

nipsa

Annual Report 2023



Biedlin Public Services
Heftin' Waarkers in the Public Airt

Protecting Public Services
Supporting Public Servants

Ag Cosaint Seirbhísí Poiblí
Ag Tacú le Seirbhísigh Phoiblí



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Foreword

2023 was a year of workers struggle unlike any we have ever witnessed.

The year began in the same way 2022 had ended - with NIPSA members and other workers on picket lines in defence of pay and services. In 2022, after the collapse of Stormont, the Secretary of State had accused local politicians of being fiscally irresponsible in running up a so called 'debt' of £660 million. He then went on to impose cuts that meant public sector workers and services were starved of funds. He doubled down on his cuts by imposing a sanctions budget in April which ensured that any additional funds from the Treasury, which was being provided in England and Wales, would not come here as part of the Barnett consequential. Effectively he was punishing workers here and using economic sanctions for political reasons.

The trade union movement responded in force. NIPSA's health workers who had begun action in December 2022, took to the picket lines again in February. NIPSA's civil servants then voted 'yes' in their strike ballot and took to the picket lines alongside teachers in April. As the year progressed NIPSA members in the Housing Executive and Libraries embarked in action while local government workers continued their action in furtherance of their pay disputes in councils.

NIPSA's action continued in the civil service with hugely successful selective action by members in the Veterinary Services and Animal Health Group whose action closed ports and meat plants and forced the Secretary of State to agree to meet NIPSA. Members in the health service and civil service took strike action on 22 September and then in November, NIPSA members in education took to the picket lines. This meant that for the first time in NIPSA's history, members in all the key sectors were engaged in industrial action. The year of action ended with successful selective action by Business Service Organisation members in health.

By taking strike action, NIPSA members were not only responding in anger to the continuation of derisory pay awards but also to the run down in services through cuts and staff shortages. To make matters worse, 2023 was the year of the worst cost of living crisis in living memory with workers experiencing double digit inflation for much of the year.

Whilst the government and right-wing economists continued to try to lay the blame for the crisis on the war in Ukraine, it was abundantly evident that it was the profit-gouging of the multi-nationals that was largely responsible for the world-wide crisis.

With the Assembly collapsed, decision making for the year was in the hands of civil servants who were granted additional powers. The Secretary of State then demanded that they bring forward a list of potential finance generating measures. The measures included for consideration were water charges, prescription charges, an end to free transport, the introduction of car parking charges and rates increases. NIPSA will respond to challenge these stealth taxes.

NIPSA's media profile throughout the year was second to none and our call to the political parties to fight for a needs-based budget got a significant echo. When the Secretary of State set out the details of the financial package that might be available if the Assembly returned, NIPSA was clear that we did not believe the package was sufficient to address all our members pay demands and that we needed to continue the fight to ensure there would be sufficient funding now and into the future. NIPSA made clear that our members should never have to accept a choice between cuts in public services or cuts in members' pay.

As the Secretary of State dangled the offer of funds for pay, NIPSA set out a warning that workers should not be forced, through desperation, to accept awards that were less than they deserved. We also made clear that the pay demands of all public sector workers must be met and that no group of workers should be left behind.

As the year ended, NIPSA through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, was making plans for generalised strike action by all public sector unions. With work progressing well, the strike action to be taken 18 January 2024 was shaping up to be the biggest and most significant strike action in the history of Northern Ireland. NIPSA was proudly to the fore in those plans and played a key role in helping to bring the action together. Because the action was due to include our members in the civil service, the health service and the Education Authority this would mean that NIPSA would have the largest number of members involved in the action.


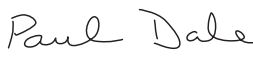

NIPSA ends this year with the highest number of members we have ever had. We record sincere thanks to the staff, the activists and the members for the work they have done to make that happen. With the level of work and commitment shown by all, we can be very confident that NIPSA will continue to be successful in the future.

The capitalist system we live under does not give working class people anything for nothing. Everything workers have ever gained has been won through struggle. The year ahead is likely to be one of further struggle but there is no doubt, NIPSA will remain in the forefront.

Up the workers! Up the Strikers!



General Secretary
Carmel Gates



President
Tanya Killen

Vice-President
Paul Dale

Honorary Treasurer
Jane Scott



Officers and Staff 2023

Officers 2023

President: Tanya Killen
Vice-President: Paul Dale
Honorary Treasurer: Jane Scott

Staff at 31st December 2023

General Secretary	C Gates		
Deputy General Secretaries	A McMillen ^(A)	M Morgan ^(A)	P Mulholland
Policy and Research Officer	J McVey		
Assistant Secretaries	K Smyth N Shiel ^(A)	A Law ^(A) T Thomas ^(A)	T McKillop ^(A)
Assistant Secretary (Finance)	M Law		
Higher Executive Officer	C Arkinson R Graham K Kelly B Trainor	P Boyle ^(T) L Hartin ^(T) L Mackel Janice Walsh ^(T)	E Farrell ^(T) S Harvey ^(T) J Murdock ^(T) R Wilson
Executive Officers	M Donnelly C McDonnell D Whitford	T McAteer B Nugent	A McDonnell LA Scott
Senior Personal Secretary	L Hudson		
Personal Secretaries	D Dawson C McLeish ^(P)	S Johnston M O'Coisneachain	C McConnell
Administrative Officers	A Cartwright G Jarvis ^(P) P Murray	K Doherty J Jennings	G Jones
Caretaker	A Burns		
General Assistants	A Mekelburg ^(P)	S Overend ^(P)	D Rolley ^(P)

(A) Acting (P) Part-time (T) Temporary

Seconded Officers, Civil Service

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² Temporary
³ Temporary

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General Council

Attendance of members at General Council Sessions:

January to May 2023			June to December 2023		
NAME	POSSIBLE	ACTUAL	NAME	POSSIBLE	ACTUAL
Bell, S	8	8	Antal, S	7	6
Collins, L	8	8	Barlow, D	7	7
Conlon, S	8	3	Bell, S	7	6
Cowan, D	8	0	Collins, L	7	6
Crilly, D	8	8	Conlon, SP	7	5
Doherty E	8	5	Creaney, T	7	7
Dowds, E	8	8	Dale, P	7	7
Duffy, L	8	6	Dawson, E	7	5
Godfrey, T	8	5	Doherty E	7	5
Harvey, S	8	8	Duffy, L	7	0
Higgins, G	8	8	Garland, H	7	6
Killen, T	8	8	Graham, R	7	4
McCloskey, M	8	5	Killen, T	7	6
McKee, M	8	7	Loughran, M	7	4
McKeegan, J	8	8	McAtamney, E	7	7
McLaughlin, T	8	7	McCann, F	7	6
McSherry, H	8	8	McCloskey, M	7	4
McVeigh, G	8	5	McSherry, H	7	6
O'Neill, F	8	6	McVeigh, G ¹	2	2
O'Reilly, B	8	8	Mulholland, B	7	6
Rooney, J	8	6	O'Sandair, R	7	5
Scott, J	8	8	O'Neill, F	7	5
Sloan, R	8	3	Scott, J	7	7
Toner, D	8	8	Sloan, R ²	4	1
Turner, P	8	7	Toner, D	7	4
			Turner, P	7	4

1 Joined November 2023
2 Resigned October 2023

Committees

Membership of Committees at 31 December 2023

General Purposes Committee	L Collins H McSherry	T Creaney B Mulholland	P Dale J Scot	T Killen
Equality Committee	S Antal P Dale E McAtamney	M Campbell J Davidson F McCann	L Collins E Donaghy A Millar	T Creaney H Garland G Saunders
Welfare Fund Committee	L Collins	T Killen	J Scott	
Finance Committee	S Bell	R Graham	R O'Sandair	J Scott
Management Side JNCC	C Gates	P Dale	T Killen	J Scott
Global Solidarity Committee	S Antal SP Conlon R O'Sandair	I Boersma T Creaney J Scott	W Brooks E Dawson	L Collins M Loughran
Conference Arrangements Committee	SP Conlon H McSherry	M Loughran	E McAtamney	F McCann
Standing Orders Committee	A Boal	K Loughran	J McCloskey	J Veighey
NIPSA News Editorial Committee	I Boersma R O'Sandair	J Davidson	D Maguire	H McSherry



Civil Service Group

Attendance of Members and Officers at Executive Committee Meetings

December 2022 to November 2023		
Name	Possible	Actual
I Boersma	17	17
W Brooks	17	15
F Cammock ¹	3	3
P Cobain	17	15
L Collins	17	15
T Creaney	17	17
D Crilly	17	13
P Dale	17	16
J Davidson ¹	15	14
M Dobbin ³	17	9
E Doherty	17	8
L Glass ³	5	5
S Harvey ²	11	8
G Higgins	17	15
M Loughran	17	14
E McAtamney	17	17
S McCorry	17	15
D McErlean	17	16
M McKee	17	14
P McWilliams	17	16
C Morgan	17	17
B Mulholland ²	6	6
J Rooney	17	15
V Russell	17	12
D Sloan	17	15
D Toner	17	12
A Trainor	17	15
P Turner	17	12

¹ F Cammock retired January 2023, replaced by J Davidson January 2023

² S Harvey resigned May 2023, replaced by B Mulholland June 2023

³ M Dobbin resigned June 2023, replaced by L Glass July 2023

Officers: November 2022 to October 2023

Chairperson: P Turner

Vice-Chairpersons: S Harvey (Nov 22 – May 23)
P Dale (May 23 – Oct 23)
J Rooney

Standing Orders Committee

A Boal, E Donaghy

All other Representations and Committees

Health and Social Services:

Representation on Health and Social Services Trade Union Forum 31 December 2023

T Thomas (HQ Official)	L Duffy	P Quinn
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Education Authority:

Representation on the Education and Library Boards Joint Council 31 December 2023

D Austin	B Booth	E Lavery
A Law (HQ Official)	H McSherry	J Scott

Northern Ireland Housing Executive:

Joint Consultative and Negotiation Committee 31 December 2023

S Agnew	B Cassidy	J Foster	K Smyth (HQ Official)
S McConville	S McDaid	T Girvan	S McMahon
N McMullan	L O'Hanlon		



Resolutions and Motions

**Resolutions and Motions
– NIPSA General Conference 2023**

**Resolutions and Motions
– Civil Service Group
Conference 2022**

Resolutions and Motions – NIPSA General Conference 2023

Resolution No.1

Notes how members and their families are having to deal with the long-term failure of successive UK Governments to provide the level of funding required to provide the public services our post-conflict society needs and demands a devolved administration that properly, strategically funds public services and rewards public servants. Calls upon the incoming General Council to reinvigorate the Public Service Defence Campaign.

The Campaign was discussed at all General Council and Committee and Panel meetings and the campaign continued in every area of NIPSA.

Resolution No. 4

Notes that the pay of members across the public sector has fallen in real terms since 2010. Notes that the education sector still have had no resolution in their campaign for a just and equitable pay structure which are strongly aligned to NIPSA's policy on Fair Pay and condemns the employers for not implementing a fair and equitable solution. Calls on the General Council to robustly fight all attempts to side-line, ignore, dismiss the legitimate calls for above inflation pay increases for all public sector workers and resist the attempts by the UK Government to make public sector workers pay the price of their economic mismanagement, and to use all methods and resources to achieve fair pay and above inflation pay rises for all public sector workers.

Noted as policy and actioned at the CS Group Executive Committee and PO Panels. All political parties have been lobbied.

Resolution No.5

Notes that pay parity across the four regions has not existed for many years. Calls on the incoming General Council to bring forward a comprehensive report which outlines a flexible approach to pay parity. This report should outline the best means by which maximum gains can be made in respect of pay where

pay is a devolved matter while protecting against the pitfalls of regional pay.

Referred to Panels for their views to inform the position to be taken by the General Council.

Resolution No. 6

Notes that one of the points in last year's motion No 5 on the State Pension i.e. the re-establishment of the triple lock arrangements has been implemented by the Treasury. Commends the French unions and working class in their resolute action to stop a rise in the Pension age from 62 to 64. Calls on the General Council to continue to work with sister unions and other groups campaigning for a fair and decent state pension. Calls on the General Council to begin discussions with NIC-ICTU and fellow trade unions on a campaign to reverse the planned increases to 67 and 68 in future years and to reduce the current age of 66 back towards alignment with the French pension age of 62 as a maximum pension age.

Taken forward through the ICTU.

Resolution No. 7

Condemns the use of Pay Review Bodies as an affront to democracy. Calls for the end of the use of Pay Review Bodies and a return to appropriate collective bargaining arrangements which upholds the principle of equal pay for work of equal value at its core. Calls on the General Council to refuse to engage with the undemocratic process of PRBs by refusing to submit evidence to them and to seek change by campaigning for their removal.

Referred to Health Panel.

Resolution No. 10

Calls on the General Council to support all efforts by NIPSA to support refugees and combat the racist, divisive approach to this issue propagated by the mainstream media and opportunistic politicians.



New NIPSA policy and research paper publication "Beyond the Politics of Hate – defeating anti-refugee rhetoric" produced and issued to branches. Also coordinated work through the ICTU.

Resolution No. 11

Calls upon the incoming General Council to re-energise our opposition to racism by increasing our activities in support of refugees and asylum seekers and the bodies that work on their behalf and to promote more material that helps to educate members on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers with a view to giving them the tools to counter the arguments of racists in our society.

New NIPSA policy and research paper publication "Beyond the Politics of Hate – defeating anti-refugee rhetoric" produced and issued to branches. Also coordinated work through the ICTU.

Resolution No. 12

Notes with concern how some politicians and sections of the media are increasingly using disgraceful and very disturbing language when talking about refugees and asylum seekers. Calls on the General Council to ensure NIPSA is at the forefront of combatting the rise in such intolerance, providing leadership in countering misinformation and scapegoating of refugees and asylum seekers and instead fighting for a better life for all in our communities.

New NIPSA policy and research paper publication "Beyond the Politics of Hate – defeating anti-refugee rhetoric" produced and issued to branches. Also coordinated work through the ICTU.

Resolution No.13

Conference calls on the General Council to continue support for the NIHE Campaign against the threat to "Privatise the Northern Ireland Housing Executive" as contained within the DFC Minister's proposal to the NI Assembly to "Revitalise" the NIHE through re-Categorisation to a Mutual/Co-Operative. Calls on the General Council to support the NIHE campaign to secure the recommendations laid out in Professor Stewart Smyth's NIPSA publication "21st Century Housing for Northern Ireland" and his 2022 paper, "The "Spectre of Privatisation", which explained the severe impact that these "Revitalisation" proposals would have on

public housing in NI and provide alternative investment options for social housing that are realistic, fully costed, and deliverable at lesser cost to the public purse.

Taken forward as part of Public Service Defence Campaign, including lobbying of political parties, and referred to NIHE Panel.

Resolution No. 14

Calls on NIPSA to campaign for affordable mortgages and if local politicians join us in this fight in a restored Assembly we highlight it as a priority to invest in our young people's future.

To be raised with local political parties and with ICTU.

Emergency Resolution No. 1

Condemns the recent announcement of cuts to several Irish language programmes. Calls on the General Council to:

- Oppose the delivery of services through inadequate short term funding models which leave them vulnerable to cuts.
- To support Irish language and other minority/endangered language groups in their struggle for fit for purpose funding models which meets their needs long-term.
- To continue to campaign for sustainable, long-term funding for services currently delivered by the community and voluntary sector.

Taken forward as part of Public Service Defence Campaign.

Resolution No. 17

Endorse the following constitutional amendments. Rule 6.15: Delete the Rule and replace with the following: "A Disputes Committee may be established from time to time consisting of the President, Vice-President, Honorary Treasurer, the Chairperson of the Civil Service Group Executive for disputes affecting members within the Civil Service Group, the Chairperson of the relevant panel(s) for disputes affecting members within the Public Officer Group, and the General Secretary. The Disputes Committee may co-opt or invite to attend to its meetings such persons as it considers may make a useful contribution to the deliberations of the Committee. Such persons shall not be entitled to participate in any vote on the Committee. The General

Secretary shall act as Secretary to the Committee and shall be responsible for convening its meetings." Paragraph 2 of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance Procedure for Industrial Action: Delete the paragraph and replace with the following: "In accordance with rule 6.15 the Disputes Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Honorary Treasurer, the Chairperson of the Civil Service Group Executive for disputes affecting members within the Civil Service Group, the Chairperson of the relevant panel(s) for disputes affecting members within the Public Officer Group, and the General Secretary. The Disputes Committee may co-opt or invite to attend to its meetings such persons as it considers may make a useful contribution to the deliberations of the Committee. Such persons shall not be entitled to participate in any vote on the Committee. The General Secretary shall act as Secretary to the Committee and shall be responsible for convening its meetings."

NIPSA Rule Book amended.

Resolution No. 21

Endorses the content of Conference Paper No.1 and calls upon the General Council to be given more time to research and explore all the options for the introduction of a NIPSA Learning Fund going forward, to look at the sustainability of the Union Learning Fund in the future and prepare a paper to go to the 2024 Conference for consideration.

Referred to ULR Committee.

Resolution No. 23

Notes that during strike action some trade unions, in areas such as Health, have offered their members financial assistance to mitigate against loss of pay that is usually referred to as "strike pay". Notes that more recently NIPSA has also offered financial assistance to striking members in Education and historically to struggles in Health and other areas. Notes that the decision in relation to whether NIPSA offers financial assistance to members on strike lies with the General Council and Conference is concerned that there is no clear consistent approach from NIPSA on this issue. Calls on the General Council to produce a paper to NIPSA's 2024 Annual Delegate Conference outlining how this issue can be better considered.

Strike paper produced. Paper will also go to 2024 Annual Delegate Conference.

Resolution No. 25

Notes the consistently low turnouts for NIPSA elections. Calls on the General Council to investigate ways to encourage higher turnouts in future NIPSA elections and to improve democracy, including seeking advice from other Unions who have had success in their ballots. Calls on the General Council to bring a paper to the 2024 General Conference on ways to increase the turnout for all NIPSA votes and elections.

Data on the 2022, 2023 and 2024 General Council elections will be collated and analysed with a view to considering which areas/groups of members might need encouragement to vote. Paper will be prepared for 2024 conference.

Resolution No. 28

Calls on incoming General Council to ensure that NIPSA remains fully committed in the continuing fight to protect women and girls against gender related violence, misogyny and femicide. This should include support for campaigns and requests for funding for education projects aimed at combating misogyny and "Toxic masculinity" wherever it occurs.

Referred to Equality Committee.

Resolution No. 29

Condemns

- The use of physical force and/or the threat of physical force within the trade union movement
- The use of misogynist and sexist language
- Attacks on women within our ranks
- The use of sectarian language
- The use of racist language
- The use of so called 'fake news'.

Calls on the General Council to stand up to these actions and commit robust measures to make clear that NIPSA takes the issue of inappropriate behaviours very seriously and if and when they occur they will be dealt with through the appropriate procedures.

Referred to NIC/ICTU Training Officer, Equality Committee and ULR Committee.



Resolution No. 30

Calls on the incoming General Council to recognise that just as progress was not inevitable neither is retreat nor defeat. The advance of women's rights therefore needs to be central to the trade union agenda with the global liberation of women an integral part of it. Our work must therefore be internationalist, fully representative, collectivist (in the advocacy of unionised workplaces) and acknowledge that no true advance for the labour movement is possible without the dismantling of barriers to women's full participation. Conference calls on the General Council to work with our sister unions in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to ensure this remains central to our work.

Referred to ICTU and continue as policy.

Resolution No. 31

Commends the excellent work done by NIPSA Equality Committee, the Chair and HQ Official in developing a work programme to address the lack of female activity in NIPSA and welcomes the increase in female representatives elected to the General Council but believes not enough progress has been done on Resolution No. 12 from 2022 Annual Delegate Conference to improve female participation in NIPSA Business. Calls on the General Council to take urgent steps to address this imbalance and inequality, including to consider suggestions such as, but not limited to:

- Promoting and reinforcing NIPSA's Zero Tolerance policy;
- Single Sex based training that fits with the work patterns of female reps;
- Developing Female Forums to address the barriers; and
- Awareness and education to help lift women in society and achieve economic freedom.

Referred to Equality Committee to continue with progress under their action plan.

Resolution No. 32

Calls on the General Council to campaign for the Government to:

- Provide for a statutory right to paid leave, as a day one right, and to be paid at earnings related rates to all workers experiencing the menopause.

- Consult on reforming equality law to protect menopausal women; so that women can bring dual discrimination cases based on age and sex or create a standalone menopause provision.
- Require employers to have action plans on the menopause and the guidance setting out how to create a plan should make clear that taking well-evidenced, low-cost actions to support women with menopause is key to closing the gap.
- Make flexible work the default. All jobs should be required to be advertised with any possible flexible work options so that menopausal women can access this important accommodation to their symptoms, and if employers feel that a role cannot accommodate any form of flexibility, they should be required to transparently set out the exceptional circumstances that justify this.
- Fund a nationwide public information campaign on the menopause. This should dispel myths that menopause is just about hot flushes, dispel the stigma, and provide women with the information that there is help available for their symptoms.
- Develop a standardised clinical pathway for menopausal women. This could involve an invitation sent at an appropriate age for all women to discuss potential menopausal symptoms and treatment with their GP, or an appropriate nurse or pharmacist.
- Ensure GPs and relevant healthcare professionals are trained on the menopause.

Referred to Panels, CS Group EC, Equality Committee and work continued as part of Public Service Defence Campaign.

Resolution No. 33

Notes with alarm the continuing cost of living crisis which allied to a de facto pay cut in real terms has a disproportionate effect on women both in society in general and in the workplace in particular. Calls upon the General Council to liaise with interested pressure groups to call for the free provision of feminine hygiene products in all buildings currently occupied by Civil Servants and Public Sector workers.

Continued to enact as policy.

Resolution No. 34

Notes that racist attacks against refugees and migrants have increased. Calls on the General Council to issue

guidelines on the use of terminology and language and to further develop discussions within NIPSA on anti-racist action.

New NIPSA policy and research paper publication "Beyond the Politics of Hate – defeating anti-refugee rhetoric" produced and issued to branches. Also coordinated work through the ICTU.

Resolution No. 37

Condemns the abhorrent, relentless and often under reported continuance of human rights violations on the Palestinian people and diminishment of Palestine in pursuit of Capitalism by the Israeli state. Reaffirms its commitment in solidarity with Palestine to end economic injustice, inequality, occupation, genocide and national oppression in all its depravity. Calls on NIPSA to engage with ICTU and other Union affiliates to continue to forge links, continue to communicate and oppose human rights violations, continue to develop NIPSA and ICTU BDS policies to condemn outright the abuses and genocide of the Palestinian people.

Continued to take forward as policy and continued to engage with ICTU and Trade Union Friends of Palestine. NIPSA has attended rallies and protests and spoken on platforms in opposition to the genocide in Gaza. NIPSA has also made donations to Medical Aid for Palestine.

Resolution No. 38

Notes the loss of over 50,000 lives in the earthquakes that hit Turkey and Syria in February 2023. Condemns the developed countries, the United Nations and ultimately capitalism that has failed to deliver swift, effective responses to such disasters across our planet. Calls on the General Council to raise this with ICTU and any other organisation it sees fit and publicise that a better system is possible for Disaster response.

Referred to ICTU.

Resolution No. 39

Condemns the displacement and state murder of Huwaitat people by the Saudi Arabian regime. Calls on the General Council to formally write to the UK government to not only join in this condemnation, but to

cease the supply of arms to the Saudi regime, which are used to violently oppress opposition at home and abroad. Calls the General Council to formally write to the United Nations for an independent, democratic, intentional investigation of the atrocities and violation of human rights perpetrated by the Saudi Arabian government.

Letters to UK Government and the United Nations.

Resolution No. 42

Condemns the attempted assassination of PSNI member John Caldwell. Salutes the quick response of Omagh Trades Council in organising a rally in Omagh town centre under the banner of 'No Going Back' and all who supported that rally. Reaffirms NIPSA's proud stance of campaigning and stating No to Paramilitaries, sectarian killings and state repression. Calls on the General Council to reinforce this message at every opportunity in the trade union movement.

Continued as policy.

Resolution No. 43

Calls on NIPSA to campaign alongside sister unions in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions for an end to profit gouging from fossil fuels and for:

- the nationalisation of these industries under democratic control and management,
- the removal of the profit motive by providing fuel at cost, and
- the implementation of a policy of phasing out the use of fossil fuels

Continued as part of Public Service Defence Campaign and referred to ICTU.

Resolution No. 44

Notes that the right to protest is at the heart of our democratic rights as citizens and workers and opposes the attacks on those rights that is represented by the Public Order Bill in the UK. Calls on the General Council to support the campaign to Defend the Right to protest in UK, across the world and to fight against any extension of such legislation to NI. Calls on the General Council to ensure NIPSA members have the right to protest without censure.

Enacted as part of the Public Service Defence Campaign and raised through ICTU.



Resolution No. 45

Calls for the General Council to hold our local Government to account on reducing our carbon footprint, emission targets and reducing greenhouse gas emission and do everything they can to ensure we have a better world for the future generation.

Continued as policy and raised through ICTU.

Resolution No. 46

Notes that many employers are still requesting that employees have access to a car for use at work as a contractual requirement. Calls on the General Council to campaign for the introduction of pool cars across the public sector.

Referred to CS Executive Committee & PO Panels.

Resolution No. 49

Condemns the ongoing unacceptable behaviour of members at conferences and meetings which is making other members feel unsafe, including the disrespect for the NIPSA paper entitled Code of Conduct at Meetings. Calls on the General Council to fully support those who encounter intimidation, bullying or threats when they are attending meetings and conferences to fully represent the membership in their areas. Calls on the incoming General Council to enable members to feel that we can attend meetings and conferences without fear or intimidation and calls upon them to produce and carry out robust measures to ensure a safe environment for all members.

Referred back to Equality Committee to consider an appropriate training and delivery model.

Resolution No. 50

Notes the lack of support and quick resolution members feel when they are forced to invoke the NIPSA Complaints process and the unacceptable delay in achieving any outcome. The General Secretary should have the power to allow the immediate referral to the relevant body where they deem a matter is seriously prejudicial to the union's interests, such as:

- (1) A serious breach of one of the Union's rules;
- (2) Misappropriation of union funds;
- (3) Bullying and harassment; and/or
- (4) A serious breach of the union's equality policies.

Calls on the General Council to review the NIPSA Complaints Procedure to ensure it achieves the objectives and interests of NIPSA.

A review of the complaints process has been initiated.

Resolution No. 51

Expressed concern regarding the contents of GC circular 40-21 from the General Secretary on behalf of the General Council that was issued on the 9th November 2021 and believes this is a fundamental attack on the rights of NIPSA members to campaign in accordance with the mandate of their Branch, on issues and matters relevant to their members. Calls on the General Council to take the necessary steps to protect, and affirm, the rights of NIPSA Branches to involve themselves in campaigning activity without fear or favour, in the interests of their members, in line with NIPSA's longstanding democratic traditions.

Bulletin issued to branches and as part of the public sector defence campaign we encourage activists to continue to involve themselves in campaigning in accordance with NIPSA policy.

Resolution No. 52

Calls on the General Council to ensure that ALL novel, contentious or ex-gratia payments made to members or to NIPSA staff are fully listed and itemised within the Annual Accounts.

Continued to enact as policy.

Resolution No.53

Calls on the General Council to review the current data use guidelines for officers and improve them to ensure the correct use of personal data.

Continuous review of GDPR and Data Protection policies and procedures.

Resolution No. 56

Notes the proposed Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill which has been condemned by a plethora of human rights organisations including the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Calls on the General Council to support our sister unions in Britain in resisting this bill and to continue our opposition to all the Tory anti-union legislation.

Take action to support as necessary.

Resolution No. 57

Calls on the incoming General Council to:

- Write to all political parties seeking in writing support for workers to take strike action and seeking their position to enhance workers' rights
- Seek to work with other trade unions to collectively formulate a paper on the required legislative changes to protect and enhance the rights of workers across NI
- In lieu of an agreed trade union paper mentioned above, lobby political parties to repeal anti-trade union legislation.

Work ongoing through the ICTU.

Resolution No. 58

Notes the dangerous mix of political instability, the cost-of-living crisis, paramilitarism, sectarianism and state repression in our society. Calls on the incoming General Council to work with NIC-ICTU to promote policies that provide a real alternative to the current impasse.

Continued as policy and as part of our Anti-Sectarian Community Work. Also referred to NIC/ICTU.

Resolution No. 59

Notes that the health service is in crisis due to years of underinvestment, backdoor privatisation, cuts and mismanagement. Conference calls on the incoming General Council to take steps, where appropriate, to seek to co-ordinate and support campaigns to defend the health service.

Noted as policy as part of public service defence campaign and referred to Health Panel.

Resolution No. 94

Notes the failure, to date, of the NI Assembly to agree to a Trade Union Rights (NI) Bill. Calls on the General Council to join with the NIC ICTU, if possible, to draw up a suitably worded bill protecting workers' rights, defending the Right to Strike and to campaign to get this passed into legislation.

Referred to NIC/ICTU and continue to lobby political parties.

Resolution No. 62

Notes concern about the current state of the childcare sector in NI in terms of availability of childcare places, the spiralling cost of childcare and lack of a childcare strategy for NI to support parents and children. Calls on the General Council to engage with our elected representatives to address the provision of suitable childcare places, their accessibility and affordability and the challenges faced by our members struggling to pay for childcare.

Continued as policy under Public Service Defence Campaign and lobbied political parties.

Emergency Resolution No. 2

Notes that cuts, proposed and actual, affecting the public, community and voluntary sectors over the last number of weeks, show the endemic failure of NI Departments, especially the Department of Health and the Department for Education, to deliver on their duties to promote good outcomes for children in NI. Calls for the General Council to campaign for an immediate freezing of financial allocation at the level of March 2023 for any component parts of a potential 'Child Welfare Agency' identified via the Jones Review, in whichever department or public body they lie. Calls on the incoming General Council to respond to this emergency by writing to and lobbying all political parties to urge the immediate use of the Children's Services Cooperation Act to aggregate these spends, plus any additional departmental allocations/bids currently in process into a single virtual children's services budget. Should the NI Assembly return, calls on the General Council to urge the creation of a cross departmental Child Welfare Agency, to be established on an emergency basis at the earliest opportunity.

Referred to Panels and CS Group Executive Committee. Continued as policy under Public Service Defence Campaign and continued to lobby political parties.

Resolution No. 63

Calls on the incoming General Council to support, and explore how best to advance, the campaign to have long Covid recognised and classified as a disability. Calls on General Council to consider and take the necessary steps to protect our members suffering from long Covid from the aggressive policies of some employers.

Referred to H&S Committee and CS Executive Committee and PO Panels.



Resolution No. 64

Notes with concern at the lack of progress regarding the introduction of a 4-day working week with no detrimental pay loss within the Civil Service and Public Sector. Calls upon the General Council to join with other Trade Union bodies and pressure groups and vociferously, actively and publicly campaign for this new working week arrangement to be introduced to the Civil Service and Public Sector as a matter of urgency.

Continued as policy and lobbied employers and political parties.

Resolution No. 65

Notes that children of school age should be provided with warm healthy meals at breakfast and lunch times. Congratulate those unions already campaigning on the issue and calls on the General Council to support those campaigns. Calls on the General Council to raise this issue at any appropriate forum to assist our members across education who witness this first hand and to help our members whose children will ultimately benefit.

Fought cuts as part of Public Service Defence Campaign, lobbied politicians and engaged with Joint Secretaries in Education.

Resolution No. 68

Notes the growing cost of living crisis for members right across all sectors of the union. Calls on General Council to do a piece of engagement with members to look at what the effects of this crisis have been on them. The information from this piece of work could then be used to inform negotiations and support mechanisms for members and future actions.

Active engagement throughout the year with branch activists and members as part of the industrial action on the pay campaigns.

Resolution No. 69

Recognises the challenges faced by many of our members as a consequence of rampant inflation, and stagnant wages. Other trade unions including CWU, Royal Mail and PCS, have combined to form a Credit Union called 1st Class Credit Union. Calls on the General Council to consider the option of NIPSA becoming a part of 1st Class Credit Union and thereby allowing our members to have access to affordable credit and the

benefits that accrue from membership of a workplace Credit Union. Asks that General Council might examine what process would need to be followed should NIPSA members wish to become part of 1st Class credit Union, and report its findings to the membership for their consideration before Conference 2024.

Enquiries to be made with 1st Class Credit Union and to be considered by General Council before referring back to members before conference 2024.

Resolution No. 70

Calls on the General Council to investigate the possibility of adding an additional section to the current new member application form to enable new members to either request further information about the NIPSA Developing World Fund or to actually commit to contributing a set amount each month each month.

Referred to Global Solidarity Committee.

Resolution No. 73

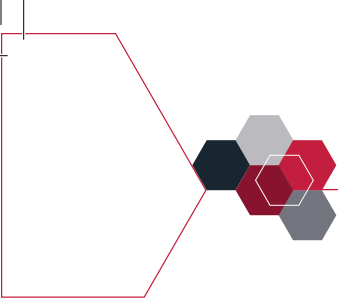
Notes the continuing high level of vacancies across the public sector and NICS. Calls upon incoming General Council to ensure that all health and safety reps are provided with the tools and resources to ensure that our members mental health, is strenuously advocated and protected. Calls on the General Council to begin to liaise and engage with outside bodies, including mental health advocacy groups to ensure that members are aware of the services available to them, by signposting members and ensuring that they can avail of all such services.

Referred to Health and Safety Committee, Panels and the Executive Committee.

Resolution No. 74

Notes the increase in Public Sector risk as a result of lack of health and safety in the workplace. Notes that several issues should be highlighted in all departments across the public services:

- Safe Staffing Levels
- Health & well-being
- Mental health issues
- Violence at work
- PPE.



Calls on the General Council to campaign all employers for more investment and protection in staffing levels and equipment for our members in the workplace using all methods and resources available including campaigning for more investment in public services.

Referred to Health and Safety Committee, Panels and ECs.

Resolution No. 77

Notes that the NIC-ICTU education programme January – March 2023 had only 6 available courses and nothing specific for long-standing union reps. Calls on encourage General Council to push to offer a broader range of courses to upskill reps learning potential pertaining to the ever-changing challenging workplace environment and better educate them in supporting the ever-growing situations of members.

Referred to ULR Committee.



Resolutions and Motions - 2022

Civil Service Group Conference

Motion No. 1

Called on the Civil Service Executive Committee to ensure that NIPSA employs the full range of tools available to us, including negotiations, lobbying, protesting and industrial action, if necessary, to ensure we achieve the necessary pay rise.

Ongoing as part of the current pay campaign.

Motion No. 2

Called on the Civil Service Executive Committee to lead a NICS Pay campaign that will seek to join and unite with other Pay campaigns across our union and with other unions who are willing to work with us.

Discussions are ongoing across the union and within the ICTU.

Motion No. 3

Instructed the Civil Service Executive Committee to campaign and explore all avenues to ensure Civil Servants get a real wage increase and an end to the delays in having pay implemented.

Ongoing as part of the pay campaign. Raised with all Political Parties and Civil Service Officials.

Motion No. 4

Called on the incoming Civil Service Executive Committee to highlight the reality of civil service pay in all negotiations and media campaigns to banish this myth (high NICS pay) to fantasy where it belongs once and for all.

Ongoing as part of the pay campaign and media strategy.

Motion No. 5

Instructed the incoming Civil Service Executive Committee to address and progress action points from the NIPSA Pay, Terms and Conditions campaign review immediately.

Ongoing as part of the pay campaign.

Motion No. 6

Asked that the incoming Civil Service Executive Committee do everything possible to support the ICT Consultative Committee and to safeguard the future of an internal, properly resourced and adequately remunerated ICT Profession in the NICS.

Civil Service Executive Committee has, through the Public Service Management ICT sub-committee, engaged with management on both a Review of ICT Remuneration and ICT recruitment. Work continued under updated Terms of Reference which ensured increased engagement in these matters going forward.

Motion No. 7

Called on the incoming Civil Service Executive Committee to enter negotiations with NICS senior management with the aim to achieve a rise in the NICS Mileage Allowance and asked the Civil Service Executive Committee to treat this request with great urgency.

Discussions recently concluded with NICS HR. Although at a rate lower than CTUS had originally sought, Subsistence rates have been increased. Due to budget constraints progress on the mileage rate had not been achieved, but management side agreed to reconsider in the new financial year.

Motion No. 8

Called on the incoming Civil Service Executive Committee to seek to ensure that the uplift of 20% in salary for ICT Apprenticeships is extended to all other NICS Apprenticeships automatically and that it be backdated to the start of 2021/22 academic year.

Will be raised as part of any future pay discussions.

Motion No. 11

Called on the Civil Service Executive Committee to continue engagement with NICS employers on the development of recruitment and workforce planning policies/strategies and to continue to press our employers to follow the existing policies set out in the Civil Service Handbook until these new policies and strategies have been agreed.

Raised with NICSHR Resourcing. Clarity has been sought by CTUS on ongoing budgetary issues and the impact on workforce planning. Work is ongoing.

Motion No. 12

Instructed the Civil Service Executive Committee to demand that a proper Workforce plan is developed urgently to make sure that vacancies are filled with permanent staff which, in turn, will reduce the use of agency staff and give meaningful job opportunities for existing members. To protect the career opportunities of our members across all disciplines and ensure that consultation with Management Side provides outcomes that allows movement internally across the NICS both sideways and upwards.

Consultation ongoing as per above.

Motion No. 13

With reference to the Civil Service Academy the motion called on the incoming executive to engage with employing departments and to press them to develop schemes to improve the knowledge and skills within our own workforce to such levels that will enable our workers to progress through the grades.

CTUS have put the points outlined in the motion to the NICSHR Resourcing and Learning, Wellbeing & Development Teams and work is ongoing.

Motion No. 16

Instructed the incoming Civil Service Executive Committee to raise the issue of paternity leave via Central Whitley and ensure that there is parity between maternity and paternity leave going forwards. Any public and privilege days not returned to staff should be done so retrospectively.

Raised by CTUS and management side responded stating that it was policy under consideration and advice was awaited.

Motion No. 17

Called on the Civil Service Executive Committee to negotiate a new managing attendance policy which has members' interests to the fore and enhances protection for those living with a disability and/or long-term health issues.

CTUS have raised these issues in opposition to derogation to line managers and sought a review of policy. Consultation ongoing.

Motion No. 18

Instructed the incoming Civil Service Executive Committee to negotiate via Central Whitley an arrangement whereby absences covered under the DDA can be disregarded for the purposes of managing attendance review points.

Raised as per 17 above.

Motion No. 19

Instructed the Civil Service Executive Committee to continue to explore ways in which we can bring the conditions of agency staff up to those of Civil Servants.

Raised with NICSHR and engagement ongoing.

Motion No. 20

Suggested Civil Service Executive Committee remind members can attend their workplace to avail of the heat, light and electricity. If members want to return to their office on more days their WSA could be reviewed to allow this.

Raised with CWC Accommodation Management Side.

Motion No. 23

Ref INTEGR8 instructed Civil Service Executive Committee to continue to engage with the Department of Finance, through Central Whitley, with the objective of protecting jobs and services and to ensure we have in-house services that provide the best structures and systems for our members and all users.

The Business Case provided by management side indicated that services will be kept in-house. Consultation ongoing.



Motion No. 26

Called on the Civil Service Executive Committee to ensure that consultation continues departmentally on the Estates Strategy to ensure that all specific queries and concerns are consulted on and addressed; this should include any potential for the redeployment of staff.

Engagement and Consultation ongoing with specific issues being raised via Departmental Trade Union Sides as much of this work has now been devolved to Departments.

Motion No. 27

Instructed the Civil Service Executive Committee to push to for a fair treatment of all staff and adherence to the Hybrid Working Policy where only valid business needs can be used to bring people back into the offices more often than they wish.

Where issues have been identified they have been challenged both within Departments and Centrally.

Motion No. 29

Re Civil Service Renewal Programme instructed the Civil Service Executive Committee to engage with Senior Management on the Programme and to ensure that all aspects of the work and its impact on jobs and services are properly scrutinised through the Whitley Structure.

Ongoing. Trade Union Side have requested more detail on this initiative and a response is awaited.

Motion No. 38

Asked that alternative technological solutions be explored that would allow ALL Northern Ireland Civil Servants the ability to communicate with each other remotely via tools such as Jabber and Webex.

CTUS continued to explore this issue with Management Side.



Section A

NIPSA Headquarters

General Issues

Organisation and Administration

General Issues

A1 Equality Committee

Meetings of the Committee were held on a regular basis throughout the year. The key action areas were as follows:

Abortion: The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 came into force on 31 March 2020. For the first time the regulations made provisions for legal framework for the abortion provision in Northern Ireland. As of October 2023, all Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts offer medical abortion where pregnancy is under 12 weeks. From December, the South-Eastern Trust began offering abortions beyond 12 weeks. NIPSA continued to press for a comprehensive commissioned services in all Trusts to enable women to realise their full reproductive rights and has worked collectively through the NIC-ICTU Women's Committee, Women's Policy Group and Alliance for Choice in support of this aim.

Abortion Service (Safe Access Zones): After vigorous campaigning the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill received Royal Assent on 6 February 2023. Under this law, anti-abortion protests and other behaviours are prohibited within any Safe Access Zone once it has been established. Safe Access Zones were introduced at Health Service locations providing abortion services across Northern Ireland from 29 September 2023.

The Zones have been established to protect women and girls accessing abortion treatment services, information, advice and counselling, and to protect staff working at these locations.

Carer's Week (5 - 11 June 2023): A virtual event was held on 6 June 2023 to coincide with Carer's Week. Craig Harrison from Carer's NI discussed the findings and recommendations from the New Deal for Unpaid Carers in Northern Ireland, produced by the Coalition of Carers Group, of which NIPSA are a stakeholder. Craig set out the priority policy changes needed in the realms of welfare, employment, health and social care, housing and more; with a particular focus on the policy issues and questions facing people juggling employment with unpaid caring.

The report set out a programme of recommendations co-designed with over 240 unpaid carers in Northern

Ireland to give them the support they need in the spheres of health and social care, social security, employment, housing and more. Forming the outline of a desperately needed New Deal for unpaid carers here.

Childcare for All Campaign: NIPSA continued to be an active member of the Childcare for All Campaign. The Department of Health commissioned an independent review of Children's Social Care Services, and the Report was published in June 2023 and reported 53 recommendations on how social care services in Northern Ireland should be reshaped. It highlighted, due to the legacy of the Troubles, the demand for children's services in Northern Ireland is higher than other parts of the UK.

Childcare provision is a devolved matter, the collapse of the Assembly has meant the NI Assembly's Early Learning and Childcare Strategy has not been produced.

Cliff Edge Coalition Relaunch: NIPSA attended the relaunch of the Cliff Edge Coalition on 3 May 2023. A new Briefing was launched by the Coalition which highlighted the negative impact of a range of new welfare challenges which had emerged since the original mitigations were introduced, particularly in the context of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and set out a series of urgent measures that are needed to strengthen the current benefit system to ensure the situation does not worsen further.

NIPSA committed to continue to support the Coalition.

Coalition of Bereaved Workers (CBW): NIPSA continued to be an active member of the CBW, a group of charities, professional bodies and trade unions, campaigning for the introduction of statutory paid bereavement leave for anyone impacted by the death of a close relative or partner in Northern Ireland.

Coalition of Carers Organisation: NIPSA continued to be an active member of the Coalition of Carers Organisation. The Coalition is a collective of community and voluntary sector organisations to campaign for policy change to better support unpaid carers in Northern Ireland. The member organisations are Carers NI (Chair), Action for Children, Action Mental Health, Age NI, Alzheimer's Society, Angel Eyes, Barnardo's, CAUSE,



Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Mencap, MND Association, MS Society, NIPSA, Parent Action, Parkinson's UK NI, Stroke Association and Women's Support Network.

A New Deal for Unpaid Carers in Northern Ireland was published by the Coalition in June 2023. NIPSA attended the launch of the publication. NIPSA also attended the Carer Poverty Conference in October 2023 and the launch of The Economic Value of Unpaid Care in Northern Ireland. Both these events called for reform of the Social Security and Health and Social Care systems to help unpaid carers who saved the NI Assembly £5.8 Billion in care.

Domestic abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022: NIPSA met with Rachel Woods, MLA, and a written response was submitted to the consultation on the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) by 2 May 2023. The Departments were preparing a consultation summary. In the meantime, a six-month addendum to the current strategy was drafted and brought to the Strategic Delivery Board for sign-off.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse: NIPSA continued to promote and campaign on behalf of all victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse through the following actions:

- (a) Continued to support Women's Aid campaign to call for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention;
- (b) Submitted a detailed response to the Department of Justice and Department of Health Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy by the deadline of 2 May 2023;
- (c) Issued regular circulars to branches providing information on new support services; and
- (d) Continued to be active member of the Belfast, Northern, Southern, South-Eastern and Western Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnerships.

Disability: A major focus of the Committee was raising awareness of issues faced by members with a disability and reengaging with NIPSA Disability Champions with the aim of focusing on the issues that most affected workers. A new Disability Network Forum will be launched in 2024.

Female Participation: In furtherance of the aims of Resolution No 10, adopted at the 2022 NIPSA Annual Delegate Conference (ADC), the Working Group set

up to consider increasing female participation and activity within NIPSA continued work on progressing the Action Plan.

International Women's Day (IWD): To mark International Women's Day a lunchtime event was held on 8th March 2022 from 12.30pm to 2.00pm. The theme was "Women Standing Up and Fighting Back for Fair Pay and Equality" and focused on the struggle women have had to achieve fair and equality in the workplace and had NIPSA guest speakers including Carmel Gates (General Secretary), Tina Creaney (Equality Committee Chair), Densie Crilly (Vice President) and the Chair of the LGBT Group. NIPSA also had a presence at the IWD march and rally on Saturday 4th March 2023.

NIC/ICTU Women's Committee: Geraldine Alexander (Headquarters Official) and Tina Creaney (Chairperson of the Equality Committee) continued to represent NIPSA on the NIC/ICTU Women's Committee. Lucia Collins (Vice chairperson of Equality Committee) replaced Geraldine Alexander on her retirement in October 2023.

Tina Creaney (Chairperson of the Equality Committee) also attended the Trade Unions Women's Council of the Isles Conference in Llandudno, Wales in October 2023.

Non-Fatal Strangulation Legislation: The new offence of non-fatal strangulation or asphyxiation was carried in the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (NI) 2022 (the Act) and came into operation on Monday 26 June. A circular was issued to Branches to alert them.

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022: NIPSA continued to keep a watching brief following the consultation to extend statutory paid leave in cases of miscarriage.

Promotion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Issues and Anti-Racist Agenda: In furtherance to Resolution No.11, adopted at the 2023 Annual Delegate Conference, the new NIPSA guide 'Tackling Racism and Promoting an Anti-Racist Agenda' was issued to branches on 16 May 2023. NIPSA engaged with NIC-ICTU on the provision of a training course on tackling the rise of the far right.

At the year's end work was underway by a Working Group to engage with Branch Activists on progressing the Recommendations from Resolution 11.

Sexual Harassment including 'Upskirting': Upskirting and cyber-flashing laws come into effect in

Northern Ireland on 27 November 2023 as part of the part of the Justice, Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims (Northern Ireland) Act 2022. Perpetrators could face up to two years in prison and up to 10 years on the Sex Offenders Register. It was among new sexual offences under legislation which included enhanced laws to deal with people who threaten to share private sexual images or impersonate children with the aim of grooming.

Violence Against Women And Girls: As part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Girls 2023, NIPSA held a lunchtime event on 30th November 2023. Helen Crickard from Raise Your Voice Campaign provided awareness on Bystander Training.

Violence Against Women And Girls (VAWG) Strategy: TEO: A co-design process ongoing with Women's Aid Federation NI engaged along with wider sector organisations was progressed throughout the year. The Executive Office (TEO) had confirmed the draft strategy was embargoed and awaiting sign-off. It has been put on hold pending a functioning NI Executive to implement the strategy and adequate funding will be required to make any form of meaningful impact. NIPSA will continue to lobby for the implementation of the strategy.

A2 Global Solidarity Committee

The Global Solidarity Committee met regularly during the year and dealt with a range of issues as follows:

Table A details the project being supported by NIPSA Global Solidarity and Developing World Fund:

A	<p>Centre for Global Education - Project Nour:</p> <p>Educating Palestinian and Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (2 year project February 2022 – July 2023)</p> <p>To provide educational and psychosocial support services to 100 Palestinian and Syrian children in Burj Barajneh refugee camp in Beirut.</p>	£11,500.00
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NIPSA Global Solidarity and Developing World Fund has met all its financial commitments with regards projects during the year.

The number of donors contributing to the Fund is as follows:

- 123 donors contribute through GAYE generating a monthly income of approximately £818.
- 2 donors contribute monthly through Cheques for Charity (Gift Aid) creating an additional £15.
- One donor donates £4.75 per month through Charities Trust.
- One donor donates £60 annually (£5 monthly).
- One donor donates £10 per month via bank transfer.

The overall total number of donors is 128 generating a monthly income of approximately £852.75.

30th Anniversary: NIPSA Global Solidarity and Developing World Fund celebrated its 30th anniversary.

A short video was produced for conference detailing the history of the charity. Video messages from the Centre for Global Education, Tools for Solidarity, Justice for Colombia and Concern Worldwide were included. Former Chairpersons of the Committee submitted video messages and current Committee members provided short messages about previous projects. All the clips were incorporated into one video showcasing our work at conference.

For conference a special newsletter was produced with contributions from some of the charities we have funded projects for over the year.

Justice for Columbia provided an overview of the current situation, with government supported by workers and the peace movement. Trade Unionists report regular human rights abuses, attacks and killing, so their work is still as important as ever.

Concern thanked us for the support we have provided over the years.

The Centre for Global Education gave a report from Project NOUR and how our funding was benefiting the Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Beirut.

Tools for Solidarity provided a report on their very successful sewing machine training centre in Tanzania which NIPSA has supported in the past.

Conference Raffle 2023: The raffle at the 2023 NIPSA Annual Delegate Conference generated £582 in aid of the Fund. A letter of thanks was sent to the service providers who donated the prizes.



Presentation of Annual Report and Audited

Accounts: The Annual Report and Audited Accounts, presented by GMcG Chartered Accountants, for the year ending 31 December 2022 were approved by the Committee. The Annual Report and Audited Accounts to the Charity Commission by the deadline of 31 October 2023.

GMcG Chartered Accountants were appointed as auditors for 2023.

Campaigns and Urgent Action Requests: In addition to the above campaigns, NIPSA supported other campaign including Fairtrade Foundation, Global Green Deal, and requests from organisations as follows:

A donation of £200 towards Justice for Colombia's Trucks for Peace Fundraising Campaign.

A donation of £282 to Concern Worldwide which will provide 1 family with the means to set up a small business that has been matched to the needs of the community.

A3 Irish Congress of Trade Unions

The year began with a continuation of the activities and meetings around the Workers Demand Better campaign which had been launched at the end of 2022. The campaign took on a new focus after the budget announcement by the Secretary of State which was seen as a punitive budget to add pressure for the return of an Assembly. The NIC ICTU meetings were then dominated by the industrial action taking place across all areas of the public sector and the organisation of rallies and events to mark strike action by affiliated unions.

The Biennial Delegate Conference took place in July in Kilkenny. Carmel Gates and Dáire Toner were elected to the Executive Council for 2 years.

An event to mark 25 years since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement was held in Dundalk in November. The event included contributions from the 5 main Assembly parties and the Shadow Secretary of State, Hilary Benn. NIPSA's General Secretary, Carmel Gates was part of the trade union panel for the event.

At the year end, and whilst the political talks and strike action across a number of unions were continuing, the NIC began co-ordination of generalised strike action for January 2024.

A4 Legal Cases

Holiday Pay: At the start of the year NIPSA awaited the Supreme Court Judgement relating to the Agnew/Smyth -v- PSNI Holiday Pay case in which members fought for normal pay when on holiday and not just their basic pay.

An Industrial Tribunal in 2018 ruled that unlawful deductions made from holiday entitlements of the PSNI's officers and support staff were in breach of European law rights.

In 2019, the PSNI appealed the decision to the NI Court of Appeal who upheld the Tribunal's decision. The PSNI appealed again to the UK Supreme Court, with it being heard in December 2022.

NIPSA had stayed thousands of cases across the public service pending the outcome of the UK Supreme Court Judgment.

In October the UK Supreme Court upheld the Court of Appeal judgement with the final sentence in the 66 page judgement stating:

"For the reasons we have given, this appeal must be dismissed".

The Supreme Court Judgement meant backpay for thousands of workers potentially going back to 1996 with significant costs.

NIPSA had engaged its solicitors and legal experts to engage with employers to agree a methodology for payment to its members.

The issue was ongoing.

Injury To Feelings: Arising from the McCloud Judgment, NIPSA continued to lodge cases on behalf of members across the public services. NIPSA solicitors McCartan Turkington Breen (MTB) continued to deal with the cases.

A5 LGBTQI+ Committee

Since the establishment of the Committee, membership grew and regular meetings were held. The Committee has continued with its two year action plan (2022) with the following activities undertaken.

LGBTQIA+ Awareness Week: In May, a circular was issued to all branches with a copy of the programme of events across Northern Ireland LGBTQIA+ Awareness

week. The Committee marked International Day of Action Against Homophobia & Transphobia (IDAHOT) on 17 May.

Belfast Pride Festival and Parade: In July NIPSA, along with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), had a presence at Belfast Pride. As part of NIPSA's commitment to Belfast Pride:

- (a) A donation of £100 was made towards the organising costs;
- (b) A full page advertisement was included in the Pride Guide; and
- (c) A stand was located at The Pride Village.

Other Pride Festivals and Parades: The following action was taken:

- (d) Bangor Pride Festival: Information was issued to branches;
- (e) Mid Ulster Pride Parade: Information was issued to branches;
- (f) Causeway Pride: Information was issued to branches and NIPSA was in attendance;
- (g) Omagh Pride Parade: A donation of £100 was made. Information was issued to branches and NIPSA was in attendance;
- (h) Larne Pride Parade: Information was issued to branches;
- (i) Trans Pride Parade: Information was issued to branches and NIPSA was in attendance;
- (j) Foyle Pride Festival and Parade: A donation of £100 was made. Information was issued to Branches and NIPSA was in attendance.

Social Media Strategy: The Committee continued to make significant gains in relation to its social media strategy. The social media content and postings have generated new followers and viewers. There will continue to be an emphasis on developing new content for the Committee's social media outlets.

LGBTQIA+ Strategy and Action Plan: The Committee's strategy and action plan came to an end in 2023 and work commenced in the Autumn for a new strategy and action plan to be agreed by the Committee in Spring 2024. The strategy and action plan has guided the work of the committee in

supporting our LGBTQIA+ members and raising key issues on which campaigns have been formulated.

NI Assembly All Party Group (APG) for LGBTQIA+ Equality: In March, NIPSA took part in the LGBTQIA+ Equality APG at the Northern Ireland Assembly. NIPSA will continue to engage with political parties on LGBTQIA+ matters at the APG.

LGBTQI+ Strategy (DfC): NIPSA was represented on the Co-Design Group established by the Department of Communities to work on the development of a government LGBTQI+ strategy. Despite the collapse of the NI Assembly, the Co-Design Group has not met, but hopefully there will be a reinvigoration of the development of the strategy upon the resumption of the NI Executive.

A6 Pensions

The Central Consultative Working Group (CCWG): The CCWG covers all public sector pension schemes including NICS, Health, Teachers, Local Government, Fire, Police, Prisons and Judiciary. Trade Union representation falls under the auspices of the ICTU. NIPSA were represented on the CCWG throughout the year. The main issue dealt with remained the ongoing engagement with the McCloud Retrospective Remedy introduced in October 2023.

A7 Policy and Research Unit (PRU)

The Policy and Research Unit's (PRU) analyses provided regularly throughout the year examined: the return of austerity as an overt part of UK government economic strategy at Westminster; its destructive effects exacerbating the "cost of living" crisis and the fact that its imposition was directly applied in the absence of devolved Government. The UK's Budget in March set the tone for this approach in that, its failure to read across the standard Barnett consequential for our public services, continued to inflict "punishment budgets" on people here in order to pursue its own political objectives. This meant that the failure to address the real terms cuts to public sector investment generally and pay/staffing in particular was prolonged and deepened. The PRU challenged both the imposition of a pay "offer" for 2022/23 to Civil Servants that it described as "a pay insult not a pay offer" and reinforced the message that long-term devaluation of pay had to be addressed by submitting a claim for 23/24. This was shaped by the argument that "pay justice delayed is justice denied" and the fact



that the pay of civil servants is over 20% below what it should be, had pay awards matched inflation over the last seven years.

The need to challenge the reactionary and conventional approach on pay was expanded within the Unit's contribution to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's process of "Open engagement on the funding and delivery of Northern Ireland's public services." The PRU rejected the narrative around public service funding that has deliberately pushed the myth that, as a population, we were over-funded and that the only escape from funding pressures was either the withdrawal or dilution of provision previously offered free of charge or the imposition of a series of new charging regimes across the public sphere. On the former the PRU submitted a consultation response (rejecting) the threat to Translink's concessionary fares scheme and urged the Department to: recognise the adverse impact on Equality of Opportunity their own EQIA had noted; recognise the popularity/success of the current arrangements and reject any proposals that decreased eligibility/social inclusion. Similarly, the threat to reverse the Hospital Parking Charges Act was challenged as a democratic affront and a subversion of the principle of the NHS being free at the point of use for its patients and staff.

Conscious of the toxic and destructive nature of the debate and the political posturing around the issue of migration, NIPSA's annual conference had encouraged the need for both support for refugees and a challenge to the racist, divisive approach to this issue propagated by the mainstream media and opportunistic politicians. As a contribution to this wider struggle, the PRU produced a booklet ("Beyond the Politics of Hate: defeating anti-refugee rhetoric") that argued for the trade union movement and its allies to take the lead in offering a progressive vision of true citizenship, rights and democratic control – in and out of work.

Organisation and Administration

A8 Appointment of Auditors

After a tender process GMcG Lisburn Chartered Accountants was appointed as NIPSA Auditors for the 2023 year.

A9 Donations

Organisation	Amount	Purpose of Donation
Belfast City of Sanctuary	£300	Great Refugee Picnic
Belfast Pride	£100	Towards Festival Organisation Costs
BETICO Promotions	£200	Film 406 Days - The Debenhams Picket Line
Communication Workers Union	£20,000	CWU Welfare Fund
Concern World Wide	£282	Dhaka Project
Cork Mother Jones	£200	Mother Jones Festival 2023
Derry Trades Union Council	£300	Film Screening
International Brigade Commemoration Committee	£100	85th Anniversary of the Return of the Brigadiers
International Trade Union Confederation	£500	Turkey Appeal
International Trade Union Confederation	£500	Strike Fund
Justice for Colombia	£200	Trucks for Peace
Medical Aid for Palestine	£1,000	2023 Appeal
NIPSA Global Solidarity & Developing World Fund	£7,500	Annual General Council Donation
North Down & Ards Trades Council	£250	To assist with decline in affiliation
Omagh Pride	£100	Towards Festival Organisation Costs
Professor of Industrial Relations	£300	Towards Strike Statistics Project
Reclaim the Agenda	£200	Towards IWD Rally & Programme
Save Our Sperrins	£500	Save our Sperrins Campaign
Trade Union Friends of Palestine	£200	Palestine Solidarity Campaign Rally



A10 Headquarters Staff

At the end of the year the staffing review agreed by the General Council in June 2021 had not commenced but the new General Council in June agreed that some long-standing permanent vacancies could be filled on a substantive basis.

Claire McDonnell and Debra Whitford were successful in the Executive Officer competitions and took up the posts in Finance and Membership respectively.

Lynsey Hudson was successful in the Senior Personal Secretary competition.

Dooley Harte left NIPSA to take another job and Geraldine Alexander retired at the end of October. Antoinette McMillen took up the acting Deputy General Secretary post.

Natalie Shiels was successful in the temporary competition for Assistant Secretary for the vacancy left by Dooley.

A11 Headquarters Staff

Composition of NIPSA's Workforce: The monitoring return for February 2023 to the Equality Commission showed the composition of NIPSA's workforce as summarised below:

	Below EO	EO and above	Totals
Male	7	11	18
Female	12	12	24
Protestant	9	5	14
Catholic	10	12	22
Unclassified	0	6	6
Disabled	2	4	6

A12 Membership

The year-end figures for 2023 and comparison 2022 are listed below:

	CIVIL SERVICE	PUBLIC OFFICERS	NIPSA
2023	18,510	27,194	45,704
2022	16,819	24,387	41,206
Increase/Decrease	10.05%	11.51%	10.91%
Male	8,459	5,826	14,285
Female	10,051	21,368	31,419

Membership records continued to be updated throughout the year with information provided by employers and members.

Membership Figures fluctuated during 2023 with the end of year total at 45,704. There was an increase in the number of applications processed during the year. There were 6,449 applications processed in 2023, a significant increase of 2,363 on 2022.

Career Breaks: The practice of inviting members to retain their NIPSA membership whilst on Career Break continued with the annual fee remaining at £10.00. A total of 22 NIPSA members registered or retained their Career Breaks throughout 2023. This included 6 Civil Service members and 16 Public Officer members.

Branch Re-Organisation:

Civil Service Group:

Department for Communities (DfC): The General Purposes Committee (GPC) approved the amalgamation of Branches 138 and 144. The Branch is now Branch 138 Guidance Learning & Development. Branch 144 is now defunct.

Department for the Economy (DfE): The General Purposes Committee (GPC) approved the amalgamation of Branches 31 and 34. The Branch is now Branch 31 Adelaide House. Branch 34 is now defunct.

A13 NIPSA Annual Conference

The 2023 NIPSA Conference was held at the Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen, in hybrid format. The Conference took place over 3 days from 31 May to 2 June.

The Civil Service Group Conference was held in person at the Malone Hotel, Belfast on 8 November.

A14 Services for Members

Legal Services: The NIPSA Legal Advice (Personal Matters) Scheme was used by 102 members in 2023.

Legal Services (Personal Injury): In 2022, 956 new cases were submitted to the NIPSA Solicitor. In the same period 46 were closed, of these 38 were won or settled with awards totalling £1,306,550 and the remainder closed at a cost of £15,439 to NIPSA.

Welfare Fund: 104 applications were received for the Welfare resulting in grants totalling £33,250.

Financial Services: Platinum Financial provided independent financial advice on all aspects of financial planning. This included participating in Pre-Retirement and Mid-Career Seminars.

Membership Plus Cards: The three-year (2022/24) Membership Plus/NIPSA card was distributed to NIPSA members in December 2021. Further offers were added throughout the year and were available at www.membershipplus.co.uk and on the Membership Plus App.

Specsavers: Premium Club discount vouchers continued to be available through NIPSA Headquarters.

Abbey Autoline Insurance: Abbey Autoline continued to offer NIPSA members exclusive discounts on Car, Home and Travel Insurance.

A15 Trades Councils

NIPSA continued to actively encourage Branches to affiliate to local Councils of Trade Unions.

The Trades Council to which NIPSA Branches were affiliated were:

- Antrim & Ballymena;
- Belfast;
- Craigavon;
- Derry;
- Fermanagh;
- Mid Ulster;
- North Down & Ards;
- Omagh

A16 Union Learning

The NIPSA Union Learning Project submitted a new bid for 3 years (2023/2026) to NIC ICTU on 20 March 2023. The budget was approved mid-June at a much lower amount than was bid for. This was relayed to the ULR Committee and ULR Network at their meetings on 28 June 2023.

The ULR Conference took place again virtually on Wednesday 8th March 2023. The theme of the conference was 'Learning & Recruitment' and was tied into International Women's Day too. There was a speaker from the TUC, Carl Roper National Education & Organising Manager in the Organisation & Services Department, who spoke about his experience and expertise in organising strategies and union organising. Julie Gorman Union Learning Development Officer from NIC ICTU also spoke about the benefits of Union Learning.

The incoming committee was elected at conference and the members are detailed below. The Chairperson is Stephen Gowdy and the Vice Chairperson is Patricia Devenney. It was agreed by the incoming Committee to issue another email to Branches to ask for more nominees to fill the vacant places, the closing date for all nominations to be received would be Monday 22 May 2023 at 12 noon. Those who were elected and nominated are named in the table below.



ULR Committee 2023-24

Name	Branch	Employer
Cheryl Johnston	51	PBNI
Patricia Devenney	119	DfC
John McKeegan	560	LNI
Andrew Charles	530	ANDBC
Nominated 21 March 2023		
Arnold Stewart	70	
Nominated 3 April 2023		
Oisin Cash	77	Dfi
Nominated 13 April 2023		
Rory Duddy	80	Dfi

The ULR Conference is to take place again virtually on Wednesday 20th March 2024.

The ULF Project Manager organised another remote ICT ES Course through Northern Regional College (NRC) which ran from September 2022 to January 2023. A further remote ICT ES Course, through Northern Regional College (NRC,) was advertised and recruitment to it begins in January 2024.

The ULR Committee agreed to run courses in line with the application but with lower numbers. A pilot course for our NIPSA Representatives in an OCN Level 3 Mental Health First Aid was held on 16 & 17 October 2023. This was the first course that has been held in NIPSA HQ in person since the Covid pandemic.

A meeting with the FDA Project Manager took place in mid-August to look at ways that we could work together within the NICS. We were informed in late July that the NICS 'Assistance to Study Scheme' was being suspended for this year due to budget constraints, however, any participants currently availing of the scheme would continue to be supported.

Other courses that members participated in and undertook included a DfE 'Skill-up' programme for the Microcredential Business Management: Project Management that was fully funded. Other members were able to avail of other courses including an OCN NI Level 1 Counselling Course and an OCN NI Level 3 Award in Information Technology.

The Union Learning Project Co-Ordinator issued a survey through Office 365 Forms to our Representatives and our members to seek their views on Learning & Development and to ascertain what types of courses that they would like to see delivered by NIPSA through their Training Programme for representatives and through our Union Learning Project for members. The UL Project Co-Ordinator wished to know if representatives and members were aware of the ULR (Union Learning Rep) role and what it entails and to check if they would like to know more. The purpose of this was also to address motions that were passed at the NIPSA Delegate Conference in relation to training and also to enable discussions with the ULR Committee on what courses could be facilitated through the UL Fund. The survey closed on 6 October to enable this discussion with the ULR Committee to take place at their next meeting in December.

A ULR Course began on 20 October 2023 in NIC ICTU and completed in December.

The ULRs continued with any work they could, given the continued hybrid working patterns that employers are asking staff to work following Covid 19.

The ULRs have had to look at ways to communicate with members to get information out.

To date there are 140 NIPSA ULRs, 88 in the Civil Service Group and 52 in the Public Officers Group.



Section B

Civil Service

General Issues

Personnel Management

Group Reports

B1 General Issues

B1.1 Accommodation

Central Trade Union Side were advised of a proposal for an energy saving pilot to be run in Clare House. Central Trade Union Side liaised with DoF Departmental Trade Union Side on this pilot which involved a 'Change to the Current Ventilation Approach' which saw a change in approach from running Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to starting an hour before opening times and ending an hour after closing times and which began in Clare House in the week commencing 9 January 2023. Carbon dioxide monitors were received and monitoring of CO2 levels began. Energy usage as well as CO2 levels were assessed continuously over the following weeks. Trade Union Side were given an update on the ventilation approach at the end of April 2023 and the pilot concluded. The findings of the review of the pilot were shared with Trade Union Side and showed that there was no noticeable difference in CO2 readings between running the system 24/7 and running it for an hour before and after Clare House opening and closing times. There had been a consequent reduction in energy usage. Properties Division advised Trade Union Side that they would instruct Property Services Division that, where there were appropriate HVAC systems across the DoF Office Estate, they should be returned to pre-pandemic settings, in line with building opening and closing times.

In August, a letter from Properties Division to Departmental Accommodation Officers was shared with Central Trade Union Side. This letter was to make Departments aware of the detail of the impact of budget cuts on DoF service delivery and how this would affect Departments. The detail of the letter was discussed at the CWC Accommodation Whitley in early September when concerns were raised about the fact that the budget meant that only essential statutory health and safety related works could be progressed. Departmental Trade Union Sides were informed and asked to raise at their formal Whitley meetings in order to gain more local detail on impact.

In September, Central Trade Union Side was informed about plans to vacate Marlborough House, Craigavon in 2025. Concerns were raised about the staff currently working in the building and the need to retain Civil Service employment in the area. It was also highlighted that a Connect2 hub is housed in the building and is used by staff from across various Departments as an integral part of the Hybrid Working policy. All impacted Departmental Trade Union Sides were informed and both Departmental and Central consultation is ongoing.

In December, Central Trade Union Side was made aware that Digital Transformation Branch were proposing 'Proof of Value' projects. The first was building occupancy and building sustainability, with Trade Union Side and staff engagement to be completed in advance of any data collection. The stated objectives of this project are:

- "to demonstrate how the existing WiFi solution could be enhanced to facilitate the monitoring of environmental conditions, such as temperature and occupancy levels within the NICS Building estate; and
- "compiling and producing analytics which will be of benefit to Construction and Procurement Delivery Building Management, Premises Officers and Properties Division."

Four initial buildings were identified: Clare House; Craigantlet Buildings; Ballymena Connect 2 Hub; and Lanyon Plaza. Central Trade Union Side had identified a number of issues with the proposal to be raised with Digital Transformation Branch.

B1.2 Pay, Reward and Grading

The Civil Service Group Executive on 5 December 2022 agreed that a pay offer for 2022/23 was likely to fall short of the claim and agreed to engage with political parties to ramp up the pay campaign and to link into ICTU's Workers Demand Better campaign. Local Dispute (Strike) Committees and activists' meetings were established to begin consultation with members. Central Trade Union Side met with the Department of Finance on 16 December to discuss the 22/23



pay offer. The Management Side set out the overall amount available for the Civil Service pay award and presented a 'without prejudice' offer. The response from Trade Union Side was that the offer was both derisory and insulting. Trade Union Side challenged it and sought an increase in the amount available. Trade Union Side stated that the £2.1m needed to fund the Living Wage for the lowest paid should not be counted as part of the quantum available for all. Management Side responded to say that the £2.1m would not be additional and there could be no additional funding. The Civil Service Executive Committee began preparations in branches for the rejection of the likely offer and for further consultation.

Management Side then contacted Trade Union Side to advise that after further consideration, it was agreed that the £2.1m to fund the living wage would not be counted as part of the quantum for the award and on 6 January the trade unions received the formal offer.

The offer consisted of a) contractual, performance-related progression; b) bringing up the pay of the lowest paid staff (Administrative Assistant and analogous grades, including Industrial 1 staff) to the Living Wage Foundation rates of £10.90 an hour or £21,053 annually; c) all eligible other staff to receive a consolidated increase of £552. After rejecting the offer a formal branch consultation took place.

NIPSA's Civil Service Executive Committee met again on Monday 23 January to consider the responses to the branch consultation exercise on the NICS pay offer. 90% of branches responded and all of those voted unanimously to reject the offer. It was also clear from branch responses that civil servants felt undervalued in comparison to their public sector counterparts who have all received much higher offers, albeit those awards were also below inflation.

With the clear support of branches, the Civil Service Executive agreed to proceed to a ballot for industrial action. A mailshot was issued to all members in advance of the ballot which opened on 9 February and closed on 2 March.

The Civil Service Executive met again on 3 March to discuss the ballot result and the ongoing strategy. The ballot outcome was:

Are you prepared to take part in industrial action consisting of a strike?

Number voting Yes 84.62%

Number voting No 15.38%

Are you prepared to take part in industrial action short of a strike?

Number voting Yes 93.83%

Number voting No 6.17%

It was noted that this was the biggest positive vote for action we have ever had.

Following the very successful ballot the Civil Service Group Executive agreed to commence action short of strike action on 15 March.

It was agreed that the action short of strike action would be continuous and take the form of the following:

- (a) Refusing to undertake the work of vacant posts and absent colleagues;
- (b) Refusing to undertake any voluntary duties;
- (c) Taking proper breaks; and
- (d) Only working the hours they are paid for.

After discussion and consultation with sister unions in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Civil Service Executive Committee decided to take strike action on 26 April, along with the teachers' unions. The Executive Committee agreed to endorse a decision by the members in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museums to take strike action on 17 March.

The strike action on both dates was very successful with more picket lines and more members on picket lines than during any previous strike action. Very successful rallies were held in Belfast and Londonderry and the strike action was extensively covered in a special edition of NIPSA reports which was issued to all members. NIPSA received a significant level of media coverage before and during the action.

Recognising the difficulties of progressing the claim in the absence of an Assembly, NIPSA continued to engage with the local political parties and had a round of very successful meetings which resulted in the local parties declaring support for an improved award. The leader of one of the largest parties issued a very helpful press release on the day before the April strike and subsequently echoed NIPSA's call for a 'Needs Based Budget'.

At the end of April, the Secretary of State announced the budget which significantly reduced the spending for all government departments. To make matters worse, he declared that any additional funding provided by the Treasury for departments in Britain would be deducted from the so-called deficit accumulated by the Assembly. At the end of July, the estimated shortfall in funding for NICS departments was estimated at between £800k and £1 billion.

Having not received responses to letters dating back to November 2022, NIPSA continued to write to the Secretary of State to seek a meeting to discuss the situation – especially in relation to NICS pay. A response was finally received in May which simply stated that pay was a matter for the Assembly.

The derisory pay award of £552 was imposed in June salaries and NIPSA marked the event by holding another protest at the NIO, Erskine House.

The Civil Service Executive Committee met regularly over the summer months and agreed to consider an escalation of action in the Autumn if there was no further movement. It was reported at that time that unions affiliated to ICTU were also discussing broader action by other public sector unions.

NIPSA activists were kept apprised of events throughout that time through very successful monthly branch activists' meetings at which activists raised issues, asked questions, and gave feedback from their areas.

With the assistance of the PCS General Secretary, Mark Serwotka, NIPSA General Secretary met with the PCS Parliamentary Group of MPs to apprise them of the situation here and to seek their assistance. They were advised of the additional offer made to civil servants in Britain as compensation for their 2022/23 award of 2%, that that because of the Secretary of State's budget stipulation, that money would not be coming here as a Barnett consequential. The MPs agreed to raise this issue.

In August, NIPSA wrote to the NI Affairs Committee and to the former Shadow Secretary of State Peter Kyle, to seek a meeting. NIPSA made a submission to the NI Affairs Committee and sought a meeting to explain the issue affecting the pay of public servants. NIPSA met with the new Shadow Secretary of State, Hilary Benn.

Along with our health colleagues in NIPSA and our sister trade unions in ICTU, civil servants took part in a further day of strike action on 22 September. Once more, members turned out in force on picket lines and at the rallies that took place in Belfast, Derry and Dundonald.

During that time, the CS Executive Committee continued to give further consideration to selective action and following discussions with the relevant branches 94 and 97 our members in Veterinary Service Animal Health group agreed to take selective action for 5 full days. The action began on 29 October and ended on 5 November and involved around 260 portal inspectors, meat inspectors and vets. The action taken during that week involved picketing and protests including at Erskine House.

The hugely successful selective strike action garnered an immense amount of publicity across TV, and the printed and social media and led to an offer of a meeting with the Secretary of State. That meeting took place on 30 November.

Throughout the year, NIPSA continued to meet with all the political parties and branch activists were kept apprised of events through regular and very successful branch activists' meetings.

At the year end, the political parties were in discussion with the NIO in relation to a budget and other issues that might end the political impasse, but plans have been made for all public sector unions to take strike action on 18 January 2024 if there has not been an acceptable settlement to public sector pay.

(a) Subsistence Allowance: In response to a letter from NIPSA sent in October 2022, seeking an increase in subsistence and mileage rates, Management Side responded in April to say they would consider an increase in the subsistence allowance but not the mileage rate. A meeting was held 30 June at which NIPSA sought an increase in the proposed increase. It was agreed that NIPSA would gather evidence for a higher increase and respond with a counter proposal. NIPSA submitted a response for a better increase in the allowance, but management side responded to advise



they were intending to proceed with the increase they had proposed. Management Side agreed to revisit the mileage rates in the new financial year.

(b) On-Call Allowance: Following proposals set out by Management Side on 25 April to change on-call and overtime terms for staff in the Department for Infrastructure, meetings were held in July and November at which Trade Union Side challenged the proposals. Both sides agreed to further fact-finding and to further discussions at a later date. Trade Union Side indicated that there could be no agreement unless there was clear evidence of no detriment to members.

(c) SGB Pay Issue: The discrepancies in the SGB overtime pay were resolved and the change resulted in an increased hourly overtime rate for this small group of staff, effective from 1 August 2021. Staff received arrears in their May salary. Trade Union Side worked closely with the Management Side Pay team on this matter and welcomed the resolution of the issue for the members.

(d) Agency Workers Issues: Trade Union Side met with Management Side and pushed for payment of the 3% unconsolidated payment and also raised the unacceptable delay of back pay for 2021/2022. Trade Union Side also made clear that were keen to explore what other Terms and Conditions improvements could be made to afford Agency Workers similar arrangements to their permanent colleagues, restated that the posts needed to be filled permanently and continued to query if it were possible to make an exception to the merit principle to allow for the recruitment of Agency workers into permanent contracts. Management Side agreed to take Trade Union Side's points away for further consideration. In relation to 2022/2023 and the imposition of the £552 award, Management Side confirmed that the new rates were in place from 7 August and calculations were completed and progressing for approval of back pay. Trade Union Side pressed Management Side to ensure Agency workers were paid all monies due as soon as possible.

B1.3 Pensions

The NICS Pension Forum: The Pensions Forum involves the recognised Civil Service Trade Unions meeting management on all pensions related issues. In April 2023 the Department of Finance (DoF) issued its public consultation document on the

McCloud retrospective remedy. NIPSA's response to the consultation was submitted by the deadline of 2 June and raised various important issues including that we believe that the proposals provided an adequate procedural redress to the discrimination that was perpetrated by the Government, but that the proposals were not without concerns. The publication of responses to the consultation issued in September and it was stated that the DoF will continue with the proposed legislation, which was laid in advance of 1 October 2023 statutory deadline. The legislation will restore eligible pension members with service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 to a position they would have been in had the discrimination not occurred, giving them a choice of alpha or PCSPS (NI) benefits for 2015-22.

The NICS Pensions Board (NICSPB): NIPSA has an Employee representative on the NICS Pensions Board. The Board has responsibility for assisting the Scheme Manager in the effective administration of the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension arrangements and assisting the Department in securing compliance and good governance. During the year the main discussion centered on McCloud implementation. Other issues included Business Continuity, legislation, Resourcing and training.

North South Pension Scheme: A response was submitted to the North South Pension Scheme, on proposed rule changes covering the 2015 remedy ("McCloud") retrospective phase and the published response mirrored that set out by DoF as reported under the NICS Pensions Forum.

B1.4 Public Service Management

Integr8 Project: The Integr8 Programme is an initiative to support the transformation of Finance and HR services across the Civil Service. Current technology systems for Finance and HR (Account NI and HRConnect) have been in place since 2006, need to be replaced having reached end of contract and being, in some areas, out of support and may become obsolete.

Trade Union Side met with the Integr8 team in early March to discuss the detail of the business case (version 2) and this consultation included the need for change, the preferred option of in-house services, potential benefits and next steps. There had been considerable doubt as to whether there would be the requisite funding given the punitive budgetary

arrangements imposed on the NICS by the Secretary of State. The programme, in the main, was stood down due to the budgetary constraints. However, Central Trade Union Side continued to receive high level updates on the matter.

Central Trade Union Side and DoF Departmental Trade Union Side consulted with Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources People & Organisational Development in developing the recruitment process for the Integr8 management structure.

Hybrid Working Policy: Trade Union Side alerted Management Side that, although Work Style Agreements were correctly being agreed by staff at a local level in many business areas, directives on quotas of days in the office were being demanded in some others, contrary to the central agreement. There had been some issues with the implementation of the policy in some areas and a registered disagreement had been lodged over Senior Management application of the process in one Department. This matter was escalated to Central Whitley and heard by Management Side from People & Organisational Development. The outcome was received in October, was favorable to the Trade Union Side position and was taken up in the local business area. Trade Union Side maintain a watching brief for any other issues arising across Departments.



B2 Personnel Management

B2.1 Employee Relations

People and Organisational Development

(P&OD): The proposal from Management Side for the further delegation of responsibilities to line managers had been suspended due to COVID-19. Following an exchange of correspondence where Management Side indicated that they wished to look again at reviewing the Discipline policy in the HR handbook, a meeting was arranged for 19 June. These proposals included giving line managers the authority for investigations and decision making, up to and including gross misconduct stage. Trade Union Side registered very strong objections to the stated intention by Management Side and reiterated the reasons for opposing the delegation of functions currently carried out by Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources to line managers. Trade Union Side advised Management Side that a discussion on the changes should be parked as other work priorities meant that Trade Union Side was not in a position to begin discussion on the detail of these proposals. Trade Union Side also raised concerns around a range of subjects including:

- the consequential burden of additional work coming at a time when the service is not properly resourced;
- budgetary pressures resulting in Departments looking to identify what work will no longer be done;
- a derisory pay imposition;
- vacancies at many grades across all departments which may not be filled;
- issues of resourcing/capacity and Departments being unable to find the resources to cover the extra duties;
- training (with particular regard to disability); and
- favouritism and bias.

Trade Union Side reiterated the objections previously outlined in relation to the Managing Attendance proposals about delegation to the line and followed this up in writing. Trade Union Side stated that the proposed new policy is coming at a time when the Secretary of State has set a punishing budget adversely affecting all departments, a budget that will affect the number of staff employed in each department and the services carried out. Departments' priority must be to ensure

that they are able to carry out existing functions with a potentially reduced workforce. Trade Union Side stated that they do not believe this is the appropriate time to consider imposing additional work on already hard-pressed staff.

Additionally, Trade Union Side highlighted that the new process would not work within the current management structure in the NICS. Changes made as a result of budget cuts, such as delayering and changes to staff span of control, may affect the implementation of the process and compromise the requirement to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest in the management chain. Further to that, a significant cultural change and training programme would be required in order to prepare staff for what would be a significant shift in the way the disciplinary process is carried out. Another important factor for consideration is the low morale that exists in the NICS at present which is a result of the budget cuts, the increased workload and the derisory pay award received by staff. Trade Union Side indicated that now was not the time to ask staff to take on more work that has the potential to create division amongst teams of staff.

In September, Management Side had sought dates from Central Trade Union Side to start formal consultation on a review of the Dignity at Work and Grievance policies. Central Trade Union Side also raised that a Sexual Harassment in the Workplace policy be considered, either within the extant Dignity at Work policy or as a standalone policy. Central Trade Union Side stated that before meetings could take place, a Formal Whitley Structure needed to be discussed and agreed for the People & Organisational Development and Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources divisions.

Throughout the year, Central Trade Union Side had raised the issue of paternity leave entitlements. Management Side advised that they were still taking advice on the issues identified.

In November, Central Trade Union Side were made aware that Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources had adopted what appeared to be a new process in determining compensation levels on dismissal for Inefficiency Sickness Absence that, in the view of Trade Union Side, is not established policy. Central Trade Union Side challenged the development

and use of this process and sought a meeting with Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources Employee Relations and policy officials from People and Organisational Development to discuss these issues of concern.

B2.2 Learning, Wellbeing and Development

In November, Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources informed Central Trade Union Side of their intention to publish and support all Learning and Development activities available to all Northern Ireland Civil Service staff. They advised that their intention was to write an article in the L&D Bulletin and issue every few months. NIPSA's Union Learning Coordinator was advised that the new L&D Portfolio would include ULR courses and the new portfolio was due to launch.

B2.3 Resourcing and Workforce Planning

Overview: Trade Union Side continued to engage with Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources Resourcing through meetings and via correspondence on resourcing issues, including individual draft Candidate Information Booklets, consistently putting the case for competitions to be advertised internally in the first instance. Trade Union Side have had some success in respect of this with some recent competitions having been advertised as Interest Circulars and Trawls. At a meeting in February, Trade Union Side was advised that a 2023/24 Recruitment Plan was being developed but this had yet to be shared due to budgetary pressures.

In early May, Trade Union Side met with Management Side on the issue of budgets and their impact on Resourcing and Workforce planning. Management Side advised that they were not close to a situation where formal surpluses would be declared but that work had been undertaken on the policy should this be required. Trade Union Side stated that if vacancies were not being filled then departments must identify what work is no longer required. Management Side advised that departments had been asked what work they would no longer be able to undertake and to identify what statutory work must be done. Departments were also asked to review which of their vacancies they could afford to fill. Trade Union Side welcomed the commitment that there were neither

plans nor finances for another Voluntary Exit Scheme and requested that consultation continue centrally, particularly if there were any future plans for cross departmental redeployments.

A review of affordable vacancies had resulted in over 1000 vacancies being removed with all outstanding vacancies standing at 2,292 of which 1,542 were general service and 750 were non-general service.

Detail on the individual competitions is outlined below.

E02/E01 Competition: A further request was received by Trade Union Side to extend the E02 and E01 competitions to June 2024. In light of the current budgetary issues Trade Union Side agreed to this extension. Further interviews were planned for November with new merit lists anticipated at the end of December.

Grade 6/7 Competitions: Trade Union Side were advised at a meeting on 28 July that Grade 7 and Grade 6 competitions were ready to be launched but were on hold due to departmental budgets being assessed. Consultation on these competitions would commence in the new year.

SO/DP Competition: Some progress was expected with the tribunal cases lodged by NIPSA in September 2019, in relation to the potentially discriminatory effect of the psychometric testing element of the external competition on some protected categories, following the recommencement of Tribunal hearings. Whilst there was a consequent backlog, NIPSA's legal advisers asked for all documentation that we wished to rely on in any forthcoming case and this has been provided.

A new SO competition was launched in 2022 and remained live until August 2024 with an available supply in October of 227 with candidates to begin being placed in the new year.

As regards the DP competition, the recruitment update at the end December 2022 showed that 3,300 applications were received, online tests were completed and phase 1 of approximately 1,000 interviews conducted. A merit list of 209 was produced and candidates were expected to begin being placed in the new year. Further interviews were planned to take place in February and March. Available supply stood at 100 in October.



AO Competition: A request was received by Trade Union Side to extend the AO competition to 31 December 2023. In light of the current budgetary issues Trade Union Side agreed to this extension. A further extension until 31 March 2024 was sought and agreed and there were 40 candidates remaining on the merit list in December.

Accountancy Issues: Competition Candidate Information Booklets had been agreed for SO and DP accountants and a further meeting was also in the process of being arranged with Central Trade Union Side and the Head of Profession.

Permanent Secretary Competition: In October, Central Trade Union Side consulted with Senior Civil Service Resourcing Branch on the recruitment for Permanent Secretary roles in the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Department for Communities AO Competition: In November, Central Trade Union Side consulted with Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources and approved the recruitment processes for the expansion of the work that Department for Communities delivers on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

This competition was anticipated to fill up to 2000 permanent Administrative Officer roles within Department for Communities Department for Work and Pensions service areas based in the three locations of Belfast, Ballymena and the Northwest with Department for Work and Pensions covering all the staffing and associated costs.

This reversal of the use of temporary agency staff to cover permanent roles was welcomed as both Departmental Trade Union Side and Central Trade Union Side had robustly argued for the permanency of these DWP posts for many years.

B3 Group Reports

B3.1 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)

Consultation: Trade Union Side (TUS) continued to liaise directly, every three weeks, with the Grade 3 in Corporate Strategy and Corporate Support Group (SPCSG) and other members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) on a range of complex issues to address working arrangements in the Ports and other locations.

Trade Union Side had difficulties within the Forestry Service (FS), Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Marine Fisheries Division (MFD), with failure to consult on a wide range of issues. There was a marked improvement in consultation across all these areas after it was raised at the related Group Whitley Meetings.

Trade Union Side experienced some difficulties within Veterinary Service Animal Health Group (VSAHG) who remained reluctant to fully engage in consultation on a range of issues. This culminated in the HQ official having to ask for a meeting with the Permanent Secretary to discuss issues within the group, which took place in October. The meeting was productive and an agreed way forward was put in place, with ongoing engagement via the group Whitley meetings. TUS continued to engage constructively with MS on a wide range of issues.

The inaugural Climate Change, Science & Innovation Group (CCSIG) Whitley after the restructuring of the DAERA groups took place at the end of January. This proved to be informative and a healthy discussion ensued.

DAERA Estate: Orchard House refurbishment has been completed and Department for Communities (DfC) has moved in. All Work Style Agreements (WSA) for DAERA staff have now been reviewed. Four buildings occupied by DAERA are due to close, Dundonald House, Klondyke, Sperrin House and Academy House. DoF staff will retain a presence in Clare House.

Due to a large coping stone falling from the roof, Dundonald House has been closed and will not be opened again for work purposes, other than to collect equipment and decant to Clare House. A maximum of twenty people are permitted into the building at any given time and this is only to collect items they may need. The re-location steering group continued engaging on the decanting from Dundonald House and Klondyke to Clare House.

It is anticipated staff in Klondyke will move to Clare House in March 2024. It is unknown at this time but the move by staff in Dundonald House may be sooner than anticipated and they could also move by late 2023 or early in 2024. The Secretariat established a Relocation Committee which includes representatives from Branches / Buildings impacted by these moves. This Committee met with Management Side (MS) from Estates Transformation Division on a regular basis to deal with the many anticipated issues members could have. Also, TUS sit on a working group for the move of some NIEA staff to Lisburn NIEA office.

Vacancies: Given the unprecedented level of vacancies across the Department, Trade Union Side continued to raise concerns at every possible opportunity, including Whitley meetings, regarding the hours staff were working and the workload they had covering the work of vacant posts and in some cases their former post. Management Side prioritised work, with a pause in a very limited number of work areas.

Temporary promotions levels have been very high during this reporting period.

Well Being of Staff: The Senior Management Team (SMT) continued to explore various areas for considering the wellbeing of staff while working from home and for their return to "normal" working and the implications this would have on all staff. Trade Union Side (TUS) continued to be involved in this area of work. TUS was concerned with the backlog there appeared to be with Occupational Health Service (OHS) appointments. The period from referral to appointment has reduced over the reporting period, but delays remain.



BREXIT Operational Readiness: Trade Union Side continued to negotiate on behalf of our members at the ports and in the field offices on issues such as Supervisory Allowance, Annual Leave, Bovine TB Testing and Veterinary Renewal Project.

There was ongoing consultation with Trade Union Side across the Department on the many varied and complex issues raised by BREXIT. These issues which cut across the entire Department have put extreme pressure on the Secretariat.

The issues in this area and across the Department led to an unprecedented increase in the number of personal cases being dealt with by the Secretariat and Branches.

Industrial Relations: An effective working relationship was maintained with a Grade 3 in Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group (SPCSG) and this was of great benefit to both Trade Union Side (TUS) and Management Side (MS) in preventing, managing and resolving issues.

TUS worked with SPCSG to develop an Industrial Relations Presentation for Management and Staff, which is expected to roll out early in 2024. Delivery was pushed back due to the workload pressure on the Secretariat.

It will be presented by TUS and MS via webinars. Both TUS and MS will monitor progress and the presentation is likely to be rolled out annually following the initial webinars.

In addition to this, MS have agreed to having a NIPSA presentation along with the DAERA online induction programme. It will be included when face-to-face inductions recommence. The Secretariat is in the final stages of developing the presentation.

Orchard House issue re time spent in the office: Trade Union Side (TUS) was concerned about Management Sides failure to consult on staff returning to Orchard House and the way this has been communicated to staff. Following an Orchard House Whitley and a lengthy discussion on this issue with the Grade 5, the issue has now been resolved with a marked improvement in management's approach to WSA. TUS will monitor this closely.

Trade Union Side Office: Following a competition, the DAERA Trade Union Side Office welcomed the appointment of Colm Morgan as Departmental

Secretary and Ryan McNulty and John Stewart as Assistant Departmental Secretaries. This meant alongside Brian McGeehan that the Seconded Office was at full complement for the first time in over six years. Work levels remained high across the period of this report. The Office also welcomed the appointment of a new HQ official during this period.

Selective Action: A very effective period of selective strike action was delivered by DAERA members, commencing 30th October 2023 and continuing for five consecutive days, impacting on operations in ports and meat plants.

There was great support and enthusiasm for the action from the vets, technical staff and administrative staff who took part. The support they received from the wider trade union movement was greatly appreciated. The action impacted the meat industry, portal inspections and had a knock-on effect for supermarkets. These staff took a stand to fight for better pay and to defend public services on behalf of all NICS and public sector workers and have indicated their willingness to take further action if required.

B3.2 Department for Communities (DfC)

Departmental Whitley Committee: The Department for Communities Committee (DfC) continued to meet DfC management on a regular basis. The 2023/24 Budget constraints were the main focus of any engagement.

Finance: Trade Union Side met with management to discuss the impact of the 2034/23 budget. The Department's 2023-24 Non-Ring-Fenced Resource Budget allocation reflected a £13.3m (1.9%) reduction from 2022-23. 90% of the total resource requirement was for inescapable spending commitments and given the £97.9m of additional requirements in 2023-24, meant the funding gap is £111.2m (15.5%).

This was also set against the context of almost £277m (29.5%) of reductions to Resource Budgets over the past nine years.

In terms of Capital, the allocation was £59m (27.3%) short of the £275.1m required for 2023-24. This was due in part to increases in inflation in the construction industry, where most of the capital budget funds the building of new social housing.



Departmental Trade Union Side have provided a response to the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the 2023/24 budget and to the EQIA for the impact of the cuts to Discretionary Support.

Recruitment: Trade Union Side (TUS) continued to push for all vacant posts to be filled but the decision by NICSHR to suspend recruitment impacted on the Department. TUS engaged with management to bring a further 2000 posts from the Department for Work and Pensions into the Department for Communities and management agreed to fill 70% of these new posts with substantive staff. Consultation on the method to fill took place via the Central Whitley Committees.

Organisation & Membership: Trade Union Side (TUS) continued to progress its priorities of:

- (1) Recruiting Agency Workers;
- (2) Training Organisers; and
- (3) Increasing Female Participation.

Work continued to re-establish Committees in all Branches. Work continued on the alignment of members in some areas to the appropriate Branch in line with their Management structures.

Awareness Sessions on the Criteria Based Interview process was provided to Agency Members.

The Departmental Female Reps Forum, established to assist increase participation of female members within NIPSA DfC structures, launched a Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace as part of Internal Women's Day on 7 March 2023 following a survey of all members. The survey highlighted serious concerns in the workplace but also within NIPSA structures and was Departmental Intranet site in August 2023. Departmental Trade Union Side have welcomed the commitment of the Departmental People Strategy and Diversity & Inclusion Teams to reinforce the Department's Zero Tolerance Policy and develop an awareness programme.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism, a hybrid event was held on 29 November 2023 to launch DfC TUS Tackling Sexual Harassment Desk Aid. Over 60 members attended in person or online and DfC Management, NIC ICTU and Raise your Voice provided guest speakers.

Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local

Government group (HURLG): During the year, Trade Union Side (TUS) within the Group met with management on a quarterly basis through the Group's Whitley structures.

TUS continued to be kept informed about plans to develop the new Building Safety Group.

Following flooding, Causeway Exchange sustained substantial damage and was closed. TUS, and particularly the Causeway Exchange Health & Safety Panel, met regularly and engaged with Management Side (MS) on the outstanding remedial works necessary and possible timeframe for full re-opening of the building.

Throughout the year, TUS met with The Appeal Service (TAS) Management Side to discuss concerns with regards to the building and staff safety. With support from Section Office, an in-house Health and Safety Committee was established. Following the Annual General Meeting, TAS elected a new committee.

Budgetary constraints and impact upon service provision and delivery remained on-going topics for regular discussions throughout the year.

Throughout the year, TUS continued to engage regularly with MS in Benefit Security Division on a range of issues affecting members across the area.

Move to Universal Credit Project: Move to Universal Credit (UC) Trade Union Side (TUS) continued to engage with management monthly. Approx 80,000 people are on Income-related Benefits these figures will keep moving due to the natural movement between the benefits. The Autumn budget statement confirmed Employment Support Allowances (Income Based) Customers approx. 66,000 will not move to UC until 2028. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has confirmed its intention to complete Move to UC of the other legacy benefits by 2024-2025.

Following meeting with members due for redeployment to UC Operations, TUS met with management to address members concerns regarding redeployment. TUS were successful in getting management to agree to a delay in the redeployment process from 16 October until after Christmas to give people a chance to arrange caring responsibilities etc. TUS were also successful in getting other changes and the first phase of redeployment was completed with volunteers and no compulsory redeployments.

It is the intention to have all Migration Notices issued to Tax Credit customers by March/April 2024, with migration notices being issued to customers from April/September 2024.



Finance Support: As result of Budget 23/24 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) an EQIA was issued launched about the proposed changes to Discretionary Support (DS). DfC Trade Union Office submitted a response to the EQIA on the suggested changes to DS due to the budget situation. Some changes such as only providing essential items and increasing the time for repeat goods from 1 year to 2 years failed to make the expected savings and the budget for the year is not expected to meet the need, although management said they will just have to keep paying and overspend if necessary.

Finance Support Project: The Finance Support Project in the Work and Health Group has been working towards the development and implementation of a new processing system to replace the Discretionary Support Computer System and improve staff experience by being a quicker, more intuitive, and easier system to operate.

In late May the project team began to test phase one of the Claims Processing Tool. This phase focused on the processing screens used by Finance Support Officers (FSO) from receipt of claim to committing their decision. The staff involved in testing were impressed with the new system and consultation is ongoing.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Areas: Work continued on industrial relations within the Lisahally and Ballymena service Centres, and regular local Whitley and branch committee meetings were held alongside correspondence with the Seconded Office and NIPSA HQ.

Quarterly Whitley meetings were held with Management Side within Child Maintenance Service with Seconded Office representation; these meetings incorporated pensions work within Great Northern Tower.

A large area of work was dedicated to the moving of staff from the Plaza to Great Northern Tower following an investigation of potential issues which affected the structural integrity of the building. At the end of year this was still ongoing and the building had been vacated by all staff bar premises and security.

Supporting People Group: Group Whitley Council meetings continued on a regular basis. Work continued with branch reps to encourage increased participation within some of the less active branches within the Group.

Engaged Communities Group: Group Trade Union Side (GTUS) continue to meet with management on a quarterly basis through the Group's Whitley structures.

A Deloitte review into ECG made several recommendations that have been accepted by the Department, including:

- The Creation of a new Departmental Group (Regeneration and Community) and the movement of Community Empowerment Division and Voluntary and Community Division from Engaged Communities to Regeneration and Community.
- Commissioning Deloitte to carry out a review of the operating model for Public Records Office Northern Ireland (PRONI) with a view to creating a more independent body with commercial opportunities.
- Increased staffing resource for Casement Park and Sub Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer projects.

Strategic Policy & Professional Services Group:

Trade Union Side (TUS) within the group continued to meet with Management on a quarterly basis though the Group's Whitley structures. Between meetings of the Group Whitley, TUS have been engaged on a variety of matters including staffing and temporary promotion.

In September, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) launched a consultation on changes to the Work Capability Assessment activities and descriptors, to which NIPSA submitted a response. The Government provided their response to the consultation in late November.

Universal Credit: Throughout the year, Universal Credit Operations has been involved in a number of pilots. Ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately) is a codeword scheme that enables victims of domestic abuse to discreetly ask for immediate help in participating pharmacies and Jobcentres (Jobs and Benefits Offices in Northern Ireland). The scheme was developed by the Home Office with the help of partners including the domestic abuse sector, pharmacy associations and the police. It was launched across the UK in January 2021. The scheme is now managed by Hestia's UK Says No More campaign.

There was also a pilot ongoing in Maghaberry Prison. DfC staff are engaging with returning offenders

prior to their release, along with a number of other organisations, to ensure a smooth transfer when released. Several employers are working with the department on this and there is a campaign called "Ban the Box" looking for employers to remove the declaration of convictions from their application forms.

Belfast, Southern and Northern Regions continued to engage via well-established quarterly Whitley's. In addition, Trade Union Side meet with the Assistant Director on a quarterly basis for the entire Universal Credit business area.

Work and Health: Group Trade Union Side (GTUS) have continued to engage with management through the Whitley framework. Following the publication of the Departmental Equality Impact assessment, GTUS had weekly meetings in early 2023 to discuss the impact of the 2023/24 budget which had had a significant impact in Work and Health mainly because of the need to migrate over 75000 Tax credit, Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance cases to Universal Credit (UC) in 2024/25. This requires an extra 260 staff. As the Department cannot recruit above the current baseline because of budget restrictions these posts have to be filled by redeployment from other areas of the Department.

Phase 1 of redeployments from Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance to Universal Credit that were due to begin in November 2023 were postponed until January 2024 following consultation with GTUS. This followed meetings with GTUS and members who were alarmed by the imminent moves that did not give members with caring responsibilities enough time to make suitable arrangements. In addition to this GTUS negotiated a process where members who had volunteered or had been selected for redeployment could have informal discussions with their prospective management to address welfare concerns and if necessary, look at opening up wider departmental vacancies if Universal Credit was not suitable for them. Following this enough volunteers came forward for redeployment to make random selection unnecessary.

In-Work Support: The Department provided support to people with a disability in employment through two contracted programmes, Access to Work (NI) and Workable (NI). These programmes were due to be replaced by the new In-Work Support provision on 1 April 2024. However, under the 23/24 Budget

Proposals, the Department has set out plans to pause any further development of the In-Work Support provision.

Indicative Resource Allocations were given for 23/24 to deliver Access to Work (NI), Workable (NI), Employment Support Scheme and Condition Management Programme.

NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities: A pilot was started for people with disabilities to have between 2 and 8 weeks of work experience in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). It and will be evaluated in 2024 with a view to rolling out across the NICS and consultation with Trade Union Side is ongoing.

Disability and Work Strategy: Under the 23/24 Budget Proposals, the Department set out plans to pause the development of a new Disability and Work Strategy. These are subject to funding and Trade Union Side and other disability groups have been consulted on the proposal.

B3.3 Department for the Economy (DFE)

Estates: Regular Health & Safety checks and inspections continued to be carried out across all buildings occupied by DfE staff.

There have been reviews of premises functions which have been ran by the Organisational Development and Transformation (ODT) team.

(a) Netherleigh: This building has now completely closed for staff with all remaining premises and SGB staff now based out of Adelaide House (except for one SGB 2 who is currently on loan to DfI in Clarence Court).

(b) Killymeal House: Remaining Covid 19 mitigations have been removed in this building with work returning to pre-covid practices.

Hybrid working is still available on a limited basis (due to working practices in the area).

(c) Adelaide House: Daily occupancy levels at this building remained lower than Management Side (MS) anticipated. With this in mind, MS have decided to close Fermanagh House and move the c100 staff to Adelaide House (this was initially proposed for Autumn 2023).



Some remedial work was required in the lobby/post room area of the building to facilitate the location of meeting/interview pods prior to the relocation of Insolvency Service to Adelaide. MS had advised that this work would be delayed until towards the end of the calendar year due to budget pressures.

Interview pods now in place in lobby of building. TU appointed H&S reps have sought consultation with MS regarding newly constructed interview rooms which are proposed to be used.

MS have advised Insolvency Staff will relocate at end March '24.

(d) Fermanagh House: There were ongoing issues with thermal comfort in this building due to a replacement boiler.

Local H&S reps have regularly had to engage management and successfully had the building closed on several occasions at the start of 2023.

As stated above, MS have decided to close Fermanagh House and move staff to Adelaide House (initially proposed by Autumn 2023).

TU appointed H&S reps continue to engage MS regarding risk assessments for remedial work on the brickwork of the building that took place during the year.

(e) Consumer Affairs Building: Hybrid work is continuing in this building.

Staffing: The latest update from the NICSHR Business Partner indicated that as of the end of July 2023 there were 1,279 staff (1,185.4 FTE) in post, 95 'approved active' vacancies, 121 (117.1 FTE) temporary promotions in place and 18 agency staff in post.

MS have confirmed that they will move to fill more currently declared vacancies from existing and upcoming lists at various grades following the decision by the Perm. Sec. Group to lift the pause on filling of vacancies.

Health & Safety: Health & Safety (H&S) reps continued to engage and consult with Management on H&S matters and in particular, continue to monitor the levels of attendance at all buildings in the estate.

TU Appointed H&S reps consulted with MS and provided detailed responses regarding the filling of

vacant H&S posts within the Department near the start of 2023. As we come to the end of the year, posts have remained unfilled.

H&S reps have provided a submission to MS regarding a H&S Strategy paper for the department. This is now with MS.

H&S reps have drafted a response on a General H&S Checklist and an Expectant Mothers Checklist.

New Ways of Working (NWW) Project: Trade Union Side continued to advise members of entitlements under the Hybrid Working Policy and to work with management on the fair application of the NICS wide policy.

The outcome of the registered disagreement regarding implementation of Workstyle Agreements in DfC is likely to have an impact on their implementation in DfE.

Organisational Development and Transformation (ODT) Programme: Trade Union Side (TUS) continued to engage with Management in relation to the ODT programme as it nears the end of its life span.

TUS consulted with MS regarding a document they intended to publish on behaviours they expect to see DfE staff display due to the culture piece of work. TUS considered the document in regard to the codes of ethics etc that are already in place for all civil servants.

An agreement on Short Term opportunities in DfE has been made and published. Consultation on 'long term opportunities' is ongoing with a view to a document being published imminently.

Careers Service: Careers Service MS sought engagement with the Departmental Secretary and HQ Official regarding the implementation of action short of strike action by members in this business area. The Dept. Secretary and HQ Official met MS and advised them that they could not and would not consult on the lawful strike and action short of strike action.

Following a period of consultation and negotiation, members from branch 32 agreed to suspend their withdrawal from operation of a 'Digital Hub'.

MS and TUS have agreed to consult on the operation of the hub which will also look at overall case loading.

Careers MS have advised TUS of the likely use of AI

and bots in the near future for provision of careers advice to citizens. There will be early and meaningful consultation on any implementation.

TUS have been consulted on CIBs for trainee careers advisers. The competition has launched and interviews have been held with an expectation of merit lists being ready imminently.

This will hopefully begin to ease some of the under resourcing and workforce planning issues in the area.

Following consultation with TUS, MS have engaged the services of the Business Consultancy Service in DoF regarding the viability of a Professional Allowance for Careers advisers.

Insolvency Service: TUS registered a disagreement regarding Central MS' use of an Interest Circular to fill Trainee Examiner posts rather than the trawl which had been consulted and agreed locally.

MS subsequently approached CTUS to advise they wanted to reverse that decision. The reversal was welcomed, however MS were advised that the consultation should return to Local MS and Branch 33.

Interviews for the trainee competition have completed, with a hope to recruit 9 people.

Trading Standards: TUS were consulted on CIBs for trainee Trading Standards Inspectors and Area Trading Standards Inspectors. The competition has completed with 6 trainees in post.

OITFET: Members continue to report high levels of stress in this area.

Industrial Action: Members throughout DfE are adhering to ASOSA.

Branch 32 (Careers) has been the most visible and possibly effective area as it is seriously impacting MS' delivery model.

The Dept. Secretary. continued to engage with a particular area regarding possible Selective Action.

2023/24 Budget: MS advised TUS that as a result of the budget imposed by the SoS, there was £130m to be found from the anticipated DfE budget.

MS advised that they intended to suppress 115 vacant posts with an anticipation to save £7m.

TUS wrote to the Permanent Secretary stating *"The remaining workforce must not be expected to carry the burden of this drastic reduction in the workforce. TUS are therefore asking MS to advise what departmental business is going to stop to reflect the reduction in staffing levels?"*

Among other intended cuts, MS have advised that the budget for FE colleges will be cut in-year. The HE budget will not see similar cuts.

TUS advised MS at the Departmental Whitley in June that this was likely to have a bigger impact on working class areas due to the higher uptake of use of the FE sector from that cohort.

Further meetings were scheduled for the end of August to facilitate consultation on the budget and TUS continued to engage with MS regarding the out-workings of the 2023/24 budget.

We continued to seek clarity on what work was stopping in line with the already advised suppression of vacancies.

MS now state that no posts have been suppressed due to a mix of reasons.

- (a) An exercise was carried out with all business areas to identify what their actual staffing requirements were. They indicate that this exercise identified that previously declared vacancies were now not required for various reasons.
- (b) Some business areas' (e.g. European Fund Management) work came to an end and post-holders were re-deployed.

Consultation: In addition, Section Office have been involved in consultation with MS on the matters listed below.

- Learning & Development Framework and 23/24 Action Plan, and Culture Guide
- Draft DfE Customer Service Standards
- Short Term Opportunities Paper
- Temporary Promotions paper
- Draft DfE Writing Style Guide
- The filling of numerous posts at various grades.

TUS have agreed to the formation of a Local Whitley Committee with the new G3 of the Skills & Education Group (SEG).



B3.4 Department of Education (DE)

NICS Estate: When it was revealed in August 2022 that some offices across the NICS Estate currently housing civil servants would close and the staff working there would be moved to alternative office space, the Department of Education (DE) was made aware that Teachers Pay and Pensions Team (TPPT), based in Waterside House, Derry, would be affected by the closures.

The staff based there were advised they would be moving to Orchard House, Derry, but a date for the move was still to be determined.

Accommodation - Rathgael House Complex: A business case was submitted to the Department of Finance for funding to demolish the Rathgael House Tower Block, which had faced an uncertain future for years once it was no longer deemed fit for purpose. The building was to be demolished during 2024 and the earliest estimates for demolition were for March/April.

Work commenced in January to demolish a number of smaller buildings surrounding the Tower block including the Balloo Annex. The Annex was initially going to be used as additional space when the Tower Block was sealed off. However, it was subsequently also deemed no longer fit for purpose after the current financial situation meant that repairs, which might have continued to make it habitable, could no longer be carried out.

As such, all DE staff based in Rathgael House were now solely working in the main building. Management Side (MS) believed this was doable because staff were availing of hybrid working and since the site houses a NICS hub which DE staff could avail of if need be. No issues had been raised with TUS regarding lack of space to date.

Soundproofing of several offices and meeting rooms in the main building was completed in January when the works commenced.

In addition, a walkway was created for staff while work was being carried out and they could now only enter the building solely via the pedestrian entrance.

As vehicles were unable to access the carpark spaces within the perimeter staff had to utilise the carpark at Balloo Crescent which was across the road from the complex.

The first series of the BBC1 drama, Blue Lights, was partially shot within the Rathgael House complex during 2022/23.

Corporate and Business Planning 2023-24

DE Corporate Plan: In July 2023, the DE Board agreed its final 2023-24 Business Plan. Action for year one was to deliver on Every CHILD, a new corporate plan for education for the period 2023-2028, focusing on the following Strategic Priorities:

- CHAMPIONING the needs and aspirations of all our children and young people and the positive impact of education.
- HELPING all our young people by supporting their well-being and learning.
- INSPIRING all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society.
- (Meeting the) LEARNING needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential.
- DELIVERING an effective, child-first, collaborative and high-quality education system.

The Plan issued in October 2023 with the proviso that, if/when a minister was appointed, it would be required to be reviewed.

Re-organisation Proposals: Over the Summer of 2023, the DE Top Management Group (TMG) discussed proposals for re-organisation to help:

- Improve alignment between business priorities and people resources.
- Improve the balance of responsibilities across the main groups in the Department.
- Enhance senior management focus on key, high profile policy and delivery.

The proposals were circulated to Grade 5s in August 2023 for consideration. This resulted in a range of written and verbal comments being provided to Grade 3's which were ultimately considered, agreed, and finalised.

Staff Engagement Forum (SEF): The DE SEF had been meeting regularly and although several TUS representatives sit on the SEF, because they are not there in that capacity, it was accepted by Management



Side that any suggestions emanating from the forum would be required to be raised separately with TUS.

However, once action short of strike action (ASOS) was declared by NIPSA, a number of NIPSA members withdrew their participation from these meetings and several subgroup/SEF meetings had to be cancelled or postponed. MS recently sought additional members for the SEF in an attempt to allow meetings to resume.

2023 People Survey: The 2023 People Survey results were conveyed to DE staff in September 2023. The position for DE was encouraging as the results showed improvements across all areas and a ranking in the top four departments across almost all themes. The Department had a good participation rate (57%) and, although this was slightly down on the 2021 figure, it gave a strong basis from which to move forward.

The NICS Employee Engagement Index (EEI) for DE remained constant from 2021, sitting at 59% and it continued to be amongst the highest departmental EEI scores across the NICS.

All themes scored higher than the NICS average. The highest scoring overall DE broader topics were "My Team" (83%) and "Organisational Objectives & Purpose" (82%); with the lowest scores on "Learning & Development" (48%) and understandably, "Pay and Benefits" (30%).

Departmental Whitley Committee (DWC) Meetings: DE DWC meetings continued to take place online every 6 months, via Teams. This was partly initially through necessity due to of COVID restrictions. It transpired that it also helped facilitate better participation, as some members of the committee are based in Bangor while others are based in Derry.

B3.5 Department of Finance (DoF)

The Departmental Committee and Whitley Committee: Met quarterly throughout the year. Meetings with the Permanent Secretary met with the HQ Official and Departmental Secretary on Pay pressures and Budget concerns.

The Reserve Claim the Secretary of State stated must come out of any Barnett formula consequential reduced slightly to £244m.

Hybrid Working: The Department reported over 50% of days were worked remotely and Trade Union

Side linked that in part as aiding the Department having 24.1 days average sick leave over 3 years compared to the NICS average of 34.4 days over the same period. Stress related illness accounted for 47.7% of DoF sick absence compared to 42.2% for NICS overall. Trade Union Side raised the view of the Department to long covid and sought an empathetic and flexible approach to the issue.

Staffing: Consultation covered several areas where surpluses of staff had been identified. The Department was dealing with these internally in the first instance as an informal surplus with only formal surpluses going out to the wider NICS.

Workplace stress continued to be an issue and Trade Union Side continued to liaise with Management around staffing levels and prioritising areas of work for staff.

A stress audit had been expected but no decision had yet been relayed, the People Survey and NISRA annual absence report were to inform a decision on the audit.

After the pause on recruitment had ended the staff in post by FTE had dropped to 3248 from 3357 (-109), agency workers had reduced to 171 from 203 (-32) and Temporary promotions 311 from 359 (-48). With placing from the General Service competitions again proceeding it was expected the figures would improve, vacancies were confirmed with approved funding, sitting at 317. Approximately a third were for non-general service vacancies.

Integr8 Project: The Department advised late in the year that the Permanent Secretary had committed to securing funding for the coming financial year and therefore the program would proceed, and the structure would now be populated. The business case had identified the new operating model for HR and Finance and procurement for a delivery partner was to launch in March 2024. NIPSA welcomed the outsourced functions returning in house. Payroll however was not expected to return.

Proof of Value Projects: Was raised with Trade Union Side with the first being an Occupancy and Sustainability Study to look at Lanyon Plaza. Other buildings such as Clare House, Craigantlet Buildings and others could follow. Wi-fi connection statistics to gauge usage without collecting personal information would likely be used.

Accommodation: Work completed on Hillview Building in July bringing it to an improved



specification. Work was planned for refurbishment of Waterside House by Spring 2024. Possibly four floors of Goodwood House would be freed up for DWP staff by March 2024. Marlborough House would be vacated by the end of 2025. The refurbishment of Boaz House would be completed by mid-2026 and Academy House by 2028.

Land and Property Services (LPS): Trade Union Side learned in December that the Chief Executive, was moving to Department for the Economy on temporary promotion to Permanent Secretary. We wished him good luck from all in LPS and DoF NIPSA and he thanked NIPSA for the constructive approach to industrial relations in LPS.

NOVA Program of Projects: The overall status of the program was amber with the Revenues & Benefits Implementation Project registering a red status. The private supplier indicated the August 2024 go live date would be missed. The Valuation and Integration Services elements were both Amber.

LPS Valuation: Trade Union Side continued to discuss Management proposed methods of filling vacancies in the Valuation Directorate. Trade Union side argued internal competitions should be run as opposed to external competitions where a sufficient candidate pool existed. There were real problems recruiting at all levels, but Valuer 2 was particularly problematic where candidates could not be attracted even through external competitions and there was an insufficient candidate pool internally. Management introduced a Graduate Trainee Valuer Scheme which they hoped would help address the issue over a 3-4 year period. In the interim they had proposed an Interim Re-Profiling of Vacancies Plan to help address the Valuer 2 issue over the next three years. Trade Union Side was in ongoing consultation on the issue.

Induction: Trade Union Side had agreed with Management to give every graduate class a Trade Union Induction Talk, a number were successfully carried out throughout the year.

LPS Land Registry: The Digital Transformation project work would see additional staff recruited and temporary promotion opportunities for trainers required from existing staff. Trade Union Side had been consulted and continued to monitor the process.

The new staff had not appeared in the numbers hoped for but resourcing continued to supply the required

Admin Officers (AOs). One issue is the workplace location for much of this work may rule out Hybrid working which is not attractive to new staff. Trade Union Side have had ongoing engagement with the Land Registry Special Projects team to delivering development opportunities for members.

LPS Ordnance Survey: Promotion competitions started following on from the Recruitment Mapping & Charting Officer (MCO) competition. There was less interest in the MCO competition so a follow-up competition was expected. A Chief Survey Officer competition ran early in the year and Higher, Senior and Principal MCO internal competitions were scheduled.

Discussions had begun on the possibility of an Apprenticeship scheme for the Mapping & Charting discipline.

The asset management support work progressed well with the possibility of a Support unit to assist NICS.

Valuation Pilot: Consultation was due to begin regarding delivery of 3D Mapping with a fundamental review of the large scale specification. This could have major implications for future survey and mapping work with possibly large numbers of new posts required.

LPS Revenues and Benefits (R&B): Achieved high levels of rates collection. The Transformation work ran into major delays due mainly to the provider being unable to deliver on its commitments. A rescheduled timetable and supporting work saw LPS assisting the supplier.

Several temporary promotion opportunities were in place for R&B training roles.

A call recording agreement was introduced after full consultation with good communication of issues to the members affected. However a number of calls were recorded without the knowledge or agreement of members and Trade Union Side ensured a transparent process where all were informed and assistance was provided as necessary.

Enterprise Shared Services: Has been reorganised as **Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services (DSF)** with Pensions being separated to sit alongside the Core. Trade Union Side had been proactive in proposing amended constitutions to reflect the change to Craigantlet



Buildings and Goodwood House Local Whitley's. NIPSA had also sought an increase in the number of DSF Whitley's from 2 to 3 per year and Health & Safety committees for these buildings.

Clare House Health & Safety Committee: A new joint committee with protocols and a constitution was agreed with colleagues in DAERA who would manage Clare House but fully utilise DoF Accommodation staff.

Pensions Branch: Staffing issues remained a problem in Pensions Branch in the last 12 months, primarily impacted by the implementation of the McCloud Case Remedy and the additional workload that generated.

Discussions continued with Local Trade Union Side and Management around the implementation of the Hybrid Working Policy in the office, but management had indicated that they might require staff to increase the number of days office based. Trade Union Side indicated we are opposed to a unilateral increase in the number of office-based staff and that agreements should be negotiated individually with business need evidenced.

Staff and Management had concerns regarding the impact of the Estate Strategy Project on Waterside House staff moving to the Orchard House site. Local Trade Union Side highlighted concerns to the Estate Strategy Team, and awaited further consultation. Trade Union Side also highlighted concerns regarding the move to Orchard house for IT Assist staff. The Room allocated to the IT Assist staff had been deemed unsuitable by staff for IT Assist business due to inadequate space and security concerns. Adequate Car Parking for IT Assist staff and their customers was also an issue. Negotiations were ongoing.

An issue had arisen around the discovery of 51 pension overpayment cases. These overpayments had been paid to a vulnerable groups of people, who retired on high tier ill health grounds. Initial plans by Management were to pursue repayment of the overpayments but Trade Union Side highlighted that each of these overpayments were made to people in Ill Health and a vulnerable groups and that repayment should not be pursued in this exceptional case due to the extreme stress the process would have on these individuals.

Management eventually agreed that these cases would be written off.

Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO)/Crown Solicitor's Office (CSO): Departmental Solicitor's Office continued to consult regularly with Trade Union Side on the implementation of the new Digitalisation Project. The Project, aimed at updating current IT systems and work processes was beneficial for all. The new system had several upgrades and major fixes uploaded onto the system which helped address many of the functionality issues which had existed since "Go Live". The system improved greatly and the provider put more resources into the project after pressure from Trade Union Side and Management.

The implementation of the Hybrid Working Policy appeared to be running smoothly with no major issues reported.

Regular Whitley meetings continued to take place with the Crown Solicitor's Office in particular the Review of Corporate Services and Admin Teams in the office. The Review sought to streamline working practices alongside new computer systems but no job losses were envisaged.

Crown Solicitor's Office management indicated that they wanted all staff to return to a 4 day week office based work pattern to deal with additional work pressures brought about by legacy inquiry cases. Local Trade Union Side registered objection to implementing the policy unilaterally across all grades and all sections in the office pointing out that every member of staff couldn't be required to increase their office attendance to 4 days per week and reiterated that Work Style Agreements must be agreed on an individual basis, based on business need.

Further consultation with Management was awaited by the end of the year.

Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD): Staff continued to work from home where possible in CPD. The approach to the implementation of the Hybrid Working Policy in Clare House had been discussed between Management and Trade Union Side and management appeared to be taking a flexible approach. Staff vacancies, particularly in technical grades remained an issue and there were clearly recruitment problems.

CPD implemented an Apprenticeship Scheme to help address the problem. Trade Union Side were made aware that staff on the scheme were not paid for study leave. After negotiations Management agreed to amend the scheme terms and conditions.



Trade Union Side welcomed the change but insisted on apprentices receiving arrears of pay and annual leave from the initial scheme start date to fully resolve the issue. Trade Union Side awaited confirmation of backpay but had been advised it would be resolved soon.

Trade Union Side highlighted a number of workplace Bullying incidents in Clare House proposed that additional training be arranged for Line Manager staff. Senior Management had agreed to look into the issue and consider appropriate training packages.

Further investigation by Trade Union Side discovered that there was a gap in the provision of training courses on Bullying and Harassment. A meeting took place with representatives from NICSHR who confirmed there was a gap in this field. Trade Union Side, CPD Management and NICSHR staff agreed to develop a training package to address this gap.

NISRA: NISRA have encountered considerable Budget difficulties and needed to re-organise their structure as a result. The Department of Health returned a significant number of statisticians from their department due to their budget cuts and this resulted in an increase the number of statisticians currently in the Department of Finance.

NISRA in consultation with Trade Union Side ran a process to fill priority statistician vacancies through a Managed Moves Process, where Statistician staff in Department of Health could express an interest in filling these priority posts in areas of work of interest to them.

This process worked well and proved to be an innovative way of addressing the staffing issues arising out of statisticians being returned to NISRA from the Department of Health the process could be used again in the future.

NICSHR: Consultation continued on assistance for the Occupational Health Services (OHS) and new roles to support the business area. Trade Union Side raised the delays in receiving appointments and the OHS endeavours to prioritise urgent cases such as Ill Health retirement applications.

Core - Internal Audit: Audit continued to suffer understaffing and a moratorium was in place restricting Staff Transfers. Trade Union Side continued to engage constructively and considered how best to facilitate the voluntary return of ex Audit staff to the Business area. The issue was ongoing.

Government Advertising Unit: An informal surplus was declared affecting 3 Admin Officers (AOs). Suitable posts were found in the Northwest and Trade Union Side worked well with the Business partner on the arrangements.

B3.6 Department of Health (DoH)

Covid-19 Update

Trade Union Side (TUS), continued to monitor any Covid-19 related Health & Safety considerations within our Castle Buildings working environment. With the recent successful recruitment of a NIPSA H&S officer for Branch 26 we have now re-established coordinated consultations with the Castle Buildings H&S Committee. This has been a welcome development from both sides as no official meetings had been held for some time. Our newly appointed H&S rep has completed a ten day programme of initial training in H&S.

Staffing: The Department's resourcing sub-committee continued to monitor all vacancies and requests for additional resources/recruitment. The Department remains in consultation with TUS regarding the progression of a complete re-design/re-structure of the Department. The most recent resourcing sub-committee meeting resulted in agreement to raising vacancies with NICSHR for all general service vacancies where funding exists, allowing an element of internal 'career development' opportunities for our staff. The process will use expression of interest exercises with corporate supply being available as backfill.

As at end of December 2023, there were 624 permanent staff within the Department (587.12 FTE).

There are 81 temporary promotions in place (reduced from 130+).

There are 21 recruitment agency workers in post (reduced from 62).

There were 32 vacancies submitted to fill by HR Connect and a further 31 approved by our Resourcing Sub-Committee to be progressed.

The DoH resourcing sub-committee's work has resumed with several DP and SO vacancies being successfully filled. Offers have also been issued for EO2's with start dates in the New Year and further EO1 allocations are currently in progress.

Further allocations from General Service volume competitions are projected with TUS expecting a reduction in TP's and a redistribution of existing staff to meet the changing business needs. Management side remain committed no redundancies being considered.

TUS continued to monitor the re-design/restructuring exercise closely. NIPSA's main concern that staff possibly being declared as 'surplus' and any detriment they may face due to possible planned merging of current directorates etc.

Homeworking/New ways of Working

(NWW): DoH is now just over 16 months into the implementation of our NWW policy allowing for a 'partial' return to the permanent offices for DoH staff. Under the NWW policy and current procedures DoH Staff are being asked 'by agreement where possible' to attend their permanent office on 2 days (40%) per week on average. Staff who are not full time are also asked to attend their permanent office space on a 'pro-rata basis. The availability of the Connect2 Hubs (accommodation of working space closer to home) have been put on hold as the uptake from staff seeking such accommodation has been relatively low.

At this time staff attendance at a 'Hub' remains as not being considered by MS as equivalent to attendance

at your permanent office. The low take up of accessing these hub's perhaps reflecting their current locations and the fact that it is not considered as an 'attendance' at your permanent office. Any new episodes of COVID 19 may mean a possible review of DoH Hybrid NWW policy. There is evidence showing staff attending the workplace in greater numbers than before (staff meetings etc) and communications regards 'safe working environments' will be reinforced across the Department in agreement with TUS.

MS duty of carrying out the appropriate risk assessments and maintaining support for the more vulnerable staff working from home remained as an on-going concern of Trade Union Side.

Consultation: TUS continued to meet with MS through the office of DWC and last held a DWC on 12th September 2023. A date for our DWC/AGM has now been arranged to take place on 6th February 2024 and it will be chaired by the DOH Permanent Secretary. This will include the relaunch of our DoH/NIPSA industrial relations guide with a photo opportunity

with the Permanent Secretary, providing his full support, and our NIPSA official. Both of whom recently agreed a new foreword to the document. A proposal to consider joint industrial relations training for NIPSA reps and new staff managers where required, aimed at new staff who may have joined the Department during the COVID restrictions period, remain at an early stage.

TUS remained in consultation (represented on the future Departmental Project Working Group) with management side plans to review the 'design' and structure of how the Department is working currently via directorates. TUS are actively involved and monitoring impacts of these joint exercises with a main objective of having 'round pegs' in round holes with the appropriate loading and grading of posts being paramount. Where possible the 'redesign/restructure' also has enabled staff who wish to do so the ability to move across the department (career development/new experiences). Opportunities to do so are widely advised to all staff through communications including use of the online staff information 'Hub'.

Communication: TUS (mostly through emails/ Notices/zoom meetings) has managed to keep in touch with our steadily increasing Branch 26 membership. The vast majority of our membership continued to work at least three days a week from their homes. Staff are currently adhering to MS requests to attend their actual office on a least 2 days (average) per week and this seems to be managed well. This agreement on Hybrid working remains subject to a review but there has been no indication from MS to take any action to date.

Any suggested return to 'full' offices now or in the near future is not being considered. Further, the 'redesign/restructuring' of the department and Castle Buildings itself would not be conducive to a full return of staff. It remains the case that discussions on how Hybrid (home/office/hub) working may be improved and more successfully implemented for the future are likely.

TUS, continued to provide the full NIPSA services such as the progressing of member's personal cases/ concerns where possible. We have maintained contact with our members and MS representatives. TUS has continued to encounter difficulties and frustrations in engaging fully with staff within NICSHR. However, we fully acknowledge movements and new appointments within NICSHR which have affected the DOH directly.



DoH 'Staff Hub' on the department's Intranet site includes a wide range of relevant NICS-wide resources including Communication tools; Information on Health and Wellbeing; Diversity and Inclusion; Staff movements; Learning and Development; Departmental Overview; Organisational Charts to name a few. It is proving to be an invaluable 'live site' providing regular updates and information for staff on an on-going basis and is regularly updated and can be added to with suggestions from TUS. Additionally, the new newsletter is being distributed regularly (monthly) to all departmental staff. This is directly aimed at information being provided specifically on the ongoing redesign/restructuring of the Department and providing links to 'internal' career development opportunities for all staff as appropriate.

Other issues: TUS have welcomed the early results of reduced temporary promotions (50+) and will continue to encourage MS to have necessary posts filled by NICS staff on a substantive basis mostly through redeployment of staff from within DoH and accessing corporate supply through NICS HR where funding exists, whilst of course recognising there will always be some need for the use of temporary promotions – particularly in cases such as maternity leave, long term illness and time-bound projects.

Unfortunately, the Block A coffee shop provided and serviced by Orchardville informed MS of its planned closure with effect Friday 2nd February 2024 citing the ever-increasing cost of food supplies and the daily reduced footfall of staff since the introduction of hybrid working impacting Orchardville's ability to break even. There is also the planned relocation of the Department of Infrastructure staff. Orchardville explained that a longer notice period could not be facilitated as they no longer have the staffing levels required to safely operate as some staff had chosen to leave before any formal decision was made. TUS and MS are in discussions regarding a revamp of the vacant facility in the hope to provide vending machines, tea/coffee/soup, chilled filtered water supply and an area to have lunch/rest with seating etc.

'Diversity & Inclusion' remains as a standing item agenda for our DWC's going forward.

The Department confirmed its commitment to providing placements (job shadowing) for workers with disabilities.

As a result of a NIPSA NICS-wide ballot on Industrial Action the Branch 26 DoH members participated

in the days of strike action held on 26 April and 22 September. At the time of writing this report a generalised strike was being planned for 18th January 2024.

B3.7 Department for Infrastructure (DFI)

Clarence Court: Trade Union Side was advised that Clarence Court would close in early 2024, and staff would then move to the new office accommodation in James's house from December 2023. DFI planned to have this move completed before the end of the financial year. The business plan and final floor plans were signed off by DOF/DFI, causing some delays. The DFI TUS had worked with the Facilities Team throughout 2023 and had numerous meetings with those branches and staff most affected. NIPSA also sat on the working group. This move impacted on the staff in James's house carrying out facilities roles as these responsibilities moved to DFI, which became the largest tenant on site.

Concerns were raised among Clarence Court facilities staff that the number of facilities and security staff needed in James's house could reduce, as it was a much smaller building than Clarence Court. These concerns were raised with the Depts who acknowledged that things might change in James House going forward, but it was deemed too early to make a staffing call on types of jobs or staff numbers until they were in and settled. The Management Side held several meetings with the facilities staff at the TUS request and offered reassurances. This piece of work was ongoing.

NICS Shared Spaces Guide: This was introduced to provide practical guidance to help business areas and staff use shared spaces and shared desks effectively. The guidance was a best practice guide only, which would be adapted to allow for departmental variations and would be needed in James House as DFI learned to work in an open-plan environment.

Budget: In the Departmental Budget Update 23/24, it was reported at the DFI Whitley that budgets were very tight that year. Monies were moved from next year's budget allocation to cover 22/23 costs, to be repaid next year from a spending envelope that was already under pressure. Difficult decisions would have to be made in DFI. The Department carried out an Equality Impact

Assessment in June 2023, receiving 800 responses, leading to the decision to stop various work in DFI. Some budget decisions fell outside the gift of a Permanent Secretary and were political decisions. These budgetary decisions could not be taken without an assembly or minister in place.

In Capital, the Trade Union Side was advised at Whitley that the Senior Management team continued to monitor the capital budgets against requirements and would keep NIPSA updated if changes were required. Capital allocation in DFI for 2023/2024 was detailed for Arm's length bodies and the Department.

The Roads Group: Continued to meet throughout 2023, albeit by Teams, and hoped to get back to holding face-to-face meetings in Harkin House in 2024.

The Water Group: Was set up in 2023, covering Rivers, Living with Water, the power of Water, and the Water and Drainage Division. The Living with Water program of work was impacted by inflation increases, leading to a review of the original program of work in 2024. NIPSA requested updates on decisions in early 2024, as it would impact members in DFI and arm's length bodies like Northern Ireland Water. Concerns were raised about the ongoing blue algae situation in Lough Neagh, and a new Water and Drainage Bill was confirmed.

Car Parking in Clarence Court: TUS were advised that the car park would close in early 2024. NIPSA had discussions with the facilities team about car parking facilities and availability in James House, with limited spaces available.

Security Guards Overtime Pay: Was eventually resolved, and Security Guards received backdated monies.

Transport Regulation Unit (TRU): There were staff changes at senior levels in 2023. The new leadership team reviewed previous agreements in 2022, consulting with TUS about potential improvements.

DFI Seconded Office: Continued to operate with three seconded officers, and efforts were made to fill the remaining vacancy from the ongoing competition in Dec 23/Jan 24. It was hoped to have the vacant post filled early in the New Year.

Digital Services Branch (DSB): NIPSA met the management team throughout 2023, flagging concerns about training, ICT skill sets, vacancy management, and planning meetings in 2024.

Planning: Members from Clarence Court met in October and discussed concerns about the new planning portal, lack of career development, vacancy management, and the James House move. This was followed up with a meeting with the Senior Management team in Planning in November.

Overtime: Ongoing concerns about the amount of overtime being worked in Roads/Rivers in 2023 were due to vacancies in all grades not being filled, and it would only decrease when posts were filled.

Vacancy Management: Across DFI remained an ongoing issue across all grades and disciplines. NIPSA faced delays in progressing recruitment competitions in DFI, impacting existing staff.

The Strangford Ferry: Moved from the Transport Asset Management Group (TRAM) to the Climate and Public Transport group in 2023. Discussions about TUS issues arising were planned for 2024.

The Section Office: Work stream was delayed with no further updates.

Marlborough House: TUS were informed that Marlborough House and the hub would close, but it was unclear where the staff would be moved. The closure of Annex A and B in the Stormont estate was also planned for 2024, with options considered for relocating Roads staff.

The Driver and Vehicle Agency

Licensing: Licensing staff worked through the year to reduce the backlog of applications. The introduction of a new Occupational Health Contract also resulted in a quicker response for Vocational and Health-specific Licenses.

Enforcement: The Enforcement Section was able to meet all targets, even though they began the year short-staffed. A recruitment exercise was run mid-year, recruiting 4 new staff.

Testing: Testing started at the beginning of the year with a recruitment and retention problem that continued to date. Private sector salaries outstripped Civil Service salaries with staff moving to more



lucrative posts with other employers. Recruitment proved very difficult for the that reason which led to a second competition released in the late Autumn. The outcome at year end was not fully known.

Vehicle Examiners: The regrading of the Vehicle Examiners began early in March of this year. By the year end Trade Union Side were awaiting the outcome.

Driving Tests: Waiting times for driving tests remained longer than normal despite a successful recruitment campaign.

Roads and Rivers

Roads 3 year Budget: Management Side reported that the budget was going to be very tight and that Roads would have to rely on the in-year monitoring rounds for additional monies. The Capital Budget for the year was £227.45m. The Maintenance Budget for the year was £139.26m

Overtime: Trade Union Side concerns were ongoing at the start of the year regarding the amount of overtime worked in Roads and Rivers in 2023 due to the vacancies in the technical grades.

Vacancy Management in Roads and Rivers: Vacancy Management continued to be a major issue in Roads. Roads was running at a deficit of approximately 25%.

(a) Senior Professional and Technical Civil Engineer recruitment Competition: Trade Union Side raised concerns with management regarding the qualifications required.

(b) Higher Professional and technical Civil Engineer recruitment competition: Trade Union Side approved the CIB for several disciplines.

Even though the two competitions were signed off by Trade Union Side as internal trawls, they were re-submitted to Trade Union Side as external competitions.

Roads and Rivers Development Programme

This work had been delayed due to covid with Trade Union Side having received the report but awaited a consultation meeting. As a result of this, it was declared that Roads and Rivers would Split. Roads became part of Transport and Roads Asset Management, while Rivers became part of Water

and Departmental Delivery. The Strangford Ferry was transferred to Climate, Planning and Public Transport.

Section Office: This work stream was ongoing. Trade Union Side awaited a meeting to discuss the out workings of the work which was delayed due to Covid. This work stream outcome would potentially radically change the way Roads delivers business in the section office and a further update was due at the year end.

ER Standardisation in Roads and Rivers: The two pilots in Roads and Rivers were ongoing and added to the workload pressures of staff in Roads and Rivers. This was unsustainable with the level of staff available. These pilots were ongoing, and an update as to be provided when progress is made.

B3.8 Department of Justice (DoJ)

Departmental Whitley: Whitley meetings were held on a regular basis throughout the year via remote means. Trade Union Side engaged with management on various issues within this forum. Trade Union Side met the new permanent Secretary in person at the Whitley AGM meeting in September 2023.

Trade Union Side raised issues regarding staffing; highlighting the number of vacancies in the department and raised concerns regarding the number of temporary vacancies and Agency workers within the department. Further concerns raised recruitment in that it was now carried out exclusively externally and that this limited the opportunities for existing staff to forge a career within the DOJ and the wider NICS. Trade Union Side also highlighted the pathetic pay offer for staff within the department as part of the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay offer.

New Ways of Working: Trade Union Side continued to monitor the implementation of New Ways of Working within the department and continued to discuss this with management. Trade Union Side also continued to monitor the reviewing of Workstyle Agreements within the Department, but few issues had been reported regarding this matter to either local Trade Union Side or the Departmental Trade Union Office.

DOJ Induction: Departmental Trade Union Side attended inductions as several events had been organised for staff from across all areas within the Department of Justice. There had not been any events from June due to sickness absence in the area that organised the induction events. It was agreed that

Trade Union Side would be advised of new induction events so that a member from the Departmental Trade Union Office could be in attendance and were also advised that a new video would be produced for new staff. Trade Union Side asked to be included and to be kept updated on this matter.

Equal Pay: Trade Union Side had written to the Justice Minister to ask that she inform staff that Equal Pay had been closed by the NI Executive and that there was no prospect at all of there being any payment for staff in respect of compensation for equal pay. The Finance Minister had also been previously written to arising from his stated position that that he would raise this with the NI Executive. However, given the NI Executive was suspended, there had been no further movement on this issue. It was hoped answers would be forthcoming if the NI Executive resumed in the New Year.

Pay 2022/23: The pay offer was rightly described as a disgraceful and pitiful offer. Departmental Trade Union Side assisted local branches in having consultation meetings. Branches in DoJ firmly rejected the offer and wanted to be to a balloted on industrial action. Members offering their comments and constructive criticism. Local representatives were encouraged to attend the activists' meetings organised by NIPSA centrally. Members voted for strike action, and it was expected this would take place early in the New Year.

DOJ Core

Castle Buildings Refurbishment Project: The Departmental Trade Union office met with the project manager regarding the lack of any meetings, and it was explained that there had been issues raised by Northern Ireland Prison Service regarding storage and the potential layout of their office. This led to the project team and NIPS agreeing a slightly different layout with storage space for files to be identified. At a meeting in November this was agreed.

Victims Payment Board: Trade Union Side were contacted by members regarding work related stress due to working conditions and vacancies throughout the year. Trade Union Side met with management in May and November to discuss the vacancies and working conditions and to impress upon management the effects on staff. Trade Union Side planned to conduct a health and safety inspection using material and tools provided by Health & Safety Executive NI in the form of the HSENI management standards.

Legal Services Agency (LSA)

Workstyle Agreement Issues: Formal disagreement was registered regarding senior management wanting to review Work Style Agreements before they had been put into practice, as they did not agree with the workplace/remote split that had been agreed between the staff member and their line manager. Staff had been working 1 day per week in the office for several months with no issue in the workplace/remote split.

The review took place over the course of the year. Trade Union Side supported members involved in the review and ensured a satisfactory outcome for members.

Location of Work with Directorate Structure: Management confirmed four posts were transferred to a different business area. Staff were content with the move and Trade Union Side ensured issues regarding processes raised by staff were being resolved.

Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS)

Dundonald House: Was closed in June 2023 as the building was deemed unsafe. Northern Ireland Prison Service moved to a temporary base within the DOJ hub located in Knockview Buildings on the Stormont Estate but by November had moved to Hillview mobile buildings on a temporary basis pending their permanent move to Castle Buildings once refurbishment was completed.

Industrial Relations: After a period of strained industrial relations it was agreed to have regular meetings with management. Relationships improved greatly and issues were moved forwards. The Director General, moved at the end of July 2023. Trade Union Side had an introductory meeting in September 2023 with the new Director General.

Youth Justice Agency

Amalgamation of Youth Conference Co-ordinator and Youth Conference Practitioner: Trade Union Side still await proposals on this matter but have requested an urgent meeting to discuss the way forward.

Senior Practitioner Role: Trade Union Side received the job description and were content. The role was graded at Staff Officer but due to the number of vacancies at the grade below, this matter had not progressed. Trade Union Side continued to monitor the issue.



Regional Care & Justice Project Meeting -

Lakewood & Woodlands: This project sought to accommodate young people admitted under a secure care order from Lakewood to one unit in Woodlands. Trade Union Side working with NIPSA Representatives in Health agreed to meet once a month with the Project Board. There were unforeseen difficulties with the process with meetings cancelled. However, it is hoped meetings would begin again in the New Year.

Forensic Science Agency Northern Ireland

Forensic Service Review of Delivery: Trade Union Side met with the Forensic Science NI Chief Executive in August for an initial meeting on the Review of Delivery. The Review of the Delivery was focused on services jointly provided by the PSNI and Forensic Science. Trade Union Side received assurances there would be no staffing implications at that stage of the review. Trade Union Side awaited the options paper. The issue was ongoing.

B3.9 The Executive Office (TEO)

Budget: At the start of the year Trade Union Side had been warned of cuts close to 20% in budgets. By the year end and after each area having reviewed its work it was expected there would be a break-even situation at the end of the financial year. However, prioritisation of work took place and other work had to be stopped or put on hold in a number of areas.

Recruitment: The pause in recruitment had a major effect and temporary promotions also came under scrutiny.

A major review of vacancies took place and Trade Union Side was consulted. A draft paper on Resourcing for 2023/34 was confirmed and saw over 100 vacancies both confirmed and active, with around 70 being removed from the structure. These posts never been filled and were not required as the Assembly did not sit during the year. However, it was advised that those posts could be reviewed and reinstated if required. Trade Union Side was content to agree the revised structure which would see a substantial filling of posts if fully implemented.

The pause on recruitment was lifted in October.

Accommodation: The Department worked on office layouts in Castle Buildings to support Hybrid working and Trade Union Side were fully involved in

consultation process. By the year end the work was ongoing.

Reviews: There were a number of reviews including the Finance Division and the Induction Process to the Office. Trade Union Side were consulted.

NIPSA Secondment: NIPSA raised the issue of a full-time secondment for The Executive Office. This was based on the increased workloads, complex cases and increased staffing. Given the increased workload in DoF Trade Union Side felt it was no longer feasible to have the work carried out from another Department. It was felt that the TEO needed someone from that area to deal with issues going forward. Trade Union Side agreed to submit a paper in the New Year.

B3.10 Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)

JNCC and Discussions with Management:

There was no Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) meeting from September 2022 to September 2023, with Management Side cancelling two scheduled meetings. Following Trade Union Side's challenge to AFBI management regarding AFBI's failure to adhere to agreed mechanisms for industrial relations, including failure to hold a JNCC Meeting since September 2022, JNCC Meetings were reinstated, with quarterly meetings being held in September and December. A schedule of meetings was agreed for meetings up to December 2024.

Recruitment and Retention: There was productive consultation between Trade Union Side and Management side following Trade Union Side's representation to management regarding unrealistic expectations from requirements contained in recruitment materials, including inflated essential criteria. Trade Union Side actively participated in a consultative group that is reviewing requirements for qualifications and experience for scientific and technical posts in AFBI.

There were initial positive outcomes arising from consultations throughout the year, including consideration of relevant experience as an alternative to formal qualifications; however, there was a disappointing reversion to previous recruitment practices and this was raised by Trade Union Side.

Staff retention remained a significant issue for AFBI and Trade Union Side continued to refer to ongoing and

increasing reports of unacceptable demands on staff, and working conditions that are adversely affecting staff wellbeing and morale. Issues of diversity, inclusion and equality were also cited as factors in AFBI's problems with retaining and recruiting staff.

Trade Union Side continued to remind Management Side to apply a lessons-learned approach by analysing data from departing staff completing an exit questionnaire and attending an exit interview.

Industrial Relations: Trade Union Side faced significant difficulties with AFBI's approach to the conduct of industrial relations through AFBI HR. This continued to result in increased tension and difficulties in maintaining good consultation processes. Trade Union Side proposed Industrial Relations training for Human Resources staff and senior management, through the LRA, as a potential way forward. Trade Union Side did not receive a formal response from Management.

Trade Union Side requested regular meetings with AFBI Human Resources and proposed creation of a Human Resource Sub-group of JNCC to progress outstanding issues that have had an adverse impact on staff wellbeing, morale and on industrial relations, and to address the increasing trend in grievance and dignity at work cases being taken in the organisation. Trade Union Side presented this proposal in an attempt to improve industrial relations and employee relations in the organisation. Management Side, while accepting these proposals, failed to convene a meeting of the Human Resource Sub-group of JNCC, despite requests from Trade Union Side.

Following negotiations with management side, AFBI provided trade unions representatives with laptops and mobile phones under facilities agreement, where representatives did not already have such work equipment.

Hybrid Working: Trade Union Side continued to support members who have formally challenged AFBI on its application of a maximum of two days per week working from home.

Concern was raised that hybrid working arrangements had been withdrawn from certain work areas without consultation with Trade Union Side, who raised the matter with Management. Management has cited to staff, matters such as recruitment and retention as mitigating factors.

Trade Union Side continued to challenge Management's assertion that there is a requirement for 40% attendance in the workplace for staff that can work from home, and this being given precedent over requests for reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act to enable eligible staff to work from home.

Mental Health and Wellbeing: Reports from staff regarding poor mental wellbeing and poor mental health at work remain a concern. Following representation from Trade Union Side, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had instructed the Heads of AFBI Human Resources and Health and Safety to work with Trade Union Side to progress the matter of a corporate mental wellbeing at work risk assessment and action plan. The group did not meet during the year and Trade Union Side requested the CEO to assign an AFBI Director to lead the initiative and to expedite meeting of the group.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Trade Union Side continued to challenge Management Side on the ongoing lack of inclusion and consultation on AFBI's Equality Diversity and Inclusion initiative and continued to support and represent staff regarding ongoing workplace issues.

Trade Union Side presented a paper to Human Resources on menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace. In line with the motion passed at NIPSA Annual Delegate Conference, Trade Union Side called upon AFBI to secure free provision of feminine hygiene products in its buildings by the end of the year.

The paper and a request for Trade Union Side to work with HR and management on these matters was positively received and AFBI has committed to providing free feminine hygiene products in AFBI Workplaces as soon as practicable while AFBI awaits formal introduction of an NICS initiative via DAERA.

Health and Safety: There was ongoing discussion about the format of a safety committee to represent Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD), with a recommendation from Trade Union Side that a safety committee representing FCAD and Environmental and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD) is created. In December the inaugural meeting of the FCAD Safety Committee took place. EMSD continued to be represented through the joint SAFSD and EMSD Safety Committee.



Trade Union Side engaged with management regarding a failure to provide information on RIDDOR reportable accidents to safety representatives.

Staffing of the Health & Safety and Dangerous Goods Compliance Branch progressed, with filling of the Senior Scientific Officer post for Biological Safety Officer/Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor and a Higher Scientific Officer post for Health and Safety Advisor.

Trade Union Side presented challenges to management on several health and safety issues. These included: management of mental health and mental Wellbeing at Work; the use of suitable and sufficient assessment risks to mental health and mental wellbeing at work; management of first aid at work and the training of conventional first aiders throughout the organisation.

Other challenges presented by Trade Union Side included: training and appointment of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessors and the conduct of DSE Assessments; health and safety training for staff, including chemical safety training and health and safety training for managers. Arising from negotiations, AFBI committed to providing IOSH Managing Safely training to approximately two hundred managers over a period of three years.

NIPSA Recruitment and Membership:

Recruitment of new members continued at a healthy rate, despite AFBI not providing the names of new staff to Trade Union Side for recruitment purposes.

The branch committee continued to actively encourage women to become branch reps and safety reps and the new representative means an increase in female representatives for AFBI to 40%.

Agency Workers: Despite assurances from Management Side to consult with Trade Union Side on proposals for permitting agency workers to compete for internal trawls, and repeated requests for consultation, Management Side has failed to meet with Trade Union Side to discuss this issue.

Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division

(SAFSD): Management in SAFSD approached Trade Union Side regarding proposals for the introduction of compulsory overtime for industrial staff and some scientific staff at the AFBI Hillsborough site. Trade Union Side highlighted that issues of staff health, safety and wellbeing pertain, with concerns raised about existing issues of staff working long hours

without sufficient breaks and the adverse effects on staff health, wellbeing and work-life balance. Safety issues of fatigued staff operating agricultural vehicles and equipment were raised with management. Trade Union Side raised issues of staff welfare and animal welfare and potential non-compliance with the Working Time Regulations.

Consultations were ongoing with the three main unions representing scientific and industrial staff in AFBI. Management Side committed to not introducing compulsory overtime for existing staff. Following negotiations, there was an increase in the number of industrial staff working at the Hillsborough site which went some way to addressing issues of staff shortages and excessive overtime working.

B3.11 Commission for Older People

NICS Assimilated Pay Progression: The business case to introduce pay progression for existing staff was approved by the Department for Communities and the Department of Finance in October. The separate business case for two longstanding staff to be back dated to the commencement of their employment remains with the Department for Communities for consideration.

B3.12 Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

Organisational Review: CITB carried out a job evaluation exercise using both the NICS Job Evaluation Scheme and the Greater London Provincial Council Scheme (GLPC). The results of both are being considered and will inform the business case to introduce a new Pay Framework which will be sent to the Department for the Economy for approval.

B3.13 Consumer Council NI

Industrial Relations

Overview of Industrial Relations: The Consumer Council experienced another year of strained industrial relations with NIPSA, despite the active engagement of local representatives. The established industrial relations structure, particularly the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC), faced challenges as it failed to convene throughout the year. NIPSA made diligent efforts to address this issue, initiating communication with the CEO and Director of Corporate Services early in the year to reestablish the

JNCC. While an agreement was reached, unforeseen circumstances, including the Director's health issues and a building flood, disrupted the intended progress.

Reestablishment Attempts: NIPSA's proactive approach involved written requests for the reestablishment of the JNCC, emphasising the importance of a collaborative platform for addressing workplace matters. Despite initial setbacks, a new representative joined the team, successfully completing NIPSA's stage 1 training. However, management side initially resisted releasing the new representative for training, prompting HQ to intervene, emphasising the recognition agreement, relevant employment laws, and good practice. Eventually, management agreed to facilitate the representative's release for training.

Moving Forward: Addressing the ongoing industrial relations challenges at Consumer Council requires a collaborative effort from both sides. NIPSA remains committed to fostering an environment where concerns can be addressed effectively, advocating for the importance of regular JNCC meetings and ensuring the active involvement of representatives in the decision-making processes. The challenges encountered in the past year underscore the need for a proactive approach to overcome obstacles and promote a positive workplace environment at the Consumer Council.

B3.14 Dale Farm

Contract Changes - MILK LABS: Throughout the year, a prolonged issue unfolded at United Dairy Farmers, specifically within the Milk Labs at Dale Farm's facility in Ballymena. Management proposed a significant shift in working conditions, aiming to transition staff from their existing Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm contracts to a new 10-hour shift schedule, working four days on and four days off. This proposed change, driven by the need to accommodate new testing requirements for thermiduric, prompted extensive negotiations and counterproposals from NIPSA.

After numerous meetings and persistent efforts, NIPSA successfully advocated for an alternative arrangement. In September, management ultimately agreed to NIPSA's proposal, allowing staff to maintain their Monday to Friday working hours while incorporating one weekend day per month. This arrangement ensured that the staff would still fulfil their contractual

hours, with the additional provision of a day off in the respective week.

Negotiations further resulted in an enhanced rate for weekend work, leading to a substantial increase in members' annual wages by over £1000. The negotiation process was challenging, involving multiple HR representatives and directors of the business. Despite not fully aligning with the initial management demands, the negotiated agreement marked a significant achievement for NIPSA and its members.

Recognising the impact of the contract changes, NIPSA sought a goodwill payment and a 3-month notice period for the implementation of the new working arrangements. Negotiations concluded in October, with a £500 goodwill gesture offered by management, along with an agreement to the 3-month notice period and the substantial salary increase for members. The successful resolution highlighted the effectiveness of collaborative negotiations and the commitment to achieving fair and favourable outcomes for the impacted staff at United Dairy Farmers.

Pay: The year saw successful pay negotiations between the unions and the company, resulting in a **7.25%** increase. This decision aimed to protect members' pay from the impact of high inflation, ensuring they receive their fair share of the company's profits. NIPSA remains committed to advocating for members' financial well-being.

B3.15 Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI)

Hybrid Working Policy: The implementation of the current hybrid working policy at HSENI has garnered positive feedback, indicating its success in fostering flexibility while preventing isolation. Staff members have been actively encouraged to attend in-person meetings, contributing to a more balanced and connected work environment. Members have expressed satisfaction with the policy's execution, highlighting its positive impact on their professional experience. NIPSA, in its commitment to member well-being, continued to monitor the policy's application across departments, ensuring equitable benefits for all.

Exit Interviews: In a persistent effort to enhance workplace dynamics, NIPSA has been advocating for the implementation of exit interviews by management at HSENI. Recognising the importance



of understanding the reasons behind staff departures, NIPSA has been emphasising the value of exit interviews in identifying and addressing issues contributing to strained working relationships. Throughout the year some staff members have left the Executive due to such concerns, highlighting the need for a formal process to capture their insights. NIPSA continued to engage with the management side, urging the establishment of an effective exit interview process to create a more positive and harmonious work environment at HSENI.

B3.16 Human Rights Commission

NIHRC Pay: An Independent Review of the Commission was undertaken and the UK government's response to the Review was published in September. The review highlighted that the Human Rights Commission was struggling to fulfil its statutory mandate with the core budget set. The review made a number of recommendations including a budget uplift and the development of a new pay policy to include financial autonomy for the Commission. A business case was developed which proposes moving staff across from the NICS pay scales to the Human Rights Commission UK Civil Service Grades. The transitional arrangements proposed include moving all staff to the maximum of their current NICS pay scale and assimilating across to the new pay scales at the same or next highest point. Although there will be no pay progression going forward, the pay budget can be used in its entirety to uplift salaries. The business case focuses on the principle of 'equal pay for equal work'. The business case will need to be signed off by Treasury.

B3.17 ICT Committee

The ICT Consultative Committee continued to meet quarterly with representatives from ICT grade across a range of NICS departments and arm's length bodies.

Management of the ICT Profession: There were significant changes made to the senior management in the ICT management structure including a new NICS ICT Head of Profession.

Review of ICT Remuneration: A management led report was drafted following a delay of five years since the allowance was agreed to be addressed, following 2018 pay negotiations. The report which was produced was below standard considering the delay and did not take a robust look at the review of

the allowance. The report was objected to by trade union side and this was agreed by the new Head of Profession who ensured a closer examination of the allowance would be carried out. The trade union side have highlighted recent public-sector comparators who are paying ICT staff a better wage and could have significant impact on recruitment and retention of staff.

Recruitment: A NICS corporate student competition and an apprentice competition was held in the Autumn. There has been recent recruitment at level ICT3 which was welcomed by the trade union side to fill vacancies externally. The process for recruitment for recruitment of ICT7 positions were recently advertised externally. The trade union side highlighted that external recruitment at this level hinders progression of internal staff and competing in an external competition places internal staff at a potential disadvantage.

Knowledge and Development: Concerns over the lack of training available for ICT staff has been raised. While management have introduced LinkedIn training they have expressed that budget constraints are preventing funding for accredited training. A NICS Cross Department L&D Forum has been introduced to share learning and development activities across NICS.

Terms of Reference: The ICT Consultative Committee have updated the terms of reference relating to the functioning and scope of the committee. It was raised that the committee's original terms of reference were relating to the transformation of IT services. This project has now closed and an updated terms of reference was needed going forward.

B3.18 Invest NI

Staff Movement & Recruitment: There was an increase in staff movements within the organisation. Trade Union Side welcomed this opportunity for members as it helped members to progress their careers and personal development within the organisation.

Temporary Promotions: Concerns were raised regarding various issues i.e. the high volume of temporary promotions within the organisation. Trade Union Side continuously raised this matter with management and management advised that posts were in the approvals process from the Board. A number of posts were filled permanently.

Unfortunately posts such as IT, EO2s and DP's did not generate interest internally or externally and continued to create difficulty. The situation was being monitored. Trade Union Side raised the issue that there was a need for more SO posts in the organisation. The issue was ongoing at the year end.

External Recruitment: Trade Union Side raised concerns with management regarding the external competitions to fill vacancies within the organisation. Some grades of staff were left demoralised with no prospect of career development through internal promotions such as SO grades. However other grades proved difficult to fill even with external recruitment. Trade Union Side was monitoring the issue.

Working Above Grade: There were concerns regarding issues over a number of staff within the organisation feeling pressured to take on additional duties due to a volume of leavers within the organisation through retirement or moving to other jobs. Trade Union Side raised the vacancies and levels of stress that staff faced, highlighting this would lead to higher sickness absence if not addressed. Trade Union Side also highlighted the poor treatment of staff, inconsistencies in relation to the recruitment policy, the failure to replace administration staff and the high volume of outsourcing work to agencies at a cost to the public purse. Management advised approval from the board took a lengthy time, approval was in small numbers given the budget. The issue was ongoing.

Hybrid Working: A 40/60 split was agreed. Concerns were raised by members regarding the approach of two days in the office. Following consultation with Trade Union Side it was agreed to pilot some amendments to provide more flexibility i.e. not to mandate 2 days in the office. This was working well at year end.

Car Parking: Trade Union car parking came an issue as staff were booking spaces and desks and then working from home creating a problem for staff attending the office. Trade Union Side agreed that these spaces had to be cancelled if staff were not going to attend to ensure other staff got parking spaces. It was also agreed that those staff paying for outside spaces would be reimbursed. The issue was being monitored.

CEO: A new Chief Executive was appointed arising from the competition for the Chief Executive Post. The interim CEO was due to step down early in the new

year after having carried out the duties for a few years. Trade Union Side were to seek a meeting with the new CEO in the New Year.

A new HR Director was also appointed and took up post in October.

Lyons Review: The Review of Invest NI by Sir Michael Lyons stated that profound change and Reform was needed in Invest NI, with specific areas highlighted. However, given the personnel issues movement was slow and Trade Union Side still awaited further consultation. The issue was ongoing.

B3.19 Labour Relations Agency (LRA)

Policies: Throughout the year, NIPSA has actively engaged in the review and enhancement of the Dignity at Work and Equal Opportunities policies at LRA. This collaborative effort aimed to ensure clarity and effectiveness in addressing workplace issues such as discrimination, harassment, and bullying. The union worked closely with the management side to align the revised policies with legislation and best practices. Simultaneously, efforts were directed towards fostering awareness and conducting training programs for both staff and managers. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a workplace culture marked by dignity, respect, and prompt resolution of issues related to discrimination or harassment. The implementation of the updated policies commenced in February, setting a foundation for a more inclusive and respectful working environment.

Hybrid Working: The ongoing trial of the Hybrid Working Policy reflects LRA's responsiveness to evolving work patterns. While data indicates a gradual return to the office, discussions between NIPSA and management underscored the importance of managerial responsibility in ensuring compliance with the required two days a week in the office. Recognising the positive compliance from the majority of staff, it was agreed not to impose more restrictive measures. The policy, subject to ongoing review and input from NIPSA, supports flexibility in work arrangements.

Health & Safety: Mental health and wellbeing took centre stage during discussions at the JNCC meetings throughout the year. Near the beginning of the year the Chief Executive highlighted plans for the HR team to collaborate with the Board Mental Health Champion to address the significant sick absence rates attributed to mental ill health. NIPSA supported these



efforts and continued to press for proactive measures, emphasising the prompt filling of staff vacancies and temporary measures to prevent workload backlogs. The union remains committed to safeguarding the mental health of its members.

Car Parking Provision: In the wake of the August Annual General Meeting (AGM), NIPSA revisited the pressing issue of car parking provision for LRA staff. The genesis of this challenge lay in the initial building contract that allocated parking spaces based on the number of staff each tenant had in the building. Unfortunately, this approach led to a disproportionately small allocation for the LRA, creating difficulties for its staff.

Recognising the impact of this issue on the daily lives of LRA employees, NIPSA agreed to prioritise the matter and raise it at the upcoming Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) scheduled for early 2024. The decision stems from a pragmatic assessment of the parking landscape, revealing that many other tenants aren't utilising their allocated spaces effectively. By revisiting the parking allocation at the JNCC, NIPSA aims to secure a fair and practical solution that addresses the parking needs of LRA staff.

B3.20 National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI)

Terms & Conditions: The changes in T&C's for new staff (2022 Annual report) continued to have a negative impact on staff morale, but also brought operational difficulties. With Bank Holiday Monday working falling outside normal shift patterns, the de-incentivised terms offered have been reflected by a minimum number of members offering their time on those days. NMNI responded by attempting to change the contractual obligations of relevant staff to include compulsory attendance on a number of Bank and Privilege holidays. NIPSA objected to this approach, as well as pointing out the in the 15 years since NMNI's sites adopted Monday closure this has never been an issue. This issue meant that, for the first time in the history of National Museums, all sites failed to open on New Year's Day due to a lack of available staff. The impact of the downgrading of T&C's is the important factor, and NIPSA continued to encourage the organisation to rethink their damaging strategy on this matter. Discussions continued on ways of alleviating the many problems this matter has brought on to the organisation.

Recruitment: A p/t woodworking demonstrator was appointed at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (UFTM), as well as a Bar Manager. A number of visitor services staff were appointed on varying contracts. A Transport Manager, Logistics Manager and Stores manager were all appointed in summer 2023. A new Visitor Service Manager at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum was appointed at the in March 2023, and the same pots at the Ulster Museum was filled in December 2023. The Assistant Visitor Services Manager (AVSM) role at the same site was temporarily filled in September 2023, with a permanent position expected to be filled in early 2024. In November 2023 the vacant Director of Public Engagement post was put out for trawl, having been held in abeyance for around five years, and filled by an internal candidate. NMNI recruited a part time Education Assistant based at the Ulster American Folk Park, as well as a Finance Assistant and a Procurement and Contracts Assistant based at Cultra. Recruitment for a Schools Liaison Assistant based at the Ulster Museum began in late October 2023, with an appointment expected early in the new year. The Vacant Education Officer at the Ulster Museum was filled in early October.

Pay/Overpayments: As reported in previous 2023 progress reports, a small number of overpayment issues arose. No movement really occurred on this, but that is being seen in a relatively positive light by those affected at this point. A final resolution is still unknown, but the members and NMNI appeared to be on the same page on this matter.

Industrial Action: Over the course of two meetings in February 2023, the members of Branch 183, based at Cultra, decided to carry out a day's strike action on 17th March. Being St Patrick's Day; this was a significant date as it is historically one of NMNI's biggest event days in the calendar. The day of action was a success, drawing many members from across the sites as well as HQ Officials, other NIPSA members and other Union members to the picket line. There was much positive engagement with the public on the day, and the message relating to the insulting pay award was delivered with clarity. An issue did arise, as it appeared NMNI managers had been given lists of members/non-members to approach regarding attendance on the day of action. The Section Secretary continued to press NMNI on this concerning matter, as well as examining any potential GDPR matters arising. Other days of action across the year were well supported across the organisation.

Site Issues: Various issues around industrial relations, Health and safety and general terms and conditions matters, continued to be at the forefront of NIPSA activity within the organisation. A positive aspect has been an influx of new activists taking up Committee roles in the two NMNI branches, making resolution in multiple areas much more easily achieved.

B3.21 North South Bodies

Tourism Ireland

Travel & Subsistence: NIPSA raised concerns about the travel and subsistence being paid to staff who are required to travel for work purposes. Trade Union Side made clear that staff travelling from the Coleraine Office to Dublin or London were significantly out of pocket and some members had reached the point they could not afford to travel. Management agreed to develop a guidance document on payment of travelling time for non-industrial grades to try to lessen the financial impact members were facing when being required to travel for business reasons.

Waterways Ireland

Organisational Review: The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC), in conjunction with Waterways Ireland and the sponsoring Departments, agreed to carry out an organisational review given that 21 years have passed since the body was founded. Baker Tilly Mooney Moore (BTMM) were appointed to carry out the review and consulted with Trade Union Side and staff separately. BTMM on completion of their review will make recommendations but some may require NSMC and sponsoring departments approval.

Special EU Programmes Body

Industrial Relations Agreement: NIPSA and Forsa signed an Industrial Relations Constitution in November and have begun negotiating meetings with Management.

B3.22 Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA)

Pay: Trade Union Side submitted a pay claim for the 2022/23 pay year to include an inflation rate spine point pay rise as per CPI figures released for November 2022 (10.7%). With an additional 3% increase on all scales, or £3500 per annum added to each pay scale (whichever is higher). This was to address the ever increasing cost of

living pressures; an increase in line with CPI of existing allowances, including on-call, footwear, DSE, subsistence and mileage etc.; an increase in the percentage paid for deputising allowance that more accurately reflects the additional responsibility on staff who are deputised; and meaningful immediate engagement on a Four-Day Working Week as committed to in the 2021 Pay Offer.

Management Side considered the claim and came back with an offer consisting of the following:

- (1) a consolidated 4% increase on all points of all pay scales;
- (2) in considering this offer, the Assembly Commission was very mindful of both the current cost of living crisis facing staff, particularly those at the lowest grade, and the extremely challenging fiscal environment in which the Assembly Commission finds itself. With that in mind, a one-off non-consolidated payment for staff at AG8 to AG5 was included in this offer, consisting of: £1,000 for staff at AG8, £750 for staff at AG7, £500 for staff at AG6 and £250 for staff at AG5;
- (3) an amendment to the qualifying period for a pay increment from 31 August to 30 September. The pay implementation date of 01 April had already been agreed.
- (4) an increase in the on-call allowance by 4% in line with the main pay award;
- (5) the rate of Deputising Allowance will be increased from 9% to 15% and will be calculated on the scale minimum of the post that is being deputised into.
- (6) in relation to the Four-Day Working Week, the Assembly Commission had originally agreed to undertake further analysis and investigation of the claimed benefits and costs that would arise from a four-day working week. The Assembly Commission noted that the Hybrid Working Policy had been in place since October 2022 and following a review in March of the implementation of the policy, staff reported feeling that working on a hybrid basis has enhanced their work/life balance. As such, the Assembly Commission did not consider that a move to a four-day working week merited further consideration at this point.

The pay award was put out to members by TUS in December and the offer was overwhelmingly accepted by the membership.



Political Situation/Redeployment: The 2023 year was difficult due to the ongoing issues affecting the return of the Assembly and Executive and this had a direct impact on a large number of members across the organisation. Members had been completing work for other public sector bodies including the other legislatures. Trade Union Side were extremely keen to see a return of normal business so that members can get on with the work that they are employed to do. The financial situation, as across the entire public sector, provided a difficult background to negotiate on pay matters.

Pay Benchmarking: Pay benchmarking was completed in June. This followed a long delay due to difficulties with the original PwC report. Hays, who had been appointed in 2022, produced a detailed report that highlighted a number of anomalies. Trade Union Side had agreed the process and understood that the report was an independent piece of work. Trade Union Side provided comments on the report and also provided feedback on the proposed implementation. A Salary Supplement Policy was developed and signed off in July. A number of queries were raised by members during the implementation phase of this work. Trade Union Side worked with members to try and address any concerns.

Health and Safety: Trade Union Side Secretary has continued to represent NIPSA members at regular health and safety sub-committee meetings throughout the year. Through representation on the group, Trade Union Side successfully negotiated to ensure that the Assembly Commission had implemented a comprehensive range of measures to mitigate a number of identified health and safety risks throughout Parliament Buildings, including issues that were ongoing with the roof and subsequent damp related issues.

Recruitment: Trade Union Side liaised constructively with Management Side on the approach to recruitment and selection. A large number of competitions were successfully completed throughout the year. The timetable for recruitment encountered very few delays. A number of merit lists are now in place to fill both permanent and temporary opportunities that may arise in the coming months. Trade Union Side met bi-weekly with Management Side to discuss the recruitment schedule and to discuss any changes to the priority of posts. Trade Union Side successfully argued for a number of

members to be permanently appointed off a list that was close to expiring.

Trade Union Side Seconded Position: The Trade Union Side seconded position was reviewed for funding in March. Management Side continued to acknowledge the value of this post and the position continues to exist. The Trade Union Side Secretary post is currently filled via a 2022 recruitment process. The post will be kept under review. Trade Union Side envisaged no issues with funding for the post being approved on an ongoing basis.

Employee Relations Group (ERG): The Employee Relations Group, which consists of the Director of Corporate Services, Head of HR, Deputy Head of HR, Senior HR Managers and Trade Union Side, met bi-monthly throughout the year. These meetings focused on the continuing impact of the political situation. There was a particular focus on the impact on Assembly staff, including staff morale, health and wellbeing, meaningful work, job security and redeployments. Trade Union Side worked with Management Side on various pieces of work throughout the year, including staff surveys, internal communications, IT strategy, systems review and vacancy management.

Policy Development: Policy development with Management Side throughout the year has been progressed well. Trade Union Side were consulted on proposed amendments and improvements to the Flexible Working Policy (FWP), the Security Clearance Policy (SP), Discipline Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Further discussions have taken place in relation to the Menopause Guidelines/Policy.

As per Trade Union Side suggestion, dates were added to the policy development timetable. This helped to focus progress on some long standing issues. Trade Union Side provided comments to Management Side on the Conduct policy and on the Appeals section of the Discipline policy.

Visitor Experience Team: Towards the end of the year, Management Side proposed to establish a Visitor Experience Team, as a central point of contact for all visitors to parliament buildings. Following discussion with members from the affected groups, who could lose out on overtime earnings due to the introduction of new staff with normalised Saturday working, issues were raised by Trade Union Side with Management Side around potential redeployments and concerns by ushers about job changes going forward. It was

agreed to have better communication around the proposals and consultation was ongoing around a pilot implementation of the plan.

B3.23 Northern Ireland Audit Office

Auditor Pay & Grading: Persistent concerns surrounding pay and grading, with a specific focus on the Auditor grade, have been the subject of ongoing attention within the Northern Ireland Audit Office. Despite previous efforts, including a comprehensive evaluation in 2019, challenges persist, as highlighted in the 2022 staff survey, emphasising the need for clearer role definitions and addressing pay-related issues for Auditors and Senior Auditors.

In response to these concerns, a meeting between HQ and the local branch took place in September, leading to a letter sent to members in early October seeking feedback on Auditor pay disparities and distinctions between Auditor and Senior Auditor roles. The responses received underscored the persistent nature of these concerns.

On November 21, 2023, a meeting with Auditors further delved into the challenges they face. Common themes included the lack of role definition, worries about staff retention, and concerns about additional responsibilities associated with the lead auditor role lacking clear benefits or equitable recognition. Changes in staffing profile have further complicated the clarity of the Auditor role.

As the year concludes, NIPSA is in the process of consulting the local branch on a draft letter to the Chief Operating Officer (COO), requesting a comprehensive pay and grading review. This intricate issue has the potential to impact a broad range of members beyond Auditors, including those placed on this scale, such as Analysts and Higher-Level Technicians. The union remains committed to addressing these concerns and advocating for fair and equitable outcomes for all affected staff members.

Pay

NIPSA's Original Pay Claim (1st March 2023): NIPSA officially lodged a pay claim on behalf of our members for the financial year 2023/24, outlining the following key points:

(1) RPI + 2% Increase: To ensure that our members' pay keeps pace with the rising cost of living.

(2) 35 Hour Working Week: To achieve a better work-life balance and reduce stress.

(3) Additional Annual Leave Day: To allow members quality time with their families and friends.

(4) Increase to Mileage Rate: To compensate for the additional costs of travel due to high fuel prices.

Management Side Response: The Chief Operating Officer responded to the pay claim, stating that the NI Audit Office was facing budget constraints and operational challenges. Consequently, the management side offered a 3.5% pay increase, effective from 1st April 2023. Points 2, 3, and 4 of the pay claim were not considered further.

NIPSA's Case for Fair Pay: In response to the management side's offer, NIPSA further made the case for fair pay for our members. We presented comparative pay offers from various sectors, highlighting the disparity between those offers and the proposed 3.5% increase.

Additionally, we learned that other audit agencies, such as NAO and Audit Wales, had been offered 4%, and Scotland was still awaiting an offer (with a previous offer of 5% with an underpin of £2,000 for 2022-23). NAO and Audit Wales considered these offers insufficient and engaged in industrial action as a result.

NIPSA emphasised that the proposed 3.5% increase felt particularly inadequate, considering the economic conditions and the essential services provided by our members to the Northern Ireland public.

Meeting on 1st August: On 1st August, NIPSA representatives had a meeting with the management side to advocate for a more equitable pay offer. During the meeting, NIPSA reiterated the strong support from our members for the original pay claim and presented compelling arguments for fair compensation.

The management side appeared moved by the concerns raised but conveyed that they needed to review their budget before providing a response.

Revised Pay Offer: Breakthrough came through telephone conversations on 8th August, resulting in a revised pay offer of 4.5%. This offer, against the backdrop of fiscal and political constraints, exceeded



the NAO's 4% offer and matched the 4.5% accorded to the Civil Service in England following sustained industrial action.

Members' Consultation (Closing on 24th August):

NIPSA initiated a two-week consultation with members, closing on 24th August, resulting in overwhelming support for the **4.5% offer**. Recognising the substantial effort made by NIAO given present budgetary challenges, NIPSA recommended accepting the offer, acknowledging that while it may not meet all expectations, it represented a significant step forward in achieving fair compensation for members.

Recognition and Procedural Agreement: With the recent appointment of a new HR manager, NIPSA's longstanding requests and concerns about the Recognition and Procedural Agreement have received due consideration. The existing agreement, in place for over a decade, contained outdated references, impacting NIPSA's representation in the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC).

The new HR manager conducted a comprehensive review of the Recognition and Procedural Agreement, leading to a revised policy that addressed longstanding issues. The removal of outdated references, including the recognition of a union with only one member, ensures fair representation for NIPSA in the JNCC.

Key Points of the Revised Policy:

- (1) Removal of Outdated References:** The revised policy eliminates the concern of recognising a union with only one member, rectifying an outdated reference and ensuring equitable representation.
- (2) Modernisation of Language:** The language in the revised policy has been updated to reflect contemporary workplace practices, enhancing clarity and relevance.
- (3) Concise and Comprehensive:** Despite being considerably shorter, the new policy retains all essential elements. Its concise and comprehensive nature facilitates better understanding and adherence.

NIPSA has engaged with the HR department to discuss key matters addressed in the revised policy. The initial response from the HR team has been

positive, acknowledging the increased relevance and alignment with NIPSA's concerns. The revised policy underscores a commitment to recognising the importance of union representation and fostering fair practices in the workplace.

NIPSA is committed to continued collaboration with the HR department for the finalisation and implementation of the revised Recognition and Procedural Agreement. The progress made thus far is commendable, and NIPSA anticipates further strengthening the agreement in the upcoming year.

B3.24 Northern Ireland Water (NIW)

NIPSA Office Accommodation: NIPSA Seconded Secretary moved into new office accommodation in the Radio Workshop building on a temporary basis. There were more refurbishment projects planned and the office was to be vacated again by end of December for an approx. 2-month period.

2022/23 Pay Claim: Trade Union Side and Management Side were in conciliation as an extension of the "without prejudice" negotiations on the 2022/23 Pay Proposal. The 2023/24 Pay Claim would not be considered until the current negotiations had ended.

Hybrid Working: The hybrid working pilot had been largely positive; everyday activities and incidents had been monitored by NIW and the feedback had been positive in nature. However, in June NIW advised the workforce that due to the refurbishment of the Westland site some staff had just begun their hybrid working by returning to their offices. Due to this, a decision was made to extend the pilot until 31st December 2023. Trade Union Side and Management Side continued to consult through the duration of the pilot.

Construction/Refurbishment: Planned construction remained ongoing at Westland HQ site. Work was due to begin on further development of the old radio workshop building to accommodate teams linked to Capital House who would be vacating the building. Further reconfiguration was due to take place in the HR building to accommodate staff from H&S teams who had joined the directorate. This work was due to begin in January next year.

Analytical Services (AS) - 7 Day Work Pattern

(7DW): The job evaluation process which Trade Union Side secured for AS staff was delayed beyond NIPSA control. However, Management Side had given a

reassurance that the work would be carried out. Trade Union Side and Management Side picked up the 7DW consultation again in August with initial monetary values discussed. Trade Union Side invited members involved to a meeting in September to provide details of the consultation. The figures presented were rejected by the members as they were viewed as too low to change their work-life balance. This was conveyed to Management by Trade Union Side, with further consultation expected in the New Year.

Holiday Pay Review: The Supreme Court outcome, following the December 2022 hearing, was announced on 4th October 2023. NIPSA won, a historic victory, as the UK Supreme Court ruled in their favor in their fight for "normal pay when on holiday and not just their basic pay" backdated to 1998. The Supreme Court Judgment would mean backpay for thousands of workers potentially going back to 1998 or even 1996. It was expected negotiations would take place on the quantum in the New Year.

Agency Workers: Following lengthy consultation with NIW, Trade Union Side agreed to attend conciliation with the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) in September. This was the final stage of the process which saw individual agreements signed by all involved as final settlements. Monies were due to be paid in the coming months, although a second round of analysis, to capture staff who were not initially included in the investigation, was to be actioned early in January. Once completed this would bring the matter to a close.

Policy Reviews: Management Side produced an update to the Acceptable Use Policy which Trade Union Side continued to consult on with further meetings to be scheduled. Management proposed changes to 8 policies: the Grievance Procedure, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, Family Leave, Attendance Management, Recruitment & Selection, Harassment & Bullying, Discrimination and Disciplinary. Trade Union Side reviewed the amendments and agreed them as the changes were to ensure statutory compliance e.g., update GDPR principles.

Employee-led Transfer: Following a decision to stand down the Employee-led Transfer Scheme, Management Side were asked if everyone currently on the list would be given the opportunity to be transferred. They advised that the scheme was not best practice and there were risks associated with equality issues around the Recruitment & Selection Policy. It was confirmed that welfare transfers or medical

redeployment were still applicable. Management Side advised the Learning & Development teams would be looking into new paths for development within the company.

Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Training Pilot:

Management Side advised this accredited training programme was, in the first instance, to be rolled out to 12 members of staff with links to wastewater. The training would be delivered as a pilot scheme with a view to including a wider pool of candidates in the future depending on success. The training was to provide a standardised approach, combined toolkit and techniques to help resolve business problems and improve operational processes.

Commercial Team: Management Side set out their vision for the future of the Commercial Team which currently consisted of the Procurement and Contract Management (CCMT) teams. A 12-month pilot to test how/if merging the roles within Procurement and Contract Management would work in practice began in April. Trade Union Side was assured that this was not a head count exercise, but more about finding a best practice solution to a disjointed process. The merging of roles would facilitate a more end to end seamless process and provide a development opportunity for staff. Further consultation was agreed as evaluation was to take place during the next 12 months.

Corporate Governance: Management Side presented an in-depth overview which showed several high-risk areas within the function. To ensure adequate governance, they planned to increase the number of staff and separate workstreams into three areas, Business Continuity, Risk & Insurance and Governance. Trade Union Side had been assured that any current members would move across, at grade, into the new structure.

Alarm Management Centre: Trade Union Side raised an issue on the recruitment of some staff without an on-call clause in their contract of employment. Management Side consulted on the matter assuring Trade Union Side that this was an error and that the staff involved had continued to work their on-call rota but may have been underpaid. Management Side advised this would be corrected and back paid to the date of employment for each member involved.

Security Pass Policy: Following consultation with Trade Union Side, Management Side introduced a new policy to support the administration and management



of passes for both employees and relevant contractors' security. This policy was necessary as although there had previously been rules in place, nothing formal had been written in support of the measures required by the company.

Cases: Trade Union Side continued to support and advise members on a variety of matters e.g., flexible working requests, the Hybrid Working Pilot, Sick Absence Reviews and multiple other cases.

B3.25 NSL Traffic Attendants

Pay: Following the acceptances from the majority of unions of the NJC pay offer for 23/24, NSL introduced the new hourly rates and back pay from November.

Councils: Belfast, Ards and North Down, Newry & Mourne, Mid Ulster, Derry & Strabane, Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon, Fermanagh & Omagh and Lisburn & Castlereagh Councils tendered for a separate Parking Enforcement contract to commence from November. NSL were successful in their tender bid and were appointed preferred bidder status at the end of July however during the 10-day standstill period one of the other bidders placed a challenge. However, they then withdrawn their case and the writ was lifted. As a result of the legal challenge, the councils will not be leaving the main DfI contract until March 2024 to allow time to get the new contract up and running.

B3.26 Police Ombudsman Northern Ireland

Hybrid Working Policy

Overview: Throughout the year, NIPSA has actively engaged with the Senior Leadership Team to address concerns and advocate for improvements in the Hybrid Working Policy.

January - April

Consultation and Amendments:

The consultation process on the policy was opened to all staff following NIPSA's representations.

Successful advocacy by NIPSA led to amendments addressing issues such as pro-rata arrangements and the specified number of working days.

The irrelevant reference to the NICS uniform appeal policy in Paragraph 3.6 was removed.

Member Consultation:

In April, NIPSA received the final version of the policy for further comments.

Ongoing dissatisfaction with the set number of days members are required to come into the office prompted NIPSA to plan consultations with its members.

May - August

Ongoing Consultations and Feedback:

NIPSA continued consultations with its members to gather feedback on the final version of the policy received in April.

Specific concerns regarding the stipulated number of days members are required to work in the office were highlighted.

September - November

Formal Arbitration Process:

A formal arbitration process was initiated to address the dispute over the Hybrid Working Policy.

The 2007 signed version of the Recognition and Procedural Agreement was referenced for discussions and clarifications.

Management Side Commitment:

In September, the Management Side advised that a review of the current policy would take place early in the new year, subject to consultation with TUS.

Conclusion: The year-long efforts by NIPSA have resulted in significant progress in shaping and amending the Hybrid Working Policy. Ongoing consultations, the initiation of a formal arbitration process, and the commitment from the Management Side demonstrate the union's dedication to ensuring a fair and beneficial arrangement for its members. As the year concludes, NIPSA remains vigilant, anticipating further developments in the early part of the new year with the promised policy review.

Agency Workers

The issue of a high number of agency and fixed-term workers in the Police Ombudsman's office, particularly within the History Investigation Branch, has been a persistent concern for NIPSA throughout the year. The union remains steadfast in its commitment to advocating for permanent contracts, emphasising the

significance of job security and stability for workers in critical roles. As the year concludes, NIPSA will continue its efforts into the new year to address this ongoing issue.

Legacy Department and the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill

Throughout the year, the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill has been a central focus for NIPSA and its members, particularly concerning the potential closure of the Legacy Branch. The union has actively engaged with the Management Side to address implications for affected staff and to safeguard jobs and rights.

In the early months of the year, the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill entered the House of Lords at Committee Stage, raising major concerns for NIPSA regarding the potential closure of the Legacy Branch and its implications for members. Collaboratively with the Management Side, the Trade Union Side explored alternative employment options for affected staff while continuously monitoring the bill's progress and remaining prepared to take necessary actions to protect jobs amid potential closure.

Progression to the final stages of the House of Commons saw the bill undergoing consideration of amendments, yet the looming prospect of Legacy Branch closure remained a significant concern. Ongoing exploration of alternative employment options and readiness to take requisite actions continued.

The Legacy Bill successfully passed in September, intensifying efforts to address implications. A dispute arose concerning redundancy policy terms in light of the bill's passage, with NIPSA advocating for the retention of an enhanced notice period as outlined in the organisation's policy. The employer sought legal advice on the status of the redundancy policy and expressed a desire to mirror NICS redundancy terms. Additionally, legal counsel was sought regarding additional allowances and perks to address transferability and redundancy avoidance.

The passage of the Legacy Bill in September marked a pivotal phase in addressing the potential Legacy

Branch closure. NIPSA's continued engagement, legal considerations, and dispute resolution efforts underscore the union's unwavering commitment to protecting member jobs and rights. As the year draws to a close, NIPSA remains vigilant, advocating for policy updates and legal compliance amidst organisational transitions.

Reasonable Adjustment (RA) Passports

Throughout the year, the introduction and progress of the Reasonable Adjustment Passport initiative have been significant developments. The Trade Union Side actively engaged with the Management Side to pilot the scheme within PONI, aiming to create a more inclusive workplace environment, particularly for staff with disabilities.

The Trade Union sought to ensure that the Reasonable Adjustment Passport initiative adequately addressed the needs of staff with disabilities. Discussions with the Management Side focused on implementing policies that would effectively support reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Legal advice was sought on various aspects, including the status of existing policies and considerations regarding additional support measures for affected staff.

Positive feedback from participating staff members underscored the value of the initiative, perceived as a valuable resource for collating information on reasonable adjustments required by staff with disabilities. Despite challenges, such as delays in policy implementation due to the absence of several Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members, the Trade Union remained committed to overcoming obstacles and advancing the initiative.

As the year concluded, the Reasonable Adjustment Passport initiative signified a positive stride towards cultivating a more inclusive workplace environment. Despite challenges, particularly delays in policy enactment, the Trade Union Side remained unwavering in its dedication to the initiative's triumph. Looking ahead, the union remained focused on achieving the overarching objective of a workplace that embraces the needs of all employees, ensuring a supportive atmosphere, especially for those with disabilities.



Staff Survey

Overview: Throughout the year, NIPSA's persistent advocacy for a staff survey faced significant challenges, including delays and disruptions caused by internal organisational issues. Despite hurdles, the union continued to emphasise the importance of addressing identified issues and improving working conditions for its members.

Advocacy for Staff Survey:

The Trade Union Side had long advocated for a staff survey, encountering resistance and various excuses from the Management Side.

NIPSA's insistence led to the Management Side eventually agreeing to conduct the survey.

Survey Results and Urgent Response:

The survey results, as anticipated by the union, were not encouraging.

NIPSA held several meetings with the Management Side to emphasise the importance of a tangible response and the need for an action plan.

Organisational Turmoil and Leadership Challenges:

In April, organisational challenges emerged with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in turmoil.

Several senior staff members were on notice to leave, and the CEO was reported not working, though reasons were not disclosed.

Commitment to Advocacy Despite Challenges:

Despite these challenges, NIPSA expressed its commitment to urging the Management Side to address survey-identified issues, including staff morale, and to work toward improving working conditions.

Conclusion: The year has been marked by persistent efforts by NIPSA to address staff concerns through a survey, encountering obstacles and disruptions related to organisational challenges and leadership issues. While progress on an action plan stalled due to the absence of key SLT members, the union remains committed to advocating for improvements in staff morale and working conditions. As the year concludes, NIPSA looks forward to overcoming obstacles and collaborating with the Management Side to implement positive changes for its members.

GDPR Concerns

Emergence of GDPR Concerns:

In July, union members at the Police Ombudsman lodged complaints, specifically pointing to issues with the staff vetting process and data retention practices.

Allegations of Inappropriate Information Collection:

Allegations surfaced that sensitive information, including personal details about staff's private lives, was collected during the Develop Vetted (DV) process without appropriate justification or consent.

Concerns about Management Access and Data Retention:

The union raised concerns regarding senior management's access to detailed personal information and the excessive retention period of sensitive data until the age of 72.

Seeking Legal Advice:

In response to these concerns, the Trade Union sought legal advice from a solicitor to evaluate whether the handling of sensitive data and its access by management breached the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Solicitor's Opinion and Potential Legal Actions:

The solicitor's opinion played a crucial role in assessing potential legal actions or remedies for affected staff members, considering the alleged mishandling of sensitive information and potential GDPR violations.

Action Plan Development:

Armed with the solicitor's assessment, the Trade Union is actively formulating an action plan to address the concerns raised by its members.

Commitment to Rights and Privacy:

NIPSA remains unwavering in its commitment to advocating for the rights and privacy of its members. The ongoing efforts ensure that appropriate actions are taken to rectify the alleged mishandling of sensitive information and to uphold GDPR compliance.

Conclusion: The year has been characterised by the Trade Union's resolute efforts to address potential GDPR violations at the Police Ombudsman. Legal

advice has provided critical insights, guiding the union in formulating an action plan to rectify the alleged mishandling of sensitive information. As the year concludes, NIPSA remains committed to protecting the rights and privacy of its members, marking a significant step toward ensuring data security and compliance with GDPR principles.

Recruitment

Recruitment activities faced significant disruptions throughout the reporting period due to staff shortages and the prolonged absence of key HR personnel. These challenges resulted in delays in filling essential positions within the organisation. The Trade Union is actively collaborating with the HR department to address these issues, working towards streamlining processes and expediting the recruitment timeline. Despite the obstacles, concerted efforts are underway to ensure efficient and effective recruitment practices to meet the organisation's staffing needs.

Anonymity Application – IT Case

In September an important milestone was achieved as a Restricted Reporting Order was granted in an ongoing IT case, ensuring the anonymity of staff involved. NIPSA welcomed the protection of our members identities.

Transformational Change Programme

The ongoing Transformational Change Programme involves active consultation with the Trade Union Side (TUS) regarding a proposal to bifurcate the current directorate into two distinct divisions: the Investigation and Regulatory Division and the Impact and Support Division. During the Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee (JNCC) in September, management emphasised the essential need to hire an additional 20 staff across various roles within these divisions to ensure effective operations. TUS has expressed a positive welcome to this proposal, recognising its potential benefits. However, TUS has also conveyed the importance of urgently addressing recruitment needs in other areas, emphasising the need for a comprehensive and strategic approach to staffing requirements. This ongoing collaboration between TUS and management underscores a commitment to thoughtful and inclusive decision-making in the midst of organisational transformation.

Flexi Time Policy Alignment:

During the Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee (JNCC) in September, the Trade Union Side (TUS) expressed concerns regarding discrepancies between the Office's flexi-time policy and the NICS (Northern Ireland Civil Service) policy. TUS emphasised the necessity of aligning these policies to prevent any potential disadvantage for PONI (Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland) staff when compared to their NICS counterparts. In response to these concerns, management requested TUS to submit a written request supported by evidence from the Whitley Council Agreement. The request and evidence was submitted in October and will be subject to discussions at a future JNCC.

Disciplinary Policy Review and Amendments:

The Trade Union Side (TUS) and Management Side engaged in a comprehensive review of the disciplinary policy over several months, prompted by concerns raised by TUS regarding the volume of formal disciplinary investigations. The objective was to reform the policy, introducing a more informal pathway to address the majority of disciplinary issues within the office. In the September Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee (JNCC) meeting, TUS requested additional time to review the revised policy thoroughly. Following subsequent discussions, amendments were made to the policy to align with TUS preferences. By the end of the year, the disciplinary policy underwent successful revisions, incorporating TUS feedback and achieving a resolution that met the collective goals of both sides.

B3.27 Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI)

Pay: For the first time, PSNI Staff received their pay award 2 months after the rest of the NICS received theirs into their pay packets. This was a momentous win by PSNI NIPSA Seconded Officers, who secured a change in the pay approval process for all PSNI members. However, TUS are still pressing for the provision of incremental pay when it is due and not when the pay award is paid. This would make a huge difference to our members in these unpredicted times of high inflation in the absence of an Assembly.



Finance: The PSNI is no different from any other area of the NI Public Sector and is facing a £59 million deficit compounded by the lack of a functioning NI Assembly. This situation is further compounded by the NI Secretary of State treating all NI Public Sector workers as political pawns.

NIPSA Recruitment: TUS has continued to use and develop our recruitment strategy with a good success level. Due to the strong leadership of the Seconded Officers at the time of the Data Breach coupled with a high public facing image TUS recruited approximately 600 new members. Police Staff recognised the need to belong to a Trade Union and joined to benefit from the strengths of working together for a common goal.

Revised Environmental Allowance: The Seconded Officers put further and continuing pressure on the Northern Ireland Policing Board, Chief Constable, DoJ and the Northern Ireland Public Affairs Committee to pay the increase in the REA. The ask was further highlighted by the Data Breach and the negative impact it had and is still having on all Police Staff.

B3.28 Prisoner Ombudsman

Staff Wellbeing: In recognising the issues which NIPSA had been highlighting in relation to staff wellbeing, recruitment & retention, staff morale and staff sickness in the Ombudsman's office, the Prisoner Ombudsman's Office and the Department of Justice sought help in relation to a staff wellbeing intervention from NICSHR. It was agreed to introduce a Health & Safety Executive's Management Standards approach. The Management Standards covered six primary sources of stress at work, which were:

- Demands
- Control
- Support
- Relationship
- Role
- Change

NICSHR independently carried out a series of focus groups using the management standards approach and developed an action plan.

B3.29 Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI)

Pay Modernisation: A Business Case for Pay Modernisation was developed jointly between Trade Union Side (TUS) and Management and was submitted to the Department of Justice (DoJ) for approval in November 2022. The preferred option for Trade Union Side and Management Side was to use a bespoke pay framework for PBNI, informed by the NJC pay points. In July 2023, DoJ asked PBNI management to consider another option; moving only operational staff to agenda for change and admin / corporate staff to remain on NICS pay, terms and conditions. TUS robustly challenged this as this option would not meet our objectives of pay modernisation which included having a single pay framework, one set of terms & conditions and one job evaluation scheme. TUS met with the DoJ Permanent Secretary and argued the merits of our preferred option. The Permanent Secretary explained that they are required to seek their own legal advice and that their advice stated that our preferred option may be repercussive and there were concerns around affordability. TUS and management looked again at the preferred option and considered DoJ's concerns around affordability now and in future years and amended the business case. The main measures proposed to achieve affordability were:

- (a) Buy-out of the Essential Car User Allowance; and
- (b) Delaying the transition of staff on NICS aligned Terms and Conditions to the new pay framework from April 2022 to April 2023.

The amended business case was submitted back to the DoJ in November and the key features included:

- A single pay framework for all posts in PBNI with 15 pay bands;
- A maximum of 6 incremental points in any band;
- No overlaps in pay bands;
- The ability to use the new structures to create career opportunities in the future if needed;
- The new pay bands are in line with market rates;
- PBNI can benefit from mirroring negotiated pay settlements from a large negotiating body, the National Joint Council (NJC).

The transition arrangements proposed in the business case include:

- (a)** Probation and the Senior Leadership Team will transition to the new pay framework from 1 April 2022. Staff in post on 31 March 2022 will move to the closest point of the new scale, which will result in no detriment. Where a 2% uplift has not been achieved on transition, a non-consolidated payment will be made to ensure a minimum uplift of 2%. The NJC pay uplift for 2022/23 of £1925 will then be applied. Progression up the pay scales for staff in post as at 31 March 2022 will apply on 1 April in future years.
- (b)** New starts from 1 April 2022 onwards will transition to the lowest point of the relevant pay scale, which will result in no detriment. Progression for new starts on or after the 1 April 2022 will apply on the anniversary of joining in relevant year(s).
- (c)** New Probation Officers who join PBNI as 'Assessed Year in Employment' (AYE) posts will be appointed at a new lower starting point. This does not apply to existing AYE's.
- (d)** Staff on NICS pay scales will transition to the new pay scales from 1 April 2023. Staff in post on 31 March 2023 will move to the lowest point of the new scale, which results in no detriment. Progression up the pay scales for staff in post as at 31 March 2023 will apply on 1 April in relevant year(s).
- (e)** New starts from 1 April 2023 onwards will transition to the lowest point on the relevant pay scales which results in no detriment. Progression for new starts on or after 1 April 2022 will apply on the anniversary of joining in relevant years(s).
- (f)** NICS pay points have been uplifted £552 from 1 August 2022. Therefore staff on NICS pay scales will receive a pro-rata uplift from 1 August 2022 to 31 March 2023 and an annual uplift of a minimum of £1925 from 1 April 2023 in line with the NJC pay award for 2023-24.

Terms and Conditions (T&Cs)

- (a)** All current T&Cs for Probation Staff / SLT will remain the same, except for the entitlement to the Essential Car User Allowance (ECUA).

(b) The ECUA will cease for all staff from 1 April 2024, if the business case is approved. To buy out this contractual entitlement, a non-consolidated payment equivalent to one year's ECUA will be paid to all staff in post as at 31 March 2024, in addition to ECUA already been paid from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024.

(c) All new starts would avail of Probation T&Cs on joining PBNI.

(d) Staff who are on NICS T&Cs would transfer onto Probation T&Cs in a period of up to 5 years. This transition would, for example, take account of access to Occupational Sick Pay and Maternity Pay. After a period of 5 years, all staff would be on the same arrangements.

The business case was approved by the DoJ and forwarded to the Department of Finance for their approval.

Pensions: NIPSA lodged legal cases to challenge the decision by management to remove the compensation for the difference between the NILGOSC and PCSPS (NI) pension rates. Accountants developed a formula to establish the actual loss for each named plaintiff as the loss varies for each individual. All plaintiffs were listed into three separate categories. 1) Plaintiffs who potentially have no loss, 2) Plaintiffs who potentially have past loss and 3) Plaintiffs who potentially have past and future lost. McCartan, Turkington & Breen solicitors collated the responses and cases were withdrawn where appropriate and quantified in respect to the remainder of the cases.

Budget: TUS robustly challenged the budget cuts and the implications for the service delivery. We emphasised that for a small organisation like PBNI, budget cuts impact significantly on the organisation's ability to provide core services which increases the risk to the public. TUS welcomed the reinstatement of the funding for the community & voluntary sector but also highlighted that the cuts to the supervision & rehabilitation of service users impacts not just the service user but their families and the whole community. TUS highlighted that the cessation of programmes and interventions for adjudicated medium risk domestic abuse and sexual offences services users leave PBNI in a position of not being able to afford to carry out work that has been deemed necessary to prevent further reoffending.



B3.30 Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland (PPSNI)

The total budget for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) in 2022/23 was £41.234m. That was a slight increase on 21/22 budget but it was set against a backdrop of increased costs through Covid Recovery, significant reform, and on-going political uncertainty. The Department operated on an under-capacity basis for several years and 2022/23 saw that trend continue. The hard work and dedication of NIPSA members enabled the Department to deliver its objectives under those conditions. It was hoped that the budget would increase in 2024 to accommodate fair pay to ensure a full complement of staff.

Health & Safety and Risk Assessments: Trade Union Side were represented on the Departmental Health & Safety Committee throughout the year, attending meetings, conducting risk assessments, and ensuring matters were resolved satisfactorily.

A number of security incidents occurred at PPS Headquarters between April – June 2023 and in Derry in December 2023. Trade Union Side raised significant concerns regarding risk assessments, the Departmental Health & Safety Policy and Procedure. Some concerns were alleviated with immediate action taken to ensure safety and welfare of members. A full review of Departmental Health & Safety began in November 2023. Negotiations on other issues were on-going and a resolution was expected after an early meeting of the H&S Committee in the New Year.

Whitley: Trade Union Side engaged in regular consultation with Management Side (remotely via Teams & WebEx). Agenda items were varied and included Indictable Cases Process, Committal Reform, Judicial Case Management, the joint PPS/PSNI Working Together Project, Electronic Case File (ECF), Digital Strategy and GDPR, Prosecutor Activity Sheets (PAS), Temporary Recruitment and Promotion, Performance Management, Vacancies, Agency Workers, Special Leave and Carers rights at work among other issues.

Other agenda items arose through the out-workings of the plethora of subgroups and committees in PPS. The Senior Management Group (SMG), Organisational Recovery Group (ORG), The Gold Team, People & Resources Committee (PRC), Performance and Delivery Committee (PDC), Policy & Quality Committee (PQC), Strategic Improvement Board (SIB), Performance and

Accountability Meetings (PAM's), Health and Safety Committee as well as issues generated through NICSHR, produced a significant workload for the Departmental Committee.

In depth consultation and negotiation occurred throughout the year, delivering favourable outcomes for members across multiple topics.

IT Projects: Multi-Media Evidence (MME) delivery: Phases 1 and 2 were delivered in May & September 2021. After some delay, Phase 3 was introduced in 2023 after a successful 6-month Pilot project in Belfast. Trade Union Side engaged throughout the year to ensure that members interests were considered and protected in light of the changes in Legislation, policy, service line agreements and procedures.

Consultation was on-going in relation to additional resources required to continue the success of the Pilot.

Consultation on Phase 4 of the project was on-going. Several other innovative IT measures were presented and progressed throughout the year. They included the Modernising Services programme a five-year Strategic Plan for the PPS called 'PPS 2027'. The delivery of key operational PPS projects and inter-agency initiatives under the Service Improvement and Innovation Programme (such as Committal Reform, Remote Evidence Centres, Sight-link facilities, and the Joint Digital Justice Strategy) and the implementation of ICT Strategy objectives. The proposals were about transforming the PPS into a more modern prosecution service, including the greater use of digital and IT processes. Trade Union Side continued to engage in Consultation with Management Side at the year end.

New Ways of working (NWW): Despite reassurance that PPS would comply with agreed arrangements, issues continued to surface throughout the year. Trade Union Side engaged successfully with several business areas, whilst department-wide concerns were resolved via the Whitley mechanism. As a result, most posts in the PPS were able to offer Hybrid Working to members.

Policy, Legislation, and Change: The introduction of significant volumes of new legislation and policy (18 new internal policies implemented in the PPS in 2023) was a source of conflict throughout the year. Naturally, members struggled with the constant changes having already attempted to navigate 26 new internal policies introduced in 2022. The ever-

changing landscape of the PPS saw implementation of legislation across several complex, sensitive, and difficult topics, including implementation of the Gillen Review recommendations, the law on Stalking, Harassment, Domestic Violence, Non-Fatal Strangulation, Child Sexual Exploitation, Abortion, Sentencing in Murder cases and the use of Medicinal Cannabis, among others. These highly emotive topics often dictated the working practices of members and demonstrated the difficulty they faced in the highly stressful environment of the Criminal Justice System.

Industrial Relations became strained when members and Trade Union Side repeatedly lobbied Management about the PPS' perceived willingness to prioritise the needs of external agencies ahead of their own staff needs. This demanding situation was on-going.

Pay & Industrial Action: The disparity in pay between admin and legal work in PPS continued in what had been a constant and long-standing issue. The cost of living crisis had many members in admin sections reporting daily struggles to make ends meet. Below inflation pay increases caused significant issues around morale, mental and physical health.

Reps in Branch 53 worked tirelessly, culminating in positive days of action throughout the year. Healthy numbers of members withdrew their labour and major disruption was noted across all areas, with Picket lines in place on all occasions in Belfast and Derry. Engagement continued with the membership and with NIPSA Headquarters where Branch 53 Representatives attended regular activist meetings organised by NIPSA Headquarters. As public servants who worked throughout the pandemic, they were keen to secure a fair and just pay award. The Branch Committee continued to engage and update members in relation to action short of strike action (ASOSA) and in anticipation of further days of strike action. Members had voiced concern over selective action and the difficulties ASOSA presented.

Review of the Department: A Review via an external consultancy firm PA Consulting was commissioned late in 2022 and completed in September 2023, producing another raft of recommendations and changes to working practices. The Branch Committee engaged with management on a number of issues, raised concerns about staffing levels and proposed implementation methods.

Several other issues are also ongoing. They included issues arising from Groups and Committees such as the Criminal Justice Partnership Consultations Group, the Operational Recovery Group, the Business Managers Forum, and numerous pieces of departmental policy being drafted by the Policy & Information Unit (PIU). These types of issues were constant matters and work was on-going across all the areas.

B3.31 SERCO

Pay: In the discussions with SERCO regarding the pay offer for the 2023/24 period, NIPSA took a proactive stance in advocating for fair compensation on behalf of its members. Despite initial reluctance from SERCO, the union successfully made the case for aligning the salaries of lower-paid employees with the Real Living Wage rate of £10.90 per hour for the year 2023. This crucial move was designed to ensure fair compensation for the workforce and address concerns about poverty wages.

SERCO eventually conceded to the points raised by NIPSA during multiple meetings, including one with senior staff responsible for UK-wide operations. The commitment by SERCO to address the concerns raised by the union resulted in a decision to implement the Real Living Wage rate from 1st April 2023. Backpay arrangements were made, with payments scheduled to be completed no later than the July salary distribution.

The decision to align with the Real Living Wage rate marked a substantial increase of approximately 15% for lower-paid employees, who were previously on the National Minimum Wage. This increase, applicable to the majority of SERCO staff, demonstrated SERCO's responsiveness to the concerns raised by NIPSA and aimed to uplift these employees from poverty wages. Additionally, other employees received a commendable 4% increase, effective from 1st April.

NIPSA played a pivotal role throughout the negotiation process, submitting a pay claim and urging SERCO to self-fund the increase. The union's proactive engagement and advocacy for fair compensation were instrumental in achieving a positive outcome for its members. This success underscores the importance of unions in safeguarding the interests and well-being of the workforce, ensuring fair compensation and equitable treatment in the workplace.



B3.32 Sodexo

Pay: In the early part of the year, NIPSA engaged with the management side on the critical issue of pay for Sodexo staff working on the PSNI contract. The decision by the NI Executive to become a Real Living Wage employer posed a unique challenge, as the PSNI contract was not due for renewal until March 2025. According to the Executive's guidelines, outsourced contracts were only required to pay the Real Living Wage at the award or renewal stage.

Recognising the importance of timely implementation, NIPSA set out a compelling case for expediting the Real Living Wage for Sodexo staff, either through self-funding by Sodexo or by seeking funds from the PSNI. Despite the challenges and months of persistent advocacy, an agreement was eventually reached. Consequently, Sodexo began paying the Real Living Wage for staff on the PSNI contract from 1st April of the current year.

While NIPSA continued to advocate for backdating the implementation to the previous October, Sodexo has, to date, remained unwilling to do so. The ongoing efforts by NIPSA underscore the union's commitment to ensuring fair compensation and equitable treatment for its members, even in the face of challenges posed by contract timelines and agreements. The successful implementation of the Real Living Wage for Sodexo staff represents a tangible outcome of NIPSA's proactive engagement and dedication to the well-being of its members.

B3.33 Sport NI

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Review: Earlier this year, NIPSA actively engaged with a Health & Safety consultant appointed by Sport NI to conduct a thorough review encompassing all aspects of health, safety, and wellbeing in the workplace. This comprehensive examination included staffing procedures, buildings, risk assessments, policies, and occupational health provision.

The impetus for this review stemmed from NIPSA's advocacy on behalf of its members, particularly those based at Tollymore, whose physically demanding roles were starting to impact them as they aged. NIPSA raised concerns regarding the lack of necessary support from the employer, citing issues such as the absence of regular check-ups and inadequate provision of physio support.

In response, NIPSA collaborated with the Health & Safety consultant, participating in multiple meetings throughout the review process. The consultant has since completed the report, presenting a comprehensive analysis of the existing health, safety, and wellbeing landscape.

The next step involves NIPSA continuing to actively engage with management on the implementation of the report's recommendations. A comprehensive set of short, medium, and long-term aims were outlined in the report, and NIPSA remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring the full and effective implementation of these measures for the long-term benefits of its members. This project is recognised as a significant and ongoing effort, highlighting NIPSA's dedication to fostering a safer and healthier workplace environment at Sport NI. Top of Form

Human Resources (HR) Meetings: Throughout the past year, NIPSA maintained an active and collaborative approach through monthly HR meetings with Sport NI. These sessions served as a platform for discussions on a diverse range of topics, including recruitment, health, safety, and wellbeing, policies and procedures, budget considerations, and organisational restructuring.

A significant focus of the trade union side during these meetings has been the ongoing efforts to implement a lateral transfer policy. This policy aims to facilitate internal staff transfers without any negative impact on allowances, a crucial consideration for enhancing workforce flexibility and job satisfaction.

Sport NI has been notably engaged in recruitment endeavours, particularly in areas such as finance, IT, and sports development. However, NIPSA has consistently advocated for a comprehensive review of the pay system for health professional staff stationed at the Sports Institute. The union asserts that the current NICS scales do not adequately reflect the unique roles and responsibilities of these staff members. As part of its advocacy, NIPSA is pushing for the establishment of a more suitable pay structure that aligns with the expertise and contributions of health professionals within the organisation.

Reflecting on the past year's endeavours, NIPSA acknowledges the ongoing dialogue and collaborative efforts undertaken in HR meetings and remains committed to addressing key issues, ensuring equitable policies, and advocating for the wellbeing and fair compensation of Sport NI staff in the year ahead.

Upheaval at Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

The Trade Union Side (TU side) convened with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) in July to address the stagnant progress on various matters within Sport NI. The ensuing discussion revealed substantial upheaval within the SLT, introducing a cascade of challenges that have significantly impacted the organisation's stability.

(1) CEO Absence:

- The CEO's prolonged sick leave has posed challenges in finding suitable cover, leading to uncertainty and impeding decision-making processes.

(2) COO Departure:

- The COO disclosed their departure, adding to the instability within the SLT and raising concerns about leadership continuity.

(3) Parent Department Intervention:

- The Department for Communities (parent department) has intervened, considering the appointment of an Accounting Officer. Plans included appointing a Grade 7 on a direct award contract to lead the finance section and stabilise financial matters. Additionally, a Grade 6 acted up into the CEO's role temporarily.

(4) Board Involvement:

- To navigate the tumultuous period, the board met weekly, underscoring the severity of the situation.

As of December, the CEO had not returned, and the Director was simultaneously acting as CEO while managing their own responsibilities. The COO position was temporarily filled through an agency. Recruitment efforts for these pivotal roles proved unsuccessful, prompting a re-evaluation at year-end, including potential revisions to job descriptions and specifications.

NIPSA remains deeply concerned about the SLT's current state within Sport NI. The lack of stability and prolonged absence of key executives have adversely affected decision-making processes and staff morale. Members express apprehension about uncertainty and seek more stable employment opportunities.

The Trade Union is committed to closely monitoring the situation, advocating for stability, and ensuring effective decision-making within the organisation. The

challenges faced in recruiting key positions necessitate a strategic reassessment, and NIPSA remains steadfast in protecting the interests of its members during this challenging time. The year concluded with a commitment to exploring alternative avenues to address the leadership vacuum and enhance organisational stability.

Time in Motion Study: In July, NIPSA responded to concerns raised by several members regarding detailed time sheets, some even requesting information on a half-hourly basis. Objecting to this practice, the Trade Union sought a meeting with HR (Human Resources) and the COO (Chief Operating Officer) to address the matter.

During the meeting, NIPSA articulated significant concerns about the lack of consultation with the union regarding the time in motion study, questioning its purpose and potential impact. Management acknowledged that clearance for such a process had not been given, ensuring NIPSA that they would address the matter with the responsible senior manager.

In a subsequent meeting, management clarified that the time in motion study was not intended to be a wide-ranging surveillance exercise. Instead, it was targeted at specific staff where potential breaches of the Working Time Directive and health and wellbeing issues were suspected.

NIPSA vigilantly monitored the situation throughout the year, and as the year concludes, no adverse impacts have been raised. This ongoing scrutiny underscores NIPSA's commitment to ensuring fair and reasonable working conditions for its members. The union will continue to uphold its role as a guardian of members' rights, ensuring that workplace practices align with legal standards and do not compromise employee wellbeing.

Absence Management: Year-to-date statistics reveal a noteworthy decrease in both short- and long-term absences. Short-term absences have diminished by 36%, while long-term absences have shown an impressive 53% reduction. Equally significant is the substantial decrease in the average days lost per person in the current year.

These improvements are a result of enhanced employee relations and collaborative efforts between NIPSA and the management side. A closer working relationship has addressed earlier issues, directly contributing to



the reduction in stress-related absences and improving overall employee relations.

The positive trend in absence management underscores the effectiveness of cooperative measures, emphasising the importance of ongoing collaboration between the Trade Union and management to foster a healthier and more productive work environment for all members.

Pay: The implementation of the NICS (Northern Ireland Civil Service) pay award faced delays until August this year, despite NIPSA's central advocacy for a more streamlined approval approach. Previously, a business case had to be submitted to the parent department and then the Department of Finance for final approval. However, Sport NI can now self-assure, bypassing these departments.

Unfortunately, the shortage of staff in finance and HR and difficulties at the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) level added to the delay in implementing the pay award. Despite the streamlined process, the same amount of paperwork is still involved, contributing to the slowdown.

NIPSA continues to monitor the situation closely and advocate for a timely and efficient application of the pay award to ensure our members received their rightful compensation promptly.

Restructuring - Sports Institute: In November, the union discovered that Sport NI's was seeking to commission a review to maximise the Sport Northern Ireland Sports Institute (SNISI) as a regional high-performance training centre and provider of sport science and sports medicine expertise. Athletes from Northern Ireland compete for Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Great Britain, and for that reason, SNISI provides support to both elite international athletes and developmental athletes on the pathways of the three representative bodies (NIR, IRL, and GBR).

NIPSA intervened and sought to review the terms of reference. Management Side agreed and provided these. A number of amendments were put forward and accepted, including but not limited to:

- (1) TUS would be consulted and have input into the report.
- (2) It would look at pay for physios and other healthcare professionals to determine whether NICS grading is appropriate or some other form of pay system be applied, e.g., AFC (Agenda for Change).

NIPSA expects to engage with the consultant in the new year but finishes this year content with the approach agreed to date. The proactive intervention by NIPSA demonstrates the union's commitment to ensuring that any restructuring aligns with the best interests of its members, considering not only the efficiency of SNISI but also the welfare and fair compensation of the healthcare professionals integral to its success.

Tollymore National Outdoor Centre: A similar type of review (REF: Restructuring – Sports Institute) is envisaged for Sport NI's Tollymore National Outdoor Centre. NIPSA finishes the year having submitted feedback for the Terms of Reference (TOR). NIPSA's primary focus is improving the health and wellbeing and provisions to support this for our members based at this centre.

Throughout the year, we pushed for the recruitment of key positions in the centre and redrafted a number of job descriptions that were accepted by Management Side, leading to successful recruitments. The union remains keenly aware of the future risks associated with this centre and is ensuring its functioning and fitness for purpose by pushing to have positions filled. Additionally, NIPSA successfully opposed the outsourcing of the cleaners based there.

The union's commitment to enhancing the wellbeing of its members at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre is evident in both proactive recruitment efforts and steadfast opposition to outsourcing, reinforcing its dedication to maintaining a sustainable and supportive environment for its members.

B3.34 Utility Regulator

Pay: NIPSA Members in the Utility Regulator voted to accept the pay offer from Management which included:

- One step progression subject to scale maximum;
- All spine points on all scales revalorised by 4.7%;
- Removal of the bottom two spine points in the Officer/Associate Analyst scale;
- For any staff in receipt of a salary in excess of a scale maximum, the 4.7% would be based on the scale maximum.



Section C

Public Officers

Education & Further/
Higher Education
Health & Social Care
Libraries NI
Local Authorities
Northern Ireland
Housing Executive
Other Bodies

C1 Education & Further/Higher Education

C1.1 Education Authority (EA)

Summer Provision - Special Schools: As previously reported in 2022. A Case Management Preliminary Hearing took place on 21 September with several directions given by the President. The Tribunal was notified on 26 October that the EA are willing to engage in Judicial Mediation. The case was listed for hearing at the Industrial Tribunal; however, it was postponed due to sickness.

Industrial Action: NIPSA commenced a ballot for all members employed by the EA or in schools on EA contracts. The dispute covered the Pay and Grading review, Job Evaluation moratorium, erosion of pay differentials and the impact of the austerity budget.

The ballot opened on 23 September and closed on 12 October at 2pm. Several lunchtime and evening teams meetings took place to respond to membership queries and to build support for the industrial action. Over 600 members attended these meetings. An Education Reports bulletin was prepared and issued directly to members alongside membership direct emails and text messages.

96% of members voted for Action Short of Strike Action and 89% of members voted for Strike Action.

A strike committee was established consisting of the DGS (PO), Assistant Secretary (Education), HEOs, Branch Secretaries and JNC representatives. It met weekly during the dispute.

On 26 October, the Education Authority was notified of the commencement of Action Short of Strike Action as follows:

1. Stick to Job Description.
2. Stick to contracted hours.
3. Take all your breaks without interruption.
4. All additional hours to be either paid or banked or flexi-time accrual.
5. Only designated keyholders should be opening schools & EA buildings (gates & buildings)
6. Do not pay for items out of your own pocket where you normally must claim (and wait) to be reimbursed.

7. Do not carry out any additional work arising from industrial action by other trade union members e.g., any other staff including teachers.

8. School Based Staff - No supervision of exams or access arrangements.

This action commenced on 6 November.

A further notice was issued on 2 November adding to the action listed above which commenced on Monday 13 November.

1. Do not use personal vehicle for business use unless being paid mileage.
2. Ensure Risk Assessments, PPE and PHA Guidance are adhered to.
3. Refusal to undertake admin tasks which are not strictly part of your job description.
4. Do not answer work telephone calls/messages/emails on personal devices.
5. Do not answer work telephone calls/messages/emails when off duty.
6. Refuse to train new staff/agency workers if not part of your job description.
7. Refuse to undertake non-emergency callouts unless paid.

A protest took place on 25 October at the Secretary of State's office in Belfast City Centre. This involved all 4 unions in the dispute and was covered by BBC and broadcast on subsequent news bulletins.

Education Welfare Officer Dispute: Members continued to undertake Action Short of Strike Action. This was modified in November to include an additional item. A further report is contained in the directorate section.

Accounts Payable: The failure to resolve a longstanding grievance, submitted in October 2021, led members to request NIPSA to commence a consultative exercise on the possibility of moving to Industrial Action. The ballot commenced on 17th March and concluded with all 8 members balloted responding with a Yes for Strike Action and a Yes for Action Short of Strike Action. Industrial Action commenced on the 10th of April as follows:



The industrial action will be continuous with the affected NIPSA members engaging in action short of strike action. This will include the following:

- Working to contracted hours.
- Take all breaks.
- Not covering for absent colleagues and not covering maternity leave
- No overtime
- Duties not covered by the Senior Clerical Officer JD

JNC and Directorate Forums

Finance

Financial Position: TUS was provided with a comprehensive update on the EAs financial position which I have listed below in full. It concluded that the EA is facing an end of year deficit of £210.641 million.

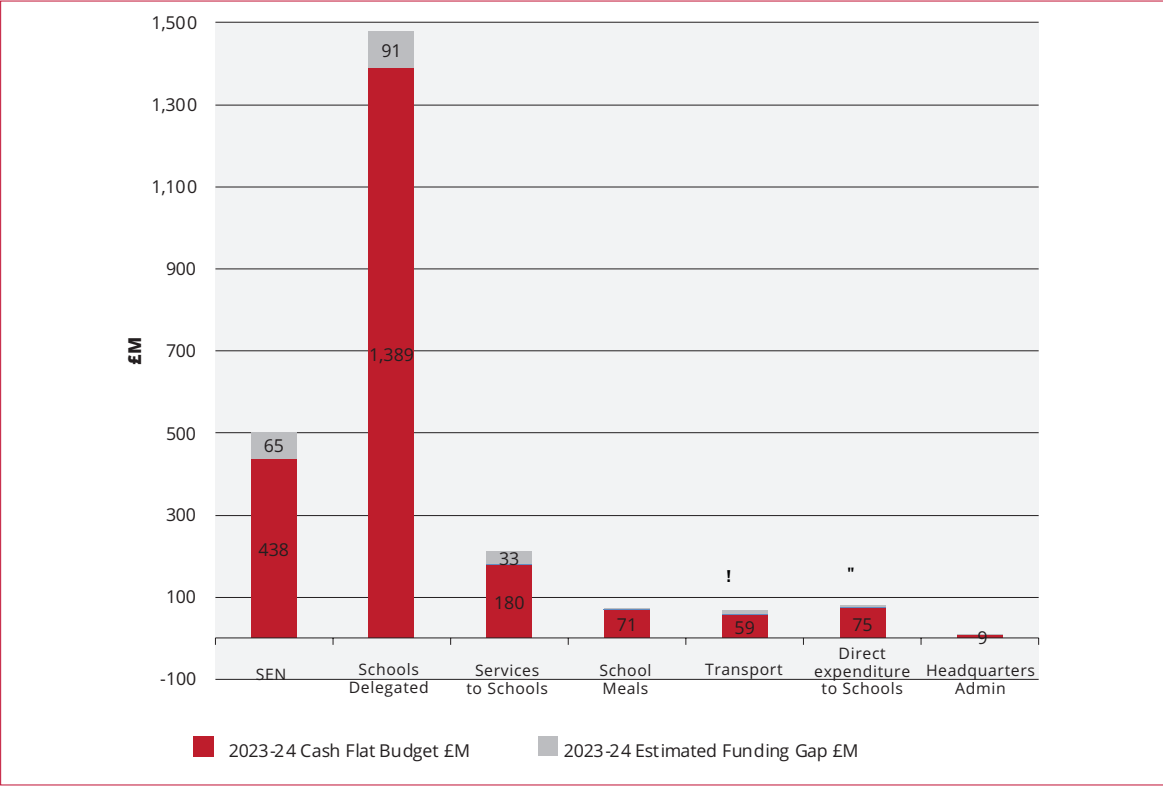
This paper provided an overview of the Education Authority (EA) financial position at August 2023 and information on the latest 2023-24 Funding Gap.

2023-24 Budget Allocation: The EA has received £2,342.105m in 2023-24 Resource Budget and has been advised to operate on the basis that there will not be any further in-year allocations.

The 2023-24 allocation is £210.641m lower than prior year and falls significantly short of our funding requirements for 2023-24. EA is reporting an overall funding gap of approx. £220m across all budgets which includes:

- An estimated Schools Delegated Funding gap of £91m made up of increasing Schools Deficits (£60m) and expected Schools Surplus Drawdown (£31m)
- An estimated funding gap of £65m relating to SEN
- An estimated funding gap of £35m relating to Services to Schools including Music, Cleaning, Legal, Library, C2K, Pupil Support, School Development & School Crossing Patrols

Key areas of funding shortfalls are shown on the chart below:



Note: Earmarked funds (excluded from the bar chart above) are also under pressure with an estimated funding gap of £18m primarily driven by Contingency requirements relating to School's in year growth and split sites (£12m) and Maintenance (£5m).

This estimate however is before the impact of any pay award outcomes, both retrospective and for 2023-24 and associated NIC and Pension costs. It also excluded the impact of any potential Pay & Grading Review outcomes.

EA Savings & Sustainability programme continues to make every effort to deliver savings and constrain expenditure and EA has profiled totals savings of £18.2m to be delivered in 2023-24.

The Board has noted that the majority of measures required to deliver a balanced budget (over £200m) requires legislative and policy change, alongside investment in long-term transformation.

Such decisions are outside of EA's role and authority and require further consideration by, and direction from, the Department of Education.

EA is unable to deliver the quantum of savings required to meet the current year financial pressures and will overspend its budget allocation in 2023-24 without significant additional funding allocations being made available in year.

EA continued through the remainder of the year to review services delivery and cost drivers with a view to generating further savings in 2023-24.

Conclusion: In 2023-24 the EA is facing an unprecedented financial risk which it cannot mitigate without access to significant in year funding allocations. DE has advised that it is likely that there will be one in year monitoring round this financial year. It is not clear what level, if any, funding will be available for distribution across the NI Block.

This does not include the impact of any pay award outcomes, both retrospective and for 2023-24 and associated NIC and Pension costs. It also excludes the impact of any potential Pay & Grading Review outcomes.

The current reported funding gap may be further impacted by the 2022-23 school enrolment numbers in the new academic year census. Full year profiles will in due course need to reflect the financial costs of actual intake enrolment within schools. It is estimated

that the required adjustments will be known by early December and will at that point be reflected in profiled expenditure to the year end.

Based on the current reported position, it is likely that EA will overspend its budget allocation in 2023-24.

Children and Young People

Education Welfare Service (EWS)

Transformation: Education Authority management from (EWS) met with NIPSA on 13 October to provide an update on their recent meeting with Department of Education officials. They advised that EA CLT have taken the decision to suspend further work on the EWS transformation until there is greater clarity on the funding arrangement and progress on the business case. NIPSA issued an email to members to provide an update.

Classroom Assistants: NIPSA reviewed the longstanding issues which affect the employment model for classroom assistants. We are aware that this workforce is almost exclusively female (95% female v 5% male) and 85% are on term time contracts, which ignored previous agreements to remove these contracts. Schools regularly flouted standardised recruitment processes and relied heavily on word of mouth and temporary engagement contracts to fill vacancies. NIPSA engaged with the EA on this matter throughout the year. Budget constraints limited the EA's ability to progress matters.

SEND Transformation: A new project board met, and this work continues at pace. The scope of its work has been drastically curtailed to reflect a significant reduction in budget.

HR and Pay, Terms and Conditions

Pay and Grading review: The Pay and Grading review business case was submitted in February 2023. TUS monitored the progress of this matter with updates from the EA. Although there was regular engagement on this issue there wasn't any significant progress. This was primarily linked to budget constraints and political inertia. NIPSA remained concerned that the approach by DE was not indicative of the urgency required to resolve this complex issue.

Age Discrimination - Long Pay Scales:

Approximately 500 members registered their details as being impacted by the EAs long pay scales. A test case involving members of the NIHE is being supported by NIPSA.



Department of Education withdrawal of

Services: The Department of Education implemented an austerity budget imposed by the NIO via the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. This resulted in the following either being cancelled or severely curtailed:

- Happy Healthy Minds
- Engage
- Digital Devices Scheme
- Baby Book Scheme
- Pause on capital development
- 28 new school projects paused
- 40% cut to the free period products
- 50% cut to the shared education budget
- Reduction in nurture funding by £8m
- End of schools sports coaching
- Pause on cashless system for schools
- Shortfall in resource for SEN pupils
- Pause on school crossing patrols

The level of cuts to the Education budget and the impact they had on children from social disadvantaged backgrounds is going to be felt for years to come. NIPSA continued to highlight the consequences of these decisions which caused so much harm.

Education Directorate

A review of the music service is continued during the year, its objective was to reduce the cost of the service and to modernise its delivery and charging structure.

Holiday Pay: NIPSA continued to assist members with further holiday pay claims by providing updated holiday pay claim packs, adding names of additional claimants to the already lodged and new internal holiday pay collective grievances against the EA, liaising with the LRA to obtain Early Conciliation Certificates for each case prior to additional ET lodgement and engaging with OITFET. The cases lodged at the OITFET continued to be stayed pending the outcome of the Supreme Court Final Appeal by the PSNI. As this matter has been concluded it has now been referred by the OITFET for resolution.

C1.2 Education Authority Belfast Region (EABR)

During 2023 NIPSA continued to represent members at all stages of the redundancy process within the Education Authority (Belfast Region). The redundancies are attributed to SEN children leaving the school.

Members in EA Belfast Region have been consulted within their directorates in relation to reorganisation proposals.

Following a letter that was issued to members by AMEY on 5 September 2022 regarding plans for the school's access time to be changed from 7.00am to 7.30am, information sessions were arranged for cleaning staff and TUS for Monday 27th March 2023. This directive from AMEY was to be implemented on 1 April 2023 without delay. NIPSA and the other trade unions strenuously disagreed with this and advised the EA who have responsibility for the cleaning staff that members were not to be disadvantaged. EA agreed that they would be honouring the 30 minutes' pay for each staff member whilst negotiations with the PPP Company – AMEY continued. Members were instructed to report to work each day as usual and to remain safe whilst waiting for entry to their place of work. NIPSA have asked for several things to be clarified and have asked that TUS side meet with the person who has responsibility for PPP agreements and this agreement in particular within the EA. This directive by AMEY adversely affects the cleaning staff who are low paid, predominately female and who have other jobs and caring responsibilities for children as well as having caring responsibilities for members of their family who are disabled. The status quo remained in relation to the staff being paid by EA until this situation was resolved. Towards the end of 2023 staff were consulted about alternative arrangements and they were accommodated with other jobs with the same hours as they had in other schools close by. Members were content that this had been resolved to their satisfaction.

Members on the Fortwilliam Resource Centre site were informed that all of their site was being offered to a special school who was already located in their grounds, namely Harberton North Special School. All of the current departments including the Music Service, Autism Services, and Visual Impairment Services etc. had been asked to vacate by the end of August 2023. By and large this had happened but in June NIPSA was contacted by members of support staff including members of the cleaning and caretaking staff. This group of people were not included in any meetings with Management with regard to what was happening with their jobs if Harberton North Special School was to take over the remaining Fortwilliam site. NIPSA and other unions met with these staff with Management who stated that all members would most likely be subsumed by Harberton as the building still needed to be serviced in relation to cleaning and caretaking functions. There are still a number of staff who are displaced and discussions are ongoing with EA in relation to these members. Towards the end of the year there was still one member of staff that was displaced and negotiations are ongoing.

Work during this year also focused on the ballot for Industrial Action within all of the Education Authority. The result in mid-October was overwhelmingly 96% in support of Strike Action and 86% for Action Short of Strike Action (ASOSA). The results of were communicated to the CEO of the Education Authority and at the end of October, notification of ASOSA beginning on 6 November was also communicated to Management as well as being informed of the 2 Hour stoppage by NIPSA members on 16 November. A series of meetings were convened to assist members in their Industrial Action which was a huge success.

C1.3 Education Authority North Eastern Region (EANER)

As with all Education Authority (EA) branches this year has been one of change as EA continues to transition from the legacy of the Library Boards. Several service reviews have restarted including Music and Finance which impacts many members within this branch. For some this was a relief given the disparity of arrangements across the sector but for others it was just another change they had to adapt to.

Redundancies continued to present a problem with several schools reporting these late in the year leading

to delays in processing however NIPSA continued to represent members at all stages of the process and identifying issues to schools and EA as appropriate.

Ongoing actions short of strike action remains an issue in some schools, however most issues have been addressed and resolved at a local level.

C1.4 Education Authority South Eastern Region (EASER)

Notification of redundancies continue to be issued throughout the year with most falling into the last term. Changes in special needs provision tend to account for the majority of notices as children transition through the school system. NIPSA continues to support our members at all stages of the process and highlight issues in regard to procedural issues where they occur.

A major school merger within the branch area continues to be managed as we see a number of our members move from EA to voluntary grammar employment. A number of meetings have taken place with management and the acting school governors with issues being addressed as details of the merger become available, however it is agreed that TUPE arrangements apply.

Ongoing industrial action continues to raise issues within some schools particularly the special education sector but these are being addressed locally and where necessary through headquarters. Thanks to the branch for the positive turnout for the day of action in November.

The announcement of changes to arrangements within the Dundonald site and talk of closure and transfer to Belfast Academy Street caused great concern to members resulting in a number of meetings with members and between members and management. While talk of closure has been addressed discussions are ongoing in regard to the rationalization of the site and all EA sites in general.

C1.5 Education Authority Southern Region (EASR)

During 2023, NIPSA continued to represent members at all stages of the redundancy process within the Education Authority (Southern Region). The redundancies were attributed to SEN children leaving the school.



The branch has been active in promoting what rights and entitlements that members have.

Members in EA Southern Region have been consulted within their directorates in relation to reorganisation proposals.

As a result of these activities and the concerted effort within the branch on behalf of members, it has led to an increase in the membership figures and made Branch 521 the largest NIPSA branch.

Work during this period was also focused on the ballot for Industrial Action within all of the Education Authority. The result in mid-October was overwhelmingly 96% in support of Strike Action and 86% for Action Short of Strike Action (ASOSA). The results were communicated to the CEO of the Education Authority and at the end of October, notification of ASOSA beginning on 6 November was also communicated to Management as well as being informed of the 2 Hour stoppage by NIPSA members on 16 November. A series of meetings were convened to assist members in their Industrial Action which was a huge success.

C1.6 Education Authority Western Region (EAWR)

During the year NIPSA continued to represent its members' interests in relation to redundancy, mergers and closures and engaged with school management and members at each stage of the processes offering guidance and support across Education Authority (EA) workplaces.

In January members in the Accounts Department in Omagh lodged an appeal to the outcome of their collective grievance in which they were aggrieved due to insufficient staff impacting their workload, the failure to backfill vacant posts, and carrying out duties of a higher grade. NIPSA met with members, management and Human Resources (HR) in February and management agreed to look at the issues and arrange a follow up meeting.

A follow up meeting with HR and management took place 4th April with management giving a number of commitments, in the main to recruit four temporary additional staff to support the Accounts Payable function pending roll out of enduring structures. NIPSA wrote to Chief Executive of EA on 10th March giving notice of statutory ballot for Industrial Action.

Ballots issued to members and EA was notified of the result on 3rd April. The result of ballot was 100% voted 'yes' for strike action and 100% voted 'yes' for Action Short of Strike Action. Notice given that industrial action would be continuous and commence on 10th April and would include: working to contracted hours, take all breaks, not covering for absent colleagues and not covering maternity leave, no overtime, duties not covered by Senior Clerical Officer Job Description. NIPSA members were to continue with Industrial Action to progress to a satisfactory conclusion.

Members in ICT Projects Service raised concerns re: the EA's SEND Strategic Development Programme (SEND SDP) consultation and the potential affect it could have on the service they provide and duplication of their roles but at a higher grade. NIPSA followed up with HR and advised that consideration was being given to submitting a collective grievance, HR requested to hold on this and then followed a commitment from management that those affected member's posts would undergo an evaluation exercise to align them with the newly created Centre of Excellence posts, with Job Descriptions to be reviewed and ready for consultation by the end of April.

Members across different areas contacted NIPSA after being turned down in their Hybrid Working Applications. NIPSA advised and supported on appeals and grievances.

NIPSA balloted members across the region in EA in September/October on the failure of EA and the Department of Education to address the pay differentials for supervisory grades for cleaning, catering and estates, the failure to complete and implement a pay and grading review, the failure to lift the Job Evaluation moratorium and on the impact of budget cuts. The ballot resulted in 96% voting in favour of Action Short of Strike and 89% in favour of Strike action. NIPSA supported members with queries that arose from the action short of action and organised members for the first Strike day which took place on 16th November 2023.

C1.7 Further Education (FE) Sector

Covid 19: Throughout the year, NIPSA reminded the College Employers at NTSNC and College levels that both staff and students should continue to be encouraged and supported to observe Covid mitigations to protect themselves and each other. The specific Long Covid Protocol tabled by NIPSA in

February was rejected outright by Management, who advocated that there was not enough Covid absence to warrant it. The JTUS led by NIPSA continued to press for release, and detailed analysis of, Covid absence figures, particularly with new strains of the virus emerging to monitor prevalence.

Hybrid Working Framework: NIPSA pressed continually for the development and monitoring of a sector wide Framework throughout the year. However, HR across the 6 Colleges could not agree on a common template that could be implemented equitably across the Sector, citing difficulties in agreeing fundamental principles, including the extent to which flexibility could apply. In February, information relating to the SERC pilot was shared at NTSNC level, together with useful guidance to line managers, guidance for teams and a home working health and safety guide. At time of writing, a review report on an individual college basis was expected imminently.

DfE Review of FE Sector Service Delivery Model:

In late February, correspondence from the Department confirmed that this review remained at Stage 1 – the data gathering phase. Issues of concern discussed at Sectoral level included falling enrolments, a lack of an overarching Government 6th Form Policy, insufficient funding, deficient numbers of GB students and increases to utility and other running costs. NIPSA met with the newly appointed Director of FE Sector in DfE on several occasions to escalate issues pertaining to members. Following change to the DfE Project team around Easter, and in the absence of a Minister, the interim Permanent Secretary reviewed the data collected by Tribal Consultancy and determined that the Review should move to Stage 2 as he maintained that analysis of the data suggested that there was scope for Colleges to become more agile and flexible in the face of increasing costs and falling enrolments. Potential outcomes may include college amalgamation, sharing of support services, reduction in colleges or courses provided and increased partnering with schools to increase enrolment. NIPSA continued to recruit and organise Branches in readiness for detailed consultation and further engagement with DfE, which resulted in steadily increasing membership in all FE Branches throughout the year.

Budget Deficit: In February, the role played by the SoS in setting the 2023/4 NI public sector budget in the absence of a functioning devolved Government, resulted in a much deficient budget for the DfE, which

in turn resulted in Colleges being asked to plan for further cuts of up to £12 million without taking into consideration any NJC pay increase costs. Projected cuts of between 17% and 19% were heavily criticised by NIPSA and sister unions Unison and Unite. In June, NIPSA responded critically to the DfE's consultation on its 2023/4 budget spending plans and associated EQIA, the potential impact of which would mean further draconian severe cuts to College funding. It was clear that the approach taken by the Department to the EQIA process was not in accordance with ECNI guidance and best practice, which was pursued by NIPSA in detail at NTSNC level and with the Department. The most marginalised and vulnerable across society would suffer most keenly from the funding cuts, including those from the most financially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, disabled people, women with caring responsibilities, older people and rural families. The Department agreed to review its budget plans in light of NIPSA's objections, particularly if additional funding was to become available through the year.

Implementation of a Redundancy Scheme:

Despite JTUS making clear its opposition to initiating redundancy processes as result of the funding deficit, and Management reassurances early in the year that everything possible would be done to protect jobs and services across the sector in the face of extremely difficult financial constraints, it became clear by September that each College individually intended to run a redundancy exercise using the agreed sector wide redundancy policy. NIPSA sought negotiation on sector wide detailed proposals and built in sectoral protection mechanisms. However, this was rejected by the NTSNC, stating that as each College was an individual separate Employer from the rest, the consultation must take place on a College by College basis. Whilst each College notified local TUS of their intention to initiate consultation on a redundancy scheme in late September, in November, the Belfast Met College CEO was the first to announce the commencement of redundancy consultation locally. JTUS considered further information provided by BMC and other Colleges, including a joint review of the current Redundancy Policy, which was due in November. At the NTSNC meeting held in late November, JTUS called for a halt to the redundancy consultation at College level due to the Policy being outdated and due for review. JTUS wrote to Management Side (MS) to specify particular content within the current policy which was unlawful. At year end, MS was considering



further. NIPSA also criticised the teaching Redundancy Scheme and its inclusion of a last in first out Policy, which was contrary to Age Discrimination Legislation. At year end, an enhanced redundancy calculation was under MS consideration for non-teaching staff, who were being treated less favourably in the current policy when compared to teaching staff. It was hoped that any redundancy requirements could be made on a purely voluntary basis or could be avoided altogether with necessary finances provided as a result of potential restored devolution.

2022 Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS) Local Pay

Claim: As reported in the 2022 NIPSA Annual Report, a local pay claim lodged at NTSNC level by NIPSA, on behalf of the JTUS, continued to be pursued. JTUS requested that Management Side (MS) conduct a Section 75 analysis of the current pay structures across FE and share the results for further discussion. This was pursued at the NTSNC held in late November. MS agreed to expedite the provision of the requested information. The CEF of the Sector emphasised repeatedly that no pay offer could be made due to lack of affordability and insufficient funding. As a result, JTUS refused to continue discussions relating to the job evaluation process to improve the pay structures for the Upper Pay Grade Bands. Meetings held on this matter with the Director of FE in DfE resulted in a commitment by DfE to discuss the potential for talks to recommence with the CEF, although no funding commitment was given. JTUS heavily criticised Management at every NTSNC meeting for its disconnect with staff, particularly those struggling most during an elongated cost of living crisis, using anecdotal and empirical data extracted from NIPSA's NJC areas' Cost of Living survey of members across NJC areas to illustrate members' financial struggles. Management also maintained its incorrect view that, according to legal advice, Part 3 of the Green Book did not facilitate separate local pay negotiations and that to do so would jeopardise the NJC pay link. This was repeatedly rejected by NIPSA, who cited the many additional pay rises achieved in other NJC based employment areas using the same Green Book mechanism such as NIHE and Councils. However, the funding deficit was proving to be an extremely difficult issue to overcome in pay negotiations. Prior to the NTSNC in November, NIPSA provided a research article by the TUS which made stark reading on the devastating consequences for vulnerable groups of the COL crisis in furtherance of the pay claim. At year end, MS were considering its position in light of this new information.

2023 NJC Pay Award: The lack of funding for any NJC pay rise during 2023 was pursued by NIPSA at NTSNC and Departmental levels during the first half of the year. By June, NIPSA sought and received confirmation that 2023 NJC incremental uplifts would be applied with June salaries, which was broadly welcomed. When the final 2023 NJC pay offer was reluctantly accepted by the majority of the unions who made up NJC JTUS at the end of October, NIPSA wrote immediately to the NTSNC Management Side Secretary to seek confirmation that the £1,925 pay award would be implemented as quickly as possible and that, contrary to the LGA's advice that backdating to 1 April 2023 should be applied in one lump sum, requesting that where individual staff in receipt of Government financial support were to ask for payments by instalment, that would be accommodated. In the absence of a response, this was raised at the Negotiating Committee meeting held in late November, with NIPSA criticising the lack of a regional constructive position, which continued to be pursued at year end.

C1.8 Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)

At the beginning of 2023, on 23 March, NIPSA wrote to BMC asking them for their understanding of the news of the proposed budget cuts in the Further Education Sector and how it sees the cuts impacting on service delivery for their College and what this would mean for staff.

NIPSA and other unions then met with the Principal towards the end of June in light of the news that there were proposed budget cuts in the Further Education Sector. We sought clarification on how BMC saw the cuts impacting on service delivery for the College and again what this would mean for staff. Management gave no definitive answer to our queries but advised that there was a public consultation taking place that ended on 30 August. TUS were to be kept informed of any developments that we should be consulted on.

Therefore, at the end of September 2023, NIPSA and other Trade Unions were provided advance notice that Department for Economy (DfE) had informed the Further Education (FE) sector that a business case to fund a scheme for redundancy would be viewed favourably in line with the sector policy. This policy objective would have a proportionate and sustainable reduction of costs through a permanent reduction of

head-count. NIPSA wasted no time and wrote to the CEO/Principal and the Head of HR of the College to state the need for early engagement in this process. In late October we met with BMC Management and reiterated the need for early, open and transparent negotiations. The College were to review their staffing and arrange to meet with Trade Union Side at an early stage to discuss the impact for staff.

These discussions continued through to the end of 2023 when it was anticipated that the negotiations would conclude in early 2024 with the voluntary redundancy scheme being offered out to staff in mid-January 2024 for redundancies to be concluded by 31 March 2024.

During 2023, NIPSA have met several times with HR in the College regarding the issues that members have raised in relation to a return to work using the 'Hybrid Working Policy'. The pilot of this policy was trialed in BMC and after intervention from TUS, it was agreed that there was a need for it to be evaluated. NIPSA met with HR following the mid-term break in February 2023 and agreed that a further trial and evaluation of the operation of the policy would take place following the Easter break. Again this review identified that a further review would be needed over the summer break as well as the main issues arose due to lack of understanding by line managers which were then dealt with following TUS intervention. A further trial and evaluation took place and at our most recent meeting in October, Trade Union Side were informed that this trial/pilot was to continue. NIPSA and the other Unions pointed out that at this stage it is no longer a Pilot/Trial and it needed to be communicated as such.

During the year, BMC HR put a proposal to TUS. They wanted to enter into negotiations on the potential closing BMC for 2 weeks over the Christmas period. This was put forward as an attempt to save costs in light of the budget constraints. NIPSA informed HR that staff would need to have access to at least one campus to be open as not everyone wants to take leave at Christmas time. NIPSA also suggested that some staff would need to be able to work up additional 'flexi' as they would not have enough leave to facilitate such a closure. As a result, Management side agreed to keep their Millfield Building open and allow staff to work up this additional time to offset against the closure at Christmas. There were some issues that needed to be addressed relating to individual cases.

BMC already offer staff a day to facilitate closure of the College for a shorter time over the Christmas period and this has been a longstanding arrangement for a considerable amount of years. These additional measures were put in place due to the new proposal for a longer period of closure time, namely 2 weeks.

Some of the NIPSA members who were previously Department of Justice (DoJ) staff who TUPE'd to BMC have now sought ill-health retirement. Staff agreed individually at the time of transfer to receive a percentage payment as an allowance from BMC as they could not match the pension scheme that the NICS offered. A number of queries arose and have been referred to the pensions ombudsman. There have been many discussions with BMC HR in relation to the TUPE transfer and the unique agreement that was reached with staff in relation to their pensions. NIPSA wanted to ensure that members were not disadvantaged by this unique arrangement and sought advice from the Pensions Ombudsman. The Pensions Ombudsman had looked at all the information with regard to the first member to medically retire from this group of members. The Pensions Ombudsman reported that the agreement that was put in place at the time of the TUPE transfer was sufficient and did not financially disadvantage any member of staff. This decision assisted future members who went through and are going to go through this process so that they have an easier transition into medical retirement.

In late October 2023, NIPSA and other Trade Unions were informed of a 12-week consultation exercise that was to be issued to all stakeholders in relation to a proposal to close their Castlereagh Campus. This 12-week consultation exercise is to seek feedback and assess the impact of this proposal on the College, staff and the wider community. Consultation with staff would commence in November through several campus briefings so that the College can discuss this proposal with them and the trade unions in more detail and seek our feedback. The Consultation is to close in 2024.

C1.9 Northern Regional College (NRC)

A JCC meeting was scheduled for 24 February 2023 with the next meeting scheduled for 2 June 2023.

At the beginning of 2023, on 23 March, NIPSA wrote to NRC asking them for their understanding of the news of the proposed budget cuts in the Further Education Sector and how it sees the cuts impacting



on service delivery for their College and what this would mean for staff.

NIPSA and other unions then met with the Principal towards the end of June in light of the news that there were proposed budget cuts in the Further Education Sector. We sought clarification on how NRC saw the cuts impacting on service delivery for the College and again what this would mean for staff. Management gave no definitive answer to our queries but advised that there was a public consultation taking place that ended on 30 August. TUS were to be kept informed of any developments that we should be consulted on.

Therefore, at the end of September 2023, NIPSA and other Trade Unions were provided advance notice that Department for Economy (DfE) had informed the Further Education (FE) sector that a business case to fund a scheme for redundancy would be viewed favourably in line with the sector policy. This policy objective would have a proportionate and sustainable reduction of costs through a permanent reduction of head-count. NIPSA wasted no time and wrote to the CEO/Principal and the Head of HR of the College to state the need for early engagement in this process. In late October we met with NRC Management and reiterated the need for early, open and transparent negotiations. The College were to review their staffing and arrange to meet with Trade Union Side at an early stage to discuss the impact for staff.

These discussions continued through to the end of 2023 when it was anticipated that the negotiations would conclude in early 2024 with the voluntary redundancy scheme being offered out to staff in mid-January 2024 for redundancies to be concluded by 31 March 2024.

During 2023 the College continued to operate a hybrid working scheme; where any staff wishing to avail of this hybrid working arrangement of 4 days on campus and 1 day remote, and who works in a team offering hybrid working, must email their request for approval to their line manager. This applied to teams that could facilitate remote working and where staff could work one day per week from home on a rota basis during term time. During periods of non-term time a greater number of days could be worked from home as long as the business needs were met. This was to be agreed with their line manager/head of dept. Where there have been a few individual concerns raised these have been dealt with, with advice from NIPSA.

C1.10 North West Regional College (NWRC)

NIPSA continue to meet regularly with Human Resources (HR) with updates given on a wide range of issues including the College's financial position, Digital Transformation in HR, Recruitment & Selection, Health & Wellbeing initiatives, Learning and Development, Hybrid Working Scheme.

NIPSA wrote to the Chief Executive (CE) on 9th March following BBC news report on 'horrific funding cuts' to put on record concerns around the security of jobs and the impact on the more deprived members of the community.

The Branch AGM held in June with new members elected on to the committee and into officer positions, including the Branch Secretary post which had been vacant for a number of years.

NIPSA supported a number of members facing redundancy due to funding streams ending. Meetings were held to support members through the process and all affected members were redeployed within the college with no detriment to banding.

NIPSA supported members with return to work meetings and long term absence meetings, in addition to job evaluation applications and appeals both on an individual and collective level.

NIPSA have been supporting members in the prison service with regard to working conditions and environment

Following the announcement of £9 million budget reduction across Further Education a pre consultation notice on voluntary severance was issued to NIPSA on 20th September. NIPSA responded requesting the sharing of all information regarding cost savings and sought reassurances over any staffing cuts. Consultation meetings took place in the latter months of the year in the run up to Christmas with the expectation that expressions of interest for the Scheme to go out to staff in the New Year.

C1.11 Southern Regional College (SRC)

The college continues to engage with NIPSA at a local level with the Branch Secretary representing members' interests at the JCNC. Matters such as health and safety, policy review and development and

restructuring continue to dominate the agenda at a local level. Some issues were noted in regard to the launch of the Agile Working policy and these are being dealt with on a case by case basis.

As with all colleges there has been considerable pressure in relation to their financial position and this has had a knock-on effect regarding staffing and recruitment controls. The notification of redundancies by the college has caused concern among members however this is being managed through an agreed voluntary scheme funded by the Department of Economy. The expected numbers affected have been limited based on the notice received and the impact on NIPSA members is not significant however this will be monitored.

C1.12 South Eastern Regional College (SERC)

The recommissioned branch is now in the second year having successfully been re-elected to office. Relationships continue to be developed and new members of the committee will shadow a number of cases in order to build and develop the knowledge and skills within the committee.

The branch continues to support members at a local level in relation to team restructures and grievances with more complex cases being referred to NIPSA Headquarters for support.

Financial pressures have been a major issue for the college this year with cuts across the sector resulting in additional pressures on our members as staff leavers are not replaced. The financial pressures came to a head when the college issued notice of redundancy. This has been a fractious process with NIPSA and our sister unions challenging the level of engagement citing, in particular, the sharing or lack of detailed redundancy information. As of this moment the college's voluntary redundancy scheme has closed and we await details of that process to be made available.

C1.13 South West College (SWC)

NIPSA met with management and Human Resources (HR) throughout the year and updates were given on various issues including, South West College (SWC) financial position, absence rates, Employee Standards Policy, & Hybrid Working Framework and Procedure. Management requested joint Trade Union (TU) meetings as of March to which NIPSA agreed.

Following the announcement in late 2022 that the European Social Fund & PEACE funding was ending, NIPSA organised an initial meeting with members and management to support members through the redeployment and voluntary redundancy process and then continued to meet on a regular basis to offer continued support and to progress to closure of the scheme in March.

NIPSA attended the Change Management team group meetings to discuss action planning from the Structure and Culture reports including a realignment of the College structures.

The College issued a consultation document on Management Realignment in March and NIPSA met with members to collate responses and submitted a comprehensive response to management. NIPSA continue to support members affected by the consultation.

NIPSA wrote to the Chief Executive (CE) on 9th March following BBC news report on 'horrific funding cuts' to put on record, concerns around the security of jobs and the impact on the more deprived members of the community.

The Branch AGM was held in April with new members coming on board as reps and branch officers.

Policy updates were shared at the October joint TU meeting and management gave a commitment that future policies for review were to be shared with TU side in advance.

Following the announcement of £9 million budget reduction across Further Education, a pre consultation notice on voluntary severance was issued to NIPSA on 20th September. NIPSA responded requesting the sharing of all information in relation to cost savings and sought reassurances over any staffing cuts. NIPSA requested further detail and information as set out in the Employment Rights Order in line with the duty of the employer to consult meaningfully. Consultation meetings took place in the latter months of the year in the run up to Christmas with the expectation that expressions of interest for the Scheme would go out to staff in the New Year.



C1.14 Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

It has been a difficult year for the branch following the breakdown of relationships in 2022 however the appointment of a new Chief Executive brought some fresh thinking to the table and there was significant progress made in rebuilding relationships over the last 12 months. A list of priorities was provided and while some remain unresolved it is hoped that re-engagement at JCNC will see progress made on them. Labour Relations Agency (LRA) involvement in building relationships proved beneficial and it is hoped that with a new constitution for JCNC meetings will restart soon.

Matters relating to job evaluation are progressing. Other matters in relation to agile working, outstanding pay arrangements, holiday pay, and recruitment review were planned and in some cases are underway. It is anticipated that progress will be made on these in the coming months with others to be programmed in for discussion.

C1.15 Queen's University Belfast (QUB)

The branch saw significant change over the last year with the Branch Secretary stepping down mid-year and the Branch Chair stepping down at the AGM. The branch was grateful to the departing officers for their hard work and support over the last number of years and welcomed a new branch committee who picked up the baton and supported members of the Queen's branch.

NIPSA represented members at discussions with management in relation to the implementation of the real living wage. While the implementation of the real living wage is welcome, NIPSA felt it fell far short of what it could have been and have distanced themselves from the outcome. It is already clear this will require a further review in 2024.

The agreement of a pay deal with the University and College Union (UCU), outside of Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), meant QUB was suspended from the association which resulted in the need for local negotiation on pay. This provided an opportunity to improve pay at a local level and avoid the continued suppression of pay by an external agency.

C1.16 Stranmillis University College

While Stranmillis members remained a part of Branch 524, Queen's University, it was felt that they would be better represented by their own local branch committee. To that end a meeting of members was held and a local committee was elected to act on members' behalf. The new committee were active representing members in disciplinary and grievance meetings and hearings and fed back to management on various policy reviews and development. The Branch Officers attended management meetings and engaged with line management and senior management on behalf of the membership. Relationships with management were positive and it is hoped that this will continue. Regular meetings with management have been planned, to include the NIPSA Official, as required, while relationships continue to be built.

C2 Health and Social Care

C2.1 General Issues

Pay Campaign: NIPSA began and ended the year engaging in industrial action on pay and safe staffing.

Action was taken in Health on 26 January, 1 February, 21 February alongside colleagues from Education and on 22 September alongside NIPSA members across the Civil Service.

In early March, a pay offer was made to the UK NHS Staff Council Trade Union Side, but no offer was put to the Northern Ireland Trade Unions due to the lack of a sitting assembly and minister. Their offer consisted of a 5% consolidated uplift for all staff for the 2023/24 year, and a 10.4% increase to the Band one and two entry points.

NIPSA then wrote to the Secretary of State to seek urgent intervention and a meeting to discuss the pay and safe staffing issues, followed by a joint HSC letter to the same effect, and a meeting was arranged for the 5 April.

At the meeting NIPSA reiterated its aims of an inflation busting pay rise for all health service staff, safe staffing levels in all areas of the health services and appropriate mileage rates for all members who must travel as part of their job.

A further meeting with the Secretary of State took place in May but the issue remained unresolved.

Throughout the year NIPSA officials met with all political parties to restate that a needs-based budget is essential to allow members decent pay and public services the appropriate recurrent funding required in order to provide vital services.

NIPSA members in BSO warehouse operations took part in further successful targeted, weeklong strike action in December.

Throughout the year, NIPSA worked alongside other health trade unions where possible, to co-ordinate action and action short of strike was continuous for this period.

NIPSA, together with all other parts of the public sector, were preparing for a joint, large scale generalised day of strike action in January 2024.

Travel Costs: NIPSA members in health began the year by engaging in action short of strike action and withdrawing the use of personal vehicles for work-related duties on the 20 January and had planned further action for February and March.

Following negotiations with the Department of Health, they secured a 10p per mile temporary increase in the rate for all journeys over 3500 miles. Discussions on permanent reform of the mileage rate under the normal Agenda for Change process continued throughout the year.

Car Parking Charges: Following successful lobbying by NIPSA, a bill to end car parking charges for staff and the public in hospitals and Healthcare sites was introduced in the assembly in February 2022.

The bill was due to come into force in May 2024 but following the collapse of the Assembly, moves were made to repeal the bill, with a public consultation on reintroducing parking charges launched in November 2023.

NIPSA remained concerned that no steps had been taken in the interim to introduce free parking for members at hospital sites and lobbying and action was planned to oppose any attempt to roll-back on the bill.

C2.2 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT)

Children's Community Services (CCS): The situation regarding vacancies in Family and Children's Care Services was critical throughout the year, as many posts in Family Support/LAC remained vacant. This was and will remain a clear Branch priority to protect members' interests. The branch issued letters to the Trust and meetings took place with senior management which were ongoing throughout the year as well as regular communications with members on current issues.

Adult Social and Primary Care (ACOPS): Many issues with the Adult Social and Primary Care Directorate have replicated those within CCS. The branch held a meeting with ACOPSA members in the Balmoral Hotel which was well attended by members.



There were ongoing meetings throughout the year with Hospital Social Work staff.

Learning Disability: There continued to be challenges within Muckamore Abbey Hospital in relation to adult safeguarding and staffing issues/levels. The PSNI and Adult Safeguarding investigation remained ongoing at this time.

Agency: It was highlighted that the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust was spending in excess of £120 million on agency workers with most of this going on medical and nursing. The Department of Health (DoH) sought to significantly reduce Agency in Social Work across each of the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. This took place in a two-step approach. Firstly, they completely withdrew from the use of 'off contract' agency workers and then secondly in June they sought to stop/reduce use of contract Agency workers.

Recruitment: It was noted that the HSC Trusts had sought to address recruitment difficulties outside of BSO Recruitment through the contracting of a non-public sector organisation called Health Sector Talent. This raised concerns in relation to the potential privatisation of recruitment within the HSC. The utilisation of this organisation reduced in the latter part of the year.

pHPV Working Group: A working group was established to identify a number of possible proposed models for pHPV testing within HSC. 14 proposed models were identified and as a consequence a Laboratory Workshop took place on Friday 27 October to score the models. The proposed model recommended by the Laboratory Workshop was for a 2-site model. This recommendation was proposed to the pHPV working group for consideration but at the end of the year no final decision had been made.

Regional Emergency Social Work Service (RESWS): NIPSA highlighted concerns throughout the year to management in relation to the crisis with the RESWS service due to a lack of mental health beds, staff shortages, late finishes etc. As a consequence of a lack of progress on these matters, the local branch put out advice to members under Health and Safety guidelines to seek to safeguard/protect members. There was little improvement with the result that this guidance remained in place and is scheduled to be reviewed by the local branch in early 2024.

C2.3 Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT)

Industrial Action: Industrial action and Action short of Strike Action was ongoing through the year. The effect of the action brought many challenges from management and the Branch has had to step in to represent and support members in difficult situations. This put a considerable demand on the time of the Branch secretaries, but their efforts gave rise to an increase in membership. The branch committee were very supportive and have either gone through or are in the process of union training to alleviate some of the pressure and support members.

Causeway Hospital Maternity Service: On 17 July, the Delivery Services at the Maternity Unit in the Causeway Hospital were transferred to the Antrim Hospital. This added significant travel time for many women in labour, who have access to a car, while the journey on public transport can take up to 4 hours with multiple transfers along the way and that is if the labour coincides with the timetable. The Trust said those who do not have access to private transport should ring for an ambulance, despite knowing the ambulance service was already under extreme pressure, with long waits outside A&E tying up ambulances.

Despite significant objections from the Trade Unions and the local community, local politicians, the service was transferred to Antrim on 17 July 2023. Causeway Maternity Hub will continue to provide antenatal and postnatal services.

Mental Capacity Act Training: The Branch challenged a directive from the Trust, that all staff must complete level 2 Mental Capacity Act training. There were concerns that, once trained, management would then expect all staff to carry out the procedures around detainment. The branch maintained that it should only be the remit of professional staff. NIPSA advised members not to do the training unless it impacted on their duties on a day-to-day basis. At year end, management was in the process of seeking clarification from the Department of Health.

Staffing Crisis: Staffing levels in the Trust have had a major impact on members. Lack of recruitment and low wages added additional pressures to staff trying to maintain a service while staff haemorrhaged out of the health service to other jobs with better terms and conditions. There remained high sickness

levels throughout the year and staff morale was at an all-time low. All of these factors impacted on the level of individual representation within the branch which led to an increase in the support needed by NIPSA members. The Branch Committee undertook additional training to be able to help with the volume of cases coming forward.

C2.4 South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT)

Industrial Action: Industrial Action particularly action short of strike action took a lot of the branch resource.

The, "do not use your car for work" action was very effective in the South Eastern Region.

As part of action short of strike, members were not to attend the training for the Encompass system which went live in November. However, actions by some managers to intimidate/bully staff (NIPSA members) to complete the training brought derogations in advance of a strike day to a halt, not just in the South Eastern Trust but across all the Trusts, involving all the unions. It was only after talks between all trusts, including direct involvement by the Secretary of State and only after written assurance was given to the unions that the practice would cease, did the derogation meetings resume, along with engagement around the training which resulted in the ASOSA being lifted.

The Branch disengaged with all management consultation unless it was about safe staffing, pay or mileage.

Closure of Urgent and Emergency Care in Ards and North Down: The Trust held a 12-week public consultation between 8 February and 3 May to seek public views on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services in the Ards and North Down area. The feedback received during the consultation process was presented to Trust Board on 28 June. Despite opposition from Trade Unions, Political Parties, Community Groups and members of the Public, the Trust Board approved the proposal to deliver a new, 7 days a week Consultant led Urgent Care Centre. The service was based at the Ulster Hospital, and replaced the Minor Injury Unit (MIU) at Ards Community Hospital and the Minor Injury Unit at Bangor Community Hospital. The closure of the Bangor unit which was initially on a temporary basis in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic became permanent under

the proposals endorsed by the Trust board. These closures gave rise to longer travel times by car, limited service and connection on public transport for patients from Bangor, the Ards Peninsula and Ards. Staff were re-deployed to the Ulster Hospital.

Approved Social Workers (ASW) Hub: The Trust revealed its plan to open an ASW Hub in Newtownards. The ASWs will be stationed there for one week out of five instead of one day per week. Concerns relating to travel time and mileage expenses were addressed with management and a positive outcome for members secured. The Hub opened in September.

Northern Ireland Framework for Integrated Therapeutic Care (NIFITC): A Steering Group was set up to take forward recommendations from the review of the health and wellbeing of Looked After Children and Young Children in NI. The work will lead to consistent approaches and processes for providing trauma and attachment therapeutic care across the region. Information sessions took place for both internal and external stakeholders. Training for the implementation team, the residential working group and the residential home workforce has begun.

Representation: Branch 732 continued to support NIPSA members regarding personal cases. The cases increased, many of which were attributed to staffing shortages and the stress on individuals trying to sustain the service under immense pressure. The latest report in the year showed that 41.4% of long-term sickness was attributed to mental health issues (stress, anxiety, work related stress, depression and other mental health problems). There was a marked increase of medical redeployment cases were members, due to stress/poor management, has an OH doctor's recommendation that they should be moved. The Trust were very slow to process these requests stating lack of vacancies or opportunities to move people, within certain grades. A request was made to Management for more facility time for the branch to be able to deal with the volume of personal cases coming through. At the year end this had not been successful.

C2.5 Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT)

Supported Living: Several supported living facilities faced major difficulties with both verbal and physical attacks on our members. This was due to escalation of behaviours from Tenants and lack of staff which had seen more gaps due to recruitment issues. Numerous



Staff had to be redeployed due to injuries and mental health concerns.

Recruitment & Retention of Staff/Staffing

Issues: The Branch reported major issues with social work in all directorates, especially children's services. This was a result of staff vacancies and onerous workloads on the current staff. A number of members left the trust for other work as a result of the pressures which then compounded the difficulties. The Trust held a recruitment drive in India which appeared to have some success. Members repeatedly made advised the Branch about the workloads and vacancy issues throughout the year.

Drivers/Guide Help: Serious concerns were raised by Drivers with Management attempting to remove guide help on some buses. After negotiations a review of the service users on each route was promised and at the year end the Branch were awaiting an update.

Shortfall in Budgets: The Trust reported a deficit in the budget given the situation in Stormont and was working towards reducing it without impacting services. At year end the shortfall was 17 million and will grow as stated by the Financial Director of the Trust.

Management Communication Issues:

Management continued to make decisions without consulting Unions. This was seen as a lack of good faith on their behalf, but the NIPSA Branch in particular was very vocal on this issue and repeatedly voiced its concerns throughout the year. Senior Management were made aware the main problems were with middle management passing on information to Staff.

Increase on Absence Management Meetings:

In order to facilitate the Departments demands on getting sickness absence down, pressure was being put on unions to facilitate the representation of our members. There was a notable increase in these meetings which put pressure on the Branch Committee Members to attend given short notifications from HR. The issue was raised formally.

Stress: The overall morale of staff was at an all-time low throughout the Trust. The sickness levels were high due to work-related stress. Some members left the Health Service completely with one leaving to stack shelves in a retail company due to work-related stress. Members were concerned of the impact this causes on personal and family life.

Secondment: Due to the long-term sickness absence of the full-time secondment, there was only one full-time seconded rep filling in. Repeated requests by the Branch, including furnishing business plans, failed to increase the support needed by the branch. Management stated that budgetary constraints were to blame and showed no movement on the matter.

Alongside the vacancies and staff sickness levels this had put the Branch in an uncomfortable position as the branch committee could not attend meetings etc due to heavy workloads. It gave the only seconded member a very heavy workload. It remained under review.

Member Recruitment: The Branch actively recruited Members and had "walk around" days, which were well received by staff and led to a substantial increase in members. The branch committee members each held the branch phone for a month at a time. Branch publications were sent out to members throughout the past year.

C2.6 Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST)

Safe Staffing, Fair Pay and Mileage: The New Year began with the results of the ballot for safe staffing, fair pay, and mileage. Members voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action (SA). Action short of strike action (ASOSA) continued and proved to have a positive impact for some staff in getting longstanding issues resolved. NIPSA members withdrew from the Encompass training as part of ASOSA. High levels of vacancies continued to have a major impact on safe staffing.

A letter from the Chief Executives of all the health trusts to the Secretary of State in favour of fair pay for staff was welcomed by the branch.

Strike Action: Strike action took place on 26 January, 21 February, 22 of September.

The loss of Emergency General Surgery services in South West Acute Hospital:

This put immense strain on staff in the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) and Altnagelvin Hospital, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, the public and the industrial relations in the Western Trust, as patients requiring emergency general surgery had been transferred to Altnagelvin Hospital from SWAH. Meetings between Management and staff side were initially held weekly

then fortnightly. These tailed off but NIPSA remained concerned and continued to voice opposition to the loss of services.

Mental Capacity Act: The Department of Health issued advice for the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) lead regarding the stepping down of panels. Meetings continued for MCA.

Occupational Health Referrals: Management stopped doing Occupational Health referrals. Concerns were raised at both Central Panel and to HR and these were reinstated.

The Working Time Directive/ Sleep-ins: These cases were brought to tribunal in October and the outcome, although anticipated shortly, was not published at the year end.

Menopause Subgroup: The Trust's Menopause sub-group was attended by NIPSA branch committee representatives. A toolkit for managers was developed and was rolled out in September. Reps were overwhelmed by members' concerns at the lack of support in particular areas (support services & porters) as they had no access to emails and were not being afforded time to attend Menopause Cafes etc. This was brought to the Menopause subgroup which gave assurances that members would be informed going forward.

Injury Allowance for Long Covid: Concerns were raised about Injury Allowance applications from staff suffering from long covid not being allowed. This was raised with management and the issue resolved.

Agency Workers: The trust planned to cease engagement with Social Workers employed by recruitment agencies in all Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts by June. The branch welcomed permanent job opportunities but were again concerned with staffing levels and high stress levels on current staff, and for patient safety.

Anti-abortion protestors / Safe Access Zone: NIPSA approached management regarding reports of anti-abortion protestors within the Altnagelvin hospital site. This concern was for staff and patient safety and confidentiality. Management imposed a 100m Safe Access Zone (SAZ) around the hospital perimeter, and this was uploaded on to the Trust website as well as the DOH website. Campaigners have continued to protest outside the hospital site at the main road.

Distinguished Service Medal: Lee McDermott, who passed away in August was awarded a posthumous medal. The branch was liaising with Lee's family to present them with his medal. The branch was grateful for the time these two influential and selfless people gave of themselves.

C2.7 Business Service Organisation (BSO)

Management of Change: BSO initiated a Management of Change process re: Restructuring of the ITS Service Desk Management. NIPSA fully engaged in the consultation process with management and members. NIPSA supported members throughout the implementation process.

Industrial Relations: Industrial relations within the BSO Warehouse (Boucher Crescent) became strained during the year initially due to a lack of engagement and consultation with the local NIPSA representative and again further in late December due to our concerns about managements treatment of the local NIPSA representatives. Meetings took place with HR and Senior Management to seek to resolve the ongoing difficulties/impasse. The outworkings are that there have been some indications of initial positive developments and a further discussion is scheduled to take place in February 2024 with the relevant parties.

Hybrid Working Pilot Review: A Hybrid Working Pilot was initiated in September 2022 initially for 60% home working with 40% office working and from the beginning of January this moved to 40% home working with 60% office working. During the pilot BSO undertook a review of Hybrid Working and the feedback from that review had been that Hybrid working was positively received by both management and staff but the main concern was around the lack of flexibility for the 60% / 40% split. BSO confirmed that it was committed to retaining Hybrid Working and the current arrangements were extended for a further 12-month period to allow a revised policy/procedure to be developed and implemented. NIPSA raised concerns that the organisation is going to be taking 12 months to revise the current policy/procedure and requested that this be reviewed and expedited if possible.

Encompass: NIPSA brought forward a number of fundamental issues/concerns on behalf of staff within Encompass i.e. unrealistic workloads, lack of management support, culture etc. and met with management/HR to discuss. Difficulties/issues



continued within Encompass and NIPSA has continued to support members in relation to these issues/concerns and resolved to seek resolutions with management.

Proposal to Re-design the Procurement Function within PaLS (Procurement and Logistics Service) - Management of Change:

The organisation initiated a Management of Change process in relation to the procurement function within PaLS. NIPSA engaged with members during the consultation and supported them throughout the process.

C2.8 Children's Court Guardian Agency

Management of Change/Organisation Change:

The organisation undertook a Management of Change/Organisation change process to seek to review the structure to introduce 6 'new' Band 7 Guardian posts into the structure. NIPSA consulted with members during the consultation process and provided a written response to management detailing our concerns and issues, especially in relation to what we viewed as the downgrading of the current Band 8a Guardian post/role by the backdoor. The organisation undertook a recruitment exercise for the 6 Band 7 posts and these staff members are scheduled to take up post in early 2024.

C2.9 Patient Client Counsel (PCC)

Policies: Late in the year Trade Unions were advised by Human Resources that, unbeknownst to trade unions, the new Chief Executive had amended HR Policies and procedures. The Trade Unions requested an urgent meeting with Senior Management to have this addressed and at end of year were awaiting this being scheduled.

C2.10 Public Health Agency (PHA)

Admin Working Group (Public Health Directorate):

The organisation undertook a review of admin and clerical line management structures within the Public Health Directorate to ensure they were 'fit for purpose'. The review process itself was completed in May and the organisation sought to implement the proposed changes as soon as reasonably practicable but unfortunately progress was delayed. NIPSA formally requested that a similar Admin Review be carried out within the Nursing Directorate as we believed that there were similar issues/concerns

that need to be addressed within that Directorate. Management agreed to this request and a review process is scheduled to begin in February 2024.

Reshape and Refresh: After the outcome of the Hussey Report which looked at resourcing requirements and the strain on the organisation due to COVID-19, the organisation undertook a review beginning December 2020 and had sought to implement the outcome/recommendations of that review. The project is titled 'Programme to Reshape and Refresh the Public Health Authority'. A number of meetings took in the year during which the organisation discussed the details of the programme and advised that an Operating Model had been decided. The programme has a number of Work-streams and NIPSA secured a seat on two of those Work-streams i.e. the People and Organisation Work-stream and the Digital Work-stream. Work was still ongoing in relation to the implementation/roll-out of the programme. NIPSA was advised at a recent meeting that the organisation was still reviewing/developing the organisational structure with the expectation that it would be potentially mid-2024 before they had an initial proposed structure to share for Senior Management levels. Once the organisation has a proposed Senior Management draft structure, there are assurance that this will be shared with NIPSA as part of a Management of Change/Organisation change consultation process. NIPSA continued to support members during the implementation of the Reshape and Refresh programme.

C2.11 Regional Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)

Management of Change: RQIA initiated a Management of Change process regarding Registration Restructuring. As part of consultation process management gave the commitment that no staff members would be downgraded as a result of the Management of Change process. NIPSA fully engaged in the consultation process with management and members and supported members affected during the implementation stages.

Safe Staffing: NIPSA raised issues in relation to staffing levels under safe staffing and supported a number of members in RQIA in relation to this issue i.e. due to budget restraints and staff absences etc staff were being expected to carry out additional duties on top of their substantive roles during normal working

hours. Discussions with management took place and resolutions were achieved that ensured staff continued to hold acceptable and reasonable workloads.

C2.12 Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG)

SPPG Partnership Agreement: Following the 'migration' of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the SPPG sought to alter the pre-existing Partnership Agreement i.e. she sought to remove the word negotiating/ negotiate from the agreement. NIPSA advised SPPG that they would never agree such an amendment. Due to ongoing Action Short of Strike Action discussions had stayed in relation to this matter.

ICP (Integrated Care Programme)

Restructuring: The Integrated Care Programme was restricted with a Management of Change/Organisation Change process which identified that the entire team was to be stood down permanently and all staff members were to be redeployed to suitable alternative vacant posts within SPPG. NIPSA supported members throughout the Management of Change/Organisation process in both collective and 1-2-1 meetings. All staff were successfully redeployed into suitable alternative permanent posts and no-one was downgraded/placed on pay protection.

As a consequence of the Management of Change/Organisation Change process and concerns/issues raised by NIPSA a reflective piece was undertaken by Human Resources following the completion of the process. An outcome of this reflective piece was that Human Resources acknowledged that lessons needed to be learned by the organisation when redeploying staff in the future, as the organisation had made a number of errors e.g. staff not being provided with Job Descriptions for the roles they were being offered as potential suitable alternative posts etc. These outcomes were welcomed by NIPSA.

Policy Review: The organisation initially engaged in a consultation process in relation to the drafting and implementation of a 'Raising a Concern' Policy. NIPSA was fully engaging in the consultation process and expressed concerns that the draft policy was equivalent to trying to fit a square peg in a round hole as it was based on a Northern Ireland Civil Service policy which the organisation was attempting to modify to make it relevant to SPPG staff. Due to the ongoing Action Short of Strike Action discussions ceased in relation to this matter.

Primary Care Directorate Review: SPPG commissioned the Leadership Centre to undertake a review of the Primary Care Directorate with a focus on how the Directorate aligns, underpins and supports ICSNI recognising its statutory responsibilities but with a particular focus on:

- Commissioning of Primary Care Services
- Ensuring VFM
- Optimising performance

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the group were shared with NIPSA as was the final report. A meeting was yet to take place with NIPSA, the Director of Primary Care Directorate and HR to discuss the report findings and out workings of the review recommendations.



C3 Libraries NI (LNI)

Branch Library Manager (BLM) Dispute: As reported in last year's Annual Report, NIPSA had been pursuing a re-evaluation of the BLM role for well over a decade. In January, pre-Appeal grounds were submitted following the rejection of a questionable job evaluation (JE). However, the Panel refused to undertake the Appeal when the Director of Finance disingenuously created a failure to agree on the paperwork, which was discovered when NIPSA sought disclosure of all JE information provided to the Panel. Following a series of acrimonious exchanges between the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS), NIPSA held meetings of BLM members of both NIPSA and Unison, at which SMT was heavily criticised for its actions to date and deliberately obstructing the job evaluation process. Both unions were mandated in April to undertake statutory ballots for Industrial Action and Action Short of Strike (ASoS), which took place after Easter upon three key issues – LNI's failure to address BLM pay and grading insufficiencies in a fair, open and transparent manner, overloading of BLM posts by stealth and failure to address the job vacancy crisis across LNI. The ballot result in mid-May had a strong return of 74% with overwhelming YES votes for both IA (at 85.5%) and ASoS (at 98.4%).

NIPSA formed a BLM Strike Committee which agreed a comprehensive list of 10 ASoS actions which were all successfully implemented by members from early June to year end. Meetings of both the Strike Committee and all BLM members were held throughout the year and regular Circulars to update members were also provided by NIPSA HQ.

A series of dispute resolution meetings were held from June through to year end. By July, the CEO had tabled a third and final offer to buy out the historical grading element of the dispute, which the vast majority of BLM members accepted in part settlement via a consultative ballot. NIPSA made clear to the CEO that, whilst the buyout may settle this element of the dispute, the other two elements must also be resolved in order for the dispute to end. During further dispute resolution meetings towards the end of the year, NIPSA made clear that information relating to the front-line services

review and any new ways of working must also be shared and in response, SMT provided commitments to do so by the end of January 2024. Further commitments of no detriment to BLMs and the creation of career development pathways were secured. As a direct result of the action led by NIPSA, several new activists were recruited.

Budget Deficit: The impasse of not having a functioning NI Executive in Stormont resulted in the Secretary of State imposing a punishment budget upon the public sector across Northern Ireland, which included a reduction in budget of approximately 5% for Libraries NI, no funding to meet increasing inflation pressures and no consideration given for funding any pay awards, which LNI was informed must be kept within its overarching funding allocation for 2023/4.

The impacts of the proposed significant budget cut of at least £1.2 million less than last year was detrimental to LNI services and staff in many ways, including: reduction of community mobile and Homecall library visits, impacting community services particularly to vulnerable older people and those with disabilities/mobility issues; temporary relocation of staff required and ending of Agency contracts and further reduction in Agency working hours – currently covering almost 1/3 of all posts across LNI; potential redundancy situation; no purchasing of new stock – stock budget set at historic low of £260,000; estate enhancement activities paused; deliveries to Libraries reduced to 1-3 times per week and kept under review; no funding for pay rises/job evaluation upgrades/dispute settlements and the extension of reduced hours over Summer to at least 31 December 2023.

A Freedom of Information request was submitted by JTUS to determine the staffing levels within Libraries NI and illustrate how poorly vacancies were being managed. The response exposed that some job roles at the Clerical Officer, Senior Administrative Officer and Senior Clerical Officer grades remained unfilled for over 15 months. JTUS raised a number of alarming, related concerns and sought confirmation from HR of cost savings measures being considered by LNI. JTUS concerns were further exacerbated by mid-July when BLMs reported that LNI was ending Agency

workers' contracts, leaving Libraries even further short staffed from the beginning of August. Given funding pressures, JTUS remained worried that this further suppression of posts would continue in order to address the funding deficit, putting unacceptable additional pressures onto front line services. These issues were pursued with line management and HR throughout the year, with contingency plans called for to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our members in customer facing roles across Libraries in particular and updated individual risk assessments sought for each work place across the LNI network. The CEO conceded that information relating to the cuts to Agency hours and contracts should have been shared in a better and more timely way.

Changes to Opening Hours of Libraries: Project proposals to extend the opening hours of selected Libraries were issued in late March, with a view to running a pilot scheme over the period from April-June in Bangor, Lisburn, Omagh and Glengormley Libraries, which also informed further consideration of Summer opening hours. The intent was to amend the operational hours of these Libraries to 9pm on weeknights and to open from 9am on Saturdays to primarily facilitate students who may wish to avail of the facilities for studying for the exam period. Upon NIPSA questioning the staffing availability in each area, it was confirmed that the Pilots could not run in the absence of volunteers for additional hours. There was no additional funding provided for this and any incurred costs were covered by the exiting resource budget.

In late October, JTUS received a formal proposal to extend the usual closure period between Christmas and New Year in another effort to curtail spending – a further budget deficit impact. By early November, NIPSA had undertaken a member consultation on the proposals with the critical objective of ensuring that no one would be pressurised into taking leave without pay. Issues raised were addressed by HR with a flexible approach to working up any hours' deficit.

Covid 19: At meetings with Libraries' NI in early Spring, a review of the current mitigation measures with a view to removing protective screens from public counters was criticised by NIPSA. It was agreed that individual need for protection, particularly for those with weakened immune systems, must be provided through regularly revised individual risk assessments and associated action plans. The need for protective

measures to be strengthened when new variants emerged was highlighted. Levels of the virus were monitored throughout the year and discussed via the LNI Negotiating Committee (LNINC) and Health and Safety Committees.

Health and Safety: During the summer months, concern amongst members grew that only lip service was being paid to Health & Safety (H&S) with generic risk assessments being copied, pasted and circulated around branches which failed to raise or directly address specific issues in work areas. It was reported that members were being actively encouraged not to record or report incidents through official mechanisms but instead to direct these verbally through district managers, which ultimately remained unaddressed. It appeared that there was no concrete safe staffing level for different Library Bands and that an action plan was not in place to protect members should a dangerous situation develop. As a result, NIPSA devised and agreed with Unison a stress survey with the intention of issuing electronically around mid-August to their respective members. The survey was broken down into seven sections comprising of Workload, Manager, Pay, H&S, Structure, Relationships and Work/Life Balance and achieved a return rate of over 30%. The top three topics which members of all grades answered very negatively were pay, H&S and structure. Both anecdotal and empirical data were referenced during dispute resolution meetings with SMT and HR.

The removal of agency workers from 1 August was also highlighted as a critical concern for safe staffing levels within Libraries, and associated issues over BLMs and Library Assistants facing approval difficulties to take annual leave and Time Off In Lieu were escalated to HR and addressed in November.

JTUS Cost of Living Pay Claim: Local negotiations on the claim lodged by NIPSA mid 2022 moved slowly, fettered by an unwillingness from Management to engage meaningfully with Department for Communities (DfC) to progress this issue to the benefit of members, in comparison with other arms-length bodies who had reached settlements or engaged with the intent to resolve the claims in recognition of the suffering of staff as a result of the ongoing cost of living emergency. NIPSA requested clarification of a contact point within DfC and sought disclosure of all copies of correspondence between the DfC and the LNI Chief Executive to ascertain the current position. During 2023, the CEO of LNI suggested that a pay and grading



review may be the best way to secure pay uplifts. NIPSA voiced its lack of confidence in this proposal, given the ongoing failure to agree a Terms of Reference for the BLM Review. This issue was pursued in parallel with the BLM Review, however the CEO chose to concentrate on resolution of the BLM dispute by year end.

Policy Development: Throughout the first half of the year, consultation continued on a plethora of new and revised policies including Harassment, which was agreed by Easter, Domestic Violence, and provision of free period products in Libraries. However, when the BLM dispute was lodged, the JTUS withdrew from all policy development to focus on dispute resolution.

Potential Library Assistant Dispute: NIPSA became aware during the year that Library Assistant (LA) members believed that they too had a long-standing grading issue and lack of job evaluation on their evolving role for over 10 years. Comments and feedback provided via the NIPSA H&S Survey highlighted that there were also issues with perceived overloading of LA posts and other direct negative consequences of the removal of Agency hours from Libraries.

NIPSA held a joint meeting of LA members of both trade unions in late October, during which advice and support was provided by NIPSA. Issues raised which had not been resolved by line management were escalated to HR, such as working above grade, covering for BLM duties not being undertaken due to ASoS and inability to obtain approval for TOIL and leave. NIPSA warned SMT that if the issues raised remained unresolved, the situation could develop into a further formal dispute in the New Year.

C4 Local Authorities

C4.1 Local Government (LG)

Covid 19: At bi-monthly LG Panel meetings which took place during the year, Branches reported removal of many of the protection mitigations which were introduced during the height of the Pandemic, such as social distancing, office and vehicle interior barriers and reduction in working from home ratios. The Sector appeared to be moving by stealth to normal working practices. Branches were reminded of the importance of risk assessments and remaining vigilant. Sick absence procedures which protected the pay and attendance of those who fell ill with Covid were removed by September with Covid absence being treated the same as any other absence, including trigger points and penalties for long term absence.

Regional Negotiating Machinery: Preparation work towards the potential re-establishment of a regional collective bargaining Framework continued from last year, with the LG Panel electing its 5 person Trade Union Side following the AGM held in early February. NIPSA pressed the regional JTUS to meet with the objective of agreeing to undertake a pilot Job Evaluation regional exercise. A joint letter from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) and the NI Local Government Association (NILGA) was received by JTUS in January which appeared to signal a positive approach from all 11 Councils with regard to working on a joint regional project as a stepping stone towards developing a broader regional framework to replace the long defunct NI Joint Council. However, the issue of individual Council sovereignty still required resolution. NIPSA discussed how to potentially progress the unresolved matters with the Director of the LGSC and the newly appointed CEO of NILGA throughout the year.

A divergence of view, primarily by Unite, developed during the summer period which prevented the JTUS from establishing an agreed collective way forward. At a further JTUS meeting in late October, concerns were expressed by sister unions that dispute resolution was being blocked by some Councils who cited a reliance upon regional collective bargaining on a revised Job Evaluation (JE) process. It was agreed that, for the time being, negotiations and dispute resolution would be

directed to Councils as individual Employers. As a result, the JTUS sent correspondence to NILGA and the LGSC which advised that, at this time, the JTUS was not in a position to enter any regional negotiations on JE or any other policy.

LRA Statutory Review of Industrial Relations (IR) across Local Government:

In late January, it came to light that the LRA had commissioned a Consultant to produce a report on Industrial Relations across the LG Sector in NI. It was highlighted that this Review was being conducted under the LRA's statutory functions and a Terms of Reference was shared with NIPSA in late January. A meeting was held with the Consultant in late February, where a frank exchange of views occurred based upon NIPSA's SWAT analysis of IR in Councils and the potential to re-establish regional collective bargaining for the Sector. NIPSA was cognisant that this statutory review may have implications for the potential for a new Regional Negotiating Framework to be agreed and implemented.

A NIPSA HQ Officials' meeting to discuss the LRA Board approved report took place in early August. Due to a number of factual inaccuracies and misleading statements contained within the review report that, despite NIPSA seeking correction, remained in the report, it was agreed to advise the Local Government Panel of dissatisfaction with the report and for the Panel to take a position on it. At the September meeting, the Panel endorsed many objections to the report and its recommendations and unanimously agreed not to participate in advancement of the recommendation options. NIPSA engaged with other Full Time Officers (FTOs) across Local Government in October and agreed a joint TUS position of non-cooperation on the review report.

Job Evaluation (JE): An overview of workshops held towards the end of 2022 and into 2023 was provided to the LG Panel at its February meeting. A set of key principles were agreed between the FTOs and local representatives who would be playing an active role in JE going forward. It was agreed that further training, including joint training with Management Side representatives, would be required as part of any



Joint JE Project. Draft model JE Conventions were developed by NIPSA in preparation of a joint MS/JTUS working group being set up. Advice was provided to Panel members over lodging complaints to the Information Commissioner as a result of the ongoing failure in some Councils to provide JE paperwork to NIPSA, which was a requirement under the GLPC JE Scheme, particularly when Appeals were required. Branches were also advised to ensure that the issue of JE was a priority agenda item for local negotiating machinery and that they should seek copies of Service Level Agreements between each Council and STAHRs Consultancy, together with clarification of the tender process by which each Consultancy engagement was finalised to inform Panel strategy.

In April, the LGSC had tabled a draft ToR for a JE regional pilot exercise which JTUS criticised for its insufficient and unachievable timescales. JE continued to be a major catalyst for disputes throughout the year. NIPSA's ambition continued to be to achieve an in-house model on a regional basis and, to this end, engagement with NILGA continued throughout the summer months. Equality vulnerabilities were exposed via the use of Freedom of Information requests by HQ Officials for JE tender and process information. By November, the JTUS decided by majority that it was not in a position, at this time, to engage on any topic on a regional basis and would instead continue to challenge Councils on an individual basis, following the strategy agreed by the LG Panel.

Potential Transfer of the Water Quality Inspection (WQI) function to NI Environment Agency (NIEA):

The NIPSA WQI working Group, established mid-2022, continued to meet on a regular basis to compare the pay, grading and terms and conditions of employment of staff in the function across the 4 Council areas. As a result, a comparison report was written which also highlighted the deficiencies in NIEA Job Descriptions and associated grades. The report was shared with the WQI Group members and the Departmental NIPSA office on the NIEA/DAERA side. The report assisted NIPSA reps in the 4 Councils to work towards equity of pay and grading for WQI staff in Councils. The NIEA received financial information early in the year over the costs associated with pension transfer, which factored heavily in its potential transfer deliberations. By May, the NIPSA WQI Working Group was stood down until such times as a transfer decision was received.

2023 National Joint Council (NJC) Pay: As a result of discussions with NILGA, NIPSA addressed the NJC family of Employers across NI in February on behalf of JTUS to advocate support and rationale for an inflation busting NJC pay rise for 2023. The presentation was pitched to inform NI Employers' discussions with their GB counterparts on framing the 2023 pay offer. This was the first opportunity for NI trade unions to directly and collectively influence Employers' deliberations on an NJC pay award and it was agreed that this opportunity would be offered again.

During the year, several NIPSA meetings on NJC areas were held to discuss the potential to take Industrial Action should the NJC pay offer be rejected by the NJC TUS. However, in late October, the final offer of £1,925 was accepted by majority and NIPSA wrote to Councils to seek immediate implementation and to ask employers to ignore the Local Government Association's advice to pay the backdated award to April 2023 in one lump sum should any member seek to have it paid in instalments, thereby potentially mitigating against any Government support penalty.

Withdrawal of DAERA Funding for Statutory Non-Farm Animal Welfare:

In late August, NIPSA became aware of a potential decision by DAERA to completely withdraw the £1.25 million public funding in place annually since 2011. Councils absorbed this statutory function in 2012. When the funding removal decision was announced, the LG Panel discussed setting up a working group with the objective of challenging and reversing this decision, given that this was a statutory obligation placed upon Councils. Branches raised the matter on a local level to clarify how many staff were impacted, what and where the impact was likely to be and to seek Council's agreement to campaign for funding restoration as a matter of urgency. It was clear that the staffing compliment was already significantly reduced with Councils leaving vacancies unfilled due to lack of funding. NIPSA wrote to the Permanent Secretary and Grade 5 within the Department for Communities to lodge objections to the decision, seeking its reversal. Lobbying of previous Ministers of DAERA and Department of Justice was also undertaken, given the negative impact the decision had on the "Paws for Thought" DAERA Ministerial initiative and the potential reduction of bringing unscrupulous criminals through the justice system to deter against further animal cruelty and abuse. This funding

withdrawal was another clear result of the punishment budget set by the Secretary of State in the continued absence of a functioning NI Executive. Branches were asked to share NIPSA's objections and call for joint work with their Employers to reinstate the funding as a matter of urgency.

By late October, a very supportive response by the Alliance Party and a rather bland response from the Permanent Secretary were received, which were shared with the Panel to inform the ongoing NIPSA campaign strategy.

C4.2 Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC)

Staffing Structures: At the outset of this year the Joint Trade Unions were consulted on Council's intention to launch a Voluntary Severance scheme, primarily concentrating on Parks but extended to cover all Council areas.

There was considerable uptake of this offer from NIPSA members, the majority of whom accepted offers. This exercise also led to some senior managers and directors leaving creating vacancies which were either filled by recruitment or merging of directorates.

Co-incidentally, the Chief Executive signalled her intention to retire before the year end with it being eventually filled in November by Richard Baker, previously of Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.

At operational levels, vacancies still exist creating pressure on staff who have been left to maintain service levels. Recruitment for these posts continues but in the absence of an agreed Job Evaluation process, unfavourable salary levels, in comparison to other Councils are providing a barrier to successful recruitment.

Terms & Conditions: Following the announcement of the Voluntary Severance scheme, Council embarked on a consultative process with the Joint Trade Unions to review and develop new and existing policies in order to move all staff members on legacy contracts over to ANBC terms and conditions.

This has been an extensive exercise with all policies being reviewed taking the best parts of all legacy terms and conditions, along with those of the NICS and existing ANBC policies to enhance, refine or in some circumstances develop a new policy.

Changes to working patterns have been proposed and agreed, with lump sum offers being made to entice staff members to sign over along with increases in annual leave entitlements and reduction in length of disciplinary warnings.

It was agreed with the Joint Trade Unions that the effective date of this for staff who agree will be backdated to May 2023.

This process is entering into its final stages with a consultative ballot to be held.

Policy Review: In consultation with the Joint Trade Unions, as part of the review process on Terms and Conditions, Council have reviewed the four core policies of:

- Managing Attendance
- Disciplinary
- Grievance
- Annual Leave

In addition to this a menopause policy has been agreed and implemented while consultation continues on the Dignity and Respect at Work, Essential Car User and Career Break policies.

Attempts have been made on the introduction of a performance management function otherwise labelled as iProgress. Concerns were raised by NIPSA as to how this will be implemented particularly when there are no proposals to deal with unscrupulous managers who may use it as a tool to punish members. A counterproposal was put forward in that a 360 reporting model should be adopted to ensure that appropriate checks and balances are in place to prevent abuse of the system. This has now been shelved.

Cost of Living: Following the rejection of Council's initial proposal and the mandates for industrial action being received by GMB and NIPSA, a revised pay offer was submitted which was put to a membership ballot and overwhelmingly accepted. The offer consisted of: NJC Pay grades lifted by one Spinal Column Point for all grades up to and including PO7 from April 2022; the same NJC Pay grades would be further lifted by one Spinal Column Point from April 2023; removal of Scale 1C grade with those employees currently on 1C moving to Scale 2; overtime to remain available up to and including Scale 6; commitment to the participation in and completion of a full Pay & Grading review within a two-year period; commitment to



reviewing the Essential Car User Policy with a view to extending where appropriate the number of posts that can access this allowance. Both tranches of the increment payment and any associated back pay have been made.

Job Evaluation (JE): A proposal on the introduction of a new Job Evaluation process was made to the Joint Trade Unions with consultation in the initial stages. It was the view of NIPSA that this was unacceptable in that there is no impartiality at any stage with the Trade Union panel member being outvoted on either a 2:1 or 3:1 basis. Even if a member was successful at any stage, the decision could be overturned by HR if they did not like it. Not only this but as it is an automated system proposed, conventions are pre-populated from an obscure council in Wales which has no bearing or relevance to any Council in Northern Ireland. The current NIPSA proposal on Job Evaluations was put forward as the JTUS counter proposal.

C4.3 Ards and North Down Borough Council

Campaign to keep Leisure services in house:

NIPSA led a campaign to stop further services in this council being outsourced to SERCO.

This included collective action of joint trade unions led by NIPSA involving ballots for industrial action.

A public awareness campaign that revolved around the users of the service such as sporting groups. A petition was organised which had over 5000 signatures of local people objecting to this outsourcing.

A number of successful protests were organised outside Council buildings while Council meetings were taking place to let the Councillors know that the public or the unions would not tolerate this action. Hundreds of members and the public attended and the campaign achieved wide support from the public.

A media campaign using all methods such as social, local press, regional radio was started that led to television coverage of the final protest.

Because of all of these actions, the decision to outsource was reversed and the service has been kept in house, which was a great result for members.

Job evaluation: This was high on the agenda for this Council due to the need for a significant pay and grading review. The process of one evaluator

is being challenged locally and regionally as the current method is open to bias and discrimination. NIPSA has trained local branch reps regarding the scheme and is currently implementing an in house model for JE.

Pay Anomalies: Swimming instructors in the legacy Ards finally got pay parity with their colleagues in North Down. This was a long drawn out grievance that included carrying out an industrial action ballot. Management finally resolved the issue, which included back pay for the members concerned.

Consultations: Normal issues such as disciplinary and grievances were ongoing. There was a mixed approach to meetings with some being carried out remotely and in person.

C4.4 Armagh City, Craigavon and Banbridge Council (ABC)

Dispute: The year started as it finished with various disputes and disagreements between management and Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS). It must also be said that these disputes often spilled out to disagreements with a sister union that made negotiations all that more difficult.

The disputes started when Management decided to obstruct the implementation of structures agreed via RPA despite this being part of the recent dispute. This could not be left unchallenged by JTUS; these structures were agreed many years ago and are partially implemented most notably at the higher levels within the organisation. We had been given the rationale of cost savings with underlying threats of redundancies to the point that the DCEO attempted to put in a vacancy control procedure. This was a change in policy with no consultation and therefore certainly not agreed by NIPSA. When the DCEO was challenged about this policy and unilateral decision, she refused to meet the Unions. It was clear no consultation was becoming an unacceptable culture within ABC and if this was allowed to continue, all of our good work over the years would be destroyed in a matter of months.

Elected Councillors were also continuing to attack our members via social media and other forums. NIPSA had to lodge a formal complaint on this matter. This was further failure of Senior management to take our concerns seriously that has led to our decision of lack of confidence.

As a result of the above and other issues which arose during the year, we had to take action to protect our members' terms and conditions as well as their welfare. We registered a formal dispute with the Council, in order for this not to escalate it into industrial action we requested that conciliation be carried out under the auspices of the LRA. Failure to agree with this request would have led to each of the unions balloting their members for action. This action included the withdrawal of goodwill and a work to rule in line with our previous dispute. Given the seriousness of our issues and concerns, particularly those pertaining to our members' welfare, we also carried out a stress survey regarding their workplace. Following formal negotiations under the auspices of the LRA, an agreed way forward was established that was in line with the previous dispute's heads of terms. However, it did not take long before management reneged on their agreements to complete the RPA job evaluations in line with the GLPC schemes guidelines, which had secured that posts previously evaluated by a singular evaluator would be verified by a panel. This led to a lengthy dispute involving all of the unions. The implications of the outcome of this dispute could have significant ramifications on all Council employees across every Council.

JTUS therefore, following legal advice, had tabled to the Council a compromise to resolve this issue. If accepted, it could avoid multiple court cases and have the potential to correct many misapplications of the scheme. This would also benefit some members pay and grades. At the time of writing NIPSA is confident that the compromise will be accepted, given the understanding reached at the last joint meeting.

Job Evaluation (JE): As a result of the dispute, JE was high on the agenda for the members. NIPSA has trained local branch reps regarding this issue and the scheme and is currently implementing an in-house model for JE.

Policies: A number of policies were reviewed by NIPSA and JTUS these included, Disciplinary where we were successful in getting a second appeal hearing stage to the LRA for dismissal cases. Other policies of note are the grievance and working from home policy.

Consultations: Normal issues such as disciplinary and grievances were ongoing. There was a mixed approach to meetings with some being carried out remotely and in person.

C4.5 Belfast City Council (BCC)

Pay & Grading: Following on from the agreement of £1925 pay increase for all NJC staff this was implemented by BCC throughout the year and all staff paid in a timely fashion. A pay and grading review instigated in the previous year has seen ongoing negotiations between Management Side and the Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS). This was aimed at addressing a number of issues, firstly in order to grant all BCC staff the two point incremental progression granted in other areas of local government and to address the issues of grade overlap which have been ongoing since moving to NJC pay scales. To date there has been ongoing negotiation between management and TUS in respect of this, with the aim of TUS being to deliver incremental progression to members and resolving the outstanding issues in respect of overlapping grades. Despite a number of issues being identified in respect of anomalies in certain grades and their assimilation into the proposed new structure it is envisaged that a formal offer will be forthcoming in the short term. Further to this TUS have sought and received a commitment from management that any and all outstanding single status issues will be dealt with on completion of this Pay & Grading review.

Job Evaluation: As a result of a grievance raised by NIPSA members within BCC issues were raised in relation to the carrying out of job evaluations within BCC. As a result of this JTUS and management side have been engaged in ongoing negotiation as to how to resolve this issue going forward with a commitment being provided by management to rectify the issue and proceed with full job evaluations in line with the GLPC scheme. Despite ongoing engagement on this matter, it has yet to be resolved due to a duplication of resource in BCC Human Resources between job evaluation and pay and grading. Engagement on this matter remains ongoing and it is hoped will be intensified on completion of the pay and grading review. Average holiday pay was paid throughout the year at the correct rate and following a previously reported agreement a further two years of arrears was agreed to be paid to all eligible staff as a result of the unsuccessful appeal by the PSNI.

Policies: The following policies have been progressed or updated this year:

- Neonatal Leave Policy
- Drivers GPS Protocol
- Car Parking Policy



- Leave Arrangements- Negotiations remained ongoing in respect of the calculation of leave to hours. To date TUS and management have been unable to reach agreement despite conciliation via the Labour Relations Agency and legal counsel has been engaged from both management and TUS.
- Essential Car Users (Planning Division)- Initial consultation has occurred in respect of proposed changes to the essential car user policy in relation to Planning staff.

Industrial Relations (IR) Framework: Following the agreement of the IR framework last year, there remained a number of outstanding issues regarding the training of managers on IR matters such as right to accompaniment at informal disciplinary meetings. As a result of this and through negotiation at Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC) level, further training sessions were delivered by John Corey to managers within BCC on their roles and responsibilities within the IR Framework and to date improvements have been noticeable.

Notice of Motion - 4 Day Week: As a result of a notice of motion tabled to a full meeting of BCC, the proposal of a 4 day week for BCC staff has remained an ongoing agenda item at all JNCC meeting. To date agreement has not been reached on the matter despite negotiations remaining ongoing. Both management and TUS have engaged in benchmarking exercises in order to establish the likelihood of success are in ongoing discussions regarding operating a pilot scheme in a specific area.

C4.6 Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CCGBC)

After a lack of fair pay and cost-of-living payment (COL) offer for staff, NIPSA members voted to undertake strike action (SA) and action short of strike action (ASOSA). Membership increased in the branch and staff undertook ASOSA in January. Within a week the Council was unable to function wholly and an offer of £601 COL payment, 1 incremental spinal column rise in 2023 financial year and 1 spinal column rise in 2024 on top of the NJC pay increase. This included staff protected under TUPE. Members accepted this offer.

Longstanding job evaluation disputes against Council were concluded in the favour of the staff members. Job Evaluation grading sheets are still not being

provided by Council. NIPSA continue to campaign for those to be available.

An incident occurred that caused the Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS) to take a vote of no confidence in the Directors and Chief Executive of the Council. This incident cannot be reported on due to a High Court injunction. Following prolonged dispute, JTUS took the Council to the Labour Relations Agency where Senior Management Team agree to attend Dignity at Work Training by the end of September 2023, an independent person was appointed to attend JCNC group meetings, Corporate Health & Safety meetings, and Action Group meetings and will work with both sides to produce an agreed industrial relations framework document.

C4.7 Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC)

Harmonisation and Restructuring: NIPSA attended meetings with Human Resources (HR) lead and Management Side to discuss harmonisation in Leisure and staffing implications in a number of centres across the council area. NIPSA were in joint consultation in relation to the restructure in the swimming teachers section.

NIPSA also engaged in joint consultation on the harmonisation of bank holiday arrangements, final detail not agreed by end of year.

Financial Pressures: Following the increase struck in the rates in February NIPSA attended a joint Trade Union (TU) meeting with management and HR and sought assurances that there would be no job losses and requested full involvement in the outworking's of proposals put forward to fully support members.

NIPSA attended meetings with HR and management to discuss the restructuring across Business/Culture, Environmental Health and Environment in light of staff leaving through Voluntary Severance and also the impact on budget challenges with the withdrawal of funding projects. NIPSA also supported members in redeployment situations following the withdrawal of funding on some projects.

Policies: NIPSA provided feed back on the Council's review of the maternity policy.

Branch Organisation: The branch held AGM's in March and then again in October to get it back into line with AGM season following disruption due to COVID. New branch representatives joined the committee.

Planners: NIPSA met with the head of HR in September to discuss the Planners moving to NJC pay and terms and conditions who were TUPED to the Council. The negotiated pay uplift over the last few years resulted in the Civil Service TUPED members pay element being significantly lower than their Council counterparts. HR agreed to carry out a scoping exercise on the financial implications of bringing members over to Council's Terms and Conditions with follow up meetings planned to progress and to run into 2023.

NJC Pay: Following the negotiated pay uplift 2022 all backdated monies owed to Council members was paid in full by April.

C4.8 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC)

Efficiency Review: The efficiency review within LCCC was initiated pre pandemic and proceeded on the return to business as usual. The initial area under review was Planning and Capital Development Unit. This was largely considered the most complex area to be dealt with under the terms of the review due to the fact that a large proportion of the work related to assimilating staff who had TUPE'd into the business area from the NICS onto NJC terms and conditions and aligning those staff into the proposed new structures. The initial aim of this aspect of the review was completion early in the year, due to a number of issues in respect of the grading and proposed structure of the division. NIPSA's aim throughout the process was to ensure that all members moved over on a basis of no detriment to their existing terms and conditions and it was envisaged that many staff would benefit financially from the move. As of the completion of the assimilation process in the final quarter of the year this has proven to be the case.

Following the completion of the efficiency review of Planning and Capital Development Unit the overall review process has proceeded in Environmental Health Unit commencing in the new year. Early discussions between trade union side and management have commenced.

Kerbside Model: Following completion of the kerbside recycling trial a proposal was raised to move to an alternative recycling model with differently sized recycling bins being offered with alternatives being available dependent on need. There was no opposition from NIPSA members in the impacted area on this proposal and a consultation was issued this year to which NIPSA provided a stakeholder response.

Policies: The following policies were updated or progressed:

- **Hybrid Working:** In the previous year a Hybrid Working policy group was set up to review the existing office attendance arrangements. Despite this group being set up it was unable to meet throughout the year. Due to this TUS proposed that the existing pilot arrangement be extended and the current office attendance arrangements remain in place. This was passed by the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Forum (JCNF) and further ratified by council committee.
- **Informal Warnings:** It was identified in the final quarter of the year that certain leisure centres within the council area were operating an informal warning / three strike disciplinary policy of which it was uncertain whether or not TUS had previously been consulted on. This was raised formally at JCNF and is currently being explored for discussion at further meetings.
- **Trade Union Facilities Arrangements:** Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS) were initially consulted on a draft trade union facilities agreement. JTUS is preparing a written submission on this proposal. Based on discussions to date there were ongoing concerns in relation to accommodation for use by trade union representatives and members.

Job Evaluation: NIPSA has had long standing concerns that LCCC and a number of other councils were incorrectly completing job evaluation exercises for a majority of grades by outsourcing these to a single person panel who completed a desktop exercise without employee engagement. Further to this no appeals policy existed and it was thought that the process was neither tendered nor underwent an equality impact assessment. As a result of this NIPSA submitted an FOI in LCCC and a number of other councils which confirmed this. A new policy is currently in draft form for tabling at JCNF which will bring job evaluation in line with the principles of the GLPC scheme, ensuring employee engagement in the process and full appeal rights. This remains an ongoing agenda item at all meetings of the JCNF and NIPSA remains fully committed to engaging management on correcting this issue.

Pay: Following on from the agreement of £1925 pay increase for all NJC staff this was implemented by LCCC and all relevant arrears paid to all staff in a



timely fashion. The previous years pay agreement for LCCC provided for staff to receive two increments, the second of which was to be paid in October 2023. This was paid to all eligible staff from October onwards. In relation average holiday pay as per agreement between LCCC and JTUS average holiday has been paid at the correct rate with payments being made as an addition to salary on a bi-annual basis.

C4.9 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC)

Council Structure: Following the announcement of the suspended Chief Executive to resign, the interim postholder remains in place. As yet no proposals have been made on how this will be filled on a permanent basis however the Joint Trade Unions have been led to believe that Valerie Watts will remain in place for at least another two years.

A consultative exercise was carried out with the Joint Trade Unions on proposals to change the Corporate and Support Services structures with the removal of heads of service and creation of deputy director roles in their place. Additionally, there was a condensing down of posts from six to three which has led to the amalgamation of Departmental responsibilities under the new roles.

Concern was raised by NIPSA on this issue on what appeared to be the overloading of job functions, in particular the lack of importance given to the HR function which is no longer stand alone.

Recruitment was initially internal before moving externally for any unfilled posts. The eligible criteria for the posts appeared deliberately set to exclude potential candidates who instead were offered alternative suitable employment at lower grades, which eventually led to a compulsory redundancy situation for those who refused. Only one internal candidate was successful with the remaining two posts being filled externally.

Finance: As has been widely reported in the press, Council finally provided the Joint Trade Unions with a presentation based on work carried out by PWC on its financial position, upon which issues were raised with the lack of information and timeliness of provision to JTUS.

The presentation was very detailed but the takeaway is the Council have very poor financial and procurement systems that don't meet minimum

expected standards in places. This stemmed from a culmination of several years of problems which covers everything from basic practices and procedures, use of IT systems, staffing levels and also experience and training of staff in these areas.

The most shocking line was that Council's cashflow didn't cover monthly salaries at times without temporary borrowing, plus certain figures in current financial IT system can't be totally relied on.

Council also have huge number of IT systems with quite a lot of duplication especially between finance, HR and wages, not making best use of existing new software in these areas.

Council also didn't have clear accurate data over the numbers of staff employed, which posts were temporary, which were externally funded and also highlighted the high number of agency posts. The rates estimates for 2023/24 were also based on staffing data from 2022 so wasn't accurate for a number of reasons.

The actual £7.25million deficit is due to several reasons, some of which is theoretical and could improve (or get worse) as the year moves on. PWC have calculated an expenditure figure for 2023/24 that is £5m higher than in Council figures and there is a £2 million reduction in expected income hence £7.25m figure.

These numbers include issues like in year cost rises of Bryson recycling increasing by £750k, diesel up £200k, insurance up £100k. Expected cost savings did not all occur such as £1m from increased car park fees which has been watered down by changes from Councillors, and less savings from changes to trade waste collection than expected.

A list of possible options for in year savings was presented and consisted of stopping services with no income, such as, animal welfare, overtime reductions/ban, use of reserves, reduce agency staff use, voluntary redundancy, increase fees/charges.

Medium term savings covers presented were: the sale of assets such as buildings, rationalisation of estate, digitisation services, stopping services, reduction in leisure offer, community grants and outsourcing.

The only firm proposal was to sell Smiley Buildings in Larne. This shouldn't be a major issue for members as they will be relocated to other Council buildings within the town centre.

Staff Survey: This has completed and initially it was proposed the overview was being released to the working group only with Trade Union officials not being given sight of it. Instead this was to be filtered through by local reps with Trade Union input being accepted when formulating action plans on the findings through the working group.

Progress on the reporting of the implementation and findings of the survey has stalled originally due to the Council elections taking place and a reluctance to make a decision. The reasoning for this has now shifted to the overriding concerns with Councils budget and until recently the lack of senior staff in Corporate Services.

C4.10 Mid-Ulster District Council (MUDC)

Job Evaluation: NIPSA has had long standing concerns that MUDC and a number of other councils were incorrectly completing job evaluation exercises for a majority of Job Evaluations by outsourcing these to a single person panel who completed a desktop exercise without employee engagement. Further to this no appeals policy existed and it was thought that the process was neither tendered nor underwent an equality impact assessment. As a result of this, NIPSA submitted an FOI in MUDC and a number of other councils which confirmed this. A new process is currently in draft form for tabling at Local Joint Consultation and Negotiation Forum (LJCNF) which will bring job evaluation in line with the principles of the GLPC scheme, ensuring employee engagement in the process and full appeal rights. This will remain an ongoing agenda item at all meetings of the LJCNF and NIPSA remains fully committed to engaging management on correcting this issue.

Policies: The following policies were proposed, updated or progressed:

- **Customer Behaviour:** As a result of a notable number of member complaints regarding unacceptable customer behaviour towards council officials Trade Union Side have tabled a proposal to introduce a customer behaviour policy and potentially an unacceptable customer behaviour register in order to protect staff and monitor instances of such behaviour going forward. This has been tabled for discussion at LJCNF level.

- **Driver Fobs:** A proposal has been tabled by management which will look at the introduction of driver fobs to monitor potential excessive speed and other possible dangers in driving. This has been raised by management and a protocol is due to be raised at LJCNF for consultation with TUS. Trade Union Side to date have raised concerns with the introduction of such a policy in respect of its proposed link with the disciplinary process and performance management but to date has not received the draft protocol for comment.
- **Carers Policy:** Management Side have indicated the potential to revisit the reporting mechanisms surrounding the MUDC carers policy but to date no formal review has been initiated.

Seamus Heaney Homeplace/ Bellaghy Bawn: In the last quarter of the year, MUDC management indicated that there may be a possible movement of staff in the Seamus Heaney Homeplace Centre which is based upon access to external funding. To date NIPSA have engaged with effected members to discuss potential concerns and an initial meeting occurred between MUDC management and JTUS to discuss the terms of reference for staff engagement forums. It was clearly outlined by NIPSA at this meeting that any potential meetings of such a forum could not replace the established negotiating forums with recognised trade unions and this position was agreed by management. It was further noted that NIPSA remains committed to ensuring that all members current terms and conditions are protected and where possible enhanced.

Planning Division: As with other local councils, staff in Planning Division within MUDC were employed on the basis of TUPE protected terms and conditions having transferred from the Northern Ireland Civil Service to local authorities. Similarly, an exercise was undertaken within MUDC to align staff where possible to NJC terms and conditions. This has been completed relatively seamlessly with the majority of staff opting to move to NJC terms and conditions and a small minority opting to remain under NICS.

C4.11 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Industrial Dispute: Following the successful industrial action of the previous two years, it appeared that management of this Council still wanted to take the unions on for a third year in a row.



They again reneged on previous agreements and attempted to erode further terms and conditions. This included trying to take away allowances and leave our members in serious financial detriment.

NIPSA therefore registered dispute and successfully balloted our members for all types of industrial action. NIPSA's asked included:

- A full and complete timetable to include a start and finish date of all remaining RPA issues including service reviews and allowances etc. Management agreed a complete timetable which includes all reviews of departments.
- An agreed formula for any buyouts and or protection arrangements relating to the above if required. A pay protection policy has now been agreed and a formula for the buyout of tcs which ensures no long-term financial detriment to our members.
- The facilities and officers released from both sides to meet the above timetable. Management have agreed to this demand.
- The written guarantee and agreed protocols regarding the implementation of moderation panels (as per ABC council) on all job evaluations carried out from Jan 21 as per our agreement) Managements have now formally agreed to this again.
- The immediate levelling of the working week to 36 hours for all employees. Management have agreed to this as of the 01/04/24
- The creation of an all-party (to include HR and JTUS) working group to discuss issues of industrial relations outside of normal operational matters. Management is seeking legal opinion this matter and we await further detail and are therefore still in dispute on this matter.
- That a third party be used to be used on this occasion that has the authority to have the agreements enforced if there is a failure to comply or a dispute in the agreement's interpretation. Management have agreed to this approach on the proviso that the third party is seen as an appeals authority on issues relating to any agreement reached. The person selected was previous NIPSA General Secretary John Corey.

- The immediate reversal of all decisions that conflicted with the previous agreements of 21/22. JTUS require a full list of all changes that management are aware of and reserve the right to serve further notice of action on any changes they fail to disclose. Management have not fully complied with this demand at the time of writing, but we envisage this to be resolved in order to end the action.

NIPSA members in this branch have to be commended for once again fighting management to a well-earned victory securing their Terms and conditions including a reduction to their working week. The action taken was a one-day strike followed by a number of weeks of action short of strike.

Job evaluation: This was high on the agenda for this Council due to the need for a significant pay and grading review. The process of one evaluator is being challenged locally and regionally this method is open to bias and discrimination. NIPSA has trained local branch reps regarding this issue and the scheme and is currently implementing an in-house model for JE.

Consultations: Normal issues such as disciplinary and grievances were ongoing. There was a mixed approach to meetings with some being carried out remotely and in person.

C5 Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Accommodation Strategy: Staff moved across from Lanyon Place to Adelaide Street in June. Members' concerns were successfully addressed by the Branches and TUS office. TUS continued to attend Accommodation Strategy meetings on behalf of members and report on any issues raised to the Panel. Ongoing pilots such as a "booking system for hot-desking" were monitored closely. Staff in Craigavon's Marlborough House, South Region were told their lease would not be renewed in early Autumn and affected staff would be moved to other work locations by 2025. The Chief Executive explained to NIPSA that this was outside of her control and she was very disappointed by how this news was relayed to her staff by the Department. Management explained Marlborough House, along with Derry offices, were their top priority and that they were in consultation with all other stakeholders to develop options and proposals for discussion at steering group level. NIPSA adopted a watching brief on these accommodation matters, having already submitted comments to the draft Strategy.

Branch Recruitment and Organisation: Trade Union Side (TUS) targeted all branches over the latter part of the year largely spurred by members interested in joining the collective age discrimination grievances. This resulted in a number of new members contacting TUS office who joined NIPSA and also wished to form Branch Committees in Strabane, Limavady and Coleraine District Offices. Initial conversations led by the TUS Secretary to welcome, encourage and explain formation of committees were welcomed, training courses were suggested to these members and an invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting of Central Panel in late November as observers was issued. Regional Consultative Committee structures were reinvigorated as a key objective for the seconded office and this was achieved for all areas TUS towards the latter part of the year. Further support and mentoring plans to hold a number of in person and online sessions to build on branch committees were well advanced at year end.

Corporate Services Restructuring: NIPSA raised a plethora of live issues with the Director of Corporate Services over the approach being applied to restructuring his departments in late Autumn. A number of roles were renamed and new structures introduced without the appropriate consultation with TUS and the necessary one to one meetings with affected staff. Members felt that their roles were being diminished, which was clearly explained to Management Side. The Director listened to members' concerns and agreed to carry out "one to ones", plus rolled back on the change of job titles. Discussion on the restructuring was ongoing at year end.

NIPSA agreed to take part in focus groups in furtherance of Investors In People (IIP) Gold Award, which was a key HR objective for 2024. Meetings were anticipated to be scheduled involving NIPSA's NIHE seconded officers and the IIP assessor in the new year.

Covid-19: NIPSA continued to meet with HR on a weekly basis as well as at health and safety Committee, regional and Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee (JCNC) levels to pursue any particular concerns arising from the Pandemic. Whilst front line areas such as client counters and Housing Maintenance Services had reopened on a rota basis, NIPSA remained vigilant with regard to Public Health Agency Guidance, the continuation of protection mitigations and the critical importance of risk assessments and associated action plans, which required regular review. Being particularly mindful of new variants, housekeeping issues were also raised such as more robust and regular cleaning cycles, additional sanitiser use, wipes and reinforcement of detailed information to staff over how to keep themselves, and each other, as safe as possible. At year end, a watching brief was ongoing in regard to a number of new Covid variants and resultant related absences across the NIHE.

Evolve (Direct Labour Organisation - DLO): TUS was included in the DLO Evolve Focus Groups from mid-year. NIPSA sought a meeting to discuss plans in more detail and to review the Terms of Reference for a new pilot that the NIHE was hoping to roll out in the South Region over the next year.



Grants Restructuring: TUS received confirmation towards the end of October that a long awaited permanent structure would soon be sent to TUS for consultation. NIPSA was agitating management throughout 2023 to advance this issue as members had been working off a temporary structure which was neither in line with the rest of the organisation nor reflective of Grants members current work, tasks, geographical areas or customer demands. By late December, a proposed permanent structure was received and member consultation commenced, with detailed discussion with NIHE senior representatives anticipated in the New Year.

Local Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS) Pay Claim

Dispute: The local claim was lodged by the NIPSA Assistant Secretary on behalf of JTUS in June 2022, which included the 5 key elements agreed under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Committee of the -Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU) - all grades to move up 2 spinal column points; a reduction of the working week to 35 hours (pro rata) with no reduction in pay; Covid 19/cost of living recognition payment of £1000; 2 days' additional annual leave and improvements to mileage rates. Following 7 months of frustrating engagement with an extremely intransigent NIHE Senior Management, including 4 meetings facilitated by the Labour Relations Agency, the following "final Pay offer" was tabled by the CEO of the NIHE in late December 2022: One additional Spinal Column Point (SCP) for Bands 1-3, backdated to April 2022 and Staff whose grades up to and including Level 5 (with scales ending at SCP 25) to receive a one off cost of living payment of £1,000 net, with all other grades to receive a one off cost of living payment of £500 net. Management Side offered to pause its review of mileage rates with further discussions to be based on the principles of carbon reduction/sustainable development. The original Management Side offer proposed a significant cut to the current mileage rates, despite JTUS Claim calling for an increase. Any cut to mileage rates was outright rejected by NIPSA and Unite and was consequently removed from the offer.

The CEO, despite every effort by NIPSA, refused to re-engage at that point. NIPSA believed it was the best offer possible without some form of action to apply pressure on the NIHE to return to the negotiating table. Unite had completed over 6 months of strike action over pay. NIPSA continued to work with our sister union to secure a better offer from the

NIHE. A consultative ballot by both trade unions resulted in a resounding rejection of the second offer and a willingness on the part of members to be balloted on Industrial Action and Action Short of Strike. Notification that NIPSA was lodging a dispute on this matter was provided to the Employer on 7 March. NIPSA commenced a statutory ballot seeking our members' mandate to engage in an intelligent and impactful industrial action strategy, which may have included selective action, action short of strike action and strike action to secure an improved offer which was worthy of members' consideration. However, before the statutory ballot completed and in direct response to NIPSA correspondence, the CEO committed to further meaningful engagement and a series of intense negotiation meetings resulted in a vastly improved offer being tabled on 22 March 2023, which the NIPSA Central Panel considered on 23 March and agreed to recommend acceptance of. A decision was taken to halt the statutory ballot on 24 March given it was based upon consideration of an earlier already rejected offer. An all-member meeting was also held on 24 March to update members in the NIHE on the progress made and to explain the revised offer, which was addressed by the NIPSA HQ Official. The revised offer, which comprised of 1 SCP to Bands 1-3, a one off payment of £1,600 gross for all staff and an additional £400 gross payment to all staff at or below SCP25, together with an extra leave day for 2023, was overwhelmingly accepted by members by way of electronic consultative ballot and Management was formally notified that both trade unions were in a position to accept the improved offer by correspondence of 28 March 2023. The letter also reinforced JTUS readiness to further engagement to jointly explore with Management maximising working hours' flexibility together with simplification and enhancements to the annual leave provisions. Members were kept up to date throughout the process via regular NIPSA Circulars.

NIHE Social Housing Reform/Revitalisation:

NIPSA continued to seek clarity on the direction of travel of this review, against which the research paper the "Spectre of Privatisation" was launched in May 2022, which provided viable alternative strategies to privatisation. However, in the absence of a Minister to take decisions, it appeared that the Revitalisation Project remained stalled. The issue was pursued at every Negotiating Committee meeting throughout the year, with the CEO and Senior Management stubbornly tight lipped until the September Joint

Consultative and Negotiating Committee meeting, when a verbal report by the CEO appeared to give rise to optimism that NIPSA's call to keep the NIHE as a public body and maximise public sector funding was the direction of travel of discussions to date, which would fit with the previous Housing Minister's commitment to NIPSA not to privatise the NIHE and to adopt a way forward that would minimise change for staff. This matter was also pursued at a meeting with the NIHE Chairperson, Nicole Lappin, in October. TUS made the Chair aware of NIPSA's "Spectre of Privatisation" and other social housing publications, which the Chair agreed to study, and outlined our fervent opposition to any form of privatisation. This issue remained at the forefront of NIPSA's Central Panel agenda. NIPSA stood ready to engage with other stakeholders, tenants, customers and citizens should a reinvigorated campaign become necessary.

A meeting was held in late November at which increased Social Housing plans were discussed in the context of funding for the Landlord function and potential rent rises, which was very informative and helpful for NIPSA to use as a lobbying tool to seek better funding and relaxation of public borrowing restrictions. NIPSA also raised concerns over the new build pilot project.

Pay and Grading (P&G) Review: Despite NIPSA's constructive meeting with the Minister of the Communities immediately prior to Purdah in late 2022, and her subsequent correspondence to the CEO of the NIHE querying the quality of NIHE's engagement with NIPSA on the P&G Review, no further information was forthcoming to date. NIPSA repeatedly sought disclosure of the Outline Business Case (OBC) both verbally and in writing throughout the year, to which NIHE responded that the Department was forbidding disclosure prior to business case approval being granted. NIPSA accused the NIHE of deliberately obstructing NIPSA from consulting with members on the proposals. In June, MTB Solicitors issued a Pre-Action Protocol letter on behalf of NIPSA seeking full disclosure of the OBC. Legal discussions were ongoing at year end.

A further critical issue was NIHE's proposal to only backdate uplifts to April 2022 which was unacceptable to NIPSA members given the issues were initially raised as far back as 2018/19 as part of the local pay negotiations on NJC assimilation. By September, the OBC had been passed to the

Department of Finance (DoF) for final sign off. In parallel, class action cases were lodged on the grounds of indirect discrimination due to elongated pay scale structures of up to 20 pay points, contrary to age legislation.

During a further meeting towards the end of November, HR shared some further detail on the review proposals and commenced discussions on potential assimilation approaches. NIPSA stressed the importance of having an agreed in-house Job Evaluation process in place to inform further discussions, enquired if an Equality Impact Assessment of the revised pay structure proposals had been undertaken and sought section 75 analysis of the current and proposed pay structures. As final approval of the OBC remained outstanding, the information shared was to be kept confidential at this stage, which continued to fetter TUS' ability to consult with members on the proposals. It was stressed that the effective date for implementation remained April 2022 and NIPSA highlighted the importance of the legal challenges underway to protect members' best interests retrospectively. However, Management did signal its agreement to engage with JTUS constructively to agree a new Job Evaluation process going forward, following the Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) Scheme code of practice in full.

Policy Development: Negotiations continued on a plethora of new and revised draft policies throughout the year including: Overtime; Health and Wellbeing; Standby and Callout, Flexible and Future Working Practices, Accommodation Strategy, consolidation of Lanyon Place to Adelaide Street; Out of Hours (homelessness); and the Evolve (DLO) transformation project. Whilst engagement paused on all Policy engagement once NIPSA entered into a dispute over the Local JTUS Pay Claim, which was both strategic to put pressure onto the Employer and also to facilitate determined focus on pay related issues, Policy and restructuring negotiations recommenced following the Easter break.

In late October, NIPSA vociferously objected to a separate Flexible Working Policy being tabled for front line staff across Housing Services, which provided much less flexibility to staff than the overarching Policy.



Following a lengthy, detailed and somewhat contentious meeting with the Director, this draft policy was withdrawn, which was welcomed by NIPSA.

TUS represented members' interests on a forum dedicated to eliminating and reducing aggressive behaviour and incidents directed towards members whilst they undertake their duties. TUS made a number of suggestions and recommendations that would assist with the protection and safety of members, which were accepted and actioned by Management.

Technical Level 2 (TL2) & Other Class Action

Grievances: Due to the NIHE failing to address evident age discrimination of TL2 members relating to their 20 point pay scale and other pay implementation issues, NIPSA lodged a formal grievance early in 2023 which was heard on 8 March 2023. In parallel, preparations were being made to lodge a class action at the OITFET to challenge the length of the TL2 payscale via a data cleansing and membership database updating exercise. As the discrimination grounds for this collective grievance equally applied to up to 10 other grades in the NIHE, data cleansing and updating was undertaken for all affected grades in preparation for the potential lodgement of further collective grievances and associated class action/s. Given the significant wider interest and implications of the TL2 test case, approval for legal funding was granted by NIPSA and the class action was prepared for submission in April. The collective grievance decision, whilst upholding the terms of the grievance and supporting the necessity of rectification, did not offer any timely remedy when received in late March, with NIHE hiding behind the sponsoring Department's approval process for the pay and grading review not having completed. Failure to appropriately backdate any remedy, as detailed above, remained a matter of dispute. The Appeal decision given in June did not differ from the previous hearing held in May and was shared with NIPSA's legal team as the NIHE agreed that the pay scale was far too long and must be rectified using the pay and grading review. Circulars, Pleadings and a Frequently Asked Questions document was placed on the NIPSA website, with a link provided within Circulars issued to all TL2 members. With all internal appeals processes exhausted, the class action awaited hearing in the Industrial Tribunal (OITFET).

A second collective grievance was subsequently lodged for members in other grades which currently have over 6 pay points to their pay scale. The grievance was heard in December and at time of writing, the decision was awaited. Preparations to lodge a second-class action case at the OITFET on the grounds of age discrimination were well advanced at year end.

C6 Other Bodies

C6.1 City of Derry Airport. CoDA

NIPSA submitted a joint pay claim to the Airport on 25th January on behalf of staff-side requesting a pay rise of the current rate of inflation plus 5% and a request for a follow on to the commitment given in the previous year to seek to improve the pay of those on the National Minimum Living Wage (NMW).

Management responded 9th March with a pay offer of an increase of 9.7% for those on the NMW plus 5% on top to honour the prior commitment given, with an increase of 5% for all other staff.

NIPSA carried out a consultative ballot of members: 61% voted 'yes' to accept and 39% voted 'no' to reject. A follow up joint Trade Union (TU)/management meeting took place on 29th March. Following the outcome of the ballot various members across different areas contacted NIPSA with queries in how the Airport was determining those falling under the NMW, given allowances and enhancements. NIPSA wrote to management on behalf of staff side 6th April and outlined their concerns and requested an urgent meeting. A meeting was arranged for 17th April and concerns were further highlighted, management agreed to seek legal advice about these and agreed a follow up meeting 21st April. NIPSA then supported members who had been identified as not having been paid the national Minimum wage over the last 12 years. NIPSA sought legal advice on this and have lodged a collective grievance, an Industrial Tribunal Claim with the OITFET following non-resolution of Early Conciliation with the LRA.

NIPSA and UNITE made clear the position as to the necessity to the setting up of a working group to address issues relating to pay across the various departments in the Airport and as a collective bargaining forum. Meetings were scheduled on a two weekly basis to follow on to 2024.

NIPSA requested to meet with HR and management to discuss issues specific to a number of departments in the Airport. The first meeting with members in the Fire Department took place in August with RAMP and

Terminal Service Departments in November. Following meeting with Fire members management announced on 4th October that due to the pressures in the Fire Department, they were implementing an uplift with immediate effect from 1st October to staff in this department.

NIPSA agreed to support members in relation to issues around recruitment and retention.

C6.2 Controlled Sector Schools Council (CSSC)

The Controlled Schools' Support Council is a non-statutory body, currently classified as a Third Sector Organisation, providing services in supporting and representing the controlled schools sector in Northern Ireland. Discussions took place with NIPSA in relation to the Education Funding for 2023/2024 and the difficulties that potential cuts to funding would cause for the organisation. At the year end, those discussions continued.

NIPSA and staff were consulted on the CSSC Redundancy Policy and CSSC's draft policy statement on how the employer will exercise certain discretions regarding the NILGOSC pension scheme. The Redundancy Policy package was discussed at a meeting on 27 March where NIPSA raised concerns that the redundancy package that was being offered to staff who were on NJC Terms & Conditions, was different to what other educational public sector organisations were offering. At the meeting discussions took place about benchmarking the redundancy payment in CSSC to be the same as other educational public sector organisations. NIPSA were made aware that CSSC is currently not an NDPB but this is being actively considered by their Council going forward. NIPSA agreed to scope out other similar type organisations who offered a better package and report back to the next meeting. No further meeting had taken place by the end of the year and no redundancies were announced. The organisation was not replacing posts when staff left to mitigate any compulsory redundancies.

Trade Union operations in CSSC was also discussed during the year and it was agreed that the meetings organised as part of the Recognition and Facilities



Agreements would be reinstated. It was agreed that meetings would take place up to 3 times a year and more if needed.

The CSSC were contacted by NIPSA to ask that the NJC Pay increase be implemented for members and it was confirmed in the later part of the year that the increase had been implemented.

C6.3 Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

On the back of what was happening in the Education Sector with regards to budget cuts, NIPSA wrote to request a copy of CCMS redundancy policy in preparation for any discussions that may arise regarding savings the organisation may need to make as a result of cuts to their funding.

The CCMS was contacted by NIPSA to ask that the NJC Pay increase be implemented for members and it was confirmed in the later part of the year that the increase had been implemented.

C6.4 Extern

Personal Representation: Personal representation remained a high priority at branch level and accounted for the majority of the branch's work. There was active engagement on members behalf on a variety of casework including attendance management, disciplinary and grievance.

Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC): A meeting of the Extern JNC was scheduled for the latter part of the year but due to unforeseen circumstances this did not proceed and other commitments such as annual leave have prevented this from occurring since. It is aimed to hold this meeting in the very near future and this will enable Trade Union Side (TUS) to proceed with matters such as potential policy reviews and future pay claims. Despite the inability to hold a formal JNC, TUS and management remained engaged at a local level and with Extern Human Resources in respect of any ongoing issues.

Employee Relations: Throughout the year TUS and management via Human Resources were active in improving employee relations within the organisation. This came about as a result of issues raised throughout the year and TUS remained committed to proactively engaging with management to improve employee relations on a continuous basis.

C6.5 General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI)

The GTCNI was contacted by NIPSA to ask that the NJC Pay increase be implemented for members and it was confirmed in the later part of the year that the increase had been implemented.

GTCNI management entered into Phase 3 of their Employee Handbook Consultation where the following policies were reviewed by NIPSA:

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Anti-fraud & Bribery Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Flexible Working Hours Scheme

During the year, there was no further update on the future of the GTCNI following a consultation that launched in September 2022 for 16 weeks by the Minister for Education.

C6.6 Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)

Trade Union Recognition: Negotiations were ongoing throughout the year regarding agreeing a trade union recognition agreement between management and Trade Union Side (TUS) for GLL staff. Previously staff on Belfast and Castlereagh legacy contracts held recognition with NIPSA and Unite however staff employed on GLL contracts did not. After lengthy negotiations a final recognition agreement was signed off by management and TUS.

Pay Claim: Following a lengthy pay freeze for legacy council staff and proposal by GLL to align legacy staff to GLL pay scales, NIPSA provided robust opposition partly due to the risk to trade union recognition agreements by staff moving to GLL pay scales. Following the finalising of the trade union recognition agreement with GLL and in consultation with representatives, Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS) submitted a pay claim for the year which seeks to align all GLL staff with their comparable NJC scale. To date management have provided an acknowledgement of this claim and advised JTUS that it has been passed to Corporate Human Resources for consideration and JTUS are awaiting a response.

Holiday Pay Allowance: A conciliation process for the payment of holiday pay allowance was completed in the early stages of the year via the Labour Relations Agency with NIPSA raising significant issues with delays in the process. However, it was identified that a number of current and previous staff had not been captured in the exercise and a mop up exercise was planned in consultation with the LRA in the final quarter of the year. Due to a lack of up-to-date contact details this has not been possible to date and currently management and JTUS are both engaged with the LRA regarding potential future dates.

Allowances Issues: A number of issues regarding the correct payment of allowances for legacy staff have been identified throughout the year. Negotiations between management and TUS have been ongoing throughout the year and as of the most recent meeting of the joint TUS and management forum all relevant staff had been provided with relevant financial information regarding allowance. TUS raised concerns that many members found these figures difficult to understand and it was agreed that a point of contact would be allocated by Human Resources to discuss and explain these figures, on an appointment basis and prior to any agreement by staff.

C6.7 Linen Hall Library (LHL)

The Linen Hall Library was contacted by NIPSA to ask that the NJC Pay increase be implemented for members and it was confirmed in the later part of the year that the increase had been implemented.

C6.8 Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)

NICIE was contacted by NIPSA to ask that the NJC Pay increase be implemented for members and it was confirmed in the later part of the year that the increase had been implemented.

In September, after many years on College Gardens, Belfast, beside Queens University (QUB), NICIE moved premises to The Gasworks, 1st Floor, James House, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA.

C6.9 Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)

NIPSA started the year in dispute with the NIFRS this was due to the failure to meet our demands regarding pay, terms and conditions. We balloted our members for strike and action short of strike action (ASoSA) and received an overwhelming positive result on both questions.

Due to this mandate, we started with ASoSA, which immediately had dividends for our members as management moved on our two major requests:

- A full pay and grading review to include the restructuring of pay scales ensuring incremental progression for all staff.
- The payment of two £500 payments, similar to those paid in health as the Department of health are the budget holders of NIFRS.

Management's proposal was for a pay and grading review to take place within the year. A Project Board would be established to oversee the work of the Pay and Grading Review. This team would be responsible for overall management of the programme of work. The board will consist of members from HR, Finance and others including the Trade Union Side.

The scope of the review would be:

- (a) Examination of the Scale 3 - Scale 6 grade within the review process;
- (b) The structure of pay scales;
- (c) Arrangements for pay progression including length of pay scales and the need to avoid risk of discrimination;
- (d) Overtime arrangements related to certain grades;
- (e) Overlapping pay bands – where staff can earn more than those in grades higher than their own;
- (f) Leap frogging – where staff in lower grades can be promoted to a higher point on the promoted grade pay scale than staff already at the higher (promoted) grade;
- (g) Ensuring that where anomalies in the level of pay for analogous grades exist, that they can be justified.
- (h) Arrangements, if any, to address labour market additions/supplements.



Management also proposed a payment of £500 but given the lack of a health minister they could not get agreement from the DOH to pay however they gave assurance that this would be paid.

NIPSA members accepted this offer on the understanding that if these actions were not forthcoming then further industrial action will take place.

Since the agreement of a pay and grading review NIPSA have already secured the regrading of 25% of our membership some moving up by as many of three scales from scale 3 to 6, others have moved from 3 to 5. We also moved our more senior members from PO1 to PO3 and PO5 to PO7. This work is continuing, and we hope to have this finalised in the coming year.

C6.10 Radius Housing Association

Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC): A meeting of the Radius Housing Association JNC was held in the latter part of this year, being the first meeting since the COVID pandemic. At that meeting, Trade Union Side (TUS) tabled a number of items for discussion including absence management, resourcing and staff wellbeing. TUS received commitments at this meeting to return to frequent meetings of the JNC on appointment of a new Human Resources Director and to provide timely resourcing updates in advance of future meetings.

Pay: Salaried staff within the organisation continued to be paid in line with NJC pay scales and the recent nationally agreed pay scale changes adopted and arrears paid accordingly. An adjusted amount on average holiday pay was imposed on staff within Radius Housing against the request of NIPSA and members were advised to lodge cases accordingly.

Policies: The association continued to review its policies on a regular rotational basis and TUS were consulted on these reviews with no amendments being proposed from management or TUS in the year's rotation.

Absence Management: One of the primary areas of concern for both members and TUS was the continued use of the Bradford factor as a system for absence management triggers. This was consistently raised by members to TUS in a large proportion of absence management meetings and as a result of this was tabled by TUS as an agenda item at the JNC. As a result of representation made by TUS, a review of the absence factor was undertaken by management, and this is currently ongoing. TUS await the outcomes of this review for further discussion. The review is being undertaken by Baker Tilly.

Staff Wellbeing: Staff wellbeing was raised as an agenda item by TUS at JNC. Following a robust debate on how to advance this issue, a draft awareness programme was agreed between management and TUS in order to fully inform staff of services available to them via the association and encourage participation in these.



Section D

Branch Organisation

Civil Service Group

Public Officers' Group

Branch Organisation at 31 December 2023

Civil Service Group

BRANCH	EMPLOYING AUTHORITY	BRANCH LOCATION	BRANCH SECRETARY	MEMBERS AND VOTES	CS GROUP DELEGATES	NIPSA DELEGATES
1	DOF	CPD & Properties Division, Clare House	Brendan Fegan	169	2	2
2	DOF	CS Pensions & Recruitment	Martin Bradley	104	2	2
3	DOF	Enterprise Shared Services	Michael Cassells	89	2	2
4	DOF	Legal Admin	Gerard O'Connor	49	1	1
5	DOF	Legal Service	Wilma McKeegan	125	2	2
6	DOF	LPS Land Registration	Colleen Bonner	76	1	1
7	DOF	LPS Ordnance Survey	Enda McAtamney	154	2	2
8	DOF	LPS Rating	Kate McKeating	329	3	3
9	DOF	LPS Valuation	Justine Goodall	148	2	2
10	DOF	NICS HR	Vacant	152	2	2
11	DOF	NISRA	Nichola Coburn	221	3	3
13	DOF	Digital Shared Services	Noel Gunn	258	3	3
14	TEO	Stormont	Philip Devlin	211	3	3
15	DOF	Core	Edith Toppon	138	2	2
22	DE	Inspectorate Rathgael	Deirdre Robson	29	1	1
23	DE	Rathgael House	Vacant	142	2	2
24	DE	Waterside House, Derry	Marie Stewart	84	2	2
26	DOH	Policy	Vacant	288	3	3
31	DFE	Adelaide House	Elizabeth Cameron	415	4	4
32	DFE	Careers Service	Mary Bell	117	2	2
33	DFE	Insolvency/OITFET	Patrick McGeough	94	2	2
35	DFE	Trading Standards	Kevin McNamara	41	1	1
45	DOJ	Core	Sean Brown	258	3	3
46	DOJ	Legal Services Agency	Gerard Patterson	99	2	2
47	DOJ	NICTS	Lorna Glass	514	5	5
48	DOJ	NIPS	Stephen Hayes	149	2	2



49	DOJ	YJA	Peter Gibson	112	2	2
50	NIPB	Policing Board	Vacant	13	1	1
51	PBNI	Probation Board	Wendy Thompson	204	3	3
52	PONI	Police Ombudsman	Elaine Moore	69	1	1
53	PPSNI	Public Prosecution Service	James Murphy	211	3	3
70	DFI	Clarence Court, Planning	Declan Sloan	259	3	3
71	DFI	Driver Vehicle Agency	Stewart Moore	473	4	4
73	DFI	Rivers Agency	Vacant	88	2	2
74	DFI	TNI Ballymena	James Scullion	68	1	1
75	DFI	TNI Belfast	Conor Boyd	117	2	2
76	DFI	TNI Coleraine	Vacant	46	1	1
77	DFI	TNI Craigavon	Val Russell	78	1	1
78	DFI	TNI Downpatrick	Corrie Carr	63	1	1
79	DFI	TNI HQ	Danny Norton	74	1	1
80	DFI	TNI Omagh	Sean Mcdermott	162	2	2
91	DAERA	Central Belfast	Stephen McCorry	187	2	2
92	DAERA	Dundonald House	Jan Davidson	268	3	3
93	DAERA	Forest Service	Brendan Mulholland	54	1	1
94	DAERA	Inspectorate	Gerard Higgins	539	5	5
96	DAERA	Province Wide	Brian McGeehan	637	6	6
97	DAERA	Veterinary Service	Abigail Armstrong	125	2	2
110	DFC	Andersonstown	Damien Coleman	121	2	2
111	DFC	Antrim & Magherafelt	Clare Skelcher	135	2	2
112	DFC	Appeals Service	David Magill	73	1	1
113	DFC	Armagh, Banbridge, Lurgan & Portadown	Elaine Hillis	150	2	2
114	DFC	Ballymena, Carrickfergus & Larne	Siobhan Boyd	144	2	2
115	DFC	Ballymoney, Coleraine & Limavady	Martin Bell	165	2	2
116	DFC	Ballynahinch, Bangor, Downpatrick, Kilkeel & Newcastle	Vacant	91	2	2
117	DFC	Belfast Benefit Centre	Mark Gibson	514	5	5
118	DFC	Castle Court Disability Benefits	Susan Irvine	548	5	5
119	DFC	Child Maintenance Service	Brendan O'Reilly	946	9	9
120	DFC	Communications	Jim Smith	35	1	1
121	DFC	Community Cohesion	Sally Kirker	101	2	2
122	DFC	Cookstown	Vacant	25	1	1
123	DFC	NI Pension Centre	Denise Conway	207	3	3
124	DFC	Design Centre	Eamon Doherty	198	2	2
125	DFC	Dungannon	Stacey Cheevers	83	2	2



126	DFC	Enniskillen & Omagh	James Carey/ Patricia Toal	129	2	2
127	DFC	ESA	Kerrin Joiner	211	3	3
128	DFC	Falls Road, Newtownabbey, North Belfast, Royal Avenue & Shankill	Gerard McLaughlin	244	3	3
129	DFC	Foyle	Ann Coyle	248	3	3
130	DFC	Hollywood Road	Carol Skelly	93	2	2
131	DFC	Improving Benefits Uptake Unit	Ryan Meekin	45	1	1
132	DFC	Knockbreda, Newtownards & Shaftesbury Square	John Stuart	108	2	2
133	DFC	Legislation	Gary Donaldson	39	1	1
134	DFC	Benefit Security Division	Alexandra McKee	152	2	2
135	DFC	Lisahally	Martin Neeson	225	3	3
136	DFC	Lisburn	Mark Cairns	93	2	2
137	DFC	Lisnagelvin & Strabane	Martin Rouse	95	2	2
138	DFC	Guidance, Learning & Development	Timothy Eaton	41	1	1
139	DFC	Newry	John Quinn	146	2	2
141	DFC	Public Record Office	Angela Campbell	59	1	1
142	DFC	Regeneration	Carol Curran	212	3	3
143	DFC	Strategic Policy & Resources Branch	Brendan Callan	120	2	2
145	DFC	Universal Credit	Anthony Rice	161	2	2
146	DFC	Engaged Communities	Ruth Bonnar	76	1	1
170	ACNI/NIS/PLTUM	Arts Council, NI Screen, Armagh Planetarium	Gavin O'Connor/ Allison Courtney	49	1	1
171	AFBI	AFBI & Departmental CS Scientific Officers	Paul Soto-Kelly	568	5	5
172	AMK/EUREST/ G4S/MCG/ NOONAN/ SERCO/SODEXO/ ORCHARDVILLE SOCIETY	Cleaning & Catering Contractors	Vacant	212	3	3
173	CC/COPNI/ CVSNI/EC/GCCN/ NICCY/VSS	Charity Commission, Commissioner for Older People, Commission for Victims & Survivors, Equality Commission, General Consumer Council, Commission for Children & Young People, Victims & Survivors Service	Graham Smith/ Samantha Murdock/ Claire McCloskey/ Rachel Woods	132	2	2



174	CITB	Construction Industry Training Board	Joyce Savage	13	1	1
175	EONI/NIAUR/NIHRC/NIPSO	Electoral Office, Utility Regulator, Human Rights Commission, Public Service Ombudsman	Ivanka Antova/ Piotr Rekawet	108	2	2
176	HSE	Health & Safety Executive	Gareth McCrory	62	1	1
177	INI	Invest NI	Sharon Atkinson	190	2	2
179	ITI/LA/SEUPB/TIL/USA/WI	Cross Border Bodies	Nuala Reilly/ Andrew King/ Marion Thompson	71	1	1
180	LRA	Labour Relations Agency	Desmond Woods	63	1	1
181	NIAS	NI Assembly	Janice Thompson	203	3	3
182	NIWL	NI Water	Deborah Adegoye	403	4	4
183	NMNI	Ulster Folk & Transport Museum	Conor Hanna	116	2	2
184	NMNI	Ulster Museum	Oisin Hill	113	2	2
185	NSL	NSL	Vacant	83	2	2
186	PSNI	Belfast City	Joyce McCready	753	7	7
187	PSNI	Districts B,C, D, E	Tara Nugent	179	2	2
188	PSNI	Districts F, G, H	Kimberley Hill	202	3	3
189	PSNI	Districts J,K, L	Sinead McCormick	218	3	3
190	PSNI	ICS	Michael Kewley	112	2	2
191	PSNI	Scientific Support	Ian Gibson	119	2	2
200	SPNI	Sport NI	Christine Rea	63	1	1
201	TAO	The Audit Office	Colette Connolly	77	1	1
202	TNI	Tourism NI	Alice Murray	66	1	1
203	UDF	United Dairy Farmers	Vacant	18	1	1



Public Officers' Group

BRANCH	EMPLOYING AUTHORITY	BRANCH LOCATION	BRANCH SECRETARY	MEMBERS AND VOTES	PO GROUP DELEGATES	NIPSA DELEGATES
501	NIHE	Housing Centre, Castlereagh Office, Lisburn, Dairy Farm, Shankill Office, DLO Glengall Street & Stockman's Way	Sheelagh Agnew	666	6	6
503	NIHE	Lanyon Place	Christina Girvan	206	3	3
508	NIHE	Craigavon, Armagh, Portadown, Banbridge, Lurgan & DLO Portadown	Oisin McQuillan	147	2	2
509	NIHE	Derry/Londonderry, Strabane & DLO Pennyburn	Elizabeth Lynch	193	2	2
510	NIHE	Ballymena, Larne, Carrickfergus, Antrim, Newtownabbey, DLO Pennybridge, Rathenraw & Rosslea	Louise Carey	133	2	2
511	NIHE	Downpatrick & Newry	Kara Woods	58	1	1
512	NIHE	Enniskillen, Omagh, Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt	Gary Hemphill/ William Loane	103	2	2
513	NIHE	Newtownards & Bangor	Brian Cassidy/ Christopher O'Neill	99	2	2
515	NIHE	Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Limavady, DLO Coleraine, Ballymoney	Kelly Harbinson	50	1	1
516	Education Authority	Belfast Region	Jane Scott	1169	11	11
517	Education Authority	South Eastern Region	Frances O'Neill	2170	21	21
519	Education Authority	North Eastern Region	Eamonn Lavery	1299	12	12
521	Education Authority	Southern Region	Helena McSherry	3213	32	32
522	Education Authority	Western (Derry Area) Region	Vacant	353	3	3
523	Education Authority	Western (Omagh Area) Region	Vacant	665	6	6
524	Queen's University/ Stranmillis College	Belfast	George Brownlee/ Michael Nolan	287	3	3
526	City Council	Belfast	Mary McKenna	493	4	4



527	Borough Council	Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	David Mayers	474	4	4
528	Borough Council	Mid and East Antrim	Nigel Devine	302	3	3
529	Borough Council	Antrim and Newtownabbey	Adrian Porter	202	3	3
530	Borough Council	Ards and North Down	Dawn Phillips/ Lorraine Ringland	268	3	3
531	District Council	Newry, Mourne and Down	Patricia Manley	375	3	3
532	District Council	Derry City and Strabane	Karen Henderson	469	4	4
533	District Council	Fermanagh and Omagh	Andrew Boyd	200	2	2
534	City Council	Lisburn and Castlereagh	Julie Casson	232	3	3
535	Borough Council	Causeway Coast and Glens	Sharon McQuillan	210	3	3
536	GLL	Greenwich Leisure Ltd	Sharon Jordan	68	1	1
540	District Council	Mid - Ulster	Phelim Marrion	269	3	3
545	NILGOS/LGSC	Belfast	Julian Coffey	38	1	1
546	NICCEA	Belfast	Melanie Mulligan	170	2	2
547	NI Fire and Rescue Service	Province Wide	Ciara McCloskey	131	2	2
548	Vuntary Housing Associations	Province Wide	Vacant	98	2	2
549	Radius Housing Association	Province Wide	Vacant	245	3	3
551	FE Colleges	Belfast Metropolitan College	Maira Morton	167	2	2
552	FE Colleges	South Eastern Regional College	Alison Ferguson	163	2	2
553	FE Colleges	Northern Regional College	Vacant	81	2	2
554	FE Colleges	Southern Regional College	Karen Cosgrave	138	2	2
555	FE Colleges	South West College	Matthew Markey	136	2	2
556	FE Colleges	North West Regional College	Sean O'Neill	104	2	2
560	Libraries NI	Province Wide	John McKeegan	396	3	3
701	Business Services Organisation	Province Wide	Patricia Quinn/Cathi Tregaskis	860	8	8
703	Business Services Organisation	IT	Brian Crawford	117	2	2
704	NI Ambulance Service	Province Wide	George Preston	113	2	2



725	Voluntary Sector	Province Wide	Adam Murray	266	3	3
726	Extern	Province Wide	Sean Conlon	114	2	2
727	Disability Action	Province Wide	Vacant	53	1	1
728	Credit Unions	Province Wide	Vacant	4	1	1
730	HSC Trust	Belfast	Tanya Killen/ Damien Maguire	2299	22	22
731	HSC Trust	Northern	Fionnuala Anderson/ Sabine Antal	1829	18	18
732	HSC Trust	South Eastern	Debbie Barlow	1135	11	11
733	HSC Trust	Southern	Joanne Martin/ Gerardette McVeigh	2381	23	23
734	HSC Trust	Western	John Havord, Tony McLaughlin	1720	17	17
735	Charities	Province Wide	Vacant	63	1	1



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