



Northern Ireland

Civil Service

People and Organisational Development

Aisling Quinn
Director, People & Organisational
Development
2-4 Bruce Street
Belfast, BT2 7JD
Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: [aisling.quinn@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:aisling.quinn@[REDACTED])

Maria Morgan,
Deputy General Secretary,
NIPSA

By email: [maria.morgan@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:maria.morgan@[REDACTED])

Date: 07 July 2025

Dear Maria,

DRAFT HYBRID WORKING POLICY

Thank you for your letter of 25th June and helpful indication that, while Central Trade Union Side (CTUS) cannot agree the policy and is opposed to any percentage requirement for workplace attendance, you are willing to discuss several matters raised in your letter prior to implementation.

I have detailed below responses to each of the points raised which will be helpful to discuss when we meet at Employee Relations Subject Committee on 9th July.

Implementation date

As advised during consultation, early implementation was planned of the revised policy. Having taken on board the points raised by CTUS during consultation regarding anticipated difficulties of implementation during the summer months, the revised policy will be implemented across all Departments from September 2025, with full completion throughout NICS by October. We are unable to defer the commencement of implementation to the end of October. It is considered that the approach proposed will allow time for communications to issue regarding the policy change and for staff/ line management to discuss and agree how the policy will operate in relation to individual business areas.

Communication regarding reasonable adjustments which is separate from adjusted working arrangements, etc.

As you are aware, following earlier consultation on this matter, the policy was updated to include paragraph 4.16 highlighting that requests to work from home or to work from another location as a reasonable adjustment due to disability are separate to requests for hybrid working. The paragraph further emphasises the legal requirement made for reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This is also highlighted in the supporting procedure.

The importance of this distinction will be highlighted in communication to support the policy launch. It will also be reinforced in the reasonable adjustment policy which is currently being developed.

Appropriate training for managers to ensure the policy is clearly understood.

Line managers have been managing the application of the current Hybrid Working policy since its introduction in 2022.

The launch of the revised Hybrid Working policy will be supported with communication to promote the policy, procedure and FAQs. Communication will ensure that managers and staff are fully aware of changes to the policy and requirements to ensure consistent implementation and management of the policy.

Clarity on how leave days are treated under the policy. Specifically, if leave is taken on days when staff would normally attend the office, there should be no requirement for them to attend on other days.

Management of annual leave is covered at Q.29 of the FAQs. Further wording to clarify the impact of annual leave will be drafted for inclusion in both the procedure and FAQs. Updated wording will be provided for your consideration.

Assurance that the manager/staff discussion process can be conducted with sensitivity.

Detailed guidance for line managers on workplace attendance conversations is included in Annex C of the Hybrid Working policy supporting procedure. This highlights the importance of ensuring there is appropriate privacy for the conversation and includes the need to discuss the business needs along with discussion on matters including if temporary easements are needed, and wellbeing. The guidance will ensure that line managers are fully prepared when discussing all aspects of hybrid working.

Flexibility in relation to how staff claim attendance at Connect2 hubs.

As previously advised following consultation, CTUS views were considered and paragraph 3.1 of the policy was subsequently amended to provide that Connect2 hubs may be treated as the workplace on an exceptional basis, subject to business need and line management agreement. It is considered that this provides sufficient flexibility for the use of Connect2 hubs.

Senior Civil Servants (SCS) attendance requirements.

I note that CTUS is opposed to SCS being encouraged to attend more than the 40% minimum workplace attendance requirement per week and in your email of 27th June, you provided revised wording regarding SCS attendance.

The revised wording is not accepted. As discussed at the recent Whitley Subject Committee, the wording is to reflect the critical leadership role of the SCS and importance of visible leadership. It is therefore considered it is appropriate to encourage greater attendance by SCS.

Office Estate

You have stated that CTUS does not believe that the current office estate can accommodate a 40% workplace attendance. During consultation, Orchard House was highlighted as an example, but reference has also been made to multi occupancy

buildings generally. I have raised this matter with Construction and Procurement Delivery and would be grateful if you would provide further details of buildings in the NICS estate CTUS consider will be unable to support 40% staff occupancy.

As you are aware the policy is subject to approval by the Finance Minister. Subject to Minister's approval, we plan to launch communications regarding the policy during August with implementation from September with completion in October. We will share with CTUS any planned communications in advance of these issuing to staff.

I am happy to discuss further with CTUS at the next Employee Relations Subject Committee meeting on 9th July.

Yours sincerely,



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Cc: Jill Minne

