



Prison Service
Pay Review Body

Prison Service Pay Review Body

Tenth Report on
Northern Ireland 2018

Executive Summary

Chair: Jerry Cope

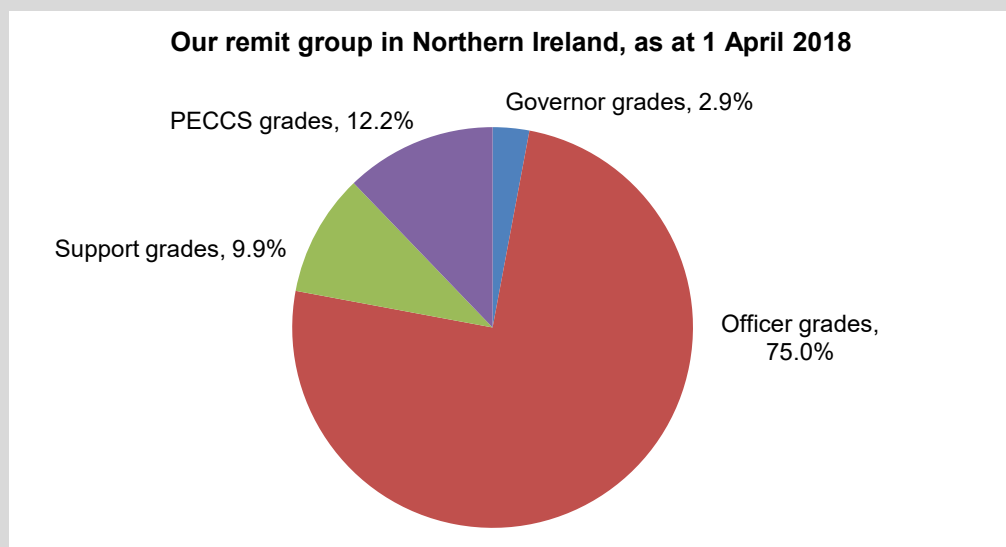
Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and our remit group

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is responsible for the operation and delivery of services within the Northern Ireland prison system. Its main statutory duties are set out in the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953. It is an Executive Agency of the Department of Justice. The overall aim of NIPS is to improve public safety by reducing the risk of re-offending through the management and rehabilitation of offenders in custody. The Service, through its staff, serves the community by keeping in secure, safe and humane custody those committed by the courts and, by working with prisoners and with other organisations, seeks to reduce the risk of re-offending. In so doing it aims to protect the public and to contribute to peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

There are three operational establishments in Northern Ireland. The prison population as at week ending 23 November 2018 was 1,420 (2.4% lower than a year earlier).

NIPS paybill costs relating to the remit group in 2017-18 were approximately £51.5 million (including social security and other pension costs).

As at 1 April 2018 there were 1,255 staff (headcount) in our remit, up from 1,229 a year earlier (an increase of 2.1%). The composition is below.



	<i>Headcount</i>
Governor grades	37
Officer grades ¹	941
Support grades ²	124
Prisoner Escort and Court Custody Service grades ³	153

Source: NIPS

Notes:

1. Comprising Custody Prison Officers, Main Grade Officers and Senior Officers.
2. Comprising Night Custody Officers and Operational Support Grades.
3. Comprising Prisoner Custody Officers, Senior Prisoner Custody Officers and Principal Prisoner Custody Officers.

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Summary

We recommend, with effect from 1 April 2018:

- That the pay scales for all grades are adjusted as set out in Appendix D. This would deliver consolidated increases of at least two per cent for staff in our remit group, after progression and this award.
- That the rate for the Supplementary Risk Allowance (SRA) is increased to £2,950 for all eligible staff.
- That the Governor on-call allowance is increased to the rates set out in Appendix E.
- The introduction of a three-tier, non-pensionable drivers' allowance for the Prisoner Escorting and Court Custody Service (PECCS) staff at the rates set out in Appendix E.
- That the rates for other allowances remain at their current levels (set out in Appendix E).

Specifically, we have followed the joint proposals for governor grades agreed between the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and the Prison Governors' Association (Northern Ireland) (PGA(NI)).

We also recommend that proposals are put to us as soon as possible to align the SRA with the Police Service Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA).

Introduction

In the absence of a Justice Minister in Northern Ireland, the then Department of Justice Permanent Secretary, Nick Perry CB, wrote to our Chair on 9 May 2018 asking us to make recommendations on pay for our remit group in NIPS from 1 April 2018. This report sets out these recommendations.

This is the first report we have produced for this remit group since 2013. Between 2014 and 2017, rather than ask us to make recommendations, NIPS

has engaged in collective bargaining with the trade unions on the annual pay award. We have nevertheless continued to keep up-to-date on the work of our remit group across that period and have visited staff in the establishments, in PECCS and held discussions with NIPS management and the unions annually, most recently in July 2018.

We are conscious that the timing of the activation letter, delayed by the absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, means that we are submitting this report long after the date on which its recommendations should take effect. We regret that this will mean staff in our remit group again receiving their pay awards later than they should. In considering our recommendations, we have looked in particular at data for April 2018, which is the start of the pay year covered by this report. We note that key indicators have not shifted dramatically at the time of writing.

Context

Consumer Prices Index inflation stood at 2.4% in April 2018 and is currently projected to rise slightly before gradually returning to the Bank of England target of 2.0%. The labour market in Northern Ireland has significant differences from the rest of the United Kingdom (UK), with a much greater proportion of public sector roles. Average earnings growth in Northern Ireland was lower than elsewhere in the UK, at around 1.5% for the year to April 2018.

In terms of public sector pay, 2018 saw the first increases above one per cent for many parts of the UK public sector since 2010 as the Government relaxed its policy of public sector pay restraint. Staff in many of the Pay Review Bodies' remit groups (including our remit group in England and Wales) saw headline consolidated increases of two per cent. The Northern Ireland Department of Finance public sector pay policy for 2018-19 aligned policy in Northern Ireland with that in the rest of the UK and allowed for awards to be greater than one per cent where justified by factors such as recruitment and retention.

Evidence

Against this backdrop, NIPS told us that it had maintained the Service while

delivering significant efficiency savings. However, staff leaving rates were now increasing, and NIPS felt that its overall employment offer was becoming less attractive. It pointed particularly to low morale within PECCS.

NIPS stated that its proposals this year were designed to reduce the disparity of the entry grade pay scales, provide a consolidated increase in overall remuneration and extend the pay scales to deliver future progression for some groups. They considered that this would reduce the recruitment costs associated with higher turnover and enable the Service to retain experienced staff. The proposals were also designed to deliver efficiencies by facilitating cross-deployment between support grades and PECCS.

We were pleased that NIPS and the PGA(NI) held discussions and reached agreement on the proposals for the governor grades. As a result, the PGA(NI) did not submit written evidence. We were disappointed not to receive evidence from the POA (Northern Ireland)¹ (POA(NI)) who declined our request for written and oral evidence in line with its 2015 conference decision. We also received a written submission from the Community trade union this year for the first time.

Our recommendations on pay and allowances for 2018

Our recommendations aim to address the key challenges we have identified this year: a lack of consolidated awards for operational staff since 1 April 2016; an emerging issue with recruitment and retention; and low levels of morale and motivation, particularly for the PECCS grades.

We were broadly supportive of NIPS's proposals (set out in detail in Chapter 3). We welcome the collaborative approach that NIPS took with the PGA(NI) and for this year saw no reason not to follow the proposals agreed for the governor grades. For the other groups of staff, our recommendations retain much of NIPS's proposals but differ in two fundamental respects.

Firstly, the NIPS evidence did not contain a headline award figure but rather proposed changes that targeted money to address differentials between certain

¹ The Professional Trades Union for Prison, Correctional and Secure Psychiatric Workers.

grades. We believe that all staff in post should receive consolidated increases of at least two per cent this year. We believe that NIPS staff should be treated similarly to others in the public sector following the relaxation of pay restraint and therefore that it is worth prioritising more of the available money this year to this end. We have consequently made recommendations that adjust NIPS's proposals to deliver this within the same cost envelope.

Secondly, while we support NIPS's proposal to extend or create new pay scales for some groups, we also support its aspiration to reduce the number of pay points in some scales. In our recommendations we have therefore restricted the scales for PECCS grades to four pay points, the same as NIPS proposed for the Night Custody Officer scale. This will mean quicker progression to the maximum and should assist in sustaining motivation, supporting NIPS to recruit and retain staff within these grades.

This is the first report that we have produced since our report that introduced the SRA at the end of 2013. Since then, the SRA has increased to £2,700. There was an acceptance from all parties this year, including NIPS, that the SRA should be aligned with the NITA. NIPS's proposals this year prioritised available funding for consolidated pay increases and it argued it was not yet affordable to align the SRA with the NITA. We accept this argument and recommend that the SRA should increase to £2,950. We also recommend that NIPS should present proposals to us as soon as possible to align the SRA with the NITA.

On other allowances, NIPS proposed increases to the Governor on-call allowance (introduced last year) and the introduction of a daily PECCS drivers' allowance. NIPS did not present proposals to us to increase any other allowances, so that available money could be targeted at basic pay increases this year. We agree with this approach and recommend the changes that NIPS propose.

Overall, we believe our recommendations retain the key elements of NIPS's proposals but place greater emphasis on NIPS's priority of delivering "fair and equitable" consolidated increases for all staff, in line with the increases seen

elsewhere in the UK public sector. They should result in the same total paybill increase as the NIPS's proposals – 2.8% overall – which NIPS management told us was affordable.

Looking ahead

We were disappointed by the absence of up-to-date evidence on the morale and motivation of staff in our remit group. We were pleased to note that NIPS proposes to implement the Northern Ireland Civil Service People Survey from 2018 and encourage it to do so such that its findings are available for our next round.

We had a number of other concerns this year to which we would like NIPS and the other parties to give consideration in their evidence for future rounds. These include: what might be done to reduce the significant number of people on what appears to be long-term temporary promotion; and whether the new performance management system is fit for purpose, in respect of the merits or otherwise of linking some element of pay to performance. We encourage NIPS to introduce formal exit interviews to gather more systematic evidence on why staff are leaving.

Finally, we remain very concerned at what now seem to be perennial delays to pay awards for NIPS staff. We encourage NIPS to consider giving us a remit for a period of longer than 12 months (with appropriate compensation) that would allow our process to return to its normal timetable and ultimately ensure staff were paid as close as possible to the due date. As part of this evidence we would also like the parties to consider whether a 1 April pay effective date is still appropriate given recent delays.

Jerry Cope (<i>Chair</i>)	Luke Corkill
Roberta Brownlee	Professor Andrew Dickerson
Mary Carter	Leslie Manasseh MBE
Nicholas Caton	Paul West QPM