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Civil Service Quarterly
SPRING 2022

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Editorial

Deal done on blended working framework

In this spring edition of CSQ we are finally able to bring you news of agreement centrally on a Blended Working Framework for the Civil Service.

This is a really important development arising from a sub-committee of General Council whose aim was to deliver on a central framework which sets out key principles to be captured by individual departments and organisations right across the Civil Service.

It is expected that the Civil Service template will also form the basis for similar policies right across the Public Service.

It was agreed at the conclusion of negotiations that we would separate disagreed issues from the framework agreement to allow the work of departments to commence. This includes the question of flexi-time accrual for blended workers, which DPER want to introduce on a piloted basis.

Their proposal on pilots was unacceptable to the union and, as a result, we referred this specific question to the Civil Service Arbitration Board for determination. At the heart of the issue is the view of the union that flexi-time accrual should be available to its fullest extent from the onset of blended working, albeit it through a pilot process.

We differed with the employer proposals as it sought to introduce different pilots across the Civil Service. We made it clear that such an approach would create much difficulty across our membership, who will expect access to flexi-time and accrual and also that it be applied consistently across the Service.

At the time of writing we await the Arbitration Board findings.

There was also disagreement on the question of expenses, and this matter has been referred back to the review process which will consider the

operation of blended working and the legislative position on the right to apply for remote working. Overall, the bigger prize here is the agreement on blended working which will allow members to carry out their role remotely with regular agreed attendance at the office too, providing the sort of post-pandemic flexibility and work-life balance which is a huge demand.

Separately, we take time out in this edition to recognise the appalling situation in Ukraine following the invasion by Russia. Much has been done by Fórsa to support the international effort and this will continue. Our members in the Civil Service have also answered the call to provide much-needed support to arriving refugees.

Fórsa branches and individual members donated generously to our fund and this was matched by the NEC to bring the fund to a half a million euro. Well done all those involved.

Our thoughts are with all Ukrainians at this time.

Derek Mullen
Editor



News

All civil servants given right to request blended working

All civil servants will have the right to apply for remote or blended working under a new framework agreed between Fórsa and the Department of Public Expenditure and reform (DPER).

Workers will also be able to have the decision reviewed if they are turned down, with a view to resolving the issues that led to the refusal to facilitate remote work.

It's envisaged that the framework, which requires all civil service departments and offices to develop a blended working policy, will provide a template for the roll-out of agreed blended work policies across the entire civil and public service.

Fórsa officials are primed to quickly negotiate a similar framework in the wider public sector.

On Fórsa's insistence, the framework says departmental policies must set out a decision-making process that ensures a consistent approach to assessing applications, and which ensures "fairness across the organisation."

The new policy places a responsibility on managers to ensure a "fair and effective" system with strong supports, staff development, communications, and effective performance management. And there can be no change to a worker's pay and working conditions on the basis that they have blended working arrangements.

It also requires employers to conduct health and safety assessments, which should determine specific risks and outline any information or training needs. And it says employers should provide the necessary equipment to home-workers.

It envisages three-months to six-months of 'initial trials' once an individual is approved for blended working, and says individual remote work arrangements should be regularly reviewed.

The framework insists that customer service, standards and performance "must never be compromised in order to facilitate remote working." An individual's performance standards, timekeeping and attendance will be among the criteria considered when deciding if blended working will be facilitated. If



WORKING IT OUT Fórsa and DPER have now agreed a new framework on blended working

Picture: Roman Bozhko at unsplash

We have achieved a framework that meets virtually all of the union's priorities in developing a fair and transparent approach to remote working within the timeframe set down for these talks

refused, an employee can seek a review of the process. The framework is currently silent on the question of flexitime accrual for those with blended working arrangements. This issue has been referred to arbitration to ensure that the current disagreement between Fórsa and management doesn't hold up implementation of the framework.

Fórsa wants staff to retain the right to accrue flexitime worked up while working at home; however, proposed pilots on flexi

Continued bottom of page 5

Spring 2022 ONLINE CSQ

Blended working policy framework brokered

Derek Mullen

National Secretary, Civil Service Division

Discussions on a blended Working Policy Framework concluded with agreement reached on Tuesday, 8th March.

However one aspect that we couldn't reach agreement on was the question of flexi-time accrual for civil servants availing of these new blended working arrangements.

It was agreed therefore that this matter would be dealt with discretely by referral to the Arbitration Board allowing the framework to be implemented at local level.

The plan being that departments and organisations would develop their own blended working policy enshrining the principles set down in the central framework agreement.

At the same time the Arbitration Board would consider the issues arising from our discussions on flexi-time accrual taking account of the proposals tabled by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) in November 2021 and February 2022.

The Arbitration Board convened quickly and heard the case on 22nd March.

In our submission before the Board we argued against different pilots being introduced across the Civil Service. The management proposal suggested a number of options to be considered by departments, as follows;

Option 1: No flexi-time accrual allowed for employees who have a blended working arrangement (the

Picture: zoutedrop (CC BY 2.0)



current situation);

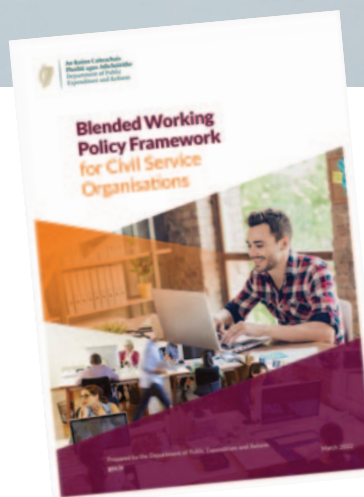
Option 2: Flexi-time accrual to be allowed for all employees in eligible grades, irrespective of work location;

Option 3: Flexi-time accrual to be allowed for all blended working employees in eligible grades while in the office only; and

Option 4: Flexi-time accrual to be allowed for all employees in eligible grades, with a reduced amount of accrual facilitated for employees with a blended working arrangement (e.g. max 1 day rather than 1.5 days).

They believed different options were necessary to test the issue appropriately, including Option 1 where no flexi-time accrual would be possible.

For our part we argued that only one option should be considered – which is Option 2 which would allow flexi-time accrual for all employees in eligible grades, irrespective of work location.



This, we argued, would be in line with the Government's policy statement from July 2021 where they stated that they too wished to support "employee engagement, innovation and productivity by providing options for additional flexibility, alongside the suite of other flexible working options the Civil Service currently provides (e.g. Shorter Working Year, Career

Breaks, Work-sharing, etc.), and by offering options for reduced commutes, more affordable housing choices and improved wellbeing for all employees".

It should be noted too that when one-and-a-half day's flexi-leave accrual was reintroduced under the Lansdowne Road Agreement, it was on the basis of a consistent Civil Service-wide pilot, from which no issues arose.

We also advised the Board that the original e-working agreement in the Civil Service did not preclude flexi-time or flexi-leave accrual.

In conclusion, we countered management's argument about possible operational issues arising, something we didn't expect and we challenged them as to whether the real concern was one of trust more than anything else.

At the point of writing the outcome from the Arbitration Board is imminent.

Right to blended working...

From page 4

accrual were not acceptable and the matter went to the Arbitration Board on 22nd March.

There is no change in flexitime accrual arrangements for staff attending workplaces.

The union decided not to seek arbitration on the issue of a home-working allowance as the potential cost implications mean such an arbitration referral was certain to stall implementation of the framework for some time.

DPER is adamant that it won't agree to pay an allowance for remote working. Instead, the

policy refers staff to the recently-enhanced tax reliefs available on energy, heating and Wi-Fi costs. Fórsa says it will continue to seek the payment of an allowance in future talks.

The head of the union's Civil Service Division, Derek Mullen, led the union side in the negotiations that led to the agreed framework.

He told CSQ: "We have achieved a framework that meets virtually all of the union's priorities in developing a fair and transparent approach to remote working within the timeframe set down for these talks.

"It means we can now quickly roll out blended working arrangements in the civil service and, indeed, the wider public service.

"The experience of remote working during the Covid-19 emergency has demonstrated that many roles can be carried out remotely in ways that are productive, cost-effective and attractive to employers and their staff."

Mullen added: "It's now over a year since the Government published its national remote working strategy, which said remote working would become the norm for 20% of public sector staff. As the biggest employer in the State, the public service must continue to take a leading role in making remote and blended work part of post-Covid working life."

● Read the framework document at: <https://bit.ly/3NUu4KH>

Overview

Blended Working in the Civil Service

Derek Mullen

National Secretary, Civil Service Division

The term 'blended working' refers to a combination of working from the employer's work premises and working remotely. There are a number of drivers for the introduction of blended working across the Civil Service. These include supporting government policies and commitments as set out in the Programme for Government.

They also include supporting the *Civil Service Renewal 2030* strategy by ensuring the Civil Service remains an employer of choice, promoting a diverse, innovative and progressive work environment that offers flexibility and values work-life balance.

The Government has mandated public sector employers to move to 20% remote working. The Civil Service will demonstrate leadership in moving proactively to this new blended working environment with a view to achieving at least 20% initially, in line with government commitments.

The move to blended working also supports commitments contained in the *National Remote Working Strategy*, *Our Rural Future*, the *Climate Action Plan*, and the *National Planning Framework*.

Now that the Blended Working Framework for the Civil Service has been agreed, departments, organisations and the wider public sector will introduce their own policies based on five key principles. These include:

- Supporting the business needs of the organisation and ensuring maintenance of the required level of service quality, team performance and team collaboration. This takes into account operational issues as well as organisational costs, which obviously have an input into the extent of blended working arrangements available in the organisation.

- Factors mitigating against blended working will include the need to access particular technologies, equipment, or data only available or accessible on-site as well as the requirement for customer-facing service delivery at the employer premises.

Any job involving a high degree of manual work or tasks that must be provided on-site, or are more efficiently provided on-site, is unlikely to be suited to blended working.

The other key principles include:

- The support of senior leadership through championing a culture of flexibility, agility, trust, and innovation is critical to ensuring the success of blended working. Leaders and managers should actively encourage and facilitate blended working where it is deemed practical, and they should participate where possible in advocating for blended working as the new norm as well as in assisting with embedding this organisational change.

Picture: Kelly Sikkema at unsplash



The Civil Service will demonstrate leadership in moving proactively to this new blended working environment with a view to achieving at least 20% initially, in line with government commitments

- Being an 'employer of choice' is also an ambition and key principle of this forward-looking policy, as it is stated that the Civil Service "continues to be an inclusive and progressive employer that is responsive to the needs and preferences of its workforce through its employment policies and practices..."

The benefits of blended working include the potential to attract a diverse, high-quality pool of talent, offering fulfilling and rewarding roles with opportunities for development and career progression.

Importantly, it states that the introduction of blended working will not reduce the availability of current flexible working options.

In the interests of transparency and consistency, the policy also states that no employee can have automatic access to a blended working arrangement on the basis that

they have previously worked remotely.

However, to ensure fairness and equity to all employees on an ongoing basis, blended working will not be indefinitely guaranteed to any employee, as rotating may be required in order to support business needs, employee mobility and career development.

Under the Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of their employees. This applies regardless of where the work is being carried out, whether it is at the employer's premises, a hub or shared work-space, or at the employee's home.

Employers need to consult with their employees to assure themselves that the employee's workstation and equipment are suitable for their work, to determine if there are any specific risks regarding working from home and to provide any information, training or instruction required.

The employer must arrange for a risk assessment, including an assessment of equipment and ergonomics, to be carried out. The employer must take appropriate protective and preventative measures following on from that risk assessment, including following up to ensure the necessary amendments have been made to mitigate any identified risks.

All applications for blended working arrangements will be set out for staff shortly on foot of the development of bespoke departmental plan. The application process will be handled by the NSSO.

Criteria for assessing employee suitability is set out in the policy and includes, but is not limited to:

- Confirmation that performance standards and delivery of results have been achieved using defined metrics/deliverables, as appropriate, that satisfies the requirement for blended working;

- Satisfactory performance including PMDS/Probation;

- Satisfactory compliance with time and attendance policy and procedures; and

- The person wanting to be considered for blended working arrangements is not subject to an ongoing disciplinary process or hold a live record of disciplinary action on file.

In cases of refusal, all employees are entitled to have their cases reviewed by specially appointed appeals officers, who following an informal discussion, can refer the matter for formal review within 10 days. Within this time, it will be possible for the review officer to affirm the decision, recommend that the original decision be reconsidered, or make other recommendations.

The new policy will also be the subject of review taking account of its early operation and also the development of national legislation. The review process will return to the question of the payment of expenses, as agreement could not be reached on this during discussions.

Separately in this edition of CSQ (see page 5) we will set out the issues and outcome in the flexi leave accrual case which went to Arbitration.

Unions' outrage at invasion

Mehak Dugal

Communications Dept, Fórsa

The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), which represents Fórsa and other unions with a collective membership of more than 20 million, has condemned Russia's onslaught on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms and called for the immediate withdrawal of its invading forces.

On 2nd March, Fórsa General Secretary Kevin Callinan joined an online call with leaders of Ukrainian trade unions to hear for himself first-hand reports of the situation on the ground and to learn how best the union could provide practical support.

In the weeks that followed, Fórsa members and branches responded to a union appeal for funds by digging deep to raise an amazing half a million euro in an superlative display of solidarity (See page 8).

Ukrainian trade unions have been working to provide food and shelter to people following the Russian invasion amid attacks that have left people's homes trashed as well as workplaces and infrastructure badly damaged.

The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPSU) and



DEADLY Destroyed tanks & APCs attest to the ferocity of the fighting in Bucha

Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) trade unions, which represent almost five million workers, have thrown open the doors of their offices and buildings across the country to people seeking refuge, including women and their children, elderly people and those wounded in the conflict.

Ukrainian trade unions are doing everything they can to contribute to efforts to protect people, peace and democracy and the European trade union movement is providing all the practical and political support it

can. According to the latest UN estimates, a staggering 10 million people are already thought to have fled their homes in Ukraine because of the invasion.

European Trade Union Confederation General Secretary Luca Visentini pointed out that war "hits people and workers first," and called for democracy to be re-established immediately.

He said: "Europe must stand strong against Putin's aggression and put maximum pressure on his regime, and entourage in particular, to bring about peace and dialogue."

"We cannot allow policy to be shaped by violence, and we expect world and EU leaders to protect Ukraine's integrity as well as the security of all other countries in the region."

"Solidarity is at the core of trade unionism and our brothers and sisters in Ukraine are showing that's not just a slogan by putting their lives at risk every day to care for the most vulnerable victims of this invasion. We urge working people who can support their humanitarian efforts to do so."

ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow said: "We mourn for those who have lost their lives and offer our deepest condolences and solidarity to those who have lost loved ones or been injured."

"The imposition of sanctions by governments which support democracy and the rule of law is both inevitable and justified and should focus particularly on the entourage of President Putin who is leading Russia down this destructive path and threatening peace in Europe and the world."

ITUC has called for world leaders to take urgent and definitive steps to initiate dialogue and find a peaceful solution to this crisis in line with the charter of the United Nations.

Picture: mvs.gov.ua (CC BY 4.0)

Justice and DSP act to help war refugees

Derek Mullen

National Secretary, Civil Service Division

The war in Ukraine is leading to the displacement of large numbers of civilians who are arriving in countries across Europe, including Ireland. The Government's plan to assist this vulnerable group of people is being led and co-ordinated by the Department of Justice and will involve DSP in the critical role of income supports.

Our members from Justice and DSP are operating in support positions at ports and airports across Ireland and in recently-established Ukraine Support Centres in Cork, Dublin and Limerick.

DSP has indicated that contingency plans are being put in place to deal with what is expected to be a large number of arrivals. The department has also advised that those arriving from Ukraine can avail of income supports under the EU Temporary Protection Directive.

We understand that immediate priorities will include allocating Personal Public Service Numbers (PPSNs) and providing immediate income supports. A fast-track approach to processing these payments has been supported. While Fórsa will do all in its power to deliver these services, we have raised urgent issues with the Department to ensure that we protect the role and functions of CWOs in this process.



Picture: Catholic Church in England and Wales (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

News

Half a million euro raised in Fórsa's Ukraine appeal

The Fórsa Ukraine Appeal has raised half a million euro – TEN TIMES the original target – in an amazing display of solidarity from members and branches of the union.

In a 28th March email to members, General Secretary Kevin Callinan spoke of his "immense gratitude" to those who had responded so generously to the appeal, launched at the

start of March as the crisis unfolded in Ukraine. The appeal, which ran for three weeks across the union from 3rd to 23rd March, raised close to €250,000 in donations from almost 2,000 individual Fórsa members and more than 100 branches.

The Fórsa National Executive Committee, meeting on 23rd March, agreed to increase

that figure with monies from the Developing World Fund, bringing the total raised to €500,000.

In his email, Callinan pointed out that the proceeds would be shared equally between the Irish Red Cross and a special trade union solidarity fund jointly set up by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Each of these appeals are currently supporting humanitarian efforts on the ground.

He continued: "If you recall, our original target was €50,000, but the solidarity and generosity of our members and branches exceeded expectations. This unbelievable response from Fórsa members echoes the generosity and support for the Ukrainian people coming from all walks of Irish society."

"It's humbling to see such a magnificent display of solidarity from ordinary working people as we remember those who have died, those who are grieving, and those who have lost everything because of this terrible war and illegal invasion."

Though the appeal has officially closed, those branches that haven't yet made a donation and wish to do so can request the relevant details from appeal co-ordinator Linda Kelly by emailing her at lkelly@forsa.ie

Branches who have already pledged a donation are asked to transfer funds as soon as possible.



BOMB SITE Ukrainian emergency worker surveys a scene of utter devastation after a Russian attack in a Kyiv suburb

Picture: Oleksandr Ratushniak / UNDP Ukraine (CC BY-ND 2.0)



SOLIDARITY ICTU President Kevin Callinan, Ukrainian Ambassador Larysa Gerasko and ICTU General Secretary Patricia King at the rally

Fórsa members joined other trade unionists and citizens in a rally outside the Russian Embassy in Rathgar, Dublin, on 24th March. Hundreds attended the ICTU-organised Stand with Ukraine protest on Orwell Road to mark a month since the invasion. Many thousands have died in street fighting and shelling since Vladimir Putin ordered his forces to cross the Ukrainian border on 24th February. Ukraine's Ambassador to Ireland Larysa Gerasko, Fórsa General Secretary and Congress President Kevin Callinan along with other representatives of the Ukrainian community addressed the protest.



Pictures: Maxwells/ICTU
Spring 2022 ONLINE CSQ

Amid surging inflation unions seek review of public service agreement

Bernard Harbor

Head of Communications, Fórsa

Unions have formally triggered a review clause in the *Building Momentum* public service agreement allowing for a process of re-engagement with the State over the terms of the deal, which runs until the end of this year.

Speaking before the decision was taken, Fórsa General Secretary Kevin Callinan, who chairs ICTU's Public Services Committee (PSC), claimed sustained high inflation and strong public finances were grounds for a review of the agreement's pay terms, which will see maximum pay increases of just 1.2% in 2022.

Clause 5.7 of *Building Momentum* states that the agreement's pay terms cannot be revisited during the lifetime of the deal unless "the assumptions underlying this agreement need to be revisited." It sets out how under such circumstances both parties must re-engage.

Kevin Callinan made his comments in advance of the AGM of the PSC, which represents almost all public servants in the State. He said assumptions underpinning the agreement clearly had to be revisited in view of soaring inflation.

"The CSO [has] reported that, at 5.6% for the year to February, inflation is at its highest level for 21 years. It's also clear that the cost



Picture: Marco Verch (CC BY 2.0)



of living is on an upward trajectory, despite earlier hopes that prices would stabilise and fall.

There was no assumption of the high and sustained cost-of-living increases in play when the agreement was negotiated in late 2020. "Meanwhile, the public finances are in surplus, and both the unemployment rate and the projected deficit are much lower than anticipated at the time *Building Momentum* was negotiated and accepted by public servants in ballots."

He continued: "Well over a month ago, on 3rd February, I raised these issues in the Labour-Employer Economic Forum (LEEF), which brings together the most senior Government,

union and employer representatives. I identified three urgent actions - including a confirmation that talks on a successor to *Building Momentum* would open in May - which are required to stabilise the agreement against the background of these radically-changed economic circumstances.

"In the absence of any concrete movement on these necessary actions since then, and with the cost of living continuing to soar, it's time to trigger the *Building Momentum* review clause," Callinan added.



TRIGGER CLAUSE
GS Kevin Callinan

Grades opt to convert sectoral bargaining clause into 1% rise

All grades in general service, service and professional and technical roles opted to convert the sectoral bargaining clause of *Building Momentum* into a 1% general round increase.

While there are a number of pay claims among our professional and technical grades, we could not find agreement on the estab-

lishment of an appropriate bargaining group that would be of the scale necessary to settle departmental claims.

Outstanding business will have to be addressed as part of any discussions on a successor agreement. This includes a review of pay for conservation rangers, pay parity for solicitors in the Le-

gal Aid Board and jump increments for statisticians in the CSO to name some.

Removed

Jump increment issues also arise elsewhere, including the Met service. They existed for reasons to do with recruitment and retention. However, they were generally

unilaterally removed during the austerity cuts. The union has been working hard since to seek their restoration.

Branches have also been advised that the union will progress matters in line with the National Agreement, utilising third party dispute resolution where necessary.

Adjudicator appointed

Following months of discussion it has been agreed to appoint Tom Clarke as Civil Service Adjudicator under the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme. Dan Murphy will also continue for a further year primarily with the Education Council.

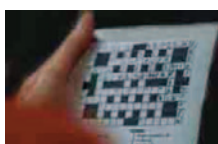
Outsourcing review

A review of outsourcing in the Civil Service is under way and includes our thinking on the return of previously outsourced work, including that of service grades, LPT helpline in Revenue, and other telephone

helplines in departments such as DSP. National Secretary Derek Mullen told CSQ: "The union is committed to using all of the protections as set down in national agreements to secure the work of our membership."

Local Property Tax

LPT



CSQ Crossword

Test your wits. See page 20

GENERAL COUNCIL UPDATE

By **Derek Mullen**



The General Council is the main industrial relations forum for Civil Service unions, comprising mainly of senior, elected and full-time officials from Fórsa and other unions as well as senior officials from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). The Council is established under the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme. The Committee meets every month to consider claims from the union or management side and ongoing policy matters that affect the terms and conditions of civil servants.

Talks continue over transfer of Conciliation & Arbitration scheme

Discussions continue at a General Council sub-committee over the transition of the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme to the state industrial relations machinery.

Talks on the transition had been delayed by the onset and progress of the Covid-19 pandemic; however, we are now dealing with a range of specific issues.

These include any further legislative requirements and the drafting of an internal dispute resolution mechanism for the Civil Service. This will incorporate those aspects of the current scheme – including General and Departmental Councils – which should be retained.



Illustration: Luann Hunt at Unsplash

Parental leave claim

A claim seeking the extension of the age limit within which a parent can avail of parental leave is currently before the General Council. At present parental leave is only available up to the child's 13th birthday. This claim seeks an adjustment to the 15th birthday.

Another claim before the Council is asking for the introduction of a flexi-time credit to allow civil servants to attend Irish Blood Transfusion Service clinics to donate blood.

A number of other claims are also under consideration; however, they run foul of the cost-increasing clauses contained in the national agreement.

Annual Leave

The 2003 Annual Leave circular is to be reviewed over the second quarter of 2022. This review will consider such issues as the three-year cycle and annual leave year alignment.

Against the backdrop of the pandemic, issues arose over the taking of leave. However, as we entered 2022, a request for a third rollover for those in the third year of the cycle was refused. The only latitude being given was the provision at a local level to allow some carryover to be taken during a specific timescale.

Fórsa concerns over policing bill

Fórsa represents some 2,000 civil servants in An Garda Síochána including clerical, admin, technical and services grades.

We welcomed an opportunity in early 2022 to make a submission to the Dáil Oireachtas sub-committee on Justice setting out our concerns over the implications over proposals contained in the policing bill.

The Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill comes out of the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (COFPI).

Published on 18th September, 2018, the COFPI report went some way in identifying shortcomings in the Garda Síochána organisation. This draft heads of the bill has been put together with the intention of moving towards implementing the

COFPI recommendations, and to enable "an Act to make further and better provision in relation to An Garda Síochána".

Our first concern at the publication of the general scheme centres on the fact that absolutely no consultation whatsoever took place with our union which represents those staff most impacted by this proposed legislation.

In publishing the bill, the Minister stated that "the scheme reflects enormous work by a dedicated team in my department who engaged extensively with key stakeholders including all government departments, An Garda Síochána and the policing oversight bodies".

It is deeply concerning to Fórsa that the thousands of staff who will be impacted by the proposed reforms were

apparently not deemed to be "key stakeholders" by the Government in this process.

Secondly, the heads of bill of the Policing, Security & Community Safety Bill as published raise two significant issues of concern for Fórsa and its members. If enacted, this bill would effectively strip our civilian members in An Garda Síochána of their civil service employee status, resulting in civilian staff becoming direct employees of An Garda Síochána.

This bill, if enacted, would also allow civilian staff to come under the remit of a new policing complaints body that will replace GSOC.

Effectively, what this means is that civilian staff would be subject to the same rigors of any complaints procedure as a uniformed Garda with sworn powers.

Mobility in the Civil Service

Following the completion of Mobility schemes for general service grades represented by Fórsa, the union is now finalising an important addition to this scheme. This will see professional and technical posts having access to a mobility scheme for the first time.

As CSQ goes to press, the final details are being ironed out and we expect this latest addition to the scheme to be in operation shortly.

Pension issues

A number of issues are under discussion over the pensionability of allowances. These include the calculation of Sunday premium in pensions and while a proposal has been received to ensure its inclusion from a current date, we are still addressing the question of retrospective allocation.

Automation

The use of robotics and automation is a key component of the digital agenda across the public services. An impact report provides a

series of case studies that identify the very material quantitative and qualitative benefits realised over the last 24 months.

These include areas as diverse as: Covid-19 test reporting in the HSE and automation of the Garda Vetting Matching Process in Health Business Services; automation of job seekers' requests and Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) arrears communications in the Department of Social Protection; automating pensions processes in the Department of Education and Skills; and automating PAYE and Customs processes in the Revenue Commissioners.

The impact report outlines how through these and other projects thousands of hours have been saved, as well as highlighting other benefits such as the delivery of improved timeliness, quality and accuracy.

However, Fórsa has made it clear that continuing cooperation depends on adhering to the general principles we have set out, including that such new technologies are not used to drive job losses in the public service.

A root and branch approach

New Fórsa branch seeks input from members in OGP and OGCI

Fórsa's newest civil service branch is looking for clerical officers to be co-opted onto the branch committee. The new branch is also seeking input from members in the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) and Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) at all grades to come on board.

The new branch brings together clerical officer and executive grades (EO, HEO, AO) and equivalent in the OGP, OGCI, Ombudsman's office, DPER and Department of Finance.

Fórsa Assistant General Secretary Pat Ennis said the new branch was established to reflect changes in employer structures and the union branches that previously covered the area.

"One of the biggest changes was that the National Shared Services Office was moved out of DPER and was established as a separate large entity. Members there formed a new branch. Separately, the Finance and DPER executive branch had become dormant," he told CSQ. The new branch – named Finance, PER and Associated Organisations – was formed at an EGM in November and held its first annual general meeting earlier this year.

Branch Chairperson Cathal Kelly said branch representatives had since represented members at meetings of departmental councils

in DPER, Finance, and the Ombudsman's office

"We have also been consulted by HR in the three employers on issues like draft notices of competitions, and have had the chance to give feedback before they are issued to staff when we spotted something that we felt should be changed," he said.

Branch Secretary Sheena Tuite said the branch committee did not yet include Fórsa members who work in the OGP or OGCI.

"This is a particular problem in the OGP because it has its own departmental sub-council, and our branch committee members employed in the other offices and



AGS Pat Ennis

departments do not ordinarily attend the OGP departmental council to advise our official or represent our colleagues on the issues discussed at it," she said.

Fórsa members in the OGCI can currently be represented at the DPER departmental council by the branch representatives employed by DPER, but this may change down the road. "It would be great to have committee members from the OGCI because they are best placed to identify and address the issues facing staff in their own workplace," said Sheena.

To ensure good representation across the grades and offices, members of the branch who are COs or who are in the OGP or OGCI, and who are willing to assist the branch committee or are open to being co-opted onto it are asked to contact Pat Ennis by email at patennis@forsa.ie

In addition, any members of the new branch who did not get the notices for the EGM or AGM can contact Monica Rooney at mrooney@forsa.ie to get their contact details added to the branch committee's mailing list.



Oifig um
Sholáthar Rialtais
Office of Government
Procurement

'It would be great to have committee members from the OGCI because they are best placed to identify and address the issues facing staff in their own workplace'

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Industrial News Fórsa Legal Professionals

Office of the Chief State Solicitor

Time recording move is referred to adjudication

Following an attempt to introduce formal time recording for all staff in the CSSO in 2022, Fórsa referred the CSSO to adjudication under Section 1.24 of the Croke Park Agreement.

Specifically, Fórsa noted that once formal time recording is introduced, there will need to be mechanisms put in place to compensate staff for additional attendances as, at present, there are no such mechanisms other than by local arrangement.

When this issue was raised with management, they suggested that legal professionals were not an overtime grade and that it was understood that exceptional additional attendance was already factored into their attendance.

The union noted, however, that in reality, staff undertook additional attendance regularly rather than exceptionally and any attempt to formalise time recording would have to include a mechanism to compensate additional attendance.



Picture: Dineshraj Goomany (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Following the submission of a statement of case for adjudication, however, Fórsa has learned that the CSSO has written to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) to advise them that they are not agreeable to the referral to a third party and have, effectively withdrawn from the case.

The union sees this as a blatant and absolute breach of the national agreements and has written to the national agreement oversight body to cite the CSSO for a breach of the agreement clauses committing all sides to engage in dispute resolution mechanisms.

This is a highly unusual course of action for the union to take, but it is necessary given the clear breach of the national agreements by the CSSO.

'Full inclusion' call over Smithfield office move

The CSSO will move from its current locations to a new building in Smithfield over the course of 2022/2023. For a number of years, Fórsa has called for full inclusion in the move management process, a request that we understood to be both routine and non-confrontational.

The union was therefore baffled when the project board was announced without an expression of interest for members of staff to participate on the board. Furthermore, only a single place was offered on the board to represent all union members.

The union queried this practice and insisted on at least three positions, one for each of the grade streams in the CSSO, on the board. This has been refused. As a result, the union intends to seek to refer the matter to conciliation.

PRAI

Talks on return to work and blended working

Fórsa, together with the AHCPs, has engaged in a productive conciliation conference with Property Registration Authority of Ireland (PRAI) management on the issue of return to work and the roll out of blended working.

The conciliator, Joe McDermott, was appointed to try to facilitate an understanding between staff and management sides over the formal end of Covid-related remote working and the introduction of a more permanent scheme. It is clear, however, that continuous engagement will be needed over the coming months and years in order to carve out spaces for blended working given the nature of the work and records involved.

DPP

IR structure sought

Fórsa has asked for the setting up of a Departmental Council structure in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The DPP has no formal structure for industrial relations matters, although traditionally issues were resolved bilaterally. However, the introduction of policies that impact the entire office, such as blended working, and the inappropriateness of partnership avenues to decide on such matters has led local reps to seek the setting up of a more formal IR engagement forum. A response is awaited from management.



Slava Ukraini...
€5k donated to
Fórsa's Ukraine
Appeal at AGM

At the recent Fórsa Legal Professionals AGM, the attendees agreed to make a donation of €5,000 to the Fórsa Ukraine Appeal. This significant donation added to the overall amount of €500,000 raised for the appeal during March. The money collected will be split between the Irish Red Cross and a separate Ukraine fund established by the international trade union organisations ITUC and EPSU.

Picture: Ahmed Zalabany at Unsplash

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Legal Aid Board

'Pay scales inequity' at LAB highlighted by Fórsa

Fórsa is continuing to highlight a number of pay inequality issues relating to legal professionals working in the Legal Aid Board (LAB).

In particular, Fórsa has drawn attention to the inequity of the LAB pay scales, the normal max point of which is some €21,000 less than the pay scales for legal professionals working elsewhere in the civil service.

There is an additional difficulty relating to starting pay as, unlike in the DPP and CSSO, the LAB has been given no leeway to start par-



Legal Aid Board
An Bord Um Chúnamh Dílíthiúil

ticularly-suited candidates on higher pay points. Fórsa has highlighted these inequities in the recently-established Departmental Council structure and is seeking a national platform to raise the issues centrally.

Case lodged at CSAB over Legal SO grade

Fórsa has lodged a case with the Civil Service Arbitration Board to seek to have the grade of Legal Staff Officer tethered to the Executive Officer pay grade.

At present, it is tethered to the now-defunct Staff Officer pay grade.

The general service SO pay grade was amalgamated with the EO pay grade in 2017, bringing all general service SOs up to the EO pay scale.

Fórsa has argued that it makes no sense for professional and technical staff who were historically tied to the SO pay grades not to benefit in the same manner. A hearing date is awaited.

Department of Foreign Affairs

CSAB ruling awaited after pitch on ALA pay

Fórsa presented a case to the Civil Service Arbitration Board on behalf of the Assistant Legal Advisor grades in the Department of Foreign Affairs. In particular, Fórsa is keen to seek to restore the traditional pay parity

between the ALA and AP grades in the department, a link that Fórsa believes was mistakenly broken during the austerity years. A ruling from the arbitration board is awaited.

Department of Social Protection

**DSP resumes full public hours**

Roísín McKane

Communications Dept, Fórsa

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) has restored normal public opening hours for walk-in services in Intreo centres (ICs), following substantial union engagement. Normal public hours have resumed on a phased basis, with services expected to be fully operational over the coming weeks.

Fórsa official Paul MacSweeney explained that the resumption of services began last month. "Large ICs opened for walk-in customers each afternoon from 7th February, with medium ICs opening from 14th February. Smaller ICs began their phased opening to the public from 21st February," he said.

Stressing the need for DSP to ensure adequate staffing levels in ICs to facilitate normal opening, he added: "Fórsa has sought this. Adequate staffing levels must be maintained to ensure the resumption of services."

NICC

Fórsa meets with management to discuss 50/50 split work proposal

Fórsa met with NICC management on 28th March to discuss the proposal that 50% of staff time is spent answering phone calls on the NICC helpline, while the remaining 50% is allocated to other duties.

Management have approached IT with a view to developing a web chat facility, which would offer customers NICC services online.

Such a development would support our claim, as NICC staff could then answer customers' queries online. At present though, DEASP support for Ukrainian refugees is being prioritised, so it is unlikely such a 50/50 split in duties will be achieved until the summer.

Fórsa has asked for another meeting with management in May and will be seeking an update on

the issue. Meanwhile, Fórsa also raised the matter of insufficient time being allocated for staff training. Management said they would rectify this.

Fórsa has not agreed to any 'targets' in relation to phone calls answered in a day, and management accept that the number of calls answered in any given day can vary. Management also told the

union that the contract with Abtran has ceased, and training will be offered in-house from now on.

While welcoming this update, Fórsa noted that consultation should have taken place before training was outsourced.

The union has also requested staff sick leave statistics at the NICC, as the health and wellbeing of members remains a priority.

Union seeks extension of gender pay gap law



Picture: Marco Verch Professional Photographer (CC BY 2.0)

Mehak Dugal

Communications Dept, Fórsa

Fórsa has welcomed the Government's announcement that, later this year, it will introduce an obligation on medium and large employers to report on their gender pay gaps. But the union said it wants a quick expansion of the number of companies covered by the new law.

Initially, the gender pay gap reporting requirement will be limited to organisations with more than 250 employees. This only covers a third of the workforce.

Fórsa says it's imperative that the threshold rapidly falls to 50 employees once the details of the reporting process are worked out.

The Government announcement, which coincided with International Women's Day on 8th March, said that the employers covered must report the pay gap among staff on a 'snapshot' date in June 2022 and on the same day in December 2022.

They will also have to publish a statement setting out the reasons for the gender pay gap

in their company, and the measures they are taking to address it.

The Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 introduced the legislative basis for gender pay gap reporting, and regulations under the Act are expected to be published in the coming weeks.

Fórsa has been calling for effective legislation on gender pay gap reporting since 2018. The union says it's a mechanism to encourage employers into tangible action to bridge the gap. Ireland currently has an average gender pay gap of around 14.4%.

Initially, the gender pay gap reporting requirement will be limited to organisations with more than 250 employees. This only covers a third of the workforce

National Secretary Ashley Connolly, who leads Fórsa's Equality Committee, said she was pleased to see that regulations would give employers a duty to publish the measures they are taking to close the pay gap. "This would give Fórsa and other unions an opportunity to negotiate actions to address pay inequality," she told CSQ.

The reporting requires employers to publish data by pay band and job classification, as well as giving data on bonus pay, the pay gaps for part-time employees and temps, and the proportions of male and female employees in various pay bands.

ICTU Equality Officer David Joyce said that, once the reports are published, employers must discuss the gap with workers and their representatives and agree on a joint approach to tackling any gaps identified in an effective manner.



NS Ashley Connolly

Office of Public Works

AEHS branch members OK engagement

Members of the AEHS Branch at the OPW have given their approval to engage with OPW HR department to conduct a review and revision of General (Conciliation) Council Report 1539. General Council Report 1539 deals with the sequence for filling posts for professional and technical-equivalent posts

through confined and open competitions.

Branch Executive Chairperson Andrew Davies along with Treasurer and DEC member Michael Carroll and AGS Pat Ennis recently met with management to finalise the review's terms of reference, which are to be brought before the branch for approval.

The review will then start without delay and a report containing recommendations will be submitted within a defined time frame.



AGS Pat Ennis

Annual leave and Xmas office closure

In recent years agreement has been reached locally (on a non-precedent setting basis) to close the OPW offices over Christmas period.

This followed the results of a 2018 OPW management survey of all staff. At that time, most respondents indicated a preference to close the offices and avail of annual leave over the relevant three days.

While office closures over the festive period have been favourably received by many staff, the decision remains fundamentally unsuitable to several of our members.

They find it hard to reconcile the fact that they have worked effectively and efficiently

in a remote context since March 2020 and are now being compelled to take up to three days of valuable annual leave at Christmas time.

Management has agreed to conduct a joint survey with Fórsa of all staff with the hope of obtaining an up-to-date, evidenced-based staff perspective on this issue.

It had been decided to park the survey until the completion of blended working negotiations.

It is hoped that the survey, when it is put to staff over the next few weeks, will identify options for a consensus-based and sustainable solution going forward.

Picture: Lissa Padilla (CC BY 2.0)



TIME OFF Xmas closures do not suit all OPW staff

Shortlisting promotion competitions for general grades

Fórsa is currently engaged with local HR in a review of the draft short-listing policy for competitions for all general grades. The current pilot policy has operated for the last 18 months.

A review meeting took place last December with an exchange of views and information between the two sides. The Staff Panel is currently finalising a submission setting out our issues with the draft policy. In this submission Fórsa are seeking the following:

- Candidates to be informed of the number of vacancies;
- Where the vacancies are;
- Envisaged size of the panel;
- That panels be set up and in place pending vacancies;
- Greater clarity as to what triggers activation of the policy;
- That short-listing should only be carried out by those forming part of the interview board; and



OPW

Oifig na
nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works

- That no shortlisting should take place where candidate numbers are small. Where numbers are below a certain level, everyone who passes the baseline competency should receive an interview.

Fórsa has also highlighted the overall importance of training. The union's main criticism is that training needs to be more scenario/role-based with staff having a realistic scope or opportunity to avail of it.

Appeals process

If an appeal is submitted properly and within the prescribed time

frame it must be dealt with speedily. If the appellant is subsequently successful they must be returned to compete in the competition.

Review provision

We have asked that the policy remains a 'live' document and open to changes proposed by either side throughout the conciliation process.

This submission will be forwarded to Human Resources within the next couple of weeks, following which we propose a meeting with a view to obtaining consensus on the document.

Draft report on Review of Property Maintenance

Fórsa has been given the final draft of the report on the OPW's Review of Property Maintenance.

The union had been seeking this for months after concerns had been raised by some members that there were moves to implement recommendations without appropriate consultation.

Fórsa is engaging with management on the report, while those members affected are considering its contents and collating issues and concerns.

Once this has been done, the union hopes to schedule an early meeting with HR and Property Maintenance management to clarify and address any concerns.



Picture: Julie Mulliver at unsplash

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Forum report submitted to Ceann Comhairle

The Forum on a Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament's report was submitted to the Ceann Comhairle last November. The report contains several recommendations which, if implemented, will improve many members' work-life balance.

Since its publication the staff panel have been collating feedback from union members for a joint union response to the report.

From the perspective of Fórsa members, Recommendation 13 deals with reducing long, late and unpredictable sitting weeks. It states: "with immediate effect, members and political parties and groups are to facilitate appropriate flexible working and remote working arrangements for their staff to address the long sitting hours, until other recommendations to eradicate long hours have been implemented."

Recommendation 10 also states: "Houses of the Oireachtas Service to address areas where staff are working very long, late and unpredictable hours to serve sittings. This could include additional staff, the use of rosters, and/or role re-design."

Recommendation 11 further states: "By March 2022, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service to promote and facilitate flexible remote and hybrid working arrangements for civil service staff, when appropriate and in line with Department of Public



RECEIVED REPORT Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghaíl. Committee room (below)



Expenditure and Reform (DPER) guidelines."

Other Forum recommendations include:

- With immediate effect, Oireachtas Committees are to adhere to meeting time-slots.
- By end 2021, both Houses

to assert a strong commitment to family-friendly practices/sittings in the Standing Orders. Standing Orders to be gender-proofed at every revision.

- By January 2022, Dáil Éireann to adhere to the time of adjournment set out in the

Standing Orders. Where additional business is added to the Dáil schedule, other business is to be postponed to another sitting day.

- By September 2022, Dáil, Seanad and Committees are each to publish a sitting calendar for the year, where recess weeks are aligned with school holidays at Easter, Halloween and Christmas, as set out in Department of Education circulars.

- By September 2022, Seanad to establish adjournment times for sitting days in the Standing Orders and introduce a voting block to be taken in the afternoon of a sitting day.

- By September 2022, Dáil voting block to be moved within the weekly schedule, so that it is taken in the afternoon.

- During the 33rd Dáil, assess the feasibility of introducing a fortnightly or monthly schedule for Dáil, Seanad and Committees. Dáil Business Committee currently sets out the schedule on a weekly basis.

- During the 33rd Dáil, establish an appropriate system for managing the timetabling of Government Bills.

- Houses of the Oireachtas Service to develop and promote a 'right to disconnect' policy asking members and staff to avoid sending non-urgent emails or making calls to colleagues at certain times of the day or at weekends (for example between 7pm and 8am on weekdays).

DETE

Civil service status retained

The passing into law of the Companies Act 2021 provided for the setting up of the Corporate Enforcement Authority (CEA).

The CEA will replace and assume the following responsibilities of the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE): advocacy, enforcement, insolvency, corporate services and customer services.

Staff from the ODCE who are civil servants attached to the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Employment will transfer to the new entity of the CEA when it is set up. The staff will retain their status as civil servants with all associated terms and conditions.

Fórsa is engaged with the head of governance and support operations at the CEA with a view to setting up appropriate industrial relations structures with the Authority.

Forensic Science Ireland

New grade agreed in FSI

For a number of years, the union has sought to create career progression options for analysts working in Forensic Science Ireland.

Currently, an analyst must decide to become a forensic scientist if they wish to seek career progression.

Fórsa (and, previously, Impact) had sought to increase career progression options within the analyst stream itself.

In 2021, a claim was taken to seek to introduce an advancement option for the analyst career structure.

Following a detailed submission prepared by the Fórsa FSI Branch,

management has agreed to establishing the grade of Laboratory Services Coordinator.

Assistant General Secretary Seán Carabini told CSQ: "This is a welcome development. Career advancement options for analysts have long been sought by the union. Our committee has done immense work to advance this issue."

It is hoped that the new position will be formally agreed and filled before the FSI lab moves from the Phoenix Park to the new facility in Backweston over the course of the next year.

Cross-depts network to link AOs

Following an outreach to Administrative Officer members in 2021, Fórsa has set up an AO network. A committee, comprising members drawn from 15 departments, is meeting every three weeks to tease out each of the issues identified in the results of the 2021 AO survey.

At present, the committee is drafting the findings of this group into a report. This report will be used to guide Fórsa in the resolution of AO issues.

The report will highlight many of the issues facing AOs – both big and small – and will make recommendations on how the issues can be resolved. To date, the issues discussed have included the AO as a graduate role, AO pay, annual leave, career progression possibilities and higher scales. Additionally, a dedicated quarterly AO e-bulletin has been launched as an information tool for the group.

Assistant General Secretary

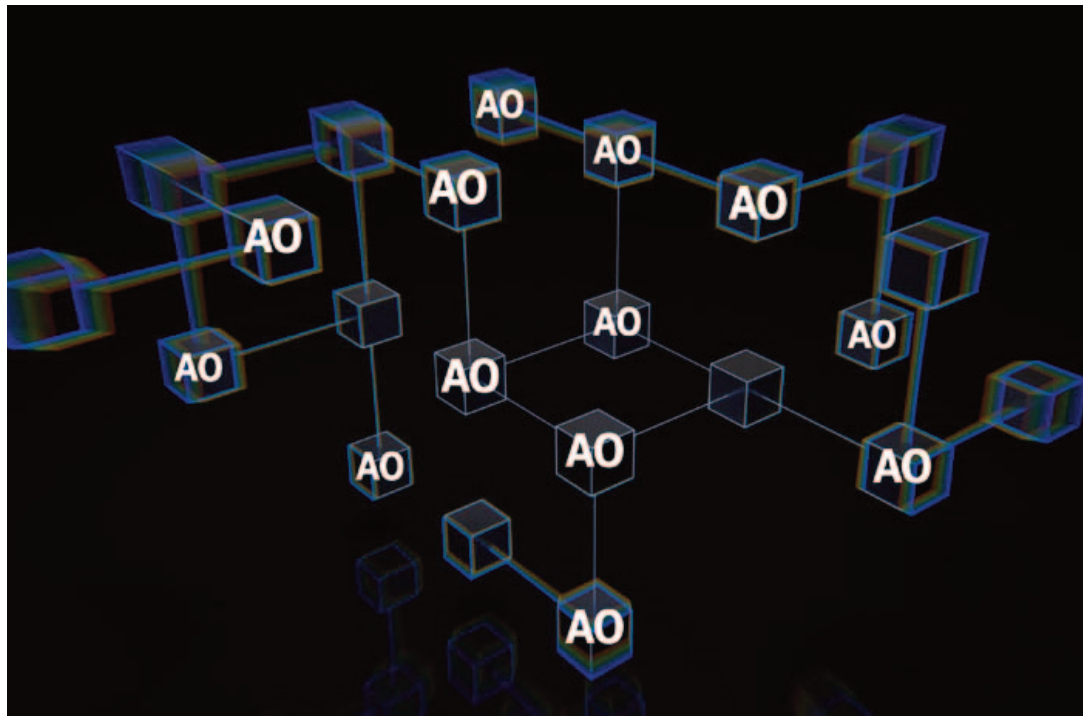


Illustration: Shubham Dhag at Unsplash

Seán Carabini told CSQ: “This is an important and timely group. The AO, as a grade, is over 100 years old and was originally established as a way to ensure that there were third-level graduates in the civil service.

“However, now that more than 80% of new joiners to the civil service already have a third-level qualification, we need to rethink the purpose of the grade.

“AOs and HEOs are both working in similar spaces, but the career progression options and

the pay scales are very different. Basic fairness dictates that we need to look at these issues.”

He continued: “The work that this group of AOs is doing is a very necessary first step in addressing the issues that have evolved with the grade over the years. The union will have the data – directly from the membership – about the biggest issues facing the grade and options for how we might be able to resolve them.

“I have no doubt that some of these issues will be immensely more difficult to resolve than

others and I know that members understand this. But with the right data in our hands, we can begin to make inroads.”

As a next step, the committee is planning an outreach to members with the results of their project. This outreach will be an important opportunity to engage with members and to verify the work done to date.



AGS Seán Carabini

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Social Welfare News

Regional Division Review

Fórsa has strongly voiced its opposition to any proposals that would downgrade services – particularly walk-in services – provided in Intreo centres.

National Secretary Derek Mullen pointed out that Fórsa had “sought and supported” restricted IC walk-in services on health and safety grounds specifically relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

He told CSQ: “Post-pandemic we are seeking that customers will have full access to all Intreo services in the Intreo centre based in their local community.”

Loss of reception & walk-in services at some IC locations

DSP outlined in a recent briefing on the Regional Divisions Review how in future front offices in Intreo centres would operate on a self-service basis with most of them providing reception appointments.

It had yet to be decided, however, how many locations would operate a walk-in service as well as other yet-to-be-determined new services (possibly new DSP initiatives or wider Government services).

For its part, Fórsa voiced its concerns over the downgrading of services through the loss of walk-in services in ICs across the country.

SWI restructuring

The Review also proposes the restructuring of the SWI function. The restructuring would establish a cross-divisional back office team. It is intended that the team would undertake back office desk-based work while referring work to SWIs in the Regions to be actioned, a



front-facing function. This is seen as similar to how NPT Hub-SWIs function currently. Staff would move between cross-divisional and local work under the proposals.

Fórsa is seeking intensive consultation and agreement over these significant restructuring proposals in advance of their implementation.

CWS restructuring

It is also proposed to restructure the Community Welfare Service with a cross-divisional back office team and local customer-facing teams. Rent supplement is also to be processed cross divisionally.

Fórsa has raised concerns that the restructuring of the CWS will reduce access for vulnerable customers to Community

Welfare Officers (CWOs) and that clinics will be closed in certain local communities.

AGS Paul MacSweeney told CSQ: “There is a concern that clinics which have been restricted by Covid-19 will not now reopen. Fórsa is seeking extended consultation and agreement over what are clearly significant restructuring proposals in advance of any implementation.”

Activation services

The Regional Divisions Review presentation given to unions did not cover Activation services. Fórsa has sought a separate meeting with DSP to discuss any proposals on restructuring of Activation as well as a number of other Activation-related issues.

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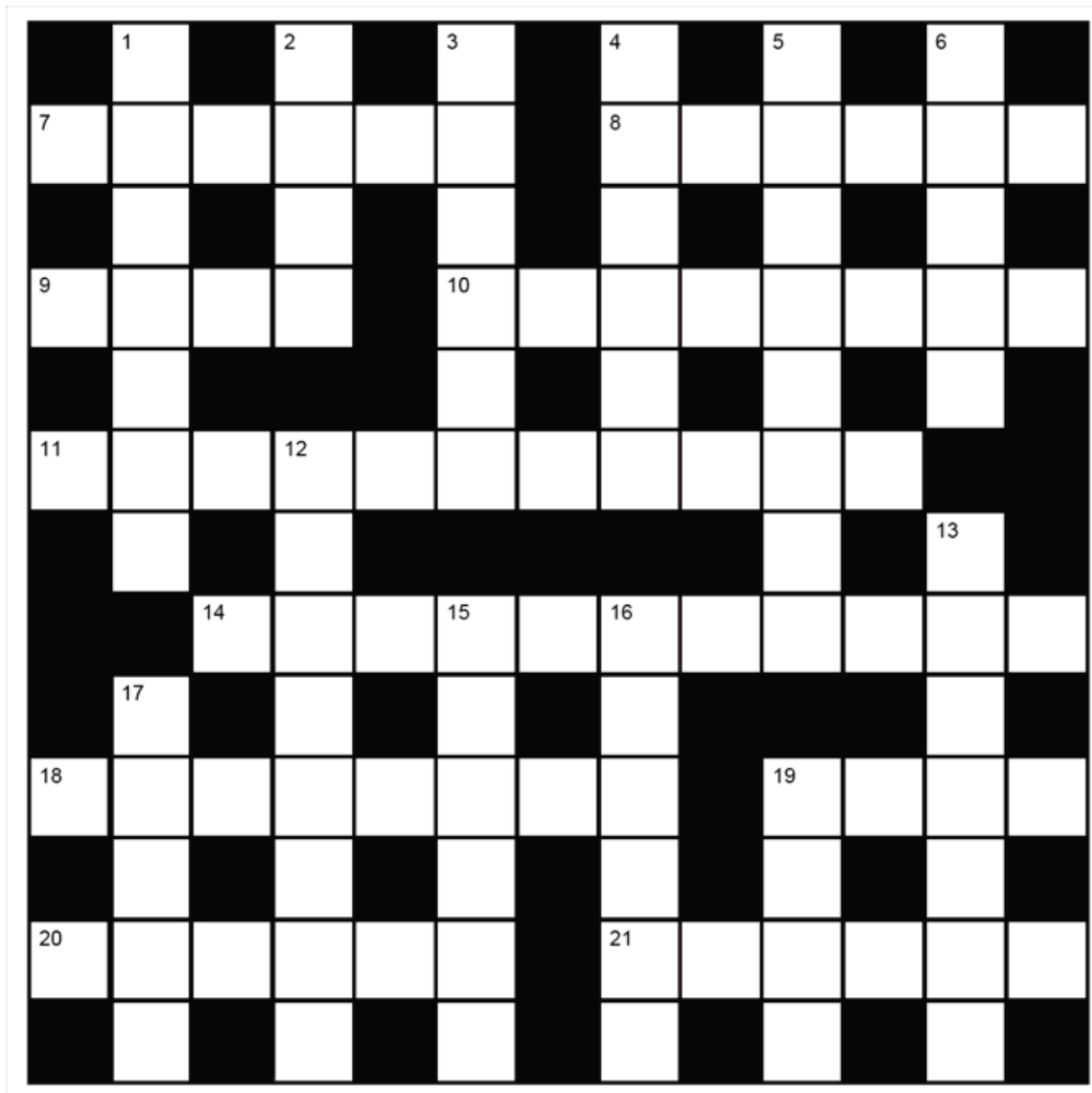
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Crossword

As **CSQ** is currently being published **online only** during the course of the pandemic, we have decided to end the competitive element to the crossword as it is more difficult to track returned entries to Head Office. However, the crossword will continue to run in **CSQ**.



Across

7. And 19 across – A fried race gets mixed up with the Canadian Indie band (6)
8. Greece, to the Greeks (6)
9. Mimics the Simians (4)
10. Devon prison, once home to De Valera (8)
11. Could Kellie Harrington have a home fight in Oregon? (8,3)
14. This actor has played Malcolm Crowe, Butch Coolidge and James Cole (5,6)
18. Its capital is Harare (8)
19. See 7 across (4)
20. Low cost, short term lodging (6)
21. Autonomous region of Portugal (6)

Down

1. Chemical element and home of Superman (7)
2. Fair City character, played by Eamon Morrissey (4)
3. Walsh – Peelo, star of CODA and Sing Street (6)
4. Spare this and spoil the child (3,3)
5. Line on ship's hull, indicating maximum safe draught (8)
6. And 17 down – This line marked the division between North and South USA (5)
12. A trillion units of digital information (8)
13. These were written by Pepys and Mole (7)
15. Chemical element, symbol Co (6)
16. This Republic describes Germany from 1918 – 1933 (6)
17. See 6 down (5)
19. Tailless amphibian of the order Anura (4)

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS CSQ Winter 2021

ACROSS: 7. Danish; 8. Airbag; 9. Mask; 10. Solomons; 11. Picture This; 14. American Dad; 18. Alsatian; 19. Kris; 20. Kindle; 21. Easels.
DOWN: 1. Malaria; 2. Risk; 3. Chaser; 4. Hamlet; 5. Grampian; 6. Maine; 12. Tom Hardy; 13. Camilla; 15. Raider; 16. Cancer; 17. Alfie; 19. Kish.