Remote workers look to employers for help with soaring energy bills

Work-from-home employees are turning to employers to help pay soaring energy bills, according to a new survey.

Nearly one-in-five remote employees have sought payments toward heating and energy bills, according to research from Belfast law firm O'Reilly Stewart. The situation has intensified as a result of the sharp increase in energy bills as a result of the war against Ukraine and is likely to become more prevalent in the coming months as the cold weather of winter wears on, according to O'Reilly Stewart Commercial Director Seamus McGranaghan.

"The current cost of living crisis is undoubtedly putting financial pressure on people right across society," he said. "Employees working from home are facing higher costs on heating and electricity while businesses are incurring lower costs due to many staff availing of the hybrid working system.

"Staff working from home are calling for support from employers to ensure that they are afforded the same benefits as employees who are working in the office."

Mr McGranaghan said there are a number of options available to employers, including additional salary or bonuses and reimbursing the employee or making a loan to staff. However, these methods can be problematic and can present tax implications for the employee, he said.

"Additional pay and reimbursements will be treated as earnings for tax purposes and there will be no relief or easements available, despite the purpose of this payment. Making a loan appears to be the most tax effective way to assist employees

during this challenging time as there are no tax implications if the loan is capped at less than £10,000.

“Employers can agree repayment with the employee on agreeable terms or they can write the loan off at a later date.”

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