



## SNA Workforce Development Plan: Analysis of the Fórsa Negotiating Objectives

Objective	Reason	Outcome	Assessment	Implementation
<p><b>Abolition of the 72-hour obligation</b></p>	<p>The 72 Hours were being abused with inappropriate work being allocated to SNAs, staff were rostered even when no appropriate work was available.</p> <p>SNAs were being directed to carry out demeaning work such as cleaning, photocopying and were being used as unskilled labour to use the 72 hours.</p>	<p>The 72 Hours will be replaced by time allocated to learning and development (CPD) and time devoted to student centred planning and evaluation.</p> <p>A minimum of 10 hours self-directed learning will be required. There is a maximum of 36 hours proposed for learning and development and CPD. The School/Dept/NCSE are responsible for funding the training, not the SNA.</p> <p>SNAs can be asked to participate in staff meetings and local policy development engagement within their school up to a maximum of 10 hours per annum.</p> <p>SNAs will be part of student-centred planning and evaluation and can be requested to give their input into student support plans. The proposals state that this will be a minimum of 10 hours per annum.</p> <p>SNAs would record such hours themselves and complete a form at the end of each school year.</p>	<p>The Department refused to completely abolish the 72 hours pointing out that the role of the SNA will always require some additional hours outside of class time. This proved to be the most difficult issue to address.</p> <p>The 72 hours will be replaced by structured learning and development time anywhere between 10hrs and 36 hrs per annum. It is the responsibility of the school to organise, provide and pay for this training, to date no additional funding has been provided. SNAs will be asked to contribute to planning the care and supports for students with additional needs, plans may need to be reviewed and evaluated. This could take 5 hrs or 20 hrs per annum depending on</p>	<p>The new arrangements for Learning and Development and School Community Time will be formally reviewed by Fórsa and the Department within 2 years of implementation.</p>

			the complexity of the needs of the students .	
<b>No compulsory attendance in June for Post Primary SNAs unless there is a genuine reason</b>	Attendance in June had been an extremely difficult issue for post primary SNAs and the union as it was being abused, leading to SNAs being held in a time bound fashion without appropriate work being identified, or requested to undertake demeaning tasks that were not appropriate to SNAs, or have them doing displacement work of other grades/training for the sake of training etc.	<p>It is and has always been accepted that SNAs may need to support students who have had SNA provisions throughout the year to undertake their exams. However, that work should be allocated in a fair and equitable manner and not all SNAs will need to be present at one time, so it may work on a roster basis.</p> <p>There is greater clarity that classroom hours do not exist and that attendance should be determined by the work to be undertaken and not time bound.</p> <p>Greater emphasis on being able to undertake training or duties such as prep of materials at home with attendance on site only really being necessary where supporting a student(s) is required.</p>	<p>Whilst we argued for the total abolition of the obligation to work in June, the Department took a view that the obligation had always been in place or post-primary SNAs and that SNA support must always be available for students who undertake exams.</p> <p>However, the Department did acknowledge that the provisions had been abused in the past and were open to making changes to ensure this did not happen into the future.</p> <p>The union had put forward positions in 2023 which formed the basis of a clarification letter that issued by the Department in relation to a number of items, including June working.</p> <p>We have used this letter to very good effect, all but eliminating inappropriate work in June where members will agree to follow union guidance and stick together, should issues arise.</p>	<p>The new proposals strengthen these provisions further and transpose them into a circular, making it easier for officials to intervene and resolve issues.</p> <p>In summary there should be no more abuse of June Working and where there is, officials can swiftly intervene and provide clarity and instruction, supported by the circular.</p>

<p><b>Increasing the Minimum essential qualification to QQI Level 6</b></p>	<p>Achieving a realistic minimum essential qualification was a key objective of the RespectForSNAs Campaign.</p> <p>The current requirement for 3 D grade passes in the Junior Cycle has not changed since 1979 and does not reflect the significant academic achievements of SNAs .</p> <p>Raising the minimum qualification would start to transition the role of the SNA towards professional status and end the perception that SNAs are unskilled labour.</p>	<p>Agreement that the Minimum qualification will move to a QQI Level 6 award within 10 years. From September 2026 the minimum qualification will move to a relevant Level 5 QQI award. By 2036 all SNAs will be expected to have achieved a Level 6 qualification or have accrued equivalent experience.</p> <p>Serving SNAs within 5 years of retirement (55yrs) will be exempt. SNAs already working in our schools who do not wish to undertake a Level 6 qualification will not have to do so, they can be exempted due to prior experience and expertise.</p> <p>From Sept 2026 all new SNAs will be required to either have achieved at least a relevant Level 5 qualification before appointment and must achieve a Level 6 qualification within 5 years of appointment.</p> <p>The National SNA Training Program (at Level 6) will continue each year and newly appointed SNAs will be expected to undertake that program if they do not already have the qualification</p>	<p>The SNA Qualification is to move to a Level 6 QQI award as Fórsa requested.</p> <p>This is to be achieved over the next 5 - 10 years. Most serving SNAs have already achieved this level of academic qualification, and many have already achieved higher qualifications.</p> <p>Existing SNAs who do not wish to study for a Level 6 qualification will not have to do so as they will be deemed to have reached that level due to prior experience.</p>	<p>Revising the entry qualification is a significant step towards professionalising the role of the SNA.</p> <p>Whilst the initial requirement will be at QQI Level 6, there will without doubt be discussion in the years ahead on moving to a Level 7 or Level 8 requirement.</p>

<p><b>New SNA Redeployment Scheme</b></p>	<p>Establishing a new SNA Redeployment Scheme will significantly improve SNA job security. Allocations were frozen in 2019 with new posts added into the system in each subsequent year. In 2026 the NCSE attempted to Review SNA Allocations and remove SNA Posts from many Primary Schools. In the absence of a Redeployment Scheme this would have created a risk of large-scale redundancies.</p>	<p>A new Redeployment Scheme for SNAs and new Redeployment Circular have been agreed. The process will be administered by the NCSE through an on-line portal.</p> <p>Where an SNA post is not required in any school the SNA will have the right to be redeployed into a new or vacant post within 45km of work or home.</p> <p>Principals will not be able to fill new or vacant SNA posts in any school until the National Redeployment Panel is exhausted. SNAs may receive an offer of redeployment and would then start work in the new school in the September of that year. Their service is protected, but they would not take seniority with them to the new school and thus will not displace existing SNAs in terms of seniority in that new school.</p> <p>If an SNA does not receive an offer of redeployment, the NCSE will assess the situation towards the end of the redeployment process and match SNAs with vacant posts within the 45km radius</p> <p>The option of redundancy and the Supplementary Assignment Panel remain in place and will still be available should SNAs prefer that option.</p>	<p>The Redeployment Scheme will provide additional job security for SNAs who will have two opportunities to be redeployed into new posts. The NCSE has agreed to take responsibility for managing this process.</p> <p>The extent to which deployment is necessary depends on Government decisions on the allocation of SNA posts.</p> <p>In light of the changes within the new Circular on the Role of the SNA, further discussion on the nature of the NCSE Reviews and their outcomes will now have to take place.</p> <p>Even if a complete freeze on SNA Reviews were to be put in place for the foreseeable future, a Redeployment Scheme would still be necessary to cater for schools that close or amalgamate.</p>	<p>The Redeployment Scheme will be operational in time to provide redeployment opportunities before the start of the 2027/8 school year.</p>
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<p><b>New SNA Circular that recognises the role has changed and developed</b></p>	<p>The SNA contracts were devised in 2005, and the most recent SNA circular was devised in 2014.</p> <p>Those documents were predominantly pointed towards on SNA provision that focused on primary care needs.</p> <p>The circular focused more on what an SNA could not do, and making clear the lines of demarcation between the SNA role and that of the teacher.</p> <p>The role of the SNA and the provision of special education had evolved significantly in that time, and the circular did not appropriately recognise the SNA role, the practices occurring on the ground and the importance and standing of SNAs in today's education system.</p>	<p>The new circular is very much focused on the SNA role; the importance it plays in our education system and the benefits they hold for the children.</p> <p>The new circular appropriately recognises and values the role that SNAs play in the classroom for all children and the part they play in ensuring children access the curriculum.</p> <p>The new circular describes the SNA role more accurately and reflective of the realities on the ground and provides much greater detail on the scope of the role and the responsibilities it holds.</p> <p>It accurately captures a true reflection of the modern SNA role, outlining it as it exists today but does not expand the role beyond what is the normal custom and practice in the sector.</p>	<p>The new circular puts into text many of the arguments that the union has put forward over the several years in relation to the SNA role and the professionalisation of same.</p> <p>It removes ambiguity and places enhanced focus on the role of the SNA and their vital function in our education system. This in tandem with the new min qual, and job security/redeployment clearly meets the objectives set out in the respect4SNAs campaign,</p>	<p>The new circular is to be launched imminently, with new template contracts, guidance documents amongst other improvements on fixed term entitlements.</p> <p>There will be greater governance of the new provisions with the Department agreeing to either utilise the existing IR forum to deal with issues or establish a new national forum.</p> <p>There will also be a role for the schools inspectorate in ensuring SNAs are utilised by</p>
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				schools appropriately.
<b>Including SNAs in the School Community in the same way as Teachers are valued</b>	<p>SNAs reported that they felt ignored, undervalued and were not included in the same levels of information and communication as were Teaching colleagues both within their schools and in communications issued by the Department.</p> <p>This sentiment was clearly expressed by SNAs in the Focus Groups and in the National SNA Survey.</p> <p>SNAs also reported that their role was widely misunderstood within their schools and by the public.</p>	<p>The Department will continue to develop the SNA Information Hub on their website and will use this to publicise developments and resources for SNAs including the SNA Guide to Good Practice and other materials.</p> <p>The Department will hold a series of Webinars for SNAs each year, including an annual pensions seminar.</p> <p>Guidance will also be produced on the role and value of the SNA, this will be disseminated to schools directly, will be developed with the NCSE and made widely available to schools and parents.</p> <p>Templates will be provided to schools for use in induction and other activities to ensure consistency of communication.</p>	<p>It is helpful that the Department has recognised that SNAs feel undervalued and to an extent excluded from the rest of the school community.</p> <p>Changing that situation requires a genuine appreciation of the role and value of the SNA which in some schools is lacking.</p> <p>The real test will be the extent to which Principals and Boards of Management improve the way in which SNAs are managed to ensure that all their staff are treated with due respect.</p>	<p>New materials should be available for the start of the 2026/7 school year.</p>

<p><b>Promotional opportunities for SNAs and a Career structure</b></p>	<p>One of the clearest messages across stakeholder engagement over the last 2 years was the desire for the SNA role to be recognised as a career, not a temporary or transitional occupation. The current absence of a structured career framework undermines long-term planning and makes the role less attractive for school leavers and younger adults.</p>	<p>The Programme for Government contains provision for the Department of Education to clarify and develop career pathways for SNAs. Introducing Posts of Responsibility will take some time, the commitment is given in the SNAWDP.</p>	<p>Fórsa policy seeks to secure viable career progression for SNAs across all settings.</p> <p>We will continue to work towards that objective and may consult members on using any further local bargaining opportunities to establish Posts of Responsibility.</p>	<p>Claims to be lodged if a new Pay Agreement allows local bargaining to continue.</p>
<p><b>Secure EPV Days and other types of leave for SNAs</b></p>	<p>Disparities in leave levels have existed between SNAs and colleagues for some considerable time.</p> <p>Whilst there are areas where there is justification for this, the vast majority of disparities have no justification whatsoever, and seem to exist merely because of a difference in grade.</p>	<p>These claims have been taken through the SNA IR forum and on to the WRC but have hit a dead end and cannot be progressed further.</p> <p>Whilst the claims have merit and there is no significant argument being put forward that they do not, the debarment on cost increasing claims means the Department of Education cannot concede them without sanction from DPER, who will not give sanction to any claim that can be interpreted as meaning an increases in costs.</p>	<p>Taking the opportunity to further bridge the gap between SNAs and other educational colleagues terms and conditions, makes sense as not only does it provide benefit to the members, but it also impact the perception and mindset of how SNAs are seen in comparison to teachers and other educational colleagues.</p>	<p>Bridging gaps in entitlements will remain an ongoing priority, as it has a positive effect for members as it more closely aligns it with other grades and that in turn increases how the role is perceived and the respect it is given.</p>

	<p>Eating into these disparities and placing SNAs on a more equal footing to colleagues save for when there is justification, will assist in changing the mindset that SNAs are in some way lesser to colleagues.</p> <p>Significant efforts have been made to bridge these disparities and equalise leave in a more fair and balanced manner, but these have not been barriers and cannot be progressed no matter how strong the argument because of the fact that they are cost increasing claims, and as such debarred under the terms of the national agreement.</p>	<p>The most recent national agreement provides us access to a fund of 1% of the total SNA pay bill. This fund is available backdated to the 01<sup>st</sup> of September. This fund could be used to address some (5) of the 7 types of leave that we lodged claims for.</p> <p>The 5 leave items submitted that could be resolved within the funding available to us are copied into the table below.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="779 630 1094 1024"> <tr> <td><b>1. Membership of Public Bodies</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>2. Health &amp; Safety Leave</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>3. Retirement Seminar</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>4. Ordination/Profession Imm. Family</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>5. Conferring of Teacher/Imm. Family</b></td> </tr> </table> <p>2 other claims for EPV days and Paid Family Illness Leave, would be too expensive in terms of costing for us to be able to address them with the funding available at this time.</p>	<b>1. Membership of Public Bodies</b>	<b>2. Health &amp; Safety Leave</b>	<b>3. Retirement Seminar</b>	<b>4. Ordination/Profession Imm. Family</b>	<b>5. Conferring of Teacher/Imm. Family</b>		<p>However, with the current constraints in place it is only possible to bridge the gaps when funding is available as it is now.</p> <p>Using the funding in this way makes a difference to members in a meaningful way throughout their career and puts the grade on a more equitable footing to colleagues.</p>
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<p><b>Use of the Local Pay Bargaining claim to improve pay at the top of the scale</b></p>	<p>The current National Pay Agreement provides for claims to be submitted up the value of 1% of the SNA pay-bill. In order to use this money a claim for an increase of 1.5% at the top of the SNA scale was submitted</p>	<p>The Department of Education has now agreed to increase the top of the scale by an additional 1.5% effective from September 2025.</p>	<p>The local bargaining claim will further increase earnings at the top of the scale over and above the last 1% pay increase implemented from the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026 under the National Pay Agreement.</p>	<p>A further 2% of the pay-roll bill may be available for more local bargaining claims should a new National Pay Agreement be concluded from July 2026.</p>
<p><b>Ensure the new contract is clear, not open to local misinterpretation and can be enforced centrally</b></p>	<p>The old circular was open to abuse. It was vague and ambiguous in many areas.</p> <p>Where issues arose, there was a reluctance on the Department to intervene and a pattern of schools choosing to believe their own interpretation or what they had garnered from other sources, IPPN, WhatsApp Groups, principal conferences/seminars.</p> <p>This made holding schools accountable difficult and often left us relying on our ability to convince the BOM or principle of our view.</p>	<p>All stakeholders have been involved in the discussions on these documents and provisions.</p> <p>There is agreement to utilise the schools inspectorate to ensure appropriate deployment of SNA resources through their inspections.</p> <p>In tandem to this there is an agreement to either use the existing SNA IR forum or establish a new national implementation forum to ensure that the new provisions are adhered to and breaches//bad behaviours can be dealt with swiftly.</p> <p>The union have also made clear our intent to defend any new provisions aggressively, given there can now be no excuse of employers, such as they weren't aware/ or had a different view of what the provisions meant.</p>	<p>Provisions will be clearer and better understood by all, meaning the union can deal with any potential issues more swiftly. We can also be aggressive in advising our members and seeking to preserve the integrity of the new provisions, given there can be no more excuses or misunderstandings. This will in turn mean we can respond to members issues, more swiftly and decisively, issuing clear and definitive instructions.</p> <p>There will also be further safeguards established with the Department directly and through their inspectorate.</p>	<p>Circulars and guidance to be issued imminently.</p> <p>The union can intervene from commencement of the new school year. New implementation forum to commence from new school year, roll out of governance to inspectorate may take a little longer but is expected to commence in 26/27 school year.</p>

	<p>There was an absolute need to get documents that were clearer/less ambiguous and ensure all stakeholders understood the provisions.</p>		<p>The above, in conjunction with the professionalisation of the role and added clarity is a significant will be a significant shift in the landscape from where we were and should see abuse, all but eliminated once members report it.</p>	
<p><b>Centralised Garda Vetting</b></p>	<p>Centralised Garda Vetting would greatly assist SNA Substitutes working in different schools and would provide Vetting clearance for a fixed period of time as is the case for Teachers, this would also streamline the new Redeployment process. Whilst the Teaching Council carries this out this function for Teachers no such Body exists for SNAs. Legislative changes will be required to introduce Garda vetting.</p>	<p>A centralised, NCSE-led approach to Garda vetting is proposed. Under this model, the NCSE would act as a single "relevant organisation" under vetting legislation, authorised to seek, receive and securely store vetting disclosures. SNAs would undergo vetting once, with the resulting disclosure recognised across all schools and ETBs. Schools would remain the legal employer and retain responsibility for recruitment decisions but would be able to rely on centrally held vetting information. , accessed in a secure and controlled manner.</p> <p>Implementing a centralised vetting model requires legislative changes to ensure NCSE has the legal authority to act as a relevant organisation. The department will work with stakeholders to deliver a centralised approach to garda vetting for SNAs.</p>	<p>The move to Centralised Garda Vetting will be welcome, however there is definitive timescale for this to take place. Legislation will have to be enacted to allow the NCSE to assume this role.</p>	<p>To be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Implementation Working Group.</p>

<b>Professional Regulation of SNAs</b>	Professional Regulation of SNAs would be the final and definitive step confirming true professional status.	Groups subject to Professional Regulation are required to hold qualifications at a minimum of Level 7 on the GGI scale. Therefore, the Department will not be pursuing this option at this point in time.	Should the minimum essential qualification be raised to at least Level 7 from 2036 then SNAs would become eligible for Professional Regulation in the future.	N/A
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