

Members speak out: Why remote work matters



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FÓRSA

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Message from the Chair

Our future success relies on you playing your part

Dear members,

As we approach our Biennial Divisional Conference now is a good time to reflect on our division's activities over the past two years.

Our membership has grown, and some of our branches have amalgamated to enable us to grow in collective strength. We have protected members' rights at work and won better pay for public servants. Our work to reform the archaic conciliation and arbitration scheme continues, as does our activity on the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill.

Already this year we have stood strong in the face of attempts to reverse the Blended Working Framework, and we have submitted local bargaining claims for clerical officers, administrative officers, executive officers, and higher executive officers.

At the Civil Service conference, which takes place in Galway from Wednesday 28th May to Friday 30th May, we will debate over 80 important motions and hope to adopt a new Civil Service Divisional Strategy for the period 2025-2027.

The new strategy will build upon the pillars laid down in the 2023-2025 Strategy 'Reclaiming our Place', namely, better industrial relations processes and outcomes, re-establishing the Civil Service as leaders in the generation of policies, and improved communications systems within the division.

The new strategy will focus on organising for higher union participation on issues such as remote/blended working, pay and local bargaining pay claims, artificial intelligence, outsourcing, engagement with NSSO, the Civil Service Regulation

(Amendment) Bill, reasonable accommodation and starting pay on promotion.

Our future success will rely on our members playing their part and building collective power. We are striving to become a high participation union, firm in the knowledge that when we stand together, we have the ability to achieve so much more than when we act alone.

I hope you enjoy this edition of CSQ. It features your views on remote working in your own words, an update on local bargaining, news from the division and from across the union. In our international section we have an inspiring story of Indian women organising to win better pay and maternity leave.

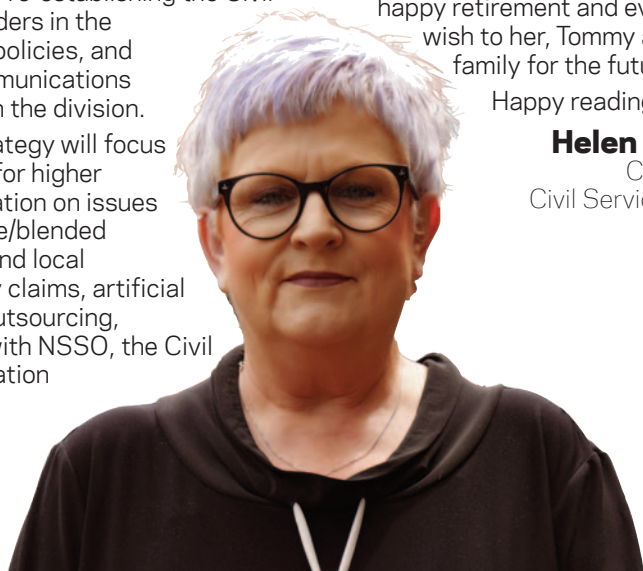
Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Betty Tyrrell Collard. Betty is retiring later this year having given a remarkable 51 years of service to, not only the Civil & Public Service but, also, to the trade union movement. Betty is an outstanding trade union activist and stalwart. She was President of the former CPSU and Vice-President of Fórsa. Her dedication and commitment to helping her colleagues (a lot of the time behind the scenes) is to be applauded and the union will be a poorer place without her.

I wish Betty a very well earned and happy retirement and every good wish to her, Tommy and her family for the future.

Happy reading!

Helen Linehan

Chairperson
Civil Service Division



Divisional News

Members speak out: blended work must stay

Following the union's successful pushback in the face of an attempt to unilaterally change blended work in the Department of Social Protection in January, we asked our readers to tell us how you feel about blended working.

Brendan Kinsella has compiled a selection of some of your thoughts:

I am from Donegal currently working in Dublin on a blended working pattern with two days working from home. This was the only option available to me to take up an offer of a promotion as there is only one position at that level in my department in Donegal. It would not be financially viable to stay in Dublin full time and, as a parent, not viable from a caring point of view either. Blended working offered me the opportunity to take a promotion that I would not have been able to take.

E.M

Remote working has been transformational for me, and I imagine for many others. I cannot imagine going back to the office full time, and this is an issue I would be prepared to engage in industrial action over.

Niall McGlynn

I am 59 and plan to work for the next four or five years. If I was forced back into office full time (currently work three days office, two days home) I would simply resign.

Rose Grant



FEEDBACK For many civil servants, blended working has proven to be a positive, indeed transformative, development in the way that they work and how they achieve work-life balance

I am in favour of working from home. However, I feel that you need a balance between working from home and attending the office. Most Departments have staff attend the office 1 or 2 days per week. Working from home 90% of the time as is our case can be quite isolating, not good for your mental health/well-being or your overall confidence. It is important that you meet your colleagues in person at least 1 or 2 days per week. This is important to form relationships with new staff and maintain relationships with existing staff. You really benefit from that cup of tea or coffee in the canteen with your colleagues.

M.R

I feel very strongly that work-from-home is pro-woman and pro-mother. I am a mother of three who returned to work in 2024, aged 62, when my youngest started university. I could have re-started my career at least 10 years earlier (and kept up with pension contributions), had work from home existed pre-Covid. Instead, because I had three children, a husband who had a long commute, and a sick mother, I had to give up work entirely. As a result, I am now concerned I will not receive the full state pension in due course. We should not go back!

Mary Feely

Remote working has given me the opportunity to balance work and caring for my elderly mother and my brother with special needs who live nearby. I can do my work and also be nearby in the event of an emergency, or just be able to check in during my lunch break and after work. This reassurance that someone is close by is an invaluable reassurance to my elderly mother. She says it's the best thing to come out of the pandemic!

L. Gleeson

Picture: David Martyn Hunt (CC BY 2.0)



Working from home is a significant boon to many people with disability, visible and invisible. Even where there is a supportive attitude to disabilities - as with my employer - working in an even moderately busy office is unreasonably stressful for me, as it can be for many autistic people. It generates sensory overload very quickly and makes it impossible to concentrate, which is necessary for the kind of work I do.

S.M

Being able to work remotely meant I was finally able to afford to purchase my first home. I relocated outside Dublin to the midlands. I know of many colleagues were able to afford housing further afield thanks to remote working. I care for a family member and remote working allows me to provide that care. I currently work two days in the office and three days at home. While I would prefer to be fully remote, it is still better than nothing.

Anon

I have a vision impairment. Working from home allows people with disabilities to fully engage with the workplace. If remote work is removed, this would make my life more difficult.

Karen

If we'd to return five days in the office I'd have to leave my job. I commute over two hours a day, three days a week. I've no consistent childcare, the childcare in my town is practically non-existent. There's no job locally with the same benefits; annual leave, parental leave, good salary and flexibility.

Tracy

Divisional News

What's happening with local bargaining?

The Public Service Agreement 2024-2026, negotiated and ratified last year, contains within it pay rises for public servants, similar to previous agreements. However, it also includes an innovative clause on local bargaining.

Clause 42.1 outlines a new national bargaining process for collective issues specific to a grade, group or category of workers.

Despite the name, the bargaining units are national in nature, 'local' is perhaps best understood in this context as local to a specific cohort.

Deputy general secretary and director of industrial relations Éamonn Donnelly, who also heads up the Civil Service division, has been leading out on the claim development process, initially for claims which were common across the sectors and more recently, with the engineer grades in the Civil Service, which are marker grades across sectors.

Speaking about the progress made in recent months, Éamonn said: "To date we have lodged four claims, and there will be more on the way. We've consulted members to ensure that their preferences are reflected in the claims submitted. This is an example of members voicing their views and the union listening.

"Taking members' views on board, we have taken a common approach and adapted the claims to each grade and role that is covered. Most of the claims propose shortening scales, eliminating the waiting periods for Long Service Increments (LSIs), and a 3.5% increase onto the current absolute maximum point."

In December 2024, Fórsa lodged an ambitious local bargaining claim, that covers approximately 30,000 workers, working as clerical officers or in grade 3 equivalent roles across the civil and public service. This was followed by a claim lodged in February on behalf of executive officers, higher executive officers, grade 4 -7s in the Civil Service and related grades in the public service (health, education and local government sectors).

A claim on behalf of special needs assistants (SNAs), members of Fórsa's Education division has also been lodged, and most recently a claim on behalf of engineer grades in the Civil Service was lodged on



CONSULTATION Fórsa deputy general secretary Éamonn Donnelly said members' views are reflected in the claim

NEGOTIATED, FOUGHT FOR, AND WON Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan has insisted members' support is 'pivotal' in securing claims through local Bargaining. Pictured speaking to the Press during the Public Service Agreement talks in 2024



We've consulted members to ensure that their preferences are reflected in the claims submitted. This is an example of members voicing their views and the union listening

Monday 7th April. This claim has potential impact across many roles, because a number of other roles are linked to this grade. For example, many workers in semi state agencies, and professional and technical members in the Civil Service are tied to it.

For all claims Fórsa has surveyed the members involved and asked them what

matters most. Speaking about the importance of these consultations Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan said: "For local bargaining to have a real impact on members' lives, it is vital that members have a chance to input into claims early in the process.

"Members' support will also be pivotal in securing the claims. There are no automatic entitlements here, these claims will need to be negotiated, fought for and won."

He added: "We believe these claims are reasonable and it is our intention to push hard for them. We need all members to back these claims and we'll be keeping you updated as the process unfolds. The ball now lies firmly in the Department of Public Expenditure's court."



GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT With a new intake of TDs now in place, Fórsa plans to begin a further round of lobbying in the Oireachtas on the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill

Picture: Justin Pickard (CC By 2.0)

An update on the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill

As members will be aware for several years now successive Governments have been engaged in trying to pass the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill.

As your union we have been active advocating against the principal provisions in it, which seek to delegate authority for dismissal of a civil servant downwards from the current level of Secretary General to other civil servants of an unspecified lower grade.

In 2023 more than 3,000 Civil Service members signed a petition against the Bill. At the time Fórsa wrote to members underlining the union's position that: "Dismissing a worker should not be easy or simple. Your livelihood should not be subjected to unfair practices, unsound decisions, or misplaced blame."

The staff panel of unions in the Civil Service has opposed the Bill since it was first presented in 2018. However, the matter has now re-appeared on the agenda of the official side. Fórsa had previously

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We will begin a new round of political lobbying on this issue... With more than 60 first-time TDs in the new Dáil we want to ensure that our message of opposition to the Bill is heard loud and clear by the Oireachtas

been involved in lobbying of politicians to build opposition to the Bill and now we have decided to re-start our campaign on the issue.

Head of division Éamonn Donnelly told CSQ: "We will begin a new round of political lobbying on this issue in the weeks and months ahead. With more than 60 first-time TDs in the new Dáil we want to ensure that our message of opposition to the Bill is heard loud and clear by the Oireachtas."

"Nonetheless, we need to consider that the Bill may be passed and enacted. Industrial relations discussions must take place to separate the provisions which would be prescriptive, from those which would be enabling, in order to maximise protection for workers if the Bill was to be enacted."

"It must be clear who exactly the delegated authority to dismiss workers would go to."

"We will seek to ensure that it should not go beyond a Principal Officer level, should the Bill progress further," he added.

Profile

Betty's incomparable half century of service to the union

After 51 years union legend **Betty Tyrell Collard** will retire this year. CSQ Editor **Hannah Deasy** met Betty to talk about her decades as a public servant and how the working world has changed in the half-century she has spent as a trade union activist

Starting work in the civil service in 1974, Betty joined the union in her first week there and has been active ever since. Over the years she rose to the highest leadership positions, serving as President of the Civil and Public Service Union (CPSU) for eight years, and later becoming Vice President of Fórsa.

She remains a member of the ICTU Executive and has been a member of the ICTU Women's Committee for decades. With such a track record, it is no wonder that friends note fondly that she is one of the few people in the union movement who is known simply by her first name.

No Minister has passed through the building at 23 Kildare Street, occupied by what is now the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, without encountering Betty. In 51 years, Betty has worked with 42 Ministers, seeing each one of them through their term in the Department.

Recalling an anecdote, Betty tells us how she once reminded a Minister of his place when he had the temerity to announce to her that he would deal with HR matters going forward. This statement was met with a timely reminder that that wouldn't be happening, after all "he wasn't a civil servant".

Media reports from her time as CPSU President demonstrate her staunch defence of workers during the difficult period of the financial and economic crisis, with Betty quoted calling attempts to outsource clerical work as "irrational", attacks on public sector workers "outrageous", and calling out Ministers for "doing staff down".

Speaking at her final branch AGM earlier this year, Fórsa official Pat Ennis paid a moving tribute to Betty, underlining her "fearless" and "relentless" pursuit of workers' rights.

AGENDA FOR CHANGE Betty with other members of the CPSU delegation to the 2014 ICTU Women's Conference in Wexford



LEADERSHIP Betty as VP of Fórsa in 2022 with Senior VP Martin Walsh, Michael Smyth (President), Julie Flood (Hon Treasurer), and her fellow VP Helen Sheridan

Pat said: "Betty has given several representative lifetimes of impeccable service, as an activist for the wider trade union movement but more importantly as a representative of Clerical Officers and indeed other Civil Servants who needed help and assistance.

"In her own inimitable way, Betty delivered outcomes both for her colleagues and the employer, which in some instances were life-changing. Much of this work was done discreetly behind the scenes, for no personal gain or reward. All

of this reflects her fundamental decency and consideration of others. Volunteer representation, while generally rewarding, is often a thankless business."

He added: "There is a volunteer in all of us for an hour or two, maybe even a day or two, but it takes something else to remain active as a volunteer representative and to maintain the energy and commitment Betty brought to her work as a trade unionist."

Talking to Betty provides fascinating insights into the

changing nature of workplace activism. She identifies remote working, decentralised HR, and the housing crisis as big challenges facing young workers, making working life tougher and making collective activity in the workplace harder.

Going forward Betty feels strongly that the Clerical Officer role should be re-imagined given how much the role has changed, and that more needs to be done to enhance provisions for domestic violence leave.

Deeply motivated by fairness and compassion, Betty recalls her support to people in difficult personal circumstances, battling addiction, or dealing with domestic abuse, as rewarding and something she hopes to continue to do in the years ahead.

Paying tribute to her advocacy for women's rights at work, Fórsa's director of training and long-time ICTU official Fiona Dunne said: "Betty has been behind the scenes at so many key moments that have quite literally changed working life for Irish women, we owe her a great debt."

Thanking Betty for her service Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan said: "Betty has been there since the beginning of my time in the union. Her deter-

Profile



SOLIDARITY Betty supports Dublin Bus workers during 2015 strike



KEY ROLE Betty with FÓRSA General Secretary Kevin Callinan

mination, organisation and pride in the union are a lesson to us all. Today our union of 89,000 members stands on the shoulders of those who built it, a key one of whom is Betty Tyrell Collard."



In Betty's own words...

Tell us about how you decided to join the union?

One of my colleagues got into trouble and she needed someone to go with her. I said I would and that's how I got involved in the union. That day I was just her colleague, and then I joined within a week. I was passionate about the union from the beginning.

What key moments stand out for you?

The enactment of equality legislation in 1977. There was no equality whatsoever when I started in 1974. When that legislation came in, it was brilliant, it changed everything.

One funny story I have is from that time. I worked with Sylvia Meehan in the Department of Labour, and she knew I was active in the union. At the time bus conductors were all men, and a recruitment competition was taking place. So, one day Sylvia said to me, "We need

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IN THE CHAIR During her time as CPSU President

STALWART PRESENCE Betty at her final branch AGM



I always say to people you have to be in the union if you want the union to get things done. We need younger people to join now, and we need more women to step up and get involved in their branches

someone to take that exam, will you do it? So, I did. They didn't want me to sit it, but I did, and I passed. Things like that mattered at the time. Over the years on the ICTU Women's Committee we have had many campaigns and achieved a lot, though there is still more to do.

How has the civil service changed as a workplace?

My first job was in the work permit section. There were four members of staff then: a HEO, and EO, a CO and a Clerical Assistant – that was my job.

Today there's 84 people working in that section.

When I started work it was all about filing, if you were a Clerical Assistant, and if you became a Clerical Officer then you moved on to writing letters. I used to love opening the files, going through them. Now everything is digitised. Flexitime came in on a pilot in 1977, and then the first computers came around the 1980s.

Very few people know how to file properly anymore. Over the past three years I have been

sorting out the archives in the Department, because proper filing is essential, and I'm one of the few who still knows how to do it! There are incredible things in there. Parliamentary questions going back to the 1930s, documents on rationing, all sorts of things.

How has the union movement changed?

The union movement has changed so much. It's much harder to gather people together now. I trained myself when I got involved, but now the union has all sorts of training people can do.

There's a real problem with people thinking they'll benefit from pay rises that come from national agreements but sometimes they don't see why they should join themselves. I always say to people you have to be in the union if you want the union to get things done.

We need younger people to join now, and we need more women to step up and get involved in their branches.

What makes a good union rep?

You have to be organised when you're a union rep. You have to meet regularly as a branch. You need to keep minutes and have proper treasurer's reports. Doing things properly matters. I'm great at keeping stuff. I have stuff going back years. People come asking me for things from all grades – they say, 'Oh Betty will have that' and I often do!

One of the things I pride myself on is representing the member. I always say, the bigger things at the top will sort themselves out. It's all about the member on the ground that needs representation.

Any advice for members looking to build their branch?

I sort of go into competition with myself when I'm recruiting, see how many new members you can get. But when I'm recruiting somebody, I actually spend a fair bit of time with them. I just don't give them a form and say, 'Look, I'm going to come back'. You have to explain it all. I tell them they'll never know when they're going to need the union. My union activity has been brilliant, so my main message is: get involved.

Divisional News



SENSE OF URGENCY Fórsa has long pressed for a re-design of civil service grievance procedures to bring the 'antiquated' C&A system up to date

Greater urgency on C&A scheme needed

Discussions on a new conciliation and arbitration scheme have been ongoing in earnest since October 2023.

Since then, significant progress has been made and broad agreement has been reached on four key elements of a newly re-modelled scheme. However, the staff side, which represents union members, feels strongly that a renewed sense of urgency is now needed.

In late 2024 it was agreed that an officer of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) would be invited to independently chair the General Council, a move which Fórsa felt represented significant progress at the time. However, no invitation has yet been issued.

Describing the need to move on with this process, head of Fórsa's civil service division Éamonn Donnelly told CSQ: "For the staff side it's clear that the independent chair should be appointed now, rather than waiting any longer. This would demonstrate that the official



OVERSIGHT Both sides agreed to WRC officer as independent chair

side are committed to the new scheme."

While agreement has also been reached between the staff side and the official side on the need to re-design the civil service grievance procedure, a number of key elements remain

under discussion.

The staff side have argued that the current system of statements and counter-statements should be abolished, as they result in inordinate delays. Clear timelines for hearings are

needed, and any dispute resolution process should mirror the same principles which govern the state's industrial relations processes. There must be a route for unresolved grievances to be adjudicated on independently.

Éamonn Donnelly added: "We need to speed things up now on this long running issue. We would like the new scheme to launch in the autumn of 2025. Civil servants have been dealing with an antiquated industrial relations system for long enough. We have broad agreement on the principles so it's time to get a move on and finalise agreement."

We need to speed things up now on this long running issue... Civil servants have been dealing with an antiquated industrial relations system for long enough



GETTING IT DONE Éamonn Donnelly

CSQ Spring 2025

Mobility scheme talks set to resume

Niall Shanahan

Fórsa Communications

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Jack Chambers TD, has said discussions with Fórsa on the civil service mobility scheme are due to resume "in the near future", in response to a recent parliamentary question.

Offaly TD John Clendennen sought an update from the minister, including details of when the scheme would be opened to the professional/technical grades.

Responding to the question, the minister said the scheme is currently available to more than 34,000 general service staff members (clerical officer to assistant secretary), for those civil servants interested in moving to a different department or geographical location.

The minister said plans are in place to extend the scheme to include the professional and technical grades "at a



'PLANS IN PLACE' Jack Chambers TD and Fórsa official Paul MacSweeney

later date". He added: "They (professional and technical grades) can currently move on a temporary basis/secondment through an expression of interest (EOI) process which is

advertised by the Public Appointments Service (PAS).

"It provides an opportunity for the receiving organisation to fill a temporary position with both the receiving and sending organisation benefiting from shared learning, good practice, new ideas and experience."

Fórsa official Paul MacSweeney pointed out the union is expecting to engage with department officials on the mobility scheme shortly.

He said: "This is a scheme that is highly valued by civil service members, enabling them to acquire skills and experience as they progress through their careers, but also opening up opportunities to live and work in different parts of the country."

"It remains a priority for Fórsa to ensure professional and technical grades can secure access to this scheme, and we will continue to pursue this, once discussions are underway."

Clergy ministering behind bars take time owed claim to WRC Working Sundays and weekends 'not optional' for prison chaplains

Picture: HNS (CC By-SA 2.0)

Brendan Kinsella

Fórsa Communications

On Wednesday 9th April, Fórsa official Paul Moyer engaged the Irish Prison Service (IPS) in conciliation facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).

While no agreement emerged from the meeting, the IPS has been given time to reflect on their position.

The dispute centres on remuneration for chaplains in the prison service. Those on seven-day contracts are not receiving compensation for weekend work and bank holidays. Paul Moyer said: "We hope the Irish Prison Service takes this time to consider their position and comes around on this."

He continued: "We will take this to the Labour Court if we have to. Our position is supported by the Organisation of the Working Time Act, 1997, and there is precedent."

The precedent Paul refers to is a previous Fórsa win in June 2024. A chaplain working in the HSE



PRECEDENT Paul Moyer calls on IPS to reconsider

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UNDER LOCK AND KEY Mountjoy Prison as seen from North Circular Road

was similarly denied a Sunday premium and sought back pay on wages owed. Back pay was awarded and Fórsa's legal argument upheld.

The IPS alleges the chaplains' claims are a cost increasing claim. Paul dismisses this argument, stating: "Our members are working Saturdays, working Sundays, working bank holidays, and they are due payment in line with the legislation."

The IPS has previously claimed that working weekends is now optional for chaplains. They contended that they do not need to provide religious services and therefore have no need of seven-day cover. This would mean chaplains do not need to

work weekends or bank holidays if they do not wish to do so. Paul said: "Sundays are not optional for a chaplain, and despite calling weekends 'optional' the IPS has ignored the right of people to congregate and worship, especially on religious days. Sundays are seen as a day that mass is held right across this country, so of course that applies to prisons too. They have also issued no instruction to chaplains telling them not to weekends or bank holidays. So, the current situation lacks clarity and must be resolved."



Recruitment

Trade Union Week returns - bigger and brighter

The Better in a Trade Union campaign is an all-island cross union campaign, launched in 2024, led by ICTU. The campaign aims to build union membership and Trade Union Week is a high-point – a celebration of unions and their members, with events running from Monday 28th April to Friday 2nd May.

Last year during the first ever Trade Union Week Fórsa members held an array of fun and informative events, and this year was no different with members in every division holding events to create and recruit new members.

In the Civil Service division events were held in the State Labs, in the National Archives, and in the Oireachtas, the Courts Service and the Chief



SOLIDARITY IS SWEET Cooling down in sun-drenched Limerick

State Solicitor's Office to name just a few.

Fórsa national secretary and Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Vice President Katie Morgan said: "The current economic climate and international context underlines the importance of union membership. We must protect collective bargaining and build union power – every new member increases our collective strength."

Director of Campaigns in Fórsa Kevin Donoghue thanked members who organised events and recruitment stands.

He told CSQ: "We know that people are most likely to join the union if they're asked to by a colleague, so these visibility events are vital to our collective efforts to build our union."



VITAL MESSAGE Trade Union Week events at the CSSO, the State Labs (above left and right) and at the Oireachtas (below)



JOIN WITH US Aisling Cusack & Hugh McNerney (below) spread the word at the May Day march



Health members vote to accept WRC proposals

**Niall Shanahan
& Brendan Kinsella**

Fórsa Communications

Fórsa members working in the HSE and Section 38 voluntary hospitals have voted to accept WRC proposals agreed following marathon talks, which took place just before industrial action was due to take place.

Over 70,000 health service workers, from Fórsa, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO), Connect, Unite and the Medical Laboratory Scientists Association (MLSA), had been due to undertake a work-to-rule action on Monday 31st March.

The industrial action was suspended following proposals that emerged from a marathon set of discussions between unions and the HSE in the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) over the weekend of 29th and 30th March.

Over 25 hours, union representatives faced off against the HSE in tense negotiations aimed at avoiding the need for industrial action.

The dispute centred around the staffing crisis in the health service, and the HSE's so-called 'Pay and Numbers Strategy' which unions argued was imposed without consultation with unions or workers.

Head of Fórsa's health and welfare division Ashley Connolly told CSQ: "Our members were fighting for the resources that are needed to deliver a quality service to the people of Ireland. They can't continue covering up the cracks in the HSE's staffing strategy at the cost of their own health and patient services."

She pointed to Ireland's growing and aging population as a cause for concern, underlining that these factors demand a more robust approach to health planning.

Commenting on the negotiations, she said: "This was a challenging negotiation with a robust exchange of views. We were clear that in order to avert industrial action it was essential that any proposals would include Fórsa members having a role in workforce planning, a review of recruitment to already-agreed posts, commitments against outsourcing, protections for direct employment, as well as processes to address the posts that were vacant on 31st December 2023 and ongoing cover for maternity leave. The agreement addresses all these issues."

She continued: "There is also a six-month review of implementation under the auspices of the WRC, which is a crucial element. We need to make sure that the HSE honours the proposals agreed, nationally and locally. Regional forums will be established to allow

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UNITED IN PROTEST Fórsa health workers made their voices heard at Cork University Hospital – one of several locations across the country where demonstrations were held – prior to marathon talks at WRC



SLIGO Health workers on the picket line



DUBLIN Safe staffing key issue for health workers

for extensive local engagement and provision of information on staff numbers, grades, areas, activity levels, and other relevant details."

National secretary responsible for Health and Social Care professionals Linda Kelly said: "We're immensely proud of the resolve our members demonstrated in the planning and preparation for the industrial action. Without it we would not have been able to achieve these proposals. The HSE knew that a work-to-rule by our members would severely disrupt the health services and moved considerably beyond their starting position to stop that from happening."

She added: "Members have now

approved these proposals in the ballot box. We have clear opportunities to have input into workforce planning both at local and national level – this is a significant move in the health sector where members have previously been excluded from such discussions. We will work

together with branches and members to solidify the collective strength and leverage that they created in preparation for the industrial action."



Sowing solidarity with the Irish Red Cross in Nepal

WIDOW'S MIGHT Riki Maya is a widowed mother of two. With training and a Red Cross microgrant, she started a successful poultry farm, providing a brighter future for her family

The Irish Red Cross is one of the beneficiaries of Fórsa's International Solidarity fund. **James Redmond** chats to **Anna Marie O'Carroll** from the Red Cross about how members' union subs are empowering people in Nepal to be agents of change in their own lives and the valuable lessons that can be harvested for home

"When we talk about charity, it often implies a top-down approach," explains Anna Marie straight away. She acknowledges the vital role of emergency relief in times of crisis but sketches out the importance of a practice of empowerment.

"Solidarity, on the other hand, is about walking alongside people," she says. "It's recognising their inherent strengths, their knowledge and their agency. It's about building partnerships based on mutual respect and shared goals. It's about empowering communities to lead their own development."

This philosophy underpins their work in Nepal, where the organisation empowers communities through cash grants rather than in-kind donations. Beyond financial support, training is a crucial component of this. Right now, 447 farmers are benefiting

from Red Cross training schemes funded by Fórsa.

"This includes things like financial literacy, marketing and business planning. We also help them connect with relevant markets, so they have access to sell their products or services," explains Anna Marie.

A key aspect of their Nepal project is the introduction of climate-smart and high-value crops. Resistance to change was an initial challenge faced by the project. "People are used to growing what their families have always grown, and there can be a fear of trying something new. To address this, we focused on education and demonstrations. We set up trial plots where farmers can see first-hand how these crops perform."

Anna Marie explains how some people were hesitant at first. They'd seen other projects come and go, and they were weary

of empty promises.

"This is where the strength of the Red Cross truly lies," says Anna Marie. "Our local presence, our social mobilisers and volunteers come from within these very communities. They are a huge bridge between the project and the people. They speak the local languages, understand the cultural nuances and have preexisting relationships built on trust and familiarity."

Overcoming such challenges and building trust within the communities proved crucial lessons in the power of partnerships for the project.

"They also have existing networks and relationships that we can leverage. These partnerships, and the strength of our volunteer base, have been invaluable to help us navigate challenges and ensure the sustainability of our programmes. Later this

International

ON THE GROUND Anna Marie O'Carroll is the Programme Manager for International Affairs at Irish Red Cross. She's pictured here with training scheme participants in Nepal



year as we expand into a new district we'll be taking these lessons learned to heart. We'll be focusing even more on community engagement from the very beginning, ensuring that the project is truly community owned and driven."

Combating outward rural migration that sees young people fleeing for better opportunities elsewhere is also a huge focus of the programme. The project works to provide viable alternatives by supporting cottage industries and diversified livelihoods.

Riki Maya is typical of the people who benefit from these schemes. A widowed mother of two, she started a successful poultry farming business, after accessing training and a cash grant. She can now provide a brighter future for her family from selling eggs and chickens.

"These are small-scale, home-based businesses that allow people to generate income without having to leave their communities. They offer a way to combine traditional skills with modern business practices, creating sustainable livelihoods right where people live.

Spring 2025 **CSQ**

These partnerships, and the strength of our volunteer base, has been invaluable to help us navigate challenges and ensure the sustainability of our programmes. Later this year as we expand into a new district we'll be taking these lessons learned to heart



"These cottage industries can take many forms, for example we're working with women's groups to establish a handicraft business producing textiles. We're also supporting the development of honey production, recognising the potential for

these high value products."

"The key is to identify opportunities that build on existing resources and skills within the community. We don't just provide seed funding and walk away. We offer comprehensive support including training and business management, marketing and financial literacy.

"We help connect these small businesses with markets both locally and sometimes regionally. We also provide access to micro loans, which can be crucial for scaling up production and expanding operations."

While outward migration remains a complex challenge, the project is making a difference, often in simple ways like averting the loss of many traditional arts and crafts.

Like anywhere, within Nepal's rural communities, certain groups – low-income families, female-headed households, disabled people – face even greater challenges. Anna Marie explains how for the Irish Red Cross empowerment is the ultimate goal.

"So how do we do this in practice? Well, it starts with really listening. We conduct detailed community assessments that specifically seek to understand the unique needs and vulnerabilities of different groups.

Challenges

"We don't just assume we know what's best. We ask. We talk to women, to people with disabilities, to low-income families, to socially excluded groups, and we hear directly from them about the challenges they face and their aspirations for the future. Ultimately, our goal is to empower these marginalised groups to become agents of their own change."

People like Anna Marie who work with the Irish Red Cross believe international partnerships can offer valuable lessons. Like with all international solidarity work, there's a natural degree of reflexive learning involved – it's not all one way.

"The communities we work with in Nepal often face incredibly challenging circumstances, whether it's the impact of climate change, limited resources, or geographical isolation. Yet they demonstrate an incredible ability to adapt, innovate and find solutions with what they have. It's a powerful reminder of the human capacity for resilience and a challenge to reflect on our own responses to adversity."

Ultimately, Anna Marie believes this kind of cross-cultural exchange fosters a sense of global citizenship. It reminds us that we're all interconnected, and that we have a responsibility to contribute to a more just and sustainable world.

"The lessons we learn in Nepal, the stories we hear and the relationships we build stay with us long after we return home. They shape our thinking, our values, and our actions," she concludes.



UNION LEARNING A group of Accredited Social Health Activists, or ASHA workers, attend a union-organised 'Training the trainers' session in Mansar, Maharashtra. There are a million such ASHAs in India

Pictures: Public Services International

Building power

Community health workers in India win maternity benefits and better pay

Mehak Dugal

Fórsa Communications

Recent feminist labour organising efforts in India have created ripple effects throughout the country's broader community health workforce, demonstrating how strategic organising can amplify impact beyond those directly involved.

A historic 45-day strike in Mumbai and sustained organising across India has secured maternity rights and new benefits for Community Health Workers (CHWs), following a Public Services International (PSI) led programme in the region.

Increased organising among five unions since the pandemic has resulted in higher pay for members, regular payment of wages which were previously often delayed by months, and six months maternity leave for many more workers.

It has also led to a formalised work status and career path for workers that were often misclassified as 'volunteers', as well as significant growth in union membership.

Sumedha, a young Community Health Worker from the Mumbai union Mahanagar Karmachari Mahasangh (MMKM), said: "Earlier I thought unions were just for making demands. Now I understand we are building power for ourselves."

With an estimated 1,000,000 Accredited

INFORMATION IS POWER Community Health Workers (CHWs) go through reading materials at a Public Services International training event



Social Health Activists (ASHA workers) in India alone, and hundreds of thousands more CHWs across South Asia, these workers deliver healthcare to more than 500 million people in disadvantaged communities.

Community Health Workers across South Asia have been campaigning for recognition as public health workers, entitled to fair and

dignified working conditions.

CHWs hold a pivotal role in enhancing public health throughout South Asia, a region grappling with a myriad number of health challenges, from infectious diseases to limited healthcare access. They bridge these gaps by delivering vital healthcare services to communities, imparting

International



METICULOUSLY PLANNED Community Health Workers (CHWs) staged a successful 45-day strike in Mumbai last year, transforming working conditions for thousands employed in the sector

Picture: Public Services International

education, raising awareness, and advocating preventive health measures. Their significance is amplified in remote areas with scant formal healthcare infrastructure. They are known as Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) in India, Lady Health Workers in Pakistan, and Female Community Health Volunteers in Nepal. They serve as the initial point of contact during health emergencies.

Regrettably, this workforce – primarily composed of women from rural, socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds – suffers due to gendered assumptions about their work. Their contributions are often undervalued, and they are poorly compensated. They perform their indispensable tasks without proper recognition as public health workers. In India, CHWs are denied the basic right to a minimum wage and lack essential social security benefits such as pensions, medical coverage, and maternity leave.

The unions representing CHWs and PSI launched the 'Community Health Work is Work' campaign in 2020 at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though CHWs were at the highest risk of contracting COVID-19 owing to their work, they were still denied health and life insurance as well as pensions. The most powerful demonstration of the results of the campaign and the resulting organising capacity came in 2024, when CHWs from MMKM led a meticulously planned 45-day strike in Mumbai. It successfully transformed working conditions for thousands of health workers.

Drawing on their organising training, CHWs developed and implemented a sophisticated two-phase approach. In the first phase, the workers ran a complete work stoppage across the whole city putting

We are fighting for recognition that what we do is real work, skilled work, essential work. When we win, our communities win too

immediate pressure on the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

That was followed by a rotating protest system, from 18th June to 28th July 2024, to maintain essential services while keeping pressure on authorities. Each day, CHWs from different areas would take part in protests while their colleagues in other areas continued to provide critical healthcare services. This approach prevented

authorities from dismissing the action as irresponsible or endangering public health, while ensuring that protest momentum could be sustained over the remarkable 45-day period.

What made this campaign particularly effective was its multi-pronged approach. The women CHWs leaders maintained detailed records of participation, with careful tracking of attendance from 24 different wards, held strategic meetings with various state ministers, municipal representatives and government officials, distributed demand letters to officials at multiple levels of government, and engaged media to publicise their cause and the impact of the work stoppage.

After 45 days of sustained action, the CHWs secured significant victories and demonstrated the power of women-led organising, with planning, execution, and documentation led by the CHWs themselves.

Mumbai's success is part of a broader pattern of organising happening across India, with similar approaches being implemented by other unions across the country.

In each case, small groups of committed CHWs have built powerful movements and secured significant improvements through consistent organising, leadership development, and strategic action. As a result, women now also actively participate in union planning and leadership and hold visible positions in union leadership.

Public Services International stated that the most transformative aspect of this effort has been the shift to a 'training the trainers' model, where CHWs themselves became educators and organisers.

One health worker leader from Tamil Nadu said: "We are not just fighting for better wages. We are fighting for recognition that what we do is real work, skilled work, essential work. When we win, our communities win too."

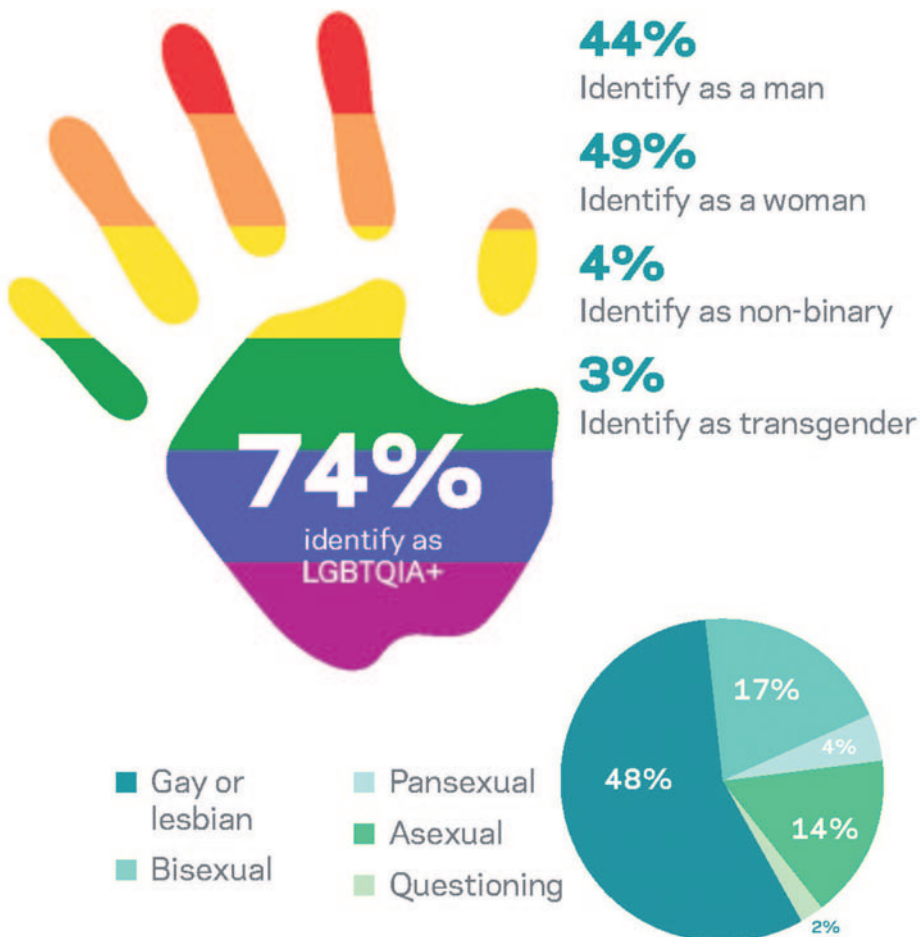


FIGHT FOR RECOGNITION Small groups of Community Health Workers have been the principal drivers of organising efforts

*In Numbers...***Fórsa LGBTQIA+ members survey**

Prior to the launch of Fórsa's **LGBTQIA+ Network** we conducted a survey of members. Through the survey we hoped to gain a more comprehensive understanding of LGBTQIA+ members' experiences, both in and out of the workplace. Respondents reported feeling alienated and less than others, fearful, anxious, lonely, hated and misunderstood as a result of discrimination. These results underlined the need to provide directed support to our LGBTQIA+ members.

743 members responded to this survey



56%

said they were not aware of LGBTQIA+ supports and policies available in their workplace

66%

said their workplace was aware of their LGBTQIA+ identity, while **28%** said their workplace was not aware

76%

disclosed their LGBTQIA+ identity to others

82%

live openly in their sexual identity

92%

live in their preferred or felt gender

75%

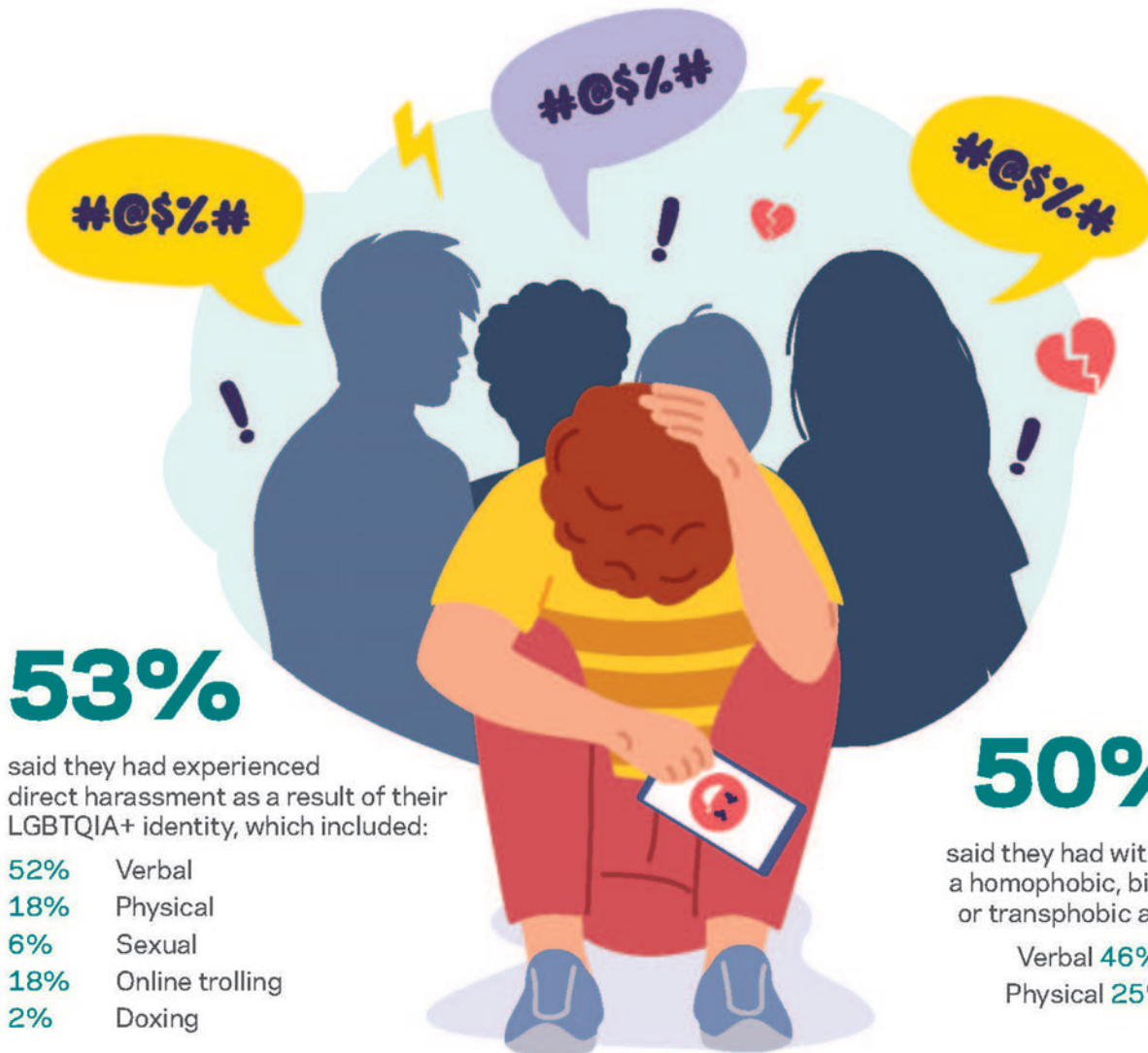
said they felt broadly supported in their LGBTQIA+ identity

60%

said their workplace celebrates LGBTQIA+ pride

79%

have experienced discrimination in the workplace because of their LGBTQIA+ identity



53%

said they had experienced direct harassment as a result of their LGBTQIA+ identity, which included:

- 52% Verbal
- 18% Physical
- 6% Sexual
- 18% Online trolling
- 2% Doxing

50%

said they had witnessed a homophobic, biphobic or transphobic attack.

- Verbal 46%
- Physical 25%

63%

said they had directly experienced hate speech as a result of their LGBTQIA+ identity

50%

felt that prejudice has increased over the last 10 years

50%

feel that Government has not combatted this prejudice effectively



LOVE AND DIVERSITY Fórsa contingent at Pride 2024 in Dublin

You are not alone: Fórsa's new LGBTQIA+ network meets

Mehak Dugal

Fórsa Communications

Though formally launched last November, Fórsa's LGBTQIA+ network held its first working meeting on Thursday, 20th February at Nerney's Court in Dublin.

The network was set up following a motion proposed by the Galway Health and Local Government branch and carried overwhelmingly at Fórsa's biennial conference in May 2024.

Rob Partridge, who presented the motion to conference on behalf of the branch, was subsequently elected Chair of Fórsa's LGBTQIA+ network.

Rob pointed out to delegates that LGBTQIA+ rights are workers' rights, and that trade unions had always been at the heart of fighting for better conditions and protections for all workers. He told conference: "What this network aims to do is

to make sure our voices are heard. And to build on the power of our union with its 89,000 members, to make sure our employers hear us too."

Rob added: "Our community is very publicly under attack in the western world as we speak; it is a dark time for us. To see such solidarity is a much-needed reminder that our strength has always come from each other.

"Societies target us at different times in different ways, but we always come through it as a community. They are not going to win this time either. We are."

A recent survey of Fórsa members, who identify as LGBTQIA+, highlighted the ongoing and ever-increasing need for such a network. More than half of respondents (53%) said they had experienced direct harassment because of their LGBTQIA+ identity. These types of harassment included verbal

(52%), physical (18%), sexual (6%), online trolling (18%), and doxing (2%).

Some 79% have also experienced discrimination in the workplace because of their LGBTQIA+ identity.

Ryan McKinney, the national secretary supporting the network, argued its setting up displayed the sheer power a simple conference motion could have. Ryan told CSQ: "If you are going through something or feel strongly about an issue, just know you are not alone. Make sure you use the democratic tools available to you and voice your concern. It can truly be surprising just how much support you can get once you do that – and the changes that can stem from your one act of courage."

Spanning decades, the trade union movement has been central in the fight to secure LGBTQIA+ rights in Ireland.



NEW CHAIR Rob Partridge

You can read more about that history in a recently published book, titled *Trade Union and LGBT Rights: A Personal History* by Kieran Rose. It is available to download on the author's website www.kieranrose.ie.

The network is hoping to recruit LGBTQIA+ members to serve as LGBTQIA+ Officers in their branches to support members from a position of experience and understanding.

If you are interested in becoming an LGBTQIA+ Officer, if you are in need of support, or just wish to get involved, you can get in contact by emailing lgbtqia@forsa.ie.

INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY Martin Bridgeman, of the RMA, (left) joins Fórsa members at a recent protest



Leaving work doesn't mean you have to leave your union

Brendan Kinsella

Fórsa Communications

Topping off a year of unprecedented activity for Fórsa's Retired Members' Association (RMA), members met recently in Fórsa's offices in Nerney's Court for their AGM on Thursday, March 6th. The meeting saw members vote on RMA Executive Committee representatives and decide the association's aims for the year ahead.

In a vote of confidence for this new energetic direction, Chair Martin Bridgeman was returned to office by association members. He will be joined by Vice Chair, Siobhán Ní Ghríofa, and Treasurer Gerry Foley.

Martin said: "My goal as Chair has been to build the Retired Members' Association as a community, to increase our membership and our role within Fórsa. For me, being returned as Chair is members saying they share that vision."

Over the past year, retired members have been increasingly active as a group and within the union. The RMA's membership has seen similar invigoration as more members decide to stay with the union after retirement.

Martin, and other members of the RMA, have been travelling across the country, speaking at AGMs to promote retired membership. So far, this mission has taken them to over 60 AGMs, in person and online.

He said: "Members often think because they're retiring from work, they have to retire



SHARED COMMITMENT RMA Chair Martin Bridgeman and Treasurer Michael Smyth at AGM



from the union. We've been going to AGMs to let members know that this isn't the case. We've been busy raising awareness and letting them know that they can still stay in Fórsa as members of their branch and as part of the Association. We've been hugely encouraged

by the response and branches are helping us to get the word out."

Martin continued: "Retired members retain many of the discounts and deals they had as employed members, such as special insurance rates, a will writing service, the €5,000 personal accident and illness cover, and more. But I think what moves people most is not having to leave the community they've built in the union." Initially established to support retired members of Fórsa by providing practical, relevant advice on issues such as pension rights, the RMA has grown into a vibrant community and a space for members to advocate on issues affecting them.

The RMA focuses on protecting pension terms and conditions, on timely pension payments, as well as addressing issues such as occupational pensions, state pensions, social welfare benefits, health matters, personal security, retirement planning, and public transport. The RMA is also part of the ICTU Retired Workers Committee, as part of their advocacy and engagement at national level within the broader union movement.

Speaking at the AGM, Deputy General Secretary Matt Staunton and Treasurer Michael Smyth affirmed commitment from the elected and official sides of the union to the continued success of the retired members' group.

Afterwards Michael told CSQ: "The knowledge and experience gathered in that room is unmatched anywhere else in the union. Being able to keep the wisdom of so many seasoned activists is a great advantage to us all."

FÓRSA
Retired
Members

Fórsa Youth

Your chance to shape the future of the union...

Fórsa Youth focuses on issues most affecting Fórsa members who are 35 and under. During this term so far, the network has hosted information sessions, a walking tour, and a quiz. Looking forward, there are multiple events planned, including a four day working week panel, a housing campaign, and a neutrality event. If you are interested in getting involved or simply want to meet more like minded young people in the union, email: forsayncsecretary@forsa-rep.ie

Chair: Hugh McInerney

Oireachtas, Courts and Foreign Affairs branch

I'm lucky enough to be this year's Chair of Fórsa Youth. I'm currently a Parliamentary Reporter in the Houses of the Oireachtas, having been an AO in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage before that. Since becoming Fórsa Youth Chair, I have also been elected Vice Chair of my branch, Oireachtas, Courts and Foreign Affairs.

So far this year, we've focused on in-person events, information campaigns and building up our membership across our branches. I'm very grateful for the hard work of the dedicated executive committee and the support of Fórsa HQ and branches and I can't wait to see what the second half of the year has in store!

Vice Chair: James Joy

Cork CSO Clerical

I am a CO in the CSO in Cork. I've always been passionate about workers' rights and the power of collective action. In fact, a more relevant question for me is not 'why did you join a union?', but 'why did you join the civil



PLANNING AHEAD Chair Hugh McInerney



MAKING CONNECTIONS Communications Officer Bridget Moylan and Secretary Rachel Fennelly



EMPOWERMENT Vice Chair James Joy

service?', and the answer is...the union!

The strength of public sector unions like Fórsa, while not without room for improvement, remains a model for what's possible across private industry. Fórsa Youth matters because it creates space to educate, organise, and empower the union leaders of the future.

Secretary: Rachel Fennelly

South Dublin South Leinster SNAs

I am a special needs assistant (SNA) in a secondary school in Ballyfermot, Dublin. I joined the branch executive in February 2022 and am still part of the South Dublin South Leinster SNA branch within Fórsa.

I found out about Fórsa Youth at the 2022 biennial conference. After attending a fringe event at that conference, I joined Fórsa Youth as the youth officer for the SDNL SNA branch. I was delighted to become the Fórsa Youth secretary in 2023, and retain my position in 2024. Fórsa Youth has been a brilliant opportunity and is beneficial for anyone under 35. You can meet new people from all divisions and make valuable connections.

Fórsa Youth



SO GLAD I JOINED Áine Bullock

Recruitment Officer: Áine Bullock

Finance, DPENDR and Associated Organisations (Executive and Clerical) Branch

I work as a HEO in the Legal Services Unit in the Office of the Ombudsman doing legal defence work. As well as that I am a local rep in a short and snappy branch called Finance, DPENDR and Associated Organisations (Executive and Clerical) Branch.

I know there's loads of young members who read this newsletter but haven't been to any Fórsa events. If you've read this article you likely have some inkling of interest. So why not come to the next Fórsa Youth event? The first time I went to a union event I just randomly showed up to an event I saw in this very newsletter! That was seven years ago and since then I've had the chance to help so many people and made so many friends. I'm glad I pushed myself to go.

Campaigns Officer: Fergal Twomey

Dept of Health Exec Grades

I am proud to be serving my second term as Campaigns Officer for Fórsa Youth. I first joined the union when on college work placement in Cork County Council. This experience influenced my decision to pursue a public service career. I rejoined the union in the civil service division after graduation, and I am also active in my branch as a Campaigns Officer.

As Fórsa Youth Campaigns Officer, my main focus is on global solidarity, particularly advocating for an increased focus on standing with Palestine through engagement with the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions campaign, in response to the Israeli occupation of Gaza.

The other main focus for this year is targeted around workplace issues disproportionately affecting young workers. Representing the interests of young workers is crucial to ensuring the continuity of the union by demonstrating its importance and relevance to a new generation who want to see their values reflected in their work.

Communications Officer: Bridget Moylan

Revenue Executive Grades Dublin No.3

I'm an AO in the Revenue Commissioners. I always knew I wanted to join a trade union,



CAMPAIGNS OFFICER Fergal Twomey

and signed up for Fórsa when I first got employed in the civil service.

I came across Fórsa Youth by chance attending an AO network event, where the Fórsa Youth Chair at that time was giving a talk. I got chatting to her, and got myself nominated as soon as I could. For me, not only was it a chance to get more involved with the union, but also a great way to meet people and attend events.

I would recommend anyone who is eligible to join Fórsa Youth. Even before becoming Communications Officer, it has been really insightful to learn more about the work of the union. With the various events throughout the year, it is also really fun!



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For further information on any of our training programmes, please contact

Judith Coffey

Administrator, Fórsa Training Skills Academy

t: 021 4255221 or 087 4072603 e: skillsacademy@forসা.ie

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Pensions

Thousands take the pledge!

Digital drive sees surge of support for pension parity

James Redmond

Fórsa Communications

Digital mobilisation tactics are delivering dividends as pledges of support flood in nationwide for the Fórsa education division's pension parity campaign.

Far from being just another petition, the pledge gathering is an exercise in mapping out what allies can lend support as the battle against discrimination steps up a gear.

The campaign seeks to correct the long-standing injustice faced by school secretaries, who, like their SNA and teacher colleagues, are denied basic pension rights. The campaign is rallying to secure fair entitlements for all school staff, including school caretakers who are an often-overlooked group of school staff.

Luisa Carty, chair of the school secretaries branch, welcomed the surge in support.

She told CSQ: "Over 20,000 people have pledged their support to our campaign. We're snowed under with an avalanche of allies!"

"We've been in touch with over 600 parents' associations and boards of management have also signed on. We've written to all politicians too and we've submitted parliamentary questions to the relevant Ministers."

David Hearne, chair of the school caretakers branch says he's seen the spirit of his colleagues lifted by the surge in support.

"Look, we felt like forgotten soldiers. This is more than just a protest petition – it's a recognition of our labour by the wider school



PARITY PLEASE Morale among school secretaries and caretakers has been boosted by surge in support

community. You have no idea how undervalued we feel. We're the ones fixing the problems, yet we're looked down upon and denied a basic pension. We're the first to arrive and the last to leave. That's us, and it's time we got respect."

Andy Pike, head of Fórsa's education division, summed up what is at stake in this campaign: "There is a deep historic wrong at play here. This campaign is about more than pensions and public sector status – it's about what should have been ours from the beginning."

"We're fighting for proper, fair, set rates of pay, a single contract of employment for all caretakers and secretaries, and access to decent sick leave, bereavement leave, and the same terms and conditions as teachers and SNAs."

● **Show your support! Sign the petition QR CODE (see bottom right)**



'HISTORIC WRONG' Andy Pike

Support pension parity in schools

FORSA

PENSION PARITY IN SCHOOLS

FORSA

What's the issue?

We don't have the same terms and conditions as our school colleagues who are SNAs and teachers. Why not?

We're fighting for pension parity in schools, a single contract of employment for all caretakers and secretaries, and access to decent sick leave and bereavement leave.

We're the first to arrive and the last to leave. Without us, schools simply don't function.

SCHOOL CARETAKERS

FORSA

NEED PENSIONS

SCHOOL SECRETARIES

FORSA

NEED PENSIONS

How can I be part of the campaign?

- Sign the pledge and share it with your school community
- If you're a member, come to union meetings
- Wear the campaign badge and distribute the stickers

Sign the pledge to show you support pensions for School Secretaries and Caretakers!



VAPOUR TRAILBLAZER Grainne Cronin (centre) became Ireland's first female commercial pilot in 1978, pictured recently with IALPA colleagues

Union wins on pregnancy pay in aviation

Hannah Deasy

CSQ Editor

Pregnant pilots in Aer Lingus will now receive variable pay for the first time in the airline's history following a campaign by IALPA, the Irish Air Lines' Pilots Association, a branch of Fórsa.

In a significant step forward for gender equality in aviation, pilots will no longer lose up to 25% of their pay when they get pregnant and are unable to fly, as had been the case in the past. Previously, when a pilot became pregnant and was unable to fly, they were automatically entitled to a suitable ground position that was only remunerated by basic pay. Now, any pregnant pilot who

transfers to a ground position will receive full basic pay, variable pay, and performance pay. The variable pay will be determined based on the variable pay received by the individual over the previous 12 months.

First officer Sinéad Forde, chair of IALPA's female and family support working group, said: "IALPA has been seeking equality during pregnancy for a number of years without any meaningful progress taking place.

"Over the last three months, IALPA and Aer Lingus have engaged extensively and have finally reached

agreement, ensuring that pilots who are pregnant will receive their normal pay up until birth and no longer be at any financial loss.

"This is a significant achievement for the female and family support working group of IALPA and is a step in the right direction for equality in the workplace."

In addition, Fórsa has been engaging on behalf of cabin crew members, and while the majority of crew on grounded duties have been receiving both basic and variable pay, it has now been confirmed that moving forward all pregnant crew working ground duties will receive basic and variable pay.



EQUALITY WIN Sinéad Forde

Working for you on all platforms...

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- Personal Accident – up to €30,000
- Missed Departure up to €6000
- Lost Baggage – up to €3,000
- Public Liability – up to €2,500,000
- Winter Sports & Scuba Diving included on annual cover

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For more information please visit <https://kennco.ie/forsa-travel>

Terms, conditions and excess will apply
KennCo Underwriting Ltd T/A KennCo Insurance is regulated by
The Central Bank of Ireland.





New mortgage service for Fórsa members

To help members take their first steps onto the property ladder or get a little bit more space for their family, Fórsa has teamed up with Symmetry Financial Management to provide members with a brand-new mortgage service.

This end-to-end mortgage service has assisted thousands in purchasing their homes. By working with a wide network of lenders, Symmetry can provide extensive options during a single meeting. With years of experience supporting public sector employees, their team is committed to streamlining the mortgage process and offering tailored solutions to meet your goals.

Symmetry Financial Management is an award-winning brokerage with a strong track record in working with public sector unions and groups. Founded by Managing Director Mark Solon in 2018, Mark's vast experience in providing financial services for the public sector gave him a deep insight into the needs and value of public sector

workers. Since 2018, Symmetry has gone from strength to strength, providing tailored mortgage solutions for public sector workers and growing their team from three to nearly twenty. Today Symmetry has an unmatched understanding of the intricacies of public sector employment and experience with the circumstances of public sector workers at every stage of their careers.

According to Mark their approach is simple, to provide a personalised service informed by an abiding understanding of the circumstances of public sector workers. He said: "Every mortgage solution we provide is tailored with care and understanding, aimed at empowering public sector workers to achieve their homeownership dreams."

Fórsa members can now avail of Symmetry Financial Management's knowledge and expertise, with a new service designed to support our members.

What does this service offer?

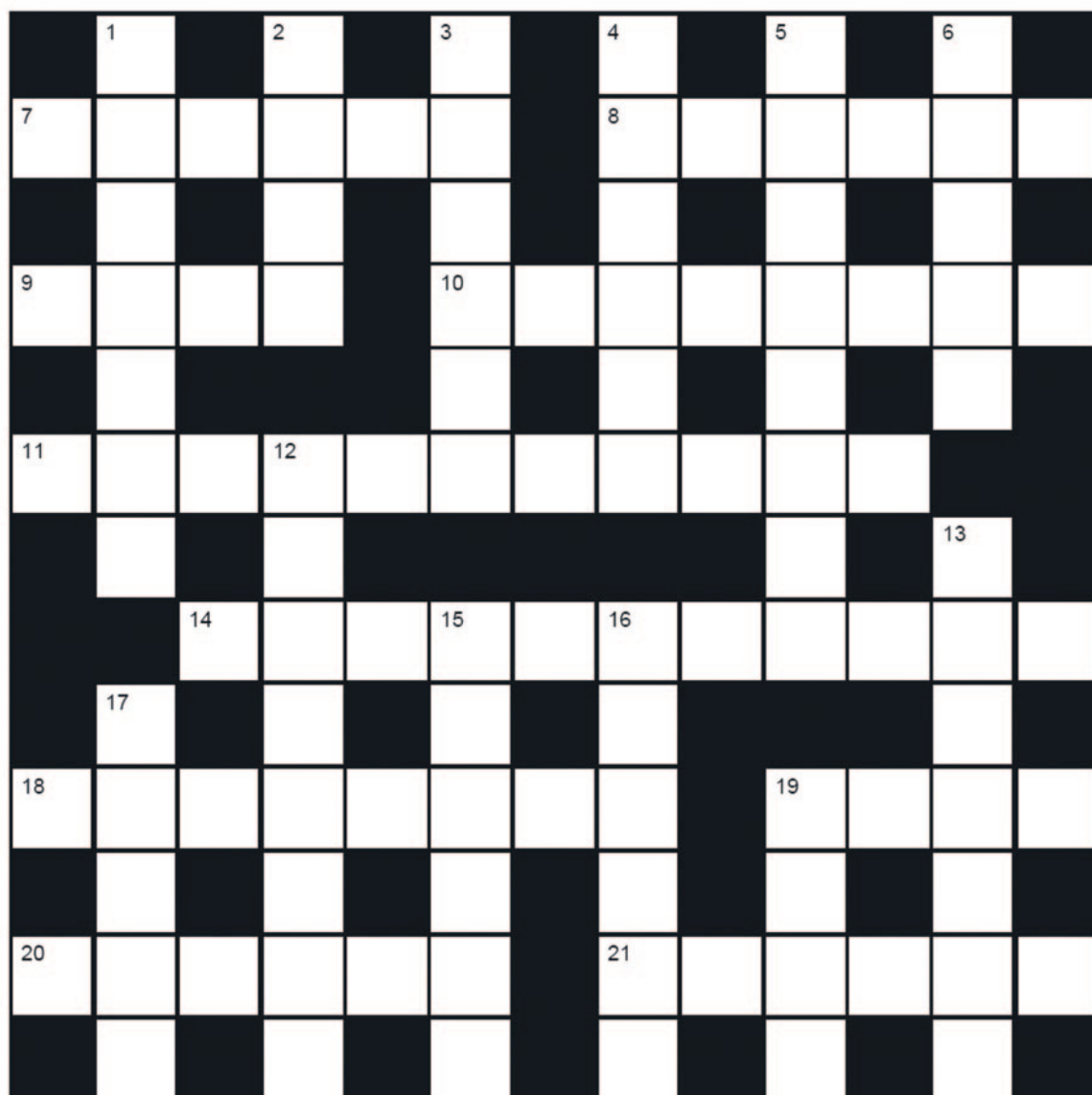
- **Expert Mortgage Guidance:** Enjoy an expert service at no cost.
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Crossword

Crossword set by Peter Connaughton



Across

7. A hat and a canal (6)
 8. See 19 Down (6)
 9. Bantu Stephen, anti-apartheid activist (1946-1977) (4)
 10. He has played Jay Gatsby, Frank Abagnale Jr. and J. Edgar Hoover in movies (2,6)
 11. The E in UNESCO (11)
 14. Home of 'The Hungry Pig' and 'Vino's' (11)
 18. The largest city in Sardinia (8)
 19. American musician, Richard Melville Hall (4)
 20. In golf, scored one over par on a hole (6)
 21. The profession of journalism is known as 'The Fourth.....' (6)

Down

1. Comedy film starring Mara Wilson based on Roald Dahl novel (7)
 2. Airport and district in The Algarve (4)
 3. French actress and animal rights activist, Brigitte (6)
 4. A fine plaster used in decoration and ornamentation (6)
 5. Animal representing the Republican Party (8)
 6. Initially, a British reality TV series based in Brentwood (1,1,1,1,1)
 12. An ordained member of the clergy who is assigned to a special ministry
 13. An old slang term for 25 cents (3, 4)
 15. Its capital city is Kigali (6)
 16. Counter used to detect gamma radiation and X-rays (6)
 17. Ecclesiastical law, that is laid down by papal pronouncements (5)
 19. And 8 across - he was an icon for Ireland's temperance movement (1856 - 1925) (4)

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS CSQ Winter 2024

ACROSS: 7. Growth, 8. Meagre, 9. Idol, 10. Rwandese, 11. Scott Bemand, 14. Arthur Fleck, 18. Moraines, 19. Bali, 20. Coyote, 21. Igloos
 DOWN: 1. Product, 2. AWOL, 3. Cherub, 4. Embalm, 5. Cardinal, 6. Grass, 12. Tarragon, 13. Scallop, 15. Handel, 16. Russia, 17. Motor, 19. Bile