

FÓRSA **Q&A**

NCSE Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme

By Seán Carabini, assistant general secretary

Q: The NCSE has made a series of recommendations. How will this affect my job?

A: Initially, it won't. The NCSE Review does contain a series of recommendations. But that is all they are at this stage.

Q: What happens next?

A: Fórsa are the representative body of SNAs. We will carefully read through the review to see what recommendations provide us with an opportunity to improve the role of an SNA and what recommendations give us pause for thought. A series of consultations will then take place with the Department of Education.

Ultimately, it is the Department of Education who have the authority to alter the work of SNAs. Therefore, any discussions that we have about whether or not the recommendations will be introduced will take place with the Department.

Q: What are the priorities for Fórsa?

A: Fórsa will look through the document to see if the recommendations can be used to improve SNA job security. It mentions 'frontloading' SNA allocations into schools. There may well be an opportunity in this to improve job security. This will be explored.

Additionally, we note that the document does make some recommendations around work that is/is not appropriate for SNAs – particularly around care that involves medical interventions and intimate care. We also note that the report picks up on a trend on some schools that expects SNAs to have a limited teaching role.

It is, quite simply, not appropriate for any worker to be expected to carry out work that is not in their job description. The report also mentions qualifications and specialist training. The union will give full consideration to these matters.

Q: Is the SNA title changing?

A: It is true that the NCSE have recommended changing the name of SNA to Inclusion Support Assistant. However, this is, again, simply a recommendation. If, for example, the new, proposed title comes with certain guarantees around additional job security, it would be more acceptable.

Final thoughts ...

Like any set of recommendations, there will be some that we like and some that we don't. However, our job is to come together to consider them and to see what opportunities there may be in this for SNAs. If we believe that there is an opportunity in this to win stronger terms and conditions for our members, we will grasp them.