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## **Civil servants told to spend more time in office as working from home scaled back**

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3-4 minutes

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The Government is seeking to have staff in parts of the [Civil Service](#) return more frequently to [the office](#).

The [Department of Social Protection](#) has told staff that from February, personnel will have to spend a minimum of two days per week in the workplace. Staff in senior management grades at principal officer level and above will have to be in the office three days per week at least.

The country's largest public service trade union, [Fórsa](#), has said about 1,000 of its members in the Department of Social Protection would be affected by the proposed changes which it has vowed to fight.

It said up to now staff in the department had to work a minimum of one day per week in the office.

The union last night instructed members in the Department of Social Protection not to follow the new return-to-the-office directive and to continue to work under the arrangements that applied up to now.

The union said some staff in the [Department of Finance](#) had also been instructed to increase the number of office workdays from next week.

Fórsa has also told its members there not to follow the new management directive.

Fórsa said it "would now begin preparation for a protective ballot for industrial action should any members be threatened with disciplinary action for complying with this union instruction".

It is understood that the proposed changes in the Department of Social Protection were first put forward in November and were discussed in detail at a meeting with the union on Monday.

[ [Analysis: Ireland joins global row-back on working-from-home arrangements](#)Opens in new window ]

On Wednesday unions raised the issue of working arrangements at a formal meeting with overall Civil Service management at the [Department of Public Expenditure](#).

The Department of Social Protection did not comment on Thursday night about reductions in the right to [work remotely](#).

The Department of Public Expenditure did not reply to questions submitted earlier this week about the overall review of its existing policy on remote or blended working.

Fórsa deputy general secretary Éamonn Donnelly told union members in the Department of Social Protection on Thursday night they were “now entering into a serious dispute”.

“The particular dispute concerns the unilateral alteration of the blended working policy to the disadvantage of workers, without discussion, analytics or consultation,” Mr Donnelly said.

[ [Top Irish law, accounting and financial firms remain wedded to hybrid work – for now](#)Opens in new window ]

“However, in this instance the behaviour of the Department of Social Protection has significantly broadened the dispute. Quite simply, the Department of Social Protection has set about achieving a deliberate attack on workers’ terms and conditions and has done so without any negotiation with the trade union. No union could or should tolerate such a circumstance.”

Separately on Thursday night, the Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants urged its members “to continue to work the same blended working pattern as previously, until further notice”.

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