

COVID-19 TOOLKIT

A handy resource for business owners,
employees and the recently unemployed for
dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland.



Covid-19 Toolkit

The Covid-19 pandemic is proving to be a difficult and confusing time for everyone, particularly in the area of employment. Many questions arise and the Open Doors Initiative are striving to provide resources, advice and support for marginalised groups in society and the wider group of employees and employers affected, to help them during this uncharted territory.

A series of four short podcasts accompany this toolkit, with detailed analysis, information and resources that will help.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact info@opendoorsinitiative.ie and we will try to help.



Working from Home

Covid-19 outbreak has caused many disruptions to the everyday working environment. Many companies are requiring individuals to work from home. For many this can be a new challenge in itself due to distractions, children, partners in the same position and learning new technology and ways of working. Once you start working from home, you may find yourself doing 24/7 shifts, piling up the overtime and cabin fever may be setting in.

WORKING REMOTELY? HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL NEED:



Computer



Good internet



Dedicated workspace



A strict routine



Chat apps

While working from home, it is important to have a defined schedule and to stick to it wherever possible. Here are some practical tips to guide you when working from home:

WORK STATION: If you don't have an office/separate room to work from, find space at the kitchen table or an area which will allow you to concentrate in solitude. It is important that you can work without disturbing other family members. Don't slip into bad habits of checking emails, voicemails or texting in front of TV or spreading work out on the kitchen table, it is just not productive.

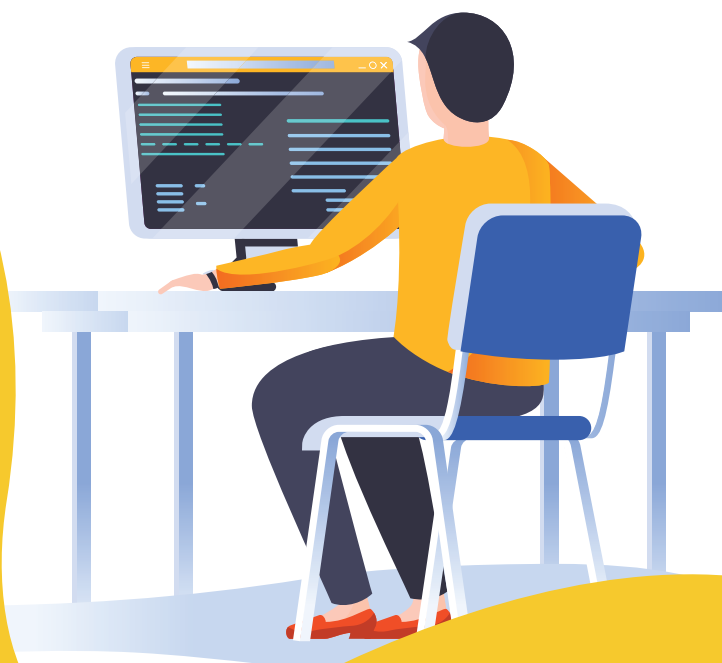
WORKING HOURS: Create a routine as close to work as possible. This enables you to separate working hours and home hours. Make a definitive time to finish your work so you can switch to home mode. Track your time and put limits in. On completion of your work, shut down your laptop and put work information out of sight to relax and charge your batteries. It is important to establish water-tight psychological boundaries. It is vital that you do not allow your mind to wander, and allow thoughts about household chores or other responsibilities while working, as it will impact on your productivity. Complete all personal activities outside of these working hours.

INTRUSIONS: It's important to prevent intrusions into your work space by informing others that although the location of your job has changed, it is no different from any other profession requiring privacy and concentration. Notify others that during at-home work hours you're unavailable and cannot be interrupted, and let them know when you will be available to connect outside of these hours.

STAY CONNECTED: Use available technology such as Zoom, Google Hangouts or Skype to stay connected with team members. It is important to use the available technology to keep in touch with colleagues, seeing someone's face is really important for more fruitful and meaningful connections.

CABIN FEVER: As you are now spending a disproportionate amount of time at home, get outside as much as possible. Studies shows that spending time in nature lowers stress, helps you relax and clears your mind.

SUPPORT: If you have access to mental health coaches, therapists and counsellors - make them available virtually to your team members. It's a good opportunity to remind them of what is available to them. For companies without this support, create a list of outside support that they can access via phone or online.



Adding Kids to the Work Equation

BE HONEST: It is important to be honest and open with your employer about work expectations. Let your employer know if you have children at home, as you may not be able to guarantee all deadlines or work calls will not be interrupted on occasions. Also, explain to children that you are working from home and unable to play like when you are off at the weekends.

SWITCH IT UP: If you have a partner, and if your work allows, could you consider working in shifts? One person could cover morning and the other the afternoon. This could guarantee some productive, uninterrupted hours.


BALANCE: As the kids may require additional attention during the day, consider if you can be flexible with your working hours. It may be beneficial to spend time with the kids during the day and starting work earlier or finish items when the kids go to sleep.


SCREEN TIME: Many parents limit screen time during normal circumstances- temporary adjustments may be considered during these exceptional circumstances. RTE will broadcast daily 'school' on TV to support parents and kids at home This will be a huge help to parents struggling at home.



Useful Links on Working From Home

Many news and lifestyle outlets have produced their own material on how best to manage working from home. Here are a selection of these articles:


 [RTE | A guide to remote working through the Covid-19 outbreak](#)

 [RSVP Live | RTE will broadcast daily 'school' on TV to support parents and kids at home](#)

 [ROI NJ.com | Working from home will be stressful. Here's how employees \(and employers\) can handle it](#)

 [Teamwork.com | Everything you need to know about working remotely](#)

 [The Mighty.com | How to Support Kids With Communication Disabilities While School Is Canceled](#)

 [The Irish Times | How to work from home: set boundaries, bribe your kids, avoid naked partners](#)

 [LinkedIn | Working from Home? Lessons from Prince](#)



Employment Information

COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

Information has been sited from: [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#)

1. WHAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENT IS

This payment is available to all employees and the self-employed who have lost their employment due to a downturn in economic activity caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The payment has a simple one-page application form and will be paid at a flat rate payment of €350 per week for jobseekers. It is designed to quickly deliver a social welfare payment to the unemployed and provide income security during the pandemic.

If you have been temporarily placed on a shorter working week, you may qualify for [Short Time Work Support](#).

2. HOW TO QUALIFY

Both employees and self-employed people can apply for the new COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment. You can apply for the new COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment payment if:

- You are an employee or self-employed and;
- You are aged between 18 and 66 years old and;
- You live in the Republic of Ireland and;
- You have lost your job due to the Coronavirus or;
- If you are self-employed have ceased trading/ work due to the pandemic

Students and part-time workers who have lost work due to the pandemic are also eligible for payment.

3. RATE OF PAYMENT

The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment is paid at a flat rate of €350 per week

If you are getting another social welfare payment, like Working Family Payment, and you have lost your employment, it can be paid in addition to this.

4. APPLY

Detailed instructions on how to fill in the form are available [here](#).

FURTHER READING:



The Irish Times | [Unions propose financial scheme to aid laid-off workers](#)

Upskilling

[Making AT for Creative Expression & Leisure](#) courses free for everyone over next while. Four short courses look at how tech can assist people with disabilities engaging in creative pursuits and leisure.

SOLAS eCollege courses are also being temporarily made available free of charge as an additional support to those impacted by Covid-19 containment measures. You will find a full list of courses available and can apply [here](#).

[WorkJuggle.com](#) are offering free CV clinics for people. If you are recently unemployed due to the Coronavirus they would be happy to review your CV & LinkedIn profile for you, over the phone. They are also happy to talk to any businesses who are unsure as to how to implement a remote working policy or even just what tools to use. [Click to book now](#).

[Lift Ireland](#) is now running all of its leadership sessions online for free to benefit as many people as possible during these challenging times.



Concerns for Business Owners

As the coronavirus pandemic further evolves, how should we face key concerns in the time of such uncertainty?

CRISIS READY: To reduce further unforeseen disruption, it is important to review your crisis and business continuity plans. Businesses need to rework their continuity plans to deal with the prolonged impacts and disruptions that a scenario like the coronavirus. Don't forget, develop a range of scenarios and test them robustly.


COMMUNICATION: It is important to proactively connect with all stakeholder groups with accurate and timely information. Irish businesses have a corporate responsibility to manage public perception of the outbreak, minimise misinformation and prevent panic. With this approach, we can reduce the detrimental impact on the economy.


Only trustworthy information about COVID-19 should be believed or shared. Start with the Health Service Executive (HSE), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). For travel advice or advice and guidance for those abroad, consult the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

THE PEOPLE: Employee welfare is paramount. During these uncertain times, employers have been challenged in terms of their people. Work productivity has declined due to social distancing requirements, production lines have been disturbed and employees have been asked to temporarily stop work. Keep communicating all change as it happens and encourage your employees to adapt work practices so they are able to cope and know that supports will be put in place as they need them.

FURTHER READING

 [Government supports to Covid-19 Impacted Businesses](#)

 Citizens Information | [Supports for Businesses](#)

 [Short Time Work Support](#)

Financial Supports and Relief for Businesses

FINANCIAL SUPPORTS:

- Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland Working Capital scheme
- Rescue and Restructuring Scheme available through Enterprise Ireland for vulnerable but viable firms
- Maximum loan available from Microfinance Ireland has been increased from €25,000 to €50,000 (these loans are now interest free with no repayments for 6 months)
- Local Enterprise Offices in every county will be providing vouchers from €2,500 up to €10,000
- Finance in Focus grant of €7,200 will be available for Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta clients

DEFERRAL OF BUSINESS RATES:

- The government has agreed with local authorities that they should defer rates payments due from the most immediately affected businesses, primarily in the retail, hospitality, leisure and childcare sectors, until the end of May

BANKING AND CREDIT MEASURES:

- A deferral of up to 3-months on loan repayments will be available to many businesses

TAX MEASURES:

- Interest on late payments is suspended for January/February VAT and both February and March PAYE (Employers) liabilities
- All debt enforcement activity is suspended until further notice
- Current tax clearance status will remain in place for all businesses over the coming months
- The Relevant Contract Tax (RCT) rate review scheduled to take place this month (March) is suspended
- Critical pharmaceutical products and medicines will be given a Customs 'green routing' to facilitate uninterrupted importation and supply

OTHER SUPPORTS:

- First Responder support service through the Intreo Offices and development agencies
- Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland in each region will provide tailored supports for affected businesses
- The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection Short Term Work Support Scheme

Wage Subsidy Scheme


The Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme will be operated by employers through their payroll system, therefore ensuring employees will be in receipt of the subsidy payment along with their weekly employer contribution of wages.


The scheme provides the payment of income supports to employers in the case of eligible employees where the employer's business activities have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The employer will include the subsidy as part of the employees' wages in addition to the amount that the employer would otherwise be able to pay. The employer will separately identify the subsidy element on the payslip as a payment described as "non-taxable pay".


The scheme is expected to last a period of 12 weeks.

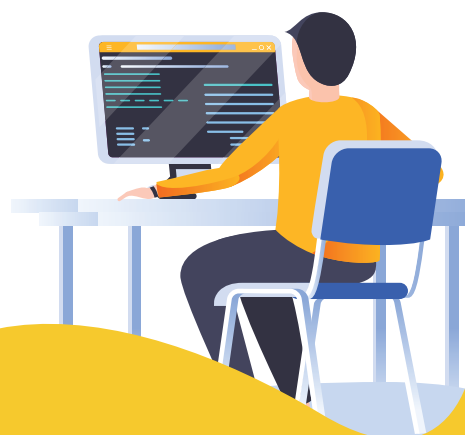
Find out more [here](#).

FURTHER READING

 **McKinsey.com | [Leadership in a crisis:](#)** Responding to the coronavirus outbreak and future challenge. Many organisations are understandably focused on reacting to and coping with the short-term challenges presented by the unfolding epidemic, but in addition to Reaction, they need to focus attention on 3 more important R's: Rebound, Recession and Reimagination.

 **Accenture | [Human resilience: What your people need during COVID-19](#)**

 **Accenture | [Productivity in Uncertain Times Through the Elastic Digital Workplace](#)**





How Will Things Be Different When It's All Over?

NAVIGATING THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND BEYOND


While there is still a huge amount of uncertainty surrounding when the pandemic will end, and how and when things will resume some degree of normality, there is an abundance of research and work designed at helping people get back on their feet when things are over.


FURTHER READING

 [BCG Henderson Institute | How Will Things Be Different When It's All Over?](#)

 [Deloitte | The heart of resilient leadership: Responding to COVID-19](#)

 [The Irish Times | Ireland has correct fiscal policy for facing coronavirus crisis](#)

 [The Irish Times | Rapid economic recovery from crisis is possible](#)

 [Micro Finance Ireland | Do you need to avail of a business loan?](#)



Wellbeing

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an unprecedented crisis, and is a worrying time for everyone for various reasons. It is important for us all to focus only on facts discussed by medical, scientific and public health experts, and to prioritise our mental health during this trying time.

Our podcast with Dr Patrick McKeon, founder of Aware and former Clinical Director of St Patrick's hospital, contains some extremely good advice for your mental health and wellbeing during this time and beyond.

BE INFORMED, BUT NOT OVERLY SO

The continued use of social media, news reports and WhatsApp updates can enhance your feeling of worry, anxiety and stress. Limit the time that you spent looking at these updates and only use reliable sources of information.

DEVELOP A ROUTINE

It is essential to keep as much structure as possible to your day.

Some of the ways you may be able to achieve this is by:

- Exercising regularly - walks and runs
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Maintain your sleeping routine
- Avail of online courses such as yoga and meditation sessions
- Read a book
- Complete online learning to develop your skills

CONNECT


As we restrict our movements and self-isolate, remember to stay in contact with friends, family and loved ones.




Mental Health Support Links

There are many mental health supports and services still available during the COVID 19 crisis. These include online counselling, phone and text services as well as online supports.

 [HSE | Mental Health supports and services during COVID-19](#)


 [Mental Health Reform | Mental Health Services & Supports Available](#)


 [UNICEF | How teenagers can protect their mental health during coronavirus](#)


 [BBC | Coronavirus: How to protect your mental health](#)

 [The Irish Times | How to cope with Covid-19 anxiety](#)

 [Success.com | 7 Tips for Dealing With Your Coronavirus Anxiety](#)

 [Success.com | Four Tips for Maintaining Hope in the Face of Adversity](#)

 [The Guardian | Coronavirus Health Anxiety](#)

 [CPL Jobs | Harnessing the Benefits of Mindfulness](#)




Helpful Links

Some helpful links for further information

 [Ibec](#)


 [ICTU](#)

 [Chambers Ireland](#)

 [Citizens Information](#)

 [HSE: Coronavirus](#)

 [Government of Ireland: Coronavirus](#)

 [Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation](#)

 [Department of Housing: Coronavirus Crisis](#)

This toolkit is collated from a number of sources. We thank them for the use of their informative and helpful material.

