

Covid-19: Staff working, or asked to work, in areas of higher risk

Fórsa and its members across the civil, public, private, voluntary and semi-state sectors are committed to co-operating fully with emergency measures necessary to contain the Covid-19 virus, protect the health and safety of citizens and workers, and maintain essential services during this unprecedented public health emergency.

The union's members have shown a determination to co-operate with efforts to beat the virus and protect and care for citizens and workers.

From the outset, Fórsa has advised its members to co-operate with all necessary measures, including some that might not be acceptable in normal times. Sometimes this will mean doing different things, in different ways, at different times - including being temporarily reassigned to different tasks and organisations.

All of us in Fórsa, and across the nation, are hugely grateful to the large number of workers in various sectors whose jobs mean they are - or could be - in contact with people who have the virus. We appreciate that this puts them at higher risk than most, and we value and admire the exceptional contribution they're making in this crisis.

We have advised all such workers to make themselves familiar with the [HSE's occupational health advice](#), as well as [guidance issued by Fórsa](#) and the [Department of Public Expenditure and Reform](#) (DPER). All workers and citizens should follow the general [HSE and government advice](#) on measures to contain the virus.

Fórsa has sought the following commitments from management in the HSE and elsewhere with regard to staff who must work in environments of particular risk with regard to Covid-19:

1. Wherever possible, volunteers for such tasks should be sought in the first instance
2. For the protection of patients, clients, the public and workers themselves, staff must have the training and qualifications required to the undertake tasks and functions they are allocated safely and effectively
3. Adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), and training in the use and disposal of PPE, will be provided along with any other necessary supports (eg, mental health support) that can reasonably be expected
4. The individual family circumstances of staff will be taken into account when people are being allocated to

tasks and functions. In particular, those living with - or whose caring responsibilities demand contact with - elderly and other high-risk groups should not be obliged to work in high-risk areas except in very exceptional circumstances

5. Wherever possible, such workers will also receive other practical supports from their employer (eg, childcare supports)
6. There will be equity in the application of these criteria.