



Background

This note sets out the position on a number of commonly raised issues around SNA working hours.

Working Hours

In general, the contractual position in respect of the working hours of SNAs is as outlined in their agreed contracts of employment. The SNA contract of employment is augmented by all of the relevant departmental circulars which detail the terms and conditions of employment for SNAs. From time to time, these circulars are amended and new circulars are issued by the Minister for Education.

The standard SNA contracts of employment, set out in Circular 0012/2005 and 0015/2005, have been designed to be flexible to cater for the different spectrum of working hours across all the various schools including primary, post-primary and special schools with no set hours. Instead full-time SNAs are expected to work for the normal school hours in the school that they are working in, as well as being available for a period of time before and after school in order to help with reception and dispersal of children and preparation and tidying up of classrooms etc. These times are set locally by the school management and will vary from school to school depending on the requirements of the school. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that 32 hours per week is the contractual requirement. It will vary in each school in line with the factors outlined above.

Job-Sharing

It should be noted that Information Note TC/IN 0002/2023, available [here](#), recently implemented a change to SNA Job-Sharing. Previously a fulltime SNA who chose to move to job sharing was required to work 16 hours a week. This has now changed so that the SNA would be required to work 50% of the hours currently contracted to work. In future any 0.5FTE posts advertised should be clear that the hours relate to 50% of the usual fulltime hours in the school and not 16 hours as a default.



72-Hours

The issue of the '72-hours' obligation has been the subject of previous discussions and correspondence. In summary, while a SNA is obliged to work the hours where scheduled in line with their contract and the requirements of Circular [0071/2011](#) it should be noted that:

- The appropriate scheduling and use of these hours are at the discretion of the school in line with the requirements of the circular. Schools and ETBs should plan for the utilisation of the hours available.
- Reasonable notice should be given to SNAs regarding the scheduling and use of this time and the school should keep accurate records of same.
- Whilst the benefit of having a bank of hours outside of normal school opening hours and/or the normal school year is recognised, there is no obligation on schools to utilise all of the hours if a school does not have appropriate work or need for them.

June Working in Post-Primary Sector

The contract for Special Needs Assistants in the post-primary sector specifically requires that SNAs are required to work the month of June on examinations and work appropriate to the grade, including training.

While June is specifically mentioned within the contract classroom hours do not exist in June in post primary. Therefore the working day in June is viewed as different to the rest of the year, and attendance should primarily be determined by the work to be undertaken. In this regard, schools should take note that only appropriate work should be assigned, as provided for under point 9 of Circular [0071/2011](#).

With regard to training during June, where appropriate training is arranged, SNAs should be allowed to undertake same at home if they have the ability to do so. Schools can consider the appropriateness of this when planning relevant training, but it is a matter for each school to decide. Similarly, where appropriate work under Circular [0071/2011](#) can be undertaken at home in June, in compliance with data protection requirements and such other governance issues as may be relevant, schools should consider facilitating same.



Supervision

In general, whilst SNAs can be requested to help/support teachers rostered for supervision, where SNA support is appropriate, they should not be tasked with supervising in isolation.

When an SNA is **actively** supervising a child for the purposes of ensuring a task or activity is worked on and completed in a safe and correct manner for the purposes of assisting the child to engage in a school setting, this would be encompassed under Circular Letter [0071/2011](#).

With respect to **passive** supervision whereby an SNA is watching but not engaging with a child who requires SNA support, this should be limited to a short period of time as indicated in Circular 0030/2014 which implicitly states that SNAs can assist teachers to provide supervision where the school has made a robust case that existing teaching resources cannot facilitate such supervision. While a degree of flexibility is accepted if a teacher needs to temporarily leave a classroom, SNAs should not be left alone supervising children for any extended period of time.

Book Scheme

It has been brought to the attention of the Department that some SNAs have been informed they are to undertake the duties relating to the new free book scheme and this is being requested as additional duties within the contractual '72-hours' obligation.

Similarly, instances of SNAs being tasked with roles in the Book rental scheme, as part of the contractual obligations relating to 'June working', have been reported.

Such administrative tasks are not part of the agreed duties under the circulars.

The Department has put in place a grant payment, for schools, for administrative support on some schemes. Some allow for the school to employ an individual for this administrative task, the individual employed can be an existing member of staff of the school/ETB (including a SNA) but this is a separately paid role.



Work of Other Grades

Schools are reminded that SNAs cannot be compelled to carry out the work of other staff such as secretarial or cleaning staff.