



Circular Letter 0027/2020

To: Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

COVID-19

Temporary assignment arrangements for certain staff in the education and training sector

Purpose:

1. The purpose of this Circular is to advise Management Authorities and Chief Executives of ETBs of the new arrangements for the temporary assignment of certain staff to different areas of work. This is to ensure the continuation of essential public services and is one of the many responses of Government and the health authorities to the unprecedented challenges posed by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Priority of Continuity of Education:

2. The clear priority in the education and training sector is to ensure continuity of education for learners and this is being progressed across the sector using new and innovative ways of working.
3. Management will need to consider how best to utilise staff to facilitate the delivery of educational services.

Temporary Assignment Arrangements:

4. All public servants who are not medically advised to self-isolate (because they are confirmed or pending confirmed COVID-19 cases) must be available to carry out work either to deliver services in their current post or for temporary assignment within the wider public service. This includes public servants who are being advised to restrict their movements and work from home, or who are working from home because of school closures. In this regard, Circulars 0024/2020 and 0025/2020 set out working arrangements and leave entitlements associated with COVID-19.
5. School management authorities and Chief Executives of ETBs must now identify which staff are required to provide and support the essential delivery of tuition to all



students during the school/centre closure period. This includes teachers, instructors SNAs and all other public service staff in the employment, and staff working in Head Offices in the case of ETBs.

6. In doing so, schools and centres should plan for contingencies in the knowledge that many staff may not be able to continue to work due to becoming ill.
7. Any public service staff member who is not required to be retained in providing or supporting educational services and has not been medically advised to self-isolate will be available for assignment on a temporary basis to support delivery of other essential public services.
8. In order to implement this temporary assignment, the Public Appointments Service (PAS) has put in place a central database through publicjobs.ie which will identify staff who have been nominated for temporary assignment by management and enable providers of essential services to draw on the services of such staff.
9. School management and HR sections of ETBs must send the links below to staff who they have identified as available for temporary assignment:

(i) SNAs

A dedicated process has been established for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), given the particular skills and experience of these staff in assisting children with additional care needs. Further information on the expected role of SNAs is in the attached HSE briefing document.

All SNAs are to be nominated for temporary assignment and may be called for assignment subject to the terms of Circular 0024/2020. School management and HR sections must send the following link with the school roll number to all SNA staff by **Friday 3 April**:

[SNA Temporary Assignment Scheme Questionnaire](#)

(ii) Other staff in the Education Sector

The link below should be sent to all public service staff in all grades other than SNA who have been nominated for temporary assignment by **Friday 3 April**:

[Temporary Assignment Scheme Questionnaire](#)

Staff in all grades other than SNA may be called for assignment subject to the terms of Circulars 0024/2020 and 0025/2020.



10. When they receive the link, the staff member will be asked to upload their details via an online questionnaire by **Tuesday 7 April**. The questionnaire can be completed on a mobile phone, tablet or laptop for ease of use and includes information such as PPSN, location, grade, work area, details of skills and experience etc.
11. Once they have uploaded their details, the staff member must then inform school management or the HR section of their ETB that they have done so. Where school management/HR section has not received this confirmation from a nominated staff member by close of business on **Tuesday 7 April**, school management/HR section must immediately follow up with the nominated staff member to ensure that their details are submitted as per the terms of this Circular.
12. PAS will collate all responses to the questionnaire on a daily basis and record the information on central databases.
13. Once responses to the questionnaire are received, PAS will seek to confirm with the school or HR section that those staff who have completed the questionnaire are still releasable. **This additional verification step will not apply in the case of SNAs as all SNAs are considered to be releasable.**
14. Releasable staff will then be added to the relevant PAS database for temporary assignment to a relevant body. Staff may then be called upon by other providers of critical public services to carry out essential duties.
15. PAS and the HSE (in the case of SNA's) will conduct a skills match of releasable staff to vacancies and will initiate contact with them on behalf of the relevant body, providing details of the role and work location for temporary assignment.
16. PAS and the HSE (in the case of SNA's) will finalise the temporary assignment process in consultation with the releasable staff and relevant body and notify school management or HR section. Garda vetting requirements may apply depending on the nature of the post to which the individual is being assigned.
17. **In no circumstances is an individual staff member permitted to upload their details to the survey without having been authorised to do so by their school management or HR section of their ETB.**
18. The Department will be working in partnership with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) on an ongoing basis regarding the sharing of high level data and statistics on the temporary assignment arrangements.
19. All staff who are temporarily assigned will remain staff members of the current/original employer and will remain on the payroll of the employer for the duration of their temporary assignment. In the event of the staff member needing to take leave during their temporary assignment, they should notify their employer in the normal way and also notify their current manager in the temporary assignment situation.



20. A copy of the FAQs issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to Temporary Assignments across the Civil and Public Service is available at www.per.gov.ie . This Circular and the DPER FAQs should be read in conjunction with DES Circulars 0024/2020 and 0025/2020 regarding working arrangements and leave associated with COVID-19
21. The latest information from the Department in respect of COVID-19, including circulars, can be found at www.education.ie
22. Queries in relation to the temporary assignment arrangements should be addressed to: temporaryassignment@publicjobs.ie

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Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Temporary Assignment of Special Needs Assistants Briefing Document March 2020

1. Introduction & Overarching Objective

In response to the current public health emergency, the health and education sectors are working together to prioritise staffing resources in order to respond to critical needs relating to Covid-19. This is especially required in terms of assisting frontline health and social care services, in particular for vulnerable children.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) form an integral part of the education sector and play an important role in assisting the teacher to support students who have significant additional care needs. This includes a range of support interventions with vulnerable students such as:

- assisting children with difficulties in feeding
- administering medicine
- assistance with toileting and general hygiene (including catheterisation)
- assistance with mobility and orientation
- assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment
- assistance with severe communication difficulties and supporting students whom are distressed (i.e. behavioural management supports).

The purpose of this document is to set out the stakeholders involved in this temporary assignment process, the priority groups to which SNAs may be temporarily placed and the model of care envisaged.

2. Key Stakeholders

The following key stakeholders will collaborate on the basis of temporarily assigning SNAs to priority work areas.

- Department of Education and Skills
- Department of Health
- Health Service Executive (Community Health Organisations and funded providers)
- Public Appointments Service (PAS)



It is equally recognised that the employers¹ and trade unions representing SNAs are key stakeholders in terms of supporting this public health emergency initiative. Collaboration and co-operation with these key stakeholders is immensely important and appreciated during this public health emergency period.

3. Priority Care Groups

The Health Service Executive, through its Community Operations Team, has identified Community Services for children with a disability as the initial priority area in terms of temporary assignment of SNAs.

4. Model of Care Envisaged & Operational Settings

In respect of disability services attention is drawn to [Appendix 1](#), which sets out the model of care envisaged. In particular, SNAs will be temporarily assigned to work alongside existing disability service staff to support the implementation of the revised model of care during this pandemic.

It is envisaged that SNAs can be assigned across all community healthcare settings whether public, voluntary or private.

5. Implementation and Co-ordination

To facilitate communication during this process, the HSE at a regional/local level will provide co-ordination/contact point arrangements between the relevant healthcare provider and local employer/ education points of contact once agreed.

¹ Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools.



Appendix 1

Adapted Model of Care for People with a Disability during Covid - 19

SNA Supports for People with Complex Healthcare Needs during COVID-19 Pandemic

This appendix sets out potential temporary assignment roles that the SNA may provide, while working in collaboration with healthcare professionals in children's disability services. In general, SNAs will have the relevant experience and in many cases, will know the children with whom they are assigned to work.

Line Management of SNAs in Children's Disability Services

Community Health Care Organisations (CHOs) may choose to ask a lead agency (i.e. a Section 38 or 39 Organisations²) to take the lead in:

- (i) Co-ordinating the allocation of SNAs assigned to the CHO or,
- (ii) Allocating assigned SNAs directly to their HSE and Voluntary Organisations under existing children's services management structures.

Whichever approach is taken, CHOs must ensure clear line management for SNAs who are temporarily assigned to children's disability services. Their line managers must ensure that SNAs work cohesively together with healthcare professionals in prioritising the needs of children. This will help ensure optimal outcomes for the service user and families, and efficiencies for services.

1. Options for support from their regular / familiar SNA

- Daily scheduled telephone or video link via WhatsApp / Facetime / Zoom etc., to provide
 - Advice on what typically works for the child in school, advice on creating work station type environment at home similar to school / training / demonstration / support
 - Share the schedule used in school which child is familiar with e.g. toileting schedule, sensory break, storytime or learning activities
 - Social stories to help the child's understanding of Covid - 19
- Support to manage behaviours that challenge
- Provide resources/materials that the child uses /is familiar with in school, in collaboration with their teacher
- In home support to provide
 - Advice / training / demonstration / support
 - Storytime or learning activities

² Section 38 and 39 refers to the Health Acts which provides the legal basis on which the HSE may fund non statutory entities to deliver health and social care services (i.e. voluntary and for profit entities).



- Support to manage behaviours that challenge
 - Support to manage self-care
- Support short outings as a form of respite for families
- Provide 1:1 sessions in an appropriate facility/ disability services building familiar to the child and family

2. Options for support from an unfamiliar / less familiar SNA

- Prioritisation factors include
 - Children / families with a high level of need as identified by the disability service
 - Families where more than one child has additional needs
 - Families without external supports
- Preparation to include
 - Consultation with the Childrens Disability Network Teams (CDNT)
 - Strategies / activities provided by the CDNT services as appropriate
 - Information pack provided with pathways to access services in case of emergency / high level of concern
- Provide 1:1 sessions in an appropriate facility/ disability services building familiar to the child and family
- Act as an additional staffing resource to children's respite services, in particular to support activities
- Support learning activities for children in isolation centres