

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT BRANCH



Shane McAteer
Clerk to the Committee for Finance & Personnel
Committee Office
Room 419
Parliament Buildings
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Room 413c
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8GB

Telephone: (028 905) 41140
Facsimile: (028 905) 40064
Email: alan.doherty@drdni.gov.uk

Your reference: DALO 24C/3/2014
Our reference:

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Dear Shane

INQUIRY INTO FLEXIBLE WORKING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development has asked me to respond directly to your memo of 31 January 2014 seeking the views of Statutory Committees on the Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector in Northern Ireland.

I have consulted Departmental officials, who have made the following points:

The Department currently has some 2,299 staff, the majority of whom enjoy Flexible Working arrangements. Of these, 279 avail of formal alternative working patterns. Applications for alternative working patterns are considered in line with statutory guidelines and NICS policies and DRD strives to support alternative working patterns where there business opportunities to do so.

The Department also operates and runs a successful Teleworking programme, which has been in place since 2007. This involves remote office stations secured at five sites across Northern Ireland. They are at Omagh, Londonderry, Portadown, Newry and Seaforde. Currently the programme is fully subscribed with 45 Departmental staff making use of these arrangements. This facility allows staff the flexibility to conduct their duties at a location which is much more convenient than their normal office.

The Department has conducted a review of this arrangement, with the overwhelming response from those using the facility confirming that it contributed positively to their work-life balance and reduced the potential for stress caused by longer journeys into work.

There is a wide range of alternative working patterns available under NICS Work-Life balance provisions. These include flexitime, compressed working hours, part-time working, job-sharing, personalised hours, term-time working, home working and partial retirement. Although there is currently no formal home working policy in place in DRD, some ad hoc arrangements do exist.

I hope that the above points are of assistance. I have copied this response to the Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development.

This letter is fully disclosable under FOI.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Doherty', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

ALAN DOHERTY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer