

## **Interpreting the Roadmap - ACESA online session for members, 20 May 2020**

*Three concurrent sessions were held using the GoToMeeting platform*

*Session 1 - facilitated by Pamela Byrne and Marian O'Sullivan; Session 2 - facilitated by John McDaid; Session 3 – facilitated by John Farrelly*

A number of themes emerged from the sessions:

[Remaining open/Returning to the workplace](#)

[HR Challenges/supporting staff](#)

[Managing Leave](#)

[IT Capacity](#)

[Working from Home](#)

[Serving the Public](#)

[Governance/Board Input](#)

### **Remaining open/Returning to the workplace**

- The '10th August' date is challenging, not all organisations feel ready, and there is a lot of clarity still needed.
- In terms of reoccupying offices, public transport, long commutes and childcare are going to be significant challenges.
- Getting back to the office environment will be very welcome for some and not for others. There will need to be flexibility and there will be challenges around fairness and in trying to ensure a consistent approach.
- There are HSA and NSAI guidelines on returning. OPW guideline document to be published.
- Acknowledgement that it can be hard to interpret the roadmap.
- Staff reaction- mixed some want to return others are caring for children and elderly, and wont be able to return. Some staff are very comfortable working at home.
- Messages are going out that the re-occupation of offices is likely to be a slow and gradual process and that it is not going to happen 'just like that'. There is a need to ensure that staff understand that we're in this for the long haul. One contributor noted that she is communicating with her staff on a weekly basis. The value and importance of good communication with the staff was generally echoed. The benefits of communicating with video enabled technology were also noted;
- In terms of getting back into offices we should be carefully reflecting on what it is we need to go back to the office to do i.e., what do we need to do that we can't do at the moment.

- One contributor noted that their organisation is hugely dependent on its parent Department in terms of working the Roadmap and re-opening for business.
- One organisation has retained a consultant to examine premises and make recommendations with a view to ensuring it is a safe place to return to work.
- 60-70% staff working from home Essential workers are present as they work in labs.
- A lot of innovation in terms of making it work. Separate teams being staggered; 6 hour days; however lack of 'water cooler' chats; great to have a good proactive H&S manager.

*In terms of returning to normal working/returning, significant work had been undertaken by the Adoption Authority. A number of documents were shared by Patricia Carey. As they are significant in size, they are available on the members' section of the ACESA website.*

### **HR Challenges/supporting staff**

- Concern was raised by a number of participants across the groups as to the mental well-being of staff, that the effect isolation was beginning to have.
- More than one contributor noted that not working in the office was giving rise to a loss of cross fertilisation of ideas and that it was increasing the potential for creating silos or reinforcing existing ones. One contributor noted that she wasn't able to join any table in the canteen and not having this interaction was a loss. Another noted the danger of staff losing the feeling that they are part of an organisation. Another noted that working remotely did not necessarily equate to working well together and that the level of innovation was impacted by not having staff present together.
- The crisis is proving challenging in HR/disciplinary issues. An example was given by one CEO of a current HR challenge being experienced. Whereas before, it was an issue that would be resolved by getting two people in a room, this wasn't an option, and as a result was proving difficult to resolve.
- A number of initiatives were spoken of with regard to improving morale. One example was of a gift pack that was given to all staff that was very well received.
- Unions were becoming very active at this time and it is taking up considerable time.

### **Managing Leave**

- This continued to be a challenge for a number of organisations. One member had closed their agency for a number of days, meaning that staff had to take leave.

### **IT Capacity**

- The importance of IT has been brought home by the crisis. One organisation had upgraded its IT functionality just before the crisis started and this made it much easier to vacate the office and work from home.
- A couple of organisations noted that IT objectives that had been slow to progress for years, had been largely achieved in the space of a few weeks.

- Most organisations appeared to have good remote connectivity i.e, the majority of staff can access the IT system;

### **Working from Home**

- A number of contributors noted actions they had taken in relation to working from home safely including ergonomic assessments etc. One organisation noted that it had a 'working from home' package which was given to each employee and each employee was asked to acknowledge that they understood it.
- An App was developed by an IT Manager where staff can log leave and when they are working.
- There were too many 'video conferencing' meetings. Don't forget the phone is sometimes of value.

### **Serving the Public**

- A number of organisations deal with the public or have other external engagements and are carefully considering how appropriate safety measures can be put in place to allow that engagement to happen safely.

### **Governance/Board input**

- One agency spoke of one positive having been that the crisis had forced their Board to become more engaged. They had to get 'under the bonnet' more, and this was leading to an increased understanding of the organisation by board members.

**ENDS**