



Are you ready for the hybrid future?

April 2021

A CCMA Research Initiative

Supporting Partner



Foreword

In the past year we have all become accustomed to working remotely and the constraints and (for some) the benefits that it has brought.

Our latest CCMA research, conducted among a cross-section of frontline contact centre colleagues in the UK, reveals that a return to the office will be welcomed by many. At the same time remote working is without doubt here to stay – the vast majority of those we surveyed, including those who would prefer to be primarily office-based, wish to retain the option to work remotely from time to time and many expect to be given some say in the matter.

As remote working becomes a more permanent approach for contact centres, this gives rise to new questions and new implications for contact centre

leaders. How do we ensure that colleagues working remotely feel as included as those in the office? How can employers help colleagues to make sure they have the best possible working environment, including the equipment that they use for contact centre work? Could it be possible for advisors to work from co-working spaces, for example to handle text-based customer interactions?

Welcome to the new hybrid working model. We at the CCMA are delighted to be able to offer insight to help inform the debate.



Leigh Hopwood,
CEO, CCMA

Poly is proud to be supporting this research by the CCMA that delivers insight into the new model of hybrid working, and what employees want from it.

Hybrid working is a new term for call centres. Traditionally the industry was dominated by working within a company's premises with a small minority of employees working from home. Like everything in 2020, the pandemic has changed this. Now 79% of employees want to spend some time at home and some time in the office.

This is a fundamental shift away from previous operating models and requires a reimagining of the role of the call centre building towards more team, social, and learning activities. It also requires an understanding of how employees transition

between, and work seamlessly across two locations, and how teams in different locations use tools such as video to keep connected.

This research was built around the idea that employees are now more empowered. More involved in decisions on what equipment they use, and more involved in the choice of where they work. As global economies pick up, organisations will need to do more to keep their key staff that build an exceptional customer experience. Now is the time to listen to the voice of the advisor.



Richard Kenny,
Senior Marketing Manager, Poly

Research methodology

Led by Research Director Stephen Yap, the CCMA conducted 200 interviews with UK contact centre workers from 11-15 March 2021. All survey participants were screened to ensure they held customer-facing roles. Thank you to Poly for supporting this research initiative.

Majority have been working from home, but would prefer to spend more time in the office

In March 2021 with lockdown restrictions still in force, most contact centre advisors were working at least some hours at home with only 13% of advisors being fully office-based.

Figure 1: Which of the following best describes where you currently spend your time working for the contact centre?



Base: n=200 contact centre advisors

- Work at home exclusively
- Work at home and in the office, but primarily at home
- Work about the same amount of time in the office and at home
- Work at home and in the office, but primarily in the office
- Work in the office exclusively

As restrictions ease contact centre professionals will be glad to get back to the office. Many are spending more time at home than they would ideally like. Currently 51% of advisors are spending more working hours remotely than in the office, but only 22% would actually choose to do so given the option. Six in ten (59%) would prefer to split their time equally between the office and remote locations, or be mainly office-based with some remote working.

Figure 2: Which of the following best describes where you **currently** spend your time working for the contact centre? / After lockdown restrictions are lifted, which, if any, one of the following best describes your preferred location when working for the contact centre?

	Current	Prefer
Work all of my hours in an office	13%	21%
Work primarily in an office, but some time away from the office too	5%	30%
Work half of the time from the office, half of the time away from the office	33%	29%
Work primarily away from the office, but some time in the office too	34%	15%
Work all my hours away from the office	17%	7%

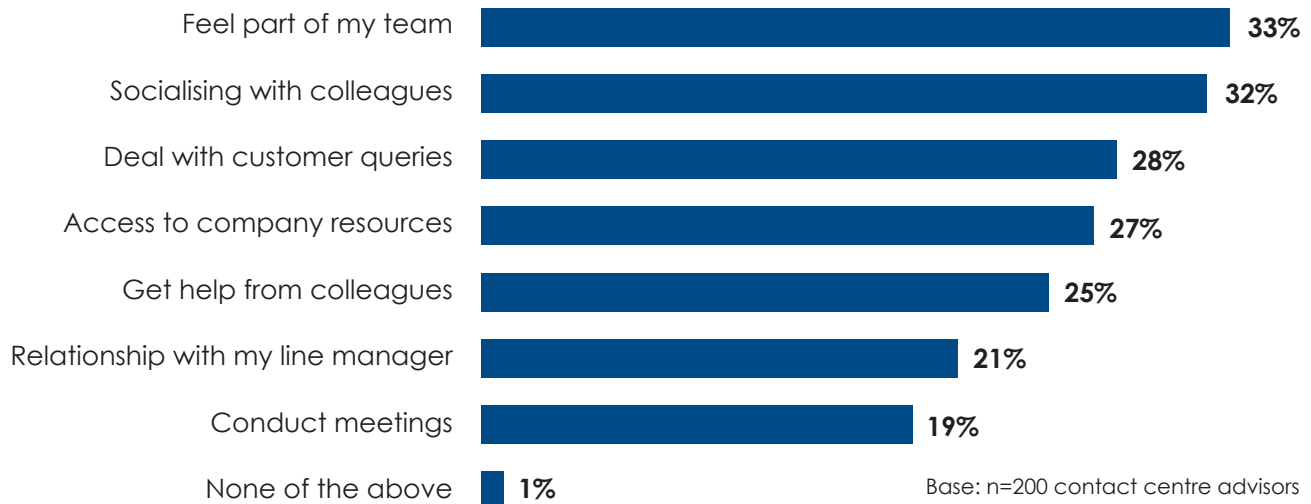
Base: n=200 contact centre advisors

While there is a widespread preference to be office-based, just 21% would want to work in the office exclusively.

79% 79% of contact centre professionals would like to work in a hybrid model

The top reasons cited by advisors for working in an office are “feeling part of my team” and ‘socialising with colleagues’.

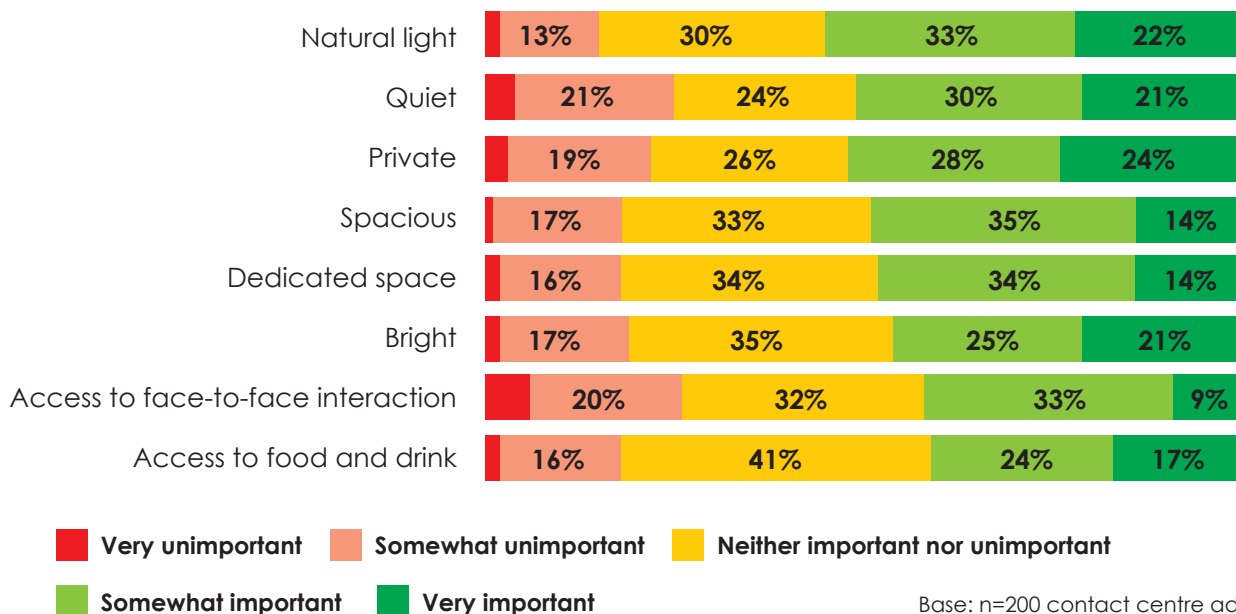
Figure 3: Which, if any, of the following are your most important reasons why you spend/would spend time in the office? Tick up to 3.



Topping the wish list for homeworking spaces: natural light, privacy and quiet

Wanted: a quiet and private area with windows. As shown in Figure 4 below, “natural light” tops the list of desirable attributes for home-working spaces, cited by 55% of contact centre advisors as “very important” or ‘somewhat important’.

Figure 4: When doing contact centre work outside the office, how important or unimportant is it to you that your working area is each of the following?



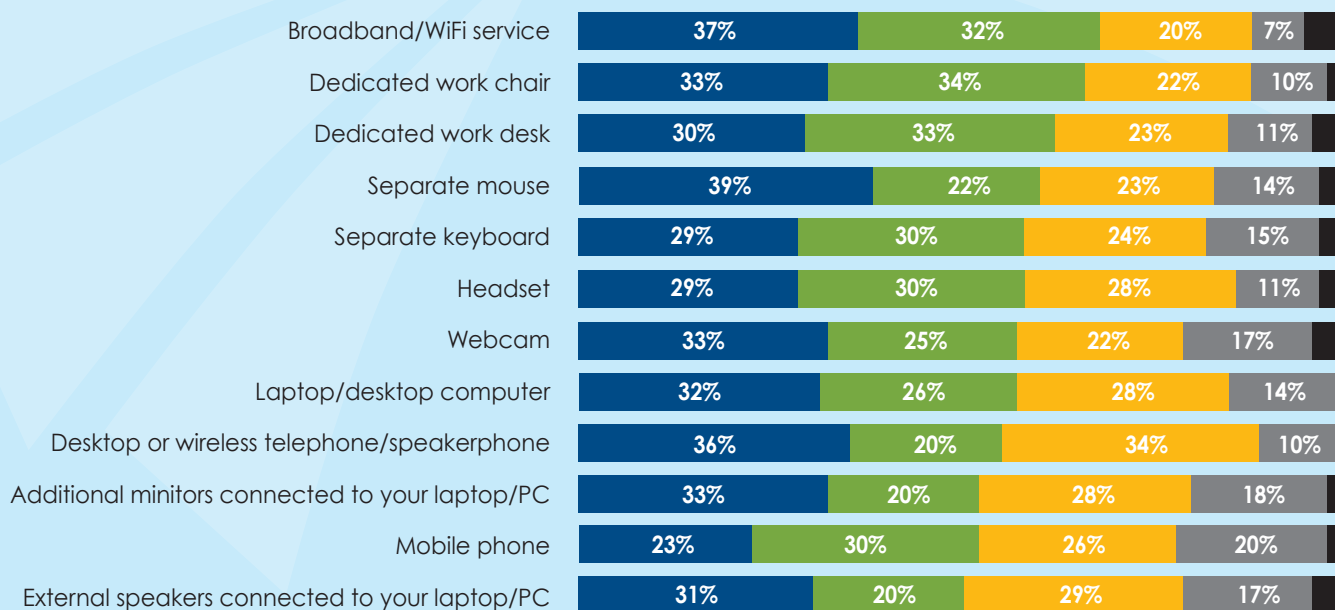
Bring-your-own-device is a reality for the contact centre workforce

As contact centre professionals have acclimatised to extended periods of working from home, so has awareness of needing the appropriate equipment to work effectively.

As Figure 5 shows, across all types of hardware, software and services there is a clear preference among individuals to be able to source homeworking equipment themselves, rather than rely on what their employer chooses for them.

Interestingly a sizeable proportion of colleagues are happy given the choice to pay for their own items, particularly when it comes to furniture. 34% would be happy to choose and pay for their own work chair and 33% their work desk. On the other hand, when it comes to technology hardware such as desktop phone and mouse, there is a stronger preference for employers to pay.

Figure 5: Ideally, who do you think should choose and pay for each of the following types of equipment that you use when doing contact centre work at home?



Base: n=200 contact centre advisors

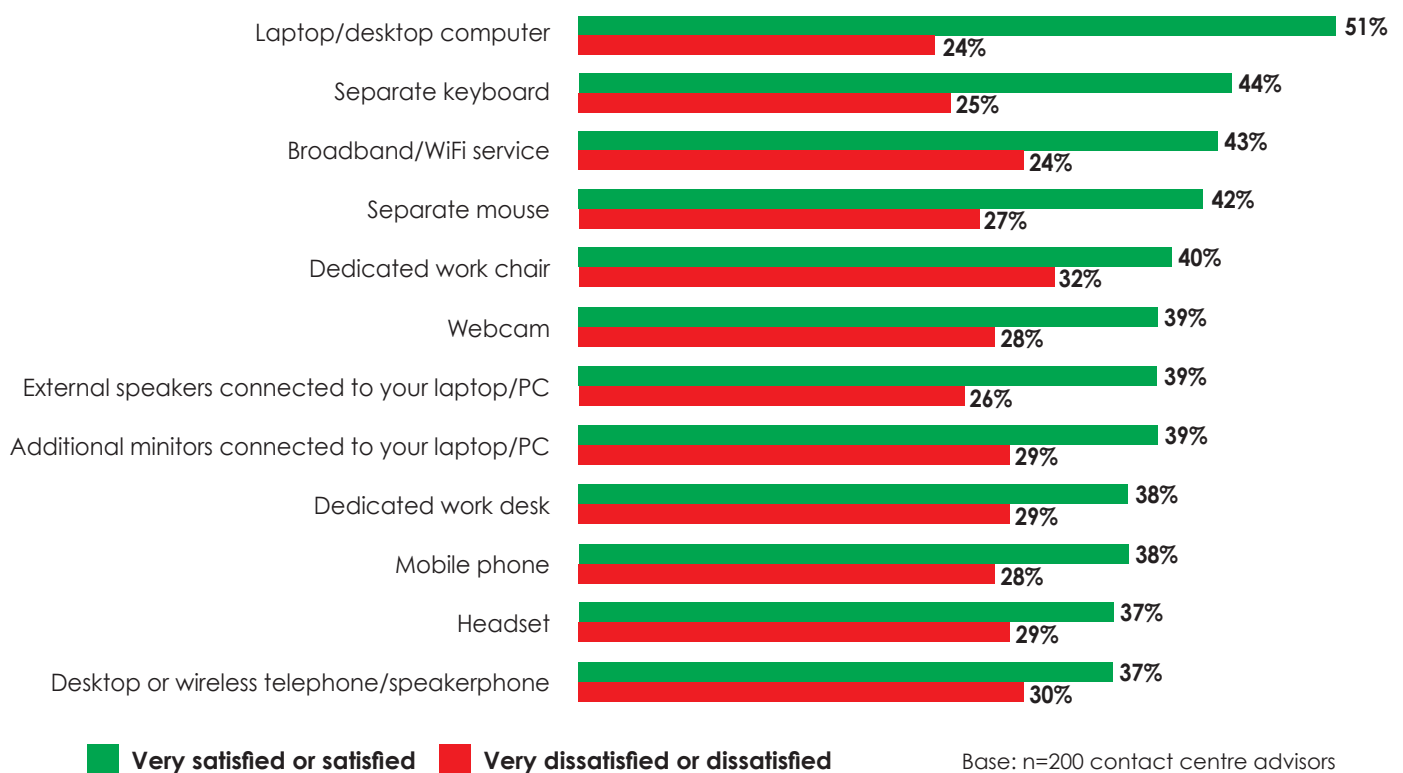
- I would prefer to choose this myself and have my employer pay for it
- I am happy to choose and pay for this myself
- I am happy for my employer to choose and pay
- I don't need this
- Not sure

Satisfaction with home equipment varies

Being able to choose one's own equipment for home use (with appropriate advice and guidance from employers) will help to ensure that it is fully fit for purpose. As Figure 6 shows, current levels of satisfaction vary across the spectrum of items. Satisfaction with the work PC is relatively high but lower for broadband, desktop phone and headset.

Furthermore, despite there being comparatively high willingness to source and pay for one's own work desk and chair, dissatisfaction with these items is relatively high. Employers are advised to raise awareness among staff of the importance of comfortable furniture when working at home.

Figure 6: How satisfied or unsatisfied are you with each of the following types of equipment that is currently available to you when doing contact centre work outside the office?



Room for improvement in homeworking infrastructure, particularly desktop phone, headset, desk and chair

“ This research shows the need for organisations to take ownership of the employee experience in the home as well as the office to ensure consistency. However, be aware that as home environments are not consistent, then employee needs will not be consistent – you will need to engage individually with employees to understand their needs. ”

Richard Kenny, Senior Marketing Manager, Poly

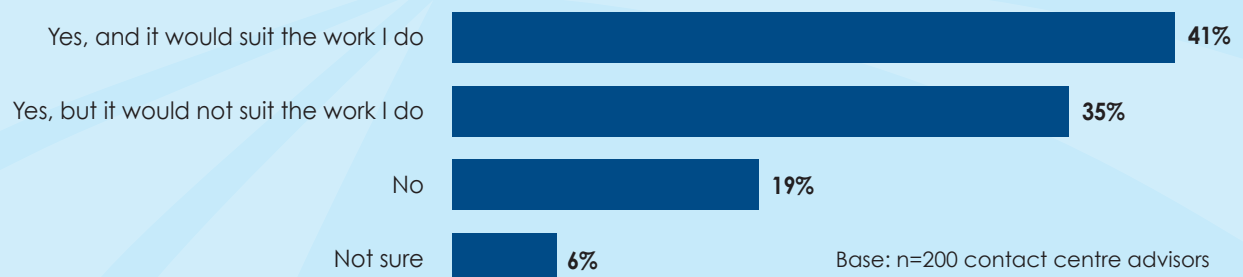
Could handling text-based interactions from co-working spaces be viable?

While many contact centre professionals would prefer to be primarily office based, the vast majority wish to retain the option of working some of their hours remotely. As restrictions ease coffee shops and co-working spaces are expected to thrive. These so-called 'third spaces' offer the flexibility and convenience of home with opportunities for social contact, or represent an alternative when needed

for those whose home environments are not ideal for work.

There is huge interest in this among contact centre advisors – 76% of whom would be interested in working from a shared location. However, the nature of contact centre work may prohibit this – 35% said they would be interested but it would not suit their work.

Figure 7: Would you be interested in doing contact centre work in a shared public location such as a rented desk in a workspace, or a coffee shop?



While it may be difficult to handle voice-based work in co-working spaces for privacy and confidentiality reasons, there are fewer barriers for text-based conversations which are now commonplace in the contact centre. 53% of advisors work via email; 41% of advisors message customers via private messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, and 40% interact with customers on social media.

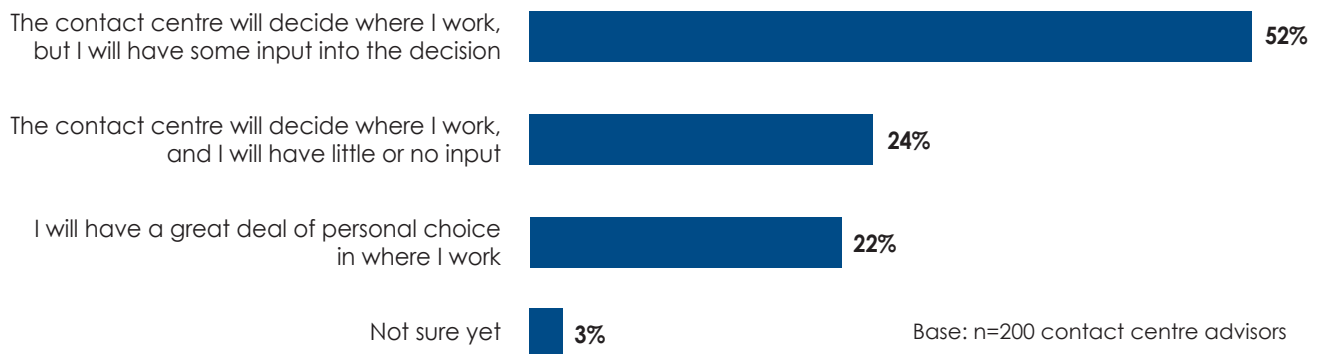
Among those who would be interested in co-working and felt it would suit their work, 85% would acquire additional equipment to be able to work from such locations. This signals the dawn of a new type of contact centre colleague – a highly mobile individual who works from multiple locations and brings with them the tools they need to do their job.

Give me options for where to work, and let me have some say

Many advisors expect to have at least some influence over their choice of working location after restrictions ease. 22% say that they will be able to decide for themselves, and an additional 52% report that the decision will be shared by their employer and themselves. Only 24% say that their employer will decide without an opportunity for them to

input. Clearly the experience of lockdown has transformed how contact centres think about their locations and workforces – with flexibility here to stay for the long term and contact centres already demonstrating forward thinking in allowing their staff some discretion over location.

Figure 8: After lockdown restrictions are lifted, which, if any, of the following best describes you regarding the location of your contact-centre work?



Three-quarters (74%) of contact centre professionals expect to have a say in where they work

“ This survey finding is typical of the new empowerment of employees, with 74% expecting to have a say in where they work. With home working proven to work, employees are not limited to geographically local jobs and can change roles to an organisation that better matches their aims and aspirations. This freedom empowers employees, and organisations will need to work harder to understand individual employee needs to ensure they retain key staff. ”

Richard Kenny, Senior Marketing Manager, Poly

Getting ready for the new remote working – key findings

1. The majority of contact centre advisors would prefer to be office-based, but four in five would like the option of working away from the office from time to time.
2. The main reasons people want to work in an office are social. As contact centre premises re-open, it will be a top priority for leaders to ensure that those working remotely and those working in the office are well connected.
3. There is strong demand among advisors to work from co-working spaces – which may be difficult with voice calls but could potentially be feasible when working on text-based channels which many advisors already handle.
4. With remote working now normalised and three-quarters of advisors expecting to have some say in where they work, there is an appetite from some colleagues to procure their own equipment for home and mobile use.
5. Employers will always have an important role in guiding staff to make the right decisions for their remote-working spaces. Areas where colleague satisfaction is lowest include headsets, desktop phones, desk and chair and broadband.

About the CCMA

The CCMA is the longest established association representing the call centre industry in the UK. We support contact centre managers through providing opportunities to network; to openly share best practice and to increase their skills and knowledge through specialist training

Our aim is to offer timely and impartial advice to our members; to keep contact centre leaders in touch with changes in their industry; to provide credible benchmarking information and to help individuals maintain an awareness of the latest trends and developments

Our membership association is not for profit, and our board is made up of people who work full time in the industry in operational roles. We are run by our members for our members.

For more information: www.ccma.org.uk | [@CCMATalk](https://twitter.com/CCMATalk)

About Poly

Poly (NYSE: PLT) creates premium audio and video products so you can have your best meeting – anywhere, anytime, every time. Our headsets, video and audio-conferencing products, desk phones, analytics software and services are beautifully designed and engineered to connect people with incredible clarity. They're pro-grade, easy to use and work seamlessly with all the best video and audio conferencing services. With Poly (Plantronics, Inc. – formerly Plantronics and Polycom), you'll do more than just show up, you'll stand out.

For more information visit www.poly.com

Poly, the propeller design, and the Poly logo are trademarks of Plantronics, Inc. DECT™ is a trademark of ETSI. Bluetooth is a registered trademark of Bluetooth SIG, Inc. and any use by Plantronics, Inc. is under license. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.



**Join
us!**

Not a member?

There is no better time to join us. The industry is changing and we are giving our members more opportunities to learn, to network and to support each other.

www.ccma.org.uk/membership



0333 939 9964 | www.ccma.org.uk

@ccmatalk | info@ccma.org.uk