

Assembly Section

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Mr Shane McAteer
Clerk
Committee for Finance and Personnel
Room 419
Parliament Buildings
Stormont

Our Ref: CFP/311/11-15

26 March 2014

Dear Shane,

Flexible Working Inquiry

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 March which following on from previous contributions from DFP regarding the situation in the wider NICS, has requested information on the extent to which flexible working practices are being applied within DFP.

The flexible working arrangements available to staff working in the NICS are:

- Flexible working time (flexi time);
- Compressed hours;
- Personalised hours;
- Part-time working (including reduced hours and job sharing);
- Partial retirement; and
- Term-time.

The majority of staff have access to flexible working time (flexi time) which provides for a more flexible working day. Staff are able to vary the times of arrival and departure from work, the length and timing of their lunch break and to take time off if they work extra hours.

The table below provides summary information relating to staff working patterns and particularly to the other formal flexible working arrangements:

Working Pattern	Full time	Compressed Hours	Personalised Hours	Part-time working	Partial Retirement	Term-time	Total
No. of staff	2912	22	10	599	158	73	3774

A total of 23% of staff within the Department currently avail of some form of formal flexible working arrangement in relation to the hours they work.

There is no formal Home Working Policy within DFP; however there are informal adhoc arrangements in place, which vary across business areas. There are around 1300 staff (approx one third of staff employed in DFP) who have laptops, of which over 128 have ADSL (a dedicated broadband line in a staff home connecting the user directly to the NICS network), while almost 280 have SSL or VPN (staff use a cable to connect to their own home broadband router). Almost 347 staff members have 3G (this enables staff to connect to the network while on the move). In addition, there are around 495 Blackberry users (which allow staff to receive emails while out of the office). Of the 495 with Blackberrys approximately 49 are on a pilot with devices such as iPhones, Blackberrys, Tablets etc.

It should be noted that there are staff who have a combination of these devices, i.e. some have an ADSL connection in their home as well as a 3G card for when they are on the move. They may even have the SSL (home broadband connection) as a backup in case of the failure of the ADSL line.

Some examples of local flexible working arrangements in DFP are:

- Business Consultancy Staff, whose work style is a mixture of home, office (hot desking) and on-site, when undertaking assignments;
- NIDirect staff, who hold daily team meetings between Belfast and Derry/Londonderry via video conferencing;
- IT staff in IT Assist who avail of satellite working, most of whom do this on a minimum of one day per week; and
- Use of the Future@Work Business Zones.

I trust this additional information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gearóid Cassidy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

GEARÓID CASSIDY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer