

Flexible working consultation seeks views for work-life balance framework

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The Government has launched a public consultation on flexible working, which will inform a broader framework linked to the Programme for Government.

The Department of Children and Equality is seeking the views of employers, employees and the wider public on the types of flexible working arrangements currently in place and the changes that they wish to see.

Findings from the consultation will inform the development of a new flexible working policy, a commitment in the Programme for Government, which aims to promote better work-life balance for those with caring responsibilities and to support the higher participation of women in the workplace.

Minister O’Gorman said: “The pandemic has brought about huge changes in the way we work, and has highlighted the need for workplaces to be responsive to the needs of families and those with caring responsibilities. With many organisations moving towards flexible working arrangements, we are now presented with a unique opportunity to reinvent the way we work and create a flexible working model - one that supports a better work-life balance and a more inclusive labour market.”

The purpose of the consultation is to help develop a flexible working policy and guidance that takes account of the needs of families (particularly those with young children); of individuals, including those with disabilities; of employers and of the broader economy.

The consultation asks questions on the potential impact of changes in technology, the workplace, the family and society on the types of flexible working arrangements available to, or sought by, employees; the changing nature of flexible working arrangements in light of the Covid-19 pandemic; the potential obstacles that may exist for SME employers when facilitating flexible working arrangements for employees as well as the potential administrative impact; and the success factors that will help the Government and businesses to develop flexible working options that suit employees and employers.

The Government has made a commitment in the First Five Strategy to enhance access to family-friendly flexible working. This consultation follows a previous consultation that ran in December 2019 and it intends to capture information on the changes to work environments due to the pandemic. The consultation is open until May 28, 2021.

