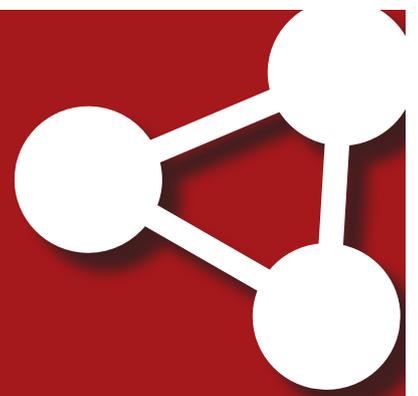


FRAMEWORK FOR NEW PUBLIC SECTOR PAY AGREEMENT



Sinn Féin

The case for a new pay agreement

The issue of pay equality for post-2011 entrants is a fundamental one facing the public sector. It has led to industrial action on the part of teachers and gardaí, with nurses and health workers also voicing their concerns. The government has no plan to address this issue outside of divisive sectoral agreements with certain unions already within the Lansdowne Road Agreement. There is no commitment from the government to allow for

equal pay for equal work across the public sector. Given the rise in industrial action to date, it is not tenable that this process will only begin in two years' time, after the end of the Lansdowne Road Agreement in September 2018.

Separate to this is the issue of pay restoration. Currently there is no roadmap in place for fair and timely restoration. The plan needs to be in place before Budget 2018 is announced in October 2017.

Background

There were ten major developments in public sector pay rates, pension rates, allowances and productivity measures from October 2008 to July 2016. Most, but not all, of the pay cuts occurred under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) acts 2009-2015. Collectively, public sector workers have had over €12 billion taken from their pay on top of working an additional 15 million hours a year.

Public sector workers have suffered on average a 15 percent cut in pay. On top of this, new entrants from 1 January 2011 start on a pay scale that is on average 10 percent lower than the rest of the workforce.

The cuts in investment, recruitment and wages have meant that those who remain within the

public sector are forced to compensate for reduced services with longer hours and less resources.

The drive to cut funding to social services and capital investment has left frontline workers having to pick up the pieces, working more hours with drastically reduced resources, while more and more of the problems caused by the crisis are dumped on their doorstep.

It is an impossible task, one that is shown by the constant headlines of waiting lists, homelessness, decayed roads and creaking public transport. And this is as a result of a crisis caused not by public sector workers but by the catastrophic errors of our private financial system and its esteemed developer clients.



A Framework For a New Agreement

Any new pay agreement must set out a road-map for the unwinding of FEMPI legislation. It must tackle in a cogent and coherent way the inequality created by FEMPI.

It should be noted that even under pay restoration those on less than €30,000 would see

Unwinding of FEMPI legislation

The emergency legislation known as FEMPI will have been in place for almost ten years by the time the Lansdowne Road Agreement comes to an end. The next public sector agreement should negotiate the fair and timely unwinding of the legislation and its removal from the statute books.

The Lansdowne Road Agreement

Pay equalisation for post-2011 entrants

Sinn Féin believes that the public sector needs to return to a single-tier pay system and that a new agreement should achieve equal pay for equal work. This should be listed as a priority for the next budget.

Sinn Féin is committed to shrinking the

The public sector to be a living wage employer

Ireland has one of the highest rates of low pay in the developed world, and this is one of the key factors behind the latest wave of mass emigration of the under 35s since 2011. Sinn Féin is committed

Pay increases for low to middle income workers

The fall in pay rates was greater in the public sector than in the private sector, despite media rhetoric stating the contrary, and it is legitimate to expect that low pay is tackled as conditions improve.

A simple scrapping of FEMPI will not tackle this issue. For example, such a blanket pay

little to no gains. Sinn Féin would argue for actual pay rises for this cohort of workers.

A commitment to equal pay for equal work should begin in 2017 with the restoration of certain allowances for post-2011 nurses, doctors, teachers and gardaí.

disproportionately benefited those over €65,000, giving full restoration of the cuts in pay imposed as part of the 2013 Haddington Road Agreement. As those under €65,000 saw minimal pay restoration, they have the greater outstanding claim in terms of pay justice and should be given first priority in any new pay agreement.

wage differential between the lowest and the highest earners in the public sector. We are also committed to addressing the gender pay gap across the economy including within public sector employment.

to the introduction of a living wage as a key measure to stem the tide of low paid work, and we believe as the largest employer in the state the government must lead the way.

restoration would give a person on €25,000 a 0.2% increase in gross pay while those on €185,000 would receive a 28.65% increase.

Those on low to middle incomes need a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. The details of this should be developed as part of any new pay agreement.



Right to Access to Industrial Relations Machinery

The government must move to immediately introduce legislation to allow gardaí and defence forces access to the Labour Court

/ Workplace Relations Commission and to organise collectively with full trade union rights.

Investing in our public services to ease the burden on frontline services

Frontline public sector workers in health, education, justice, transport, heritage and maintenance have had to deal with a system that has had its budget cut to the bone. The voluntary redundancy programme and recruitment embargo has resulted in a stark fall in frontline public sector numbers with a consequent deterioration in the stress levels, workload and environment of frontline workers.

These intolerable working conditions are making the retention of staff, not to mention recruitment, extremely difficult in key sectors. Our class sizes are too big – we need to hire more teachers. We have too many people on hospital trolleys – we need to hire more doctors and nurses.

In some cases capital investment that is necessary for the delivery and upkeep of vital social and commercial services has been cut by up to 84 percent. This has meant that elements of the existing infrastructure has fallen into disrepair, while at the same time necessary expansion due to demographic pressures was put on hold, with both policies leading to bottlenecks in services and significant structural damage.

Agency Workers

A moratorium on recruitment across all areas of the public sector was introduced in March 2009. It created a health system propped up by agency staff on salaries many times that of permanent staff.

Certain agency doctors can cost a hospital approximately €1,000 a day. In one year alone, 50 agency doctors each earned approximately €300,000.

Launching their pre-Budget submission for 2016, the Irish Hospital Consultants Association made the case that an agency consultant is twice the price of a

These bottlenecks can be seen in health, housing, education, transport and communication, with structural damage most visible in our secondary roads, heritage sites, utilities and harbours. Public sector workers are expected to pick up the pieces, putting significant hurdles in their way and affecting their ability to do the best job they can.

When we invest in our public service, we are investing in ourselves as a community. We are investing in our children and in our future. The issue of pay in the public service is one of maintaining services and key workers; of recognising the sacrifices public sector workers have made since 2008; and of tackling issues of morale caused by the deeply unequal two-tier pay system that currently exists. Increased public expenditure is also required to improve and expand our public services which benefits both public and private sector workers and their families alike. The pace at which public sector pay will be increased and restored will be in balance with improvements to working conditions through increased investment.

long-serving permanent consultant and three times the price of a new consultant.

According to the HSE Performance Report for the month of January 2015, it spent €27 million on agency staff. In January 2013 it had spent €19 million.

We need to ensure that the HSE reduces reliance on agency staff and makes permanent posts attractive for qualified applicants. The current approach is clearly costing us dearly, and not just financially.



Conclusion

Four key issues shape and inform Sinn Féin's approach to public pay policy – pay justice, equality, restoration and recognition.

We see Lansdowne Road as a lame duck agreement. There is now a clear necessity for a new public pay agreement that is built upon fairness and pay certainty for public servants.

Sinn Féin is fully committed to fair pay and conditions, and to the realisation of equal pay for equal work within the public sector.

We acknowledge that for those on low to middle incomes in the public sector, pay restoration alone will not meet their genuine demands for a pay rise.

Sinn Féin knows that without progressively addressing the primary grievances of public sector workers, currently driving industrial unrest, any new agreement will be as fatally flawed as Lansdowne Road.

These two elements are:

- » *Equal pay for equal work.*
- » *A clear pathway to pay restoration.*

Furthermore, Sinn Féin recognises and supports the 2014 European Court ruling which acknowledged that gardaí have the right to organise within trade unions and to access the State's industrial relations machinery.

A strong and properly funded & resourced public sector is crucial to both social and economic progress of the nation. An integral step in achieving this goal is to ensure that those working in the sector enjoy equitable remuneration, conditions and certainty. This would help to guarantee the sustainability of effective and response public services, which the Irish people both need and deserve.

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