

09th June 2023

RE: Public consultation - Code of Practice on the Right to Request Remote Working

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members employing over 100,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to be a world-leading Chamber of Commerce, delivering on a progressive economic, social and sustainability agenda at the heart of a vibrant business community. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

On behalf of our membership, Cork Chamber welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Code of Practice on the Right to Request Remote Working. Since the onset of the COVID19 pandemic working from home has brought about many positive changes, but with these changes comes an even great need for clarity.

Our members have informed our advocacy on this issue and tell us that remote working has led to increased flexibility for employees which in turn has led to greater job satisfaction in many cases. Increased productivity, a greater work-life balance, a reduction in commuting time and distances contributing to reduced stress levels as well as reduced carbon emissions, and an expansion of the talent pool are just some of the benefits that have been experienced for both employers and those working from home either full-time or in a hybrid capacity.

Alongside the advantages however, there are also some challenges that must be considered. For instance, many employers are unable to facilitate working from home for specific projects, teams and other tasks that require an in-person presence. This has resulted in issues relating to staff retention. There are also some drawbacks including complexities associated with onboarding and training and data security and privacy concerns. In addition, some employees have reported a decline in work-life balance as they struggle to switch off at home.

It is for the above reasons that the right balance needs to be found that meets the needs of employers and their employees. Cork Chamber has previously called for clarity on liability for everything from occupational health to health and safety, to the liability for overheads such as heating, electricity and internet access to help employers and employees to understand the boundaries of responsibility. Although some of these issues have become clearer over the past two years, it is essential that solid guidance in each of these areas is provided in this Code of Practice.

It is important that employers and employees know their obligations and entitlements and that clarity is established in other areas:

- Data protection - Employers require guidance on storing of data on external devices beyond the workplace and mitigating security risks associated with off campus working.

- Mental Health – Clear guidance on best practice should be given for remote working arrangements where an individual is working from suboptimal conditions.
- Skills – Formal training relevant to homeworking might be required and should be provided where needed. Support for this should be reflected in the Code of Practice.

Cork Chamber would also like to call for a reasonable approach to dealing with disputes where employers have already spent considerable time and expense putting in place their own working from home systems in the absence of formal guidelines. It is essential that this Code of Practice works for the businesses and employers that have adapted their entire work practices and maintained their operations throughout very challenging times in the pandemic. Equally these guidelines must work for employees who were also forced to adapt and find new ways to work throughout the pandemic and beyond.

Finally, a review period or probationary period should be built into the design of the Code of Practice to allow for adaptations. It is essential that these new guidelines work for everyone involved and strike a good balance between employers and their employees, and so allowing scope for change would be very beneficial.

I hope you will consider our observations and we look forward to the completion of this Code of Practice which will greatly enhance business and increase the attractiveness of Ireland for FDI and indigenous growth.

Yours sincerely,



Conor Healy

CEO