Business Travel and Flexible Working

Introduction

Travel undertaken for business purposes (not including commuting) can often be necessary, but comes with considerable costs for businesses. Quite often the costs of business travel are not fully monitored or controlled and can result in hefty costs to an organisation. The best way to help lower these costs and reduce your organisationís impact on congestion and pollution is through reducing the need for employees to travel for business.

Technological advances such as video conferencing and remote working with staff laptops offer alternatives to face to face meetings in a lot of cases. Where this is not possible then organisations can still reduce their costs and environmental impacts through promoting sustainable transport modes.

More information on sustainable transport modes, and their benefits, can be found here [Hyperlinks to other sheets to be added]. Each can be applied to a business context to benefit your business. The level to which these can work depends on the type of business, but there are many different modes that can be used to suit all needs.

It would be worth speaking to your local council to see what schemes they may have in place to support sustainable travel.

Reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable business travel are interrelated and should be applied as such. It is unlikely that your business can completely get rid of travel but it can be reduced to manageable levels, and trips that remain can be undertaken as sustainably as possible.

In addition to this, smarter working practices can help reduce or replace staff commuting.

Reducing the Need to Travel for Business

Reducing the need to travel is the next logical step in promoting sustainable travel, in that it further reduces congestion, pollution, and costs to both employers and employees. Reducing the need to travel is therefore based on removing unnecessary trips, and passing those savings on to your company and your employees at no detriment to your customers or clients.

In some cases, ICT systems can replace face to face meetings. By planning ahead and liaising with your clients you can use teleconferencing facilities such as video calling to facilitate meetings at a much lower cost to all parties.

Where travelling for work purposes cannot be avoided there are measures that can be taken to reduce its impact. Meeting locations could be decided based on the origins of the attendees and the public transport accessibility. If possible, organising multiple meetings on the same day and in the same location can cut down on unnecessary travel, and meeting outside of peak hours can reduce the journey time and cost.

Hampshire County Council

my Journey

Sustainable Business Travel

In some situations, business travel will be necessary, but there are still ways of reducing the impact of that travel. This revolves around incentivising employees to undertake business travel using alternatives to the car. Doing this offers the same benefits as are explored in the other sheets in this toolkit [Hyperlinks to be added], such as reducing fleet running costs. It also has benefits relating to employee productivity and happiness, as there is less time spent travelling and more time spent productively at work or relaxing at home.

As a company, the main ways of achieving this are policy based. Advocating for sustainable modes of travel such as cycling can be supported by introducing requirements that all business travel undertaken by car is approved, subject to all other suitable sustainable modes being exhausted.

Public transport use can be supported by using staff buses or by providing discounted corporate tickets for staff use. Having a simple system of acquiring public transport tickets through the company can be invaluable in promoting public transport use.

It may also be beneficial to provide pool vehicles to reduce the need for staff to bring their own car from home. In addition, ensuring that pool vehicles are fuel efficient or even electric can provide a great alternative for short and mid-distance business travel. These vehicles provide the same benefits to your company whilst being even better for the environment.

Staff can plan their commute from A to B using the My Journey web based journey planning too

Simply enter the start point and destination, and select your chosen travel modes

https://myjourney.com/journeyplanner/

Flexible Working Practices

In addition to reducing business travel, smarter working practices can help reduce or replace staff commuting. These practices can be beneficial for employeeís health and wellbeing, as well as their work life balance. Smarter working practices can include:

Practice	Benefits
Working from home, either permanently or occasionally	Employees can have a better work life balance and are likely to be more productive. This also results in less time spent travelling and a lower requirement for office space, benefiting your company. Providing computers to facilitate home working is also classed as a non-taxable benefit
Remote working	Offers similar benefits, and can be undertaken at satellite, client, or temporary offices
Flexible working: Flexitime	Staff can decide how many hours a day or days a week to work. This allows staff to base their working hours around public transport timetables or their own personal lives
Flexible working: Flexihours	Staff can arrive or leave work earlier or later if they work their agreed hours. As with other forms of flexible working, this also allows staff to avoid travelling during peak hours
Flexible working: Flexiworking	Staff can work voluntary overtime and then take that time off later as time off in lieu

Links
www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/j/m/Flexible-working-and-work-life-balance.pdf
www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview
myjourneyhampshire.com/journeyplanner

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