

Aisling Quinn
Director People and Organisational Development
2-4 Bruce Street
Belfast, BT2 7JD
CC [REDACTED]



Date: 22nd July 2025

DRAFT HYBRID WORKING POLICY

Dear Aisling,

Thank you for your reply on 7th July 2025 to CTUS comments regarding the ongoing consultation on the draft hybrid working policy.

As you will be aware from the consultation, the FDA has consistently raised our concern regarding paragraph 4.6 of the policy:

"To ensure teams feel supported and the benefits of face-to-face interaction in the workplace are optimised; and a learning culture is embedded, Senior Civil Servants are encouraged to attend the workplace for more than the 40% minimum workplace attendance requirement per week."

In your letter, you stated that management side was opposed to the amended wording submitted by CTUS on the basis that the original wording, "is to reflect the critical leadership role of the SCS and importance of visible leadership."

The FDA, as the union for senior civil servants, does not disagree with this. We recognise that SCS do have a critical leadership role and that visibility is a core part of this. We are also fully supportive of embedding a learning culture within the NICS and understand in-office attendance is part of that.

However, the FDA is opposed to codifying in the policy any wording that may lead to the policy being applied differently to different grades. While we recognise the wording is 'encouraged', we are concerned that the practical application of the policy may lead to SCS being required to attend the office more than the policy dictates.

It is the view of the FDA that NICS policies should be applied equally across all grades. While we accept there are some cases where a policy may be applied differently to SCS, this should be sparingly and there must be a clear justification, with the support of trade union side, which this does not have.

While CTUS opposed paragraph 4.6, we were keen to engage constructively and therefore offered an amendment, written purposefully to strike a reasonable balance between our concerns regarding the policy and the need to recognise the importance of visibility of senior leaders. It is deeply disappointing that management side have opposed this reasonable amendment.

We ask that you reconsider this position and support the balanced wording below:

"Senior civil servants are encouraged to show visible leadership including through workplace attendance to ensure teams feel supported and the benefits of face-to-face interaction in the workplace are optimised and a learning culture is embedded."

The FDA seeks to work collaboratively and in partnership with management side as we believe this is in the best interests of our members. However, this must be a two-way process.

If management side do not reconsider the position, unfortunately, the FDA will consider escalation, including raising a registered disagreement in line with the 'trade union arrangements' policy.

This is a course of action the FDA is keen to avoid but will pursue if necessary.

We hope you will listen to our concerns, and we can return to engaging constructively on the implementation of the policy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RM', followed by a period.

Robert Murtagh

National Officer NI

FDA