



David Morris  
Project Director

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It's not where you are, but what you do that counts: the LIW Project at Coventry University  
**UCISA: 8 JULY 2009**




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- JISC funded
- Institutional Exemplars (Pilot)
- Extends work already done with commercial staff to academic departments
- Fits with university's other work in the area (eWorking Solutions, research group etc)
- 35 staff involved
- Now in "benefits realisation" stage



**The Project**

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Our Deputy Head of Student Experience, Nancy Harbinger, reacted with anger to last week's claim by Coventry University that it was first in the field with the concept of "location independent working".....several academics at our university were already wearing similar desk-free all-purpose wind-smart communication systems...."

The POPPLETONIAN, 12 June 2008.

**The Green-Eyed Monster** 

Everyone is doing it anyway.

LIW is for everyone.

It's a recipe for avoiding work.

LIW staff are never around and the rest of us can't talk to them.

LIW people get left out.

Non-LIW colleagues carry the can.

Students get short-changed.

**The LIW Myths** 

It is a formal scheme which recognises that work does not just take place on the campus and supports people in working from other locations.

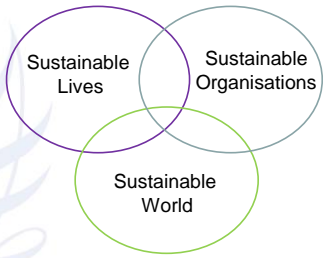
Participants are informed volunteers and have a three month try out before making any long-term decisions.

LIW staff give up their offices but have "touch down" spaces on the campus.

LIW staff and their managers are briefed and trained.

LIW has been developed in partnership with staff and the university and has been shown to work for all parties.

**The Basics** 



Sustainability at Coventry 

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- Key aim of introducing LIW *“to improve the flexibility of CUE and to enable staff to react better to customer requirements through changing the way we work”*
- Brainchild of the two IT Analyst Advisors in CUE
- Policies and procedures for LIW were developed and a three month pilot project of 10 employees commenced in October 2002.
- The project is now in its 12<sup>th</sup> round and when complete will result in 125 members of staff working LIW - 69% of the CUE workforce against an original aim of 25%.

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Origins of the JISC Project 



- Largest Faculty – split site
- 273 staff – 187 academics
- Academic staff have own office or share with one other person
- Grouped as Departments



- Professional Services staff have own office or share with their team



Faculty of Business Environment & Society 

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- Central development unit
- 30+ staff
- Academic staff have own office or share
- Very mixed group of staff working in small teams
- Spread over two sites

Centre for Studies of Higher Education 

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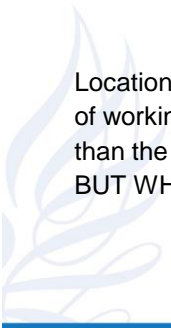
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Location Independent Working consists of working at an alternative place rather than the office – it is not where you are BUT WHAT YOU DO THAT COUNTS

LIW – what is it? 

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Individual	Employer	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Work-Life Balance</li> <li>• Reduce commute time</li> <li>• Reduction in travel costs</li> <li>• Reduced stress</li> <li>• Legitimisation of home working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve work flexibility</li> <li>• Improve recruitment-attractive employer</li> <li>• Reduce absenteeism and stress</li> <li>• Reduce space needs</li> <li>• Reduce pressure on car parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower carbon footprint</li> <li>• Reduced congestion and transport burden</li> <li>• Higher standard of teaching with innovation</li> </ul>

Expected Benefits 

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Component	Options
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•USB Broadband Stick, or</li> <li>•Broad band (standard installation), or</li> <li>•Own provision</li> </ul>
Contribution	•£2 / week contribution
Phone	•Smart phones
Chair	•Yes
PC	•Laptop, webcam and headset
Printer	•Standardised inkjet colour printer/ scanner/ fax
Trolley bag	•Standardised trolley bag
Router	•Wireless router provided with broadband installation
Accommodation	•Hot desk/ interview space
Support	•Faculty IT Technicians; LIW Handbook; Dedicated online 'blog'

Offering 

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- **Voluntary** opt in
- Expression of interest
- Decision on those to be included
- Training for participants and managers
- Individual consultations
- Formal agreement to terms and conditions
- Equipment set-up and start-up

Participation process 

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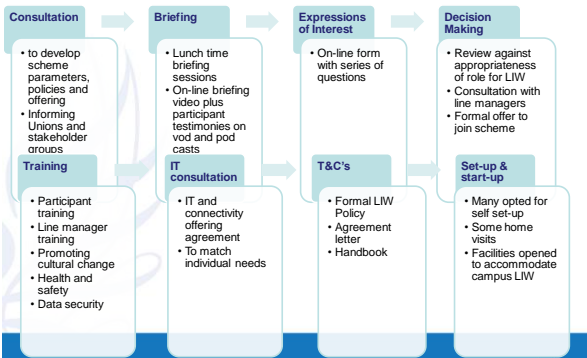
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Participation process 

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Levels of participation 

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**Managers**

Do they get worried?

Do they block LIW?





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- staff may be less accountable
- staff may try to 'cop out' of their responsibilities/have more opportunity to abuse the system
- may be more difficult/take more time to manage
- may be seen (by colleagues or managers) to be taking a soft option



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- would need more stringent development review targets and more frequent reviews
- were less easy to contact
- were too remote from the department in the LIW office
- would require longer lead times for changes

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- had no protocols for communication (an example given was on sickness notification)
- managers would find it difficult not to have personal daily contact with their staff

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- heads of departments want to see their staff working in the university and not potentially 'skiving'
- not all managers had the confidence to manage the change to LIW
- But 54% of managers thought LIW was a positive development

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Students: No significant difference.....

- Satisfied with availability of tutors regardless of whether they are LIW or not
- Satisfied with course delivery methods
- Staff participation in LIW does not affect their learning experience
- Students are not aware of the LIW scheme




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1. Have a senior champion who is LIW
2. Create the LIW spaces early on
3. Big spaces foster multi-disciplinary dialogue; small spaces facilitate team dynamics
4. A formal system increases acceptability
5. Training is important
6. Myth busting: wide communication of the scheme should be undertaken
7. Process for storage of University owned material
8. The problems are smaller than you think




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