

Frequently Asked Questions for Fórsa members working as **Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)**

What should I do during the industrial action?

A detailed union instruction has been issued to members working as SNAs. It outlines the work to rule and non-cooperation actions you should follow as part of this industrial action. It is very important that you are familiar with the instruction and understand it.

This FAQ is a guide to help with general queries and will be updated as a live document over the coming weeks.

What does this FAQ document cover?

This document covers questions asked to date regarding the work to rule industrial action commencing on Wednesday 30th September 2026.

Why is the work to rule happening?

Following a ballot of all Fórsa members working in the Civil and Public service, in which over 96% voted in favour of taking industrial action, up to and including strike action, the National Executive Committee (NEC) authorised the commencement of industrial action in all divisions from Wednesday 30th September on a continuous basis.

All public sector unions, including Fórsa are also planning two one day strikes, due to take place on Wednesday 14th October and Wednesday 21st October.

When will the work to rule start and finish?

The work rule commences at the start of your working day on Wednesday 30th September. The work to rule is continuous and will be maintained until such time as the NEC determines that it is no longer required.

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What areas are covered by the work to rule?

The union instruction outlines that SNA members should:

- a) Refuse to cooperate with the Special Needs Assistant Workforce Development Plan. This will include: withdrawing goodwill – do not assist with extra-curricular activities such as with clubs, tours or open days.
- b) Refuse to attend training.
- c) Refuse to attend student planning meetings.
- d) Work to contract as per [Circular 0030/2014](#) – do not sign or accept any new contract and do not comply with the provisions of [Circular 0032/2026](#).
- e) Refuse to carry out any work under the 72 hours provisions listed in [Circular 0071/2011](#).

Each of these instructions is explained in detail below:

a) Refuse to cooperate with the Special Needs Assistant Workforce Development Plan

This will include: withdrawing goodwill – do not assist with extra-curricular activities such as with clubs, tours or open days.

As SNA members rejected the Workforce Development Plan and associated Circulars in the recent consultation ballot, the Plan and new Circulars on the Role of the SNA, the SNA Redeployment Scheme, SNA Allocations and SNA Contracts of Employment were withdrawn by the Minister at the request of Fórsa.

Members are instructed not to cooperate with any attempt to reintroduce those measures. At the moment, the Department does not intend to revisit the proposals, if that position changes and there is an attempt to reintroduce those Circulars members should not cooperate and should adhere to existing contracts and Circulars. Members are also instructed specifically to boycott extra-curricular activities such as clubs, tours or open days which are mentioned in the Workforce Development Plan.

b) Refuse to attend training

Members should not attend or participate in any form of training in the school. This includes all forms of training. If training is scheduled on an in-service day members should attend for work but not attend the training. School management should provide other duties consistent with the role of the SNA as set out in the existing [0030/2014 Circular](#).

c) Refuse to attend student planning meetings

SNA members will know that participating in student planning meetings was a component of the now withdrawn new Circular on the Role of the SNA ([Circular 0032/2026](#)). As that Circular was rejected in the consultation ballot, it is not appropriate for members to participate in such activity. In any school where this has been taking place, members should not attend any further meetings.



- d) Working to contract as per Circular 0030/2014 - do not sign or accept any new contract and do not comply with the provisions of Circular 0032/2026

This instruction is intended to emphasise to the Department of Education and school employers that SNA members will not, under any circumstances, accept new contracts or new Circulars that have not been agreed with Fórsa.

Members should continue to carry out the existing range of duties they have been assigned and there should be no change in existing working practices or duties.

- e) Refuse to carry out any work under the 72 hours provisions listed in Circular 0071/2011

This is a formal boycott of the 72 hours. SNA members should refuse to carry out any work associated with the 72 hours. This includes attendance in the school outside normal working hours and all other elements of the 72-hour obligation.

Does the work to rule mean members should stop carrying out other routine duties?

No, members are only instructed to take industrial action in the specific areas set out in the instruction. Members are not being instructed to withdraw from duties that they have been routinely undertaking, unless such duties consist of training, attending student centred planning, extra-curricular activities or work associated with the 72 hours.

Does the work to rule mean that members can decide themselves what work they want to carry out and what work they do not want to carry out?

No, members are only protected under the Industrial Relations Act 1990 if they adhere to the official industrial action instruction that has been issued to members. The work to rule will not protect members who decide to withdraw from other duties that are not specifically listed in the industrial action instruction.

What if I have been working beyond the scope of the existing National SNA Contract, can I stop carrying out that work?

No, if you have been routinely carrying out work outside the scope of the existing contract the work to rule does not allow you to stop carrying out those duties. If there are local problems regarding SNAs being asked to work beyond the existing National Contract those issues need to be discussed with the relevant official and addressed through the normal industrial relations mechanisms.

Your employer will take the view that you have agreed to carry out those duties previously, and you are not authorised under the work to rule to withdraw your labour from those duties. Changes to existing working arrangements need to be discussed with the school.



What industrial action are the teaching unions asking their members to take?

The INTO secured a 99% vote in favour of industrial action in their industrial action ballot. They will commence a work to rule on Monday 5th October and will be instructing teachers to boycott the Croke Park hours. INTO members will be on strike on Wednesday 14th October and Wednesday 21st October.

The ASTI has completed their industrial action ballot and secured a 95% vote in favour of industrial action. They will commence a work to rule on Monday 5th October and will be instructing Teachers to boycott the Croke Park hours, boycott the use of telephones and email and work to normal contracted hours. ASTI members will be on strike on Wednesday 14th October and Wednesday 21st October.

The TUI will close their ballots shortly and they expect a similar vote in favour of industrial action in the form of a work to rule and strike action.

Will Special Schools be exempt from industrial action?

No, all SNA members have been instructed to take industrial action. Special Schools will not be exempt. The INTO has adopted the same position. This applies to both the work to rule and to the strike days.

Will the work to rule affect duties in the classroom?

No, the work to rule will not change the role or duties of an SNA in the classroom in any way. In respect of duties in the classroom members should work normally.

Does the SNA working day include a short period before teaching starts and ends each day?

Yes, this is part of your contracted hours of work. It is there to assist with reception of children from busses/taxis etc. in the morning, for dispersal at the end of the school day, and for light tidying at the end of the day of equipment being used by children with special educational needs.

These are normal duties and should continue, i.e. walking children from and to the school transport at the start and end of the day.

We do a breakfast club in the morning as goodwill do we continue this?

The work to rule includes the withdrawal of goodwill. Therefore, members are entitled to stop working on out of hours activities such as breakfast clubs.

Will we get strike pay for the one day strikes on Wednesday 14th October and Wednesday 21st October?

The union rules state that strike pay is made available after 3 days of continuous strike action, strike pay is not available for one day work stoppages.

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Will the union provide placards for the strike days?

The four SNA Branches and staff are considering how to distribute placards in each region. It may not be possible to distribute placards to every single school so members have been sent placard designs that can be printed off for use on the strike days.

More information on the availability and distribution of materials will be sent to members via email in advance of Wednesday 14th October. Members can also print leaflets and posters to share with the school community. These are available on the Fórsa [website](#).

We supervise the children in the morning with no teacher present, should this continue?

SNAs should not be supervising children without a teacher being present. If you have been providing supervision without a teacher being present, please [contact us](#) to discuss how to address the problem.

If you have been carrying out such supervision for a considerable period of time your employer will assume this is a duty you have agreed to carry out.

This needs to be addressed directly with the school, please [contact us](#) to provide details. For the sake of clarity, you are not being instructed to leave children unsupervised, you are being advised to contact the union for advice before changing existing working arrangements.

What industrial action are other Fórsa members taking?

All union members working in the civil and public service will be commencing work to rule actions on Wednesday 30th September. The form of the work to rule actions differs depending on the workplace and the role of the members.

Members in the health service, local government, civil service and many state agencies will all cease cooperation with specific duties as of Wednesday 30th September. Industrial action often escalates as a dispute unfolds, and if this happens members will be updated.

