

## Cork Chamber Remote Working Submission

August 7<sup>th</sup> 2020

### Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this consultation on remote working, which has so obviously come to the fore over the last 5 months. The Department are to be commended for the timeliness of the Remote Work in Ireland report and for publishing the Guidance for Working Remotely during COVID-19.

First and foremost, there is strong support among Chamber membership for a deeper long-term integration of remote working beyond the pandemic. I link our Sustainable Cork Programme, Building Economic Resilience report launched in the last week of July, which represents the inputs of almost 1,000 people over 100 of which provided feedback in writing and in discussion through 10 sectoral Think Tank focus group sessions. Across the breadth of every sector represented by Cork Chamber there is broad and welcome support for a more progressive approach to home working following the pandemic.

Balanced appropriately, it can offer an enhanced work/life balance and reduce commuting which is most often harmful to environment, productivity and individual stress. Please see the full report which illuminates these points in rich qualitative detail and quantitatively.

[https://issuu.com/chamberlink/docs/10749\\_sustainable\\_cork\\_research\\_findings\\_05-web?fr=sYTE4NDEzNDg0MTc](https://issuu.com/chamberlink/docs/10749_sustainable_cork_research_findings_05-web?fr=sYTE4NDEzNDg0MTc)

### Finer Points

For remote working to be a positive experience for both employees and employers, a number of areas will warrant further consideration. Ambiguity, perceived or otherwise around areas of liability is a key area to enhance if home working is to be voluntarily embraced following the pandemic and if it is to continue to be functional during the pandemic.

### Analysis

A member recently described the mass move to home working as the world's greatest experiment that nobody is analysing. It is clear that data regarding the numbers working remotely, the types of skills etc are the elementary data sets that should be gathered, but there is value also in measuring the subjective experiential dimension of home working. For many there have been both positives and negatives.

### Childcare

In ordinary circumstances childcare would not be a subject that is overtly related to home working, however during the pandemic the unstructured nature of early childcare provision in particular has become apparent. For many juggling work and childcare has been stressful and this applies to both

children and parents. It is essential that advances are made in standardising early childcare approaches nationally.

### Data Protection

The area of data protection and liability for data require further clarity. Employers require guidance on the storing of data on devices that are outside of a workplace campus and any potential security risks that this may create due to their location or the networks on which they are accessing the internet.

### Definition of workplace and liability

Clarity on liability for everything from occupational health, to health and safety, to the liability for overheads such as heating, electricity and internet access should be provided to help employers and employees to understand the boundaries of responsibility.

Not all homesteads provide adequate space for an appropriate standard of workstation and other contestable elements of a very practical nature which are not acute during intermittent phases of home working may become areas of dispute without further clarity.

### Mental Health

For many, the challenge of isolation associated with protracted non-discretionary home working is immense. For those living alone, living in a house share or any one for a number of suboptimal situations this can be exacerbated further. Clear guidance should be given on both liability and best practice.

### Skills

Almost without exception, employers, managers and employees have all had to adapt to new ways of working over the past 5 months. As ever, formal training across all skillsets relevant to homeworking will be required and support for this should be reflected in Government educational funding streams.