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General Secretary Carmel Gates on the picket line at Laganside Court during a massive day of action on 26th April 2023. Across Northern Ireland NIPSA members took to more than 90 picket lines in their bid to secure a decent and fair pay rise for civil servants

NIPSA 'very proud' of brokering 6% pay deal as branches consulted on follow-up pay claim

NIPSA is "very proud" of successfully negotiating an above-inflation pay award of 6% following years of austerity.

General Secretary Carmel Gates made the comments as the union's Civil Service Executive Committee met to discuss the 2026 pay claim and mooted the possibility of brokering a multi-year pay deal.

She told *NIPSA Reports*: "We're very proud of our success in this recent award. Restoring civil servants' pay after years of austerity has been – and continues to be – a top priority for us."

"Securing the 6% pay award has resulted in us reversing some of the real pay cuts civil servants have endured for a decade. But we're acutely aware that more has to be done to redress the balance. We know that a gap of around 9% still exists for most grades."

Carmel also highlighted a number of other gains made in the last set of negotiations, including an increase in maternity and adoption leave.

She said: "This increase from 18 to 26 weeks is something we have

argued for over many years – and we're delighted to get this over the line. Another bonus is the change in the pay year to April that means our members will get another pay award in April 2026.

"And we also challenged the 90-day rule – so that now newly-promoted staff will get their increments at the

due date without the need to have 90 days satisfactory service at the grade."

At the meeting, Executive Committee members reflected on both the success of the 20-month deal brokered for 2024-26 and on Finance Minister John O'Dowd's recent proposal for NICS trade unions to

submit a three-year pay claim to match the department's three-year budget from April 2026.

Carmel said: "In our discussions, we took into account the 2024 Civil Service conference policy 'to explore strategies including multi-year pay deals', and of course in consulting with members on the way forward."

The crux of the claim, to be discussed by members at branch level, is:

- Inflation plus a 3% increase on all scale points and allowances each year for three years (1st April 2026 – 31st March 2029).

- The amalgamation of the AA and AO grades and for the new combined grade to have a single point scale.

- The removal of the bottom point on all other pay scales (EOII to Grade 6).

Considering the duration of such a deal – and the impact wider economic changes (such as a steep rise in inflation) could have on its value over time – a re-opening clause would be a key element of any agreement.



DGS Maria Morgan joins a picket line in Derry during the 26th April 2023 strike

Starmer given 'bloody nose' at DPAC protest



NIPSA has pledged its "absolute, continued, and solid support" for activist group Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) in its fight against plans to slash PIP and Universal Credit benefits.

General Secretary Carmel Gates made the commitment as she spoke at a protest organised by DPAC outside the Erskine House offices of Secretary of State Hilary Benn in central Belfast on 9th July.

The 'Welfare Not Warfare' protest came days after the Starmer government was forced to shelve plans to cut back on the personal independence payment in a bid to avert a humiliating backbench rebellion.

Carmel congratulated DPAC for giving Starmer "a bloody nose" and making him reconsider the proposals. "We know that you're going to go on to achieve more – and NIPSA will be standing with you," she said.

DPAC activist Tony O'Reilly, who recently gave an impassioned speech to NIPSA's annual conference in Enniskillen, warned about the impact changes to Universal Credit would have on future claimants.

He told protestors: "This will take £200 and more from people every month. The severe disability criteria they're establishing [are] going to wipe from many of us the support that we need."

Describing the cuts as "cruel and immoral", he predicted it would expose many people to the "cold, harsh reality of benefit sanctions and ongoing harassment to get into work".

NIPSA's Tina Creaney, a seconded officer at DFC, said



NIPSA's Tina Creaney (above) and DPAC activist Tony O'Reilly spoke at rally



Padraig Mulholland: 'Fantastic job'

members in her area who administered the benefits were totally opposed to the cuts. "We stand by everybody who is going to fight [these cuts]. We know that this isn't the way to help the

economy. They need to tax the billionaires, they need to tax the millionaires, and that's where they're going to get the money – not from us, not from the working poor, not from the disabled people, and not from those who need it most."

Former NIPSA rep Roger Clifford, speaking on behalf of Craigavon Trades Council, pointed out that the top 1% of the UK population had a combined wealth of £2.8 trillion, yet the government was putting in place policies that made poorer people pay more.

"They look at people on benefits, at people on the absolute bread line, and what do they say? They say, 'Oh, that's where we'll get the money from – we'll make these people poorer'."

Deputy General Secretary Padraig Mulholland warned cuts to Universal Credit would cost lives. While acknowledging a "partial victory" had been achieved with the Starmer climbdown, he insisted that the campaign was not over.

"This campaign should continue," Padraig told the protest. "The trade union movement should stand beside our comrades in DPAC, and we should fight through until we have real justice for people with disabilities."

Congratulating DPAC on a "fantastic job", he pointed out that "everywhere you go disabled people are getting organised" and suggested it was "a force our opponents should reckon [with]".

The trade union movement should stand beside our comrades in DPAC, and we should fight through until we have real justice for people with disabilities ”

Unions rally in battle to halt privatisation



'WE KNOW WHERE OUTSOURCING LEADS': NIPSA General Secretary Carmel Gates speaks at the 'Protect our Leisure Services' rally outside Bangor City Hall on 27th August

More than 150 people took part in a 'Protect our Leisure Services' demonstration outside Bangor City Hall Council Offices on 27th August.

The protest organised by NIPSA, GMB, and Unite saw council workers, their families, and service users of all ages gather in the plush grounds of Bangor Castle to hear union officials argue for outsourced services to be brought back under public ownership across the borough.

Currently some services are run by SERCO, a private outsourcing firm, through a legacy contract which is set to end in 2028.

Ards and North Down Council is considering a change in how it runs leisure services and councillors are to meet on 18th September to decide on which course to take.

Three options are on the table: to continue to run some council facilities in-house while outsourcing others; to fully outsource all facilities, or to bring all outsourced services back in-house.

NIPSA, along with Unite and GMB, is strongly in favour of the third option and all three have called for a return to a fully in-house, publicly-run service.

General Secretary Carmel Gates, who spoke at the gathering, pointed out that taking services back in-house was a "no-brainer".

She said: "It's better for staff who will receive better terms and conditions, it will be more affordable for service users, and better for the



MAKING THE CASE FOR PUBLIC SERVICES: All-female negotiating team is (from left) GMB's Kellie O'Dowd, Joanne McWilliams of Unite, and NIPSA official Janette Murdock

whole community who will be healthier and happier as a result."

Carmel continued: "And we know where outsourcing leads – services become more run down over time as profit becomes the principal driving force trumping the interests of staff and the wider community. Long-term investment is also sidelined – just look at the examples from across the water and in Belfast."

NIPSA HQ official Janette Murdock

said: "We want everything brought back in-house – to secure jobs and the terms and conditions of our members.

"But there's also a knock-on effect to the ratepayer, because services that are outsourced are run for profit – and that means the actual provision is dearer for the ratepayer.

"So it's about bringing services in-house so that we can have affordable leisure services for the community."

Janette told *NIPSA Reports* she was

overjoyed with the number of people who turned out to the protest.

She said: "It's not just union members here, it's members of the community and local groups as well. We've got lots of kids here too – because it's about their future and about them being able to access these services."

And Carmel Gates claimed the turnout at the protest demonstrated how much locals were engaged on the issue.

"I think it would behove the politicians to take notice and act accordingly. I hope those inside Bangor Castle heard our chants of 'No Privatisation!' during the rally. And here's a wee reminder to councillors, we'll be back – and in full voice – on 18th September."

Unite official Joanne McWilliams, who spoke at the demo, also expressed "delight" with the attendance at the demo.

She said: "This proves there is a strong feeling in the community to keep services public, and also to bring services that have been outsourced back in again.

"I was talking to people [at the protest] and they said they loved leisure services that were affordable, and that they had a positive impact on their physical health and on their mental well being."

Joanne continued: "They actually cornered a few of the councillors and asked them how they were going to vote [on 18th September]. The



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councillors were very vague. I find it bizarre that public representatives don't realise that they are accountable to the public who vote for them."

And she appealed to locals to make their voices heard on this issue by contacting their councillors.

"Leisure services should not be run for profit, because ratepayers already pay for them through their rates. The direction of travel in England is that services that have been privatised – in Haringey, in Tower Hamlets, in Warrington, in Liverpool – have all been brought back in because it's better for the community and it's better for jobs."

But there's also a knock-on effect to the ratepayer, because services that are outsourced are run for profit – and the means the actual provision is dearer for the ratepayer

– Janette Murdock, NIPSA





FEARLESS FIVE: Ruaidhri, William, Jane, Tina, and Brian in the kitting up room



SAFETY INSPECTION: The NIPSA volunteers harness up and put on their helmets while BAC staffers Stephen and Vicki double check all is well



Going over the top for a good cause...

FIVE brave NIPSA members took the plunge for a worthy cause when they abseiled down the front of the Europa Hotel in central Belfast on 14th September.

The big-hearted volunteers – William Brooks, Tina Creaney, Ruaidhri O'Sandair, Jane Scott and Brian Crawford – had stepped forward (or should that be stepped back?) on a wet autumn Sunday to raise funds for the union's Developing World Fund.

They were cheered on from below by a colourful NIPSA contingent waving flags and sheltering under umbrellas as well as by other well-wishers and passers-by.

William, Tina, Ruaidhri, Jane and Brian were placed in the capable hands of Belfast Activity Centre staff who advised them on abseiling basics as well as the safe use of the equipment and harnesses.

They were then escorted to the top of the iconic 167ft building, stepping off a kickboard at the edge of the roof before lowering themselves down 12

floors on to the mezzanine level.

First down was Jane, who told *NIPSA Reports*: "At the start, you had to lean back over the edge on a rickety board and they made you pose for photographs."

"The fella at the top [feeding out the rope] controls your descent so when I was going a bit fast at one point, he slowed it up. The hardest bit was actually getting out of the harness at the bottom and trying to stand up cause my legs were very shaky."

Tina agreed with Jane: "It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. At the start you're looking behind you and thinking, 'Oh, my God!' and then it just starts to come naturally."

She added: "I was 55 yesterday and this is what I've done. I am going to the pub now to celebrate!"

Ruaidhri found the whole experience "exhilarating" and praised



the "brilliant" BAC staff "who made it easy for us". "Pity about the weather as we got a bit of a soaking on the way down but at least the wind wasn't blowing and turning you into a wrecking ball!"

Brian said: "I wanted to push my limits and earn some money at the same time for a good cause".

He added: "This is a brilliant cause. I have been in NIPSA for 26 years since I was 18 and the Developing World Fund has helped so many all over the globe."

"This was such a great day out with friends and comrades who I've known for years. It was an amazing experience," said William, "but the most amazing thing about it is the cause that we're doing it for – the Developing World Fund."

NIPSA Assistant Secretary Catherine Arkinson, who helped organise the event, said: "It was really inspiring to see our brave volunteers abseiling down the Europa, while those of us who were less brave cheered on from below."

"So far they have raised more than £1,200 which is absolutely amazing because 100% of the money received by the Developing World Fund will go directly towards future self-help projects selected by the charity."

For more than 30 years, NIPSA's Developing World Fund has supported a range of worthy projects across the world. And Catherine insists that "journey will continue".

She continued: "The charity's core aim is to support sustainable projects that assist people suffering from poverty, sickness or distress."

"These projects seek to improve the health and well being of people and communities through direct care, agriculture and livestock initiatives,

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DEVELOPING WORLD FUND: ABSEIL EUROPA



SATISFYING: Thumbs up from Brian



DID IT: William's salute at the bottom



THRILLING: Tina is guided back on to the mezzanine level



JOB WELL DONE: BAC staffer Vicki congratulates Jane



BUCKET LIST: William, Ruaidhri and Jane

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water and sanitation improvements, as well as the building of health infrastructure, and through health education and training."

Catherine, speaking on behalf of the NIPSA Global Solidarity Committee, added: "We want to thank Brian, Jane, Ruaidhri, Tina, and William for their bravery and for raising such a phenomenal amount for the NIPSA Developing World Fund which will allow us to continue our work in supporting and assisting others across the world."

Scan Me, Donate Now!



NEARLY THERE: Ruaidhri's power salute

Ways members can donate

● **NIPSA JustGiving page:**

Members can make a one-off donation or can set up a regular monthly donation by visiting our JustGiving page NIPSA Global Solidarity and Developing World Fund -JustGiving or simply by scanning the QR code to the left.

● **Through Give as You Earn/Payroll giving (Payroll Deduction):**

Members can make a one-off donation or can set up a regular monthly donation via their employer's payroll by selecting NIPSA Global Solidarity Developing World Fund/NIPSA Developing World Fund.

● **Charities Aid Foundation**

(personal giving page) (for ALL members). Go to www.cafonline.org/personal-giving

● **Education Authority employees:** Giving Online.

● **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust employees:** Giving Online.

● Members can also contact their specific employer's payroll or HR department for further details in relation to the payroll deduction scheme available within their workplace.

219: deadly cost in Gaza of working in the media



Pictures: Kevin Cooper/Photoline

NIPSA General Secretary Carmel Gates has added her voice to the widespread condemnation of the Israeli military's targeting and killing of journalists and media workers in Gaza, calling it "particularly despicable".

According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) 219 journalists, photographers and members of TV production crews have been killed over 22 months of the conflict.

Overall, it's estimated that more than 65,000 people – the vast majority non-combatants – have lost their lives. Speaking at an NUJ vigil, Carmel told those gathered in Writers' Square, Belfast, that she stood as NIPSA general secretary in solidarity with the NUJ in highlighting the kill-

ing of journalists by the IDF.

The 26th August event was part of a series of solidarity actions organised by the NUJ across the UK, Ireland, and continental Europe and came a few days after at least 20 people were killed – including five journalists and media workers – in 'double tap' airstrikes on Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis.

Carmel said: "This is particularly despicable. The fact that Netanyahu spuriously described the killings in Nasser Hospital as a 'mishap' is disgraceful, given the Israelis make proud claims about 'precision strikes' – but when you look at the number of journalists killed, you realise that these are not accidents but the active targeting of journalists.

"While any death in Gaza is something that offends us and we mourn, there is something even more despicable when people are deliberately killed while doing their jobs – whether journalists or first responders or medical staff.

"And we have to stand in solidarity with all workers, particularly those who are being targeted because of their profession."

Brian Pelan, of the NUJ's Belfast and District Branch, who also spoke at the vigil, said: "The Palestinian journalists in Gaza deserve our full support because all they're trying to do is to report on what is happening – and for that, they are being slaughtered.

"We have to call for an end to the genocide. We have to build bigger

protests. We have to say to people across the world that the slaughter of Palestinian journalists and civilians in Gaza is wrong."

NUJ General Secretary Laura Davison said: "We do not accept the killing of journalists, wherever it takes place. We do not accept the targeting and murder of journalists. We do not accept impunity. We do not accept that death is a price to be paid [for doing your job]."

Making the comments at a 'virtual vigil' broadcast from London on 27th August, she added that the "world-wide outrage" and "reaction to these horrors" must lead to an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages and "an end to the cycle of violence".



IN SOLIDARITY: NIPSA General Secretary Carmel Gates spoke at the NUJ Vigil protest in Writers' Square, Belfast, on 26th August. Brian Pelan, of Belfast & District Branch NUJ (left) said: 'We have to call bigger protests and call for an end to this genocide'