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Navigating evolving landscape of work: Guide for shop stewards

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about profound changes to the world of work, introducing hybrid models and remote employment. This transformative shift is likely to endure, prompting organisations, especially in the public sector, to embrace new methodologies and technologies whilst safeguarding fairness and efficiency in work practices. Shop stewards will play a crucial role in this transition.

Amidst this transition, significant challenges loom, particularly in the areas of occupational health and safety, compensation for remote work-related injuries, and the growing prevalence of casualised employment. The absence of robust regulatory frameworks leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation and substandard working conditions. Existing legislation such as the *Labour Relations Act*, *Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act*, and *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, broadly define the workplace to encompass remote locations. This recognition entitles remote workers to essential benefits and protections, including compensation for work-related injuries. However, there remains a pressing need for inclusive regulations that specifically address remote work scenarios.

Addressing remote-work challenges: Recommendations

- 1. Consultative processes:** Advocate for the establishment of a consultative framework between employers and unions to collaboratively develop comprehensive policies governing remote work, prioritising health and safety considerations.
- 2. Just and equitable framework:** Push for the implementation of transparent eligibility criteria and fair practices for remote work to uphold service-delivery standards and safeguard employee rights.

- 3. Monitoring and accountability:** Advocate for the establishment of systems that effectively monitor remote-work performance whilst respecting privacy rights and aligning with legal requirements and employee consent.
- 4. Fostering collaboration:** Encourage interdepartmental co-operation to mitigate the potential impact of remote work on overall service delivery and organisational effectiveness.
- 5. Training and guidance:** Promote initiatives that provide adequate training for remote workers on expected conduct, virtual platform usage, and occupational health and safety measures.

Navigating future of work with balance and accountability

The evolving landscape of work post-pandemic demands a balanced approach that embraces flexibility whilst upholding fairness, accountability, and effective service delivery in the public sector. It is imperative for shop stewards to engage actively in policy development and implementation, ensuring that the rights and well-being of workers remain central amidst these transformative changes. Clear policies and collaborative efforts are essential to navigate the challenges and opportunities of remote work in the modern labour landscape.

By advocating for just and equitable frameworks, fostering collaboration, and prioritising training and guidance, shop stewards can play a pivotal role in shaping a positive, sustainable future for remote work.

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Image: Freepik

