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**Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)**

The DES recently issued circular letter 0026/2021 regarding the Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2021/21 school year.

Circular 51/2019 is relevant in terms of the recruitment and appointment of SNAs

Circular letter 29/2021 is relevant in terms of the SNA allocation for the 2021/22 school year.

**SNA Allocation of Posts**

Circular letter 0029/2021 issued to school recently in relation to the **SNA allocation for the 2021/22 school year**. In light of the disruption caused by the COVID-10 pandemic, the proposed Frontload Allocation Model for SNAs for students in **mainstream classes** which had been approved by the government in 2019 is to be deferred for a further year to the beginning of the 2022/23 school year.

**The SNA allocations for special classes and special schools are not affected by this arrangement and will continue to be allocated in the normal way.**

The SNA allocation can be viewed ton the NCSE website at the end of May. SNA allocations for special classes and special schools, along with special classes and special school teaching allocations are also published on the NCSE website at the end of May.

it is expected that a small number of schools, e.g. developing schools, may not have a sufficient SNA allocation to meet the needs of their students. These schools can apply to the NCSE for an Exceptional Review of their allocation.

**Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2021/21 school year - CL 26/2021.**

**Circular letter 26/2021 deals with:**

* SNAs and redundancy
* SNA vacancies and the process to be followed by the school
* Relevant documents
* Appendix 1 – Process Verification Document (PVD)

Process Verification Document (PVD) – This form must be completed by employers in respect of every standard SNA vacancy, including the filling of additional hours (i.e. where an existing part-time SNA receives additional hours), other than substitute or cover vacancies and must be returned to the supplementary assignment manager.

* Appendix 2 – Panel Form 1 (PF1)

When an employer is notifying an SNA that s/he is being made redundant the employer should immediately give the SNA a completed Panel Form 1 (PF1). SNAs should always submit a copy of the completed Panel Form 1 (PF1) to employers when applying for vacancies as that is the only method for employers to determine whether an applicant has Panel Rights.

**SNA vacancies and the process to be followed by the school**

1. Where a school receives an **additional allocation** of SNA hours or posts (e.g. an additional allocation of SNA hours/posts or where an SNA has left the employment**), the additional allocation of hours/posts must be offered to any existing part-time SNA(s) in the school, in order of seniority, before the school can advertise the hours/posts.**

*The only exception to this rule is if there is a determination in writing from the NCSE/SENO stating that the allocation must be divided among a specific number of SNAs or must be implemented in a particular way.*

Where additional hours arise because of an SNA availing of a career break, these additional hours may be offered to existing part-time SNAs, in order of seniority. This is, however, at the sole discretion of the school. Any SNA receiving such hours should be given a separate contract for the additional hours.

1. **Appointment Process for a standard SNA vacancy (other than substitute or cover vacancies)**

* All appointments (other than substitute or cover vacancies) are subject to the conditions outlined in CL 0026/2021- Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants – Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2021/22 school year. Strict adherence should be ensured as regards liability to the SNA Supplementary Assignment Panel.

Advertising:

* All standard SNA vacancies and cover vacancies (i.e. Maternity Leave, Career Break, job-sharing replacement, Sick Leave, unpaid leave replacements etc.) **of 24 weeks or more** must be advertised on one of the following websites.
  + - [www.staffroom.ie](http://www.staffroom.ie)
    - [www.educationcareers.ie](http://www.educationcareers.ie)
    - [www.educatetogether.ie](http://www.educatetogether.ie)
    - [www.jobsireland.ie](http://www.jobsireland.ie)
    - [www.educationposts.ie](http://www.educationposts.ie)
* The advertisement for the SNA position should include any specific competencies/requirements to meet the special education needs of the students. It is difficult to justify not appointing an SNA with a PF1 Form, who applies for an SNA job, if the advertisement did not state that there were specific competencies/requirements for the position.
* The advertisement must state:
* The name and address of the school
* The expected date of commencement of the post
* State if the post if full time or part time and state the number of hours
* State whether it is a standard or cover SNA vacancy
* A general description of the duties
* Address to which applications should be sent.
* The latest date for receipt of applications (14 days required)
* State whether application form or CV must be submitted
* For standard SNA vacancies, applicants should be invited to submit a certified copy of PFI Form.
* List any specific competencies and/or requirements to meet the needs of the students.
* The Selection Committee is comprised of:
* Chairperson of the Board of Management
* Principal and
* One other person nominated by the patron/trustee

*There must be at least one male and one female on the Selection Committee.*

Please note at section note in CL 51/2019 (Recruitment and Appointment Procedures for SNAs:

*Invitations to interview should normally be issued in writing or by e-mail within three calendar weeks of the closing date for receipt of applications and shall include:*

*i. At least 7 days’ notice (number of days not specified in community and comprehensive sector) of a specific interview date, time (outside school hours in primary schools other than Community National Schools) and location.*

*ii. Details of the established* ***criteria for the post(s).***

*iii. A request for the applicant to notify the Interview Board if he/she requires any additional assistance in relation to a special need.*

When filling an SNA vacancy, schools must consider applicants with certified copies of PF1 Form in the **first instance**. Schools are obliged to give precedence to these applicants and may only interview SNAs with certified copies of Panel Form 1 (PF1) in the first instance.

An interview is required for the appointment of an SNA, even if there is only one applicant.

The school is obliged to offer the position to one of the applicants with PF1 Form if he/she meets the specific competencies/requirements as outlined in the advertisement.

If the school does not, following interview, find an applicant who meets the specific competencies required or if it does not receive applications from SNAs with a PF1 Form, it can then consider other non-panel applicants and arrange to interview these applicants. **These interviews must be held on a separate day.**

The successful candidate must confirm acceptance of the offer of employment within **6 calendar days** from the date of the letter of offer.

**Garda Vetting of Special Needs Assistants:**

* In line with the terms of CL [31/2016](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0031_2016.pdf), **a Vetting Disclosure must be obtained from the National Vetting Bureau prior to the commencement of employment of an SNA.** ACCS acts as the conduit for schools for the purpose of vetting of Special Needs Assistants. Please contact ACCS in this regard. The vetting process may take up to 2/3 weeks.
* A Statutory Declaration and Form of Undertaking must be completed and provided to the school prior to making an SNA appointment of any duration. The updated version of this Statutory Declaration is in the Appendix to CL [31/2016](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0031_2016.pdf). Copies of these documents should be retained by the school.

**PVD Form (Process Verification Document)**

At the end of the process of filling a standard SNA vacancy (including the filling of additional hours i.e where an existing part-time SNA receives additional hours), the school must complete a **Process Verification Document (PVD Form)** and return it to the DES. This must be done within 6 weeks of the filling of the SNA vacancy.

There is no requirement to complete PVD Form in respect of substitute or cover vacancies. The Process Verification Document can be found in Appendix 1 of CL 26/2021.