

## EDITOR'S COMMENT



As we emerge from lockdown, the Covid-19 pandemic has certainly created a very different working environment across sectors of industry over the last three months on a global scale.

While frontline healthcare workers and the emergency services joined forces to keep our communities safe, not to mention those who provided other 'essential' services to keep the country in operation, 'remote working' became the new norm for many employers and their employees, as they had to rapidly adjust to a new workplace.

During the early stages of the pandemic, working from home created concerns over the impact of social distancing and isolation, worries about the health of one's self or loved ones, childcare priorities, not to mention a fear of job and financial insecurity as well as the challenges posed by working differently to normal.

Now as the economy gets back on track, led by the Roadmap to Reopening, the phased return to work will not automatically see a return to health and wellbeing, according to Dr Kara McGann, Ibec's Head of Social Policy, and she claims that for many it is likely to exacerbate the strain being experienced.

In this issue of 'Health & Safety Times', Dr McGann points to a shift in the approach by employers to mental health even before the pandemic, and says this must be continued to preventatively and proactively help employees to get through this time of uncertainty.

And in the opinion of Tom Beegan, safety consultant (and a former CEO of the Health and Safety Authority: 2001-2006), the increasing practice of working from home may be turned into a catalyst that delivers a culture where we are all actively caring for each other.

We have admirably showed this very spirit of community and compassion to people in need during the crisis, and there's no reason why this cannot prevail in the workplace, as we get back to some form of normality in the weeks and months ahead.

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## 10 HEALTH & WELLBEING



As yet it is not clear what the mental health impacts of the pandemic will be and the phased return to the 'new normal', led by the Roadmap for Reopening, will not automatically see a return to health and wellbeing, according to Dr Kara McGann, Head of Social Policy at Ibec.

## 15 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID RESOURCE

A series of free resources to provide support to work colleagues struggling with anxiety due to the pandemic have been



published by Mental Health First Aid Ireland, whose survey also aims to assess how working at home for an extended period is affecting the Irish workforce.

## 16 WORKING FROM HOME

The increasing practice of working from home may be the catalyst to deliver a culture where we will all more actively care for each other, as Ireland's economy gets back on track and we return to a different working environment, writes safety consultant Tom Beegan.



## 20 DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Digital communication tools are supporting, enhancing and facilitating more people to work from home, while innovative companies are leveraging more advanced technologies – such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and 3D printing – to deal with the challenges of the pandemic.



## 22 THEATRE AT WORK

Behavioural safety in the workplace took centre stage recently when 'Theatre at Work' presented workshops, in association with Collen Construction, on risk awareness, culture, procedures and responsibility, and compliance with Covid-19 protocols.



## 24 REMOTE WORKING RESEARCH

Some employees have struggled with inadequate broadband or mobile coverage and facilities not suitable for working from home, and others have experienced fatigue with less chance for downtime during the working day and feeling pressure to be 'always on', notes a recent survey by the Irish Computer Society.



## 29 CABINPAC

One modular building business has successfully transformed its work practices through an impressively agile turnaround. Tadhg Twomey, MD of Cabinpac, outlines how his company has met the Covid-19 challenge by evolving ISO management systems and processes.



## 30 TRAINING & EDUCATION

With e-Learning now touted as the solution to maintaining effective health and safety training, it is important to know what to look out for when sourcing and selecting e-Learning solutions for your business, writes Ryan Parker.



## 33 ASTHMA STRATEGIC PLAN

Ireland's Asthma Society has experienced a huge surge in demand for its services due to the coronavirus. With its new five-year strategic plan committed to stopping asthma deaths by 2030, it's now calling for national review of the number deaths.

## 35 NSAI PROTECTION GUIDE

Practical business guidance on physical distancing, home working, staggered work and what to do if an employee is symptomatic are detailed in the National Standards Authority of Ireland's new 'Workplace Protection and Improvement Guide'.

## 37 NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND



The National Council for the Blind of Ireland is on the look-out for new companies to collaborate with its Workplace Partner Programme, to provide experience for people with sight loss to enter or re-enter the workforce.

## 39 COVID-19 RISK MANAGEMENT

A range of new testing initiatives that will include Covid-19 risk management and hygiene training has been launched by one of Ireland's largest privately-owned contract laboratories – to support the reopening of business during the pandemic.



## 41 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

An Irish supplier of medical and lab safety equipment has warned of the risks of sub-

standard products entering the market as employers prepare a return to work, on recently launching its 'Safe at Work' employee PPE kits.



## 43 CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

Bringing together stakeholders from across the construction supply chain and featuring presentations from leading experts, a safety symposium highlighted the need for collective responsibility and a collaborative approach to driving safety excellence across the industry.

## 45 NORTHERN IRELAND

With people's thoughts focused on preparing for a return to normality, Wilson Lambe, President of the Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISG) shares his own thoughts on facing a very different workplace in the future.

## 47 IOSH NEWS

Upon reopening, businesses must be risk-controlled and put health and safety first to avoid becoming places of transmission of the coronavirus, the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) has advised.

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