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e-Working in the Western Region

A Review of the Evidence

WDC Policy Briefings: The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a statutory body promoting economic and social development in the Western Region of Ireland (counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare). WDC Policy Briefings highlight and provide discussion and analysis of key regional policy issues.

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Introduction

e-Work is a method of working using information and communication technology in which the work is not bound to any particular location. Traditionally this has been understood as working remotely from the office, usually from home, whether full-time or for a period during the working week.

With the introduction of basic broadband services nearly two decades ago, there had been a view that e-Working would become more prevalent and could be particularly advantageous to more rural regions, supporting employment, especially outside of the Agriculture, forestry & fishing sector. With the widespread rollout of broadband services and greater speeds anticipated under the National Broadband Plan (NBP), along with increasing congestion and longer journey times to work, it might be expected that e-Working is becoming more common. This WDC Policy Briefing aims to identify:

• The extent of e-Working.

• The extent to which weaker broadband access in more rural locations impacts on the rate of e-Working.

• Factors driving e-Work.

• Recommendations on how e-Working can be further promoted.

Measuring the extent of e-Work is complicated by the changing nature of work but the focus of this WDC Policy Briefing is on the extent to which e-Work is a feature of 'traditional' work and employment relationships. Communications technology has evolved to allow new forms of work and service delivery to emerge, often termed the 'gig economy'. This type of income generation is outside the scope of this WDC Policy Briefing but will be the subject of a forthcoming WDC publication.

Case studies from companies and individual e-Workers in the Western Region illustrate how e-Work operates in practice. The case studies highlight the extent to which e-Work is generally a policy applied at the discretion of local management as well as illustrating the benefits to employers and employees.

Benefits and limitations of e-Work

The benefits of e-Working from an employee perspective include an improved work-life balance especially for those commuting for long periods. Benefits of e-Work are evident from the perspective of management also. In addition to improving staff retention, the efficient introduction of e-Working can increase productivity[1].

There has been recognition of the wider economic and social benefits of e-Work from a public policy perspective; greater e-Working can reduce transport demand, traffic congestion and emissions. For example, it has been

Contents

1. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. UK *Costs and Benefits to Business of Adopting Work Life Balance Working Practices: A Literature Review.* June 2014 http://www.psi.org.uk/images/uploads/bis-14-903-costs-and-benefits-to-business-of-adopting-work-life-balance-working-practices-a-literature-review.pdf

If 10% of the working population were to work from home for 1 day a week, there would be a reduction of around 10 million car journeys to work per annum.

estimated that if just 10% of the working population of 2.1 million were to work from home for 1 day a week, there would be a reduction of around 10 million car journeys to work per annum[2]. Benefits arising from higher broadband speeds and greater levels of e-Working include time savings, enhanced communications, increased sales and productivity gains, see box below on Benefits from e-Work and the National Broadband Plan[3].

e-Work and longer travel to work journeys

e-Work has been considered as a useful tool in reducing transport demand. However it may also lead to longer distances travelled, albeit less frequently, by enabling the employee to live further away from their work, but travel longer distances when they do go to the office, as illustrated in some of the case studies. In this scenario, e-Work is extending labour catchments, which can improve labour supply and mobility. On the other hand it can be a factor in the expansion of larger catchments, especially Dublin[4] with wider consequences for national planning.

e-Work and employee choice

e-Working as described in this WDC Policy Briefing is generally by employee choice. As some of the case studies demonstrate, e-Working is often in the first instance at the instigation of the employee. However there are instances where employees must work entirely from home and in these cases the benefits to the employee are not as obvious. Recent Irish research[5] discusses the practice where employees work entirely from home, though not by choice. *For at least one of the high tech multinationals an emerging practice is to place some of their customer service workers in their own homes.* In this example, employees do not have a choice to e-Work or not and employment conditions include the requirement to have a minimum speed broadband connection. e-Workers in 'traditional' employer-employee relationships usually retain all their employee benefits. However where the practice of e-Working is instigated by the employer's business model, the workers are sometimes self-employed contractors, with lesser benefits and protections.

There is an estimated improved productivity of 1.53% per employee, arising from those workers that live in rural areas but commute to jobs in urban areas, and work from home on a 1 day per week basis.

Benefits from e-Work and the National Broadband Plan – travel savings and increased gross value added (GVA)

Analysis for the Department of Communications measured benefits arising from delivery of high speed broadband planned under the forthcoming National Broadband Plan, to the 'Intervention Area' (IA), which comprises approximately 757,000 premises across rural areas throughout Ireland. These areas are not currently receiving high speed services from commercial providers.

- The analysis found that each house in the IA could yield a benefit of €89.00 per household per annum resulting from journey time and fuel cost savings from increased e-Working as a consequence of the availability of high speed broadband. This would amount to an annual total saving of €48.39 million, which does not include other benefits such as carbon emissions savings etc[6].

- Increased productivity is also forecast, generated from improved productivity of white collar workers living in rural areas (the IA) but commuting to work in urban areas[7]. This shows the benefit to the enterprise expressed as an increase in GVA per employee of 1.53% (€1,342) per worker, working from home or remote working on a 1 day per week basis. This does not capture benefits such as increased staff retention and more satisfied employees[8].

2. Department for Transport, *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* http://www.smartertravel.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/2012_12_27_Smarter_Travel_english_PN_WEB%5B1%5D.pdf#overlay-context=content/publications. p.35
3. Indecon International Economic Consultants, July 2012. *Economic / Socio-Economic Analysis of Options for Rollout of Next Generation Broadband.* Analysis undertaken on behalf of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) as part of the Government's National Broadband Plan, 2012. http://www.dccae.gov.ie/communications/SiteCollectionDocuments/Broadband/Updated%20Expert%20reports/PwCCostBenefitAnalysisSupplementaryReport.pdf
4. http://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Position-Paper-Issues-and-Choices-Ireland-2040-web.pdf
5. James Wickham and Alicja Bobek, *Enforced Flexibility? Working in Ireland Today.* TASC, 2016. http://www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/enforcedflexibilityfinal.pdf
6. See footnote 3.
7. See footnote 3.
8. See footnote 3. There is also an increase in productivity at the enterprise level – measured at 0.67% increase in GVA per small non-farm enterprise in the Intervention Area. This is as a result of productivity gains through improved businesses processes, online sales and owner managers having the flexibility of 'always-on' connectivity.

The international experience

In the 1990s, particularly arising out of technological advances, e-Working was cited as a possible 'solution' to rural depopulation and a key tool in rural development. Various reports[9] cited the potential for telecommunications to enable more remote working, enabling employees to work from home and so help maintain rural populations. The evidence on the extent to which e-Working has been of particular advantage to rural regions is more limited. A review of the Irish data is discussed overleaf.

There are examples of rural regions where teleworking is promoted as a solution to rural depopulation. For example, in the South West of France in the Gers region, the Gers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), launched the Soho Solo programme in 2008 and now has over 200 members[10] . Soho Solo targets entrepreneurs and teleworkers who can work at home using communications technology and targets occupations that can work remotely such as consultants, interpreters, journalists, along with those in the creative sector such as webmasters, designers and photographers.

Research from Scotland suggested that e-Working is particularly relevant to more rural locations, noting that high take up of e-Working is associated with low population densities and the highest incidence occurs in managerial, professional and skilled occupations. The Scottish Household Survey of 2003 found that 13.5% of working adults in Scotland spend at least some of their time working from home and a relatively large share (20%) were self-employed[11] .

In the UK since 2014, employees have the legal right to request flexible working, defined as a way of working that suits an employee's needs including working from home[12,13] . The number of employees working from home in office-type jobs, or roles involving travel where home is used as a base, has been increasing, though there has been some evidence of a flattening out[14] . The impact of the new legislation has yet to be evaluated.

e-Work company case study - Overstock, Sligo

Overstock.com is a US based online discount retailer headquartered in Salt Lake City, USA employing over 1,300 staff there. In 2013 it opened its first technology hub outside of the USA in Sligo, employing over 20 staff in its software development team. While there is no official e-Working policy the facility to e-Work is communicated to employees and potential employees. The frequency of e-Work depends on their role and is agreed between the team lead and Director of Software Development.

In general, e-Working is available to everyone but in practice approximately one fifth regularly work from home, while others do so on a more infrequent basis. Team leads are less inclined to work from home for extended periods as they need to be involved in a lot of 1:1 and team communication which is easier done face to face. For software developers and testers there is no restriction on the amount of time they choose to work from home. The company believes there are productivity gains in working from home in a quieter environment. However, the company recognises it does not suit everyone. Performance is checked and once proven to work well, is no longer monitored[15].

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9. Grimes, S. Exploiting information and communication technologies for rural development, 1992. https://aran.library.nuigalway.ie/bitstream/handle/10379/2591/1992_Exploiting_ICT.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

10. http://www.soho-solo-gers.com/en

11. Derek Halden Consultancy, Scoping the Impacts on Travel Behaviour in Scotland of E-Working and other ICTs, 2006. http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2006/05/23112408/0

12. This is available to all employees (with service of 6 months or more with the same employer), and not just those with family responsibilities. Flexible working rules are different in Northern Ireland. https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview

13. Employers must deal with requests in a 'reasonable manner' and if the employee feels that this has not occurred the employee can take the employer to an employment tribunal.

14. http://www.psi.org.uk/images/uploads/bis-14-903-costs-and-benefits-to-business-of-adopting-work-life-balance-working-practices-a-literature-review.pdf

15. David Kenny, Director of Software Development, Overstock. www.overstock.com

The evidence on e-Working

The evidence on e-Working in Ireland is limited and complicated by different definitions. The most comprehensive data is collected in the Census and the same question has been asked on previous Censuses. The question asked is 'how you usually travel to work'? with one of the answers being 'work mainly at or from home'.

The Census definition is inadequate however, in that it includes all those that are self-employed and work from home (such as childminders, home-based GPs, farmers and sole traders across all sectors) and not just e-Workers. Moreover, the Census definition only captures those employees that work from home most of the working week and excludes those who e-Work even one or two days per week, which some studies suggest is the most common pattern of e-Working.

According to the Census, nationally, in 2011[16] , 4.7% (83,326) of all those at work, stated they worked mainly at or from home. By far the most significant occupational group is farmers, fishing & forestry workers, comprising over two fifths (43.5%). Excluding those working in the Agriculture, forestry & fishing industries[17] , the share of the state's working population reported as working mainly at or from home was 2.8% (47,127). This compares to 3.2% (8,994) of workers in the Western Region, indicating a higher incidence of working from home in the Western Region.

Other studies highlight the range of reported levels of e-Work. For example:

- A European study in 2005 found that 4.2% of workers in Ireland 'tele-worked a quarter of the time', with Ireland having one of the lowest rates within the European Union[18] .

- More recently, a survey by Eir[19] found that 21% work occasionally from home though they are not based at home. The research also found that 59% of the working population now do some form of their work at home (e.g. check emails, bring work home etc).

- In 2014, a survey by UPC[20] reported that 47% of Irish employees use the internet at home in relation to work, up from 45% in 2012.

- Examining e-Working in rural Ireland, a report commissioned by Vodafone[21] , found that nearly one in four broadband users in rural Ireland use the internet at home in relation to their work (about 430,000 people) and one third have remote access to their company network for work purposes[22] . An estimated 150,000 workers avoid commuting some or all of the time because they can connect to work remotely. A quarter of those who work from home – or nearly 100,000 adults – say their current broadband service is not sufficient to meet their requirements for e-Working, and that it limits the work related activities they can do from home[23] .

It is clear therefore that the incidence of e-Working is greater than the measure of 'those working mainly at or from home', as captured by the Census (2.8%). It is also likely that the trend is generally upward[24] , facilitated by greater broadband penetration and newer technologies such as smartphones.

16. Census of Population 2011, the most recent Census data available. Census 2016 data will be available in September 2017.
17. The WDC wish to thank the CSO for a special run of data excluding those working in the Agriculture, forestry & fishing industries.
18. Cited in Hynes, M. Telework Isn't Working: A Policy Review, 2014.The Economic and Social Review. Vol 45, No 4, Winter, 2014. http://www.esr.ie/article/view/231 http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/it/observatories/eurwork/comparative-information/telework-in-the-european-union
19. Eir Connected Living Survey 2015 https://www.eir.ie/opencms/export/sites/default/.content/pdf/pressreleases/eir-_connected-_living_survey.pdf 48% of workers specifically check work email at home, up from 42% in August 2014.
20. The Second UPC Report on Ireland's Digital Future https://www.virginmedia.ie/pdf/UPC_2014_report.pdf
21. Amárach Research, 2016 https://www.vodafone.ie/connected-futures/
22. These e-Workers report that e-Working means they can avoid commuting to work, typically about two days a week. https://www.vodafone.ie/connected-futures/
23. This share rises to nearly half of those living in detached houses in the countryside. 30% report that slow and unreliable speeds currently prevent them and/or family members from working from home. Amárach Research, 2016 https://www.vodafone.ie/connected-futures/
24. According to a survey conducted by Ericsson, 44% of Irish workers work from home once a month and 76% of companies anticipate more remote working in the next 2-3 years. Research cited in Department of Communications commissioned research for the National Broadband Plan. See footnote 3.

e-Work – a company perspective: www.mykidstime.com

Founded in 2007, www.mykidstime.com started as a listings website with kids activities for parents in the Galway area, which gradually expanded with listings in different counties before becoming national in 2011. As the company grew, it engaged parents in different areas who were responsible for delivering local content and sourcing advertising.

From the outset it was decided that the company would operate without an office, in part to keep costs down, but largely because there was no need. The employees all work from home and the philosophy of the company is to be very family friendly. The working hours are flexible, it does not matter at what time of the day or night the work is done, once it is done.

The company currently has two full-time and one part-time employee and engages a self-employed consultant. As well as operating a virtual office, the company considers itself an 'early adopter' of technology using applications to assist with operations and communications. For example, they use Slack to communicate, share information and files in a structured project environment. After growing a very large community of parents on social media and global visits to the website, the company is now developing new revenue streams while continuing to deliver content and blogs that parents value.

Company e-Work practice

Generally the practice of e-Work is an aspect of flexible work practices that companies employ. Because e-Working is not clearly visible in official statistics, and because e-Working is generally at the discretion of the employer and/or the line manager, it is not clear how extensive the practice is though the survey data discussed earlier suggest that the practice is widespread.

In 2016 an IBEC survey[25] of their membership found that 30% (110) of companies had a practice of e-Working/ home-working, on one or two days per week, while 5% have a practice of e-Working five days per week. At a regional level 21% of companies in the West/North-West report a practice of e-Working one or two days per week, lower than the national average. The likelihood of e-Working among companies increases with company size, so that 40% of companies with 500+ employees cite a practice of e-Working nationally. There is a slightly higher rate of e-Work among foreign owned compared to Irish owned companies (34% and 27% respectively). The influence of company size may be a factor in the lower than average rates in the West/North-West region, as this region has a higher share of smaller[26] companies than nationally. The trend is for continued growth in the practice with 31% of companies' surveyed planning to increase their use of e-Working[27,28].

An example of e-Working policy and practice in a large foreign owned company is Pramerica, a subsidiary of the Prudential company (https://www.pramerica.ie). Operations in Letterkenny, County Donegal, started in 2000 with fewer than 100 employees and there are now approximately 1,300 employed there. The company operates a formal e-Work policy (referred to as teleworking) which is offered to staff as part of a range of flexible work practices[29]. Though the company is based in Letterkenny people work from as far away as Limerick and Kerry. Eligible employees can apply for teleworking which can be either full-time or part-time working from home.

Insights from the Western Region[30] indicate that start-ups in the ICT technology sector are very open to offering e-Work as a feature of working conditions. e-Work is not exclusive to senior personnel and can extend across a range of functions including customer support, financial, administrative, HR and IT engineering. e-Work is not restricted to long-distance commuters and is availed of by staff who have journey times of less than half an hour.

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25. IBEC, Flexible Working Arrangements Report, 2016.
26. WDC Insights, Enterprise Profile of the Western Region, September 2016. http://www.wdc.ie/wp-content/uploads/WDC-Insights-Enterprise-Profile-of-the-Western-Region-Sept-2016-0.3MB.pdf
27. IBEC HR Update Survey 2016, Issue 2. https://www.ibec.ie/IBEC/DFB.nsf/vPages/Research_and_surveys~Employer_issues~hr-update-2016-autumn-01-11-2016/$file/HR+Update+October+2016.pdf
28. According to a Virgin Business Survey, 60% of office based workers will work remotely regularly by 2020 https://www.virgin.com/entrepreneur/infographic-is-the-rise-of-flexible-working-a-myth 60% of office based workers will work remotely regularly by 2020.
29. https://www.pramerica.ie/life-pramerica/
30. In conversation with Michelle Murphy, Director, CollinsMcNicholas, which is a nationwide recruitment and HR Services company.

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e-Work is not restricted to long-distance commuters and is availed of by staff who have journey times of less than half an hour.

There is currently no specific Government policy on e-Working, although as far back as 2002 the Government committed to introduce e-Working options into mainstream public service employment.

e-Work – the employee perspective [31]

Brian is a Senior Client Services Consultant at Linedata (www.linedata.com), a global solutions provider for the Investment Management, Insurance and Credit sectors. Brian supports clients and their software applications, mostly remotely. Though the company has a policy of e-Working at a global level, no one at the Dublin office had engaged in e-Working prior to Brian. He started e-Working in July 2013 following a request to his manager as his personal circumstances had changed. His wife commenced employment in the West, where they had a house and they did not want to have to continue to pay for accommodation in Dublin also.

A trial e-Work period of 6 months was agreed. His normal work pattern is two days a week from home, and three in the Dublin office (apart from when he is elsewhere at a client's onsite location). Since the trial period, he has been e-Working continuously. Occasionally he works three days a week from home (two in Dublin office). Brian stays one night a week in Dublin using Airbnb. Brian works normal office hours and has autonomy to respond to clients as needed and deliver on his job requirements. Since Brian started e-Work, two other colleagues have also started to e-Work, one based in Navan, Co. Meath, the other in Blessington, Co. Wicklow. From a technical perspective there are no constraints to Brian e-Working.

For Brian, there are other benefits arising from e-Working. He can live in the family home and avoid paying additional rent. There are travel time savings, even with travel to the Dublin office, he still spends much less time commuting than if he was living in Dublin. If e-Working was not available, Brian feels he would have to reconsider his job so as to accommodate living in Ballaghaderreen.

e-Working policy

In Ireland, there is no specific Government policy on e-Working, though there have been various initiatives by different statutory bodies designed to support and promote the practice.

- In 2000, the Government approved a Code of Practice on e-Working entitled 'e-Working in Ireland' and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000-2002) (PPF) committed the Government to introduce e-Working options into mainstream public service employment by 2002[32] .

- In 2003 the Department of Finance issued a circular on Pilot schemes to promote e-Working in the Civil Service[33] . Though some individual Departments did introduce pilot schemes and may continue the practice, no central evaluation or assessment of the policy has taken place. The circular is still in force but there have not been any other circulars or updates issued.

- The Office of the Revenue Commissioners has issued guidance dealing with the tax implications of e-Working for employees and employers which was updated in 2013[34].

- The Department of Transport, in an effort to realise some of the benefits of e-Working in reducing travel demand and traffic congestion included actions in its Smarter Travel Policy[35] , which set out to promote e-Working. This includes setting targets to encourage e-Working in the public sector which have yet to be actioned. There was also an objective to research and develop e-Working centres, outlined in the box overleaf.

Though it is recognised that e-Working is an important element in the human resources policy of many companies which Government supports[36] , and some public sector bodies operate e-Working policies[37] nonetheless apart from various sectoral ad hoc initiatives, there is no policy actively being pursued aimed at promoting a greater incidence of e-Working.

The Smarter Travel Policy promotes e-Working and has set targets to encourage it in the public sector.

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31. In conversation with Brian Tansey, Linedata.
32. Framework IV - Para. 22 http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/upload/publications/310.pdf
33. Circular 4/2003 Pilot schemes to promote e-Working in the Civil Service http://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/finance/2003/04.pdf
34. www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it69.pdf. The provision of equipment, such as computers, printers, phone, and broadband are exempt from Benefit-In-Kind (BIK) charges. Revenue also allows an employer to make payments up to €3.20 per day to employees for additional expenses such as electricity and heating, without deducting PAYE, PRSI or USC. Where the actual expenditure incurred is in excess of this amount specific expenses claim can still be made.
35. *A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020.* 2009 Action 5, 6. See footnote 2
36. *As part of its ongoing efforts to bring jobs to rural Ireland, the Agency [IDA Ireland] supports client companies who wish to provide teleworking solutions for their employees.* Response to a Parliamentary Question on 5th October 2016. https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-10-05a.645&s=rural+employment#g647.r
37. For example Enterprise Ireland and the Western Development Commission.

e-Working centres

As part of the smarter travel town initiative, a pilot e-Working centre was established in Dungarvan. Developed in collaboration with Go Dungarvan Smarter Travel[38] , the e-Working centre aims to provide opportunities for people in rural areas and satellite towns to work closer to home. This 'Remote Working Space', allows workers to rent space and access broadband while also operating in an office environment closer to home than the office.

Westmeath County Council has set up six community e-Working centres aimed at residents who travel to Dublin or elsewhere to work. These e-Working centres provide work space with high speed broadband to support employees working remotely as well as start up businesses[39] .

The Ludgate hub in Skibbereen, www.ludgate.ie is a similar initiative, providing desk/office space in a more rural location, providing high speed telecommunications capacity and also support for start-ups[40] .

While e-Working centres have been promoted as a way to lessen the commute to work, it is not e-Work in the conventional sense, where the employee e-Works from home. The employee still needs to travel to an office location with the additional requirements of renting the space where extra charges such as insurance may apply. This may be a factor in explaining why take-up in some centres has not been as strong as anticipated.

The Action Plan for Jobs 2017 contains a commitment to develop and rollout a strategy for eHubs to support remote working, entrepreneurship and small business growth. A key characteristic of these centres will be the availability of advanced broadband connectivity[41] .

The case study evidence indicates that there is not unlimited demand for e-Working, some roles are not suitable and some workers prefer the office environment, but it is also clear that it is a growing phenomenon.

Conclusions and recommendations

The extent of e-Working is hard to measure, partly because of limited official statistics and because the practice is sometimes in the absence of company policy but at the discretion of local management. Though there is often no official e-Work policy, it is a widespread practice operated by employers, usually as part of flexible work policies.

The case study evidence and the experience of e-Working centres indicate that there is not unlimited demand for e-Working, some roles are not suitable and some workers prefer the office environment. However it is also clear that it is a growing phenomenon, largely driven by technological change, work demands, journey times and the need to maintain work-life balance.

To realise the benefits on a greater scale; to the individual, employer and wider society and economy, some actions can be undertaken to support a greater take-up of e-Work.

1. **Better data is needed** to capture the actual extent of e-Working. The CSO should consider revising the Census question as it currently only captures those 'who work mainly at or from home'. Data should measure the incidence of e-Working on a one day, two day and more frequent basis. This will also provide a useful baseline for measuring trends. Alternatively a question might be introduced into the CSO Quarterly National Household Survey on a regular basis.

2. The potential for greater rates of e-Work to help reduce Ireland's emissions (and any penalties we may incur) has been outlined[42] . While some employers embrace the practice there remains reluctance among others[43]. To support wider take-up, the Government should reactivate its commitment to **introduce e-Working options into mainstream public service employment.** The benefits to be realised by greater e-Working outlined earlier, even within a subset of the workforce such as the public sector, can generate significant benefits from increased GVA, reduced congestion and lower carbon emissions.

In order to understand and promote e-Work, better data is needed.

38. http://www.godungarvan.ie/?q=node/118
39. https://www.localenterprise.ie/Westmeath/Enterprise%20Development/E-Working-Centres-in-Westmeath/
40. A similar proposal is being advanced in Co. Donegal.http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/bringing-it-home-working-towards-the-regeneration-of-rural-ireland-1.2946791
41. https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Action-Plan-for-Jobs-2017.pdf
42. Transport emissions increased by 4.2% in 2015, the third year of increases in transport emissions following five consecutive years of decreases since 2007, aligned to economic growth. Transport is the second largest contributor to overall emissions accounting for 19.8%. *Ireland's Provisional Greenhouse Gas Emissions in 2015,* EPA, 2016. http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgemissions/GHG%201990-2015%20Provisional%20November%202016.pdf
43. See footnote 14.

e-Working of all types is dependent on the widespread availability of broadband. Deployment of the NBP should commence in those areas that have the lowest broadband speeds in the country.

3. e-Working of all types is dependent on the widespread availability of broadband. The evidence cited from rural areas suggests that online participation for work is as prevalent, if not more so, than in urban areas, despite slower and sometimes insufficient broadband speeds in rural areas[44] . This reinforces the need for the universal availability of quality broadband under the Government's forthcoming National Broadband Plan which can deliver more opportunities for e-Working in regional and rural locations. **Deployment should commence in those areas that have the lowest broadband speeds in the country,** for example Mayo, Leitrim and Roscommon are among the five counties with the slowest broadband speeds nationally[45] .

4. The projections for the rate of e-Working vary but all suggest a greater incidence of e-Working. As such **a greater awareness of the rights, regulations and responsibilities of e-Workers and their employers** will be important to ensure benefits are maximised. **Employers' bodies should highlight best practice** and offer support to employers in responding to employee requests as well as instigating company wide policies.

5. It is over fifteen years since e-Work was promoted as a policy objective but with little active promotion and implementation, e-Work is not as widespread as it might be and e-Work has fallen 'between the cracks of various departments of government'[46] . To promote greater take-up, **e-Work needs to be prioritised as a policy objective and a cross departmental approach is required.** Lead departments would include the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Communications, Climate Change and Environment[47] . It should develop an action plan and targets with monitoring and reviews on a regular basis. The group should consider the merits of the UK approach, which has granted the right to request flexible working, including e-Working to all employees. e-Working targets could be included as part of Ireland's sustainable development targets and included in the Action Plan for Jobs, the forthcoming National Planning Framework and subsequent Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies.

e-Work needs to be prioritised as a policy objective and a cross departmental approach is required.

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44. Amárach Research 2016, See footnote 21.
45. http://www.thejournal.ie/broadband-speeds-ireland-3082026-Nov2016/
46. See footnote 18.
47. Other Departments that should have input include the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

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