
CIVIL SERVANTS OFFERED 4.65% PAY DEAL

3 August 2004

NIO Minister Barry Gardiner today described a new pay offer for staff in the Northern Ireland Civil Service as:

“a very good deal for the civil service”.

Speaking on behalf of the Secretary of State, he explained that Ministers had authorised a new offer to the Trade Union NIPSA. He said:

“Today we have made a fair and reasonable offer for 2004 pay to the Trade Union and sought new negotiations on the way ahead for civil service pay. The offer is worth 4.65% over 16 months, with all elements of the package backdated to 1 April 2004. I would ask staff to consider it carefully before taking any decision.

“We would like to re-commence negotiations with NIPSA as soon as possible to explore the details and ensure that we achieve the best possible outcome for staff within the remit approved by the Government.”

Explaining how the offer is made up, the Minister said:

“If a 16 month deal can be agreed, we would be able to give staff both a cost of living increase and the other normal elements of the pay system, while keeping within the necessary limits on earnings growth. If our offer is applied as we are proposing, it would mean increases of at least 3% for all staff who are eligible for an increase and performing satisfactorily – and at least 4.5% for more than half the staff.

“The proposals would specifically avoid a repetition of the problem that staff at the top of pay scales did not receive a consolidated increase last year. The offer shows very clearly that we have been listening to staff – we have tried to find ways to deal with the anomalies of last year’s settlement, and so address some of NIPSA’s main concerns.

“As the 16 month offer would be a change from existing arrangements under our pay agreement, this would require Trade Union side agreement.”

Commenting on the relative position of the NICS, the Minister said:

“A great deal has been written and said about NICS pay in recent months. Over the past four years, civil servants have had higher pay increases than their counterparts in the private sector, and have received increases comparable to the Home Civil Service:

- between 2000/01 and 2003/04, pay for the NICS increased by a total of 14.4%;**
- in the same period, pay deals for the Home Civil Service were worth on average 14.3%;**
- average private sector earnings in Northern Ireland increased by 12.6% between 2000 and 2003.”**

Calling on NIPSA to return to negotiations, Barry Gardiner said:

“As the Secretary of State has made clear, we have to work within the pay remit set by the Government for the NICS. We have a very clear policy on public sector pay and need to ensure that resources are used to improve public services, especially our priorities of health and education.

“I would appeal to NIPSA to suspend its industrial action to allow for new discussions on the details of the offer we have made.

“We need to see an end to the disruption of public services and to stop the damage that is being done to Northern Ireland’s reputation and economic competitiveness. The disruption to driver and vehicle testing is affecting small businesses; planning delays are frustrating for homeowners and hurting the economy; farmers are being hit by unacceptable delays in grant payments.”