COVID-19 - EMPLOYMENT LAW
Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Bill 2020

30th March 2020

Dear Member,

The Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Bill 2020 Is currently moving through the Oireachtas and it contains significant measures to help co-operatives and other businesses in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

One point worth noting from the Bill is that Section 12 of the Redundancy Payments Act, which covers redundancy notice periods as outlined in our Employment Law Update of 25th March has been put on ice for the duration of the COVID 19 emergency period (provisionally expiring on 31 May, extendable by Ministerial order under Bill). This means that the notice periods for redundancy we advised on in our note do not apply for this period.

ICOS is aware that the current crisis will lead to some difficult conversations between the co-operative and its employees. Therefore, it is essential the co-operative is able to give clear information to its employees on the supports available to them. It is vital that employers engage with their employees and keep them regularly informed in relation to their employment status. Under the current circumstances employers should be checking in on employees in particular those that are working from home to ensure that they are coping with the change and that they don't feel isolated. Before any decisions are finalised as to which options the co-operative will take with regard to its work force, the employer should look at the employees contract of employment and any employment handbook or policies that are in place to ensure that they will not breach any of the clauses contacted therein.

It is critical to note that, as a result of the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19, the advice set out above is subject to change and is not a "one size fits all" solution. Therefore, it is advisable to consult with your co-operative's HR advisors and contact Sinead Farrell on sfarrell@icos.ie or Darragh Walshe on dwalshe@icos.ie if you have any queries relevant to the matters outlined above.