

National Association of Disabled Staff Networks CIC SC771666 (NADSN) response to UK Parliament House of Lords Select Committee on Home-based Working consultation.

Disabled people are contributing citizens working, paying taxes, using public and private services, volunteering, employing, caring being cared for and creating. NADSN is a collaborative super-network that connects and represents workplace disabled staff networks (DSN's) through sharing experiences, developing policies, promoting employers' best practices, exploring challenges and opportunities. NADSN is focussed on the tertiary education sector in the UK with members from all sectors public, private, social and voluntary who are committed to advancing equality for disabled people.

NADSN continues to find that understandings of disability framed through the social model (Oliver 2013) remain relevant today in understanding disabled people's experiences. As a disabled people led organisation, we argue for Nothing About Us Without Us!

In this submission within the term disabled we acknowledge diversity and embrace intersectionality. The term disability includes people with learning disabilities, energy limiting conditions, people who have sensory impairments, physical impairments, people who are neurodiverse, people with have chronic illness, people with mental health conditions.

As a part of our activities as a Community Interest Company NADSN holds a regular meeting space where disabled people, our allies and supporters share experiences and provide mutual support. Our experiences of gaining and then losing home and hybrid working options have been regular topics for discussion throughout the past few years.

In 2020 workplaces were asked to reimagine work and many did with an enormous expansion to workplaces by including home based working. NADSN members worked closely with human resource colleagues and managers to meet these challenges, and we worked to adapt our homes, and family life into these reimaged workplaces and formed new connections through technology between home and work.

As Grant (2022) has found there is no "one size fits all" to describe the experiences of disabled people's home based and remote working. NADSN members do not provide a singular perspective. Our experiences are affected by our family circumstances and responsibilities, where we live, our working conditions and our work life balance amongst other things. Unsurprisingly we say that everyone should have the opportunity to work with the balance of homeworking that best allows the management of a healthy work life balance and maximises their wellbeing. Given the sudden and unplanned introduction of home working in 2020 for many NADSN members the experience of home working has had a positive effect on our lives.

However, over the past 2 years we have become increasingly concerned with the nature and robustness of home working arrangements. Home working has often included a considerable amount of time to organise arrangements for equipment and technology. Despite this we have experienced policy decisions about home based and remote working made without discussion, consultation or based on any evidence.

For NASDN members the option of home or hybrid working has become an important factor in choosing work and employment. This was found by Florisson et al., (2025) who surveyed disabled people and found most seeking work, considered home and hybrid working arrangements essential or very important when seeking employment. NASDN members have said that they will actively look for employers offering this and would choose this employer over others.

There are several practical reasons for this which include the ability to set up the home workplace with their individualised equipment. Removing a commute to the workplace is also particularly attractive to many NASDN members. The variations in access to public transport across the nations and regions profoundly disadvantage disabled people. Where public transport exists the added physical and emotional energy required to negotiate inaccessible and broken public transport systems has been well documented in the media and discussed in the UK Parliament (2025). Disabled people can regularly be seen speaking about their experiences of repeated failures in public transport. These are long standing physical barriers that force disabled people to spend more of their income on the additional transport solutions required to mitigate repeated public transport failures.

NASDN members have found that home working and hybrid arrangements reduce some of this burden and the additional costs for taxis and also opened new working possibilities. Hybrid working provides the opportunity to have highly skilled people consider a move to new positions without the need to move location. This has a benefit to the environment reducing the use of public and private methods of transport as well as increasing the virtual mobility of disabled people. The physical barriers to mobility are an important consideration for our members in considering changing job.

UK employers appear to be missing out on this talent. Florisson et al., 2025 has reported that in the month of December 2024 out of 94, 827 new jobs advertised on the Department of Work and Pensions website only 0.6% were fully remote. The authors highlighted the disparity in remote working availability between lower and higher paid occupations. Many of our members are employed in higher education settings and therefore the types of jobs our members have may be in occupations more likely to offer remote working. However, in an increasingly insecure sector some of our members are also more likely to hold historically insecure employment contracts which do not offer home based remote working possibilities.

Remote and hybrid working can be enabling and can support disabled people with a range of conditions to actively participate in work. NASDN members with energy limiting conditions have described how working from home has brought new possibilities in imagining work. Home working and removing the commute allowed for a rebalancing of energy levels and a gradual increase in working hours from part time to full time. The benefits of this to NASDN members and their families economically and psychologically are difficult to quantify. The loss of remote working is unfortunately easier to measure in the subsequent reduction required to working hours as the energy needed for an increased commute disastrously affects the work life balance they had carefully achieved.

Some neurodivergent NADSN members adversely affected by uncontrolled noise and lighting and who would require reasonable adjustments in the workplace have found these can be individualised to meet their needs better through home working. This is not everyone's experience and some NADSN members have spoken about the importance of hybrid working and for at least part of the week joining colleagues. They have found this important for their mental health and wellbeing.

There are risks NADSN members have identified to a lack of physical presence in the workplace. Particularly in how their visibility at work affects career progression. It is important that people home or hybrid working are not disadvantaged in promotion because they are less physically present. The evidence emerging from studies in this area support these concerns. Florisson et al (2025:11) found 24% of disabled staff surveyed considered their home based or hybrid working patterns had affected their career progression.

In organisations that have moved their policy position from home based to only hybrid working some NADSN members have found themselves pressured to go into work for increasing amounts of time in the working week. Pressure can come from managers who as gatekeepers to reasonable adjustments wield considerable power. NADSN members have found line managers have varying degrees of understanding about disability. At times our experiences are understood through a medicalised lens and paternalistic assumptions made about our abilities or what is 'best for us' rather than listening to us.

NADSN members have found hybrid working can bring additional challenges when the workspace is changed by employers. Florisson et al (2025) found some reasonable adjustments became less stable and more precarious when a return to the workplace was accompanied by a reduction in available space. One of the ways employers manage space reduction is through introducing hot desking. Hot desking can be a major barrier to the effectiveness of a disabled person's agreed reasonable adjustments. Some NADSN members required to hot desk have found their individualised equipment moved around and unplugged by other desk users causing a significant amount of added time and energy in the re-set up of their equipment. Some have found hot desking arrangements incompatible with their technological requirements for example requiring a quiet space with no background noise to effectively use voice input systems.

Policy recommendations

There does not seem to be consistent reasons for decisions to remove working from home in terms of organisational requirements. NADSN members have found unilateral policy decisions catch disabled workers with little consideration of the practical implications for our lives. In workplaces the swing away from fully remote has not been based in evidence. There is also a real concern that the rhetoric associating home and remote working with laziness and reduced productivity adversely becomes associated with disabled people. It is important to ensure policies do not indirectly, as well as directly discriminate and have a negative effect on disabled people (Equality Act 2010).

The implications of home and remote working may also mean there is a loss in the visibility of disabled and neurodivergent people in workplaces. Workplace health and wellbeing programmes would also need to carefully consider how they ensure disabled people are

included in workplace activities. Workplaces need to include the provision of packages of mental health and wellbeing support for home-based workers that address the risks of isolation.

There is a need for more research into the opportunities and challenges of remote working for disabled people. Particularly in the areas of entering the workforce, reasonable adjustments, changing roles, workplace progression and promotion.

In our experience decisions about home based and hybrid working are not always made through discussion, consultation or based on evidence. Workplace based disabled staff networks provide employers with an excellent forum through which to begin a dialogue with disabled employees to discuss the implications of changes to home based and hybrid working policies.

References

Equality Act 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk

Florisson R., Williams G., Martin A., Carson C., Holland P., Collins A., Winstanley J. (2025) Beyond the office? How remote and hybrid working can help close the disability employment gap. Interim Report of the Inclusive Remote and Hybrid Working Study. Lancaster University.

Grant C (2022). Disability, Neurodiversity, and Remote E Working: Promoting the creation of an inclusive workspace (Remote for All). Coventry University.

Oliver M (2013): The social model of disability: thirty years on, Disability & Society, Taylor and Francis.

Transport Committee (2025) Access denied: rights versus reality in disabled people's access to transport. First Report of Session 2024-2025 UK Parliament.