



29 March 2021

Michael McGrath, TD
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform
Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street
Dublin D02 R583

Dear Minister McGrath

Enhanced and improved remote working in the public service

As you are aware, *Building Momentum: A New Public Service Agreement 2020-2021* commits the parties to a range of measures related to remote working. These include a commitment to accommodate “the potential of remote working where appropriate in line with the Programme for Government” and to establish the public service “as a driver of best practice in this area.”

You are also aware that the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment published the Government’s national remote working strategy, *Making Remote Work*, on 15th January 2021. The strategy, which Fórsa welcomed, develops Programme for Government commitments in the area, and pledges to make remote working the norm for 20% of public sector staff.

The union believes that the rapid expansion of home working during the Covid-19 pandemic has heralded a permanent shift towards significant levels of remote working and/or blended working in the international economy, including Ireland. Though implemented rapidly, and in highly challenging conditions, the 2020-2021 experience of remote working in the Irish public service was innovative and largely positive with regard to outputs, productivity, and service delivery and quality.

Fórsa shares the Government’s ambition to build on this achievement to position the public service as a driver of enhanced and improved home working in ways that deliver for society, service-users, employers and employees.

To this end, I attach a Fórsa claim, which seeks the negotiation, with your department, of agreed and comprehensive guidelines on the development and management of remote working for application across the civil and public service. The claim is designed to reach agreement on a clear and consistent public service approach to remote working, based on principles of fair access, adequate employee protections, and robust measures to underpin continued public service quality and productivity.

I request that you instruct the appropriate senior DPER officials to open an early engagement with Fórsa on this claim.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Callinan".

Kevin Callinan
General Secretary