



Prison Service Pay Review Body

PRISON SERVICE PAY REVIEW BODY
1st FLOOR, 10 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0NB

E-mail PSPRB@businessandtrade.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/prison-services-pay-review-body>

Naomi Long MLA
Minister of Justice
Minister's Office Block B
Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate
Ballymiscaw, Belfast, BT4 3SG

10 July 2025

Dear Minister,

NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE 2025-26 PAY ROUND

1. Thank you for your letter of 3 July, which set out the agreement reached between the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), the Prison Governors' Association (PGA(NI)) and the POA(NI)¹ for the 2025-26 pay round.
2. The Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) was pleased to learn that the parties had reached agreement again this year and endorses all aspects of that agreement. As was the case last year, the main parties coming to an agreement is a positive development and provides for further delivery of the pay strategy, which we have previously endorsed. To enable the award to be implemented and paid as quickly as possible, we are submitting this letter rather than a full report and we very much hope that this enables the pay award to be made in August, or at the latest September, several months ahead of last year's. We also hope that this approach will help to bring the timing of the annual pay award process next year closer to the position that enables the pay award to be made in time for the April payroll.
3. Your activation letter of 28 January asked that we provide a report and recommendations to cover 2025-26. Given that NIPS reached agreement with the trade unions as covered in your letter, I trust that you are content with this letter in its place. As we did not receive any separate written evidence this year, apart from that submitted by the Community union, we have not undertaken our usual full review of the evidence. We have, however, considered the wider economic context, workforce data and relevant pay comparisons. We also undertook our regular visits to Northern Ireland establishments in May and have sent a copy of our summary of the main points raised to all of the parties.

Agreed awards

4. Given all parties have reached agreement, the PSPRB is content to endorse the following:

¹ The Professional Trade Union for Prison, Correctional and Public and Private Mental Health Service Providers (Northern Ireland).

- A headline 3% award to all governor grades, Senior Officers, Custody Prison Officers (CPO) and Main Grade Officers.
 - A headline 4% award to Night Custody Officers and Prisoner Custody Officers, which moves these scales closer to the CPO minimum as part of the one officer policy.
 - A 6% increase to the Operational Support Grade scale to combat low pay and to reduce the gap with the CPO minimum. PECCS Managers to also receive 6% to move closer to the SO minimum as part of the one first line manager policy.
 - Removal of one CPO pay point to create a six point pay scale, with the intention of reducing to five points in 2026-27.
 - Those on the minimum of the 2024-25 CPO pay scale progress to pay point two on the new 2025-26 pay scale subject to a satisfactory performance report.
 - Those longest serving CPOs, on pay point five, of the 2024-25 CPO pay scale progress to the maximum of the new 2025-26 pay scale, subject to a satisfactory performance report.
 - Supplementary Risk Allowance (SRA) to increase to the level of the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Transitional Allowance (NITA) and extended in full to governor grades.
 - Non-pensionable premia extended to two more specific public and privilege holidays (six in total) – 17 March and 12 July. Staff working in prison establishments receive on the stipulated date, other business areas receive on the substitute day when the public/bank holiday falls on a weekend.
 - Specialist non-pensionable allowances for: Control and Restraint (C&R) instructors; C&R advanced trained staff; incident negotiator; and Tactical Response Group.
 - A £250 payment for passing initial training in one of the four specialisms irrespective of how many trained for. Paid once.
 - A £250 per year, paid monthly, retainer payment payable at £250, irrespective of how many specialisms staff work.
 - Governor on-call rates increased to broadly align with the Northern Ireland Civil Service – £21 to £30 for weekends and £40 to £45 for public/bank and privilege holidays.
 - Removal of the bottom pay point on the Head of Function pay scale and an addition of one step at the top.
 - Introduction of a three-hour minimum credit for staff at SO and below coming into work for an emergency if required to stay under three hours.
5. All of the above to take effect from 1 April 2025, except for the uplift to the SRA to match the NITA rate which should be from 1 September 2025, as is usual. Pay tables setting out the effects of the above changes are included at Annex A, with allowances at Annex B. We note that the agreement endorsed above represents further progress in achieving NIPS's pay strategy.

Workforce data

6. The continuing increase in the prison population, the apparent sharp increase in assaults and the persistently high level of sickness absence continue to concern us, as we know they do the leadership of the Prison Service and the unions. There are also relatively high levels of medical retirement. For context, the workforce data we received showed that:

- There was a 0.9% increase in the headcount staffing number since April 2024, standing at 1,386 on 1 April 2025.
- The leaving rate for the whole Service increased from 5.0% to 7.2% in 2024-25.
- In 2024-25, paybill costs increased by 17% or £84.5 million.
- The cost of overtime payments increased to £4.2 million, an increase of 7.7% compared to the previous year (likely to be a result of last year's agreement to increase some rates).
- Days lost to sickness absence fell slightly from 27 to 26 days but remained high in comparison to previous years.
- The prison population was 5% higher in April 2025 than a year earlier, reaching a record level of 2,009.
- The number of assaults on prison staff increased by 82.5%.

Pay comparability

7. As background, we noted that according to the latest available ASHE data (April 2024) for Northern Ireland:
- Median gross earnings increased by 4.5% from 2022-23 to 2023-24.
 - The Custody Prison Officer (CPO) scale was at 7% to 10% above economy wide median earnings in Northern Ireland in 2015-16 but had increased to 25% above by 2023-24.
 - The Prisoner Custody Officer (PCO) pay scale was 6% below median economy wide earnings in 2023-24.
 - The PECCS PCO pay compared relatively favourably against its comparators.
 - The CPO pay scale was above all comparator pay ranges, except the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Constable which it overlaps.
 - Pay for OSG exceeded the 2024-25 National Living Wage rate by 14.0% and for PCO and Night Custody Officer by 18.1% and by 3.5% and 7.2% in respect of the 2024-25 Real Living Wage.

Latest Pay As You Earn Real Time Information shows that 12-month median earnings growth averaged 6.8% in Northern Ireland in May 2025, compared with 5.8% for the UK as a whole.

Cost

8. NIPS stated that the agreed proposals would represent an increase in paybill of £6.05 million (7.2%), comprising:
- £2.52m (3.0%) for progression;
 - £3.1m (3.7%) for pay increases and grade restructuring; and
 - £0.43m (0.5%) for increases to SRA, overtime, allowances and the additional public holiday payments.

We are content with the overall accuracy of these figures. However, our practice has been that we do not include the cost of progression in our cost calculations because progression forms a normal part of a fully functioning pay system. Excluding progression costs gives an overall increased paybill cost of 4.2% or 2.3% of the total 2025-26 NIPS budget. We also note that the agreed proposals have not yet been approved by the Department of Finance.

Community union

9. We also received a written submission from the Community union, which is not formally recognised by NIPS for collective bargaining. Many of the issues raised in the submission are already covered in the agreement between NIPS and POA(NI) and PGA(NI) or are outside our remit. Those proposals that are outside the agreement but within our remit, can be considered when we undertake our next full round.

Allowances

10. As part of our response to last year's agreement, we deferred consideration of allowances that were not included in the agreement. We are doing the same this year, noting that along with the SRA we have endorsed changes to the governor on-call allowance. For the next pay round, we would like the parties to consider those allowances that have not been reviewed for a number of years, including the Northern Ireland dirty protest payments following the increase to these in England and Wales.

Forward look

11. We requested last year, as the pay strategy continues to be developed, that the parties should continue to consider jointly how the single grade structure will be introduced. These considerations should include how to take account of individual preferences, particularly for those staff who may not wish to opt in to the single grade structure; differences in contracted full-time hours; and ensuring that the new arrangements do not lead to unintended equality issues. We were, therefore, encouraged by the reference in your letter to the additional staffing flexibilities that you are discussing with the unions.
12. This year, we are again endorsing an agreement reached between the parties, rather than making evidence-based recommendations. We welcome this, and the further progress it represents on the pay strategy. We hope that this progress continues and that the parties will again be able to agree a joint approach next year.

Yours sincerely



Tim Flesher

Chair, Prison Service Pay Review Body

Annex A: Current and recommended pay levels

Governor grades

Current and recommended pay (£ per annum) from 1 April 2025.

Band 10 – Director of Prisons

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
99,932	102,930
98,780	101,743

Band 9 – Governor in Charge (Maghaberry)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
96,372	99,263
95,662	98,532
94,106	96,929
92,544	95,320
90,988	93,718

Band 8 – Governor in Charge (other posts)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
89,997	92,697
88,435	91,088
86,875	89,481
85,306	87,865
83,745	86,257

Band 7 – Governor Head of Function²

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
70,497	72,612
69,430	71,513
68,370	70,421
67,304	69,323
66,237	Pay point removed

Band 6 – Governor Head of Unit

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
63,073	64,965
62,146	64,010
61,224	63,061
60,302	62,111
59,380	61,161

² Additional pay point to be added to the current 1 April 2025 Governor Head of Function maximum from 1 April 2026 of £73,711.

Officer, support and PECCS grades³

Current and recommended pay (£ per annum) from 1 April 2025.

Band 5 – Senior Officer

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
49,317	50,797
47,888	49,325
46,843	48,248
45,797	47,171
44,752	46,095

Band 4 – PECCS Manager (40 hours)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
43,900	No pay point
43,100	No pay point
42,300	44,850
41,500	43,990
40,600	43,035

Band 3 – Prison Officer grades^{4,5,6}

Any Custody Prison Officer who has not completed their Certificate of Competence by the time they have progressed to point three of the pay scale will be held on that point until the Certificate of Competence is successfully attained.

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
41,483	No pay point
39,829	42,725
38,176	40,682
36,523	38,639
34,870	36,596
33,217	34,553
31,564	32,510

³ All rates shown for officer and support grades are based on a 39-hour working week, unless otherwise in brackets.

⁴ Pre- and post-2002 MGO and CPO grades are now both on the same pay scale and therefore the separate pre- and post-2002 MGO pay scales have been removed. We note that some terms and conditions may differ between the three groups of staff.

⁵ Those staff on the current 1 April 2024 minimum will progress to pay point two on the 1 April 2025 pay scale this year subject to having a satisfactory performance report in the 2024-25 reporting year.

⁶ Those longest serving Custody Prison Officers currently on the fifth pay point on the current 1 April 2024 pay scale will progress to the maximum of the 1 April 2025 pay scale this year subject to having a satisfactory performance report in the 2024-25 reporting year.

Band 2 – Night Custody Officer (44 hours)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
34,410	35,786
32,718	34,027
31,026	32,267

Band 2 – Prisoner Custody Officer (40 hours)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
31,282	32,533
29,744	30,934
28,205	29,333

Band 2 – Prisoner Custody Officer (35 hours)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
27,372	28,466
26,026	27,067
24,679	25,666

Band 2 – Prisoner Custody Officer (30 hours)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
23,462	24,400
22,308	23,201
21,154	22,000

Band 2 – Prisoner Custody Officer (20 hours)

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
15,641	16,267
14,872	15,467
14,103	14,667

Band 1 – Operational Support Grade

Current pay scale	From 1 April 2025
27,207	28,839
26,882	28,495
26,557	28,150

Annex B: Current and recommended allowance rates

Those allowances listed below have changed or are changing as part of this agreement or last year's agreement. All other allowances remain at 1 April 2023 levels which can be found in our 2023 Northern Ireland report.⁷

Supplementary Risk Allowance⁸

Grade	Current level a year	Recommended a year from 1 September 2025
Officer, support and PECCS grades ⁹	£4,110	NITA rate ¹⁰
Governor grades ^{11,12}	£4,110	NITA rate ⁹

Officer and support grade overtime payments (Bands 1 to 5)^{13,14}

Period	Current level	Recommended from 1 April 2025
Weekdays	Plain time	Plain time
Weekends	Time and a half	Time and a half

Officer and support grade Bank/Public Holiday payments (Bands 1 to 5)^{15,16,17}

The four bank/public holiday dates that these payments apply to are: Christmas Day, Boxing Day, third day at Christmas¹⁸ and New Year's Day. This year the following additional dates have been added: 17th March and 12th July.

Period	Current level	Recommended from 1 April 2025
Rostered staff	Plain time plus half premium	Plain time plus half premium
Rest day staff	Time and a half	Time and a half

⁷ GOV.uk, (2023). PSPRB Fourteenth report on Northern Ireland: 2023. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/psprb-fourteenth-report-on-northern-ireland-2023> [accessed on 10 July 2025].

⁸ This allowance is non-pensionable.

⁹ This includes all officer, support and PECCS grades in Bands 1 to 5.

¹⁰ This will be the level of the NITA as at 1 September 2025.

¹¹ This includes all Band 6 to 9 governor grades, including the Band 10 Director of Prisons.

¹² Under last year's agreement governor grades received the NITA at a third of the full rate, following this year's agreement, from 1 April 2025 it is paid at the full NITA rate.

¹³ These payments are non-pensionable.

¹⁴ Additional hours worked by staff on less than full conditioned hours of the grade will attract this payment at plain time rate only. Where a member of staff works beyond full conditioned hours for that week, the rate will be calculated on the same basis as those on full conditioned hours.

¹⁵ These payments are non-pensionable.

¹⁶ Rates are paid irrespective of a member of staff's conditioned hours.

¹⁷ For staff working in establishments (Hydebank Wood, Maghaberry and Magilligan), this will be on the basis of the stipulated dates. However, for those staff working elsewhere (i.e. Headquarters, PECCS & Prison Service College), when the actual date falls on a weekend, they will be paid on the substitute weekday instead.

¹⁸ This date moves each year and will be advised by NIPS.

Payments for additional duties¹⁹

Additional duty	Initial one-off training payment (element one) from 1 April 2025 ²⁰	Retainer payment (element two) from 1 April 2025 ²¹
Control & Restraint Instructors	£250	£250 a year
Advanced Control & Restraint trained staff	£250	£250 a year
Incident negotiator	£250	£250 a year
Tactical Response Group	£250	£250 a year

Governor grade on-call allowance²²

Period	Current level per day	Recommended level per day from 1 April 2025
Weekdays	£15.00	£15.00
Weekends and Privilege Holidays	£21.00	£30.00
Public and Bank Holidays	£40.00	£45.00

¹⁹ These payments are non-pensionable.

²⁰ Element one is a one-off non-pensionable payment on successful completion of training (all staff who are currently trained, as per Prison Service College records, will receive this when the 2025 pay award is implemented). As this element is a one-off, if someone ceases to carry out their specified role, and is subsequently retrained, they do not qualify for any further payment under element one.

²¹ Element two is a recurring non-pensionable yearly allowance, paid in monthly instalments. This is paid on the basis that staff continue to meet the qualifying criteria for payment including refresher training and being available to carry out their role, upon request. Element two will cease if the role is no longer performed and will be reinstated upon recommencement of the role.

²² Paid for on-call continuously from the end of one shift to the start of the next. This allowance is pensionable.