

The First Four Day Working Week UK Trial

Outcomes First Group moves more than 1,000 of its 5,500 strong workforce to a 4 day week with no loss of pay in UK's first national trial

35% improvement in productivity reported in pre-campaign pilot by largest organisation and only children's services provider to participate



David Leatherbarrow, CEO, Outcomes First Group



Emma Finch, Marketing Manager, National Fostering Group, part of Outcomes First Group

Three times winner of the Great Place to Work Award, [Outcomes First Group](#) (OFG) - *the largest organisation and only children's services provider to participate in the first 6 month [4 Day Week UK Trial](#)* that commenced in June – has moved more than 1,000 of its 5,500¹ strong workforce across the UK to a 4 day week with no loss of pay. Part-time staff have benefited from a further reduction in their hours too.

Commenting on the new trial, David Leatherbarrow, CEO - whose organisation is [Ofsted's highest performing large provider of children's services – 91% of which are rated Good or Outstanding](#)^{2 & 3} - said, "Delivering great outcomes and positive futures to the children and adults who we educate and care for, sits at the centre of everything we do, as does the consistency of the support we provide. We have empowered local leaders to implement carefully structured timetables to ensure our exceptional level of care and support is well-maintained. [Microsoft Japan reported a 40% increase in productivity](#) when workers switched to a 4 day week. I believe that colleagues benefiting from a better work-life balance will be more productive.

"Supporting the welfare and mental health of our workforce - 70% of which are women - has always been a priority for me," said David. "Since I joined in 2018, we

have consistently focussed on our Employee Value Proposition, making OFG a great place to work and striving to improve and remain relevant. The 4 day week is something that we have reviewed intermittently over the past 12 months. The arrival of the 4 Day Week UK Trial gave us a really good framework around which to work, comfort that there would always be someone there to support us, and contact with people who have successfully implemented it in their workplace. It was the catalyst that made us brave enough to take the leap and a comfort blanket to say you can make this a success.

“Always cautious, we piloted the 4 day working week in our IT department - for a 3 week period before the official 6 month trial commenced. Our IT department fulfils a business-critical function that we cannot afford to get wrong. The productivity of this team improved from 50-85% during this period - which gave us the confidence to proceed.”

He continued, “The single most valuable commodity anyone gives us is their time – which is why rather than dictating, we empowered our teams to consider what works best for them, how best to deliver against their organisational projects and how they could do this in the most productive way possible.

“We are starting to see colleagues changing the way they work, what they spend their time on, being aware of their demand on other people’s time, and thinking about how productive they are, rather than simply filling a large amount of time. On a practical level this means better meeting management - being clear upfront about the objectives, the outcomes they need to deliver, inviting only those people that really need to attend, and keeping meetings as short as possible.

“Our colleagues have bought into this because the benefit and gain for them is so significant, so meaningful. I have been amazed by how people have approached this change and taken personal responsibility and accountability for it, in a way that I have never witnessed before.

“The big benefit for our colleagues is that they now have a much better work life balance and three days a week to pursue their hobbies, relax, and enjoy quality time with their families and friends, returning to work fully refreshed.”

Commenting on the benefits, Emma Finch, Marketing Manager, Outcomes First Group, said, “Being part of the 4 day working week is incredible. It has given me some invaluable down time to spend with my baby daughter, midweek, that usually I wouldn’t have. Following the first week, I came back to work after my rest day feeling motivated and refreshed and I certainly felt productive and ticked off many things from my to do list! I’m proud to work for an organisation that puts the well-being of their teams at its heart. Being able to have an extra day with my daughter, whilst progressing my career in a role I enjoy, is invaluable.”

Concluding, David Leatherbarrow said, “How do I view the future I hear you ask? From my point of view, I want it to deliver even greater outcomes for the individuals we educate and care for. I also want to have a happy, motivated workforce who do their best for the children and adults in our care. With a better

work life balance, colleagues will have more enthusiasm and energy to channel into their responsibilities - this is a big 'tick in the box' for me.

"We are also currently trialling the 4 day week in two of our schools - it's not about opening schools 4 days per week, it's about putting in place an effective staffing timetable and changing the way that they currently work. We have empowered a couple of our leaders to consider how they can make this work. Our ambition is to roll it out to all of our 50 special schools and our residential homes within the next 12 months."

1. Staff at its 50 schools and its residential homes will follow suit over the next 12 months.

2. [Outcomes First Group Quality and Impact Report 2021](#)

3. Rated good or outstanding - 100% of OFG's fostering agencies, 83% of its children's homes, 93% of its schools and 96% of its adult settings.

Ends

Outcomes First Group

[Outcomes First Group \(OFG\)](#) is the UK's leading specialist provider of education, therapeutic care and fostering services. OFG is an organisation that believes in transforming lives for the better, embracing communities and working together to help children, young people and adults dream big and achieve more. The organisation employs more than 5,500 people, and is committed to maintaining and improving its reputation as a 'great place to work' by continuing to provide a supportive and inclusive working environment for all.

Within the Outcomes First Group family, there is a whole range of services from schools, residential services and wellbeing hubs through to digital learning and fostering services - all working together to support children, young people and adults, and to create an inclusive world, committed to equality and diversity for all.

Outcomes First Group's vision is simple yet powerful; to build incredible futures for vulnerable children, young people and adults in the UK by empowering them to be happy and make their way in the world.

The Group's specialist education, therapeutic care and fostering services are provided by its nationwide teams. These services are delivered under the brands [National Fostering Group](#), the largest independent fostering provider in the UK, [Acorn Education and Care](#), and [Options Autism](#).