PROTECTION GUIDE IS JUST THE BUSINESS!

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', which outlines financial supports for businesses to implement preventative and recovery measures to stop the spread of the Coronavirus.

The Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys TD, has said that businesses across the country have already taken significant steps to safeguard against the spread of coronavirus.

Launching the 'Workplace Protection and Improvement Guide', prepared by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the NSAI, the HSA, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland, with support from the HSE, the Minister urged all agencies to continue that work.

"The best way to ensure that firms can keep operating is to rigorously implement the public health guidelines on physical distancing and minimise the risk of spreading infection. Similarly, I encourage all employees to make themselves aware of the expert advice and strictly adhere to it.

"Implementing best practice – particularly around physical distancing, remote and home working, cleaning and shift-work and overall hygiene measures – can help limit the impact of the virus on employees and business continuity. The NSAI guidance document will be a significant resource for firms and their employees."

€2,500 SUPPORT VOUCHERS

The new NSAI helpline and the €2,500 consultancy support vouchers available through Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Local Enterprise Offices will enable firms to the identify and implement the measures needed to ensure they can continue to operate safely to provide necessary and essential goods and services for all.

The Minister highlighted a range of good practices and process changes that are being implemented by firms to protect their people, their premises and the general public so they can continue to operate safely.

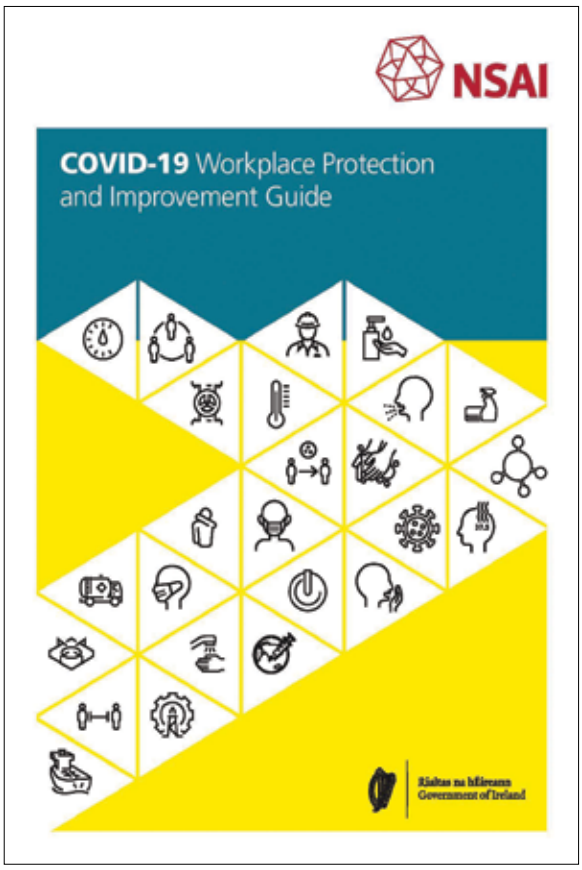
These include measures such as use of gloves for common equipment, cleaning between shifts, floor markings to ensure distance, use of perspex at counters, strict processes for deliveries to minimise contact, adjusting factory and office layouts to ensure distance and staggering of shifts, using remote handovers between shifts.

"Our absolute priority, as we battle Covid-19, is protecting the health and wellbeing of everyone in Ireland. We are working with business and worker representatives to achieve our public health objectives and sustain jobs. The Government and its agencies are committed to supporting businesses as best we can to rigorously implement the essential physical distancing and workplace preventative measures and to continue to operate."

MINIMISING THE RISKS

The Minister also welcomed the close engagement of the HSE with the business sector and in providing a range of guidance notices to employers and employees over recent weeks.

"It is essential that businesses in all sectors do everything possible to prevent the spread of the virus and to help mitigate its impact. They can pro-actively manage these risks by implementing the measures set out in the Workplace Protection and Improvement Guide".

In conclusion Minister Humphreys said that the contribution that every firm and worker made to the economy was valued. "We are committed to doing all we can collectively to ensure that enterprises rigorously implement the guidance on physical distancing and taking actions to minimise the risk of spreading the virus, can continue to operate."

Health and safety advisors are available to support businesses improve Covid-19 related prevention and recovery measures in the workplace. For details phone the NSAI Helpline on 01-8073800 or email **COVID-19-support@nsai.ie**