all of their time at home often report significant discontent.
- Many staff asked for more flexibility in where (and when) they work: a hybrid model would address many of the limitations of remote working (such as social isolation, collaboration challenges) while maximising the benefits (improved work-life balance, reduced stress etc).

## 6. Staff are asking for further communication about what the future will hold

- Staff would like further communication on what future work models might look like. This will help them make decisions about the equipment they might need in the longer-term, and ensure their personal commitments are in order (i.e. childcare).
- Staff are sometimes unclear about what 'remote working' really means, erroneously thinking this means 'working from home': communicating these nuances to staff will reduce anxiety about being 'forced' to work from home in the future.



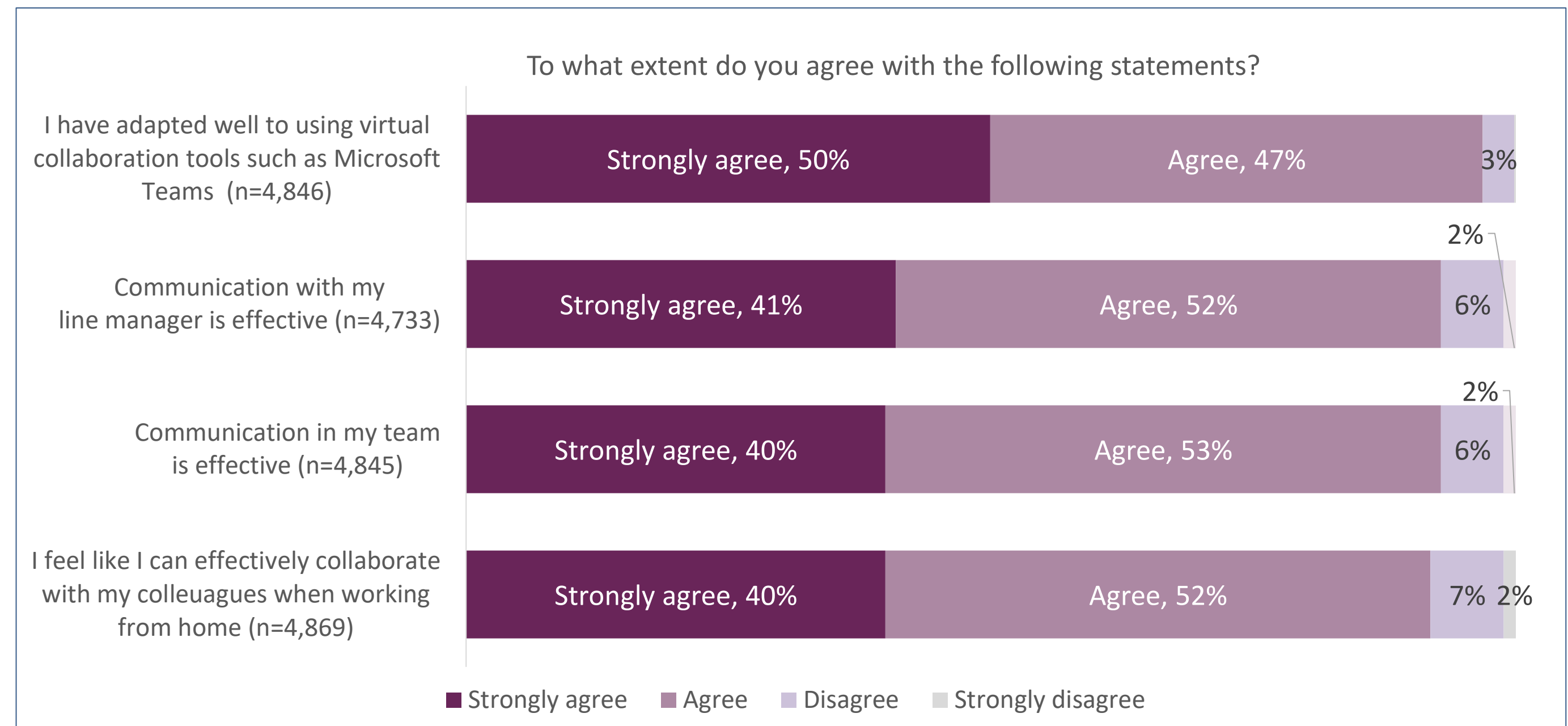
**Most staff can perform their job remotely, but this varies by function and by role**



# Most staff have adapted well to new work styles and tools, and to remote collaboration

More than **9 in 10 staff** agreed that they could collaborate effectively with their colleagues when working from home (91%), that communication in their team was effective (92%) and that they had adapted well to virtual collaboration tools (97%).

The staff who did not agree suggested the following supports: additional training in using virtual collaboration tools; guidance on how to communicate optimally in a virtual team; opportunities to meet with their team safely 'in real life' for collaborative activities.



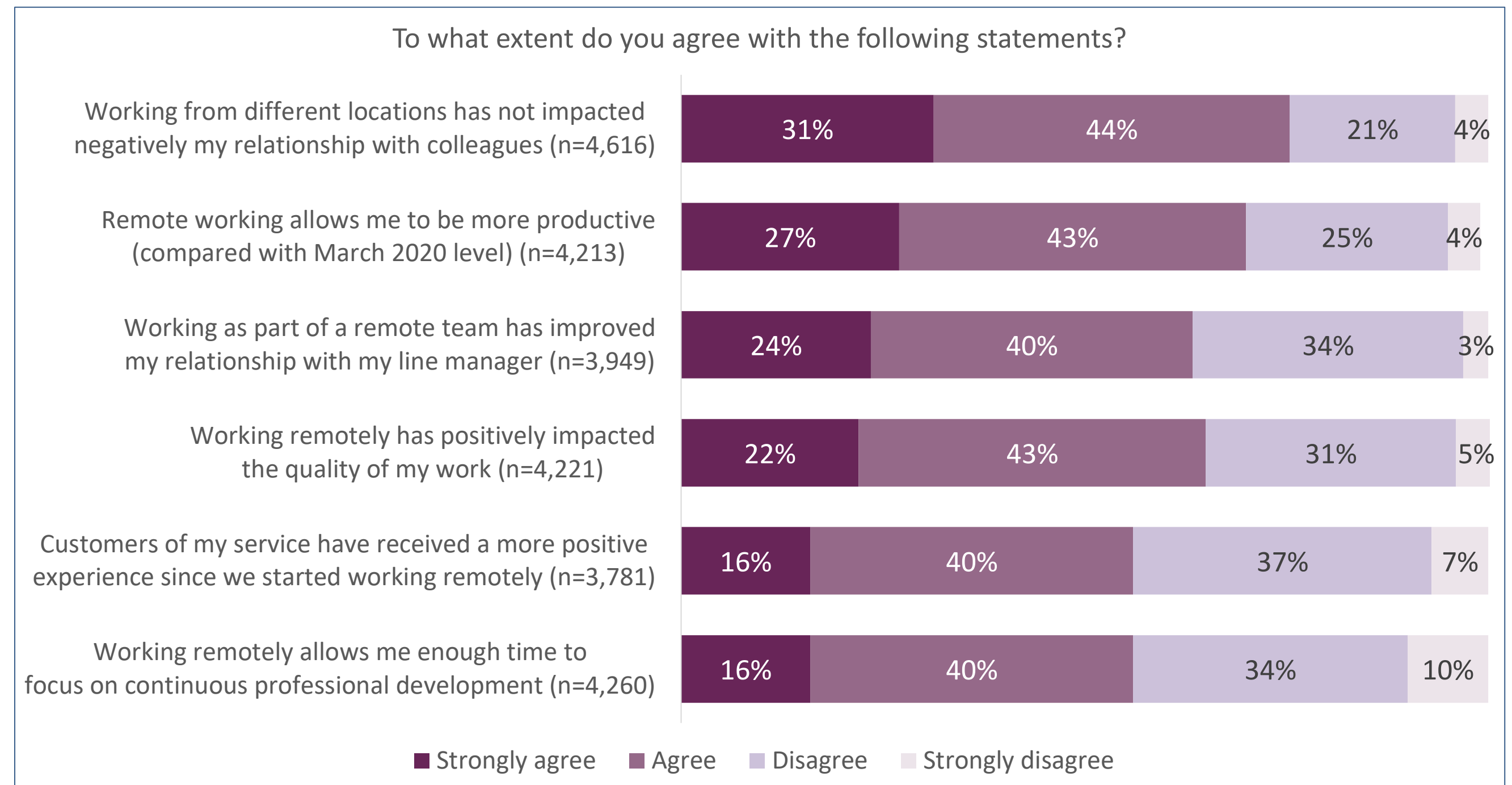
Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020. Percentages rounded to the nearest %. Blank and 'Not applicable' responses removed from analysis.



# It is not clear whether staff feel that their work quality, productivity, or working relationships have improved as a result of remote working

More than **4 in 10 staff** (44%) disagreed that customer experience had improved since we started working remotely. Similarly, staff did not always feel that remote working had allowed improvements to productivity, work quality, working relationships or time in professional development either.

However, it is not clear from these questions whether staff feel that these things were *worse* than before March 2020, or *had stayed the same* (although some further insights into staff views on productivity are on slide 25).



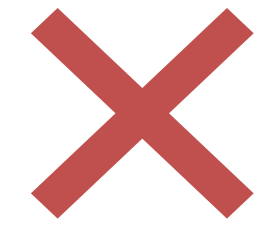
Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020. Percentages rounded to the nearest %. Blank and 'Not applicable' responses removed from analysis.

## Top 5 benefits reported by staff



1. Lack of commute - 73%
2. Less safety risk (COVID) – 73%
3. Flexibility – 71%
4. Saving £ - 65%
5. Work-life balance - 63%

## Top 5 limitations reported by staff



1. Excessive screen time - 60%
2. Reduced social interaction – 56%
3. Limited relationships with colleagues  
(incl. social learning) – 52%
4. Limited access to printing – 49%
5. Working more than set hours – 39%

These correlate with recent academic findings on experiences of remote working post Covid-19 (see slide notes)





# Experiences of remote working are mixed

Not all staff are enjoying remote working, which appears to be a result of personal factors such as:

- Access to the space, equipment and technology they need to work remotely
- The needs of their role (i.e. the need for supervision or emotional support in their role)
- Individual working styles and preferences

**“I think if I was forced to (work remotely) permanently then I would look for work elsewhere.”**

**“I have loved [working from home]: it’s been one of the positives that's come out of the pandemic.”**



# Staff want choice over work hours and locations (to the extent possible within their role)

Many staff asked for choice in where and when they work going forward, to facilitate the following benefits:

- To achieve a better work/life balance, reduce stress levels and improve morale.
- To enable more time and space to focus, and the right spaces to innovate and collaborate as needed, to increase their productivity and effectiveness.
- To combat limitations of home working, such as: loneliness, screen fatigue, feeling disconnected from colleagues and customers, poor home workspaces, and challenges in onboarding new staff.

Staff were realistic about the level of choice that could be afforded within their job role: those that would struggle to undertake their role across different locations or over flexible hours did not ask for this.

“I would like a better balance, to work from home most days but work in the office 1 day a week to a maximum of 2 days. This will balance out the isolation I feel at home.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



# Many staff report a home environment unsuitable for home working

“2 of us work for ECC and live in a small flat. We have no space for a dedicated office or desk.”

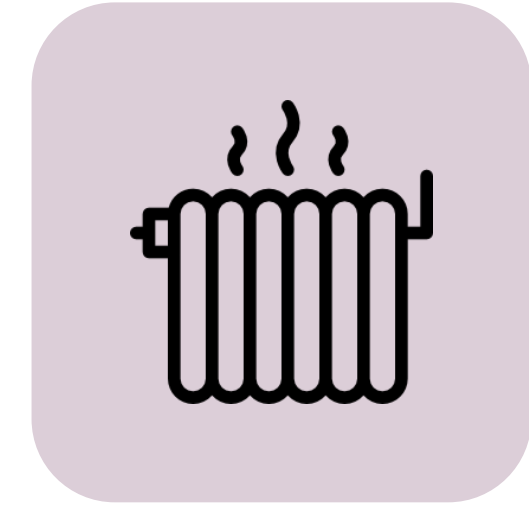
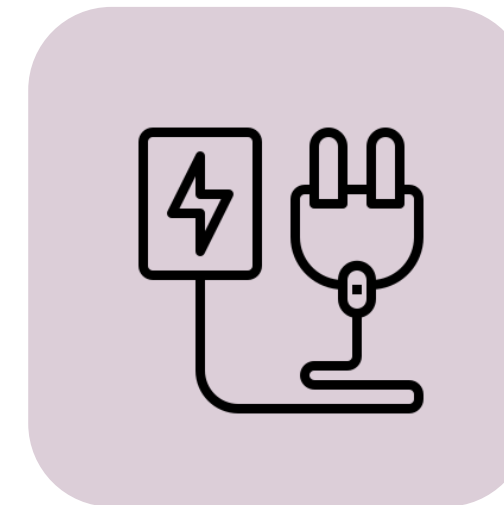
“I live with other people and so at times this can be very difficult - noise, distractions limited space.”

“I live in a one bedroom flat... Working in social care there are concerns regarding confidentiality.”

Source: staff survey, Oct 2020



# Financial considerations



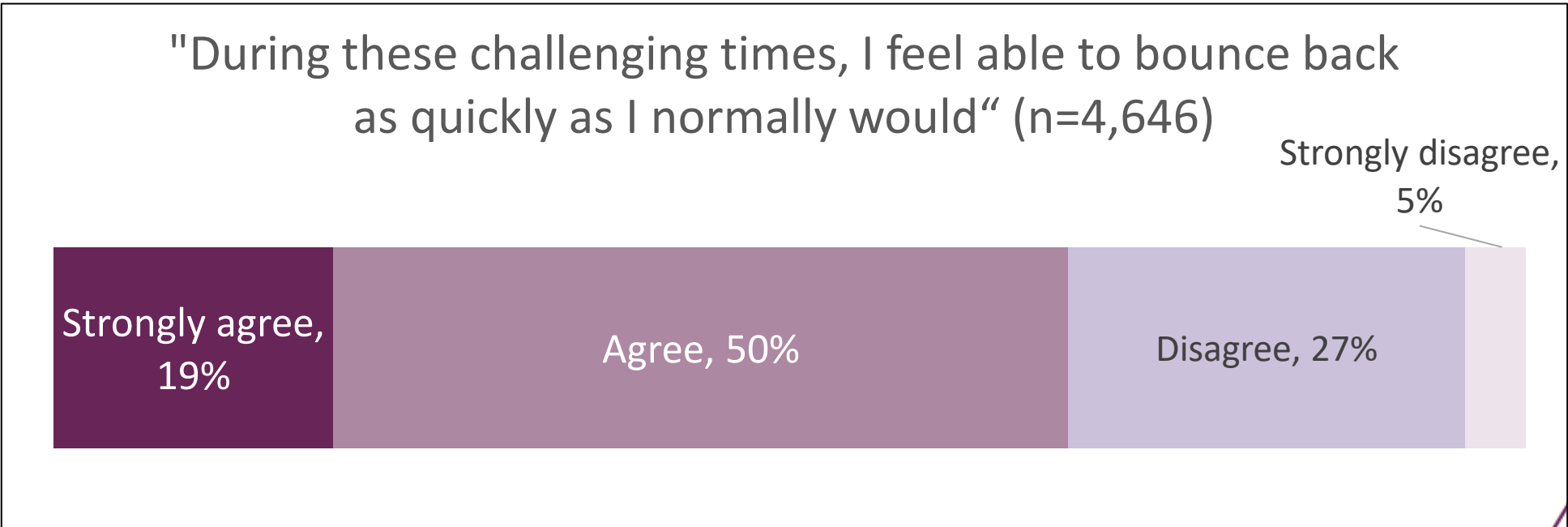
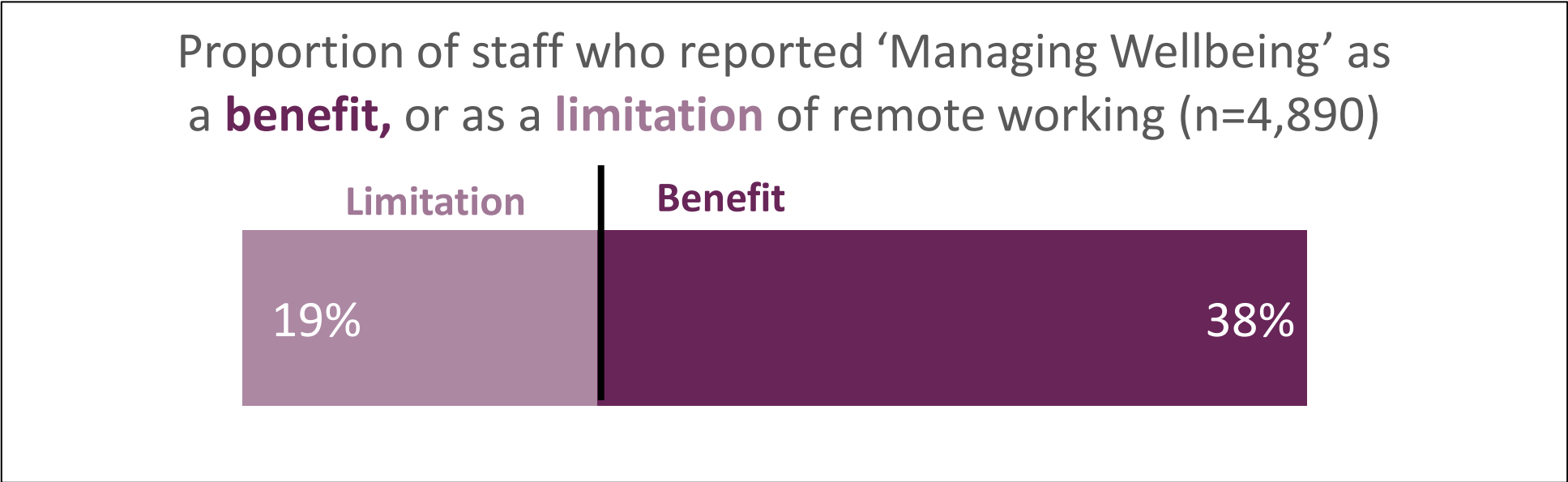
# Staff wellbeing



# The impact of remote working on staff’s ability to manage their wellbeing is mixed

While around 4 in 10 (38%) staff reported managing wellbeing as one of the benefits of remote working, around 2 in 10 (19%) reported it as a limitation.

Almost one third of staff (32%) reported finding it more difficult to ‘bounce back’ during this challenging times than they normally would.





# Loneliness, poor work-life balance, and suboptimal work environments are affecting staff mental and physical wellbeing

“My work/life balance no longer exists, we roll out of bed and onto the laptop and essentially turn the laptop off and go back to bed!”

“I have inflammatory arthritis and am working at my kitchen table, sitting on a metal chair. ”

“I fear for my long term mental health, and that of many of my colleagues who report isolation.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



**Leaders and managers play an essential role in creating a supportive homeworking environment, and communicating about the future of remote working**



Our challenge is to adopt a hybrid approach as soon as possible. We can then design models with services that strike a balance between the needs of staff, residents and ECC as an organisation.

