



PUBLIC SERVICE EXECUTIVE UNION

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Shorter Working Year (Term Time) Scheme

14 December 2016

Dear Branch Secretary,

For some considerable time the Union has been in correspondence and discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform about the operation of the shorter working year scheme.

The issue was raised at our Annual Delegate Conference in 2011 when Conference considered the lack of an appeal mechanism within the scheme to deal with cases where applications to participate in the scheme have been refused. The following motion was adopted on the matter:

This ADC seeks that an appeal process be introduced to create a transparent and just system in the shorter working year scheme

In discussions during 2011 it was indicated that the Official Side would seek to devise arrangements to deal with the concerns raised at our Conference in the context of a review of the scheme itself which was then projected to take place in 2012.

Subsequently, the Department decided to extend the scheme for a further period so the promised opportunity to deal with our concerns did not materialise.

In order to address the matter the Union continued to press the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform to consider issuing a note to Departments asking them to put in place mechanisms to internally review decisions on participation in the scheme in circumstances where such mechanisms do not exist currently.

By way of suggestion as to the text the Union proposed something along the following lines:

"In considering applications for participation in the scheme Departments\Offices should consider these with regard to both the business needs of area and\or the Department and the personal responsibilities and obligations of the officer concerned. Where officers are dissatisfied with a decision in relation to their application it would be desirable that a facility exist for staff to have any such decision reviewed independently of the business unit which made the original decision. Where Departments\Offices do not offer such a review facility at present arrangements should be made to put one in place. The decision review process should have regard to both the business needs of area and\or the Department and the personal responsibilities and obligations of the officer concerned."

No progress was made in discussions with the Department and, at the suggestion of PSEU, the Labour Relations Commission, facilitated a meeting between the Civil Service Staff Panel and DPER on the matter of the introduction of an appeals mechanism for the scheme. An agreement did not emerge from that process, although it was noted that the Department would be conducting its own review.

That review of the scheme involved:

- *A questionnaire issued to 21 Government Departments/Offices with responses received from 17 organisations (representing an 81% response rate).*
- *A workshop held with representatives of 11 Government Departments/Offices to discuss the operation of the Scheme*
- *A meeting with the representatives of the Civil Service Staff Panel*

The outcome of the management review of the scheme was that there was general satisfaction amongst Civil Service Departments about the way the scheme operates.

In order to address concerns raised by the Unions the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform is to write to Departments recommending that where appeals mechanisms are currently not in place provision should be made to provide that the refusal of an application for the scheme can be reviewed at a more senior level in the business unit. It is also to recommend to Departments that the operation of the scheme be discussed at Departmental Council prior to its introduction each year.

The outcome of the discussions does not address our concerns in the way we would wish but it does provide an opportunity for Branches to seek internal reviews where these currently do not take place. Branches might also note the recommendation concerning discussions on the operation of the scheme to take place at Departmental Councils and arrange to have the matter discussed in that forum (or other suitable forum) on a regular basis.

Yours sincerely,



Billy Hannigan
Deputy General Secretary

**To: Each Branch Secretary
EC Members
SOC Members
HQ Staff**