

New way of thinking about work-life balance is needed

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In a paper published in leading academic journal, *Human Resource Management Journal*, Cranfield School of Management expert, Professor Clare Kelliher, argues that there is a need to review how we think about work-life balance.

Professor Kelliher said: "There is strong evidence to suggest that designing policies to help the whole workforce achieve a good [work-life balance](#) brings wider benefits to employers. Therefore, it is crucial that managers and HR practitioners think differently to encompass the needs and preferences of the entire workforce."

Kelliher argues that work-life balance policies have tended to focus on the needs of working parents and whilst that remains important, there is a need to take account of modern day lifestyles and working arrangements. She suggests that other types of caring, such as for other family members, pets and friends; cultural and religious activities; participating in further education and leisure activities all require time and energy and may be things people want to balance with their work commitments.

The paper also addresses changes in the nature of work. Both research and practice have tended to focus on employer policies based on a traditional model of employment (full-time, permanent, with one employer). With the increasing use of temporary and zero hours contracts, growing numbers of multiple job holders and self-employment, especially in the gig economy, the work-life balance of these workers needs to be considered too.

Professor Kelliher adds: "As the world of work changes to allow organisations to become more agile, we need to ensure that these work practices suit contemporary lives. Although parental responsibilities continue to be important, the requirement to balance other aspects of our lives with [work](#) is equally valid."

More information: Clare Kelliher et al. All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century, *Human Resource Management Journal* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/1748-8583.12215](https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12215)

Provided by Cranfield University

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