

Reference No: 07/12/2006 LP; **Date:** 07/12/2006

Civil Service Worksharing Scheme:- 07/12/2006 LP:-Civil Service Worksharing Scheme
E109/103/97

7 December 2006

Re: Circular 31/2001: Civil Service Worksharing Scheme

Dear Personnel Officer

1. I am writing to you about the Worksharing Scheme which was introduced in the Civil Service with effect from 1 June 2001. While acknowledging that Worksharing is already operating in the majority of Departments/Offices, it appears that a minority of Departments / Offices have been quite restrictive in making the Circular, and the terms therein, available to their staff as required. I am to remind you that the details of the Worksharing scheme as set out in Circular 31/2001 should be available to all civil servants covered by the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, and applications for Worksharing should be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Circular.

2. In relation to the operation of the Worksharing Circular, it has come to the attention of the Equality Unit, Department of Finance, that there is a wide variance in the Workshare patterns in operation across Government Departments and Offices. In the course of collecting data for the Work Life Balance Review, our research revealed over 40 variations on the workshare patterns suggestions cited in Circular 31/2001. The Equality Unit supports the efforts of Departments and Offices to facilitate their staff whilst ensuring that the operating requirements of Departments are not adversely affected.

3. A number of Departments / Offices have sought advice as to whether the Workshare examples cited in Circular 31/2001 are exhaustive: this issue has also been brought to the notice of the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme through the Equality Subcommittee of General Council. Accordingly this letter seeks to clarify the position in relation to workshare patterns that are not specifically cited in the above Circular.

4. The terms of Circular 31/2001 are not intended to be exclusive, i.e. the examples cited are non-exhaustive. Those patterns specifically mentioned are *examples* of patterns that may be used in Category I, Category II, etc. The Circular itself alludes to this in Paragraph 1.2, which states that “It is important that both management and those participating in the scheme adopt a flexible approach to the operation of the scheme”. Subject to the principle that **the implementation of the scheme is at the discretion of management, in the light of the operational needs of Departments**, worksharing arrangements which fall outside of the examples listed in Circular 31/2001 may be implemented by Departments / Offices if they so choose.

5. As with any Workshare arrangements, intending worksharers should be advised of the provisions of Circular 31/2001 before making their final decision as regards their worksharing request.

6. In line with the recommendations of the forthcoming Civil Service Equality Initiatives Report, which is due for publication early in the New Year, it is intended to establish a Network of Officers from Personnel / HRMS Units in Departments / Offices early in the New Year to discuss the implementation and management of Work / Life Balance schemes, including the Worksharing Circular.

Yours sincerely

Marie McLaughlin
Principal Officer