

18 September 2023

Support the strikes in Northern Ireland

Civil servants and healthcare workers in Northern Ireland are to take strike action at the end of this week in an ongoing dispute over pay.

The unions taking part in the strike action are PCS's sister union NIPSA, as well as Unison, GMB, RCM, Unite, Society of Radiographers and Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Health service workers will begin their 48-hour action on Thursday 21 September and will be joined by civil service colleagues on Friday 22 September.

Health Service

Health and social care staff in Northern Ireland remain the lowest paid across the UK. They are yet to be offered a pay uplift for 2023/24 and have received no additional pay award for 2022/23. The industrial action will involve walkouts across many health service areas including paramedics, pharmacists, health visitors and community practitioners.

Civil Service

Civil servants working for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) were given pay rises of £552 across the board, irrespective of their grade. This paltry increase equated to 2.1% for Admin Officers and 0.9% for Grade 7s, with no cost of living payment. With inflation sitting in double figures for most of the year, in real terms this amounted to a substantial pay cut for the 23,000 staff.

The NICS is a separate body to the UK civil service and its pay is set by the Northern Ireland Executive, however there hasn't been a functioning executive in Northern Ireland since March 2022 and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris, sets pay policy in its absence.

In setting a budget for the region, devastating cuts have been inflicted on vital areas across the public sector, including health, education and infrastructure.

Pickets and rallies

Pickets are expected to be held at most civil service buildings across Northern Ireland and at most major hospitals and health care facilities. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions will also be organising holding a rally at Belfast City Hall on Friday at 12:30pm for striking workers

PCS pickets were well supported by colleagues from across the trade union movement in Northern Ireland, and PCS reps and members are encouraged to show solidarity with the strikers, supporting picket lines where possible and attending the lunchtime rallies.