

Timewise industry pilot shares positive impact of flexible working

4 years ago



[Skanska](#) has been taking part in an industry pilot of site-based flexible working with significant positive results so far.

[The first report from a ground-breaking flexible working pilot in the construction sector](#) has just been published – and initial results demonstrate that flexible working has been a key contributor to improving employee satisfaction and achieving a reduction in sickness absence rates.

The pilot, led by industry body Build UK and designed by flexible working experts Timewise saw four Construction Pioneers, Skanska UK, BAM Construct, BAM Nuttall and Willmott Dixon test different kinds of flexible working for 18-months.

Today's report, Making Construction a great place to work – a view one year on demonstrates how flexible working has had a number of positive impacts – for workers in terms of reduced stress, increased well-being and for job satisfaction. For firms, in terms of enhanced performance and notably, a reduction in sickness-related absence rates.

Alice Jennison, Skanska UK Inclusion and Diversity Manager said,

“The findings from the TimeWise trials have shown the benefits for the workforce and our business. Uniquely, these trials also show how to approach flexible working on a live construction site, an area where flexible working has been considered too difficult to manage.

“The results from this report provide guidance, advice and case studies to enable the industry to provide flexible working for all.”

The Pioneer Partners all report results that buck the wider UK picture. Specifically:

- Skanska UK: one-day sickness absences have more than halved
- Willmott Dixon: overall sickness absences have reduced by one third since 2019
- BAM Construct: overall sickness absences have reduced by one tenth
- BAM Nuttall: one-day sickness absence reduced by a third.

By contrast, analysis of ONS data by Timewise shows that the national sickness absence rate in construction has increased post pandemic, from 1.4% in 2020 to 2.1% in 2021.

While flexible working won't be the only factor reducing the sickness absence rates experienced by the four Pioneers, Timewise says the difference in the direction of travel is significant.

Sickness absences cost the industry millions of pounds a year – last estimated at £160m in 2018, as reported by the Health and Safety at Work Executive.

The report also highlights the next barriers for the construction industry to overcome, in terms of flexible working. Key among these being the need to ensure greater fairness, by finding a way to extend flexible working to the sub-contracted workforce.

1. ONS, Sickness Absence in the UK Labour Market 2021, records absence rates for the construction industry of 1.7% in 2019, 1.4% in 2020 and 2.1% in 2021