

16 January 2024

# Northern Ireland set for “biggest ever strike” on 18 January

Staff at the Northern Ireland Civil Service will join thousands of other public sector workers across health, education and public transport in a walkout on Thursday 18 January as part of ongoing pay disputes in the region.

The action is being heralded by Carmel Gates, general secretary of Northern Ireland’s largest trade union NIPSA, as “the biggest strike action Northern Ireland has ever seen.”

Ms Gates, whose union represents more than 20,000 staff in the NI Civil Service, said civil servants in NI were earning between £3,000 and £10,000 less than their counterparts in Great Britain for doing the same job.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said “PCS sends solidarity greetings to those on strike. Public servants deserve a better pay deal that reflects the important work they do to keep the country running. We stand with them.”

14 unions are taking part in the action which will affect health, education, public transport and nine government departments as well as dozens of arms length bodies. Public sector workers in Northern Ireland have received the lowest pay rises of any region of the UK, with some employers failing to make any kind of offer at all.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Conservative Chris Heaton-Harris outlined a financial package to the Stormont parties before Christmas totalling more than £3 billion, however the money is reliant on an Executive being formed. This money was to include a sum to settle outstanding public sector pay disputes but has not been made available due to the parties failing to reach an agreement.

ICTU Assistant General Secretary Gerry Murphy said “Workers in Northern Ireland cannot be held hostage by this process any longer. The Secretary of State has accepted that public sector pay needs to be settled and has admitted that he has the money to settle it. A worker’s pay is not some bauble to be dangled in a political negotiation. This money must be made available to settle this dispute now.”

## **Support the strikers**

Trade unions in Northern Ireland have always supported one another, and PCS picket lines have always received fantastic support from sister unions in the province. PCS members are encouraged to attend and support picket lines rallies which will be in place across Belfast and other major towns and cities.

## **Details of local rallies**

Rallies and marches will take place in Belfast, Derry, Ballymena, Omagh, Enniskillen, Magherafelt and Cookstown. For a full list of rallies and marches check the [NIC-ICTU website](#).