



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## Temporary Assignment Arrangements for Special Needs Assistants

You may have seen the announcement of a contingency plan for possible temporary assignment of Special Needs Assistants.

Firstly, thank you to everyone involved in making this a reality and responding to our country's need in the Covid-19 emergency.

Below we have set out a Q&A. We hope it will give SNAs, schools and anyone who is interested a bit more clarity on how the new system will work.

The FAQs should be read in conjunction with Department of Education and Skills [Circulars 0027/2020](#)

**SNAs please note – Do NOT upload your details to the temporary assignment website/questionnaire without authorisation from your manager. Doing so may delay reassignment of others who have been released.**

**If in doubt, contact your manager first to get authorisation to complete the questionnaire.**

### 1. Why are temporary assignments required?

Covid-19 is the most significant crisis faced by our country in living memory. The primary focus in the civil and public service is to support the health and wellbeing of all our citizens. To achieve this, and to keep delivering the essential services to society, especially for the most vulnerable and at-risk, we need to come together and work as a unified public service.

Temporary assignment of staff will help achieve that.

It is one of the many responses of Government and the health authorities to the unprecedented challenges posed by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

All public servants who are not medically advised to self-isolate must be available to carry out work either to deliver services in their current post (as a priority) or for temporary assignment within the wider public sector.

## **2. Does that mean every SNA is being assigned?**

All SNAs are being considered for the programme.

They will be reassigned on a temporary basis if they can be matched with another role that matches their skills, experience or qualifications, particularly in assisting children with additional care needs.

Obviously not everyone will be assigned but we have to see how we can free up other public servants for frontline work in the fight against Covid-19.

While all SNAs are being asked to sign up to the process, the HSE will engage with SNAs and their managers before they are assigned to ensure that they are not self-isolating or have restricted movements at the time of assignment.

## **3. Will SNAs be on the frontline? What work could I be asked to do?**

The plan is for SNAs to work in the following areas:

- SNAs may also be asked to provide remote supports to families of children who they are familiar with, including scheduled calls or video links with advice on routines, home schooling, behaviour management and social stories on Covid-19.
- SNAs may also be asked to provide remote supports to families of children who they are less familiar with. There is some more detail about this in the appendix to CL0027/2020.

## **4. But will SNAs be asked to work as nurses and do their jobs when they are freed up for the frontline?**

No. All the documentation issued by the Department to schools sets out the possible areas of work.

## **5. How does the assignment process work?**

You must wait for your school manager or HR section to nominate you. Then you will be given a link to upload your details to publicjobs.ie using a special questionnaire.

It is important that you wait to be nominated by your manager. It makes sure that only SNAs who have been formally released for temporary assignments will be offered another role.

## **6. Where and when will I be taking up my temporary role?**

The temporary assignment scheme is being put in place to ensure essential public services continue to be delivered over the coming weeks and months.

In the questionnaire SNAs are asked to indicate preferred locations for work, in order of preference. Or you can just indicate one location.

Unfortunately, we can't be specific about how long assignments will last. We are in an unprecedented emergency response. But we can assure everyone that the assignments are temporary. If and when the need arises, staff who have been temporarily assigned can return to their original jobs.

## **7. Is there a chance I could be offered a temporary assignment working remotely?**

Yes. We mentioned earlier there may be some options for SNAs to provide remote support, guidance and advice to families of children they are familiar with from school.

## **8. Why is the assignment just for SNAs and not teachers?**

All public servants who are not medically advised to self-isolate must be available to carry out work either to deliver services in their current post (as a priority) or for temporary assignment within the wider public sector.

The priority for staff in the education sector is to continue the provision of education. That is why teachers must wait to be nominated by school management or HR Section as releasable.

**9. I have read public health advice on Covid-19 and I am classed as At-Risk. Am I going to be made available for temporary assignment?**

The current advice is that employees in an At Risk Group should not leave their homes to travel to work with the exception of essential workers, until the 12<sup>th</sup> of April.

We have set out the option for remote working so if you are not ill then that might be an option.

**10. Is this assignment system only online? Can I complete the questionnaire and post it?**

It is only available online. It can be completed on a phone, tablet or computer.

If someone you know has no internet access they can be advised to ask the principal in their school for help to submit the questionnaire.

**11. If I am assigned who employs me? Who pays me? And will I be working longer hours than I'm contracted for?**

You will be employed by your current employer. They will pay you.

During the temporary assignment, direct management and supervision will be provided by the temporary line manager.

If you are on a contract the temporary assignment will terminate at the current end date of your contract if that occurs during the assignment period.

The emergency response to Covid-19 is based on public health advice. Any consideration of further temporary assignments will be done with full consultation with all representative bodies.

**12. What hours will I work?**

You will not be required to work beyond your current contracted hours. Working hours will depend on the particular needs and circumstances of the organisation.

Some workplaces may operate different workings arrangement which may be across an extended working day or week. These arrangements can support staff to manage caring responsibilities and facilitate social distancing measures.

**13. I have childcare or other caring responsibilities - am I required to be available for temporary assignment?**

All public servants who are not medically advised to self-isolate must be available to carry out work either to deliver services in their current post (as a priority) or for temporary assignment within the wider public sector.

There may be potential for flexible hours and remote working, depending on the requirements of the role in question, and the availability of technical resources.

**14. Can I volunteer for temporary assignment? I have not heard from my employer, but I am aware of the Public Appointments Service survey link. Can I go ahead and upload my details?**

All Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are considered available for temporary assignment and are required to complete the linked online questionnaire.

If in doubt, contact your school management or HR section.

**15. I've filled in the questionnaire. What will happen now?**

The Public Appointments Service will process all the information from SNAs and add your details to the database.

Garda vetting is also required. The process of matching SNAs with possible roles begins.

Once that is done then SNAs may then be called upon by the HSE to carry out roles set out in Q3.

**16. I already have Garda vetting. Why do I go through this again?**

Under strict Child Protection regulations a new Garda vetting will be carried out as you are temporarily assigned to a different organisation.

### **17. Is Travel and Subsistence payable to staff on temporary assignment?**

Normal T&S arrangements will apply to staff who are temporarily assigned. If you get a new role, you treat it as being headquartered at the new location and normal rules public service and Revenue rules on non-payment of T&S for home to work travel apply.

### **18. What about SNAs who are already providing remote support to families or volunteering with disability and special needs services?**

If you are already working with a family, you should still complete the questionnaire when your school management / HR section sends you the link.

To ensure an integrated approach to working with children with disabilities and their families, it is important that you make this information known to the HSE contact point once you have completed the temporary assignment process.

The HSE will then engage with managers and SNAs before any temporary assignment is made.

**Ends**

**Contact for further queries**

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