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PLAIN ENGLISH GUIDE

Public Service Pay Agreement 2026-2029

The Public Services Agreement is an industrial agreement. We wrote this Plain English guide to help you break through the technical, industrial relations language of the Public Service Agreement, so you can make an informed decision when you vote.

This deal was negotiated by representatives of DPER* and the group of unions representing public service workers. Both sides agreed to the proposed deal early in the morning on Wednesday 11th November.

The deal will run for two years and nine months, from 1st July 2026 to 31st March 2029.

**Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation*

Scan here for more information including FAQs.

The ballot runs until 12pm, Friday 4th December.

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1. Introduction

The introduction sets out the aims of the deal. It also talks about what happened as the talks took place. It mentions:

- The industrial action you took before and during negotiations on the deal.
- The cost-of-living crisis making your life harder as a public service worker.

It recognises that public service workers are needed to deliver essential services. It also repeats that Government and unions are committed to social dialogue and collective bargaining.

It says that major economic and social issues will be considered at the Labour Employer Economic Forum. These issues include:

- Housing.
- Pensions.
- Migration.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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2. Workplace change and reform

This chapter is about the steps Government and public service workers will take towards the "continued improvement and evolution of public services." The deal supports continued reform of public services. This is in line with previous agreements.

As part of the deal management and unions commit to engage in good faith. Both sides will aim to improve work practices and public services.

They also commit to making the public service a better place to work by promoting:

- Wellbeing.
- Equality.
- Inclusive working practices and arrangements.

Management may propose workplace changes that improve work practices and services. These include:

- If they want to bring in new or redesigned work processes and service channels.
- If they want you to use AI.
- If they want to increase the use of shared services, digital systems, data and automation in your workplace.
- If they want to change organisational structures.
- If they want to bring in standardised HR policies and procedures.
- If they want to make changes to your workplace's workforce plan.

Cooperation and consultation

Each sector of the public service will have its own action plan for how they will put the deal into effect.

Clauses 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 set out rules for how management and unions will engage with each other.

- Both sides need all the facts for any discussion to be worthwhile. Each side must share information with the other side before any discussion. This information should be detailed, and it should be shared early enough to give the other side time to examine it.

- Management and union representatives should be at a level that suits the level of change that management is proposing. Senior management and union officials must be part of any consultation over larger changes.
- Both sides should agree a start and end date for any consultation. This time period should be long enough that they can have meaningful discussions.
- They should use the "dispute resolution processes" if they cannot agree. This is a 6-week long process.
- Unions and management will cooperate with a 'speedy' dispute resolution process.

This is a change from previous agreements where workers were required to cooperate by 'working under protest'.

A digitally enabled public service (Artificial Intelligence)

Section 2.5 is about artificial intelligence and how it will impact the public service.

The deal says the country needs a "responsible adoption of emerging technologies". This means we need to weigh the good and the bad of new technology. We also need to plan how we introduce new technology so it benefits workers and citizens alike.

The deal also says that we should decide how we introduce new technology on a national level. A new AI forum will be established as part of the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) and will help determine how AI is introduced.

Part of the deal is no compulsory redundancies because of artificial intelligence in the public service. This is the first time a public sector pay deal has had protection against AI job losses.

It is important that public service workers can improve their digital skills. The public service will promote continuous learning for public service workers and support workers to develop specialist skills. There will also be a €150 million training fund to help workers reskill, adapt to changes in their work, and develop their careers.

Remote and blended work

Section 2.7 contains important updates on remote and blended working.

If your employer wants to make changes to remote and blended working, they will have to go through "established industrial relations mechanisms." This means they must engage with your union if they want to change remote and blended working arrangements in your workplace. If this happens, your union will be able to seek protections for your remote and blended working arrangements.

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The deal states that remote and blended working is a part of Irish working life and "the State, as the largest employer, has a duty to ensure that it plays a leading role." If members accept the deal, this will mean Government commits to maintaining access to remote and blended work for public service workers.

The deal will also mean Government commit to:

- Give workers access to remote and blended working if their work allows it.
- Include giving workers access to remote and blended working as part of workforce planning.
- An ongoing review of which jobs and workplaces allow for remote and blended working.

Workforce capability

This section of the deal is about improving your skills and the skills of your colleagues across the public service. Government will agree to:

- Increase apprenticeships across the public service.
- Improve access to training, upskilling and reskilling.
- Work on improving digital skills across all grades.

Service delivery

This section of the deal is about outsourcing. Government will agree to directly employ workers where possible and where it is "consistent with efficient and effective public service delivery."

Management will need to consult with unions before outsourcing a service. They will also need to talk directly to unions when a dispute happens.

Public procurement

The deal will bring in 'further safeguards' to make social and ethical considerations more important in the procurement process. These safeguards will be part of the new Ethical Public Procurement (EPP). The EPP will mean Government should not give contracts to businesses who do not meet any of these standards:

- Respect for human rights.
- The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).
- Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

The deal will also make collective bargaining a consideration in the procurement process. This will mean Government should not give contracts to companies who refuse their staff the right to collective bargaining. This should include:

- An employer who refuses to recognise a union representing their workers.
- An employer who fires employees who try to unionise their workplace.
- An employer who punishes an employee because they are an active union member.

There will be a pilot public procurement project. The project will work out how collective bargaining considerations will work in public procurement.

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3. Pay

This deal offers you ten pay increases between September 2026 and March 2029. Overall, these will add up to 9.75% of your gross salary, with a further 1% amount for local bargaining.

Your first pay increase is from 1st September 2026. You will get back pay for the extra income you should have gotten since 1st September.

You will get a bigger increase overall if you are a lower-paid worker. If you earn less than €60,000, there are five flat rate increases that will earn you more than the standard 1% to 2% increase.

If members vote to accept the deal, you will get your pay increase early in the new year. The date will depend on how quickly your payroll department process the pay increases and back pay.

Your annualised pay increases would be:

1st September 2026	2% increase or a flat rate of €1,200, whichever is greater
1st April 2027	1% increase
1st August 2027	1% increase or a flat rate of €600, whichever is greater
1st November 2027	1.5% increase or a flat rate of €900, whichever is greater
1st March 2028	1% increase
1st June 2028	1% increase or a flat rate of €600, whichever is greater
1st October 2028	1% increase
1st March 2029	second phase of 'local bargaining' of 1% (this may or may not be in the form of a pay increase)
2nd March 2029	1.25% increase or a flat rate of €750, whichever is greater

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Inflation

This deal is designed to protect you against inflation. Your pay increases will cumulatively* come to 10.17%, or 11.27% if you include the second phase of local bargaining in 2029. This will be at least 2% more than the amount inflation is projected to rise over the 33 months covered by the deal.

Many groups have given projections for inflation over the next three years. We used the Nevin Economic Research Institute's (NERI) projection of 7.2% to 8%. This is one of the higher projections.

NERI is a trusted institution which is funded by trade unions to give unbiased economic analysis.

There is a review clause if inflation goes above projections. The clause says we can demand a review if inflation is higher than expected and the review must be completed within six weeks.

***Cumulative**

Instead of adding the percent increases as 1 + 1, you add them as a percent of total pay one after the other. For example:

A 2% increase of 100% of your current salary is 102%.

A 1% increase of that 102% is 103.02%.

If you do this for every increase, you come to 110.17% or 111.27% with local bargaining.

This is how the pay increases will change your salary in real life.

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Back pay

If members vote to accept the deal, your payroll department will calculate how much you are owed in back pay. Your back pay will be the difference between the amount you earned and the amount you should have earned if the pay deal went into effect on 1st September.

For example:

You are a Clerical Officer (grade 3) in your first year of service.
You earn €31,935 a year.

- Members vote yes and the deal is accepted.
- You are paid on the first of every month.
- Your payroll processes the increase for February.
- This means you are owed pay for five months.
- Your pay increase is €1,200. €100 per month.
- You will get an extra €500 in your pay, before tax etc.

We have put together a **salary calculator** if you want to estimate how the pay increases will affect your salary.

The calculator does not include local bargaining increases, changes in what point you are on your pay scale, or tax and other deductions.

Lower-paid workers

This deal prioritises higher increases for lower-paid workers. Workers earning less than €60,000 a year will get a flat rate increase for five of the increases in this deal. These flat rate increases will be worth more than the percent increase amount.

Flat rate

The flat rate increase is called a 'payment' in the text of the deal. This does not mean it is a once-off lump sum payment. The flat rate is an increase to your overall salary. The flat rate is designed so the lower you are paid, the more benefit you will get.

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For example:

You are a library assistant (grade 3) in your first year.
You currently make €31,935 a year.

- On 1st September 2026 the percent increase is 2%.
- This would be an increase of €638.7 to your salary.
- Instead, you get a flat rate increase of €1,200.
- Making your salary €33,135.
- €561.30 more per year than if you got the 2% percent increase.

Your colleague is a librarian (grade 5), also in their first year, currently makes €52,761 a year.

- On 1st September 2026 the percent increase is 2%.
- This would be an increase of €1,055.22 to their salary.
- Instead, they get the same flat rate increase of €1,200.
- Making their salary €53,961.
- €144.78 more per year than if they got the 2% percent increase.
- As a library assistant you will benefit €446.52 more than your higher earning librarian colleague.

We have put together a **salary calculator** if you want to estimate how the pay increases will affect your salary.

The calculator does not include local bargaining increases, changes in what point you are on your pay scale, or tax and other deductions.

There will be five flat rate increases over the life of the deal:

1st September 2026	€1,200
1st August 2027	€600
1st November 2027	€900
1st June 2028	€600
2nd March 2029	€750

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Part-time, job share and other non-full-time workers

If you work part-time, you will get the same percent increase in your salary as your full-time colleagues. This is the same for all workers who do not work full-time hours.

> *This means on 1st August 2027 you will get an increase of 1% if you earn more than €60,000 a year.*

If you earn less than €60,000 a year you will get a flat rate increase. The flat rate increase you get will depend on how many hours you work in a week.

> *If you work half the hours of a full-time worker, you will get half the payment. This means on 1st August 2027 you will get an increase of €300, half of the €600 flat rate.*

Allowances

Pay increases would apply to pensionable allowances.

4. Local Bargaining

The next phase of local bargaining will be on 1st March 2029. This will be worth 1% of your local bargaining group's pay.

The last phase of local bargaining will be part of the next deal and worth 1% of your local bargaining group's pay.

Outstanding Local Bargaining claims

Some phase one local bargaining claims have not been settled. The government commits to finishing negotiations on these claims by the end of November.

The deal recognises the delays some local bargaining groups faced. It also recognises that the local bargaining process must become more efficient in the future.

Clause 4.2.2 acknowledges the state has a "liability" concerning local bargaining groups who are waiting on their claim "more than a year after payment was due".

There are three categories of claims from phase one of local bargaining in the deal:

- Category one claims: these claims deal with a sector. They have already been negotiated. They are now moving forward or have already come into effect.
- Category two claims: these are claims where a local bargaining group chose to take a general 1% pay increase. They are now moving forward or have already come into effect.
- Category three claims: these have not been settled yet. This category includes claims that have gone to dispute resolution.

We are negotiating with management on category three claims. We will let members know as soon as an update is available.

This includes groups who:

- Want to settle their claim as a 1% pay increase from 1st September 2025.
- Have an agreed a proposal on the table.

If you are in one of these groups, you will get back pay from to 1st September 2025.

Some specific claims are listed in the local bargaining chapter.

SNA Workforce Development Plan

As part of the deal, government and unions will re-engage on the SNA Workforce Development Plan (SNAWDP).

In the agreement, the Government has acknowledged the case for reducing the 72-hours for the first time.

We will ballot our SNA members if there are new proposals related to a SNAWDP.

Civil service mileage rates

The deal contains a commitment to a prompt review of civil service mileage rates. This means DPER must hold a review soon after the deal if members vote to accept the deal.

The review will consider all the reasons why driving has become more expensive in the last few years.

Pensions

If your public service pension is linked to the public service pay scales, your pension will increase.

Government confirmed this will happen in a letter sent to the Public Services Committee of ICTU.

The deal will not make any other changes to pensions, but it will start discussions on pensions. If members accept the deal:

- DPER will open discussions with the Alliance of Retired Public Servants. These discussions will be on issues affecting public service pensioners.
- DPER and the NSSO will open discussions with ICTU representatives and officials. These discussions will be on more technical pension issues affecting serving staff.

5. Confidence building, oversight and industrial peace

This section is about how the government plans to rebuild trust and confidence in the industrial relations process in the public service.

Clause 5.1.3 is about how unions and management will consult. We agreed that "consultation" should mean:

- Management should consult unions before they make any decisions that are likely to lead to changes in your work organisation or your terms and conditions of employment.
- Consultation needs to include meetings, and both sides need to share any information needed to make the meetings meaningful.
- Consultation should have a start and end time. Both sides need to know what these times are. This will stop consultations from dragging on for months and years.
- There will also be a set process if neither side can agree by the end of the consultation period.

The process for when neither side can agree after consultation is laid out in section 5.6

- Both sides will engage locally for up to six weeks.
- If they still cannot agree, the dispute will go to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).
    - Not every workplace's disagreement will go to the WRC. For example: a disagreement in the civil service will go to the conciliation and arbitration (C&A) scheme.
- If they cannot agree at the WRC, they will move to either:
    - The Labour Court.
    - An adjudicator.
    - The relevant arbitration board.
- The Labour Court or Arbitration/Adjudication is the final stage.

Each sector will have a forum to watch over industrial relations issues. They will be made up of representatives from management and from unions. The WRC will nominate an independent chair for the forum.

The Joint Implementation Committee will deal with any issues that affect more than one sector or the whole public service.

The industrial peace clause

Clause 5.8 is often called the "industrial peace clause". This means we won't take industrial action over anything covered by the deal if your employer keeps to the deal. We will be able to take industrial action if your employer breaks the deal in any way.

This does not mean we cannot take industrial action on issues that are not covered by the deal. One example of an issue not covered by the deal is staffing levels.

Non-union workers

This is a deal between Government and members of the unions who are part of the ICTU public service unions group. The deal states that the benefits should only go to members of these unions, and members of other unions/associations that agree to comply with the deal.

In past deals, employers gave benefits to both union and non-union staff. They will likely do the same with this deal.

Joint Implementation Committee

A Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) will meet every three months to oversee the deal. The JIC will oversee how each sector is putting the deal into effect. The committee can step in if there is a major dispute that might break the deal.

Trade union access

Management in your workplace must allow trade unions to access your workplace. This is to explain the benefits of trade union membership to employees and take part in inductions for new employees.

FEMPI

Clause 5.2 is about section 4 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009.

Government will move forward with repealing section 4 of FEMPI. They will publish a Bill to repeal it by the end of November 2026, and they will prioritise the Bill in the Dáil and Seanad.

Review of Agreement

This clause says that public service pay terms and conditions and any related issues shall not be revisited for the lifetime of the deal.

However, if inflation is higher than projected, we can reopen negotiations. We explained this in more detail in chapter 3.