

# Bankside Connects Session 2: What Does Hybrid Working Mean for Bankside?

## The Impact of Hybrid Workplaces on Culture, Community, and Local Identity


### Executive Summary

On 15th April, Better Bankside hosted the second event in the Bankside Connects series, which brings together senior leaders from across the neighbourhood to share ideas and build connections. This session focused on the new hybrid working landscape, and aimed to explore what's working, what's not, and how Bankside businesses can support one another.

The panel discussion was chaired by Katie Matthews, Director of Communications and Engagement, Better Bankside, and featured three speakers from very different sectors: Simon Winters, a Partner in Prager Metis LLP and Managing Partner of their London office; Megha Khanna, co-owner and manager of the Gladstone Arms pub; and Amy Elliott, Account Director and Head of Employee Engagement at Powwow Events. Along with approximately 30 senior leaders from Bankside businesses, they led a lively, frank, and engaging discussion.

### Key insights from the event

- There is no one single model of hybrid working. Everyone is finding their way: developing, testing, and refining new models.
- Most organisations recognize that flexible working is here to stay, and there's a need to embrace it while addressing the associated challenges.
- Leaders acknowledge that hybrid working is now absolutely expected by employees; most of them believe that they would struggle to recruit/retain employees if they did not offer this.
- Better Bankside's recent survey of its members revealed that employee wellbeing, and recruitment/retention of staff, are the two top priorities. Hybrid working speaks to these priorities.
- For office-based businesses, it is very rare for employees to spend all of their working hours in the office. For hospitality businesses, there has been a different type of shift, where others have begun to use the venue as an 'office', a need they have responded to by offering new amenities.
- Hybrid working enables organisations to both widen their recruiting pool (recruit from further afield, as people don't need to commute daily) and to make more effective use of their office space, thus reducing overheads.

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- Hybrid working also saves money for workers, reducing travel costs and commuting time, and allows greater opportunities for those who have childcare and other caring responsibilities, contributing to greater sex equality and inclusivity in the workplace.
  - Hybrid working can improve well-being and work-life balance and can increase productivity by reducing distractions.
  - Successful hybrid working requires building trust and maintaining open, honest communication. While some people need to demonstrate that they are committed to completing their work away from the office, others may conversely need encouragement to ‘switch off’ when working from home.
  - Contact time with colleagues is essential to maintain team bonding and morale. Team social events and designated ‘contact days’ with social events can work well for this. Recent wellbeing and volunteering sessions run by Better Bankside have had excellent take-up, reflecting the demand for these kinds of activities.
  - However, an overly strict attitude to which days should be designated as ‘in the office’ can backfire, depending on individuals’ commitments.
  - Hybrid working can make it difficult to integrate and train new team members. Informal conversations and learning ‘through osmosis’ – overhearing discussions, absorbing what is happening in the workplace – are crucial for people to learn and develop their skills. This requires not only the new starters to come in physically, but also the senior leaders who are needed to train and mentor them.
  - Hybrid working requires an explicit, structured, and detailed onboarding process that includes broader guidelines around workplace culture and values, as well as job-specific training. It is also essential to introduce new starters to the social opportunities, spaces, and team events that come with the job, to foster connection and belonging. People are seeking genuine connections.
  - Better Bankside can support this broader offer, through its local discount scheme, the Buzz card, but also more broadly through opportunities to network with and meet others in the area, creating a sense of community that can go beyond their own organisation.
  - New employees should also be closely mentored and guided to help them integrate into the team and offered regular two-way check-ins and feedback opportunities. There is a risk of “slippage”, where hybrid working can start to go wrong, isolation, and stagnation.
  - Some leaders have had difficulties with employees requesting further flexible working, and would like more guidance on the statutory requirements here. New employment legislation is coming into force in 2027 which will affect this. Leaders would welcome more guidance on the legal framework.
  - Different generations may have varying expectations about work hours, boundaries, and social interaction. The most effective way to address this is through ongoing, honest conversations.
  - Hospitality, which is often a first job for young people who then move on to other careers, offers a very effective training ground for work, as timekeeping, strict rules (e.g. food hygiene, checking ID, et cetera), and clear communication are essential.





## What does hybrid working really mean?

Each panellist shared their perspective on the opportunities and challenges of flexible working arrangements, highlighting real-world experiences from accountancy, hospitality, and event management, followed by a Q&A discussion.

Before COVID, they had all worked in a traditional working environment with everyone physically present in the workplace during all working hours. Each of their businesses was disrupted by the pandemic in sudden and dramatic ways, and in the subsequent years, they have been exploring the challenges and opportunities offered by hybrid working in the post-COVID era.

It became clear during the course of the discussion that there is no one single model of hybrid working. Everyone is finding their way: developing, testing, and refining new models. Most organisations recognize that flexible working is here to stay, and there's a need to embrace it while addressing the associated challenges. Leaders acknowledge that hybrid working is now absolutely expected by employees; most of them believe that they would struggle to recruit/retain employees if they did not offer this.

Better Bankside's recent survey of its members revealed that employee wellbeing, and recruitment/retention of staff, are the two top priorities. Hybrid working is an important way of addressing these priorities.

Hybrid working models can vary from a strict policy on numbers of days worked in the office per week, per month, or even per quarter, to more fluid and responsive models that may or may not take account of days worked on other sites, or while travelling. They may or may not involve flexible hours. It might be that people come into the office solely to meet and interact with others, while business planning and other types of focused work are undertaken elsewhere.

One attendee referred to the work of Prithwiraj Choudhury, Professor of Organisational Behaviour in the Department of Management at LSE, who is an expert in 'the geography of work'. His research shows that there is no one single type of 'hybrid working'.

In terms of technology and communication, the switch to laptops (rather than desktops), cloud-based storage (rather than filing cabinets or hard drives), and video calls (rather than in-person meetings) mean that for those people who can work remotely, the nature of that work has fundamentally changed – and is not going to revert to its previous form.

For hospitality businesses, there has been a different type of shift. While the vast majority of their own work has to be done in person, for obvious reasons, they have seen a shift where people from other businesses have begun to use the venue as an 'office'. It has therefore become increasingly important for venues to offer amenities such as free wi-fi, projector facilities, and quiet meeting rooms.

***“Initially, post-covid, we saw a decrease in trade for lunch. But over the course of the years, especially in the last couple of years, things have changed with a hybrid and flexible working model. And now, we've seen an uplift in lunch trade again.”***





***“People are coming in for big team meetings. And I think there is a call on pubs and hospitality businesses to offer a working space in addition to just working from home. There are some locals of ours that come in and work from the pub during lunchtime, and it helps to build up that social environment. We offer a lunch express deal, free Wi-Fi, a projector, and so on. It’s building an environment where people can work from the pub as well as just work from home. It’s been an interesting journey.”***

This is an example of economic resilience, and how businesses can respond to changing demand by adapting their offer.

## **Advantages of hybrid working**

Hybrid working has enabled organisations to both widen their recruiting pool (recruit from further afield, as people don’t need to commute daily) and to make more effective use of their office space, thus reducing overheads.

***“It’s allowed us to be more flexible. Currently, there’s 40 of us. Pre-COVID, we were thinking, our space isn’t big enough and we were considering a move. But then, 18 months later, we were able to double our headcount. These people are hybrid working, so we don’t need to be able to accommodate them all at the same time.”***

Hybrid working also saves money for workers, reducing travel costs and commuting time, and allows greater opportunities for those who have childcare and other caring responsibilities, contributing to greater gender equality and inclusivity in the workplace.

***“We’re a team of mostly women. And it’s so much easier that you don’t have to feel like you’re running into the office in between commitments or worry that you’ve left something behind. You can log on or take that call from anywhere. It has allowed for so much more flexibility to take calls when you’re abroad, or you’re travelling for work. It’s really enabled us to have that kind of flexibility. So, yeah, it’s generally positive, but challenging as well.”***

Hybrid working can improve well-being and work-life balance (for example, allowing for caring responsibilities or medical appointments) and can increase productivity (some intensive, focused projects are best completed in a quiet environment without the distractions of the workplace).


## **Potential pitfalls of hybrid working – and how to tackle them**

One key finding was the importance of building trust and maintaining open, honest communication for successful hybrid working. While some people need to demonstrate that they are committed to completing their work away from the office, others may conversely find that working at home means they don’t ‘switch off’ and need encouragement to do so.

***“As an organisation, it’s made us grow up. You know, there is an element of trust to allowing hybrid working. Why put an hour’s travel on someone coming in just for the sake of it? But you must be able to trust the people you’re working with.”***

While people can often be more productive in the short term when working at home or away from the workplace, contact time with colleagues is essential to maintain team bonding and morale. Team social events and designated ‘contact days’ can work well for this.





***“Socialising is the biggest draw; social events bring people in. People come for each other and the connection. It’s soul-destroying to come into the office and find only three people there. So we organise team days, breakfasts, Pilates, book club, running club, things like that.”***

Recent wellbeing and volunteering sessions run by Better Bankside have had excellent take-up, reflecting the demand for these kinds of activities alongside work.

But some organisations have found that they need different models for hybrid working to succeed. For example, designating a specific day on which everyone must come into the office can misfire if this is a date on which some people have a full day of remote calls booked, meaning that although they are physically in the office, they are not really able to interact or engage with their colleagues in person.

There is also a risk that new team members will struggle to learn what they need in order to progress in their work. Informal conversations and learning ‘through osmosis’ – overhearing discussions, absorbing what is happening in the workplace – are crucial for people to learn and develop their skills.

***“You can’t start a job from home – it’s impossible. But it’s hard to train new starters, especially when senior leaders aren’t in the office to train them. There are big issues for small businesses in supporting new starters. A crucial part of starting a new job is learning through osmosis – not what you’re doing but what you’re seeing and hearing – what happens not during, but after, the Teams call – that’s what is important in terms of why people need to come in. Overheard conversations may not be directly relevant to their job but are essential to development.”***


However, if no senior leaders are in the office, there are no conversations to overhear; therefore, it’s important that senior team members are also willing to lead by example, by working in the office themselves.

There needs to be an explicit, structured, and detailed onboarding process to support hybrid working. As well as training on the tools and technologies needed for the job, it must include explicit communication of expectations, roles and responsibilities, introduction to workplace culture and values, the importance of trust, communication, and collaboration, guidance on managing boundaries and work-life balance in a hybrid set up, and an introduction to the social opportunities, spaces, and team events, to foster connection and belonging.

This is part of what Better Bankside can offer: as well as the Buzz card, which encourages people to use other local businesses, it also provides opportunities to network with and meet others in the area, creating a sense of community that can go beyond their own organisation.

New employees should also be closely mentored and guided to help them integrate into the team and offered regular two-way check-ins and feedback opportunities. There is a risk of “slippage”, where hybrid working can start to go wrong, and it is important to correct this when it arises.





Some leaders have had difficulties with employees requesting further flexible working above and beyond what they offer as standard and would like more guidance on where they stand with this from a statutory point of view. New employment legislation is coming into force in 2027 which will affect this. This is a subject on which leaders would welcome more guidance: to what extent are they legally obligated to make accommodations?

There is a risk of new starters feeling unsupported, isolated, and stagnating in their role. It may also be difficult for leaders to manage them effectively with reduced contact time.

### **Hybrid working and intergenerational dynamics**

Different generations have varying expectations about work hours, boundaries, and social interaction. Many leaders have found that younger generations may have more rigid expectations around, for example, taking formal lunch breaks and finishing at exactly the designated end of work time, regardless of the status of their current projects.

The most effective way to address this is through ongoing, honest conversations.

Hospitality, which is often a first job for young people who then move on to other careers, as a sector offers a very effective training ground for work, as timekeeping, strict rules (e.g. food hygiene, checking ID, et cetera), and clear communication are essential for the sector.

### **Feedback from attendees**

**100** per cent of those who responded to the post-event survey rated the event as ‘**excellent**’ or ‘**very good**’.

**60** per cent rated the information provided as ‘**really useful**’, and **40** per cent as ‘**somewhat useful**’.

**100** per cent of survey respondents said they had made at least one new contact via the event.

**100** per cent said they would recommend the event to a friend or colleague.

### **Feedback on event content**

*“Seeing how other companies are managing hybrid working including incentives [was really valuable]. I found it interesting talking about the intersection of boundaries, policy and culture when understanding what makes hybrid successful. The event was great.”*

*“What I found most interesting was that we are all still trying to find the best solutions for hybrid / flexible working and how this will work for the next generation / starters coming through.”*

*“The fact that the situation with regard to hybrid working has genuinely irreversibly changed in the past few years, in ways which are significant and consequential for a wide variety of businesses [interested me most], in particular the fact that the expectations of a younger generation entering the workforce include, as a given, that hybrid and flexible working will be permitted and encouraged. Having a slightly blinkered view of this question due to working for the same employer, which already had hybrid working norms prior to COVID, I found a lot of this*





*information new and striking. The multiple ways in which different businesses are already adapting to this new reality, and the trade-offs involved, was also particularly interesting to me.”*

*“It was interesting to hear how different businesses deal with the hybrid way of working and what entices their work force back into the offices.”*

*“I’ve found in recent years that my employer is moving towards the same idea aired in the panel discussion, i.e. that coming into the office has to have some extra value as an experience in itself in order to draw people in, whether that comes in the form of finding ways teams can benefit from working together in person, or in the form of offering extra enticements (social activities, e.g.) I think in the case of [my organisation], they are struggling to find a formula that actually gives people an incentive, so it was very interesting to see how other companies have progressed with this.”*

### **Feedback on event format**

*“The panel discussion was fascinating but I very much enjoyed the free flow of talk before and after the panel, and the way these conversations flowed easily around the formal Q&A.”*

*“I really enjoyed the panel - and also the catching up with others afterwards”*

*“[I enjoyed hearing] the different perspective from the various panel members.”*

*“I enjoyed the relaxed and social atmosphere. It was great.”*

### **Further reading and resources**

Acas, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, ‘Organisational case studies on flexible working’ <https://www.acas.org.uk/research-and-commentary/organisational-case-studies-on-flexible-working>

Choudhury, Prithwiraj, Professor of Organisational Behaviour in the Department of Management at LSE <https://prithwirajchoudhury.com/>


European Regional Development Fund, ‘Hybrid Working: Create a hybrid way of working’ <https://theinclusivityproject.co.uk/hybrid-working-create-a-hybrid-way-of-working-full/>

Giray Aksoy, Cevat, Lecturer in Economics, Kings College London  
<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/cevat-giray-aksoy>

Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA), the largest cross-country survey to collect detailed information on workers’ experiences and attitudes regarding remote work arrangements. <https://wfhresearch.com/>

Kings College London, ‘Working from home now ‘defining feature’ of UK labour market’, 26 May 2025 <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/working-from-home-now-defining-feature-of-uk-labour-market>





Parry, Jane, 'Hybrid working and UK Government policy', House of Commons Library, UK Parliament, 27 November, 2025 <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/hybrid-working-and-uk-government-policy/>

Sellman, Mark, 'What time does work finish on Fridays? 3pm if you WFH', The Times, 31 July 2025 <https://archive.ph/A8zpl>

Work Life, 'Hybrid working rights in the UK: What employees need to know in 2025', 22 September 2025 <https://work.life/blog/hybrid-working-rights-in-the-uk/>

