



**REPORT ON THE IMPACT THAT HYBRID WORK ARRANGEMENTS HAD
ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

OCTOBER 2023



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REPORT ON THE IMPACT THAT HYBRID WORK ARRANGEMENTS HAD ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

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FOREWORD

In early 2020 the world experienced what would later be described as the COVID-19 Corona Virus Pandemic that claimed millions of lives around the world. In March 2020, the South African President announced a 21-day lockdown, which resulted in all non-essential operations being shut down during that period. In the Public Service, only departments or services that were declared as essential were allowed to operate fully during the lockdown period. In the main, the Departments of Health, Police and Defence were key in the fight against the Coronavirus, while selected services were declared as essential in most departments. At the end of the 21-day lockdown period, the President introduced regulations that comprised of five response levels, with Level 1 being the least risky and Level 5 being the level with the highest risk. The country operated at levels 2 and 5 between April 2020 and 31 September 2021, and things only started improving with the introduction of level 1 between 01 October 2021 and 05 April 2022. The Public Service also had to adjust to these regulations and other instructions issued which allowed for rotation and working from home in order to ensure continuity in service delivery. The Public Service may not have been prepared for the new work arrangements that came with lockdown, but had to adjust itself given the circumstances at the time.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) was concerned as to how these new work arrangements impacted on service delivery and the efficient, economic and effective use of resources given that the Public Service exists to meet the obligations of the state towards its citizens and other stakeholders at all times. For that reason, a decision was taken to conduct a study on the impact that hybrid work arrangements had on service delivery between April 2020 and December 2021 and to assess the Public Service's readiness to institutionalise hybrid work arrangements going forward.

The PSC has prepared this report after a lengthy process of engaging with various stakeholders from the sampled departments and incorporating inputs from stakeholders who participated in a webinar that deliberated on the draft report in June 2023. The PSC hopes that the report captures the challenges that were experienced by both public servants and the recipients of government services as well as the mechanisms put in place to ensure seamless service delivery to the public. It is also hoped that the findings and recommendations will enable the Public Service to make informed decisions about the review of relevant prescripts and the systematic and gradual institutionalisation of hybrid work arrangements.



MR VGM MAVUSO
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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- The Management Teams of the participating departments who provided valuable inputs during interviews as well as staff members who responded to the surveys, and
- Frontline staff at the various service delivery sites visited by the PSC project teams and members of the public who made time to detail their experiences.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the declaration of the first official 21-days shutdown in March 2020, all non-essential operations had to close including most institutions in the Public Service, with the exception of those that were declared essential as per the Presidential proclamation. Post the initial 21-days lockdown, the President introduced regulations that comprised of five response levels. Consequently, the Department of the Public Service and Administration (DPSA) issued State of Disaster COVID-19 guidelines alongside Directions by the Minister for Public Service and Administration (MPSA) to provide guidance to Public Service departments on how to manage the state of disaster.

The Public Service was not fully prepared for the work from home arrangements that came with the response levels. Due to the pandemic and subsequent regulations, Public Service departments had to comply. This new work arrangement had an impact on the delivery of services. The PSC decided to conduct a study on the actual and perceived impact that the introduction of hybrid environment and work from home arrangements had on service delivery in the Public Service in order to formulate recommendations that could assist the Public Service to adapt to the unavoidable future work environment smoothly.

The objectives of the study were to, amongst others, establish the extent that departments used hybrid work arrangements and technology and establish the impact that these had on organisational performance. The study further intended to determine how the hybrid work arrangements affected the recipients of public services and the impact on employee wellness. The study, which was qualitative in nature, focused on six (6)-service delivery departments in the Public Service. Data collection included interviews, surveys and site visits whereby citizens were interviewed on site regarding their experience.

Following this approach, data received was collated and a report was produced and presented to participants from the selected departments and other identified stakeholders. The aim of the stakeholder engagement was to solicit additional inputs in order to tighten the findings and recommendations.

The study found that existing primary legislation and policies are silent on the work from home or hybrid work arrangements, and this gap was addressed through the passing and revision of interim regulations, directions and guidelines. These interim measures enabled departments to put measures in place to comply with the COVID-19 regulations whilst still ensuring work continuity, albeit on a fairly reduced scale for some departments. The process of implementing the COVID-19 regulations and directions had advantages and disadvantages for employees and employers alike as well as the broader public. Findings from primary data allude to a mixture of

positive and negative practices and experiences, as well as notable innovative measures and commitment to Public Service by many employees.

There were also challenges with regard to the implementation of the hybrid work arrangement. These included, amongst others, capacity constraints, additional expenses that were not budgeted for, inaccessibility of service sites when some staff members tested positive, inconsistent practices in granting permission to employees to work from home between and within departments and lack of appropriate tools of trade for some employees.

The mechanisms put in place by departments to ensure service delivery continuity included appointment of additional capacity on contract basis to assist with the delivery of services, provision of tools of trade and allocation of alternative office space to ensure public access to services, in the event that the main buildings could not be used if there was contamination.

When it comes to performance management, the study found that there was no one size fits all solution for departments or units within departments. Performance was managed differently according to the different departments and also varied within the different units in the respective departments. There was also acknowledgement by some of the managers that it was challenging to monitor employees' performance remotely as this was a new arrangement for them. Another critical issue highlighted in the study is the blurring of lines between work and life in terms of working hours and expectations.

Given their circumstances, the view from participants from essential service departments, mainly the South African Police Service and Department of Health, is that it would be difficult to adopt a hybrid work arrangement on a permanent basis because the nature of work in these departments requires contact with service recipients. Participants from non-essential service departments were of the view that there is a future for hybrid work arrangement in the Public Service, provided a strong change management programme is implemented to support the new policy.

Informed by the findings, the following measures are recommended for implementation in the next 12-24 months:

- The DPSA should benchmark with other countries to determine how the hybrid work arrangement was managed during the pandemic and how it is being taken forward as a basis to review relevant legislation, regulations, directives, policies and conditions of service for different categories of occupations and/or employees.
- The Public Service, led by the DPSA, National Treasury and the Department of Communications and Digital Services, must take the lead in digitising government operations and prioritising access to tools of trade that will enable the effective implementation of hybrid work arrangements, where feasible.

- Departments, in collaboration with the National School of Government, should incorporate continuous training programmes on new technologies that are necessary to facilitate remote work arrangements, online collaboration and remote access to centralised systems as well as other emerging innovations for employees to stay abreast of the new developments.
- National Treasury, in collaboration with departments such as the DPSA and Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, must conduct a cost benefit analysis of implementing hybrid work arrangements for selected non-essential service departments in order to identify possible cost-saving measures and possible once-off cost drivers as a basis to generate resources to fund critical areas of need, including the rapid adoption of technology-enabled solutions and provision of other essential services to the public.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Full Name
BAS	Basic Accounting System
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
BMI	Body Mass Index
DCoG	Department of Co-operative Governance
DMA	Disaster Management Act
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DSD	Department of Social Development
ERRP	Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan
EWP	Employee Wellness Programmes
HOD	Head of Department
HRM	Human Resource Management
KZN	Kwa-Zulu Natal
LoGis	LogGIs
MPSA	Minister for Public Service and Administration
NSG	National School of Government
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
OPSC	Office of the Public Service Commission
PERSAL	Personnel and Salary System
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PSC	Public Service Commission
RWOPS	Remunerative Work Outside of the Public Service
SABPP	South African Board of Personnel Practice
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SMME	Small Micro and Medium Sized Enterprises
SRD	Social Relief of Distress
TRF	Tourism Relief Fund
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
VPN	Virtual Private Network
WFH	Work from Home

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

On 15 March 2020, the President of South Africa announced a 21-day lockdown and, as a result, all non-essential operations were required to close during the lockdown period¹. This included all institutions in the Public Service, with the exception of those institutions that were declared essential such as the Department of Health (Public Hospitals) and the South African Police Service (SAPS). In some institutions, certain services were declared as essential by management, whilst others in the same institutions had to comply with the lockdown regulations.

Once the lockdown was eased, the President introduced regulations that comprised of five response levels, with Level 1 being the least risky and Level 5 being the level with the highest risk. The regulations were gazetted by the Department of Co-operative Governance (DCoG). Consequently, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) issued State of Disaster COVID-19 guidelines² and Directions³ by the Minister for Public Service and Administration (MPSA) providing guidance to Public Service Departments on how to manage the state of disaster. These were reviewed and updated as and when necessary in line with pronouncements made by the State President.

Following the return to work guidelines issued by the DPSA in 2021, the Public Service adjusted operations in line with the applicable risk levels, as guided by the Regulations the President had announced at the time. In terms of the guidelines, departments were allowed to grant officials permission to work from home and to rotate operating from their offices on selected days. Priority was given to officials with commodities to work from home for extended periods as they were at a higher risk of getting infected.

The reality in the Public Service is that most departments were not prepared for the work from home arrangements but due to the pandemic and subsequent regulations, they had to comply. The new work arrangements resulted in more departments replacing physical meetings with virtual meetings, walk-ins to non-essential sites being prohibited and citizens being required to use alternative options of accessing services such as telephones and e-mails. At some point, departments could operate on 30% to 50% capacity and this affected the quality and extent of service delivery. The South African government was torn between protecting the lives of citizens and employees on the one hand, and ensuring service delivery on the other. Government erred

¹Ramaphosa, C. 15 March 2020: Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa on measures to combat COVID-19 epidemic. Pretoria: The Presidency

²Department of Public Service and Administration. 2020: State of Disaster: Guidelines for the containment/management of Corona-virus (COVID-19) in the public service. Pretoria: Department of Public Service and Administration

³ Department of Public Service and Administration. Directions in respect of service delivery and business continuity for the Public Service during Covid-19, 2020.

on the side of caution and the decision to protect people's lives was broadly supported at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. However, there was always a concern that this decision might have a negative impact on the productivity of most departments.

In spite of the broader lockdown measures, service delivery still had to be prioritised during the pandemic and some departments were expected to go beyond their call of duty in order to respond to the needs of communities. The South African Public Service played a pivotal role in mitigating and alleviating the impact of COVID-19 through various support mechanisms. The major role that government played was to facilitate the establishment of multi-sectoral partnerships such as the Solidarity Fund, including both public and private entities, civil society, and the public, to contribute to a unified effort in responding to the pandemic. Other mechanisms put in place included the initiative by the National Treasury of developing South Africa's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP), which was aimed to protect lives, livelihoods and also supported a more inclusive and resilient growth path. The Department of Tourism implemented the Tourism Relief Fund (TRF) through the re-directing and re-allocation of financial and human resources.

The TRF was introduced during the pandemic by the Department of Tourism to provide once-off capped grant assistance to Small Micro and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMMEs). The aim of the fund was to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to ensure sustainable livelihoods for SMMEs. The categories that were eligible to apply for the fund included accommodation establishments, hospitality, travel and related services and the amount was capped at R50 000 per entity⁴. According to a study conducted by Chiloane-Phetla and Mathipa in 2021, the challenge with the TRF was that it could not reach all the beneficiaries as some were not documented or registered, and these included street vendors, spaza shops, restaurants and salons⁵.

On the other hand, the Department of Employment and Labour provided support in the form of wage supplement to workers who lost their jobs or income due to the lockdown. In addition, the department was also responsible for ensuring that the COVID-19 health and safety regulations at the workplace were adhered to. The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) was tasked with the distribution of the special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant set at R350 per qualifying citizen⁶.

The Department of Social Development (DSD) and its agency, SASSA, as the custodians of the SRD grant conducted "*The Rapid Assessment of the Implementation and Utilisation of the Special*

⁴ Department of Transport. 2020. Tourism Relief Fund for SMME's. Accessed on 02 August 2023 <https://www.tourism.gov.za/>

⁵ Chiloane-Phetla, G & Mathipa, RE. 2021. An exploration of challenges faced by small-medium enterprises caused by covid19: the case of South Africa. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal* Volume 27, Issue 1, 2021

⁶ Public Service Commission. 2022. Report on the Assessment of the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Selected Support Mechanisms Implemented to Mitigate and Alleviate the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa.

*Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant*⁷. The assessment results found that the grant provided social relief as planned and also revealed that the grant was used mainly to purchase food⁷. In another study by Mokoena and Ngwakwe, it was reported that 88.49% of the recipients of the SRD confirmed that the grant made a positive difference in their daily lives. The recipients of the grant indicated that they used the funds for other basic needs such as transport, electricity, clothes, personal grooming and other household products. Most importantly, the recipients said the grant made it possible for them to purchase masks in order to protect themselves from infection⁸.

The measures that were introduced by various government departments at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate how government tried to achieve balance in implementing its mandate of 'protecting people's lives' and delivering services to the people.

1.2 Mandate of the PSC

The Public Service Commission (PSC) derives its mandate from Sections 195 and 196 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Constitution) and the Public Service Commission Act, 1997. In terms of section 195(1), public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution. The PSC is mandated in terms of section 196(4)(a) of the Constitution to promote the values and principles set out in section 195. The values and principles to be promoted by the PSC include efficient, economic and effective use of resources, as well as public administration that is accountable (section 195(1)(b) and (f)).

In terms of Section 196 (4)(b) and (c) of the Constitution the PSC has, amongst others, the following functions:

- To investigate, monitor and evaluate the organisation and administration and the personnel practices and procedures in the public service; and
- To propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the public service.

The PSC's mandate is to ensure good governance and to promote sound labour relations between the employer and employees so as to encourage a harmonious Public Service geared to deliver services in a professional, effective, economical and efficient manner to the public. The PSC is also empowered to propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the Public Service. In line with this mandate, the PSC decided to analyse the actual and perceived

⁷ Department of Social Development 2021. The rapid assessment of the implementation and utilisation of the special COVID-19 SRD Grant.

⁸ Mokoena, S. & Ngwakwe, C. 2022. Government's COVID-19 Social Grant in South Africa: A Synopsis of the effect on Recipients. *Holistica Volume 13 (2022) – Issue 2*

impact that the introduction of the hybrid environment and work from home arrangements had on service delivery in the Public Service in order to propose measures that will assist the Public Service to adapt to the future work environment smoothly.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Establish the extent that departments used hybrid work arrangements and technology between April 2020 and December 2021;
- Assess the impact that hybrid work arrangements had on organisational/departmental performance;
- Explore the impact of hybrid work arrangements on employee wellness;
- Determine how the hybrid work arrangements affected the recipients of Public Services;
- Assess the Public Service's readiness to institutionalise hybrid work arrangements; and
- Make recommendations to influence a suitable work-arrangement model in the Public Service post Covid-19.

1.4 Methodology

This was an impact assessment study based on an analysis of the views, experiences and perceptions of the managers, employees and citizens as well as other published sources publicly accessible literature. The data collection was conducted through the mixed method approach whereby data was collected through various data collection methods that are briefly explained below.

1.4.1 Scope and Sample

The study focused on six (6) service delivery departments at the national and provincial levels. Purposive sampling was utilised to identify departments that offer services directly to the public. Emphasis was placed on departments that were declared as essential services and those that had to play a critical role in ensuring compliance with the COVID-19 protocols as well as implementing some of the relief measures. The national and provincial departments and the respective service delivery sites that were included in the study are listed in **Table 1** below.

As per the table below, each province was required to conduct focus groups at the six selected departments and the provincial offices were allowed to select the office at either at provincial or district level. The Department of Health and the SAPS were the only departments that were identified for service delivery visits and all provincial project teams and the national team were required to use the guide in **Table 1** below when selecting, however due to numerous challenges that were beyond the control of the research teams, not all focus groups and service delivery sites

were conducted. Refer to **Annexures A and B** for details on conducted focus groups and service delivery sites visits.

Table 1: National and Provincial departments and service sites identified for the study

DEPARTMENT	NATIONAL	PROVINCIAL
Basic Education and Provincial Departments of Education	National Office	Provincial/District Offices
Department of Employment and Labour	National Office	Provincial/Regional Offices
Health	National Office	Provincial/District Offices
	1 Hospital	1 Hospital per province
	2 Clinics	2 Clinics per province
Department of Home Affairs	National Office	Provincial/Regional Offices
SASSA	SASSA National Office	Provincial/Regional Offices
South African Police Services	National Office	Provincial Offices
	2 Police Stations	2 Police Stations per province

1.4.2 Data Collection

PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collection phase included interviews with management and other relevant officials from the selected departments. Specifically, the line function senior managers, human resource managers, compliance officers and other employees (inclusive of representatives of organised labour) who formed part of the *COVID-19 Steering Committees* were interviewed in groups. The view of the PSC was that the selected officials played a critical role in the management and/or facilitation of service delivery during the COVID-19 period.

This phase also incorporated surveys and site visits whereby clients/citizens/service recipients were interviewed on site regarding their experience during the introduction of hybrid work arrangements as a result of the Covid-19 regulations. These were in a form of unannounced and unannounced site visits, which are explained in detail below.

- ***Unannounced Site Visits***

Site visits in this study were modelled along the PSC’s Inspections Protocol⁹. The protocol defines an unannounced inspection as “an onsite visit to a service delivery site where the Commission

⁹ Public Service Commission, September 2016. Protocol on Announced and Unannounced Inspections.

provides no prior notification of the actual date of the inspection to the service delivery sites, or notice is given shortly before the scheduled time of the inspection (i.e. on the same day of the inspection)". The protocol also makes provision for the PSC to inform the departments about the planned unannounced inspection without providing the full details of the date or the selected service delivery sites. As a result, the research team informed the respective departments of the plan to visit selected service delivery sites, however, in a number of cases the management was not informed on the exact dates and the service delivery sites. During these site visits, the PSC interviewed the relevant management teams before proceeding to interview service recipients/citizens.

- ***Announced Site Visits***

According to the PSC protocol, an announced inspection is an onsite visit where a site to be visited and/or inspected is given a notification in advance prior to the actual inspection by the Commission¹⁰. This means that a specific date of visit or inspection is given to the site to be inspected to enable management to prepare. There could be a negotiated arrangement on the suitability of the date of the site visit.

- ***Employee Survey***

A link was also shared with employees who could not be interviewed, specifically employees on salary levels 9-15, from the selected departments. Focus was on employees who have managerial or supervisory responsibilities that were considered relevant for the study.

SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

Secondary data was collected through a literature review (study of articles, publications, legislation and other relevant studies), review of COVID-19 regulations and circulars as well as scrutiny of departmental communication/messaging to staff where possible.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON DRAFT REPORT

Following finalisation of the draft report, the preliminary findings and recommendations were presented and further deliberated on with representatives from participating departments, academic institutions, research institutions and organised labour. Inputs from the stakeholders were incorporated into this final report.

1.5 Challenges and Limitations

The following challenges and limitations were encountered during the execution of the study:

¹⁰ Public Service Commission, September 2016. Protocol on Announced and Unannounced Inspections

- There was lack of cooperation from some employees and members of the public, which resulted in the postponement of some planned activities and delays in actual data collection.
- Non-availability of selected management representatives for interviews limited the diversity of perspectives.

These limitations were remedied through the stakeholder engagement session that created a platform for representatives of selected departments and other external stakeholders to deliberate on the draft findings and recommendations.

1.6 Structure of the Report

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2: Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks;

Chapter 3: Literature Review;

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings; and

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the relevant legislation, legislative frameworks and policies that served as guidelines to manage government operations in South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks

The legislative and regulatory prescripts discussed below are guided by the founding values of human dignity, supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law, as outlined in section one of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. They are also central to government's roles in ensuring the promotion, protection and realization of the Bill of Right, inclusive of, amongst others, the right to life, education, health care, food, water, social security and safe environment.

2.2.1 Public Service Act, 1994, as amended

Section 7(3)(b) of the Public Service Act, 1994, as amended provides that a Head of Department (HoD) shall be responsible for the efficient management and administration of his or her department, including the effective utilisation and training of staff, the maintenance of discipline, the promotion of sound labour relations and the proper use and care of State property. Section 41 further empowers the Minister for Public Service and Administration (MPSA) to make regulations regarding any matter required or permitted by the Act to be prescribed.

It is in line with these provisions that the MPSA and the Department of Public Service and Administration were able to translate the provisions of the COVID-19 Regulations into guidelines to enable HODs to make informed decisions about the operations of Public Service departments during the pandemic.

2.2.2 Public Service Regulations, 2016

Part III of the Public Service Regulations, regulates working hours for public servants, emergency work as well as issues of health and safety in the work environment.

In terms of Section 51 of the regulations, an HoD shall determine the work week and hours of work for employees and the opening and closing times of places of work of the department. This shall be done taking into account the needs of the public, the needs and circumstances of employees, including family obligations and transport arrangements. Section 52 allows an HoD to direct an employee to perform work outside normal working hours if the work is required to be performed without delay owing to circumstances which are outside the control of the HoD.

Section 53 states that an HoD shall establish a healthy and safe working environment for employees of the department as well as a safe and healthy service delivery environment for members of the public.

These provisions became even more acute during the pandemic and this required departments to go the extra mile in ensuring compliance with these provisions and the COVID-19 Regulations.

2.2.3 Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997, as amended

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) regulates the basic conditions of employment by determining the working hours and leave management in compliance with the right to fair labour practices referred to in section 23 (1) of the Constitution.

- ***Working Hours***

In terms of Section 13 of the BCEA, the determination of hours of work is the responsibility of the Minister of Employment and Labour. The Minister, on grounds of health and safety, may prescribe by regulation the maximum permitted hours of work, including overtime, that any category of employee may work—

- a) daily, weekly or during any other period specified in the regulation; and
- b) during a continuous period without a break.

For many years, working hours for different categories of employees were well established in the Public Service. However, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged some of these established practices and departments relied on the MPSA and DPSA directions and guidelines as well as the departmental COVID-19 Steering Committees inputs to review these as an interim measure. In particular, departments were required to relax their requirements with regards to employees' arrival and departure times from the office in order to comply with various COVID-19 regulations and directions.

- ***Leave Management***

All public servants are entitled to annual leave. According to Section 20 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), annual leave cycle refers to a period of 12 months' employment with the same employer. The minimum number of leave days to be granted is 21 days and it must be taken in agreement between the employer and employee. Within the Public Service, annual leave days are set at 22 days over a twelve-months period or 30 days for employees who have more than 20 years of work experience. Provisions is also made for other types of leave, in line with the BCEA as well as bargaining council resolutions that are applicable to Public Service employees.

The MPSA issued a circular in respect of leave for employees who were affected by COVID-19 and such made provision for officials that have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and those that were required to isolate or quarantine. The circular also outlined the processes to be followed in order to be eligible for special for the purpose of isolation.

2.2.4 The Disaster Management Act, 2002

The Disaster Management Act (DMA) makes provision for an integrated and co-ordinated disaster management policy that focuses on preventing or reducing the risk of disasters, mitigating the severity of disasters, emergency preparedness, rapid and effective response to disasters and post-disaster recovery. It also makes provision for the establishment of national, provincial and municipal disaster management centres. This explains the measures put in place, e.g. the COVID-19 Command Centre which provided guidance to government decisions before regulations were issued, and the participation of HODs in that structure to ensure first hand access to guidance from experts and etc.

The National Coronavirus Command Council became the centre of decision making in government's response to Covid-19 in order to deal with the risks and consequences of the pandemic. Whilst there was a lot of appreciation for many of the decisions made by the Council especially at the onset of the pandemic, there was a fair share of controversy around some decisions taken, such as the continued ban on alcohol and cigarette sales¹¹. The strengthened command and control through centralised and decentralised incident management teams (IMTs) enabled swift evidenced-based decision-making. The timely and technologically innovative contact tracing measures and large-scale community screening and testing were beneficial in quickly detecting hotspots and mitigating the further spread of the virus¹².

2.2.5 Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993

All employers are required to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). The aim of the Act is to provide for the health and safety of persons at work and for the health and safety of all employees. This includes the safety of employees in relation to the use of plant and machinery, working in hazardous environment and providing guidelines for establishing an advisory council for occupation health and safety.

The act remained relevant during COVID-19, and government as an employer did take all necessary precautions to ensure the health and safety of employees at the workplace including introducing new measures recommended to deal with Covid-19. The challenge however was with extending the same measures to the homes of employees who had to work at home. This is

¹¹ Qaanitah Hunter. News 24: 13 May 2020. What exactly is the National Coronavirus Command Council?

¹² Dr Devanand Moonasar et al. BMJ Global Health, Volume 6 Issue 2. COVID-19: lessons and experiences from South Africa's first surge.

despite the Minister of Employment and Labour defining the workplace as “any premises or place where a person performs work”¹³. Covid-19 was sudden, complying with every legislation on health and safety at the home of each employee would have required planning and additional resources which were not possible at the time.

2.2.6 Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013

The purpose of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPIA) is to give into effect the constitutional right to privacy, as stated in section 14 of the Constitution, 1996, by safeguarding personal information when processed by a responsible. The Act regulates the manner in which personal information may be processed, by establishing the conditions, standards that prescribe the minimum threshold requirements for lawful processing of personal information. As was the case in all sectors, management within the Public Service had to navigate how to ensure maximum communication without comprising individual confidential information of employees.

Employers were obligated to uphold employee’s privacy regarding their health at all times. As such, maximum care was taken when dealing with applications for employees’ who had comorbidities. *Absolute protection* of employees’ privacy proved to be a challenge during COVID-19 as employers were forced to disclose employees’ COVID-19 results in an effort to conduct contact tracing. The POPI Act requires that written consent be sought before doing so, however this was not possible or easy to do considering that employees had to isolate immediately after being confirmed as positive and there was urgency to report and trace the infected employee’s contacts¹⁴.

The Information Regulator (of South Africa) issued guidance on how to process personal information during the pandemic. Some of the security measures that were highlighted include ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of personal information and this could be achieved by:

- The responsible official who must take appropriate, reasonable technical and organisational measures to prevent the loss or damage to unauthorised access of personal information.
- An operator who must only process personal information with the knowledge or authorisation of a responsible party and should treat such information as confidential, and only disclose such information if required to do so by law, or in the course of the proper performance of their duty.

¹³ Department of Employment and Labour, April 2020. Government Notice No. 43257. Covid-19 Occupational Health and Safety Measures in Workplaces Covid-19 (C19 OHS), 2020.

¹⁴ Consolidated Employers Organisation. 2023. Dealing with information regarding an Employee’s COVID-19 status in the workplace. Accessed 03 August 2023 from <https://ceosa.org.za/dealing-with-information-regarding-an-employees-covid-19-status-in-the-workplace/>

- The responsible party who must enter into a written contract with an operator to ensure that the operator establishes and maintains appropriate, reasonable, technical and organisational security measures when processing personal of data subjects¹⁵.

2.2.7 Consolidated Covid-19 Direction on Health and Safety in the Workplace, 2020

The workplace including the Public Service was governed by the Consolidated Covid-19 Direction on Health and Safety in the Workplace during the different levels of lockdown. The first Directions were issued in 2020 and they were reviewed continuously. Section 17 of the Direction, which was issued on 04 June 2020, focuses on the 'Plan for re-opening workplaces' and explains what employers were required to do before welcoming employees back at the office and provided for the following:

17. *As and when any regulations made in terms of section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act permit industries, businesses, entities both private and in the public sector to commence operating, every employer commencing operations must-*
 - 17.1 *undertake a risk assessment in terms of clause 20.1 to 20.3;*
 - 17.2 *on the basis of that risk assessment, develop a plan outlining the protective measures in place for the phased return of its employees before opening;*
 - 17.3 *consult on the risk assessment and plan with-*
 - 17.3.1 *any representative trade union as contemplated by section 14(1) of the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995); and*
 - 17.3.2 *any health and safety committee established in terms of section 19 of OHSA; or*
 - 17.3.3 *in the absence of such a committee, a health and safety representative designated in terms of section 17(1) of OHSA or employee representative; and*
 - 17.4 *make that plan available for inspection by an inspector.*

Whilst the provisions above applied to all sectors, including in the Public Service, the DPSA in its communications to departments provided further clarity to facilitate implementation by government departments. The DPSA Circular 07 of 2020¹⁶ on the Guidelines for the Containment of the Corona Virus in the Public Service and further discussed below, provided clarity to departments on measures to be taken in order to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) in the Public Service.

2.2.8 Covid-19 occupational health and safety measures in workplaces (c19 OHS), 2020

This guide, which was issued by the Department of Employment and Labour, was instrumental in managing the COVID-19 pandemic by government departments and other public and private sector employers. One of the administrative measures that employers were required to implement

¹⁵ <https://inforegulator.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/InfoRegSA-GuidanceNote-PPI-Covid19-20200403.pdf>

¹⁶ Department of Public Service and Administration. 2020. Circular no 07 of 2020: State of Disaster guidelines for the containment/management of the corona virus (COVID 19) in the Public Service.

between May 2020 and April 2022 was to ensure that, as far as practicable, they minimize the number of workers at the workplace at any given time through rotation, staggered working hours, shift systems, remote work arrangements or similar measures in order to achieve social distancing. This resulted in the introduction of working from home or hybrid work arrangements in the Public Service.

This guideline remained in force until April 2022 when the state of disaster was terminated. The MPSA issued several circulars, however, the Accounting Officers or Heads of Departments were allowed to use their discretion in dealing with matters not covered in the circulars. Furthermore, each Accounting Officer had an obligation to enable contact tracing in their respective workplace.

2.2.9 Various DPSA Circulars

The President of South Africa declared a national state of disaster and the Public Service, being the largest employer in the country, was provided with guidelines to manage the pandemic through the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) Directives.

DPSA Circular 07 of 2020¹⁷ was issued in order to encourage Heads of Departments to put in place the necessary measures to manage and contain the spread of the virus in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). These measures included conducting risk assessments regularly, establishing departmental steering committees that included organised labour representatives and developing guidelines, action plans and protocols to manage any confirmed cases of COVID-19 amongst staff. Departments were also requested to postpone or cancel mass gatherings/events, practice social distancing and procure the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and products. The products included hand sanitisers, soaps, gloves and temperature scanners. The circular also made provision for allowing employees to work from home, where possible, in an effort to minimise exposure.

The DPSA issued another, *Circular 15 of 2020*¹⁸ that focused on providing specific directions in respect of service delivery and business continuity for the Public Service during COVID -19. The objectives of the circular in relation to the study was

- To provide for arrangements for remote work for employees following the outbreak of the COVID -19 in South Africa for which the President of the Republic of South African had declared a national state of disaster.
- To assist departments to comply with their legal obligations in accordance with section 8 of the OHSA, 1993, (Act no. 85 of 1993) as far as possible, in providing and maintaining a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of its employees.

¹⁷ Department of Public Service and Administration. 2020. Circular no 07 of 2020: State of Disaster guidelines for the containment/management of the corona virus (COVID 19) in the Public Service.

¹⁸ Department of Public Service and Administration. 2020. Circular no 15 of 2020: Sate of Disaster Directions in respect of service delivery and business continuity for the Public Service during COVID -19.

- To mitigate the impact of the spread of COVID-19 in the public service and society.
- To ensure that departments implement business and service continuity in supporting the containment of COVID-19 and supporting the delivery of services to citizens.
- To have a common approach in the manner in which departments deal with those employees who work remotely from departmental offices as a response to the President's announcement of a lockdown.
- To provide for remote work arrangements for the duration of the declared national state of disaster declared by the Government Notice. No. 313 of 15 March 2020.

The circular emphasised that remote work arrangements should be based on a management philosophy of trust and mutual benefit. The circular made it clear that the HoD of a department will grant approval for remote work only if the employee's post is not classified as critical, as would be determined by the job responsibilities.

As the national lockdown was gradually eased, and in preparation for the return to work, the DPSA issued Circular 18 of 2020¹⁹ to serve as a guideline. According to this circular, in addition to the establishing steering committees, HoDs were required to assign in writing employees to serve as compliance officers. Departments were also required to undertake thorough deep cleaning of their premises in preparation for occupation. Departments also had to disable any biometric systems or make sure they were COVID-19 proof.

Once employees returned to the office, all employees and other persons entering the premises wore masks, practised social distancing and were screened before entering the premises. The DPSA then issued various circulars overtime, depending on the different levels of lockdown, until level 1 where 100% of employees were allowed to return to the office.

2.3 Observations and reflections

In any challenging situation, there will be successes and failures, applause and criticisms as well as moments of agreeableness and intensive debates. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the legislative/regulatory framework that were put in place are no exception. The legislative framework review has shown the extent that primary legislation and policies are silent on the working from home or hybrid work arrangements as a concept, and thus this gap was addressed through the passing and revision of interim regulations. As such, Public Service departments, like all sectors, found ways to navigate the pandemic period in line with the available prescripts, the guidance of the various macro and micro structures that were put in place as well as acceptable or debatable executive decisions.

¹⁹ Department of Public Service and Administration. 2020. Circular no 18 of 2020: State of Disaster COVID -19: Public Service return to work guidelines after the easing of the national lockdown.

The COVID -19 pandemic highlighted the need to review both legislation and policies so they can be aligned to the future of work practices. Since the end of the lock-down period in March 2022 and 'return to office' announcements, not much has been done in the Public Service to systematically review legislations and policies based on lessons from the pandemic, thus resulting in *ad hoc* approaches to 'balancing limited-hybrid and dominant-office-based work' by few departments, whilst the majority of departments simply returned to the pre-COVID-19 office-based work arrangements. For example, SASSA has put in place a policy to guide their management and staff on hybrid work arrangement and working from home. SASSA is at a point where they are reviewing the policy as this report is being finalised. There seems to have been no movement however from the other departments that participated in the study. Maybe this is not a bad thing because there is limited information on the real impact of hybrid work arrangements on the recipients of government services and such information is necessary when reviewing and developing legislation and policies.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents experiences, lessons as well as the pros and cons of hybrid work environments from various sectors and literature sources.

3.2 Definition of terms

A flexible working arrangement can consist of different factors. The working hours can be made flexible through adoption of shifts, compressed work weeks or alternative work schedules. Another approach to flexibility can be flexibility with regards to the location or place of work, be it the office, home or satellite location. Organisations, especially the private sector, have always had various flexibility options for their employees. In a study conducted by Ateeq, there were various types of flexible working models that were identified, such as hybrid working models, office clubs, digital working hubs and co-working clusters. However, for the purpose of this study, focus will be on hybrid working models.

Hybrid working models refer to arrangements whereby employees are allowed to combine working from home and working from the office²⁰. Hybrid work arrangements do not require employees' full-time presence in the office and have always been there but gained popularity during the pandemic whereby more organisations were forced to implement them in an effort to limit human and physical interaction, and thereby minimise exposure to and the spread of the COVID-19 virus²¹. This work arrangement makes it possible for employees to also consider working from a 'third place' that is not the office at their homes. Third party work places include locations such as libraries, restaurants or co-working spaces²².

3.3 Advantages and disadvantage of hybrid work arrangements

It is common knowledge that prior to the COVID-219 pandemic, hybrid work arrangements, inclusive of the WFH, were new for most public and private sector employees in South Africa as only a few companies offered this option pre-Covid-19. In essence, this model was primarily introduced in the South Africa Public Service as one of the of the measures to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. While hybrid work arrangements enable employers to permit employees work alternate their work days between the physical office and working remotely²³, there are competing views on who stands to benefit from hybrid work arrangements. As much as

²⁰ Ateeq,K. *n.d.* Hybrid working method: An integrative review. School of information technology, Sjyline University.

²¹ Hopkins, J.&Bardel,A. 2023. The future is hybrid: how organisations are designing and supporting sustainable hybrid work models in post-pandemic Australia. *Sustainability* 2023, 15, 3086.<https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043086>

²² Georgetown university law center. Flexible work arrangements: a definition and examples. *Workplace flexibility* 2010

²³ Choudhury,P, Khanna,T, Makridis, C.& Schirmann, K. 2022. Is Hybrid Work the Best of Both

Worlds? Evidence from a Field Experiment. Accessed from https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/22-063_639195cc-e7b5-47d3-9281-62d192c5b916.pdf

remote working was said to be beneficial to organisations, more satisfaction was recorded for the workers²⁴. It is for this reason that in a 2020 study²⁵ conducted in various organisations around America and Europe, it was found that 75% of the respondents preferred the hybrid working model and wanted it to be retained going forward. Other studies have found that as much as working remotely is the preferred option for most workers, there is still a significant number of workers who still prefer to work at the office on a full time basis.

According to Mirela²⁶, studies conducted by various researchers have shown that WFH has the potential to improve productivity, however, with every good thing lies disadvantages. Below are some of the advantages and disadvantages that were highlighted.

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of working from home

Advantages	Disadvantages
Balance between personal and professional life	Lack of organization/association
Modernisation/automation of operational systems	Security Risk
No time wasted in traffic	Social isolation
Flexibility (working hours)	Distractions at home
Increased productivity	Separate workplace is needed

In contrast, in a separate study conducted by Gibbs, Mengel and Siemroth²⁷, it was established that the average working hours increased significantly for some employees who were working from home but there was also a decline in productivity for some employees. The study also found that low productivity was prevalent among employees with young children, especially women. According to Lupu (in Thostensson)²⁸, WFH benefits are not limited to employees only, it has been found that organisations also benefit financially in terms of reducing organisational costs such as rental/leasing costs, electricity, maintenance, telephone bills and etc.

In spite of the advantages and disadvantages highlighted above, it has become evident that the WFH arrangement is a new concept for most organisations and there is still a need to investigate ways of managing this arrangement in a highly regulated space such as the Public Service.

²⁴ Delany, K. 2021. *What Challenges Will Organizations Face Transitioning for the First Time to the New Normal of Remote Working?* Human Resource Development International 1–9.

Accessed from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13678868.2022.2048605?needAccess=true>

²⁵ Dowling, Goldstein, Park, Price. 2022. Hybrid work: Making it fit with your diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy.

²⁶ Mirela, B. 2020. The impact of working from on productivity, a study on the pandemic period. Management-Marketing Department, Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania. mbucurean@gmail.com

²⁷ Gibbs, M., Mengel, F. & Siemroth, C. 2021. Work from home and productivity evidence from personnel & analytics data on IT Professionals. Becker Friedman Institute.

²⁸ Thorstensson, E. 2020. The influence of working from home on employee's productivity: Comparative document analysis between the years 2000 and 2019-2020. Karlstad Business School

3.4 Readiness to implement hybrid work arrangements

The South African Public Service was the least prepared sector for the WFH arrangement. This was mainly due to the fact that most government technology systems still required some major upgrades to ensure that service delivery is both effective and efficient. In a study conducted by the PSC in 2020²⁹, it was established that essential systems in the administration of procurement, personnel and financial resources (namely PERSAL, LoGis and BAS) largely require onsite or office-based logging in. Even though the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) issued several directives in response to the Governmental regulations as discussed in section 2.2.9 of the report, not all Public Service departments were prepared for the WFH option and this resulted in departments issuing WFH instructions without adequate WFH guidelines, support and/or resources³⁰. There is no doubt that the circumstances and the manner in which employees perform their duties and how services were provided during the Covid-19 pandemic to the public was to a greater degree negatively affected. During the COVID-19 period, mechanisms were put in place to enable operations, however, post the lockdown the legislative framework has not been amended and the expectation was that things will simply go back to normal. As a result, the way public servants serve the public has regressed to the traditional way of operating.

The other challenge for the Public Service was the fact that not all residents/citizens had access to digital/online platforms and therefore departments were still required to serve them physically³¹, whilst still observing safety measures. This meant that at any given point, fewer people could be serviced.

In a recent study conducted by the PSC during 2021, titled “The effectiveness of *continuous employee development*”, departments confirmed that they required technology to perform their duties and approximately 75% of employees use technology and have access to computers. However, it was established in the same study that the use of laptops was limited to a few officials depending on the nature of their job or level of seniority, which made it difficult for some officials to work from home.

According to Neely³² building trust has been one of the greatest challenges experienced following the introduction of WFH, more so if everyone does not have the required tools of trade. As indicated above in the study conducted by the PSC in 2021, a significant number of Public Service employees still do not have access to laptops, which made working from home a challenge during the pandemic and will continue to hinder such arrangements unless the necessary tools of trade

²⁹ Public Service Commission. 2020. Report on lessons learnt and state capacity to facilitate ethical, efficient, economic and effective service delivery during and post the Covid-19 Pandemic.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Neeley, T. 2021. Why remote work is here to stay-and how to get it right. McKinsey & Company.

are provided to all relevant employees. According to Braden *et al* (2021)³³, in order for WFH to succeed, “leaders will also need to ensure that their workforces have access, where possible, to all relevant technologies so that they’re able to work at any time of day or in any place”.

In the same study by Braden *et al* (2021)³⁴, it was discovered that government employees spend most of their time on duty on repetitive low-value tasks and this includes tasks such as completion of timesheets and acquisition forms. The efficiency of such repetitive work can be enhanced through automation – and yet this is one of the areas that is still lagging behind in the South African Public Service.

Interestingly, a case study conducted by the National School of Government (NSG)³⁵ among its employees found that WFH did not negatively affect the mental wellbeing of employees as well as departmental performance and service delivery. This may be attributed to the fact that even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSG had already begun to automate most of the processes and programme offerings. The SAPS also reported its operation not negatively impacted during the pandemic given its standard operational plans that have always been in place. The SAPS is organisationally equipped to respond to such crises by developing and operationalising plans in accordance with standard operating procedures through existing National JOINTS, Provincial JOINTS and District JOINTS. The SAPS could also deploy specialist capacities in states of emergencies or disasters³⁶. The SAPS Gauteng for instance were adequately prepared to lead interventions and provide direction across the spheres of Government in the province in respect of initiatives to protect communities against the spread of the COVID-19 virus. SAPS in the Cape Cluster utilised its existing ‘system’ to call meetings, devise plans, and then track the enactment of such plans³⁷.

The introduction of working from home or remote work resulted in the blurring of boundaries between working hours and after hours and this led to burnout for some employees. Since some employees were allocated the necessary tools of trade to enable them to work remotely, there was also an expectation that employees will always be available. In a 2023 study, Professor Sibanda identified a gap in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Labour Relations Act with respect to the workers’ rights to disconnect after the prescribed working hours. Sibanda is of the view that this needs to be regulated as countries such as Belgium have passed a law in February 2022 protecting civil servants from reprisals for switching off work emails, texts and

³³ Braden,C.W., Isaacs.M., Langstaff,M., Mathesom,D., Tucker-Ray, S. & Ware,D. 2021. *Reimagining US federal work for the postpandemic world*. McKinsey’s Public & Social Sector Practice.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Malatjie, Poonsamy & Ngcaweni. 2021. The Impact of Covid-19 on Public Sector Performance: The Case of the National School of Government *Journal of Public Administration* 56 (3), 562-575.

³⁶ South African Police Services, April 2021. SAPS Sector COVID-19 Report. Review of the impact of the South African Police Service (SAPS) as frontline law enforcer on policing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁷ Ibid.

phone calls received out of hours. Other countries such as Portugal, France, Chile and Ireland have developed work-life balance legislation that protects workers and promotes their right to disengage³⁸.

3.5 Non-eligible jobs and employees for hybrid work arrangements

According to a study by Price Waters House Coopers³⁹, there was consensus amongst both employers and employees that the physical office still has a place in the working environment. The office, according to employees, enables collaboration, ensures that equipment and documents can be accessed securely, creates opportunities to meet clients and colleagues physically, and allows for training and career development. Besides, it is also important to note that remote working is not suitable for all types of jobs⁴⁰. The latter was more apparent during the pandemic when some jobs required workers to be at the workplace on a full time basis⁴¹ due to the nature of their work.

Even if a specific type of job qualifies for hybrid or 100% remote work, not all employees who are appointed into such posts may be eligible for such arrangements due to a number of reasons. For example, newly appointed employees, especially those who are in entry level or training jobs, may require a different arrangement. The same applies to delinquent or ill-disciplined employee. In order to determine suitability for hybrid work, the following characteristics of a post must to be considered⁴²:

- The duties can be conducted off site.
- Working remotely does not affect the service quality or organizational operations.
- The duties require access to specific personnel, onsite files, or specialized space/equipment/technology in order to effectively perform the job.
- The position had regular in-person client/customer/student interaction pre-COVID which became less efficient or effective in a remote environment.
- Hybrid arrangements adds additional cost to the employer. For example, a remote arrangement should not typically result in the duplication of office equipment.

³⁸ Sibanda, O. 2023. Why remote employees should have the right to disconnect after working hours. Accessed from: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2023-02-05-why-remote-employees-should-have-the-right-to-disconnect-after-working-hours/>

³⁹ Price Waters House Coopers. 2021. It's time to reimagine where and how work will get done. Retrieved, 24 October 2022, from https://www.pwc.com/us/remotework?WT.mcid=CT10-PL102-DM2-TR1-LS3-ND30-PR4-CN_ViewpointHighlights

⁴⁰ Sarah, P., & Maranda R. (2022) *An informed discussion on the impact of COVID-19 and 'enforced' remote working on employee engagement*, *Human Resource Development International*. Accessed from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13678868.2022.2048605?needAccess=true>

⁴¹ Franzen-Waschke, U. 2021. *Wellbeing and Engagement in Hybrid Work Environments – Coaching as a Resource and Skill for Leaders to Develop*. Accessed from <https://gisd.gile-edu.org/index.php/home/article/view/2-franzen-waschke-82-98/26>

⁴² University of Washington. Determining eligibility for hybrid or remote work. Accessed 04 September 2023: <https://hr.uw.edu/hybridwork/managing-the-hybrid-workplace/determining-eligibility-for-hybrid-or-remote-work/>

- Employee's continued remote work negatively impacts team performance.

Similarly, in determining the employee suitability, the employer must be aware that some employees may be better prepared than others to manage the unique requirements of working from home. When evaluating a need to work remotely, an employer should consider whether the employee has a record of satisfactory performance in the workplace and has demonstrated the ability to⁴³:

- Prioritize work to meet deadlines,
- Display self-discipline and accomplish job duties with minimal supervision/direction,
- Consistently follow policies and team norms regardless of work location,
- Understand their role and the employer's expectations,
- Be organized, highly disciplined and self-motivated,
- Communicate and coordinate effectively with clients, stakeholders, and team members over phone, email, and Zoom/Teams, and
- Manage time effectively.

There was however consensus amongst respondents in the study by Price Water House Coopers that there are three main areas that employers and organisations will need to work on before fully implementing the hybrid model. The areas are, work-life support, team building and mutual respect. In dealing with these three areas, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Work-life support focusses on showing appreciation for the employees demands, responsibilities and interests that are not work related;
- Team Building focuses on creating an environment that fosters trust and encourages healthy conflict amongst colleagues; and
- Mutual respect focuses on enabling employers to prioritise the well-being of all employees and encourages employees to treat each other fairly and respectfully.

3.6 The building blocks for a hybrid work model

According to a study conducted by the South African Board for People Practices⁴⁴ (SABPP), the well-being of employees should be prioritised. According to the SABPP, 'wellbeing is not an adjunct, supplementary, or 'after the fact' consideration to the 'hardwiring' of the organisation and the questions on productivity, outcomes, and value creation of the organisation'. In essence, the same focus that is considered towards achieving the organisation's outcomes must be applied to employee well-being.

⁴³ University of Washington. Determining eligibility for hybrid or remote work. Accessed 04 September 2023: <https://hr.uw.edu/hybridwork/managing-the-hybrid-workplace/determining-eligibility-for-hybrid-or-remote-work/>

⁴⁴ SABPP. 2021. Factsheet 2021/06: Hybrid Teams: Group and related.

In the event that organisations opt to implement the hybrid work arraignment, it is critical that digital transformation is prioritised⁴⁵. The hybrid model will encompass the element of human interaction and the use of technology. Therefore, organisations will need to manage both aspects. Human Resource Management (HRM) teams will need to consider how organisations plan to balance onsite operational requirements and hybrid operational arrangements. Balancing onsite and remote work requires a careful consideration of the potential risks that may arise with the introduction of hybrid working arrangements.

Table 3: The potential risks related to the hybrid-work model

The avoidance of leadership: task single-mindedness	This refers to the case whereby some managers relax their leadership roles due to the lack of proximity and physically not being present.
Proximity and recency bias	There might be some sort of bias towards the groups that are at the office with the respective managers and the ones working from home or rotating maybe disadvantaged
Silencing, scapegoating, splitting, and group biases	There might an increase in the division and conflict between the different working groups.
Avoidance of teaming	Team members may get too comfortable with working in silos and avoid being part of the wider team.

The Potential Risks related the Hybrid Working Model⁴⁶

In order to ensure balance and mitigate the risks, there will also be a need for organisations and their human resource management (HRM) teams to capacitate managers to effectively manage the new way of working through developing effective communication channels and promoting continuous engagement within the team. In addition, HRM teams must help organisations to develop new or enhanced processes and procedures of managing performance and rewards⁴⁷.

3.7 Health and Safety guidelines when working from home

In most cases, working hours for people who work from home will remain the same and they still need to comply with all the existing policies within their organisations. Only the working conditions will change, mainly working from home instead of physically going to the office. It is therefore crucial that the environment that the employees occupies must be conducive to avoid health-related challenges that will have an impact on employee productivity and organisational

⁴⁵ Jagger, P. D. 2020. *Digital Upskilling during a Pandemic*. ITNOW 62 (4): 12–13. Accessed from doi:10.1093/itnow/bwaa095.

⁴⁶ SABPP. 2021. Factsheet 2021/06: Hybrid Teams: Group and related individual

⁴⁷ Ibid.

performance. A study conducted by the Association for Rubber Products Manufacturers (ARPM) proposed the following measures⁴⁸ pertaining to working from home:

Table 4: Measures pertaining to working from home

Measures	Description
Setting up a home office	Employees are encouraged to have a workstation at home that will make provision for all equipment and be comfortable for good ergonomic posture.
Working schedule	Employees are urged to take regular breaks to stretch and get some fresh air as prolonged periods of sitting and working can lead to harmful effects, even looking at a screen for long hours can have negative side effects.
Adopt policies to accommodate working from home	Employers are required to adopt their HRM policies to accommodate the officials that will be working from home. Emphasis should be placed on issues such as incidents whereby officials get injured while on duty while working from home and the procedures that will need to be followed.
Working Alone	Employees are encouraged to schedule formal check-ins with colleagues and supervisors at least once a day. This will also form as a monitoring system and if there is no check-in the must be mechanisms in place to escalate the matter.

3.8 The future of work

There is increased interest in the need to consider alternative work arrangements. Various studies have also shown that in the future, hybrid work arrangements will gain popularity. A study by Kropp B et al in 2022⁴⁹ explores the eleven (11) trends that will shape work in 2022 and beyond. The study found that one of the trends that will shape work in the future will be normalising hybrid and remote work, especially for knowledge workers. The study found that incorporating flexibility in the workplace has the potential to decrease employee turnover as more employees value a balanced work environment. Another study by McRae and Aykens⁵⁰ highlighted hybrid work

⁴⁸ Association for Rubber Products Manufacturers. 2022. Association for rubber products manufacturers: Work from home policies and procedures.

⁴⁹ Kropp, B. & McRae, E.R. 2022. 11 Trends that will shape work in 2022 and beyond. Accessed 15 April 2023 from <https://hbr.org/2022/01/11-trends-that-will-shape-work-in-2022-and-beyond>.

⁵⁰ McRae, E.M & Aykens, P. 2022. 9 Future of work trends for 2023. Accessed 15 April 2023 from , <https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/9-future-of-work-trends-for-2023>.

arrangements as one of the future of work trends for 2023. The trend, which is titled 'hybrid flexibility reaches the front lines', focusses on exploring equitable flexibility for frontline workers as other studies have shown that frontline workers were previously excluded in hybrid work arrangements.

The other trend identified in the cited 2022⁵¹ study was the need to invest in the necessary tools of trade that enable employees to work remotely, as this will enable organisations to not only measure performance but to also improve employee performance. The study also acknowledges that managing a hybrid workforce is very complex and it may lead to some employers opting for the return to the office by all employees on a full time basis. The latter is indeed true as demonstrated by the publication of several thought provoking articles about the frustration of some employers about remote work arrangements.⁵²

3.9 Conclusion

The literature has highlighted the pros and cons of hybrid work arrangements as well as the associated risks and preconditions. Furthermore, the literature indicates that some organisations, especially those that started before the COVID-19 pandemic, are at advanced stages of implementing hybrid work arrangements whereas many organisations, including the South African Public Service, are lagging behind. While some organisations are conducting research on what it entails to fully implement hybrid work arrangements, some organisations, especially those that were forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to adopt this model, are frustrated by the challenges associated with hybrid work arrangements.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Their, J. 2023. Bosses are fed up with remote work for 4 main reasons – Some of them are undeniable. fortune.com

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings from the study based on the focus groups conducted with the management teams, employee survey and interviews conducted with members of the public/clients in government service delivery sites of the selected departments. The findings are presented according to five thematic areas that were derived from the objectives of the study.

As indicated in **Table 5** below, a total of 31 focus group sessions were conducted across the six departments that were part of the study. Sessions were held with managers in national departments, provincial departments and some in the districts/local level. A detailed breakdown of the focus group sessions is provided in **Annexure A**.

Table 5: Total number of focus groups conducted per department

Name of Department	Focus group sessions
Education	6
Employment and Labour	5
Health	7
Home Affairs	2
South African Police Service	6
South African Social Security Agency	5
Total	31

In addition, a survey aimed at soliciting inputs from employees within the six selected departments was conducted. The survey was largely conducted electronically through accessing the questionnaire via a link, but there was also an option to complete the questionnaire manually and then submitting the completed questionnaire to the relevant researchers in the provinces. Due to the high number of employees in the respective departments, the survey was limited to employees who had a supervisory role, from salary level 9 and above. An exception was made for the SAPS whereby a significant number of supervisors are appointed at level 8. A total of 1417 responses were received, of which 1291 completed the survey electronically.

Table 6 below depicts the total responses of employees from the six departments that participated in the survey, including the electronic and physical number of questionnaires that were received from each department.

Table 6: Total number of employees that participated in the study

Name of Department	Electronic Survey	Physical	Total
Education	375	5	380
Employment and Labour	71	7	78

Health	159	68	227
Home Affairs	65	0	65
South African Police Service	523	36	559
South African Social Security Agency	82	10	92
unallocated	16	0	16
Total	1291	126	1417

A total of 323 members of the public were interviewed across the six participating departments y (a full breakdown of the total number of people interviewed will be entailed in **Annexure B**). Feedback from member of the public is analysed in section 4.6 below.

4.2 The extent of utilisation of hybrid work arrangements and technology by departments

While six service departments were included in the study, only two departments were declared as essential, namely; the Department of Health and the South African Police Service (SAPS). As much as the two departments were declared as essential, there was provision made for hybrid work arrangements for these departments. At the Department of Health, the staff comprises mainly of clinical and administrative staff. Administrative staff were granted permission to work on a rotational basis whilst clinical staff were required to work full time due to the nature of their work. The same applied at the SAPS even though SAPS staff are classified into two categories, employees appointed under the Public Service Act (PSA) and those appointed under the South African Police Act, 68 of 1995. Within the SAPS, the PSA appointed employees were granted permission to rotate in line with the DPSA circulars. Furthermore, the SAPS also made provision for SAPS employees who were classified as vulnerable to work from home as per the relevant circular.

Although the other four departments were not classified as essential services in their entirety, **Table 7** below shows the list of services that were declared as essential in those departments. This means employees who were responsible for the essential services programmes, excluding those who were classified as vulnerable, were required to be on duty in their offices on more days than the employees that did not work with the classified programmes.

Table 7: List of essential functions/services per department

Name of Departments	Essential functions/services
Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National school nutrition programme • Teaching and learning • Strategic plans and other departmental reports • Curriculum and Exams unit • Employee health and wellness

Name of Departments	Essential functions/services
Department of Employment and Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) • Occupational Health and Safety • Compensation Fund • Basic Conditions of Employment Act Inspectors
Department of Home Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration services • Birth and death registration • Permit adjudication
SASSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant administration • Provision of Food Parcels • Provision of Social Relief of Distress

It was clear from the study that all six departments, including the essential services departments, adopted hybrid work arrangements in varying degrees after the hard lock down was ended on 30 April 2020. In order to facilitate this arrangement, the DPSA issued circulars and guidelines on the categories of employees and the conditions that would allow employees to work from home and the periods varied for employees and departments. According to the DPSA circulars, the category of employees that were granted permission to work from home due to pre-existing commodities were classified as the vulnerable groups. According to the Department of Health, vulnerable employees were people who were at a higher risk of contracting the COVID-19. The major category included employees over the age of the 60, people with chronic medical conditions (comorbidities), severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher) and pregnant employees. There were however department specific categories of employees that were granted permission to work from home in line with the DPSA circulars as will be discussed below

The non-vulnerable groups of employees were required to report for duty in line with the DPSA circular and circulars. In some departments certain groups of employees would be recalled back to the office despite the standing guidelines within the respective departments. For example, at SASSA, senior managers were required to be at the office 3 times a week regardless of the COVID-19 alert levels, especially because of the large volumes of the SRD grants that needed to be processed. At the Department of Labour, employees at the UIF section had to physically report to the office regularly due to the essential nature of the service they provide.

4.3 The Public Service’s readiness to implement and institutionalise hybrid work arrangements

As part of the study, focus groups sessions were conducted with members of the COVID-19 management committees of the selected six departments at the different levels of operation (National, Provincial, District and Local level). In all focus group sessions, respondents indicated the lack of preparedness for their departments and facilities to deal with COVID-19. Departments

were forced to consider the work from home option because of the COVID-19 pandemic even though under normal circumstances this is not an option that would have been considered at all.

Essential service departments such as Health and SAPS provided services as expected and measures were put in place to increase service provision in some areas. The Minister of Health at the time issued a circular relaxing some of the recruitment requirements, which made it possible for the department to appoint additional employees on a contract basis. There was also a COVID grant that was made available for these additional appointments. As a result, the Limpopo, North West and Western Cape provincial departments of health appointed additional doctors, nurses and other support staff on a contract basis. In addition to contract appointments, the Mpumalanga provincial Department of Health re-instated some of the health workers who had resigned. The SAPS Pretoria North office arranged for an alternative office building to ensure that the public could still access services in the event that the police station recorded a COVID-19 case.

With respect to the non-essential service departments, different mechanisms were put in place, especially in relation to the identified essential services. The Department of Education appointed additional staff on a contract basis to assist learners due to the classification of some educators as vulnerable. In Mpumalanga and the Free State, the departments appointed Education Assistants in all schools in order to assist with cleaning schools as well as the screening and sanitising of learners. However, at the national Department of Basic Education, the department opted to extend existing contracts instead of appointing additional contract workers.

At the SASSA the workforce was expanded by appointing social workers to assist with the increasing demand for services and placing volunteers to assist with long queues. There was also a review of how data allowances and laptops allocation was managed. Data allowances and allocation of laptops was, however, not applicable to all officials, it was determined by the line function. In addition, SASSA procured the necessary virtual platform licenses and extended the call centre services. The Department of Home Affairs ensured that training was provided for employees who were not familiar with virtual platforms as they were the new norm.

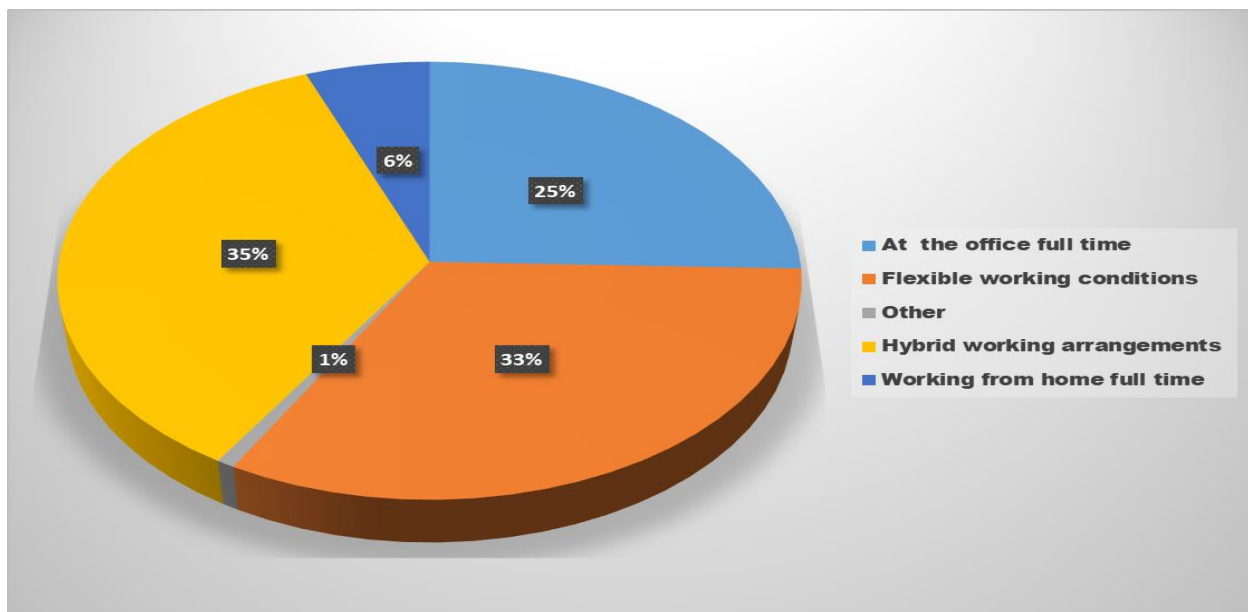
4.3.1 Future preference of management and staff

During the focus group sessions, managers provided their views on whether they see a future for hybrid and work from home arrangements in the Public Service. The Department of Health and SAPS were the two departments that were clear that since the nature of their work is contact based, it would make it difficult to shift to a hybrid work arrangement on a permanent basis. There are certain functions such as seeing patients and catching criminals that are impossible to be done remotely. On the other hand, management from the Departments of Basic Education, Home Affairs, Employment and Labour and SASSA were of the view that there is a future for hybrid work arrangements in the Public Service, on condition that a strong change management initiative to

support the new policy was conducted. There will also be a need for a clear definition of hybrid work arrangements and guidelines must be clear and easily implemented. The respondents explained that the benefits of hybrid work arrangement exceed just the office space and costs, the option will also save the environment, save on personal costs and maintenance costs for government.

The employee survey, which targeted at officials who had supervisory roles within their respective departments, also included a question wherein staff had to select the work arrangement they preferred the most. The options were between working from home full time, hybrid work arrangement which is a combination of working from home and the office, the option to work at the office full time and flexible working conditions. Flexible working conditions were defined in section 3.1 above, however, for the purpose of this study, flexible working conditions refers to a combination of the aforementioned options. The **Figure 1** below illustrates the preferred working arrangement based on the employees' responses.

Figure 1: The preferred work arrangement based on employees' response



As shown in **Figure 1** above, 35% of the respondents are open to hybrid work arrangements that entail reporting physically at the office on some days and working from home on other days, and such days should be predetermined with management. One of the reasons that this option was popular was due to the fact that both management and employees felt that working from home contributed to cost-savings for some people.

There were however respondents who experienced an increase in the cost of living as they could not share costs like car pools/lifts as they did before due to the varying work schedules. On the other hand, 33% of responded elected flexible working conditions, which is a combination of

working from home, remotely, or physically at the office and the working arrangement will be determined by the needs or priorities of the employer at that given time. There were employees (25%) who preferred to work at the office full time and in most instances, the nature of their job was cited as the reason for the selection.

- ***Functions not suitable for working from home arrangement***

The responses from management teams and employees confirm that some employees' jobs require them to perform their duties physically at the office. For example, most employees in SAPS and Health are required to report for duty at the employer's premises because they must attend to client in person. Even in the event that some departments can change and implement the hybrid approach, there are some technical and physical functions that would be impossible to do from home. The employees highlighted the fact that employees who work as cleaners, drivers/messengers, handy men, mechanics and security guards are forced to be at the office or the employer's premises in order to perform their duties. This aligns with the literature in chapter three above, wherein studies have shown that remote working is not suitable for all types of jobs and might not suit each individual employee.

4.3.2 Main challenges with hybrid work arrangements

The main challenge for most respondents, during the pandemic, was the fear of contracting the virus, especially health workers and the members of the SAPS who were interacting with members of the public. Health workers had to physically attend to patients and in some instances the police had to apprehend criminals. This resulted in some employees having anxiety or some even contracting the virus at some point. The fear was further heightened when they had to go home and interact with family members outside of their jobs. Apart from the essential workers, other employees were also concerned about the same risks on the days they had to report at work and go back to their families. There were also employees who were exposed to the virus as they had to use public transport to go to work. Whilst this may not be an issue beyond the pandemic, the experience will be important as the Public Service ventures into the future of work. In addition to the safety issues, other challenges identified included budget limitations, lack of facilities, shortage of staff and lack of access to systems which are discussed in more detail below.

- ***Budget limitations***

The most common challenge across all departments related to budget limitations as most departments indicated that they were not allocated any additional budget and yet they were required to procure additional tools of trade, data, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and pay for the decontamination of buildings in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. Employees who were not provided with the necessary tools of trade sometimes had to use their own personal resources to perform certain tasks. Some investigators and inspectors even had to use their

personal cars to perform their duties. In the case of the SAPS, there was no budget to procure additional resources to allow for the full implementation of the hybrid work arrangement. Experience from the period under Covid-19 suggest that proper planning and budgeting will be crucial if the Public Service seeks to institutionalise hybrid work arrangements, inclusive of the WFH. The literature discussed above also emphasised the need to prioritise employee wellbeing and digital transformation in implementing hybrid work arrangements.

- ***Lack of facilities***

Existing buildings made it difficult to implement safety measures such as social distancing. There was also a challenge with office space in the event that the office had to be disinfected or decontaminated each time there was a positive COVID-19 case. Essential services departments such as the SAPS and the Department Health made other arrangements in some cases. For instance, the national SAPS office and other police stations improvised by making use of alternative buildings in the event that the main building had to be decontaminated. The Department of Health had to introduce mobile clinics and made use of alternative accommodation for quarantine purposes. For non-essential departments the situation was different as many employees could work from home and rotate in terms of office attendance. This made it easier to decongest the workplace and implement safety measure such as social distancing.

In discussions with participants during the stakeholder engagement on the draft report, it was indicated that in future, hybrid work arrangements would allow for optimal utilisation of facilities because office space could be shared amongst employees and used on a rotational basis. This could also lead to savings for departments as the need for more space and other facilities would be reduced.

- ***Shortage of staff***

The main challenges experienced by the Department of Health and the Department of Home Affairs was the shortage of staff at health facilities and the ports of entry respectively. The shortage of staff for both departments was further exacerbated when staff members tested positive for COVID-19 and/or were being quarantined as a result of being in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus. There were also challenges with the availability of stakeholders, both internal and external, and this resulted in delays in some areas of work. The non-availability of staff was attributed to work rotation, leave, absenteeism, illness or isolation. The shortage of staff added more pressure on the employees who were working at the office as they would be required to take over the roles of colleagues who were at home for various reasons.

- ***Limited access to operating systems***

The Public Service has made great strides in introducing electronic systems to enable it to deliver services to the public more efficiently. One of the challenges identified by the respondents was that most of the systems could not be accessed from home or remotely. For example, employees could not remove disciplinary files from the office due to confidentiality issues and supply chain management (SCM) documents need to be physically checked and signed off. There were also cases of employees who were experiencing connectivity issues due to IT challenges, limited data and other issues such as 'electricity load shedding'. Lack of digitisation resulted in some employees having to return to their offices to access files, print/scan or sign documents. Some of these challenges were resolved by some departments whereby uninterrupted power supply (UPS) system and electronic signatures were introduced.

In the literature analysis above, it was noted that the South African Public Service was the least prepared sector for the WFH arrangement mainly because most government technology systems still required some major upgrades to ensure that service delivery is both effective and efficient. Clearly some strides were made during the Covid-19 period as departments were forced to find solutions in order to guarantee continuous services. The issue of digitisation and access to operating systems however still requires more focus and investment from government if hybrid workspaces are going to become part of the future of work in the Public Service.

- ***Lack of boundaries***

There was a significant number of employees who indicated an increase in the number of meetings that were scheduled and in most cases the meetings would last longer than planned, going way beyond regular office hours. Management focus group sessions also raised this issue strongly and argued that going forward policies and guidelines need to make provision for measures to ensure employee wellbeing through regulating time worked away from the office.

- ***Inconsistencies in implementation of hybrid work arrangements***

All departments were required to adhere to the guidelines as issued by the DPSA. It was established during the study that there were inconsistencies in granting permission to work from home. The inconsistencies were also experienced within the same departments but at different levels (e.g. national/provincial/district). The Department of Health received an internal complaint from the provincial and district offices as they were of the view that the national office was not providing adequate guidance on how to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. This was addressed by improving internal communication.

Most departments reported complaints from employees who were not allowed to work from home and this was deemed as unfair. There were also complaints of inconsistencies in how the hybrid

work arrangement was implemented. It was argued in the focus group sessions and in the roundtable session that there is a need to put policies in place to ensure fairness in the implementation of hybrid arrangements across the public service.

- ***Lack of Trust between supervisors and supervisees***

It was also established that there was lack of trust between some employees and their managers. This led to some managers recalling their subordinates to report physically at the office. Managers also reported incidents of subordinates who would use the hybrid work arrangement as an opportunity to attend to personal matters or not be available when needed for official purposes.

In the literature above, it was noted that building trust has been one of the greatest challenges experienced following the introduction of WFH, more so if everyone does not have the required tools of trade. The literature emphasises the need for Team Building initiatives that focus on ensuring an environment that fosters trust and encourages healthy conflict amongst colleagues.

4.3.3 Critical factors to be considered for hybrid work arrangements to be successful in the Public Service

- ***Management perspective***

Discussed below are the factors that management deemed as key issues that would need to be addressed before implementing hybrid work arrangements in the Public Service going forward.

- ***Fairness***

Managers, during the focus group sessions, indicated that most complaints received from staff had to do with inconsistencies in how the hybrid work arrangement was implemented. As indicated in discussions above, some employees thought it was unfair for others to be granted permission to work from home whilst others were not. Going forward there will be a need to ensure fairness, through outlining the criteria and conditions for hybrid work arrangements, before the approach can be implemented across the Public Service on a permanent basis.

- ***Preparedness of stakeholders***

The challenge with working from home is that departments rely on stakeholders, both internal and external, to perform their functions. In the case of Home Affairs, it was reported that the department relied on stakeholders such as the Government Employee Pensions Fund (GEPF) to process death cases and terminations. There was also reliance on the Compensation Fund and the DPSA for other functions. This challenge was the same for other departments as well and they would experience challenges with getting hold of relevant employees from these institutions during the lock down period. The Gauteng Provincial government has one e-Government

Department in which all provincial departments rely on to implement PERSAL instructions and other mandates and some of the departments experienced challenges with receiving the necessary support from the e-Government Department due to the unavailability of relevant officials and this resulted in a lot of complaints. There is a need to address interdependences across government departments when implementing a hybrid work arrangement.

- ***Budget Allocation***

As indicated in the section on challenges related to hybrid, management from the respective departments highlighted the challenge of allocating the necessary resources and tools of trade for all officials, especially junior officials. There is a need to ensure that there is sufficient budget to procure relevant tools of trade and to implement systems that are necessary, inclusive of technology related systems, to ensure implementation of hybrid work arrangements.

- ***Employee Perspective***

There was a significant number of employees who are of the view that the hybrid work arrangements can be suitable for the Public Service, however the majority of employees attached conditions to their response. The employees highlighted the following factors that need to be considered before the Public Service can implement the hybrid work arrangement fully:

- Job analysis of functions that can be performed from home or remotely;
- Proper guidelines on the managing performance and productivity;
- Risk/Security Management;
- Salary guarantee;
- Management of working hours while working from home;
- Provision of the necessary tools of trade;
- Management of load shedding;
- Digitisation (electronic system such as e-recruitment, electronic leave management and e-signatures etc.);
- Health and Safety of the environment and employees while working from home;
- Disciplinary/Consequence Management;
- Training for supervisors on managing performance remotely;
- Oversight to ensure compliance and fair implementation of the policies; and
- Address the needs of people with disabilities.

There were very few employees who said their areas of work can be completely performed remotely and those include people who work in research, knowledge/information management and other related areas.

There was consensus that preparatory planning needs to be done before hybrid work arrangements can be implemented. The preparatory work includes ensuring that there are proper policies and guidelines in place. Other employees highlighted the need for proper change management and training to prepare for the transition as some employees struggled with the arrangement during the COVID-19 period.

4.4 The impact that hybrid work arrangement had on organisational/departmental productivity

The aim of the DPSA circulars was to ensure business continuity while minimising the spread of COVID-19. It was the responsibility of Accounting Officers to ensure that their respective departments perform optimally despite challenges posed by the pandemic. This section will begin by discussing how employee performance was managed, it will be followed by assessing the extent that employees utilised the RWOPS option and if there were any disciplinary challenges related to the introduction of the hybrid work arrangements.

4.4.1 Management of employee performance during covid-19

In order to develop a holistic understanding of how departments dealt with performance management during the COVI-19 period, data was collected from management through focus group sessions and selected employees through an online survey questionnaire.

- ***Tools of trade to support hybrid and WFH***

The employees who participated in the survey indicated that the onset of COVID-19 required them to suddenly adjust to the new way of doing things. Departments shifted to doing things electronically and meetings were conducted virtually. The main programmes that were used for meetings was Microsoft Teams and Zoom and to a lesser extent WhatsApp was used as a form of communication. In order to ensure this, the majority of respondents confirmed that they were provided with the necessary tools of trade and support to ensure service delivery was not negatively affected. The tools of trade that were provided to employees included laptops, cell phones and data. However, SAPS employees who participated in the survey indicated that there were serious challenges because SAPS was lagging behind in terms of technology and in providing the necessary tools of trade such as laptops and cell phones. Despite the fact that SAPS was regarded as an essential service department whose services must be accessible at all times, the SAPS was also found to be lagging behind with certain technology that made it difficult for employees to connect virtually as most tasks are still done manually.

It was also noted by employees through the survey and focus group participants that in some departments, the required tools of trade were only allocated to senior officials and not junior officials. Consequently, some jobs were easily completed at home or remotely but jobs that

required access to restricted systems could not be completed remotely. This resulted in the need for adaptable mechanisms of managing employee productivity and performance.

- ***Mechanisms to manage employee performance during COVID-19***

Managers had to grapple with the dual challenge of managing themselves and employees remotely from home and/or office, because it was not always possible for managers be in the office when their subordinates were in the office. However, there was often an assumption that employees can be trusted to be effective when operating from the office even when their managers are not there due to the presence of other colleagues. As such, government circulars and departments turned to be pre-occupied with how to deal with the performance management of employees who worked from home.

The study established that there was no uniform approach for all departments or units within the departments on how to manage performance for employees who worked from home. While managers were allowed to use their discretion in the Department of Health, performance was managed differently in the remaining five departments, and also varied within the different units in the respective departments. Information provided by focus group participants suggest that attempts were made to formalise performance management for remote working through formal communication by Heads of Departments and adoption of daily/weekly work agreements, timesheets and productivity sheets/reports. **Table 8** below shows a summary of how different departments managed employee performance during the COVID-19 period.

Table 8: Performance management per department (Nationally and Provincially)

Department /Institution	Performance Management
Basic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a statement issued by Accounting Officers nationally and provincially that all employees had to adhere to in terms of performance management. • In cases where functions could not be performed at home, arrangements would be made to complete the task at the office.
Employment and Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department implemented the work from home agreement that was entered into by affected employees and their respective supervisors. • There were also regular progress updates on the tasks allocated.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No system was put in place, managers were allowed to use their discretion, but some units required employees working from home to provide reports on progress and submit the required work at scheduled times.
Home Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance was managed in line with the DPSA Circulars (DPSA Circulars indicate that each Accounting Officer has the responsibility to determine

	and ensure that the adherence to Performance Management for all employees. All employees were required to adhere and attend to the necessary time-on-task, and delivery schedules as agreed upon contractually, with their immediate line manager or supervisor.) ⁵³
SAPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each employee set targets and would work at home on condition that they had the tools of trade. • Some units introduced the completion production sheets.
SASSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMDS unit developed a reporting template that had to be used by officials

In support of management’s perspective as captured in **Table 8** above, employee survey participants confirmed that the Department of Employment and Labour had a work from home agreement that employees were required to sign and they were expected to indicate the number of days they would work from home and the number of days they would work at the office. The SASSA also had a similar approach, however; their working from home agreement included a ‘production sheet’ that had to be completed by detailing daily activities. In addition to mechanisms alluded to by focus group members, survey participants indicated that some units at the Department of Basic Education utilised the online attendance register which made provision for daily deliverables. The extent of compliance with and effectiveness of such measures remains unclear, in spite of anecdotal effectiveness assertions by some employees and managers.

There was also acknowledgement from some of the managers during focus group sessions that it was challenging to monitor the performance of employees remotely as this was a new arrangement for them. The challenges were worsened by the lack of systems to monitor employee performance and lack of detailed guidelines on how to manage the conduct of employees. The challenge was further exacerbated by the fact that some of the managers observed that some employees viewed working from home as some sort of leave or vacation. There was, however, an understanding by some of the survey participants that the working from home option was not permanent as some indicated that they had to be recalled to the office when the need arose. One employee from the Department of Home Affairs was recalled in order to deal with the repatriation of foreign citizens who needed to return to work.

4.4.2 Remunerative Work Outside of the Public Service (RWOPS)

The Public Service makes provision for employees to find other means of earning income and this is managed through the RWOPS Policy. During the focus group sessions, management was requested to indicate if there was an increase with applications for RWOPS during the pandemic

⁵³ DPSA. 2021. Circular 01 of 2021: State of Disaster COVID-19 Public Service Adjustments to risk adjusted Level 3 regulations.

or if they experienced any challenges with employees who had already received approval for RWOPS. In response, most departments indicated that they did not experience any anomalies with regards to RWOPS. In the case of the Department of Health in the North West, management observed that during the varying COVID-19 levels, there were several Pharmacists who worked in private pharmacies during weekends without the necessary approval. Management acknowledged that no steps were taken against those Pharmacists and added that even in instances where an application for RWOPS has been approved, it is difficult to monitor. The RWOPS application and approval process was even more difficult for the District Offices to monitor due to the fact that the approval process for RWOPs is managed by their provincial counterparts.

The Department of Basic Education on the other experienced a decline in the application for RWOPS in 2020, but the number picked up again in 2021. The increase was in relation to applications by educators and most of them were applying to work as markers for university students. The data also shows that only 43 (3.3%) of the 1292 employees who participated in the study applied for RWOPS and 40 (3.1%) of them were granted approval, the three who did not get approval did not indicate the reasons.

4.4.3 Disciplinary/Consequence Management

In the process of issuing various circulars, the DPSA has been consistent in encouraging Accounting Officers to prioritise service delivery at all times. In a DPSA circular issued in September 2020, it was indicated that Accounting Officers were obligated to put the necessary administrative control measures and tools in place to ensure that employees perform their duties accordingly. The measures included using all legal instruments that are in place within the Public Service to hold government officials accountable for service delivery.⁵⁴ In line with another DPSA circular issued in March 2021, Accounting Officers were required to clearly outline a consequence management plan in the event that employees contravened the remote work arrangement between them and their respective supervisors.⁵⁵

The study sort to assess the extent that employees contravened their hybrid work arrangements within their respective departments. Responses from the management focus groups suggested that the hybrid work arrangement did not result in serious disciplinary related challenges. The SAPS leadership even went to the extent of suspending all disciplinary action for a certain period to allow employees to adjust to the effects of the pandemic.

There were, however, incidents whereby supervisors had challenges with officials who were treating the working from home option as a vacation. It is alleged such employees would either

⁵⁴ DPSA. 2020. Circular 27 of 2020: State of Disaster COVID-19 Implementation measures for step down to Level 1.

⁵⁵ DPSA. 2021. Circular 03 o 2021: State of Disaster COVID-19 Public Service adjusted to risk Level 2 regulations.

disappear or not complete the tasks allocated to them. The Department of Home Affairs experienced the same, however, there was no formal disciplinary action. The Department of Employment and Labour managed the situation by recalling the problematic officials and even implemented progressive discipline, which helped in improving the situation. Some cases were dealt with by issuing written or verbal warnings and there was no need to escalate the cases. At the Department of Health in the North West, if an official absconded from work, they would be requested to complete leave forms instead of taking disciplinary action. There was no information available to management that suggested that these officials were engaged in other remunerative work when they were expected to be working from home but were unavailable and not reporting on their work during that time.

4.5 The impact of the hybrid work arrangement on employee wellness

There was agreement amongst focus group and survey participants that the period under review was a stressful time for all, and as such, both employees and management struggled to balance their work and personal lives. Managers who participated in the focus group sessions argued that some of the challenges experienced included the lack of boundaries in terms of working hours, as some virtual meetings would go on well beyond the normal working hours. Parents also found it challenging to be employees because they needed to respond to the needs of their family members, especially learners as most schools were closed for some time and parents were expected to support their children with home schooling. According to focus group participants, for a certain period, support structures were not available, as such employees in general and single parents to younger children were more exposed. These observations were largely supported by survey participants from the six departments who indicated that having to juggle working from home and family responsibilities led many employees to being put under pressure. Reference was also made to the following challenges and personal issues that some employees had to deal with without much support from the employer and/or family due to various lockdown measures:

- Financial, mental and emotional impact of spouses losing jobs and going through divorces; and
- Mental illness and reliance on or regression to bad habits such as drinking and smoking due to lack of proper physical exercise and limited social interactions with colleagues/family.

Some employees indicated that they felt isolated and alone because the movement restrictions made it impossible for them to see family members and to provide comfort and support to their loved ones when they fell ill or there was a bereavement. In particular, health workers felt more isolated as they had to protect their families by keeping their distances when they returned from work.

Management, as represented by focus group participants, acceded to the fact that the pandemic itself caused many people to have anxiety and this was more prevalent in departments such as the SAPS and Health that were the front line in the fight against COVID-19. The SAPS employees were exposed and there were concerns raised with regards to the limited number of PPE's, which contributed more to their anxiety levels. The Department of Health found that more mental health issues were found mostly amongst employees who worked under pressure for long hours. Health employees who were separated from their families due to being deployed to other provinces also experienced mental health challenges. The issue of unstructured and long working hours during the lockdown was also raised by the management of the Department of Basic Education and this trend persisted throughout the various lockdown stages. Though not quantified, there was general agreement that actual and perceived physical isolation and associated mental and emotional challenges had an impact on the productivity and performance of many employees.

- ***Fatalities and Injury on duty***

Focus group participants from different departments reported that there were employees who contracted the Covid-19 virus during the period under review, resulting in fatalities in a number of cases. According to the respondents, the departments lost many employees due to COVID-19 and some departments, such as the SAPS and Department of Basic Education, it is alleged some employees contracted the virus in the process of providing support to the bereaved during burials. Although it was not always possible to determine how or where employees got infected with the virus, at the SAPS, the steering committee reached an agreement that all members would be treated as if they contracted the virus on duty, unless the department could prove otherwise.

In all the focus group sessions conducted, there was no record of injury on duty for employees who were working from home, so the relevance of existing SHEQ policies were not tested. The only injury on duty related to people being infected with COVID-19 during the period under review. This does not mean that policies would not be reviewed to make provision for or clarify the management of injury on duty whilst working from home. The Department of Home Affairs is the only department that claimed injury on duty for Covid-19 related issues but at the time of conducting the focus group sessions, the Compensation Fund had not responded.

- ***Employee Wellness and Support***

All departments indicated that they have Employee Wellness Programmes (EWP) within their respective departments that were utilised by employees during the period in question, even though structured support was not readily available to employees in the early stages of the COVID-19 lockdown. The view is that support was gradually provided when mechanisms for providing such support were put in place by departments and health risk managers. There were however, departments such as SASSA and Department of Basic Education that indicated that it

was not easy to determine the extent that employees utilised the wellness programmes, partly due to the confidentiality clause between the departments, employees and service providers. The Department of Home Affairs reported that their EWP service provider was not fully accessible and could not provide all the required services due to the pandemic. However, the department provided a debriefing platform for employees who lost their loved ones through creating a link that would enable the affected employees to receive counselling virtually by the service providers.

4.6 The extent that hybrid work arrangements affected the recipient of public services

The Public Service deals with a variety of stakeholders but citizens are regarded as the key stakeholder as they are the main recipients of the services offered by government. In line with section 195(1)(e) of the Constitution on the Values and Principles governing Public Administration, government is obligated to ensure that “People’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making”. It is against this background, that as part of conducting the study, visits were conducted at selected facilities. The visits were limited to facilities within the Department of Health and the SAPS. During the onsite visits, citizens were interviewed in order to get their perspective. As indicated earlier, a total of 323 members of the public were interviewed (a full breakdown of the total number of people interviewed is in **Annexure B**).

4.6.1 Accessibility of the Sites

- **SAPS**

The majority of respondents who visited the sites informed the research team that during the COVID-19 pandemic, they did not experience challenges with accessing a police station in their respective locations across the country.

- **Department of Health**

Citizens were asked if they visited the service delivery sites during the lockdown period. At the Department of Health, accessibility to the service delivery sites during lockdown varied between the areas. In the urban areas citizens who were interviewed indicated that they visited the health facilities on a monthly basis or every two months or bi-annually depending on the severity of their illness or the medical personnel’s instruction. Findings show that most of the facilities were accessible and they could easily be accessed by foot, public and private transport. There were challenges experienced by patients with accessing some of the sites during the lockdown as there would be police roadblocks checking all travellers for permits. These measures made it difficult for patients who used public transport.

Accessibility was more a challenge in the rural areas that were visited, especially in some facilities in Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Northern Cape provinces. For example, some patients had to travel long distances to access the facilities. The longest distance travelled was recorded in the Northern Cape whereby some patients travelled 770km from Springbok to Kimberley and another travelled 240km from Kuruman to Kimberley. Transport was also a challenge in the rural areas and patients would sometimes have to make private arrangements to access the facilities, which was more difficult for the unemployed patients who could not afford. Some patients in the Northern Cape informed the PSC that they had to set new appointments as the ambulance sometimes did not pick them up to take them to the hospital. In Mpumalanga province, some patients experienced challenges as they worked in farms that are situated far from the clinics. This meant that for each day they consulted at the clinic, the 'no work, no pay' principle was applied.

4.6.2 Client Satisfaction

The public was given an opportunity to raise any complaints they had with selected service delivery sites during the period under review. At the various service delivery sites of the Department of Health, citizens raised several complaints; however, the main complaints were related to long queues, lack of professionalism by some staff members and poor filing system. The main complaints raised by citizens at the SAPS service delivery sites were related to slow services and poor communication regarding the management of COVID-19. Below is an overview of the main issues highlighted by the respondents.

- ***Slow Services***

The respondents interviewed at the SAPS sites had varying experiences, some respondents visited the police stations for purpose of certifying documents and getting permits during the lock down, so their visits were short. There are also respondents who experienced delays at the police stations or when they required police assistance. Members of the public interviewed at the Gauteng police stations indicated that they had to wait long hours for services due to a shortage of staff and shortage of official vehicles. There was also dissatisfaction with the lack of signage at police stations, which made it difficult for citizens to go to the right units or sections for assistance, this delayed the services even further.

In the Vereeniging Police stations, the respondents indicated that there were delays due to the unavailability or shortage of police vehicles. There was also another respondent who was not satisfied with the service received after opening a case of robbery at the police stations.

- ***Long Queues***

The issue of long waiting periods was consistent across all the sites that were visited. There were also cases in some facilities that indicated that members of the public were forced to return the

following day in order to receive a service and this was identified by respondents interviewed at facilities such as Laudium Clinic and Buite Clinic. According to the respondents, the reasons for the long queues and extended wait time was attributed to the shortage of staff, high demand, and poor filing systems. It was established that at the hospitals and clinics patient files are still managed manually and each time a patient visits the clinic; they will be required to stand in a queue to be issued with their file before they can proceed to get the medical assistance they require. There were also incidents of administrators misplacing patients' files, thus causing further delays as this will result in the need to create a new file for the patient.

The long queues also resulted in space limitations at the facilities that lead to some patients being forced to wait outside. Space was a big challenge at the height of the COVID-19 lockdown period due to social distancing measures. Respondents said they had to endure the scorching heat in summer and the extreme cold during rainy and cold seasons as some facilities did not have shelter outdoors.

In the instance of Kalafong Hospital, the main challenge identified by patients was the long queues encountered at the pharmacy. Interviewed members of the public indicated that in most instances they received the required medical services on time, only to be delayed by the long queues at the pharmacy. Interviewed members of the public at the Kalafong hospital attribute the challenge to a shortage of Pharmacists

- ***Poor Communication***

At the Police Stations, one of the concerns raised related to the lack of effective communication and language barriers as some police officers refused to use English as a medium of communication and this resulted in some respondents not receiving the help they required. In contrast, there were also instances where police officers would use English with uneducated clients, which resulted in serious cases of misunderstandings. In addition, respondents said were not always clear on the procedure they have to follow when dealing with criminal cases and police officials were not providing the necessary guidance and information.

- ***Lack of Professionalism***

There were concerns raised regarding the attitude of some of the medical staff at health facilities, especially the nurses. There was a view by some of the respondents/patients that there is lack of punctuality, which could be the reason why health facilities do not open on time and a tendency by staff to exceed the times allocated for their tea or lunch breaks. These alleged practices resulted in patients having to wait for hours before they could get the assistance they required despite arriving much earlier. At the JJ Dumane clinic, patients were informed that the clinic does not attend to patients on Friday without providing reasons for that decision.

One patient in the Northern Cape was due for a surgical procedure and it was postponed three (3) times without providing him/her with reasons for the postponement. There were also patients who complained about the doctors' conduct, mainly with regards to a tendency of prescribing medication without assessing patients. One patient indicated that he has had the same condition since 2013; however, different doctors just keep prescribing the same medication without considering alternative medication or methods. One of the respondents also felt that doctors need to explain the purpose and benefits of each prescribed medication to patients instead of just prescribing.

- ***Poor Filing System***

There was a serious challenge with the filing system in the public health facilities that were visited. This challenge was more prevalent in the health facilities based in the Gauteng province. The poor filing led to delays in some patients receiving the required medical attention as in some instances the administrators would take long to locate the patient's file or the patients' files would be completely lost. Respondents were not happy that in spite of the fact that they would be given appointment dates in advance, employees in the health facilities do not do anything in advance to prepare for the patients' visits. Several members of the public who were interviewed proposed that they should be allowed to keep their own files or at least be given a copy of the files to avoid frustrations associated with these types of challenges.

4.6.3 Measures put in place to improve service delivery during the pandemic

Department of Health

- ***Telephonic Services***

The health facilities that were visited introduced various measures during the COVID-19 pandemic period in an attempt to improve service delivery. Many facilities such as Kalafong Hospital, Seshego Hospital and Clinics introduced telephonic services to follow up with patients. According to the respondents, some of the Kalafong nurses would even go the extra mile by delivering medication at the patient's residences and also observe the patients' medical status. In the Gauteng sites, the facilities also used the short message system (sms) to update patients regarding the collection of their medication.

- ***Outsourcing of pharmacy services***

In most of the sites that were visited, patients mentioned that they were allowed to collect their medication at private pharmacies such as Clicks or Dischem or at a private doctor at a location that is convenient for the patient. Patients who used such services indicated to the research team that they would be satisfied if the Department of Health were to continue with this service of

collecting medication at the location of their choice. The Stanza Bopape clinic went further by making use of the ‘**pelebox** locker’, which served as a self- service pharmacy for returning patients with chronic illnesses.

- **Alternative accommodation**

In the Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, tents were placed outside hospitals to ensure social distancing during the pandemic. There were also mobile clinics that were made available in KZN, Mpumalanga and North West provinces.

SAPS

- **Alternative accommodation**

One respondent commended the Pretoria North police station for being a good police station and even informed the PSC research team that he preferred to drive a longer distance to use that particular police station as opposed to using the police station closer to his place of residence. The inspection team also observed that the station also had a separate office outside the main building dedicated to Gender Based Violence cases (**shown below**).



3.6.4 Awareness of the departmental and PSC complaints system

Based on the responses received nationally and provincially, it was established that the majority of the respondents at both the Department of Health and the SAPS did not know about the departmental complaints system and the PSC’s complaint handling system. There was one patient who indicated that she once used the departmental compliant system, and only four of the respondents based in Gauteng used the PSC’s complaints system, of which only two indicated that their complaints were attended to their satisfaction.

Formal complaints received from the stakeholders

As much as departments tried to ensure that service delivery was not hampered through the various mechanisms that were put in place, there were challenges that departments' encountered. Some resulted in stakeholders lodging formal complaints against some departments. The SASSA received complaints from lawyers that represented stakeholders and the complaints were with regards to delays in processing the grant applications. Other complaints from the public were related to long queues and delays in receiving progress updates in relation to the SRD grant applications. The SASSA handled these by augmenting services and increasing the number of call centre staff members to handle the high demand. In addition, automated services were introduced and volunteers and social workers were appointed to increase workforce capacity.

The Department of Health received complaints from members of the public regarding its ineffective communication system. The department improved the communication by issuing daily updates through different types of radio and print media as well as the testing sites. The Department of Basic Education's complaints were mainly related to schools' closures and the suspension of sports activities. The issues were addressed by publishing Directives and Circulars and the Minister had meetings with stakeholders and school governing bodies (SGB) to address these complaints.

The SAPS received complaints from organised labour with regards to the poor quality of some PPE's and the inaccessibility of quarantine sites. Other SAPS complaints received from the public were mainly received during the periods that police stations were closed due to staff' infections. The SAPS remedied these by providing information about the alternative arrangements on the notice boards or entrance.

4.7 Concluding remarks and reflection

The above findings demonstrate the level of implementation of the complex arrangements that were put in place by government to limit the spread and manage the impact of COVID-19. The results allude to a mixture of positive and negative practices and experiences, as well as notable innovative measures and commitment to public service by many employees.

Management representatives who participated in focus group sessions were requested to provide additional inputs to the PSC based on their experience and reflections on how the Public Service handled the pandemic and the hybrid work arrangements. Representatives of the two essential services departments expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact there was ***no tangible token of appreciation*** from government and departmental leadership. According to one SAPS representative, "we were denied a job well done". The Department of Health's management mentioned that doctors and nurses worked tirelessly to save people's lives during the pandemic and there were colleagues who went above and beyond their call of duty and even volunteered

on days they could be working from home, but there was still no form of reward or compensation. The Department of Health also highlighted that instead, they were disadvantaged by being denied pay progression due to administrative processes that were beyond their control, which was discouraging to the many hard working employees. These views clearly demonstrate that the general messages of appreciation^{56 57} to different groups of essential services workers in the health sector, police service, other departments and sectors were distant and not adequate.

Management representatives in most of the focus group discussions held also highlighted that despite the negative reports in the media, the departments did the best they could under the circumstances. Furthermore, the Department of Health indicated that there were also officials who agreed to be deployed to provinces to assist with functions such as contact tracing and case management. At SASSA, employees were responsible for administering the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grants, the Department of Employment and Labour was responsible for ensuring compliance to the regulations. In Mpumalanga, the Department of Health representatives informed the research team that the only recognition they received was from external stakeholders such as the retail and other sectors where they would receive priority service so they can return to their work stations without delay.

The proposals made to the research team by the Department of Health representatives relates to the introduction of a disaster allowance for front line employees who played a bigger role in curbing the spread of COVID-19, or compensation for those who contracted COVID-19 or lost their lives due to the virus.

⁵⁶ World Health Organisation. 2020. Keep health workers safe to keep patients safe: WHO.

⁵⁷ SABC News. 2021. Ramaphosa thanks frontline workers for the commitment to fight against COVID-19.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The section provides the conclusion and outlines the recommendations that emanated from the study. The findings from the study are not based on a comprehensive view of the Public Service, however, the findings can be used to explore the feasibility of introducing the hybrid work arrangement in the Public Service post the pandemic and the conditions thereof.

5.2 Conclusion

Available literature highlights the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid work arrangements, but the Public Service was not prepared to implement this model during the pandemic, even though some measures were put in place along the way. The study has revealed that there are employees who are willing to continue with the hybrid work arrangement, however, some employees are content with the traditional office-based work arrangement on a full time basis. The study has also confirmed that there are functions that are not suitable for remote work, but the criteria for identifying such functions and the procedures that must be followed to monitor employee productivity and performance must be clear.

The study has also confirmed that the participating departments did the best they could with limited resources, however, there were challenges that made it impossible for hybrid work arrangements to be successful. Such challenges included, amongst others, budget limitations, lack of facilities, shortage of staff, limited access to operating systems and lack of work life balance. All six departments that participated in the study confirmed that they put measures in place to ensure that service delivery was not negatively affected, but some services were placed on hold whilst others continued in line with the Covid-19 safety measures. In instances where stakeholders and the public were not satisfied with service delivery or lack thereof during the pandemic, complaints were investigated and addressed accordingly to varying degrees of success. For this reason, it is important for government departments, given the uniqueness of each department in terms of mandate and size, to continue to reflect on what worked or not and to share such lessons throughout the Public Service in order to influence policy and practice in a coherent and systematic way.

5.3 Recommendations

Informed by an analysis of existing legislative prescripts and guidelines, literature review and findings from the primary data collection, the following measures are recommended for implementation in the next 12 to 24 months:

- The DPSA should benchmark with other countries to determine how the hybrid work arrangement was managed during the pandemic and how it is being taken forward as a basis to review relevant legislation, regulations, directives, policies and conditions of service for different categories of occupations and/or employees.
- The Public Service, led by the DPSA, National Treasury and the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, must take the lead in digitising government operations and prioritising access to tools of trade that will enable the effective implementation of hybrid work arrangements, where feasible.
- Departments, in collaboration with the National School of Government, should incorporate continuous training programmes on new technologies that are necessary to facilitate remote work arrangements, online collaboration and remote access to centralised systems as well as other emerging innovations for employees to stay abreast of the new developments.
- National Treasury, in collaboration with departments such as the DPSA and Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, must conduct a cost benefit analysis of implementing hybrid work arrangements for selected non-essential service departments in order to identify possible cost-saving measures and possible once-off cost drivers as a basis to generate resources to fund critical areas of need, including the rapid adoption of technology-enabled solutions and provision of other essential services to the public.

ANNEXURE A
FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED

Name of Department	National	EC	FS	GP	KZN	LP	MP	NC	NW	WC
<i>Education</i>	X	X	X	X			X	X		
<i>Employment and Labour</i>			X	X		X	X	X		
<i>Health</i>	X			X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Home Affairs</i>	X						X			
<i>SAPS</i>	X		X	X	X		X			X
<i>SASSA</i>	X					X	X	X		X

ANNEXURE B
THE SERVICE DELIVERY SITES VISITED NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL TEAMS

TEAMS	SITE	NUMBER OF CITIZENS INTERVIEWED
National Team	Department of Health	105
	Eldoraigne Clinic	14
	Laudium Clinic	25
	Stanza Bopape Clinic	29
	Kalafong Hospital	37
	SAPS	0
	Sunnyside Police Station	
	Pretoria North Police Station	
Eastern Cape Team	Department of Health	1
	Schorville Clinic	1
Gauteng Team	Department of Health	78

TEAMS	SITE	NUMBER OF CITIZENS INTERVIEWED
	Charlotte Maxeke	20
	Hillbrow Clinic	35
	JJ Dumani Clinic	23
	SAPS	58
	Sebokeng Police Station	31
	Vereeniging Police Station	27
Kwa-Zulu Natal Team	Department of Health	12
	Mkuze Clinic	6
	Pongela Clinic	6
	SAPS	2
	Mkuze Police Station	2
Limpopo Team	Department of Health	27
	Buite Clinic	14
	Seshego Clinic	12
	Seshego Hospital	1
Mpumalanga Team	Department of Health	4
	Piet Retief Hospital	1
	Piet Retief Clinic	3
	SAPS	4
	Piet Retief Police Station	2
	Volkrust Police Station	2
Northern Cape Team	Department of Health	8
	Robert Sobukwe Hospital	8
	SAPS	5

TEAMS	SITE	NUMBER OF CITIZENS INTERVIEWED
	Kimberley Police Station	5
North-West Team	Department of Health	1
	Moses Katane Hospital	1
Western Cape Team	Department of Health	12
	Tygerberg Hospital	12
	SAPS	7
	Paarl Police Station	7