SIPTU

SIPTU Public Administration and Community Division

Public Service Agreement Dispute 2026

MEMBER INFORMATION & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1 What is the current position in the Public Service Agreement dispute?

Following the failure of the Government to agree a new Public Service Agreement that adequately protects workers' living standards and addresses key issues including outsourcing and privatisation, SIPTU members across the Public Administration and Community Division have balloted for Industrial Action and Strike Action.

Ballot Results

	Local Authorities Sector	State Related Sector	Education Sector
Industrial Action	97% in favour	96% in favour	96% in favour
Strike Action	95% in favour	92% in favour	88% in favour

These overwhelming mandates demonstrate members' determination to secure a fair agreement that protects pay, public services and employment security.

Planned Action

It is intended that notice of Industrial Action will issue for action commencing on 30th September 2026. In the absence of a resolution to the dispute, the Division has also authorised:

- **24-hour Strike Action on 14th October 2026**
- **24-hour Strike Action on 21st October 2026**

Further updates will be provided to members as developments occur.

The State of Play

The Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 expired in June. As a result, public service unions have been balloting members on industrial action. A number of unions have now announced ballot results strongly in favour of taking industrial action, with ballots ongoing.

The ICTU Public Services Committee met on Friday 11th September and agreed to coordinate industrial action.

What is going on with talks with the Government?

There are currently no talks taking place. Preliminary engagement with the Government in June didn't convince union negotiators that living standards would be protected by the approach officials in the Department of Public Expenditure are taking to a new agreement.

Union negotiators have consistently said that Government must begin with a credible approach to pay, for 2026 onwards, that properly addresses the cost-of-living pressures facing public service workers, if they want another multi-annual pay agreement.

With no public service agreement in place, we are now in dispute with the Government, as the employer of public service workers.

Why aren't we going into talks when Government Ministers are saying they are open to talks?

Our position is that talks must have a clear purpose from the outset, including a credible approach to protecting living standards, which can only be achieved by addressing pay.

The failure to immediately address pay for 2026 onwards, is the primary reason that talks cannot progress.

In previous public service pay negotiations, pay has generally been the final item on the agenda, usually following a period of intense negotiations on public service reform and other issues. Unions have made it clear to Government that a different approach is needed in 2026, and that workers need certainty in uncertain times.

In recent years, public service pay has fallen significantly behind prices, by as much as 5%. In September 2026, the CSO advised that annual inflation is running at 3.7%, while pay improvements delivered in 2026 amount to an average increase of around 1.5% across the year. This means, at a minimum, pay improvement measures need to be implemented for the latter part of 2026.

The Government side has not accepted this point and was unwilling to commit to this approach in preliminary discussions.

Until unions can secure a commitment to an approach that prioritises these pay issues, talks cannot progress.

Why does the Minister for Public Expenditure, Jack Chambers keep saying his officials are ready to negotiate?

He has been using this line since June in order to deflect from the problem we've identified where pay doesn't keep up with inflation, in an attempt to generate uncertainty around the pay dispute and to try to draw us in to protracted talks without clear commitments to meaningfully address pay for 2026 onwards.

Will we enter into another multi-annual agreement?

Only if it adequately deals with cost of living first and satisfactorily addresses other priority matters too, like privatisation and outsourcing, working from home, and the impact of AI.

Why has Jack Chambers said wages have kept up with inflation?

He is cherry-picking a 'start date' and ignoring inflation during the austerity and pay restoration years. Our analysis clearly shows that inflation has wiped out recent increases, including the 2% from this year, as inflation is already over 3.7% for this year alone.

He has also said that lower paid workers have received increases more than inflation, is that true?

In the last pay agreement, unions negotiated a fixed monetary amount for some of the increases that meant lower paid workers got whichever was greater. For example, in February 2026, the increase was 1% or €500, whichever was better for the worker. Chambers has failed to explain this and is instead using pay rates near minimum wage levels to make that assertion, however that doesn't give a clear picture as the national minimum wage has increased by even more. In fact, the Low Pay Commission has recommended that it should be increased by another 5.9% next January.

How many unions are involved?

There are 19 unions with members working in the public service who are part of a group called the Public Services Committee (PSC) of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

Will all unions be taking industrial action at the same time?

The PSC is clear that a coordinated approach is essential. While sectoral differences will lead to some variance in what actions are most appropriate for some workers, where possible, industrial action will take place at the same time and be of a similar nature. For example, targeted work to rule and non-cooperation actions will begin from Wednesday 30th September.

PSC affiliates have also agreed to co-ordinate national strike action on **Wednesday 14th October 2026** with pickets to be placed on workplaces, and if necessary, a second-strike day has been scheduled for Wednesday 21st October.

A strike puts workers under pressure too, why are we taking this approach?

Government haven't changed their rhetoric since June, they don't seem to believe we're serious, so we need to show them that we are. Public service workers will be commencing industrial action from Wednesday 30th September. In many cases these actions will be indefinite until the dispute is resolved.

What about the Budget?
We will have to wait until the Budget is announced on Tuesday 6th October to understand what impact measures in it will have on the cost-of-living crisis.

Ministers have made comments in the media about potential tax cuts to benefit workers. Anything they do will apply across the economy, and the first thing they will have to address is their own failure to index tax bands and credits last year. However, pay bargaining is the only way for workers to be sure that their pay can keep up with the cost of living.

In this dispute Government are both the employer and the state's policy maker. We can't let them confuse these two roles. The Government is the State's largest employer, and if it refuses to address pay falling behind inflation, it emboldens other employers to take the same approach, putting workers' pay across Ireland at risk.

Will every union be asked to do the same thing?
Each union will determine the most effective form of industrial action for its members; however, unions are working together to ensure that action takes place at the same time, where possible, to maximise the impact and demonstrate how vital public service workers are.

What is industrial action?
There are many forms of industrial action. Industrial disputes often have several phases, with different activities and tactics being used during different phases. When a decision is taken to move to the next stage this is called 'escalation' and members are informed as to what the next form of action will be.

Strikes, or work stoppages, are typically the most significant or high profile; however more targeted forms of industrial action can be highly effective.

These include:

- Work to rule, this means workers strictly adhere to the duties out lined in their contracts and do not do any additional tasks or duties.
- Refusing to cover the work of a vacant post.
- A ban on overtime, this means only working your exact contractual hours.
- Refusing to engage with specific systems such as IT systems, administrative systems, or payment systems.
- Picketing, this means demonstrating outside your workplace.
- Work stoppage or strikes. These can be of varying duration, i.e. several hours or several days or indefinite.

How will my employer know that I am taking industrial action?
All employers have been served an official notice of industrial action, in writing, by the appropriate union. This is a legal requirement under the 1990 Industrial Relations Act.

The Industrial Relations Act requires one week's notice of industrial action. In some employments, the collective agreement specifies two weeks notice.

Will there be any exceptions?
Sometimes 'derogations' are granted during industrial action. A derogation means that a certain type of work, or worker, is exempt from the union instruction. Usually these are only granted when maintaining the industrial action could have life threatening consequences.

Will I be penalised for taking industrial action?
Trade union members in Ireland are legally protected when they take part in industrial action, if that action has been approved by a ballot of members. Simply put, you cannot lose your job for taking industrial action

2 What Industrial Action will SIPTU members be taking?
From 30th September 2026, SIPTU Public Administration and Community Division members will engage in the following forms of Industrial Action:

1. **Work to Rule**
   Members will work strictly within their contracted hours, grade, job description, agreed staffing levels and established procedures.
2. **Refusal to Undertake Duties Outside Grade**
   Members will not perform duties assigned to higher, lower or vacant grades and will not absorb duties arising from unfilled posts.
3. **Refusal to Engage with External Contractors and Consultants**
   Members will not participate in works, meetings, surveys, work shops, interviews or reviews conducted by external contractors, consultants or consultancy-led projects.
4. **Withdrawal of Goodwill**
   Members will cease all informal workplace arrangements, voluntary flexibility, unpaid additional responsibilities and informal cover arrangements.
5. **Non-Cooperation with Redeployment Initiatives**
   Members will not cooperate with non-voluntary redeployments, relocations or reassignments associated with organisational change, restructuring or service reconfiguration.
6. **Non-Cooperation with New Work Practices**
   Members will not participate in the implementation of new work practices, productivity measures, revised working methods or service redesign programmes.
7. **Non-Cooperation with Digitalisation and Technology Projects**
   Members will not participate in the introduction, testing or implementation of new electronic devices, mobile technologies, applications, digital reporting systems, automation projects or technology- driven work changes.
8. **Non-Cooperation with Change Management and Modernisation Programmes**
   Members will withdraw cooperation from organisational reform programmes, workforce modernisation initiatives, restructuring projects, pilot programmes and efficiency drives.
9. **Refusal to Participate in Additional Data Collection and Reporting**
   Members will complete only statutory and contractual reporting requirements and will not participate in additional management information gathering, performance monitoring, benchmarking or non-statutory reporting exercises.
10. **Withdrawal from Non-Statutory Committees and Working Groups**
    Members will withdraw from project boards, working groups, steering committees, taskforces, implementation groups and other non-essential forums.

Important Note Regarding Overtime
At this stage, **the Industrial Action does not include an overtime ban**. Members should continue to work authorised overtime arrangements unless otherwise advised by SIPTU. Any future escalation of the dispute will be communicated directly to members through official SIPTU channels.

3 Why is SIPTU taking this action?
SIPTU members are seeking:

- A fair pay settlement that protects living standards against rising costs.
- Protection against privatisation and outsourcing of public services.
- Protection of public service jobs and service delivery.
- Meaningful engagement on workplace change, technological developments and modernisation initiatives.
- Respect for collective bargaining and agreed industrial relations processes.

The action being taken reflects the clear democratic mandate provided by members through national ballots.

4 Where can members get further information?
Members should:

- Contact their Workplace Representative or SIPTU Organiser.
- Monitor official SIPTU communications.
- Attend workplace and Section meetings where updates on the dispute will be provided.