



Prison Service  
Pay Review Body

# Prison Service Pay Review Body

Eleventh Report on  
Northern Ireland 2019

Executive Summary

*Chair:* Jerry Cope



## The Northern Ireland Prison Service and our remit group

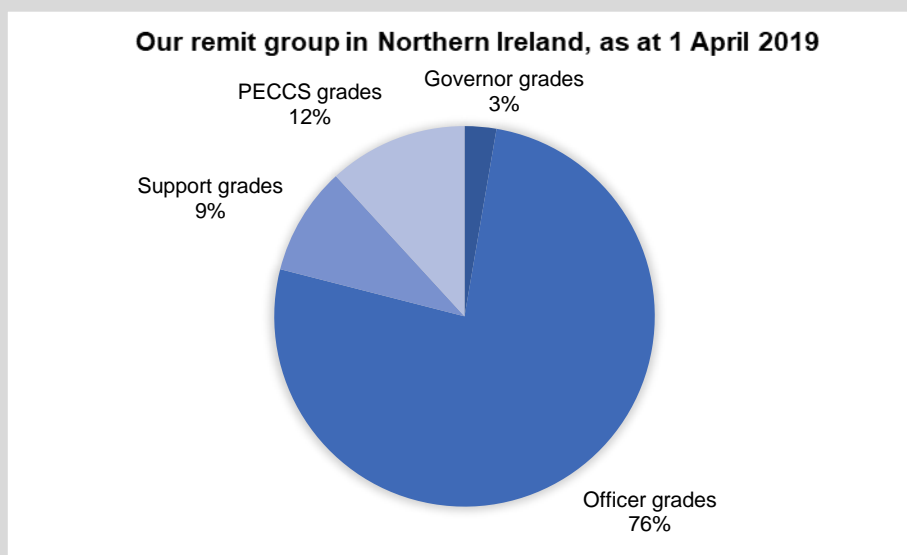
The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is responsible for the operation and delivery of services within the Northern Ireland prison system. Its main statutory duties are set out in the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953. It is an Executive Agency of the Department of Justice.

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 at 30 April 2019 was 1,486 (2.3% lower than a year earlier).

NIPS paybill costs relating to the remit group in 2018-19 were approximately £53.5 million (including social security and other pension costs).

At 1 April 2019 there were 1,261 staff (headcount) in our remit, up from 1,255 a year earlier. The composition is below.



	<i>Headcount</i>
Governor grades	34
Officer grades <sup>1</sup>	962
Support grades <sup>2</sup>	116
Prisoner Escorting and Court Custody Service grades <sup>3</sup>	149

Source: NIPS

Note:

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.

## Executive Summary

Our recommendations for 2019 are:

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend that with effect from 1 September 2019 the rate for the Supplementary Risk Allowance is aligned with the Police Service of Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance for all eligible staff. We also recommend that the Supplementary Risk Allowance changes in line with the Police Service of Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance on 1 September in future years. We will review this position in light of significant or structural changes.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that with effect from 1 April 2019 all staff in the Senior Officer pre-2002, Senior Officer post-2002, Main Grade Officer pre-2002, Main Grade Officer post-2002, Custody Prison Officer, Operational Support Grade, Night Custody Officer, Principal Prisoner Custody Officer, Senior Prisoner Custody Officer and Prisoner Custody Officer grades receive a consolidated, pensionable increase of £500. The pay scales and spot rates for these grades to be adjusted as set out in Appendix E.

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend that with effect from 1 April 2019 the Governor in Charge (Maghaberry), Governor in Charge (other posts), Head of Function and Head of Unit pay scales are adjusted as set out in Appendix E, delivering uplifts of 2.0% to all staff.

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend that from 1 April 2019 the governor on-call allowance rates are increased as set out in Appendix F.

### Introduction

This report sets out our recommendations on pay and allowances for operational prison staff from 1 April 2019. We have made recommendations for our remit group based on the evidence we received. The objectives we have set out to address this year are:

- To align the Supplementary Risk Allowance (SRA) to the Police Service of Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA), recognisingz this is a priority

for all the parties this year.

- To maintain the competitiveness of our remit group's pay scales in a tight labour market by providing all staff with a consolidated pay increase.
- To target pay at the lowest paid staff and recruitment grades to support the recruitment and retention of staff.
- To recognise the Northern Ireland Prison Service's (NIPS) affordability constraints.

We ask that the Government consider this year's recommendations and publish our report in good time to ensure staff receive their pay award without delay.

### **Role of the Prison Service Pay Review Body**

The Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) was established under statute in 2001 to examine and report on matters relating to the rates of pay and allowances to be applied in the public sector prison services in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland. It was set up by the Government as a compensatory mechanism for the removal of our remit group's right to take industrial action of any form. This was reinforced in the 336<sup>th</sup> report of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2005, in which the Government gave a clear and unequivocal commitment to depart from the PSPRB's recommendations only in "exceptional circumstances" and agreed that such recommendations would be complied with in practice. This commitment by the Government to the ILO remains.

### **Our remit and approach this year**

In the absence of a Justice Minister in Northern Ireland, the Permanent Secretary wrote to our Chair on 4 March 2019 asking us to commence our work for pay effective 1 April 2019. The letter asked us, when formulating our recommendations, to be cognisant of the Northern Ireland public sector pay guidance, to ensure the award is affordable within the existing NIPS budget, and to make further progress on addressing relativities and lower paid staff through a targeted approach to pay.

NIPS subsequently entered into negotiations with the Prison Governors' Association

Northern Ireland (PGA(NI)) and the POA Northern Ireland (POA(NI))<sup>1</sup> in an attempt to reach an agreement on pay for 2019. NIPS and the PGA(NI) successfully concluded negotiations, agreeing in principle proposals on governor grade pay scales and revised rates for the governor on-call allowance. This agreement was set out in the NIPS evidence to us, as was the final offer put to the POA(NI). Regrettably, the POA(NI) continues to maintain its position of not engaging with us and declined our invitations to submit written evidence and to attend an oral evidence session.

### **2019 pay award**

A key priority this year has been to align the SRA to the NITA, given the strength of feeling among staff, management and the unions about achieving parity. Operational staff working in NIPS face a threat when at work and also in their home life with their families. We are fully supportive of aligning the SRA to the NITA and concluded this is an appropriate way to target the money available this year. We believe that the best way to achieve parity is to align the SRA to the NITA from 1 September 2019, the pay settlement date of the NITA.

This year, we also wanted to recognise frontline staff at all grades who are continuing to carry out demanding roles in the face of difficult conditions. We have had to find a balance between achieving parity between the SRA and the NITA, and providing a reasonable and affordable consolidated award for staff. As part of the negotiations between NIPS and the POA(NI), the union requested that all uniformed grades be paid a flat rate consolidated increase, as opposed to a percentage increase. NIPS subsequently endorsed this in its proposals to us. We were persuaded by this approach as it delivers a fair award that benefits staff at all grades, while targeting pay at the lowest paid. We therefore recommend a consolidated increase of £500 for all uniformed grade pay scales and spot rates.

The joint proposals submitted by NIPS and the PGA(NI) this year ensure that all staff within the governor grades receive consolidated pay rises of two per cent and increases to the three governor on-call rates. We considered it was important to

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<sup>1</sup> The professional trades union for prison, correctional and secure psychiatric workers.

acknowledge the agreement between the two parties and there was no compelling reason for us not to follow this agreement. We therefore endorse the NIPS and PGA(NI) joint agreement as presented to us in the NIPS written evidence.

In its evidence to us this year, NIPS presented a number of proposals to extend pay scales for some groups of staff in 2020. We were concerned at the lack of evidence, rationale and market justification for some of these proposed changes and do not agree with the introduction of longer and uneven pay scales. We have therefore not endorsed these changes and believe that no significant changes should be made to the pay scales this year in advance of the completion of the grading review in March 2020.

### **Cost of our recommendations**

We were mindful to pay particular attention to the issue of affordability when determining our recommendations. NIPS informed us in its written evidence that its proposals (costed at 3.9% of paybill including progression) represented the absolute maximum of its budget and that it was confident that an award within this cost envelope was consistent with emerging pay guidelines and was affordable.

We have calculated that our recommendations will cost the same overall amount this year as the NIPS proposals and will therefore result in an overall cost of our recommendations of 3.9% of paybill including progression, or 2.4% when progression is excluded.

We are aware that NIPS faces financial pressures within its current resources, however we believe that there are strong value for money justifications for our recommendations. They strike a fair balance and represent an appropriate level of investment in operational prison staff for the contribution they have made over the past year, and will need to make going forward.

### **Looking ahead**

Looking ahead to the next pay round, we have asked the parties to address several issues, including those covering motivation, morale, recruitment and retention, in evidence for our 2020 report so that we may consider them more fully.

We regret that our remit group will receive their pay award later than usual again this year. We therefore ask the parties to consider a change in pay settlement date or a longer pay award mandate to enable us to deliver future reports in time for a 1 April implementation date.

We are keen to see the completion of the grading review before the next financial year begins and ask that NIPS take account of the findings in its evidence to us for the next round.

### **Conclusion**

The staff in our remit group are responsible for delivering a vital public service that carries an ongoing security threat, which affects the working and home lives of staff. Our overarching priority this year was to align the SRA to the NITA, and we anticipate this will be welcomed by all parties. We also consider that all staff should receive financial recognition for the difficult job they are doing in protecting prisoners in their care and the public. Our recommendations should contribute to improving the productivity and efficiency of the Service, assist with the recruitment and retention of staff, and thereby also support the Government's crime reduction and prisoner rehabilitation objectives.

Jerry Cope (*Chair*)

Mary Carter

Nicholas Caton

Luke Corkill

Professor Andrew Dickerson

Leslie Manasseh MBE

Paul West QPM