

Industrial action by ICT workers in Local Authorities

Wednesday 28 January 2026

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*Please note this is a live document and will be updated as further FAQs arise.
Last updated: 29 January 2026*

Why are ICT staff taking industrial action?

For over six years, Fórsa has engaged in good faith with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) through detailed reports, proposals, and a WRC process. Despite this, there has been no meaningful action to establish appropriate professional structures for ICT roles within local authorities. All engagement routes have now been exhausted.

This is about a fair and sustainable future for the ICT workforce in local authorities. We are fighting for proper grading, a clear career path and recognition of the responsibilities they carry.

What was the outcome of the ballot?

98.4 % of members voted in favour of industrial action, providing a clear and overwhelming mandate for action across the sector.

What form will the industrial action take?

The action consists of:

- Stopping all out-of-hours ICT work
- Non-engagement with external third parties

Who does this action cover?

This industrial action applies to all staff employed within the IT/ICT and Digital Services Departments of local authorities. This includes all grades, roles, and functions operating under these departments.

When does the action start and how long will it last?

The industrial action will commence from 7am on Wednesday 28th January and will continue until a resolution is reached.

What does “out-of-hours work” mean?

Any ICT activity outside normal working hours, including:

- System or infrastructure upgrades
- Application deployments or changes
- Reactive support, troubleshooting, or call-outs

All such work will cease for the duration of the action.

What does “non-engagement with third parties” mean?

During the action, ICT staff will not:

- Communicate with any third parties (email, phone, MS Teams, meetings)
- Attend third-party meetings or workshops
- Process or support third-party requests
- Enable or approve work required for third-party deliverables

Clarification on indirect third-party instructions

Where a third party provides instructions, guidance, or actions, whether directly to ICT staff or indirectly via a user or business area, those instructions are still considered to originate from a third party. Acting on them would enable a third-party deliverable and is therefore not permitted during the period of industrial action. The route by which the instruction is received does not change its status.

Non-ICT colleagues who are union members are expected to respect the industrial action and avoid actions that would circumvent its intent, including passing on third-party requests to ICT staff. **This means members should not take on work of their colleagues who are taking industrial action.**

Who are considered “third parties”?

Any organisation or individual not directly employed by the local authority, including:

- LGMA
- ICT contractors and consultants
- Software, hardware, cloud, and telecoms providers
- Agency ICT staff

Please note: Other local authorities are currently not considered external third parties, nor are public representatives.

What is this action seeking to achieve?

The action seeks the establishment of:

- Clear professional recognition of ICT as a distinct discipline
- Appropriate career, capability, and progression structures
- A sustainable ICT function, underpinned by nationally agreed professional frameworks for how ICT services are delivered and supported, capable of supporting both local and national digital services

What is a derogation and how do they work ?

A derogation is a union approved exemption from industrial action. The onus to request derogations is the responsibility of the employer and any such requests will be considered by the national Disputes Committee, provided that it is limited in nature and requested in a timely fashion. Branches will also establish local Disputes Committees to work collaboratively with the national committee.

Have any derogations been granted in this dispute?

Yes, four have been granted, one related to cyber – security work, one related to payroll, one related to fire and emergency services and one related to homeless services. See further details below.

Cyber-security Derogation

Following representations from the LGMA, the Disputes Committee have agreed to the following Cyber-Security Derogation and the following work is deemed permissible (i.e. is allowed)

1. Security monitoring and alert response based on current local arrangements
2. Immediate incident response and threat containment
3. Critical vulnerability and patch management
4. Emergency access control and identity security actions
5. Urgent network, firewall, and endpoint protection measures
6. Security governance actions required to manage active risks
7. Engagement with national and third-party system providers when security issues arise

This means that the normal arrangements remain in place for cyber-security.

The Fórsa Disputes Committee has made it clear that the need for an on-call system is a core issue in the dispute, and this national approach for a derogation reinforces the necessity to agree a fair system for on-call urgently.

Payroll

A derogation has been given relating to payroll continuity, including facilitation of authorised third-party access (Gartan / Mallon) to apply approved pay increases and for the payment of pensioners.

Other derogations have been requested and are subject to further clarification from the LGMA.

The union has informed the LGMA that any derogation granted will be kept under review and may be rescinded immediately and at anytime by a decision of the national Fórsa Disputes Committee. We have stated that attempts to circumvent or undermine this action may lead to the immediate escalation of the action.

Having considered the matter in terms of further derogation requests, the union Disputes Committee reminds the LGMA such requests that are not simply an opportunity to request “business as usual”. Management is entirely responsible for the position that our members have been placed in. Management also must take the responsibility for the curtailment of any service. Notwithstanding this and following the clarification from the LGMA, we have deemed the following derogations to be granted:

Emergency Homeless Services

This derogation is only applicable when members are satisfied that the need fits the specified criteria:

- Supports individuals or families at imminent risk of homelessness; and
- Provides or manages emergency accommodation.

Applicable to: iHouse, NEC, OHMS, LAVA Validation Tool, HAP/SUGAR CRM, PASS System

Fire and Emergency Services

This derogation is only applicable when members are satisfied that the need fits the specified criteria:

- Fire brigades and operational fire response are required;
- DFB is directly involved.
- All Regional Fire Control and call centres are included.

Applicable to: STORM CAD, VMware, ProQa, Dell hardware support, networking, iPECS telephony, ISDN, PSTN, VoIP, GD92 Station End Alerting, Multitone GD92 equipment, DFB Back Up systems ProComm, National IP WAN, GSM, DFB Station sounders, turnout printers.

What about further escalation?

The Disputes Committee, in consultation with ICT members, will scope out further escalation of the dispute.

We have made it clear that attempts to intimidate or threaten Fórsa members engaging in this legitimate action may lead to the immediate escalation of the dispute.

I'm not a member of Fórsa, what should I do during the dispute?

Have you thought about joining the union? Your colleagues are fighting hard for your rights. The more people who join, the more strength we have. It's never been [easier to join Fórsa](#).

Once your membership has been ratified, you must follow union instructions regarding the dispute.

What should members say to public reps?

We would encourage members to explain why they are taking industrial action to their local public representatives. You can advise elected representatives to contact the Chief Executive of the local authority in their constituency to urge them to resolve the dispute. Be advised that public representatives are currently not considered external third parties.

Is there a standard response we should use during the industrial action for third-party or out-of-hours communication?

Where required, staff may use the following standard wording when responding to communication during the period of industrial action:

“Thank you for your correspondence.

Please be advised that, due to ongoing industrial action, we are not in a position to engage with external third parties at this time. This includes all communication, meetings, and activities related to third-party requests, as outlined in the current industrial action directives.

Your message will not be processed during this period.

Please note that ICT staff are also not engaging in any out-of-hours ICT work for the duration of the industrial action, and requests received outside normal working hours will not be processed. We will resume normal engagement once the industrial action has concluded.”

I have some more questions, not answered above. Who do I contact?

You should contact your local branch. If you are unsure of who to contact, please contact your closest Fórsa office:

- Cork 021 4255 210 forsacork@forsa.ie
- Limerick 061 319 177 forsalimerick@forsa.ie
- Galway 091 778 031 forsagalway@forsa.ie
- Sligo 071 914 2400 forsasligo@forsa.ie
- Dublin Head Office: 01 8171500 lghelp@forsa.ie