

EDITOR'S COMMENT



The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly thrown the world of work into a spin and has seen the introduction of new methods and models of working across all sectors of Ireland's economy.

The latest initiative has seen the launch of new programme for employers to pilot a new four-day working week to trial the effectiveness of a four-day working week for staff with no loss of pay.

Under the plan, to start in January, organisations will receive supports, training and mentoring on how to make the concept operate smoothly during the six-month trial period.

'Health & Safety Times' takes an in-depth look at the new pilot programme, launched in June by the 'Four Day Week Ireland' campaign – a coalition of businesses, unions, academics, environmentalists and NGOs. It claims that positive results will be delivered for business while also providing employees with the right work/life balance, without any reductions in pay or productivity.

'Four Day Week Ireland' is part of the international campaign to establish the four-day week concept, which has also been introduced by countries such as Spain and Scotland, and was first launched here in September 2019 by the coalition.

So, in effect, it's not a new concept in Ireland as evidenced by companies who have successfully been operating the four-day working week, such as recruitment firm ICE Group and software company 3D Issue. Both businesses, located in the West of Ireland, noted increased productivity and an opportunity to reward and retain staff, since moving to a four-day working week in 2019.

Ireland's first ever public opinion poll on the issue last year (published by trade union Fórsa) found that three-quarters of respondents supported a Government exploration of its introduction, while almost half the number of Irish employers said it would be feasible to trial it in their own workplace.

The new pilot programme is also set to run in a number of other countries, including the US, the UK and New Zealand, co-ordinated by the Four Day Week Global group.

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10 FOUR-DAY WEEK CAMPAIGN

Under a new pilot programme, employers are set to introduce a four-day week for their employees over a six-month period starting in January 2022, which is being organised by the Four Day Week Ireland campaign. It claims the initiative can deliver positive results for business and provide a work/life balance for employees.



14 RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

Ireland's new Code of Practice on the Right to Disconnect means that employees may now switch off from work outside of normal working hours, and should any problems or issues arise, they are entitled to raise the matter with the Workplace Relations Commission.



16 TELEWORKING REGULATIONS

The widespread adoption of teleworking in response to the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020 exposed gaps in the legislation governing telework arrangements across EU Member States. With different approaches taken by each state, will the EU now bring them all into line?

22 REMOTE WORKING SURVEY

More than 95 per cent of employees in Ireland would prefer to continue with some form of remote employment once the coronavirus pandemic ends, according to the findings of a new survey, which revealed that close to one in 10 people has already relocated or moved house, since working from home gave them more options.



25 COVID VACCINATION

As the government's Covid-19 vaccination strategy gathers pace, employers may find themselves facing a new dilemma: what to do about those employees who choose not to be vaccinated against Covid-19?



27 SICK PAY SCHEME

The new statutory sick pay scheme means that all workers will now have the right to be paid for up to 10 days of sick leave per year by 2025. Under the new plans agreed by the

Government, the scheme will be phased in over a four-year period to help employers to plan ahead and manage the additional cost.



31 IOSH IRELAND

This year's National Volunteering Week in May presented an opportunity for IOSH to thank members who give their time voluntarily on the committees of its branches, districts and sections. Here's a look at the voluntary work of some IOSH members based in Ireland.

35 MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

A mental health and wellbeing initiative has been launched by the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) to bring awareness and education around mental health supports to all INMO members. It follows recent research findings which revealed that 91% of survey respondents had experienced mental exhaustion while off duty.

37 HEALTHY IRELAND STRATEGY

As part of the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan (2021-2025), the Government will link in with businesses and employers, public bodies and organisations, sports and community groups across the country as part of a cross-government approach, with a special emphasis on health inequalities, to enable people to live healthier lives.



40 REMOTE ERGONOMICS

Organisations may not be fully aware of the steps to ensure employees have proper remote working set-ups, writes Andy Mackin, CEO of Mackin. He highlights the importance of ergonomic assessments to critically assess

work stations, and for employers to act before any preventable issues may arise.

43 GREAT PLACE TO WORK

With many companies operating on a remote work basis over the last year, decisions need to be made on the extent to which this will remain the case to shape the culture moving forward, writes Anthony Hickey, Organisational Culture Analyst with Great Place to Work Ireland.

46 EMPLOYER'S DUTY OF CARE

As offices are set to reopen their doors, some employees may be chomping at the bit to meet up with their workplace colleagues, while others may need to be coaxed back, writes Dan Harding, CEO of 'Sign-In App'. He outlines the steps which companies may take to ensure that all employees will want to re-establish collaboration and connection.

48 HSENI ANNUAL REPORT

The 21st Annual Report of the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) has revealed a significant decrease in fatalities and major injuries in the workplace from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

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