

The 'Office Home'

The next step
in workplace
evolution.

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What is the 'Office Home'?



'Office home' is a new way of perceiving the office space and exploring what to consider when planning a new workspace.

Making sure employees have the benefits of home luxuries yet still have the necessities of a workplace will be a powerful tool for enticing employees to return to the office, not to mention hiring new talent and retaining people. Making an office more convenient, is in my opinion, what is currently lacking in many workplaces.

Workplace Evolution

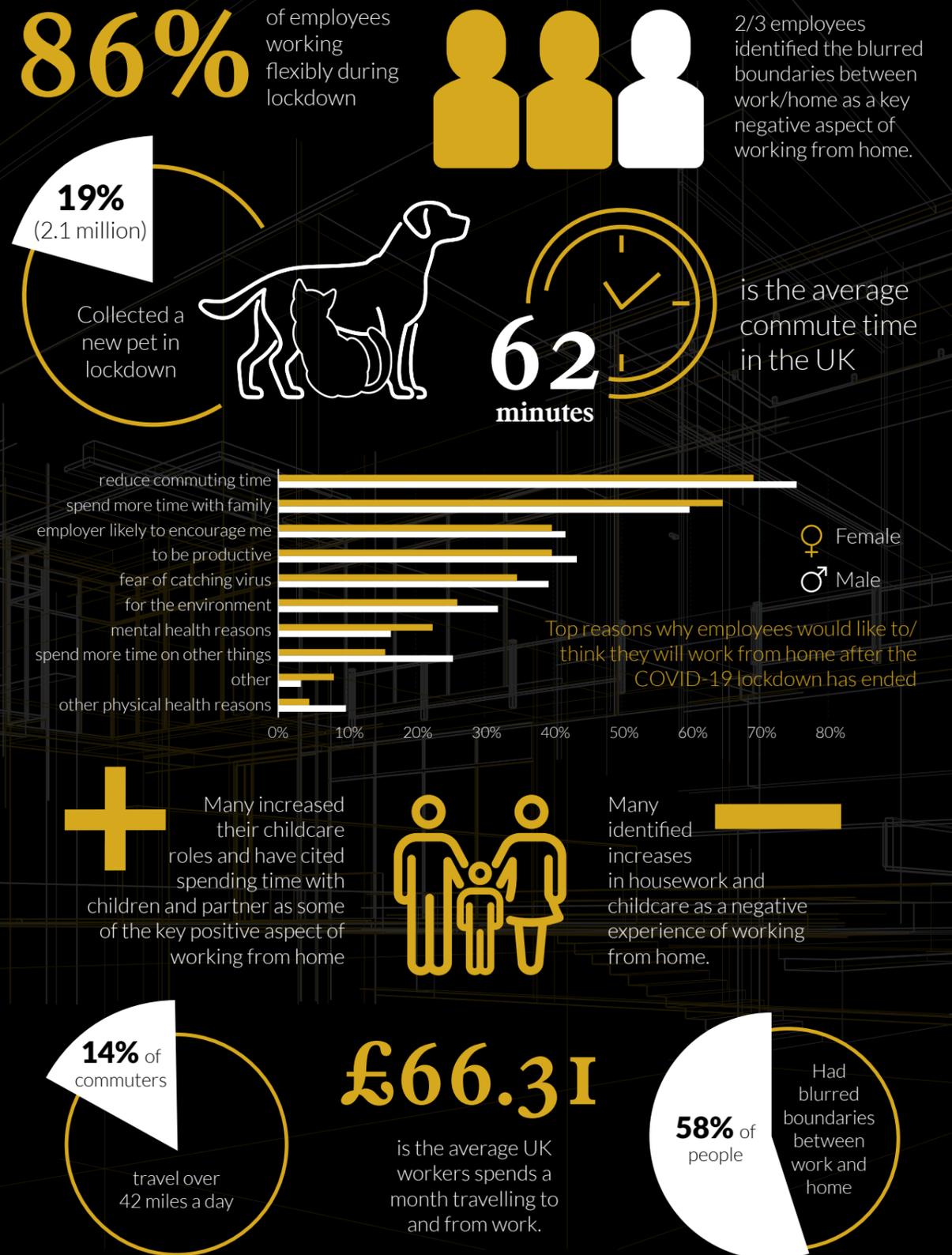
Since the pandemic hit, we have seen a significant shift in how people work, whether from home, in a co-working space or a more traditional office. Everyone has had to make changes and even some sacrifices regarding when, where and how they work.

“ The abrupt transition from the traditional office to home, whilst sustaining a daily working output, was difficult for most. ”

The scenario for many went from working in a traditional office and being present to working from home overnight. The abrupt transition from the traditional office to the home was difficult for most, but many welcomed the change. The vast majority, we included, saw working from home as a new luxury; it was different and exciting. Yet, after a few months, there was no foreseeable end in sight. Employers and employees alike began to ask how we could make this process work and ensure that the home setup was more efficient, ergonomic and better for the individual.

Food for thought

See appendix for sources





The traditional office space Vs working from home

The traditional working day no longer works for most people. Our lifestyle and schedule shifted dramatically during the pandemic, emphasising flexibility and access to home luxuries and outdoor spaces. We replaced our commute time with general life admin tasks and spent more time with family, leading to physically and mentally healthier lifestyles.

Yet whilst working from home has given us untold flexibility, we didn't have easy access to collaboration spaces and staff interaction that the office provides and is important for mental wellbeing. Whilst the employee's list of negatives concerning the office space has continually grown, so

has the demand for basic office necessities such as printing, cleaners, meeting and collaboration spaces, and a good cup of coffee. Perception and the negative connotations of the office space are what we now have to challenge when designing spaces. We must make sure that we listen to those who use the space to understand how it can work for them in a viable way for the overall business.



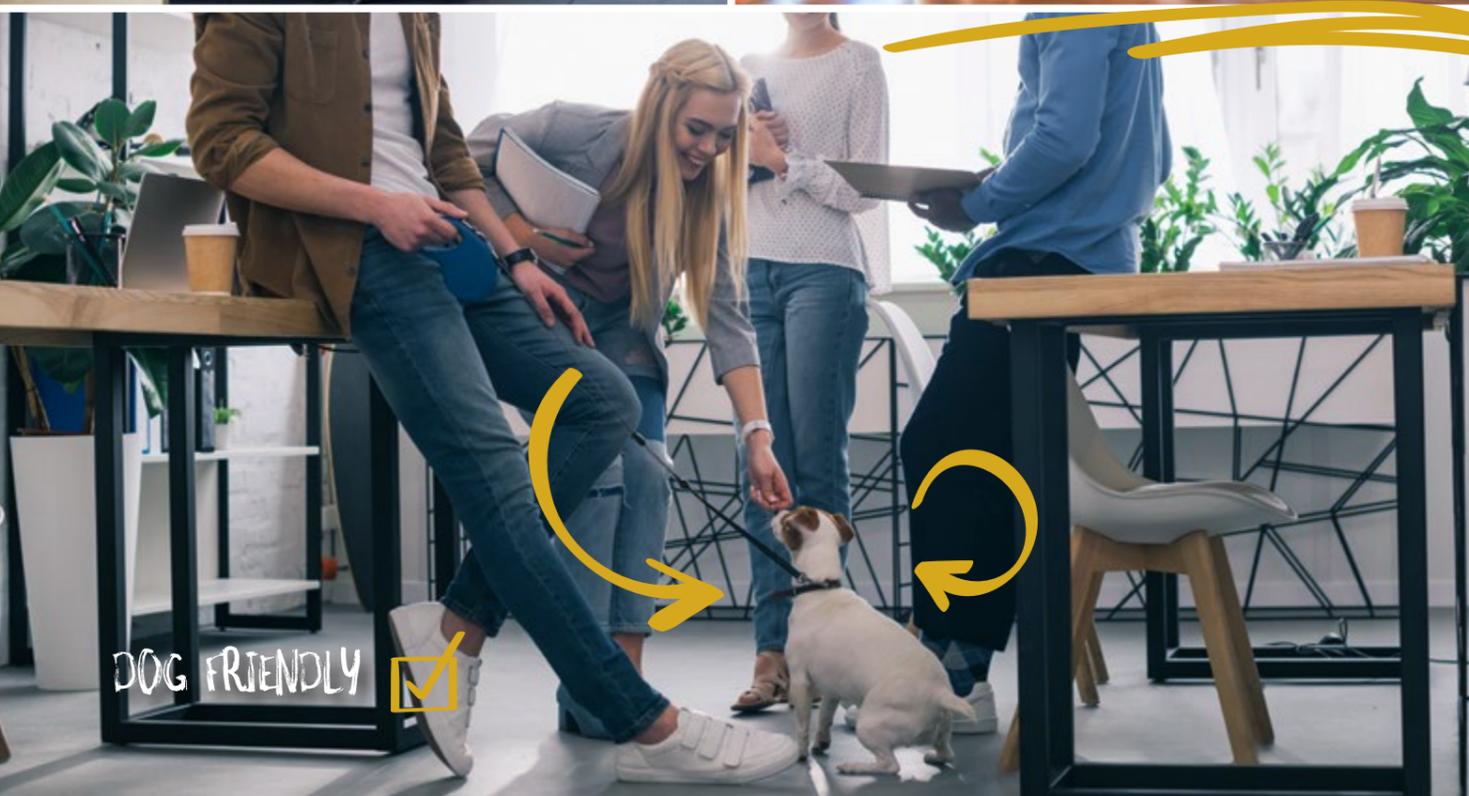
LAUNDRETTE ✓



GYM/FITNESS CENTRE ✓



DAY CARE ✓



DOG FRIENDLY ✓

What are the barriers for staff working in the office?

Is this a time for dealing with difficult questions for employers? Yes. Employees are now demanding more of their place of work; they are comfortable at home and now expect nothing less when they venture into the office; even more so as they are making an effort to commute in.

Employers are now recognising this and adjusting to suit. What happens when an employee says, 'I bought a dog in the lockdown, I can't just leave her at home all day, I can't come back to the office'? Or perhaps, 'I have to do the nursery drop off and pick up, which means I need you to allow me to work flexibly'. Perhaps they are now used to doing their laundry on their lunch break to negate the need to do this at the weekend, or they say 'the traffic is terrible in rush hour, I want to start and finish early'.

The 'office home' aims to educate both employers and employees that the idea of a traditional office and setting, so many of us know, is no longer a viable option. Our team continually challenges the traditional office to make it more appealing to returning staff and ensure that it becomes a central hub.

Considering simple ideas such as fully private sleep pods, a dog crèche or even a launderette - either within the office space or in the near vicinity of the office - are bringing home luxuries and conveniences into the workplace.

What is the next step in this evolution?

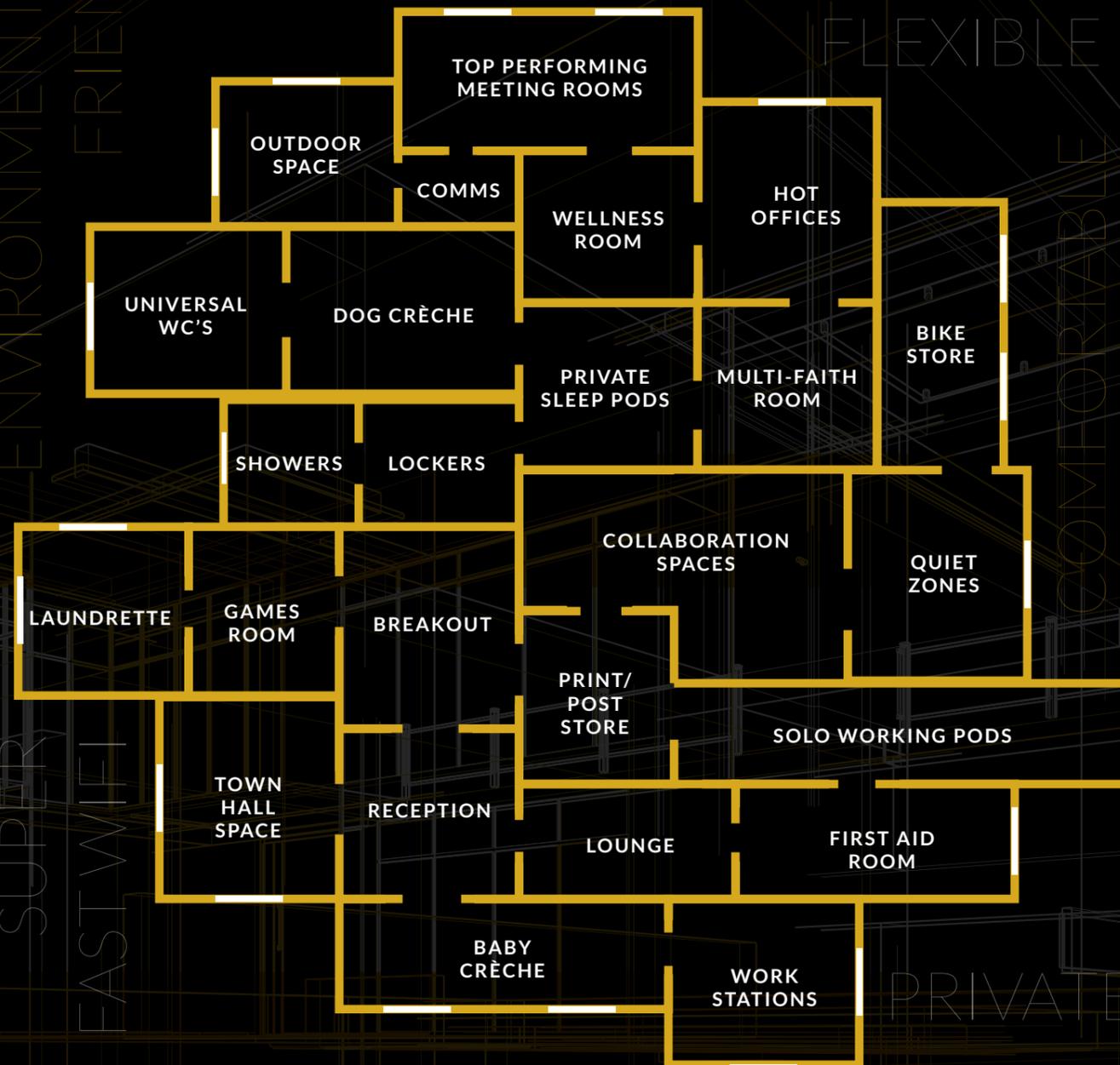
It sounds simple, but the next stage in the process is bringing the best of both the traditional office and the home into one place, where coming to the office benefits the business and the individual.

“ Bringing the best of both the traditional office and the home into one place. ”



- TECHNOLOGY
- CLEANERS
- COMPANY CULTURE
- ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY
- COMMUNITY SPIRIT
- COMFORTABLE
- COLLABORATIVE SPACES
- SUPER FAST WIFI
- PRIVATE
- AIR CONDITIONING
- FLEXIBLE
- SOCIAL

What are now the essential spaces in a workplace?



A tricky question, as all companies are different and require bespoke solutions tailored to their staff and type of industry/workstreams.

In addition, we need to be providing the absolute best in IT equipment, software, connectivity and desk/room booking systems.

However, we need to seriously consider incorporating new spaces such as:

Due to the push to reduce built environments and the need for online Teams/Zoom calls, acoustic solutions such as sound masking and baffles have become more prominent in conversations, leading to fully integrated zoning systems in our spaces, circadian lighting solutions have come back into play to enhance staff wellbeing

DOG CRÈCHES

MULTI FAITH ROOMS

WELL-BEING ROOMS

BIKE STORES

SHOWERS

SOLO WORKING PODS

DRYING ROOMS

LAUNDRETTES

GAMING ROOMS

UNIVERSAL WC'S

PRIVATE SLEEPING PODS

GYMS

...THE LIST GOES ON!

Office furniture is not the complete answer

In recent months we have seen a steady and increasing rise in the cost of furniture on projects because of the necessity to be flexible. Whilst it makes good business sense not to commit to more significant figures, it leaves returning staff pondering what future changes they may see.

In addition, are those changes significant enough to return to the office and adapt to a new working schedule and routine?

“ Being led by employees and those that use the space is more important than ever. ”

Being led by employees and those who use the space is more important than ever. Understanding the value of workplace audits is pivotal to enticing employers to return to the office instead of being told to.



What will the future look like?

I believe the future is bright for office space. It's an exciting time to be in our industry and I'm curious to see what comes next.

As the article title suggests, I think we'll see an 'office home' standard emerge from this; offices where employees are empowered to ask the difficult questions of their employers to help mould the workplace around their needs, places that encourage their use without the need to be encouraged to use them.

“ Offices where employees are empowered to ask the difficult questions of their employers to help mould the workplace around their needs. ”

If you would like to find out more about how Office Principles could help you with understanding your workplace and how we could adopt this new way of designing spaces into your workspace, please get in touch today.



About the author - Nathan Watson, Creative Director

A lauded, lead creative who has been fast-tracked throughout his career, thanks to a passion for the intricacies in providing unique design work, Nathan has an illustrious portfolio which reflects his talent and the scope of his work.



Nathan's role at Office Principles is to lead the design team, guiding and influencing distinctive and exceptional designs. He likes to work closely with the client to ensure that the final results reflect the vision and will positively impact on productivity, while making a real difference to the quality of the working day for the end-user.

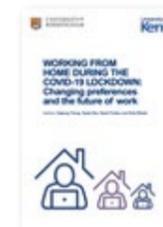
“ We spend a lot of time at the office, so it's right that we should enjoy the experience and make the space work in our favour. ”

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Interior Design
- BCO award winner
- Constructing Excellence award winner
- Mixology short-list

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Appendix



University of Birmingham & University of Kent (June 2021)

Working from home during the COVID-19 Lockdown:
Changing preferences and the future of work

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