

FÓRSA



**Biennial
Report
2024–2026**

**A Better Deal,
A Better Ireland.**

**Biennial Delegate
Conference
2026**

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Foreword

This report marks another year in the development of Fórsa as a strong, growing, and organising union. The union continues to build collective strength, deepen our presence in workplaces, and ensure that the authentic voice of our members is heard wherever decisions are made.

The context in which Fórsa's biennial conference takes place is undoubtedly complex.

Despite continued economic growth and high levels of employment, workers face an ongoing cost-of-living challenge, with uncertainty heightened by global conflict including the current fuel crisis.

Rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are also beginning to reshape the labour market, raising important questions about job security, skills, and the quality of work. Rising energy costs, higher grocery bills, and the daily cost of getting to and from work are placing real strain on households.

Chief among these challenges is the housing crisis, now affecting every sector of Fórsa's membership, and making life much harder for working people.

For too many, it means unaffordable rents, delayed plans, or simply being unable to find a place to live near work. Growing homelessness is a stark reminder that Ireland's economic success has not been shared equally, while the housing crisis itself demands a renewed model of social dialogue capable of delivering meaningful solutions. Right now, it's clear that existing arrangements for official dialogue are not up to the task.

A successful economy can be undermined in lots of ways. We've seen it happen before. The Government's overreliance on corporation tax from a handful of companies, out-of-control housing costs, and uncertainty caused by global conflict, carry the combined potential to grind things to a halt. That risk means we must act collectively to protect living standards for our members, and to secure a better deal.

This is why the 'A Better Deal' campaign represents a critical moment for Fórsa. It's an opportunity to galvanise Fórsa's collective strength and to demonstrate clearly to our largest employer, the Government, that public servants retain a strong and united voice.

The scale of engagement with the pledge campaign has been very encouraging, but its real power lies in the conversations it is prompting in workplaces across the country, as members shape the agenda for the next round of pay talks and ensure that key issues are properly addressed.



Kevin Callinan
Fórsa General Secretary

In a world marked by conflict and division, trade union expressions of solidarity are not abstract aspirations. They reflect the values that underpin trade unionism itself. That's why our commitment to solidarity remains central, why we stand with the people of Palestine and Ukraine, and with all people displaced by conflict.

This report details our activities over the past two years, from negotiating pay agreements to standing together and taking industrial action, demonstrating solidarity at home and further afield, fighting to protect remote and flexible work, while pushing for fairness in the workplace and in the world.

Fórsa's collective strength continues to grow. By continuing to organise and act together, your union remains a truly powerful force for progress. Thank you for being part of it.

Kevin Callinan
General Secretary, Fórsa
April 2026

Year in review

Organising, action and outcomes

The period under review (2024–2026) was marked by a high level of member activity across all divisions, demonstrating the continued effectiveness of collective organisation to deliver tangible outcomes. Across the union, members engaged in a wide range of campaigns, negotiations, and, where necessary, industrial action to advance their interests. Strong membership growth over the period further strengthened the union's capacity to organise and act collectively.

One of the most significant developments was the dispute involving school secretaries and caretakers, which saw approximately 2,800 workers take sustained strike action over pay, pensions, and conditions in August and September 2026. The scale and visibility of the action, and the subsequent engagement at the WRC and the Labour Court, underscored the capacity of organised members to address long-standing issues and shape national debate.

Workplace flexibility and work life balance emerged as defining themes. Member survey data confirmed strong and consistent demand for the protection of hybrid and remote working arrangements, alongside broader concerns regarding working time and quality of life, in the context of ongoing cost-of-living pressures. These issues featured prominently in negotiations and disputes, including efforts to resist unilateral changes to established arrangements and to secure improved flexibilities where possible.

There was continued engagement with systemic challenges in public services, particularly in relation to staffing, recruitment, and workforce planning. In the health sector, for example, sustained pressure from unions led to proposals aimed at addressing delays in recruitment and improving workforce capacity, although



School Secretaries and Caretakers rally at Merrion Square on the first day of strike action on 28th August 2025.

significant challenges remain. Similar concerns arose in other sectors, including local government and specialist grades, where retention and resourcing issues continue to impact service delivery.

At a strategic level, the union advanced preparations for the next round of public service pay negotiations. The launch of the 'A Better Deal' campaign reflected a clear mandate from members for improved pay outcomes, enhanced work life balance, and meaningful progress on local bargaining claims, including early outcomes such as agreements to shorten progression through pay scales. Survey evidence shows a high level of member engagement and a strong willingness to support collective action.

Taken together, developments over the period point to a union that is increasingly member-led, focused on outcomes, and prepared to act where necessary to secure improvements in pay, conditions, and public services.

Governance and structures

Union officers

Officer elections took place at Fórsa's biennial delegate conference in May 2024, and Martin Walsh, of the Louth Health and Local Government branch, was elected Fórsa's new president. Julie Flood, of Fórsa's Dublin City branch, was elected senior vice president, Michael Crowe (DSP Executive Grades branch) and Tara Horigan (Health & Safety Authority branch) as vice-presidents, while outgoing president Michael Smyth of the School Completion Programme branch was elected honorary treasurer.

Staffing and organisational developments

The period saw a few significant staffing changes across the organisation. The union extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to colleagues who retired between May 2024 and May 2026, including Margaret Butler, Chris Cully, Des Fagan, Stella Griffin, Paul Moyer, Eoin Ronayne, Matt Staunton. Each made a valued and lasting contribution to the work of the union over many years, supporting members and strengthening the organisation in meaningful ways. Fórsa acknowledges their dedication and service and wishes them every success and fulfilment in their retirement.

Following these retirements, a number of senior appointments were made to ensure continuity of leadership and support for members. Katie Morgan was appointed deputy general secretary following Matt Staunton's retirement, while Hazel Nolan assumed the role of national secretary for the Services and Enterprises division.

Finance and administration

This report covers the financial years 2024 and 2025. During this period the union consolidated its internal financial management processes while working with its external auditors. Forvis Mazars has been our auditor since 2021.

A detailed financial report was circulated to branches in advance of the national conference, setting out key financial data from the audited financial statements approved by the NEC for 2024-25 (see summary in Appendix 1). These statements include consolidated branch income and expenditure and balance sheet data, satisfying a regulatory requirement to reflect this information in the statutory AR21 statement, lodged annually before 1st June each year. The integration of branch financial data into the annual audit process was a significant challenge, not only for the union's finance team but for the branch treasurers.

The NEC approved budgets and reviewed and approved income and expenditure. Expenditure was carefully monitored by the Finance & Risk Committee. The risk register was reviewed regularly at the Finance & Risk committee meetings. The Asset Management committee determined their investment strategy after receiving advice from their investment consultants. Risk exposure analysis was reviewed, and the appropriateness of the asset or investment mix was assessed to be within the risk profile of Fórsa.

The period saw a gradual process of branch rationalisation, particularly within the Civil Service division. Garda Clerical and DSP Clerical have now been formally merged into national branches similar to the Revenue Clerical branches which were merged into one larger branch in 2024. Several smaller branches, and some inactive branches, have come together with a view to consolidating. Work is ongoing with elected representatives to reactivate some dormant branches, and to amalgamate smaller grade-based branches to deliver better representation for their members.

The NEC-approved branch rules template is used to ensure all grades and sections of new branches are proportionally represented in any new structure proposed for ratification by the NEC. Ongoing work is being undertaken to streamline financial structures within branches.

The maximum annual subscription for the default 0.8% rate of salary was €425.30 (salary maximum of €53,162.50) in 2024. This increased in 2025 to €457.01 (salary maximum of €57,125.89) reflecting increases due under the Public Sector Pay Agreement 2024-2026. Two legacy rates continue to operate outside of this maximum subscription ceiling.¹

Forvis Mazars, our auditors, recommended that Fórsa use a cloud or excel template for Branch returns. In 2025 we used an excel template. This template was emailed to all branches. (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer). If branches submitted bank statements, Fórsa head office helped treasurers complete the template. An improved template will be used in 2026 with help available from Fórsa head office to complete it.

Forvis Mazars have recommended the use of Internal audit within Fórsa. One branch was audited in 2024. Three branches were audited in 2025.



In 2025 Fórsa teamed up with Breast Cancer Ireland and Cornmarket on a Breast Health Awareness & Education Programme for members. Breast Cancer Ireland will provide presentations to Fórsa members in workplaces throughout Ireland about the importance of breast health education.

¹ The 1% Civil Service clerical officers and related grades rate (includes payment for the legacy benefits scheme for that grade) and the 0.62% subscription rate for Executive Officers and HEOs in membership prior to the amalgamation in 2018.

Membership and growth

Membership Unit

Fórsa's director of Membership is Seán McElhinney.

Throughout 2025, the Membership Unit continued to play a central role in supporting Fórsa's organisational development and sustained membership growth. During a year of continued expansion, the team combined high-volume operational delivery with targeted structural improvements aimed at strengthening recruitment, retention, and engagement.

By year-end, Fórsa's national membership reached 96,924, continuing a steady upward trajectory. This growth was supported by the processing of more than 12,500 membership applications, with officers working consistently to ensure efficient onboarding, accurate record-keeping, and responsive support to branches and divisions experiencing increased recruitment activity.

Recruitment and engagement

A significant contribution to this progress came from the work of the senior membership recruitment officer, who expanded the union's visibility through workplace visits and promotional events. Data from 2025 shows that workplaces engaged through this programme recorded three to five times more new joiners than comparable sites without direct engagement.

These results underline the continuing importance of face-to-face recruitment and highlight the value of coordinated, on-the-ground support for activists during key organising campaigns.

Strengthening membership data

The Membership Unit also made substantial progress in improving the union's data quality and analytical capacity. Staff undertook a comprehensive review and update of workplace-level information across the membership system, significantly enhancing the accuracy and completeness of records.

By the end of 2025, verified email addresses were held for over 95% of members, while workplace information was recorded for more than 80%. These improvements have strengthened reporting and planning while enabling more targeted

organising campaigns and improved representative coverage across divisions. Continued investment in data integrity will remain central to Fórsa's ability to mobilise, communicate with, and support members effectively.

Retired members

Progress was also made in developing Fórsa's structures for retired members. During 2025, approximately 600 members transitioned to retired membership, bringing the total in this category to more than 1,200 members.

In response to this growth, work progressed on establishing a Membership Development Officer for retired members, a role designed to strengthen networks, deepen engagement, and support union-building activities within this expanding section of the organisation.



Martin Bridgeman speaking at Fórsa Retired Members Association Conference.

Towards the 100,000-member milestone

Overall, the Membership Unit delivered a strong performance during a year characterised by growth and organisational development. Reliable operational delivery, proactive recruitment support, improved data systems, and a more structured approach to retired members' engagement have positioned Fórsa well as it approaches the milestone of 100,000 members.

The Unit remains focused on sustaining this momentum and supporting branches, divisions, and activists in the next phase of the union's growth.

Strategic development

Fórsa's head of Strategic Change is Ryan McKinney.

Several projects are managed currently by the Strategic Change team and the following report summarises the progress since the last conference.

Fórsa strategic plan

Fórsa's first strategic plan ran from 2021-2025. A new strategic plan has been drafted, approved by the NEC, and will be put to Biennial Conference 2026 for adoption. It builds on Fórsa's achievements over recent years, and the implementation of the first strategic plan.



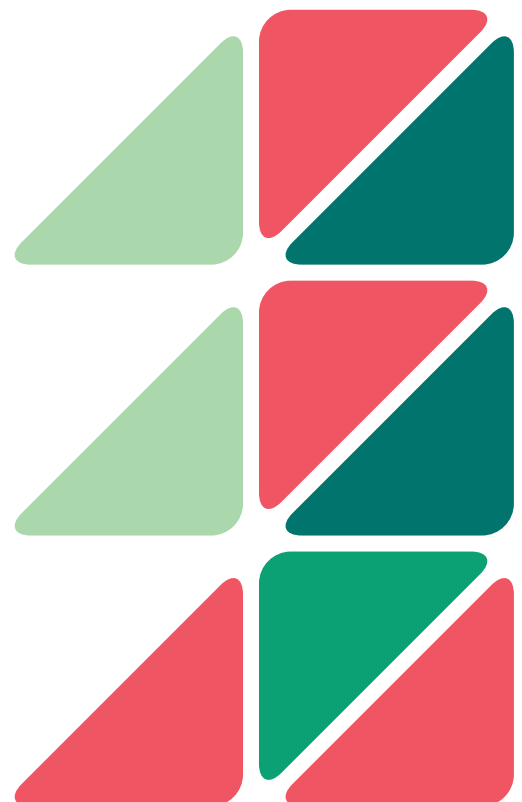
While we now have a growing membership, increased activity, more staff, and better data, the need for higher union density, increased member participation, and more resilient workplace structures is greater than ever.

The Strategic Plan 2026-2030 features five key

goals that will drive the union's work to build strong workplace structures which ensure workers are organised and empowered, guiding our growth and strengthening our collective power to shape a better working life, build strong communities and contribute to a more equal and fairer world.

Alongside technical enhancements, the project team has continued to update materials and work closely with colleagues across divisions and operations to ensure new processes are well understood and adopted.

Data improvement remains a core and ongoing priority. Strengthening data integrity is essential to ensuring that CRM reporting is accurate, consistent and dependable. As data quality continues to improve, the insights generated are increasingly helping us make more strategic decisions, focus resources more effectively, and better understand the organising and campaign landscape across the union.



Training and development

Skills Academy

Fórsa's director of Membership Training & Development is Fiona Dunne.

In the period June 2024 - April 2026, there have been significant changes to the programme offered by Skills Academy and published in our calendar. Some of our new offerings have become a key favourite such as the Fórsa Induction for new members which is offered 22 times a year, and our Lunch and Learn series which runs over 11 months of the year from January through November. The list of topics is an ever expanding one and, this year alone, sessions have included presentations on the Fórsa International Committee, the Four-Day week campaign, Online Safety and Stress busters. Both offerings are online, open to all members and are amongst the core programmes on which our foundations of skills development and ongoing learning are built.

The Level 1 Workplace Representatives Training programme, which is a key support for our new representatives, is offered eight times a year on the calendar. Increasing demand for this skills training from branches seeking to rebuild, focusing on target areas or increasing the numbers of workplace representatives in their local networks, has significantly increased the

number of times it has been delivered and in the 2025-2026 period alone the Level 1 Workplace Representatives Training Programme has been delivered 17 times from August 2025 to May 2026. Additional courses are already pencilled into the next term. This has brought the number of level 1 workplace representatives fully trained this year to date to 160, with three more courses in April and May yet to be delivered (and counted).

Following a request by our branches and under the direction of the NEC Subcommittee on training, a new application and confirmation process for participants has been agreed and has been operational for close to two years. This relies on full co-operation and co-ordination with branches and assigned officials to ensure the correct participants are registered for each course. This process (see below) ensures that branches are very aware of those who are registering for our courses by ensuring only eligible participants receive the email from the branch and confirmation of acceptance onto our courses is made by branches and assigned Fórsa officials.

Fórsa's Level 2 Workplace Representative Training continues in Dublin, Galway and Cork each year and next year the complete package (4 modules) will be offered a second time in Dublin towards the end of term, for those who may have missed out



Skills Academy awards ceremony.

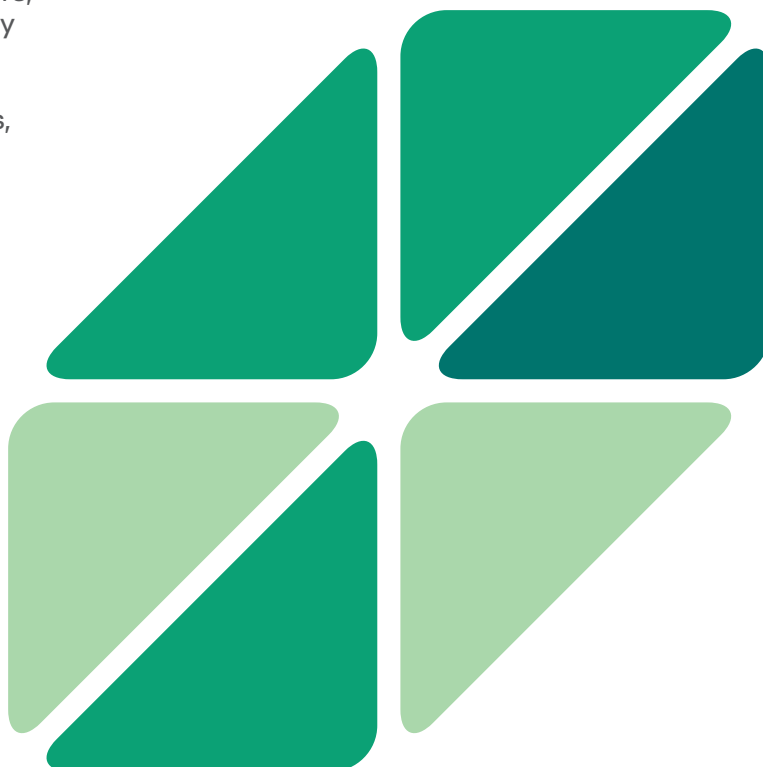
on the first course. It is intended to rewrite the content of at least two of these modules this summer, with further updates on the remaining modules happening during the year.

The range of branch skills courses has also expanded and courses provided include Branch Chairs and Secretaries, Branch Treasurers, Branch Training Officer seminars, communications, conflict resolution, digital skills and social media activism, Data Protection, negotiations, public speaking, presentation skills, resilience building and time management. A two-level programme is also offered (separately to Civil Service division officers) to branch officers on Effective IR practices Level 1 and Level 2 respectively, with a level 3 currently in development for delivery in Q1 2027. New offerings already developed for branches in the 2026-27 period will include Dignity and Respect workshop and Level 2 Branch chairs and secretaries. A series of additional courses are also in development for piloting during the year.

Fórsa Skills Academy would like to take this opportunity to thank the many staff and activists who work with us and continue to make the output of Skills Academy successful and impactful for all our workplace representatives, from our tutors, both internal and external, our Skills Academy staff, members of the NEC subcommittee on training and our branch officers. For detailed explanations of our courses and programmes, please contact the Fórsa Skills Academy at skillsacademy@forsa.ie.



Paula Gilman, Garda Clerical National branch.



Campaigns and collective action

'A Better Deal' campaign

In November 2025, Fórsa launched a new campaign ahead of the next round of public service pay negotiations. Developed using the data provided by members in the Amárach survey carried out earlier that year, the campaign's first phase centred around a pledge.

The first step of the campaign asked members to do something simple: sign a pledge stating that they will only support a pay agreement that delivers meaningful increases, resolves long-standing local claims, protects a fair work life balance, and commits the Government to investment in common good issues like healthcare and housing. Signing the pledge is a public demonstration that workers want a deal that reflects the reality of their lives.

The campaign was planned around a phased approach. The first phase ran from November 2025 to March 2026. During this period only workplace reps in targeted employments had unique links to access the pledge on digital devices. This approach was adopted so that structured organising conversations in the workplace were the main way in which members engaged with the campaign. This organising approach has been proven to build power in the workplace, to identify new leaders, involve more members, and rebuild union presence in areas where it is needed.

Following training and information sessions organised by branches and officials, workplace reps set out members one by one, listening to their experiences, answering questions, and explaining how collective strength is built from the ground up.

In March 2026, phase two began. The link to the pledge was released to all members and made available on the Fórsa website. Briefing sessions and a toolkit have been made available to any member who wishes to get more involved in the campaign. Over 20 briefings took place in the first



month of phase two and over 6000 members stated they wished to be part of efforts to further build the campaign. At the time of writing more than 30,000 members have signed the pledge.

This campaign is a new departure for the union, as it directly connects members to the public service pay negotiations before they even begin, creating a meaningful opportunity for members to organise and influence the outcome of the talks.

National Ploughing Championships

Fórsa took part in the National Ploughing Championships for the first time in September 2024 and expanded our presence at the event in 2025.



Fórsa officers at the 2025 National Ploughing Championships.

Taking part in this event, which is one of the largest outdoor events in Europe, provides an opportunity for the union to engage with people from farming households who work in hospitals, schools, county councils and community organisations, where Fórsa represents members. Fórsa officers and staff attended in both 2024 and 2025 meeting members and recruiting new members.

Campaigns Unit

Fórsa's director of Campaigns is Kevin Donoghue, and Mehak Dugal is Communications and Campaigns officer. Aisling Cusack was Policy and Research officer during the report period and has since moved to a different role in Fórsa.

The past two years have also seen the development of a more member-led approach to our campaigning initiatives. Informed by motions to union conferences and insights gathered through the annual membership survey, the campaigns unit has sought to strengthen member engagement while building Fórsa's public and political profile across a range of issues.

Political support

The campaigns unit provides ongoing support for lobbying efforts on priority campaigns. This includes industrial actions, campaign initiatives, political outreach, and relationship-building. The expansion of the unit's political database over the last two years has significantly increased the reach and impact of our political communications and strengthened the union's lobbying capacity.

Divisional priorities

The campaigns unit has provided significant support for divisional priorities, including industrial action. The unit remains committed to working with divisions to address the issues and concerns of their members. This includes support for the recent school secretaries' strike, SNA protests, research on workplace morale for the Health and Welfare division, research for the Local Government and Local Services division, and campaign development for the Civil Service division on the Civil Service Amendment Bill.

National campaigns

The campaigns unit has been involved in several national campaigns over the last two years. The following are examples of some of these campaigns.

Palestine

Fórsa has been an active and consistent participant in all the national demonstrations organised by the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) in Dublin. Over the course of the campaign, the union has developed an active network of more than 6,500 (and growing) activist members engaging with the issue of solidarity with Palestine.



International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The campaigns unit led on Fórsa's lobbying efforts in relation to the Occupied Territories Bill, including a formal submission, a national petition gathering over 8000 signatures and mobilising our membership to engage with members of the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs in their constituencies in advance of the Committee's deliberations on the Bill. Following the consultation process, the Committee recommended that services be included. In addition, the Committee's consultation received the highest number of submissions ever recorded on a particular issue.



Trade Union week, Ballymun Boys National School.

More direct and issue-focused messaging this year also contributed to the highest recorded Fórsa attendance at an IPSC demonstration to date, with a particularly strong turnout from younger members. Moving forward, we will build on this targeted outreach to mobilise support for international solidarity issues and implement this useful model for future issue-based campaigning, too.

Stop the Stigma

The Stop the Stigma campaign was initiated in 2023 following the results of a membership survey, which found that more than 95% of respondents supported the introduction of menopause and menstrual welfare workplace policies. Since its launch, work has continued on the campaign as part of Fórsa's wider equality and workplace wellbeing agenda, and it has seen successful engagement across all Fórsa divisions. The advocacy around the campaign's message also continues, as Fórsa delivered a keynote presentation at Atlantic Technological University on 4th March to mark International Women's Day. The event marked the launch of the university's "Period Promise" initiative, which provides free sustainably sourced period products to students and staff across its nine campuses. The campaign also received international recognition from the European Trade Union Institute in Brussels, which examined integrating gender into occupational health and safety across EU member states.

Trade Union Week

"Trade Union Week" is now entering its fourth year. It is the centrepiece of the cross union Better in a Trade Union campaign, coordinated by ICTU. Each year, dozens of branches organise numerous events in workplaces across the country. The events are an opportunity for union visibility in the workplace and for engaging and recruiting new members. The campaigns unit provides branches with access to materials for their events, and coordinates activities, with support from communications and digital.

In 2025, 62 participating branches, over 80 events took place across the country and more than half of branches reported recruiting new members at the Trade Union Week events they hosted.

Summer school

Alongside ongoing initiatives, preparations are underway for the union's annual Summer Series, which provides training and development opportunities for activists and branch campaign officers. The event aims to strengthen the union's campaigning capacity by equipping members with practical skills in organising, advocacy and public engagement.

EU Presidency submission

Fórsa made a submission to a consultation run by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in advance of Ireland's 2026 Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The submission highlighted significant challenges currently facing Europe's labour market and set out recommendations for Ireland's Presidency across three priority themes: housing, healthcare and the rising cost of living, reflecting the lived experiences of Fórsa members in these key areas.

Policy and research

The past two years have seen increased output in Fórsa's engagement with government policy on workers' issues.

Remote and hybrid work

A large project on remote and hybrid work has been underway in recent months to build the case for enhanced access to remote and hybrid working, emphasising the benefits to workers, employers, society and the environment.

Public consultations

We have responded to public consultations on Collective Bargaining, outlining the necessity of a mandatory good-faith engagement process between employers and trade unions to resolve disputes. We have also called for a right to bargain to be enshrined in law collectively and enhanced protections against discrimination and victimisation for workers.

Fórsa's position on *Public Procurement* was put forward to the Government and the European Commission through national and EU submissions. These emphasised how public procurement can be leveraged to promote collective bargaining and improve living standards for workers, as well as the importance of insourcing and socially responsible public procurement.

Fórsa responded to the independent *Covid-19 Evaluation*, highlighting the essential contribution of the union and its members during the pandemic and calling for a permanent return to structured social dialogue in national policymaking.

Member engagement

The union's position in consultations was strengthened through members' engagement with Government, encouraged by the development and delivery of information webinars on key issues, as well as the provision of guidance materials to support members in making their individual and branch submissions.

Those seeking to become more involved in campaigns or get more information should contact campaigns@forsa.ie.



Policy, advocacy and industrial issues

Pay and agreements

National agreement pay phases

The current agreement runs from 1st January 2024 to 30th June 2026. The March 2025 pay adjustment under the Public Service Agreement 2024–2026 delivered a 2% increase in gross pay, or €1,000, whichever was greater. This structure ensured proportionally higher gains for lower-paid workers, reflecting Fórsa’s negotiating priority to address cost-of-living pressures. For example, those on lower salary points benefited from increases exceeding 3%. The agreement, overwhelmingly endorsed by members, provides for cumulative pay improvements of 9.25% over its lifetime, with an additional 1% linked to local bargaining. Fórsa emphasised that the inclusion of flat-rate elements was critical to protecting living standards for those most exposed to rising costs. The final payment, under the current agreement, is a general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% on 1st June 2026.

Local bargaining

The Public Service Agreement 2024–2026 established a new form of collective bargaining called local bargaining, allowing trade unions to submit claims for improvements amounting to an additional 3% of pay costs, inclusive of allowances, for particular grades, groups or categories of employee. There are no automatic payments; unions must submit and negotiate claims.

Local negotiations took place throughout 2025, and agreements were to be secured, to the greatest extent possible, through direct negotiations.

Fórsa lodged formal claims for Clerical Officer, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Services Officer and

Cleaner grades in December 2024 and January 2025. These claims followed extensive consultation with members, including engagement through Equivalent Grades Committees and targeted surveys. Conference policy, including motions on incremental scale reform and long-service recognition, informed the claims.

The claims were framed within the 3% payroll provision under the Public Service Agreement 2024–2026, payable in two phases: 1% from 1st September 2025 and the remaining 2% following the expiry of the agreement in June 2026. In most cases, the claims combined a reduction in incremental scale points with percentage increases to maximum scale points. Services Officer and Cleaner grades sought full application of the available quantum to scale maxima.

Agreement was reached in October 2025 on phase one. Ballots of affected members endorsed outcomes which, in most cases, included a ‘skip increment’ and a 1.25% increase on the maximum point. Services Officers and Cleaners secured a 1.5% increase on scale maxima, without a skip increment.

While some claims have been settled, negotiation remains ongoing. Any outstanding claims were due to be lodged by 1st May 2026.

The future of work

Remote and hybrid work

Fórsa has continued to prioritise the expansion and protection of remote and hybrid working as a core workplace right², reflecting both the changing nature of work and the expectations of its members. Across the reporting period, the union has consistently highlighted the risk that access to flexible work could become stratified, available primarily to higher earners³ and certain sectors, while remaining out of reach for many workers.

2 Kevin Callinan: Working from home is a real political issue: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-41630677.html>

3 Unequal access to remote work is a policy failure: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-41794655.html>

Drawing on member feedback and labour market analysis, Fórsa has argued that without stronger policy intervention, remote and hybrid working risks reinforcing existing inequalities. This position was articulated clearly in national media, including an op-ed in the *Irish Examiner*, which set out the union's concern that current trends could lead to a two-tier workforce divided along income and occupational lines.

Fórsa has used a combination of media engagement, political advocacy, and collective bargaining to advance its position. In public commentary union representatives have been critical of the limitations of existing remote working legislation,⁴ describing it as insufficient to guarantee meaningful access. The union has argued that the current framework places too much discretion with employers and does not adequately protect workers seeking flexible arrangements.

At sectoral level, Fórsa has continued to press for the inclusion of remote and hybrid working provisions in collective agreements, particularly in the context of public service pay talks. The union has made clear that stronger, enforceable rights in this area will be a central demand in the next round of negotiations.⁵ This reflects a broader strategic objective: to embed remote and hybrid working within the normal architecture of workplace rights, rather than treating it as a discretionary benefit.

Fórsa has also linked the issue to wider cost-of-living pressures. Rising commuting costs have reinforced the case for more flexible working arrangements, with the union highlighting the financial burden placed on workers who are required to attend workplaces unnecessarily.⁶ In doing so, Fórsa has positioned remote and hybrid working not only as a matter of work life balance, but also as an economic and equality issue.

Throughout the period, the union's interventions have been grounded in a consistent message: that access to remote and hybrid working should be fair, transparent, and inclusive. By combining media advocacy with negotiation strategies and member engagement, Fórsa has sought to ensure that flexible working becomes a standard feature of modern employment, rather than a privilege for a limited few.

Fórsa also responded to the Government's public consultation on the right to request remote working, urging members to have their say ahead of planned changes to the framework. The union described the consultation as a key opportunity to influence policy following five years of unprecedented shifts in how work is organised and hosted an online briefing for members to outline the consultation and the union's submission.

The union highlighted that CSO data show the proportion of workers doing at least some remote work has risen from 20% in 2019 to nearly 36% in mid-2025, emphasising that well-designed hybrid arrangements support service delivery, staff wellbeing, and broader societal benefits, including easing congestion, supporting climate targets, and boosting regional economies.

Artificial intelligence and the future of work

Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a defining issue for the future of work, with significant implications for how public services are organised and delivered. Fórsa has adopted a proactive approach, recognising both the opportunities presented by AI and the risks it poses to workers if introduced without appropriate safeguards.

Following motions adopted at biennial delegate conference, the NEC established an AI working group in July 2024 to develop the union's policy response. Its work has focused on key areas including data protection, surveillance, discrimination, job displacement, and the need for transparency in how AI systems are deployed in workplaces. This is being supported by member engagement initiatives, including surveys, workplace mapping, and dedicated training and seminars.

The union's position is clear: technological change must be shaped through collective bargaining. If AI delivers productivity gains, these must translate into improved pay, reduced working time, and better-quality public services. Workers must have a meaningful say in how their roles evolve, and the benefits of innovation must be shared equitably.

4 Remote working legislation 'a lame duck', senior Fórsa official tells conference: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/2026/03/16/remote-working-legislation-a-lame-duck-senior-forsa-official-tells-conference/>

5 Stronger remote-working protections for public servants 'to be priority at upcoming talks': <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/stronger-remote-working-protections-for-public-servants-to-be-priority-at-upcoming-talks/a361614526.html>

6 Call for employers to be more flexible about staff working from home as commuting costs surge for motorists: <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/call-for-employers-to-be-more-flexible-about-staff-working-from-home-as-commuting-costs-surge-for-motorists/a106174686.html>

Fórsa will continue to engage nationally and internationally, including with the European Trade Union Institute, to ensure that AI is implemented in a way that protects workers, upholds public service values, and places human judgement and accountability at its centre.

Surveys and member insights

Remote work survey

Fórsa also undertook a substantial nationwide survey of members to inform its approach to remote and hybrid working ahead of the next round of public service pay negotiations. Conducted independently on behalf of the union in Spring 2026, the survey sought to build an evidence-based understanding of current working arrangements, their impact on members' lives, and priorities for future negotiations.

The survey was open to all members, including those without access to remote or hybrid working, reflecting the union's focus on capturing the full range of workplace experiences, including barriers to flexibility. It gathered data on working patterns, commuting, productivity, and wellbeing, alongside members' preferences for the future organisation of work.

The initiative took place in the context of increasing variation in access to hybrid working across the public service, and growing concern regarding the potential erosion of existing arrangements. Previous union research indicated that members regard remote working as a key workplace issue, comparable in importance to pay.

The findings will be presented at the union's conference in May 2026, and will inform the union's negotiating position, reinforcing its objective to secure equitable, sustainable, and collectively agreed approaches to flexible working across the public service.

Membership survey

In late 2025, Fórsa launched its annual member survey to shape the union's priorities ahead of the next public service pay negotiations. Over 14,000 members across all divisions participated, providing a clear picture of the pressures facing public service workers. The findings highlighted widespread concern over living standards, with 73% reporting a decline over the past two years and lower-paid members most affected.

Pay increases remain the top priority, with 84% of respondents insisting that the next agreement must deliver real, inflation-beating increases. Beyond pay, the survey identified key workplace priorities: protecting hybrid and remote working (55%), securing a shorter working week without loss of pay (54%), and safeguarding flexible hours (53%). These results demonstrate the importance members place on work life balance alongside fair remuneration.

The survey also revealed strong support for campaigning on public investment in healthcare, housing, and education. Fórsa's leadership, including general secretary Kevin Callinan, stressed that the results reflect a readiness among members to take collective action. The survey provides the foundation for a national campaign to organise members and strengthen the union's bargaining power ahead of negotiations in 2026.

Labour market policy

Collective bargaining

Fórsa has actively engaged with the Government's new Action Plan on Collective Bargaining, published in late 2025, alongside the transposition of the EU Adequate Minimum Wage Directive. Developed in collaboration with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and Ibec, the plan aims to expand collective bargaining coverage, improve union access to workplaces, and strengthen social dialogue. A key measure is the reintroduction of tax relief on trade union subscriptions, which Fórsa has long campaigned for since its removal in 2011. General secretary Kevin Callinan described the move as "an overdue but very welcome step" recognising the essential role of unions in achieving fair, stable, and productive workplaces.

In November 2025, the European Court of Justice cleared the way for the implementation of the EU Adequate Minimum Wage Directive, which obliges member states to strengthen collective bargaining structures and establish a National Living Wage. Kevin Callinan highlighted in a November op-ed in the *Irish Examiner* that these developments present a unique opportunity to empower workers, improve living standards, and address inequality.⁷ He stressed that in a world of growing economic and social pressures, access to fair wages, decent work, and genuine collective bargaining is essential to diffuse tension and tip

⁷ Trade unions and Government must build on EU's wage directive for a better future for workers: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-41744736.html>

the scales of fairness back in favour of the workforce.

Fórsa has committed to engaging fully with Government and employers to ensure the measures in the Action Plan are implemented effectively. Building union density and empowering workers to participate in collective bargaining are central to delivering a fairer industrial relations system. While the National Living Wage introduction has been delayed to 2029, these steps provide the framework for stronger, more equitable workplaces and a more resilient, human-centred economy.

Low Pay Commission

In May 2025, Fórsa made a detailed submission to the Low Pay Commission calling for decisive action to tackle in-work poverty and deliver a real living wage. The union proposed increasing the national minimum wage by €1 to €14.50 per hour from January 2026, aligning it with 60% of median earnings. Fórsa emphasised that the minimum wage must act as a floor, not a ceiling, and should not undermine collective bargaining arrangements that secure higher rates.

The submission also called for the abolition of sub-minimum youth rates, highlighting their discriminatory impact. Grounded in evidence of persistent in-work poverty, Fórsa argued that fair wage-setting is essential to ensuring decent living standards, particularly as cost-of-living supports are withdrawn.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap (GPG) is the difference between the average hourly wages of women and men. A gender pay gap will exist if the majority of lower-paid jobs in an organisation are carried out by women and the higher-paid roles are carried out by men.

Under the Gender Pay Gap Information Act, companies with more than 150 employees were required to create and publish a report outlining their gender pay gap across a number of metrics as of 2024, while reporting through the online Gender Pay Gap Portal will be mandatory for all employers with 50+ employees from 2026.

In 2025, the CSO reported that the mean gender pay gap for all employees was 3.5%. This is a significant reduction on the 2024 figure of 6.9% and follows the general downward trend since 2022.⁸ The mean gender pay gap for part-time employees decreased significantly to -33.1% in 2025. However, this figure is noted to be particularly changeable year-on-year due to the low numbers of male part-time employees.

Public procurement

Fórsa engaged with the development of Ireland's first National Public Procurement Strategy, making a detailed submission calling for a stronger link between public spending and workers' rights. The union argued that access to public contracts should be contingent on employers recognising trade unions, engaging in collective bargaining in good faith, and maintaining union-negotiated agreements.

Fórsa emphasised that the State's significant purchasing power should be used to promote fair pay and decent working conditions, rather than reinforcing a "race to the bottom" based on cost alone. The submission also aligned with wider policy objectives to increase collective bargaining coverage across the economy.

This intervention reflects a broader strategic priority for Fórsa: ensuring that public funding supports high-quality employment standards, including in areas such as the Land Development Agency, where union recognition remains a key issue.

⁸ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/cp/gpg/csogenderpaygapreport2025/genderpaygapcalculationsresults/>

Policy, advocacy and industrial: Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)

Pension auto-enrolment

Fórsa supported the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) in opposing Government decisions to delay key measures aimed at improving living standards for workers. These included the postponement of pension auto-enrolment, statutory sick leave enhancements, and the phased introduction of a national living wage—now deferred to 2029. ICTU described the package as a regressive shift in policy, prioritising employer concerns over the needs of low-paid workers.

Fórsa reinforced this position, highlighting the disproportionate impact on those already facing cost-of-living pressures. The union warned that delaying the living wage effectively transfers the burden of economic adjustment onto the lowest-

paid, while broader competitiveness challenges remain unaddressed. Through coordinated advocacy with ICTU, Fórsa emphasised the need for balanced policy responses that protect workers' incomes and ensure that economic resilience is not achieved at their expense.

ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference 2025

ICTU's BDC took place in July 2025 in Belfast, themed Winning Our Future in Uncertain Times. A significant Fórsa delegation took part, participating in debates on issues including the four-day week to remote working, AI, gender-based violence, and Palestine. Fórsa's motion on health and safety, calling for stronger legal



Fórsa delegation at the 2026 ICTU Women's Conference.'



Fórsa deputy general secretary Katie Morgan (left) was re-elected ICTU Vice- President in 2025.

protections, enhanced training, and formal recognition of the role of health and safety representatives in the workplace passed unanimously.

The event brought together delegates from across Ireland to debate critical issues affecting workers, from pay and working conditions to AI, surveillance, and gender-based violence. Fórsa's national secretary, Katie Morgan, was re-elected vice president of ICTU, joining Phil Ní Sheaghda (INMO) and Jacquie White (UTU), marking the first time all three top ICTU officers are women. Fórsa used the conference to reinforce its commitment to collective bargaining, workplace fairness, and international solidarity, underlining the union's role in shaping national trade union strategy and empowering members in Ireland's evolving labour landscape.

ICTU women's conference

Fórsa delegations took part in the ICTU Women's seminar in 2025 and conference in 2026. At this year's conference the union proposed a motion on AI enabled sexual violence, which passed. Robust debates on issues relating to gender inequality, women's working lives, pay and conditions took place at the conference, allowing members to share their experiences across their unions and set out priorities for the years ahead. Fórsa activist Margaret Coughlan finished her term as co-chair of the Joint women's Committee in 2024 and is currently vice chair.

ICTU anti-racist training

Fórsa has supported the ongoing Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Stronger Together anti-racism project, now in its second year, which aims to build more inclusive unions and workplaces for migrant workers and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. During the period, members were encouraged to participate in a series of targeted training initiatives, including leadership development for minority activists, workshops on combating racism through trade union and civil society collaboration, and "training the trainers" sessions. These initiatives are designed to strengthen workplace advocacy, challenge discriminatory narratives, and increase participation and representation within union structures.

Communications and campaigns

The union's communications functions operate in an integrated way to support campaigns, policy advocacy and industrial relations activity. Fórsa's communications incorporates three discrete areas of activity overseen by three directors reporting to the union's deputy general secretary. These are digital (Kate O'Sullivan), membership communications (Hannah Deasy) and media relations (Niall Shanahan). Working cooperatively to ensure consistency and quality of union communications, the work of each director is integrated to maximise the effectiveness of the union's reach to internal and external audiences and are coordinated with the work of the Campaigns unit and divisional and functional teams.

Digital

In 2024 and 2025, the Fórsa website had over 5.3 million visits, up from 4.6 million from the previous reporting period. The continued upward trend in visits is due to optimising the website for traffic (SEO).

The website was redesigned with a new focus on recruitment and membership benefits on the homepage, benefits section, and a new 'Join' landing page. For better information provision, the main menu was changed for navigation, we removed blogs and events from the homepage and created a Fórsa in Action section instead, website hubs have been deployed across all larger ballots, events, and campaigns and the Divisions section of the website was also redesigned, with more imagery of members and easier navigation.

Under the EU Accessibility Act, we built a feature on the website (next to the logo top left-hand corner) that when you click on it, you can decide font size, inversion of colours, and other features. Alongside new background coding, we are now technically accessible to all members with disabilities and other access issues.

Extensive work was undertaken to create a bespoke electronic pledge to support the campaign for A Better Deal campaign. Using several marketing techniques, we created an

online pledge that works like a paper pledge. It allowed in-person conversations to happen in the workplace while signing the pledge but also centralised the data collection, saving considerable time from an administrative perspective and better compliance with GDPR. The electronic pledge is connected to Solas, so the data is securely saved.

Digital campaigns continued to grow, with the use of the new subdomain particularly useful for the School Secretaries and Caretakers campaign in 2025. 70,000 people pledged their support, with 30% of those signatures coming from WhatsApp shares showing the power of grassroots organising. It was also very useful for measuring political support, especially in the final weeks of the campaign, when it was a key leverage tool. It is now being used across union activities, such as retired membership, industrial relations, SNA Day competitions, and social justice petitions.

On social media, due to the changing nature of Big Tech, our members and potential members are now predominantly on Facebook, Instagram and increasingly LinkedIn, so we focus on these platforms, though we retain a presence on other platforms. Our total views across our platforms for this period was 7.5 million.

One stand-out area in this period was the School secretaries and Caretakers campaign, with the School Secretaries branch being extremely active on their social media channels. On the main Fórsa ones, we saw extremely high engagement with content that was high energy, positive, and strong. Here is a brief snapshot of it in numbers: Social media views: 2 million (plus an additional 640,000 views on content created by an influencer for the strikes); Website hub and pages: 133,000 views; Solidarity messages from Fórsa members to secretaries and caretakers: 2,150.

The goal of reflecting our membership visually has been achieved successfully, with far more diversity and dynamic, warm, and people-focused content. Thanks to branches, members and officials who have supported this significant change.

Artificial Intelligence continued to grow in 2024 and 2025. The Director of Digital sits on the Fórsa AI working group as well as Unions 21's international group.

Membership communication

Over the past two years the union's membership communications work has grown in scope and scale. In addition to issuing regular member bulletins, creating leaflets and posters, and developing union-wide outreach campaigns, we regularly work with divisions to amplify the key messaging and membership engagement around ongoing industrial issues and disputes.

Significant national examples of this work include the development of core messaging and collateral in the Code Red: Staff our Services dispute in Health & Welfare in March 2025 and the Pension Parity Now strike of school secretaries and caretakers in September 2025.

We built a strong, coherent, consistent visual brand for this campaign, that resulted in members being front and centre of all communications around the seven-day strike, and very strong public recognition of Fórsa's involvement.

Videos of members telling their stories in advance of the strike shored up public support and created a powerful emotional narrative, these rank in the most popular videos created last year by the union.

The aim of membership communications is both to enhance the clarity with which Fórsa communicates with members, and to elevate members' voices within union communications. Fortnightly sectoral bulletins are issued to members across all divisions by the Communications Unit. These form the core outreach to members, keeping them up to date on union developments, workplace issues, and relevant national stories.

Readership of these bulletins is consistently very high, with each division hitting an open rate above 50% for each edition. Average newsletter open rates are between 15 and 20%. Such a high average demonstrates a high degree of trust in union news content among Fórsa members.

In addition, all union promotional materials, activities and events are coordinated through membership communications to ensure coherency, consistency and the highest standards of professionalism.

We also produce Civil Service Quarterly, the magazine for Fórsa's civil service members, and a new print newsletter for members of the Municipal Employees division.

We have increased the use of 'Plain English' in union communications and creating more toolkits that include posters, leaflets and guides for members to make our materials easier to understand and more accessible.

Over the course of the past two years, we have introduced new training programmes with the Skills Academy, designed to support members as they build their communications competence and skills. Communications trainings have run each year in Dublin, Cork and Galway. An online pilot programme focused on developing branch newsletters took place in March-April 2026 and was very well received.

Fórsa's YouTube channel has grown significantly in the past year, it now regularly features video content, both long form and short form, highlighting campaigns and activities by members.

The work of the Communications team is inherently collaborative, and all members bring much attention and skill to the union. The professionalism of the union's events, led by Róisín McKane, goes from strength to strength. Communication assistants Brendan Kinsella and James Redmond contribute enormously to maximising the union's voice and presence, their work is much appreciated and of real value to the union.

Media relations

Throughout the reporting period, Fórsa sustained a high-profile and strategically focused media presence, deploying media relations as an active tool in support of organising, bargaining and political engagement. Rather than functioning solely as a reactive service, media work was integrated into campaign planning and dispute strategy, shaping how workforce capacity, safety and service sustainability were understood in public debate. This approach reinforced Fórsa's industrial relations objectives through consistent external narratives, positioning the union as an authoritative and constructive voice on employment and public service policy. Interventions informed national reporting on extended working hours in the health service, community and voluntary sector pay parity, and the Pay and Numbers Strategy, consistently framing disputes in terms of workforce capacity, worker safety and service resilience rather than narrow contractual issues.

Sustained engagement on remote and blended working formed a second major theme. Fórsa secured prominent national coverage on the risks associated with unequal access, linking the issue to gender equality, labour supply constraints and

public service delivery. This work included broadcast interviews, briefings and published commentary aligned with live industrial relations developments in the Civil Service, ensuring Fórsa's position was reflected in front-page and broadcast coverage.

Divisional conferences were a further priority for structured media planning. National and regional coverage highlighted key campaigns, including SNA redeployment and the school secretaries and caretakers pensions justice campaign, ensuring member voices were prominent and extending conference outcomes beyond the organisation. Media activity also involved the management of high-profile disputes and sensitive incidents, including assaults at Oberstown, aviation staffing pressures, and disputes in local authorities and education. In each case, Fórsa anchored narratives in worker safety, service quality and sustainable staffing.

The school secretaries and caretakers industrial action in August and September 2026 represented a high point of coordinated media strategy. A structured plan prioritised disciplined messaging, national broadcast engagement and the amplification of member voices. The dispute achieved sustained coverage across print, broadcast and regional outlets, with rare editorial alignment in support of Fórsa's position. Member participation in interviews and opinion pieces was extensive and disciplined, contributing to a strong public narrative focused on fairness and their role within the community. This reporting played an important role in building public and political pressure, culminating in an agreement to enter negotiations on comparable pension entitlements.

Alongside dispute management, Fórsa deployed research and policy interventions to support its wider public narrative. Commissioned research on workforce morale and commentary on collective bargaining and EU labour standards achieved national coverage, including editorial citation, and the successful placement of a number of strong opinion pieces in national print media. This work reinforces the link between industrial relations outcomes and wider public policy issues such as recruitment, retention and service sustainability.

Media relations activity was closely integrated with political and institutional engagement. Coverage of Fórsa's participation in Oireachtas committees, national conferences and policy events ensured union positions were highly visible, strengthening its capacity to influence debate on collective bargaining, employment standards and the future organisation of public services.

Routine communications infrastructure underpinned this work. Daily media briefings, regular contributions to membership bulletins and broadcast media training for branch campaign officers supported consistent messaging, improved media confidence and enabled members to participate directly in public debate.

Combining planned interventions, disciplined dispute coverage and evidence-based commentary, Fórsa ensured that members' concerns were consistently framed in terms of fairness and public value, strengthening the union's leverage in key campaigns and reinforcing its position as a central voice in national debate.

Solidarity, equality and community

International

Fórsa's work on anti-discrimination and international solidarity demonstrates that supporting members at home and standing with workers abroad are complementary expressions of the union's core values. Domestically, Fórsa has backed the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' call for urgent government action to address the rising number of assaults, harassment, and hostile behaviour targeting minority and migrant workers. Reports show that internationally educated staff, particularly in healthcare, are increasingly exposed to intimidation while travelling to and from work. ICTU's proposals - including a Public Transport Charter, a dedicated Transport Policing Service, and strengthened enforcement of hate crime legislation - provide a clear framework for protecting vulnerable workers. Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan has emphasised that "no worker should face intimidation, hostility or hate simply for travelling to do their job," underscoring the union's commitment to safety, dignity, and inclusion.

Internationally, Fórsa members brought their solidarity into action during the ICTU Day of Action on Palestine on 28th November 2025. Workplace walkouts, awareness campaigns, and ethical procurement initiatives connected day-to-day union activity with broader national mobilisation, demonstrating support for Palestinian trade unions and workers under occupation. As museum worker Simon Ó Donnabháin explained,⁹ "This type of action really gives people the confidence to stand up and speak out," showing that small, local gestures contribute to wider solidarity.

9 "Just Keep It Going" | Fórsa workers bring ICTU Day of Action on Palestine to life:
<https://forsatradeunion.newsweaver.com/designtest/1ngrmky2jyu?lang=en&a=1&p=66204239&t=30063856>

In Ukraine, Fórsa members are among those continuing to support a long-running peaceful protest outside the Russian embassy, working with community organisations to highlight the human cost of the war. Retired member John Farrelly describes the ongoing effort as “a diverse community united by a fierce determination to oppose the invasion and support its people,” linking practical advocacy with moral responsibility.¹⁰

Together, these activities show that solidarity is not abstract or symbolic: whether advocating for safer workplaces at home or supporting workers abroad, Fórsa puts labour movement principles into practice, linking respect, fairness, and human rights across borders.

International Solidarity Autumn School

Fórsa continued to strengthen member engagement in international solidarity through its 2025 International Solidarity Autumn School, which took place at the union’s Nerney’s Court office on 27th September 2025. The event brought together members to examine global trade union, human rights, and labour issues, while highlighting projects supported by the union worldwide. The programme created space for informed discussion on key international developments, including solidarity with workers in conflict-affected regions and collaboration with unions across multiple jurisdictions. By facilitating education and debate on global challenges, Fórsa reinforced its commitment to internationalism and to building informed, active solidarity among members, underlining that the union’s work extends beyond national borders.

Global solidarity fund

Fórsa’s international solidarity work continues to make a tangible difference in communities across the globe, demonstrating the union’s commitment to social justice and workers’ empowerment beyond Ireland. Through partnerships with organisations such as Self-Help Africa and the Irish Red Cross, Fórsa members’ contributions support projects that combine practical assistance with skills development and long-term sustainability.

In Burkina Faso, Fórsa-backed funding has transformed the lives of women cashew producers. Grants have enabled the construction of a central storage warehouse, the distribution of more than 12,000 grafted seedlings, and the training of 1,000 women in orchard management



Fórsa has partnered with Self Help Africa to support women cashew producers in Burkina Faso.

and market practices. These initiatives have helped small-scale farmers access higher-value markets, improve yields, and generate sustainable incomes. Stories like that of Fatoumata Siritie, who went from destitution to running a 17-hectare orchard and beekeeping enterprise, illustrate the profound impact of these programmes.



The Irish Red Cross’s work in Nepal is among the projects supported by Fórsa’s International Solidarity fund.

In Nepal, Fórsa members’ contributions to the Irish Red Cross support 447 farmers through microgrants, training in financial literacy, business planning, and climate-smart agriculture. The project empowers communities to develop home-based businesses, diversify livelihoods, and

¹⁰ Solidarity event for Ukraine:

<https://forsatradeunion.newsweaver.com/designtest/fvoluvml1k6?lang=en&a=1&p=66204239&t=30063856>



Justice for Colombia delegation at Casa Pazcífico, Cali, Colombia

reduce outward migration. Through these partnerships, Fórsa promotes solidarity that is collaborative, sustainable, and grounded in mutual respect, demonstrating that international trade unionism can transform lives while offering valuable lessons for organising and social action at home.

This work highlights the union's ethos: solidarity knows no borders, and collective action can drive meaningful change for workers and communities worldwide.

Justice for Colombia

Fórsa continues to stand proudly with Colombia in its ongoing struggle for peace, justice, and dignity, reflecting the union's commitment to international solidarity and the defence of workers' rights. In November 2025, Fórsa joined a Justice for Colombia (JfC) delegation to assess the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement, which ended more than five decades of armed conflict between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla movement. Delegates met with government officials, trade unionists, ex-combatants, human rights defenders, and grassroots leaders, gaining firsthand insight into the complex and fragile journey toward lasting peace.

A central focus of Fórsa's support is Casa Pazcífico in Cali, a human rights centre that provides shelter, legal guidance, and psychological support to displaced families, activists, and victims of state violence during the 2020-21 social protests. Through contributions from Fórsa's Developing World Fund, the centre offers tangible assistance to those whose lives have been shattered by conflict.

Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan emphasised that "Fórsa's presence in Colombia is more than international solidarity; it is a proud statement that our union stands shoulder to shoulder with those fighting for justice, dignity, and peace all around the world." The union also chaired a JfC briefing for Oireachtas members in January 2026, highlighting ongoing risks to peace implementation, human and labour rights, and the critical need for international support to safeguard the 2016 agreement.

Through sustained engagement with JfC, Casa Pazcífico, and Colombian trade unions, Fórsa demonstrates that global solidarity is an active, meaningful extension of its values, linking the defence of human rights abroad with its work for justice at home.

Domestic solidarity

Support for community services

Fórsa continued to support community-based initiatives over the period, including a €10,000 donation to the Capuchin Day Centre in Dublin's north inner city. The centre provides essential frontline services to people experiencing homelessness and poverty, including daily meals, hygiene facilities, and access to clinical supports.

Founded in 1969, the Day Centre now serves hundreds of individuals and families each day, operating on a simple principle that no one should go hungry. In 2025 alone, the centre provided over 330,000 hot meals and more than 77,000 food parcels, alongside a range of additional supports including healthcare clinics, showers, and family services.



Fr. Kevin Kiernan, director of the Capuchin Day Centre in Dublin's North Inner City.

The centre's work is underpinned by a commitment to dignity and unconditional access, ensuring that all who attend are treated with respect and without judgement. Its services are delivered by a combination of professional staff and volunteers, supported in large part by public donations.

The union's contribution reflects its broader commitment to supporting organisations that provide practical assistance to vulnerable communities and advance the common good.

North inner-city fund

This fund aims to support community initiatives that work on fostering education, intercultural development and social inclusion, based in the northeast inner city of Dublin, where the union's headquarters is located. In 2025 organisations working with marginalised communities were invited to apply. Over 30 initiatives benefitted from funding of up to €500 each.

Temple St. toy drive

This annual charity collection is a very successful initiative that grows each year. Branches and members donate toys and vouchers for the benefit of children who will spend Christmas in hospital.

The donations go towards benefiting children and teenagers receiving care in Temple Street, Crumlin, Tallaght, and Connolly hospitals. With many Fórsa members working in hospitals, including our next-door neighbours in Temple Street, this cause continues to hold a very special place in members' hearts. In 2025, the toy collection was accompanied by a €10,000 donation to support Children's Health Foundation Ireland.

Equality

Fórsa Youth

Fórsa Youth has continued to play a central role in engaging and empowering younger members across the union. Guided by its Youth Charter, the network has championed issues including pay equality, housing, cost-of-living pressures, and workplace rights, while promoting inclusion and social justice. Over the period, Fórsa Youth expanded its visibility and activity through campaigns, events, and its inaugural national conference, alongside strong participation in union conferences and May Day mobilisations. The



Fórsa annual Toy Appeal for Temple Street Children's Hospital.

network has also prioritised increasing union density among young workers and ensuring representation across branches, strengthening the voice and influence of younger members within Fórsa's structures.

LGBTQIA+ network

Fórsa's LGBTQIA+ network was formed following a motion brought to the union's biennial conference in May 2024 by activist Rob Partridge. The network works to support all members and staff who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

It was formally launched at the union's equality seminar in November 2024

The seminar included contributions from veteran trade union activist Kieran Rose, retired Fórsa member and chair of Dublin Pride Philippa Ryder, and David Carlos Casanova Rinehart of the Queer Library Alliance.

Fórsa members took part in Pride marches throughout summer 2025, from Dublin to Cork, Wicklow, and Galway. Members also marched at Trans and Intersex Pride and at the Dublin Dyke March. In solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community in Hungary, and as part of an ETUC delegation, Fórsa official Aisling Cusack travelled to Budapest to take part in the banned Pride demonstration in the Hungarian capital.

Also in June, the Skills Academy hosted a Lunch & Learn session with LGBT Ireland which covered the history of Pride and offered practical suggestions on how to make workplaces more inclusive. Network members have also taken part in the EPSU LGBT+ network, attending meetings and creating connections with other unions active in this area.

Fund and grant schemes

Fórsa operates a number of funds and grant schemes for members and community outreach initiatives. Over the last two years we have been able to support members through scholarships and grants

Gaeltacht Scholarship Scheme

In 2024, Fórsa's long-running Gaeltacht Scholarship Scheme was renamed in memory of Jerry King, former President of IMPACT. The scheme offers grants to assist children of Fórsa members, aged between 11 and 18, in attending Irish language courses each summer.



Jerry King was elected president of IMPACT in 2014.

A library worker from Mayo, Jerry's dedication to the trade union movement saw him elected as President in 2014. He was proud of the significant contribution he made to the establishment of the Education Division, and a lifelong supporter of the Irish language.

In 2024 and 2025, grants of €150 each were awarded to 80 applicants for attending residential Irish language courses this summer, and a further 40 grants of €70 were provided to assist children attending day-only Irish courses held outside Gaeltacht areas.

In partnership with Cornmarket insurance, we have been able to raise the number of grants available in 2026 to 300 grants of €150 for either day courses or residential courses.

Third level grant scheme

Fórsa's Third Level Grant support scheme for union representatives continued to support members over the past two academic years. The scheme is intended to assist union representatives in acquiring knowledge and skills that will help them to better carry out the role of a union representative.

Financial assistance is provided to successful applicants, enabling them to undertake a certified educational course at third level. Courses (not including post-graduate) must provide qualifications and skills which will benefit a member in their work, union, and personal life. The grant is not intended to assist in the progression of a members' professional development or career.

The scheme is open to all union representatives. A union representative role includes performing any role on behalf of their union colleagues at workplace, branch, vocational group or other level.

Only current, in-benefit members of Fórsa can apply, and must be able to provide details of their role, current or past, as a union representative.

Grants are based on the gross cost of undertaking the course up to a maximum of €3,000 per year. The amount awarded to successful applicants is decided by the Membership Services Committee.



The background features a dark teal color with several overlapping, rounded geometric shapes in shades of light green, teal, and pink. The shapes are arranged in a pattern that suggests a grid or a series of interlocking forms.

2024-2026 divisional reports



Civil Service division

report 2024-2026

Civil Service Division

Organisation

Divisional Executive Committee (DEC)

The current Civil Service Divisional Executive Committee (CSDEC) is comprised as follows:

Clerical:

Jean Taylor (Chairperson), Siobhan Kiely, Helen Linehan, Paula Gilman, Declan O'Donnell, Heather Neilands, Bernadette Bradley, Paul Salter, Paul Dwan, Jim Doherty, Jessica Somerville.

Executive:

Cormac Donoghue (Vice-Chairperson), Eddie Quinn, Majella Murphy, Jennifer Drohan, Denis Conway, Gary Fagan, Cathal Kelly, Tanya O'Neill, Áine Bullock, Liam McLoughlin, Melissa Brennan.

Professional and Technical:

Darragh Fox (Vice-Chairperson), Eugene Dunne, Gerry Wilson, Michael Peters, Hazel Menton, Deirdre Morgan, Andrew Davies.

The following members also served on the CSDEC during the 2025-2026 term:

Christopher Crowley, Amanda Grouse Dunne, Seán Joyce.

Staffing:

Éamonn Donnelly was appointed Deputy General Secretary of Fórsa in July 2022. The role incorporates responsibility for the Civil Service division.

The following staff are assigned to the division:

Assistant General Secretaries:

Ian McDonnell, Cliodhna McNamara, Pat Ennis, Jim Mitchell, Mary Hurley, Maura Cahalan, Paul MacSweeney, Una Faulkner.

Industrial Relations Officers:

Donna Mooney, Ellen Brennan (FGE).

Assistant Industrial Officers:

Christopher Crowley, Noreen O'Flynn.

Lead Organiser:

Bernie Aston.

Seconded Staff:

Tony Conlon (DSP Clerical), Caitriona Oates (DSP Executive), Amanda Grouse Dunne (Revenue Clerical), Des Ryder (Revenue Executive).

Administrative Team:

David Moore, Mary Murtagh, Jade Kane, Gary Hearne, Monica Rooney.

Divisional overview

Local bargaining

Fórsa lodged formal claims for Clerical Officer, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Services Officer and Cleaner grades in December 2024 and January 2025. These claims followed extensive consultation with members, including engagement through Equivalent Grades Committees and targeted surveys. Conference policy, including motions on incremental scale reform and long-service recognition, informed the claims.

The claims were framed within the 3% payroll provision under the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026, payable in two phases: 1% from 1st September 2025 and the remaining 2% following the expiry of the agreement in June 2026. In most cases, the claims combined a reduction in incremental scale points with percentage increases to maximum scale points. Services Officer and Cleaner grades sought full application of the available quantum to scale maxima.

Agreement was reached in October 2025 on phase one. Ballots of affected members endorsed outcomes which, in most cases, included a 'skip increment' and a 1.25% increase on the maximum point. Services Officers and Cleaners secured a 1.5% increase on scale maxima, without a skip increment.

Discussions have also commenced on management priorities linked to sectoral action plans, including limited open recruitment at Higher Executive Officer level, based on identified need.

The agreements concluded to date apply to grades aligned to the relevant pay scales. Negotiations are ongoing in respect of grades on non-aligned scales, as well as Engineering grades, for which a separate claim has been submitted. Further engagement will also take place with grades maintaining direct pay linkages to the core grades, to determine whether those linkages should be retained. Remaining claims will be progressed on a bespoke basis.

Civil Service Industrial Relations System

Fórsa has long sought reform of the Civil Service industrial relations system, which remains largely based on the Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) Scheme established in 1950. The union has consistently argued that the existing framework is outdated, inequitable and not fit for purpose in a modern industrial relations environment.

In July 2023, agreement was reached on a new approach that will align civil service industrial relations more closely with the broader state system. Formal negotiations on a revised framework commenced in November 2023, and in early 2025 agreement was reached on key principles, including:

- A new dispute resolution procedure, facilitated by Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) officers
- Appointment of a WRC officer as independent chair of the General Council
- Revised adjudication and arbitration processes with defined timelines
- A new grievance procedure, including access to third-party adjudication where internal processes fail

While implementation was initially targeted for autumn 2025, progress has been complex. However, negotiations have accelerated in recent months, and draft texts for a revised C&A Scheme and Departmental Council framework are now close to agreement.

Significant progress has also been made on a new grievance procedure, including access to external adjudication for individual workers. The Civil Service Action Plan currently identifies Quarter 2 2026 as the target for completion, which is considered achievable.

Remote and blended working

The civil service blended working framework, introduced in 2022, provides for annual review and requires consultation with unions where significant workplace changes are proposed.

A dispute arose in January 2025, when the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and the Department of Finance both announced unilateral changes to attendance patterns without any meaningful consultation. At that time, the DSP explicitly stated that it was not obliged to consult with unions in advance of changes. The Department of Finance had consistently refused to consult on any aspect of its blended working policy since 2022.

In parallel, the staff panel sought central engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure, proposing a structured, evidence-based review of blended working, including its impact on productivity, wellbeing, service delivery, regional economies, childcare, housing demand, and climate objectives.

The issue was also raised at the Labour Employer Economic Forum, leading to the commissioning of a study by the National Economic and Social Council (NESO). Fórsa argued that any changes to blended working arrangements should be deferred pending the outcome of this research.

Despite this, DSP indicated its intention to proceed with changes in 2026, and the matter proceeded to adjudication in March 2026. The adjudication finding accepted that consultation obligations had been met. Fórsa and the staff panel strongly dispute this conclusion and maintain that consultation was inadequate and the finding fundamentally flawed.

The matter is being pursued at General Council. In the interim, and in light of ongoing pressures relating to fuel supply and cost, Fórsa has called for a pause on any increase in office attendance.

Separately, the issue of flexi-time accrual under blended working arrangements remains subject to arbitration.

More broadly, a Government review of the Work Life Balance Act 2023 concluded that low uptake of remote working rights reflects a lack of awareness. Fórsa rejects this assessment and maintains that the legislation is fundamentally deficient, lacking transparency and effective appeal mechanisms.

Civil Service Regulation and Management (Amendment) Bill

The Civil Service Regulation and Management (Amendment) Bill remains a stated Government priority, although it has not yet been scheduled for enactment.

Fórsa has continued to oppose the Bill, particularly provisions that would delegate dismissal powers below Secretary General level. The staff panel has raised significant concerns regarding the implications for due process and accountability.

In correspondence issued in February 2026, the Department acknowledged these concerns and confirmed that the Bill remains under development, with ongoing engagement involving the Attorney General's Office and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. The Department also confirmed that unions will be engaged as key stakeholders through established industrial relations mechanisms.

Travel and subsistence

Travel and subsistence arrangements continue to be reviewed on a cyclical basis, with subsistence rates reviewed annually and travel rates every three years.

While subsistence rates were increased in December 2023 and again in January 2025, the most recent review of travel expenses in 2025 resulted in no change. This review is based on a composite matrix of motoring costs, rather than fuel prices alone.

Fórsa has highlighted that this approach lacks responsiveness to real-time cost pressures, particularly in the context of recent volatility in fuel prices, and this will require further consideration.

A separate claim has been lodged seeking a review of foreign subsistence rates, which remain benchmarked against UK rates despite the prevalence of assignments in EU countries.

Probation policy

A revised probation policy was agreed in late 2025, informed in part by the Whelan judgement, which confirmed that probationary periods cannot exceed 12 months.

Under the new arrangements, decisions on probation are made at six months, with formal confirmation at nine months. Structured review points at two-month intervals are also provided to ensure early identification and resolution of any issues.

Proposals to replace external appeals with an internal process for promotion-related probation were rejected by the staff panel, and the role of the Civil Service Disciplinary Appeals Board has been retained.

The policy will remain under review, including ongoing discussions regarding the provision of data on unsuccessful probation cases.

NSSO engagement

Following sustained engagement by Fórsa, formal discussions with the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) commenced in September 2025, with a further meeting held in February 2026.

These engagements have been constructive, with the NSSO providing detailed briefings on its processes. This information will be made available to union representatives to improve understanding and support effective engagement.

Dignity at work

A revised Dignity at Work policy was agreed in early 2026, reflecting updated codes of practice issued by the Workplace Relations Commission and the Health and Safety Authority.

The updated policy places greater emphasis on early intervention and resolution, strengthening protections for workers.

Other developments

- **Deferral of Assignments:** New arrangements agreed in March 2026 broaden the scope for deferral of assignments in civil service competitions, including on family, medical, and public interest grounds.
- **Starting Pay:** Issues have arisen regarding the recognition of prior service and the interaction with superannuation provisions. These matters are under active discussion at General Council.
- **Divisional Strategy:** The Civil Service Divisional Strategy 2025-2027, *Playing our part - Together*, is currently subject to mid-term review, with an interim report due in April 2026.

Civil Service – industrial (by department)

Department of Social Protection (DSP)

The past two years have been challenging for Fórsa members in the Department of Social Protection (DSP). Members have responded to increased service demands arising from the cost-of-living crisis, extreme weather events, and the continued impact of the Ukrainian and wider refugee crises, while also engaging with significant organisational change, including the introduction of AI, automation and digitisation.

Fórsa has also raised concerns regarding an increase in incidents of abuse of frontline staff and continues to press for strengthened protections. Engagement with the Department, alongside AHCPs and with the assistance of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), is ongoing in relation to improving consultation and industrial relations structures. Progress on elements of the Civil Service Action Plan remains linked to pay provisions under the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026.

Branch consolidation, density building and the 'A Better Deal' campaign have also been key priorities.



Blended working

Fórsa and AHCPs have been in dispute with the Department since early 2025 regarding proposals to restrict blended working, including a reduction to a maximum of three remote working days per week.

The Department asserted that it was not required to consult with unions on these changes. While discussions took place, no supporting analytics were provided. In response, unions instructed members not to co-operate with the proposed unilateral changes in January 2025, which would have resulted in approximately 1,000 additional staff attending offices.

The Department subsequently deferred implementation in 2025 but sought to reintroduce the restrictions in February 2026. The matter proceeded to adjudication on Wednesday 26th March 2026, with the Adjudicator finding that consultation requirements had been met. Fórsa strongly disputes this finding and is progressing the matter through General Council.

Separately, Fórsa has sought enhanced blended working arrangements in light of ongoing fuel pressures. The union also secured agreement, through the Labour Employer Economic Forum, for a national review of remote working, now being undertaken by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), with a report expected in Quarter 2 2026.

A survey of members on blended working has also been conducted, with findings due to be published.

Intreo Centres

The health and safety of frontline staff remains a significant concern. Incidents of verbal and physical abuse in Intreo Centres are increasing, and while management acknowledges that such behaviour is unacceptable, Fórsa continues to press for more robust protections.

Engagement is ongoing through the Health and Safety Committee and Facilities Management Unit to ensure that workplaces are safe and that abusive behaviour is addressed effectively.

At the same time, staffing levels in customer-facing roles have reduced following the establishment of back-office functions, including the National Processing Team and National Intreo Contact Centre. Fórsa has sought the reinstatement of agreed staffing templates and increased frontline staffing.

Members in a number of centres are experiencing sustained pressures, including long queues, increased customer frustration, restrictions on leave, and work-related stress.

Contact Centre model

Under the Civil Service Action Plan, DSP is progressing proposals for a modern contact centre model.

Fórsa has sought meaningful engagement on the design of this model, with a particular focus on staff wellbeing and sustainability. The union is advocating for a blended model of work to avoid excessive time on phone-based duties and to reduce the risk of burnout.

Fórsa has also sought the extension of blended working arrangements currently available in some centres to all locations, including Longford. Evidence from members indicates that a broader mix of work improves both job satisfaction and wellbeing.

Service demand and external pressures

Demand for DSP services has increased significantly over the reporting period.

More than 121,000 Ukrainian refugees have been supported, while cost-of-living measures, extreme weather events, and humanitarian schemes have driven increased demand. Storm events, including Storm Éowyn and Storm Chandra, resulted in tens of thousands of emergency support applications processed by members in Community Welfare Services.

These developments have led to increased footfall in Intreo Centres and placed significant pressure on staff. While staffing levels have increased, Fórsa maintains that this has not kept pace with demand.

The union also notes that ongoing global economic and geopolitical instability is likely to sustain or increase demand for DSP services in the period ahead.

Staffing levels

Staffing in DSP has increased by approximately 11% since 2018. However, growth has been uneven across grades.

In particular:

- Service Officer numbers have not increased
- Higher Executive Officer numbers have increased only marginally
- Administrative Officer numbers have increased significantly

Fórsa welcomes recent increases in HEO numbers but maintains that further growth is required, particularly in Community Welfare Services, casework and frontline delivery.

Digital self-service

Digital self-service has been introduced in Intreo Centres following both internal and independent risk assessments. Participation by staff remains voluntary, with additional temporary staff assigned to support implementation. The initiative remains under review, and Fórsa continues to monitor its impact on service delivery and staff workload.

Grade appropriate work

A joint union-management review of the 2007 technical report on grade appropriate work is ongoing.

While some tasks have been simplified through automation, Fórsa has raised concerns regarding attempts to assign higher-graded work to Clerical Officers. The issue has been raised in WRC-facilitated discussions, including in the context of Front Office/Back Office (FOBO) reforms. The outcome of the review group is awaited.

Community Welfare Services (CWS)

Despite recent recruitment, the number of Community Welfare Officers remains significantly below previous levels, having declined substantially since the transfer of the service from the HSE in 2011.

Demand for CWS has increased due to cost-of-living pressures, climate-related events, and increased population need. Reductions in staffing have resulted in the closure of clinics and reduced outreach services, increasing pressure on Intreo Centres.

A review process agreed following a dispute in Sligo is examining staffing, grading and service delivery. While progress has been slow, it provides a framework for protecting and strengthening the service.

Recruitment and promotion

DSP has introduced an open competition model providing a fast-track pathway from Clerical Officer to Executive Officer level.

Fórsa has raised concerns regarding the absence of equivalent internal opportunities for existing staff and has highlighted the impact on morale. A claim to extend the fast-track model internally has been rejected and is being referred to third-party processes.

EO Inspector claim

A long-running claim relating to Executive Officer Inspectors resulted in an adjudication recommendation that an allowance should be paid in recognition of higher-level duties.

Following assessment, it was confirmed that EO Inspectors were undertaking work above their grade. While agreement on the allowance quantum has been reached, implementation has been delayed due to disputes regarding funding through local bargaining provisions.

Members balloted strongly in favour of industrial action, which commenced in December 2025. Progress is now possible through the phased local bargaining provisions under the current pay agreement.

Other industrial matters

- **Public Employment Services:** An arbitration finding in May 2025 upheld the Department's position on the transfer of Jobseeker Transition work to Local Area Employment Services, while noting shortcomings in consultation.
- **Appeals Office:** An adjudication in January 2026 found that consultation on performance targets was insufficient and recommended a joint union-management process to agree realistic targets.
- **Medical Assessors:** Agreement was reached on access to higher scales, with outstanding issues regarding backdating referred to adjudication.
- **Branch Amalgamation:** DSP clerical members have consolidated from 30 branches into a single branch, representing a significant organisational achievement.

Acknowledgement

Fórsa acknowledges and thanks all DSP representatives and activists for their continued commitment and leadership in supporting members across a period of sustained pressure and change.

Garda

Policing, Security and Community Safety Act

The Policing, Security and Community Safety Act was signed into law by Michael D. Higgins on 7th February 2024. Throughout 2024 and into 2025, Fórsa and the Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants (AHCPS) engaged with An Garda Síochána, the Department of Justice, and an independent chair, Gerard Moran, on the implementation of the Act.

Under the legislation, new Garda staff are recruited as public servants of An Garda Síochána rather than as civil servants. Importantly, following engagement with the then Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, it was agreed that no change to the status of existing staff could occur for at least 24 months following commencement, and only after engagement with the unions.

Phase one of the process, relating to new entrants, concluded in December 2024. Phase two, addressing the terms and conditions of existing staff, commenced in October 2025 but progress has been slow. Engagement has been characterised by delays and changes in Department personnel.

A joint union survey of Garda staff highlighted significant and ongoing concerns, including:

- Loss of civil service status and protections
- Mobility requirements
- Career progression
- Organisational culture
- Oversight arrangements

Notably, 89% of Fórsa respondents indicated a willingness to take industrial action, reflecting the depth of concern among members.

At the time of writing, progress on the second phase remains limited, with further engagement awaited.

Front-of-house hours

Issues arising from changes to working hours following the reversal of Haddington Road arrangements in July 2022 remain unresolved.

While initial engagement indicated agreement that additional hours worked would be compensated, management subsequently reversed its position. Fórsa maintains that all hours worked since July 2022 should be compensated as overtime, as originally understood.

The matter remains under discussion, with the union continuing to seek clarity and resolution.



Regional command and control centres

A significant industrial relations issue arose in relation to changes in rostering arrangements in Regional Command and Control Centres (RCCs).

The dispute centred on:

- Failure to consult in line with national agreements
- Insufficient notice of roster changes
- Potential loss of earnings, particularly in relation to Sunday working

Following intensive engagement, an interim agreement was reached in September 2024 allowing roster alignment to proceed while discussions continued. Key issues, including loss of earnings and Sunday premium calculations, remain unresolved and may require arbitration.

Workplace conditions and infrastructure

A number of operational issues have also arisen, including:

- **ERCC Tramore/Waterford:** Staff were temporarily relocated to substandard accommodation for an extended period. Following union engagement, this was acknowledged as unsuitable, and staff have since returned to Waterford on an interim basis pending a long-term solution.

- **RDMS System:** Initial engagement took place on a proposed replacement system for workforce management, but no further progress or response has been received from management.
- **Fixed Charge Penalty Office (FCPO):** Engagement is ongoing following proposed changes to work practices.

Organising developments

In November 2024, the NEC approved the establishment of a National Garda Clerical Branch. Following extensive preparatory work, the branch is now operational, with a fully elected committee in place. This represents a significant step in strengthening organisation and representation within Garda staff grades.

Remote working

Following negotiation, a remote and blended working policy has been developed and approved. However, implementation has been slow, and a formal review mechanism has yet to be agreed. A review structure is now in place to address outstanding issues.

Tailte Éireann

Pay assimilation

The issue of pay assimilation following the integration of former organisations into Tailte Éireann has been complex and protracted.

A proposal agreed by members in 2024 encountered difficulties due to a lack of sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure. Despite subsequent clarification and a further proposal accepted by 87% of members, the matter remains unresolved due to conflicting positions on approval.

Fórsa has formally raised the issue as a breach of national agreements and continues to engage at senior level to secure resolution.

Departmental Council

A Departmental Council has now been established, with its first meeting held in December 2024 under independent chairmanship.

The forum is addressing a range of issues, including:

- Pay-related claims
- Blended working
- Higher scales
- Surveying grades issues
- Flexi-leave arrangements

While progress has been made, a number of matters remain in dispute.

Branch development

Efforts to amalgamate legacy branches into a single Tailte Éireann branch have been delayed, largely due to the ongoing pay assimilation dispute. Work is ongoing to progress this organisational objective.

Courts Service

Out-of-hours payments

A pilot arrangement introduced in July 2024 to improve compensation for court clerks attending out-of-hours sittings has been successfully implemented.

Following extension and evaluation, the arrangement – including time-off-in-lieu for weekend and public holiday work – was formalised and made permanent in April 2025.

Workplace health and safety

Significant concerns regarding air quality in Phoenix House were addressed following sustained union engagement.

- Comprehensive air quality testing was undertaken
- A structured response process was implemented
- A health screening initiative was provided to staff

The response was well received by members and represents a positive example of effective engagement on workplace health and safety.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)

Badger Vaccination Programme/Wildlife Allowance

The agreement governing the supervision of Farm Relief Service (FRS) staff on the Badger Vaccination Programme by Technical Agricultural Officers (TAOs) was due for renewal in early 2025.

The original agreement, reached with the assistance of Kevin Duffy, provided for a higher duties allowance for TAOs undertaking regular supervisory responsibilities as part of their core role. It also set out clear criteria for eligibility, along with payment calculation and methodology.

Engagement with management during the first quarter of 2025 focused on securing a successor agreement to support the continued delivery of the programme. Fórsa raised concerns regarding insufficient TAO participation, noting that those involved in badger culling were best placed to undertake supervisory duties within the vaccination programme.

Agreement was reached in mid-2025 providing that:

- TAOs engaged in full-time badger duties would receive payment from the date of agreement
- TAOs engaged on a part-time basis would be compensated on a pro rata basis

This agreement has resulted in a significant increase in the number of TAO members benefiting from the higher duties allowance.

At the time of writing, engagement is ongoing regarding the introduction of a tiered structure to broaden participation. Participation in the programme remains voluntary.

Mobility policy

During 2025, management initiated engagement on a revised mobility policy for the department.

The proposed model sought to address delays arising from the current seniority-based system, whereby vacancies and subsequent backfilling processes can delay appointments.

Management proposals included:

- An initial transition phase maintaining seniority-based allocation
- A longer-term move to a system based on order of application rather than seniority
- A requirement to remain in post for a minimum of two years before reapplying

These proposals were rejected by members in early 2026. Fórsa remains available for further engagement on a revised approach.

Departmental Council

Revised arrangements for Departmental Council meetings were agreed in mid-2025.

The updated structure provides for:

- Four quarterly Departmental Council meetings annually
- Staff-side preparatory meetings in advance of each Council
- Provision for additional meetings where required

This revised format has improved coordination and agenda-setting between the parties.



Office relocations

A number of staff across locations including Cork and Portlaoise were required to relocate following changes to Office of Public Works accommodation arrangements.

Fórsa has engaged with management to ensure that appropriate office facilities and working conditions are maintained at new locations, including moves to:

- Revenue House, Blackpool (Cork)
- Government and commercial office buildings in Portlaoise

Sea Port operations

Recent developments in EU-UK trade arrangements may have significant implications for operations at Dublin Port and other locations where import checks are carried out.

Approximately 100 staff are currently employed in port inspection roles across clerical, executive and higher executive officer grades. Any reduction in inspection requirements may have staffing implications, and Fórsa will continue to engage with management on this issue.

Department of Foreign Affairs

Several issues remain under active engagement, including:

- **Equality of treatment for partners of posted staff:**
Fórsa has raised concerns regarding differential allowances for staff in long-term relationships compared to married colleagues. Management has committed to pursuing this issue further.
- **Foreign subsistence rates:**
Current rates have not been reviewed since 2017 and no longer reflect cost-of-living realities. A review is being pursued.
- **Third Secretary roles:**
Greater clarity and consistency are required in defining duties across overseas postings.

State Laboratory

A significant staffing issue arose in relation to the Laboratory Analyst grade stream, where recruitment had not kept pace with promotions to Chemist III level.

Staffing levels fell from 27 to a projected four posts over a two-year period, creating a critical resourcing risk.

Following a ballot in which members overwhelmingly supported industrial action, management reversed its position and committed to maintaining the Laboratory Analyst grade stream.

Fórsa is now engaged in bilateral discussions to agree appropriate staffing levels going forward.

Organising and campaigning

Ongoing engagement with members has supported the growth of union density and participation across the sector.

This work has included:

- Promoting the Fórsa pledge and petition
- Strengthening workplace representation
- Building capacity in advance of negotiations on a successor to the current public service agreement

Department of Justice

Border Management Unit

Fórsa successfully pursued a claim for uniform tax relief on behalf of members working in the Border Management Unit at Dublin Airport. The Department confirmed at Departmental Council on 12th February 2026 that it is engaging directly with Revenue regarding the process by which members may claim this relief. An update is awaited.

Probation Service

Fórsa objected to the establishment of a Senior Probation Officer (SPO) forum, which the union considered to be a form of direct engagement with employees outside agreed union-management structures. Following engagement through the industrial relations process, the employer agreed to re-engage through a joint management-union process to examine changes to the SPO grade since 2010. Union-side participants have been identified.

Following a recent industrial relations meeting, a framework of agreement was established regarding the progression of the Probation Officer (PO) workload review. Fórsa's position is that workload reviews for both the PO grade, including POs working in prisons, and the SPO grade must proceed in parallel rather than on a sequential basis that would prioritise one grade over another.

Forensic Science Ireland

A claim has been pursued in relation to the de-professionalisation of the Forensic Science grade following the replacement of a Forensic Science Grade I post with an Assistant Principal general service grade. A draft disagreed report has been prepared for branch consideration and input.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Conservation Rangers and AEHS branch

The Conservation Rangers and AEHS branches have pursued two recent joint initiatives.

The first concerns the unilateral introduction of a revised vehicle policy by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), affecting members in both branches. This issue is linked to the wider benefit-in-kind (BIK) review. Following bilateral engagement with the Department and NPWS, the principal outstanding issue concerns the storage



of work vehicles at members' homes where this is required by the employer, or where no alternative storage or parking arrangements are available. Advice is awaited on whether such arrangements may attract BIK liability.

In late December 2025, the Department engaged Mazars to conduct a BIK review covering vehicle usage and accommodation issues across National Monuments, NPWS and Met Éireann. The Department has since advised that Mazars has concluded its review and has confirmed that it will assume responsibility for any tax liability arising for the period 2021 to 2025. It has also indicated that it will assume responsibility for any additional BIK liability arising from interim vehicle storage arrangements, should that arise.

Both branches also met bilaterally with the employer regarding the long-standing failure to fill vacancies across NPWS and Heritage Services. Fórsa has raised concerns regarding excessive workloads, informal acting-up arrangements without proper recognition or remuneration, the impact on employee wellbeing, and the erosion of career pathways. This matter has been raised at Departmental Council. As the employer's response remains inadequate, further escalation may be required. Fórsa will also seek the reconvening of the previous Departmental Council subcommittee established to consider the 2022 NPWS review.

Meteorologists branch

A claim has been escalated in relation to the CAFO (Central Analysis and Forecasting Office) roster. Fórsa's position is that the staffing complement assigned to the roster is inadequate and has not been properly reviewed for many years. Recent discussions with Met Éireann and the Department produced an ad hoc response which the union considers insufficient. This was compounded by unilateral changes introduced by Met Éireann where no agreement had been reached with the local branch committee.

The matter has been raised at Departmental Council. Fórsa is seeking a full review of the roster, including negotiation of a robust working time agreement.

Department of Transport

Coast Guard

A roster proposal has been received from the Coast Guard through Departmental Council. However, it has since emerged that the Coast Guard will not be in a position to provide the required staffing complement until later in 2026. Fórsa has sought clarification from the Department before deciding on any next steps.

CSSO

A collective claim has been filed at Departmental Council in relation to unilateral changes to blended working arrangements affecting a range of grades, particularly clerical grades.

A separate claim on behalf of junior representative members relating to excessive workloads and inadequate funding also remains before Departmental Council. Survey findings from affected members have been conveyed to the employer, and further escalation may be required.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

A Departmental Council has now been established in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions following a request by Fórsa. AHCPs attended the first meeting alongside Fórsa in January 2026.

A further claim has been filed on behalf of affected members in relation to the failure to fill available PO1 posts. Fórsa's position is that the employer is refusing to recognise three existing vacancies and will not commit to retaining these posts as legal professional and technical grades. The employer has been put on notice that Fórsa may seek sanction for a ballot. A bilateral meeting was scheduled for 26th March.

Fórsa is also pursuing a claim on behalf of a group of members in relation to starting pay. Concerns have arisen that delegated sanction to determine starting pay based on post-qualification experience may have been applied inconsistently. The employer has also declined to hear these cases through the grievance procedure. These issues are being pursued collectively through Departmental Council and, if necessary, through General Council.

Legal Aid Board

Fórsa is pursuing a collective claim which may affect multiple grades in relation to the EU Pact and the International Protection Bill 2026. The concern is that the proposed arrangements would result in legal counselling being undertaken by law clerks rather than solicitors, raising questions as to whether members who are not legally qualified may be required to provide legal services contrary to legislation.

Data Protection Commission

Bilateral engagement is scheduled with the employer and AHCPs in relation to draft acting-up and internal mobility policies. A new union committee has also been established in the Data Protection Commission.

Branch merger

A recent meeting was held with members of the three predecessor branches - CSSO Clerical, Legal Aid Board Clerical, and Dublin Finance/PER Clerical - regarding the formation of a new branch following presentation of the proposal to the NEC. Attendance was low and the meeting was unable to progress either the selection of a branch name or the appointment of an interim branch executive committee.

Revenue Commissioners

Open HEO - Tax Specialist competition

The proposed introduction of an open Higher Executive Officer (HEO) Tax Specialist competition was a central issue for the Executive Grades Branch throughout the reporting period.

Fórsa maintained a consistent position that recruitment to the HEO grade should be through internal competition, in line with established practice, with limited exceptions for specialist ICT roles. The branch raised concerns at Revenue Departmental Council in mid-2024, following management's assertion that audit roles could be classified as specialist and therefore subject to open recruitment.

Despite repeated objections, the competition was advertised in October 2024. In response, Fórsa escalated the issue, including raising it with the Department of Public Expenditure. The Civil Service Divisional Executive Committee subsequently sanctioned a ballot for industrial action across relevant grades.

Following intensive engagement, a number of key outcomes were secured:

- Confirmation that the competition did not represent a wider shift towards open recruitment at HEO level
- Agreement to run an internal HEO Tax Specialist competition in parallel
- Commitment to maximise the existing internal HEO panel prior to its expiry

- Agreement to engage on the future balance between specialist and generalist recruitment
- Acceleration of a generalist HEO competition in early 2025

A formal review of the 2024 Tax Specialist competition was completed in December 2025. While a further competition was launched in early 2026, it remains subject to the constraints secured through negotiation. Fórsa continues to engage with Revenue on the longer-term recruitment model.

Atypical working pilot

In the context of the union's objective of progressing towards a shorter working week, Fórsa and the Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants (AHCPs) engaged with Revenue to develop an Atypical Working pilot.

Following extensive member consultation, the pilot was introduced within Business Division on a voluntary basis, allowing participants to self-select working patterns that suit their personal circumstances.

Participation spans multiple grades:

- Clerical Officer: 31
- Executive Officer: 49
- HEO/AO: 20
- Assistant Principal: 3

Initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. A formal review is scheduled for Q2 2026, with findings expected to inform future approaches to working time flexibility.

Mail centres

An industrial relations issue arose in July 2024 when staff in Revenue mail centres were instructed that they were no longer entitled to a paid 15-minute break. This was subsequently confirmed across multiple locations.

Following resolution of the immediate breach, Fórsa lodged a compensation claim under the Organisation of Working Time Act. Initial management proposals were rejected by members, who asserted that the breach had persisted for a longer period than acknowledged.

Following sustained engagement led by local representatives, an improved compensation offer of two days' additional leave was secured and accepted unanimously by members.

This outcome compared favourably with similar cases determined through the Workplace Relations Commission and reflects the strength of organisation and union density in the affected workplaces.

Separately, the entry of Fastways into receivership in October 2025 has given rise to ongoing discussions regarding the position of affected Revenue staff.

Blended working

A review of Revenue's blended working policy was initiated in December 2025. While management indicated overall satisfaction with existing arrangements, Fórsa raised a number of concerns, including the use of monitoring tools within the "The Way We Work" framework.

The union continues to engage on these issues at local level. Notwithstanding these concerns, Revenue's blended working arrangements remain among the most developed in the Civil Service and continue to enjoy strong support among members.

Local Property Tax

The revaluation of properties for Local Property Tax in 2025 required significant operational adjustments within Revenue.

Fórsa engaged with management to address staffing requirements, resulting in:

- The temporary reassignment of staff from other areas
- Recruitment of approximately 100 temporary clerical officers
- The return of previously outsourced work to in-house delivery

From July 2025, the full Local Property Tax phone service was delivered internally, representing a significant achievement aligned with the union's long-standing opposition to outsourcing.

Additional service enhancements were introduced, including the capacity to process payments directly over the phone. While temporary leave restrictions were anticipated during peak periods, these were managed through engagement with staff and representatives.

Office of Public Works (OPW)

District Works Managers allowance

Fórsa secured a significant adjudication outcome in relation to the allowance payable to OPW District Works Managers.

Members will be aware from previous reports that the PCW allowance was restored in July 2024. However, at the time of reinstatement, the Department of Public Expenditure emphatically rejected any retrospective liability. Fórsa subsequently pursued a claim to the Civil Service Adjudicator seeking retrospective payment of the allowance back to 2014.

Fórsa was successful in this claim. As a result, some members received up to ten years' back pay, amounting to as much as €47,000.

Review of property maintenance in the regions

During negotiations in 2022 on the review of OPW Property Maintenance Services, Fórsa sought a specific review of property maintenance in the regions.

That review is now underway. Fórsa has welcomed the commitment to an open, transparent and inclusive process, supported by a communication and engagement strategy designed to ensure that stakeholders are informed and able to contribute meaningfully throughout the review.

Fórsa sought the re-establishment of Working Group No. 7, which had previously provided a forum for management and unions to address the issues affecting members in this area. The official side agreed to this request.

Fórsa intends to make a combined submission on behalf of the AEHS, executive and clerical branches.

Architectural graduates

A pay claim has been lodged in respect of architectural graduates employed by the RIAI and seconded to the OPW.

The claim addresses both pay and non-pay issues, including pay relativities, retrospection, pension provision, working time, leave arrangements, blended working, flexi-time accrual, and the establishment of an incremental scale. It also seeks improvements in programme consistency, mentorship, study leave, career progression and graduate retention.

The claim reflects longstanding concerns regarding the conditions attached to the graduate programme and the need to establish a more coherent and sustainable structure.

Professional and Technical grades

Mobility for Professional and Technical (P&T) grades remains a live issue with significant implications across a number of employments. A draft policy has issued from the official side and is under consideration by the union, with referral to the NTPC anticipated given the potential risks for sections of the grades.

An interim report on the broader P&T review has also issued and is under consideration. The report addresses a wide range of issues including career development, recruitment and retention, competitions, mobility, and professional equivalence. Further updates will issue as this work progresses.

PCW-related claims

A claim relating to PCW-related Level 4 assignments for technical grades remains under discussion. The union has rejected management proposals for a limited uplift and has lodged a counter-claim seeking a broader application. Management has indicated that sanction would be required under the terms of the current public service agreement.

Heritage Services review

A capability and capacity review of Heritage Services, conducted by Grant Thornton, has the potential to impact significantly on grades and roles in the area. While the final report has yet to issue, Fórsa has made clear that no changes to members' terms and conditions can arise outside agreed industrial relations processes. This position has been accepted by management.

Facilities - 1 Georges Quay

A post-occupancy review of facilities at 1 Georges Quay took place in late 2025. The engagement was constructive, with agreement to continue discussions on a structured basis through Departmental Council. A number of proposals to address staff concerns have been brought forward by management.



Branch development

Work is ongoing on the establishment of a single OPW general grades branch, including development of governance structures, communications and member engagement processes.

Houses of the Oireachtas

Rosters and working time for usher grades

A major industrial relations priority for the usher grades is the negotiation of a new roster arrangement for staff attached to the Superintendent's section of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The branch has adopted a research-led and evidence-based approach and has submitted draft terms of reference for consideration by the official side. Fórsa's objective is to secure a roster arrangement that is more appropriate to the operational realities of the service and fairer for members.

References to staff during plenary sittings and committee meetings

Fórsa and AHCPs have raised serious concerns regarding references made by Oireachtas members to staff of the service during plenary sittings and committee meetings.

The unions consider the current response inadequate, as it focuses primarily on actions after incidents occur rather than on preventing them in the first place. Fórsa has argued that this issue should be addressed as one of training, awareness and workplace respect.

General policy engagement

Fórsa continues to engage with management on a range of organisational policies, including service recognition, fraud prevention, and emerging strategies in HR, wellbeing, learning and development, and equality and inclusion.

Industrial relations structures

The Joint Forum for the Conduct of Industrial Relations has not met in the past year. Fórsa remains available to reconvene the forum to progress outstanding matters.

Legacy and roster issues

A legacy issues subgroup has engaged on matters including weekend rosters and the operation of existing agreements. These discussions are expected to progress further once formal IR structures are reactivated.

Local bargaining

For the purposes of local bargaining under the current public service agreement, usher grades are participating within the wider P&T claim process.

Artificial intelligence

The increasing use of artificial intelligence, including assisted speech recognition, remains a concern for members. Fórsa has secured agreement that AI will remain a standing item at Departmental Council, with a focus on transparency, training, data protection and the potential impact on roles. Management has confirmed that implementation will not lead to job losses.

Reading Room

The Oireachtas Reading Room has not fully resumed operations since 2019. A working group involving the Office of Public Works is progressing plans for its restoration. Fórsa continues to monitor developments.

Staffing pressures

Budget constraints and workforce planning pressures remain a concern, particularly in terms of workload and career progression. Fórsa continues to raise these issues through Departmental Council.

Library and archive review

A strategic review of the Oireachtas Library and Archive has been completed. Fórsa has raised concerns regarding potential implications for staff and has received assurances that any changes will be subject to consultation through agreed industrial relations processes.

Department of Foreign Affairs

Development specialists

Progress has been made on long-standing issues affecting Development Specialist grades, including agreement to establish a working group to examine the implementation of the 2018 restructuring agreement and the use of PCW provisions.

Agreement has also been reached on payment of PCW arrears for specified grades. In addition, issues relating to access to Fórsa group schemes for staff posted abroad have been resolved following engagement with the scheme underwriters.

Fiosrú

Roster and working time review

In July 2025, Fórsa, AHCPS and Fiosrú management agreed to establish a working group under the auspices of Departmental Council to examine working time and roster arrangements.

The process is intended to be research-led and evidence-based, and both sides are now engaged in developing a sustainable working time agreement. Fórsa's position is that any future roster must properly reflect the requirements of the service while also protecting staff wellbeing, work life balance, predictability, earnings and the fair distribution of workload.

It has also been agreed that any changes to existing collectively agreed working time arrangements will only arise from this process and will require agreement between the stakeholders. Fórsa will ballot the affected membership on any proposed outcome.

Organisational developments

The transition from GSOC to Fiosrú is ongoing, with branch reorganisation underway to reflect the new structure.

Internal policies

Engagement is ongoing on a range of organisational policies, including sequencing of competitions and the application of higher scales, with agreement that these should be applied on a balanced basis of seniority and merit.

Apprenticeship programme

Fórsa has engaged with proposals for a new investigator apprenticeship programme, forming part of a wider public service apprenticeship initiative. The union is participating in discussions at national level.

Department of Finance

Blended working

Blended working has become one of the most significant issues for Fórsa members in the Department of Finance. Members have identified working time arrangements as their second most important priority after pay.

The issue escalated in December 2025 when the Secretary General directed that, from 3rd February 2026, all staff would be required to attend the office at least three days per week. The stated rationale was the Ireland's EU Presidency (July to December 2026).

Fórsa raised a range of concerns regarding the absence of meaningful consultation, the impact on members and their families, and the apparent failure to take account of the wider benefits of blended working, including productivity, work life balance, childcare and caring responsibilities, regional development, environmental gains and reduced commuting costs.

Fórsa is continuing to engage with local HR, including on the issue of flexi-time accrual while working from home. The union is also seeking a full review of blended working arrangements in the department before the conclusion of the EU Presidency, based on centrally agreed analytics.

Workplace policies

Fórsa has provided observations on a draft Clean Desk and Workspace Sharing policy, raising concerns regarding alignment with blended working arrangements and the adequacy of shared facilities. The final policy is awaited.

Department of Transport

Outsourcing proposal in Shannon

Fórsa has received correspondence from the Department of Transport seeking to begin discussions on outsourcing the printing and mailing functions currently carried out by civil servants in Shannon in relation to the National Vehicle Driver File.

The rationale advanced by management is based on process change, digitalisation and efficiency. Fórsa is engaging first with the affected membership and will then seek bilateral engagement with departmental HR to ensure that the external service provisions of national agreements are fully considered and adhered to.

Irish Coast Guard – vehicle access adjudication and compensation

Members will be aware from previous reports of the favourable adjudication finding issued in December 2023 regarding compensation for five Fórsa members in the Irish Coast Guard following the unilateral removal of access to official vehicles in 2016.

More than two years later, the recommended compensation (ranging from €10,050 to €25,200) has yet to be paid. The Department of Public Expenditure has refused to sanction payment, contending that the adjudication should instead be dealt with under the local bargaining provisions of the current public service agreement.

Fórsa continues to consider how best to progress the matter.

Review of industrial relations issues within the Irish Coast Guard

Members will also be aware that Fórsa's AMRO and Marine sub-branches agreed terms of reference for a wider review of industrial relations issues in the Irish Coast Guard.

Subsequently, Fórsa became aware of a separate external review being conducted by Crowe Consultants on matters that may overlap with issues already under consideration through the union process. Fórsa raised concerns regarding duplication, transparency and the status of any potentially conflicting recommendations.

Following engagement with the Department and senior Coast Guard management, assurances were given that recommendations arising from the Crowe review that may affect members' terms and conditions will be brought before Departmental Council for discussion and negotiation prior to implementation.

The Crowe report was made available in March 2026 and the affected branches are now considering it before deciding next steps in relation to the broader review.

Irish Coast Guard branch allocation

A review is also underway regarding the branch allocation of some Fórsa members attached to the Irish Coast Guard.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Accommodation consolidation

Following a Fórsa proposal at Departmental Council, agreement was reached on the establishment of a subcommittee to deal with the ongoing programme of accommodation consolidation.

This project affects several hundred staff across a number of buildings and includes relocation, workspace adjustment and reasonable accommodation issues. The subcommittee has been established to ensure structured consultation and staff engagement throughout the process.

Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform

Artificial intelligence

Fórsa has secured agreement that artificial intelligence and related technologies will be a standing item at Departmental Council. The union is seeking ongoing engagement on issues including job redesign, training, transparency, data protection and workload impacts.

Category Specialist grades

Engagement has taken place with Category Specialist grades regarding their position within local bargaining. Following consultation, an alternative claim has been developed to reflect the specific characteristics of these grades' pay structures.

Civil Service Employee Assistance Service

A number of issues have been raised on behalf of staff in the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service, including pay structures, allowances and contractual provisions. These matters remain under discussion.



Education division

report 2024-2026



Education Division

Leadership and organisation

The Education division has continued to grow and develop over the last two years, consolidating the progress made in strengthening membership and organisation during the pandemic.

Divisional priorities over the last two years have included increasing bargaining strength and influence through the recruitment of new members and the strengthening of branch capacity. This approach has raised the profile of the grades, groups and categories of members within the division and has delivered beneficial outcomes that would not have been achievable without significant membership growth.

Elected leadership

At the 2025 divisional conference, Ursula Cox (Higher Education) was elected cathaoirleach. Catherine Quirle (Munster SNA) was elected as Leas Cathaoirleach, and Carol McSherry (North Dublin North Leinster) was elected to the third divisional seat on the national executive committee (NEC).

Other members elected to the divisional executive committee were Breda Halley (Education No.1), James Kavanagh (School Completion Programme), Frances Roberts (SNA Connacht/Ulster), Marcel McCafferty (NETB), Luisa Carty (School Secretaries), David Hearne (School Caretakers), Annette Murphy (South Leinster SNA), and Sinead Roche Scanlon (Munster SNA). Ursula Cox stood down from the elected post as Cathaoirleach following her appointment as an Industrial Officer in March 2026 and Catherine Quike assumed the role.

Fórsa staff

Andy Pike continues in the post of head of the Education division, Barbara Anderson is the assistant general secretary (AGS) who works with the NETB, Higher Education, and the Education No.1 branches.

Shane Lambert (AGS) is responsible for the four SNA branches, the School Caretakers, School Completion and School Secretaries branches.

Two new industrial officer posts were established in early 2026. Gary Honer (industrial officer) works with the South Leinster SNA branches. Dave Sexton (IO) works with the Connacht/Ulster SNA branch, Seamus Ryan (IO) works with the Munster SNA branch, and Ursula Cox (IO) works with the North Dublin North Leinster SNA branch.

The IO staff also support the School Secretaries and the new School Caretakers branches.

The role of assistant industrial officers (AIO) is crucial to the work of the division. Their duties relate to recruitment, organisation and local representation of members. The four posts involve assignments across the schools' branches. Rachel Coyle works with the North Dublin North Leinster SNA branch, Sean Joyce works with the South Dublin South Leinster SNA Branch, Noreen O'Mahoney works with the Connaught Ulster SNA Branch and Joan McCrohan works with the Munster SNA Branch.

Seconded staff

The division's capacity was strengthened significantly through the release of activists for union-related work. While these Fórsa members continue to be employed by their respective employers, they have been assigned to work on behalf of the union on specific projects. In the Education division, Marcel McCafferty continues to work with members of the NETB branch on a national basis.

Gaining traction

During the period under review, the education division continued to gain ground and consolidated Fórsa's position as the leading union and authoritative voice for non-teaching staff across the education sector. Divisional membership grew from 19,400 in April 2025 to 20,750 in April 2026. The division has grown by more than 60% since 2019. This represents significant and sustained growth, with the greatest gains in the recruitment of school secretaries, school caretakers and SNAs.

The Divisional Executive Committee (DEC) considers membership and density within each



School Secretaries and Caretakers rally at Merrion Square on the first day of strike action on 28th August 2025.

branch each month. Density-building projects are undertaken and regularly reviewed to maximise bargaining strength and influence, which in turn supports further membership growth.

Membership growth is expected to continue through the establishment of the new national School Caretakers branch and other significant developments across the division. The continued development of the education division should result in membership approaching 24,000 by the time of the next biennial conference in May 2028.

Industrial strategy

The DEC continued its approach of organising agenda items under the headings of organising, policy and industrial relations. The committee regularly reviews divisional conference resolutions and receives presentations from staff in the division outlining their plans.

The divisional industrial strategy forms the basis of work in the division and seeks to implement relevant sections of the Fórsa strategic plan. This involves identifying bargaining objectives, aligning activity with those objectives, and maximising branch and member involvement to achieve improvements in pay, conditions of employment, status, influence and branch effectiveness.

The division reviews membership levels each month and met all membership targets set for the period 2022-2024.

Local bargaining under the public service pay agreement

The current national pay agreement provides a local bargaining facility that allows unions to negotiate claims for grades, groups and categories to the value of 3% of total payroll costs, inclusive of allowances.

The first claim submitted by Fórsa sought the establishment of a new career structure for SNAs. This claim proposes the creation of posts of responsibility across the schools' sector to provide the first career progression opportunities for serving SNAs.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was unwilling to sanction the claim on the basis that outcomes could not be delivered before the expiry of the agreement. However, the parties agreed that discussions would take place on progressing the claim if the next agreement contains provisions allowing claims to be processed for the remaining 2% of payroll costs.

Consequently, SNA members were included within the scope of the grade III clerical officer claim outlined below. To date, no costings have been agreed between the Department of Education and the Department of Public Expenditure. Once costings are finalised, the claim can be progressed.

Members in the Higher Education and NETB branches are also encompassed by the clerical and administrative claims for grade III members, and by separate claims for grades IV to VII. These claims seek to shorten the incremental scales by removing one point.

Members in the Higher Education and NETB branches will benefit directly if these claims are agreed. Members in other branches who are paid on scales linked to public service pay scales will also benefit, as their scales will be adjusted accordingly. These branches include the School Completion Programme branch, Education No. 1 branch, School Secretaries branch and School Caretakers branch.

Negotiations on the claims must conclude by the summer. The first instalment, equivalent to 1% of the value of any claim, is payable from September 2025, with the remaining 2% to be paid over the lifetime of the next national pay agreement.

Campaign: pension parity for School Secretaries and Caretakers

School secretaries and caretakers have historically been excluded from the pension arrangements and terms and conditions provided to comparable staff with public service status. This inequity has been the source of long-running discontent among secretaries and caretakers in schools.

A pay agreement for secretaries was concluded in 2022, providing access to the clerical officer pay scale and an average salary scheme that spreads salaries over 12 months. This means members no longer have to claim jobseeker's benefit during weeks of school closure. However, the agreement did not include pensions, as the government side refused to engage on that issue.

To progress the demand for fair pensions and improved terms and conditions, a new Pension Parity campaign was launched in November 2024. This culminated in an industrial action ballot which secured a 98% vote in favour of strike action, with a turnout of 88%. The campaign sought access to fair pension provisions, increases in leave, and other entitlements equivalent to those provided to public servants.

A strike notice issued to employers in early June 2025, giving notice of strike action commencing on 28th August 2025. The Department of Education and Fórsa were invited to exploratory discussions by the WRC on 27th August in an effort to avert the strike. This initiative failed as the Department did not wish to engage on the key issues.

The strike commenced on Thursday 28th August across 3,000 schools. A rally took place on the first day of the strike in Dublin and was attended by more than 2,000 members. On the second day, pickets were placed at the offices of the Department of Education and at the offices of senior government politicians in Dublin, Athlone, Cork, Wexford and other locations.

In the second week of the strike, members picketed their own schools on 1st and 2nd September. They were joined by large numbers of parents, students and other school staff. Members also lobbied their local TDs on 3rd and 4th September, securing more than 150 pledges of support for the campaign, including from a majority of government-supporting TDs. A large rally also took place outside the Dáil. The campaign pledge attracted more than 70,000 signatures.

On 5th September, members held rallies in key locations around the country focused on the offices of senior government politicians.

At midday on 5th September, the minister for education confirmed in a media interview that the Government was willing to discuss the provision of public service pensions on a without-prejudice basis, provided the parties agreed to use the services of the WRC.

On the evening of 5th September, Fórsa concluded a procedural agreement with the Department of Education committing the parties to develop proposals for secretaries and caretakers that would deliver comparable pension entitlements, a new pay structure for school caretakers, an acute illness scheme, and improved sick leave and bereavement leave provisions. On that basis, the strike was stood down after seven days of action on the evening of Friday 5th September.

A series of discussions then commenced at the WRC to progress these issues. At the outset, the Department stated that the new Auto-Enrolment Savings Scheme (AE) was comparable to the single public service pension scheme. It engaged a consultant from a corporate accountancy firm who produced various projections of the value of AE. None of these were accepted by Fórsa.

As no progress could be made on the pensions issue, the WRC referred the claim to the Labour

Court. The Court held its first hearing on 12th January 2026, during which evidence from both parties was considered. The Court identified a shortfall between AE and the public service pension scheme and asked the parties to identify and quantify the gap.

Both parties subsequently engaged actuaries to assess the extent to which the AE scheme fell short of the public service scheme.

The Court reconvened the parties for an update on 13th March. A second Labour Court hearing will be scheduled in April, after which the Court will issue a final recommendation on how comparable pension entitlements should be delivered for secretaries and caretakers.

There is a significant gap between AE and the public service pension scheme arising from the defined contribution structure of the AE arrangements, which are being phased in over the next ten years. The likely outcome of the process is a stand-alone pension arrangement designed to bridge the gap between the two schemes, administered and funded by the government.

Other outstanding issues, including retrospection and provision for members over state pension age, remain to be resolved. Fórsa will remain within the process until it concludes, after which secretary and caretaker members will have the opportunity to vote on the final set of proposals.

The dispute became one of the most high-profile strikes in recent years. Union membership increased significantly during the campaign, alongside wider recognition of Fórsa in public debate.

Alongside these industrial developments, the division has also been engaged in major policy negotiations affecting SNAs.

National review of the role of the SNA/negotiating a new contract

Fórsa conducted the [#RespectForSNAs](#) campaign throughout 2022 and 2023. The campaign sought greater recognition and respect for the work of SNAs. In response to the issues raised, the minister for special education and inclusion announced that a new [National SNA Workforce Development Plan \(SNAWDP\)](#) would commence in January 2024.



SNA Appreciation Day, St. Seton School, Ballyfermot, Dublin.

This process was due to be completed by September 2025 and includes a review of the role of the SNA for the first time since 2005. The proposals under discussion include a new contract, revised training and development frameworks, a new minimum qualification at QQI Level 6, a national redeployment scheme to enhance job security, updated job descriptions, and changes to other conditions of service such as special leave, the 72-hour obligation and June working.

The aim of the process is to professionalise and modernise the role of the SNA to reflect the reality of the work undertaken with students. Alongside Fórsa, the workforce development plan involves independent academic experts, the Department of Education, the NCSE, the schools' inspectorate, children's rights groups and school management bodies. The new arrangements were due to be agreed and implemented by September 2025. However, the Department has not progressed matters and a final publication date has not been provided.

Some limited progress has been made. This includes agreement to change the minimum essential qualification to an accredited QQI Level 6 award, continuation of the national SNA training programme for a further three years (now to be delivered by St Angela's College), and agreement to implement a pilot national redeployment scheme. Considerable work remains outstanding on the use of the 72-hour obligation and issues associated with June working.

In April 2025, the minister for education announced that the Teaching Council would be asked to include specific modules on special education in the teacher training curriculum. This will ensure newly qualified teachers are aware of the role of the SNA and are better equipped to meet the needs of students. This was one of many issues highlighted in focus groups organised for SNAs and teachers as part of the SNAWDP process.

An important element of the SNAWDP process is the development of a new circular outlining the role of the SNA. Discussions on the nature of any changes – which may include greater emphasis on meeting the educational as well as care needs of students – are ongoing. A literature review will be published shortly by the Department of Education outlining international evidence on approaches that are most beneficial to students.

The range of existing circulars covering the role of the SNA may be replaced by a single document bringing together all relevant information on SNA duties and responsibilities. Recognition that SNAs have a positive role to play in supporting students to access the curriculum would represent an important milestone in the professionalisation of the role.

SNA members will be given the opportunity to express their views on the final package of measures within the SNAWDP through a consultation ballot later this year.

Negotiating the end of 32-hour contracts for SNAs

In March 2023, Fórsa secured agreement on a new SNA job-sharing circular which removed reference to a 32-hour working week. This brought attempts by school employers to impose a 32-hour week on SNAs – who normally work on a ‘bell-to-bell’ basis – to an end.

While substitute SNAs are still paid using a 32-hour pay divisor, job sharers are no longer required to work a 16-hour week. Instead, they work 50% of the full-time hours and are paid 50% of the full-time salary.

Abolishing the ‘72-hour’ and June working obligations for SNAs

Negotiations will conclude shortly on Fórsa’s claims for the abolition of these obligations. The union is seeking a new arrangement based on continuous professional training and development, with any additional work outside of class being strictly related to the needs of students with special educational needs.

These issues will be addressed as part of the development of the workforce development plan. The extent to which members support the final SNAWDP will depend in part on the progress achieved in reforming the current arrangements.

A new funding and governance structure for School Completion Programmes

Following the transfer of administrative responsibility for the School Completion Programme (SCP) to the Department of Education in 2021, Fórsa has sought meaningful engagement on future funding and governance structures aimed at securing public service status for SCP staff.

A national seminar held in March 2022 was well attended. The then Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, attended and provided commitments regarding the future of the SCP within the education sector.

Fórsa subsequently secured an agreement under the auspices of the WRC which obliges the Department of Education to develop a framework for the employment of SCP staff by September 2024.

Regular engagement continues. Fórsa has secured agreement on the use of the correct public service pay scales for project workers and co-ordinators, while discussions continue on aligning annual leave and other leave entitlements.

In October 2024, Fórsa secured agreement on the transfer of all SCP staff to the employment of education and training boards (ETBs). Work to implement this commitment is ongoing. Funding from Budget 2026 will be required to meet the additional costs associated with transferring staff to the ETB payroll system.

These developments represent an important step toward securing stable governance and employment structures for SCP staff within the education sector.



Health and Welfare division

report 2024-2026

Health and Welfare Division

Health and Welfare Divisional Executive Committee (DEC) 2025-2027

Fórsa's Divisional Executive Committee (DEC) continued to play a leading role in delivering for members throughout 2025, a period of significant challenges across the health and welfare sectors.

Health and Welfare Divisional Conference 2025

The Health and Welfare divisional conference took place in Letterkenny from Wednesday 14th May to Friday 16th May 2025. Delegates from branches across the country gathered to debate motions, elect a new divisional executive committee, and set the direction for the division for the next two years.

Clodagh Kavanagh, Cathaoirleach, opened the conference by reminding delegates that the event is not simply a meeting, but an affirmation of the union's core values of solidarity and justice.

The conference featured a packed agenda and extensive debate across a wide range of issues affecting members. Debate on motions included Tusla reform, pay in the community and voluntary sector, outsourcing, and a range of other matters affecting members across the division.

Debate on privatisation and outsourcing heard from many members who spoke about the impact these practices are having on public health services. Delegates highlighted how the outsourcing of core work undermines and fragments HSE services and negatively affects the delivery of care.

Speakers emphasised that outsourcing strategies devalue workers and undermine patient care and stressed the need for a whole-of-division response to these developments.

Two panel discussions were held during the conference. The first focused on morale among healthcare workers and examined the results of research commissioned by Fórsa and conducted by the independent think-tank TASC. The second explored the potential impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare.

Fórsa commissioned the TASC research in response to persistent concerns about morale expressed by members. The study found that 68% of respondents described staff morale as either 'low' (43%) or 'terrible' (25%).

For the panel discussion, TASC researcher Tiarnán McDonough was joined by Dr Laura Bambrick, head of social policy at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and Niki Gallagher, head of public affairs at Ibec.

Laura Bambrick highlighted the need to expand the concept of the right to disconnect. She argued that the principle should include not only a digital disconnection from work, but also the ability to take breaks, have lunch without interruption, and take annual leave without feeling that colleagues are placed under additional pressure due to staff shortages. She emphasised that persistent understaffing prevents workers from properly disconnecting, which in turn contributes to low morale.

Niki Gallagher emphasised the importance of stakeholder engagement and the value Ibec places on engagement with unions. She also noted that Ibec supports calls for greater state investment in public services.

The panel on artificial intelligence in healthcare included Molly Newell of TASC, who noted that diagnostic algorithms could help reduce waiting list times but highlighted that Ireland's e-health infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Gareth Murphy of the Financial Services Union (FSU) stressed that unions should not assume they know what workers want, but should instead rely on research and data-informed decision-making.

On Thursday, the minister for health, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD, addressed delegates via video message. This engagement was followed later in the year by an in-person meeting with the minister.

In her message, the minister commended Fórsa members for the vital role they play in delivering health services across the country. She also outlined planned investment in health infrastructure, referencing four new hospitals intended to enhance patient care.

Also on Thursday, general secretary Kevin Callinan addressed delegates and emphasised the role of unions and union activists in responding to the



Pictured (l-r): Pat Fallon (Sligo H&LG), Paula Cregg (Clare H&LG), Ashley Connolly (Head of Health and Welfare Division), Keivan Jackson (Kildare Health), Gillian Cawley (Dublin Hospitals) Henry Hennessy (Laois Health), Clodagh Kavanagh, Chair (Cork H&LG), Colette O'Connell (Tipperary South H&C), Patricia Ahern (Limerick Health), Orla Carroll (Kilkenny H&LG), Linda Kelly (National Secretary for Health and Social Care Professionals, Pharmacy and Statutory Regulation), Corinne Phelan (Galway H&LG), Patrica Mellsop (Offaly H&LG), Andy Meaney, Vice-Chair (Waterford H&LG).

Missing from the photo are Bernadette Mooney (Dublin South H&W), Barry Herridge (Dublin North H&W), and Helen Canning (Boards and Voluntary Agencies).

challenges facing society. He told conference that unions stand "in the vanguard against division, against hate, against war – and for community, justice and peace."

Planning for the next divisional conference in 2027 has now commenced, and the division looks forward to engaging with delegates as preparations progress.

Note regarding motions

The DEC and the National Health Office continue to progress all motions passed by members at the divisional conference. If a motion is not referenced below, it does not mean that action has not been taken.

Members are encouraged to contact the division if they wish to discuss any specific motion. Several motions have also been linked to local bargaining claims on behalf of different grades and categories of members.

Access to fortnightly pay – Midlands

This motion was submitted in both 2023 and 2025. Following engagement with the HSE, it has now been confirmed that the organisation has agreed in principle to provide access to fortnightly pay for members in the Midlands region.

Access to fortnightly pay will be implemented following the conclusion of local discussions. Fórsa officials and branches are currently engaging with members working in finance departments to progress the necessary arrangements.

Transfer/mobility policy

Conference was informed that a draft transfer and mobility policy is currently under review and will be piloted shortly for certain grades. The division intends to discuss the proposal further at the next Divisional Council meeting.

Outsourcing

Fórsa, alongside sister unions, continues to address issues arising from the outsourcing of core services when they arise. Under the public service agreement, a dispute resolution forum exists to address matters relating to service delivery and outsourcing. Fórsa has used this forum to highlight management's obligation to engage with trade unions on service delivery options before any decision is taken to procure external services. Branches and members are encouraged to remain vigilant and to bring any breaches of these provisions to the attention of their local official.

Catering Officers/Managers

A meeting has been scheduled with catering officers and managers with a view to re-establishing the national professional committee for the grade. The committee will focus on progressing issues relevant to members working in these roles.

Home support

The *Health (Amendment) (Home Support Providers) Bill 2025* introduces a mandatory registration and regulatory framework for home support providers in Ireland, including the HSE. A meeting of members has been scheduled to discuss the implementation of the proposed legislation, including the workforce planning arrangements associated with the new regulatory framework.

National Investigation Unit (NIU)

Conference considered several motions relating to investigations across the HSE. While not all of these matters fall within the remit of the National Investigation Unit (NIU), the union continues to raise members' concerns. Further engagement with National Employee Relations is expected as the HSE continues to implement its regional structures. The union will ensure that the views of members, as expressed through conference motions, are raised in this forum.

Adverse weather policy

Fórsa, along with sister unions, has raised members' concerns regarding the limitations of the current adverse weather policy. The National Joint Council will continue to engage with management on this issue.

Spotlight on membership growth

Membership continued to grow across the division for the third consecutive year. Divisional membership now stands at 33,500. This sustained growth reflects the work of branch leaders and activists across the division. Every branch recorded membership growth during 2025.

While recruitment remained strong during 2024, expanding the network of workplace representatives remained a challenge. Entering 2025, the Divisional Executive identified the expansion of the representative network as a key priority in order to strengthen members' voice within workplaces and branches.

By December 2025, more than 700 representatives were recorded on the Solas system across the HSE, Section 38 organisations, Tusla and the community and voluntary sector. The division will continue to prioritise the expansion of the representative network throughout 2026.

TASC research - morale of healthcare workers

The Divisional Executive Committee commissioned research by the independent think-tank TASC on the morale of healthcare workers. A panel discussion on the preliminary findings took place at the divisional conference in May (see earlier section on Conference 2025).

The research was finalised in October 2025 and officially launched on 13th January 2026 when it was presented to members of the Oireachtas. Mary Kearney of the Clare Health and Local Government branch addressed the event and outlined the day-to-day realities faced by healthcare workers.

The research surveyed 3,775 Fórsa members across the HSE, Tusla, Section 38 organisations and voluntary bodies, alongside a series of nationwide focus groups.



Pay and numbers dispute protest, St. Luke's hospital Kilkenny.

The findings identify chronic understaffing, top-down decision-making and a failure to meaningfully engage frontline workers as key factors undermining staff morale and affecting the delivery of essential services.

The research highlights the ongoing pressures facing the sector, including the legacy of long-term underinvestment and recent policy decisions that have capped staffing levels and abolished vacant posts.

The study identifies six central pressures affecting morale and service delivery:

- **Major understaffing and rising workloads**
 Nearly half of respondents reported frequently feeling burnt out due to low staffing levels and the impact of the 2024 "Pay and Numbers" strategy. The report recommends workforce planning based on service need rather than fixed staffing limits.
- **Disconnect between senior management and frontline realities**
 Participants described a top-heavy system characterised by one-way communication that leaves workers feeling unheard and undervalued.
- **A cycle of low morale and poor retention**
 A high proportion of respondents (67%) reported actively considering leaving their role. The loss of experienced staff increases pressure on those who remain and poses risks for service stability.
- **Negative impacts on service quality**
 Understaffing contributes to longer waiting lists, reduced access to local services and increased reliance on private providers. Respondents reported that these pressures undermine preventative care and worsen outcomes for patients.
- **Risks to the delivery of Sláintecare**
 A large majority of respondents (78%) believe current staffing levels are insufficient to deliver the shift towards universal, community-based care envisaged under Sláintecare. More than half reported feeling unsupported in implementing these reforms.
- **Implications for policy and decision-makers**
 The report calls for evidence-based staffing levels, stronger retention strategies, continued progress on pay equity in the voluntary sector and greater engagement with frontline workers in policy development.

The findings highlight the lived experience of health and welfare workers, including long waiting lists, reduced access to community services and shrinking local networks.

Fórsa has emphasised the need for evidence-based workforce planning, fair pay – particularly in the voluntary sector – improved retention strategies and a stronger worker voice in policy development.

The union has sought further engagement with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health to highlight the issues facing health workers and to discuss the measures required to address them.

Pay and numbers dispute

Issues relating to staffing levels in the HSE and Section 38 organisations continued throughout 2025. The year began with members preparing for industrial action. This was averted in early March following extensive negotiations at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), which resulted in a set of proposals being put to members for consideration. These proposals were accepted in a ballot of members in April.

However, the Divisional Executive Committee remained concerned that the agreement might not be implemented effectively, given the number of false starts on staffing issues since early 2024. A key element of the WRC agreement was the inclusion of a review clause. In October 2025, Fórsa and other unions triggered this review clause, citing concerns that the HSE had breached the agreement.

Following a return to conciliation, Fórsa sought to have the issues referred to the Labour Court. A hearing took place in January 2026.

The Labour Court recommendation has now issued and strengthens the union's position. It identifies breaches of the agreement by the HSE and sets out proposals to address them. The HSE has accepted the recommendation, and work will now commence on implementing its provisions. Further updates will be issued to members as this work progresses.

Community and Voluntary Sector pay dispute

Following the interim agreement reached in October 2023, Fórsa, alongside other health unions, entered negotiations at the WRC to secure a successor agreement for workers in the community and voluntary sector.

On 10th March 2025, a new pay agreement was reached following a prolonged negotiation process. The agreement builds on the October 2023 settlement and provides for further pay improvements in the sector.

The agreement provides for pay increases totalling 9.25% over two years and confirms that funding will be adjusted to allow for the application of equivalent general round pay adjustments provided for under any successor agreements to the Public Service Agreement.

The agreement also acknowledges that pay levels for some workers in community and voluntary organisations have fallen behind equivalent grades in the public service.

Following difficulties encountered in some organisations during the implementation of the October 2023 agreement, the new agreement confirms that any funding provided to organisations under the arrangement must be used solely to meet the agreed pay increases.

A joint monitoring group comprising funding agencies, employer representatives and staff union representatives has been established to address practical issues arising in the administration of the agreement. This forum has provided an effective mechanism for sharing information on funding allocations and resolving implementation issues at an early stage.

The agreement also provides for an independent data-gathering exercise to be conducted following ratification. This exercise will develop shared evidence base on employment structures and pay across the sector. Once the data-gathering exercise has concluded, the parties will re-engage to consider its findings and discuss the next steps in addressing pay disparities across the sector. Work on finalising the terms of reference for this exercise is ongoing.

Pay terms of the agreement

The pay provisions of the agreement provide increases totalling 9.25% over two years (October 2024 to October 2026).

2024

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary of **2.25%**, backdated to 1st October 2024.

2025

- A general round increase of **1%** from 1st April 2025.
- A further general round increase of **2%** from 1st November 2025.

2026

- A general round increase of **2%** from 1st April 2026.
- A further general round increase of **2%** from 1st October 2026.

Members working in the community and voluntary sector balloted on the proposals in April 2025. The agreement was approved with just over **86% voting in favour**. The agreement represents a significant step in improving pay levels across the sector. Progress towards these improvements reflects sustained engagement by unions and the continued commitment of members working in community and voluntary services.

The community and voluntary sector plays a vital role in the delivery of public services. Workers delivering these services must receive fair and sustainable pay, and the union will continue to engage on members' behalf to advance these objectives.

Barnardos

In June 2025, Fórsa members employed by Barnardos served three weeks' notice of industrial action. The dispute arose from Barnardos' failure to fully implement the terms of the 2023 WRC Community and Voluntary Sector pay agreement and its refusal to engage with the union on the issue.

Barnardos stated that the funding it had received to implement the 2023 agreement had instead been used to offset the cost of a pay increase awarded in 2022. Fórsa maintained that the agreement contained no provision allowing employers to divert funding intended for the 2023 pay deal to cover earlier pay decisions. Of the 8% increase payable under the agreement, only 4% had been implemented.

Barnardos initially declined to engage with the union and did not accept an invitation from the WRC to attend conciliation. Prior to balloting members, Fórsa conducted a survey of Barnardos staff which found that more than 60% were considering leaving the organisation if the terms of the agreement were not honoured.

A ballot for industrial action concluded on 7th March, with more than 88% of members voting in favour on a turnout of 84.8%. Members prepared to commence industrial action in June. Shortly before the action was due to begin, Barnardos reversed its position and agreed to implement the outstanding 4% pay increase on a backdated basis.

The outcome reinforces the principle that funding provided under the agreement must be used to meet agreed pay increases. Members should remain vigilant where similar issues arise. The strength and solidarity demonstrated by Fórsa members in Barnardos, supported by colleagues in the Dublin Care Services branch, played a decisive role in securing this outcome.

Health regions

Engagement continued throughout 2025 on the restructuring of the HSE into six Health Regions. A positive outcome of this process has been the creation of six Regional Director of Health and Social Care Professionals (HS CP) posts, alongside additional whole-time equivalent posts at general manager (GM) and head of service (HOS) level. Agreement has also been reached on the HR and employee relations operating model.

However, further work remains. Nine different operating models are currently under consideration by Fórsa members. No agreement has been reached on changes below general manager level pending the receipt and consultation of detailed proposals. Other issues, including the proposed Regional Disability Lead and a regional pharmacy lead post, also remain outstanding and will form a key focus of engagement during 2026.



Pay and Numbers dispute rally at Cork University Hospital.

Reassignment/ redeployment protocol

This protocol clearly sets out the process to be followed, in the first instance management should seek voluntary reassignment/redeployment. The following are the key elements of the protocol.

- Procedure for reassignment
- Criteria for reassignment
- Competence, re-skilling, education and training
- Essential reassignment
- Appeal
- Monitoring

Local bargaining

Throughout 2025, the division engaged extensively with members in the development of local bargaining claims under the public service agreement.

To date, claims have been lodged across the majority of bargaining units representing Fórsa members in the health and social care sector, covering administrative grades, health and social care professionals, technical specialists, and operational roles. A small number of claims remain in preparation or are awaiting the outcome of related processes, including ongoing disputes and sectoral reviews.

Engagement with management is ongoing and the claims are currently at different stages of the bargaining process. It is expected that the first offers will be brought to members for consideration following the conclusion of branch AGMs.

Local bargaining claims – current position

Bargaining unit	Status
Health and Social Care Professionals	
HSCP - Therapies	Claim lodged
Audiology	Claim lodged
Perfusionists	Claim lodged
Psychology	Claim lodged
Clinical Engineering	Claim lodged
Counsellors/Psychotherapy	Claim lodged
Physicists	Claim lodged
Dosimetrists	Claim lodged
HSCP - other	To be determined
Pharmacy	
Pharmacists	Claim lodged
Pharmacy Technicians	Claim lodged
Social Care and Community Roles	
Social Work*	Claim lodged
Social Care Work	Claim lodged
Peer Support	Claim lodged
Family Support	Claim lodged
Home Support	Meeting convened
Regulatory/Inspection Grades	
Environmental Health Officers	Claim lodged
Education Welfare Officers	Claim lodged
Early Years Inspectors	Claim lodged
Analytical Chemists	Deferred pending Kevin Duffy report
Technical and Specialist Grades	
Clinical Measurement Physiologists	Deferred – dispute ongoing
Clinical Biochemistry	Claim being finalised
Workshop Grades	Claim in development
Operational and other Grades	
NAS Officer Grades	Covered by marker grade claim
Catering	Meeting convened
Civil Registration	Claim lodged (senior registrars)
Senior Management (National Director and above)	Outstanding

Note: Grades not listed remain aligned with the clerical and administrative claims.

Public Service pay awards

The second-last pay increase agreed under the terms of the Public Service Agreement 2024–2026 took effect on 1st February 2026. Workers received an increase of 1% of gross pay, with a minimum flat-rate increase of €500 for workers earning under €50,000. The final increase under the agreement will take effect on 1st June 2026, when workers will receive a further 1% increase in gross pay.

Overall, the Public Service Agreement 2024–2026 provides pay improvements totalling 9.25%, with the flat-rate elements significantly increasing the overall benefit for workers earning under €50,000.

The agreement also provides for local bargaining, allowing up to 1% of payroll to be used to secure specific improvements in pay and conditions through negotiations with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform during the lifetime of the agreement. A further 2% will be available in a second phase, to be negotiated as part of a successor agreement.

At the end of 2024, Fórsa launched the A Better Deal campaign in preparation for the next round of public service pay negotiations. The campaign seeks to engage members across the public service and strengthen the union's position ahead of future negotiations.

The campaign will continue to be rolled out workplace by workplace, with members encouraged to support their workplace representatives and participate in campaign activities.

Health sector developments

Extended working day

At the union's conference in 2023, the HSE Chief Executive outlined plans to move towards a seven-day health service. This objective was reiterated by the Minister for Health at the union's conference in 2025.

Fórsa has consistently stated that members are willing to engage constructively on proposals aimed at extending service availability across the week. However, limited detailed proposals have emerged to date from either the HSE or the Department of Health.

The union remains ready to engage in discussions on how extended service provision could be delivered in a way that improves access to care while ensuring safe staffing levels and fair working arrangements for staff.

Fórsa has made clear that simply imposing 'five-over-seven' rostering arrangements or mandating additional weekend working would not provide a sustainable solution and could expose existing staffing gaps within the health service.

Many members have valuable experience and practical ideas on how resources could be organised to extend the current five-day delivery model. The union will approach discussions on this issue constructively, with the aim of improving access to health services while protecting staff.

In June 2025, agreement was reached between the HSE and the health unions on the Principles for Extended Hours of Service, following several weeks of negotiation.

The HSE had initially proposed changes that would have weakened protections contained in the 2008 Framework Agreement. Fórsa and the other health unions made clear that these proposals were unacceptable. The final agreement ensures that existing staff protections remain in place and confirms that any proposed changes must proceed through the agreed industrial relations process.

Members are encouraged to retain a copy of the agreement, which sets out the procedures and protections that apply where changes to working hours or rostering arrangements are proposed.

No automatic changes can be introduced. Management must follow the clearly defined process set out in the agreement before any changes to service delivery or rostering arrangements can be implemented.

For staff employed before 16th December 2008, and who have not been promoted since that date, there is no obligation to accept changes to existing working arrangements, and any such changes must be agreed on a strictly voluntary basis.

For staff employed after that date, or those who have been promoted since, proposals for new rostering arrangements may be considered, but only after the procedures set out in the agreement have been fully followed.

Where disagreements arise at local level, the agreement provides for a formal disputes resolution process. This includes referral to a Joint Review Group, and, if necessary, to an independent adjudicator.

Any proposals to extend services must also be based on safe staffing levels.

Members should remain vigilant where changes to working hours are proposed and should engage with their local union representative to ensure that the agreed procedures are fully observed.

Children’s Health Ireland (Temple Street, Crumlin, Connolly and Tallaght)

Children’s Health Ireland (CHI) has received significant media attention over the past 18 months, much of it focused on the timeline for the opening of the new national children’s hospital. The consolidation of services across the CHI hospitals represents the first merger of acute hospital services of this scale in almost 30 years. Engagement on issues arising from this process will remain a key priority for the division during the coming year.

Engagement with management continues across a number of areas, including unresolved staffing numbers for the new site, superannuation capacity issues arising from staffing shortages, and proposed role regrading within Procurement and Supply at CHI Temple Street. Health and safety concerns were raised following an incident in the genetics laboratory. Investigations have since been completed and follow-up actions have been requested.

Organisational redesign proposals within the Clinical Decision Unit (CDU), along with accommodation changes affecting Finance staff, have also been subject to union engagement, with assurances provided by management. Clarification has also been sought regarding the status of clinical engineers in relation to the new CHI site.

National Joint Council (NJC)

Throughout 2024, Fórsa raised a number of concerns regarding the operation of the National Joint Council (NJC), which is the primary forum for the management of industrial relations within the health service. The NJC oversees the conduct of industrial relations across the employments covered and provides a mechanism for addressing matters arising between the parties.

Following the restructuring of the HSE into six Health Regions, the union has sought a review of the NJC constitution to ensure that the forum remains fit for purpose within the new organisational structure. A review of the constitution was scheduled to take place in February 2025.

Special Leave with Pay – Long Covid

The health trade unions sought the introduction of an occupational illness scheme for health workers who remain unable to work due to Long Covid and referred the matter to the Labour Court in early 2025. In its recommendation, the Labour Court noted that Covid-19 and Long Covid are not currently recognised as occupational illnesses or

injuries at work within this jurisdiction, and that it did not have the authority to determine otherwise.

On that basis, the Court recommended a final extension of the existing special leave with pay scheme from 1st July 2025 to 31st December 2025. Following the recommendation, the focus of union engagement shifted towards political advocacy seeking formal recognition of Long Covid as an occupational illness.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health agreed to write to the Minister for Health seeking an extension to the scheme beyond 31st December 2025. However, this extension did not materialise. The unions have also written to the Taoiseach seeking further engagement on the issue and have requested a hearing before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health.

Fórsa, alongside SIPTU and the INMO, will continue to campaign on behalf of members affected by Long Covid.

Job Evaluation Scheme

Progress has been made in reducing the lengthy waiting times previously associated with the job evaluation scheme. The board continues to meet regularly to consider matters raised by individual members. As of January 2026, approximately 700 members remained awaiting assessment, representing a significant reduction compared with previous years.

Internal audit

Engagement continues regarding the position of members working in Healthcare Audit, Internal Audit and SPI. The union is participating in without-prejudice discussions with management regarding potential options for members should redeployments arise. Meetings are being organised on a regional basis and are attended by NERS representatives alongside union officials and affected members. A number of these meetings have taken place and have generally been constructive, although discussions remain ongoing in several areas.

Civil Registration

During 2025, members and management participated in a number of hearings at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). While several agreements were reached, a number of issues remain outstanding. These include concerns relating to the digitalisation of services, as well as inconsistencies across regions in relation to grading structures, duties and levels of responsibility.

The parties are scheduled to return to the WRC. In advance of this engagement, members have been asked to complete a survey documenting changes in their roles and responsibilities. This information will assist the union in advancing members' concerns during the next stage of discussions.

Separately, local bargaining mechanisms are being utilised to pursue outstanding claims on behalf of certain grades within the service.

Technology and transformation

The significant reliance on agency staff within Technology and Transformation has been a recurring issue in engagement with management throughout 2025. This matter has been raised directly with management as part of ongoing discussions on workforce planning.

In late 2025, a draft Operating Model was circulated for discussion as part of the restructuring associated with the introduction of the Health Regions. The union has sought clarification on several elements of the proposed model and is awaiting further information from management. Issues have also been raised regarding the use of the Scorebuddy monitoring system, and clarification has been requested from management.

Integrated Financial Management and Procurement System (IFMS)

Over the past year, a number of meetings were held around the country to discuss the implications for members arising from the introduction of the Integrated Financial Management and Procurement System (IFMS). Several consistent themes emerged from these discussions, including concerns about staffing shortages and the additional workload generated by the implementation of the new system.

At a recent meeting, the Divisional Executive Committee agreed that further engagement with the full membership was required. It authorised the distribution of a survey to all relevant members in order to gather detailed information on the issues arising from the system's implementation. The survey will issue in the coming weeks and members are encouraged to participate so that the union can develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges being experienced. Following the survey, a meeting will be convened with senior HSE management to address the issues identified by members.

Career Pathway Review (CPR) dispute

One of the most significant frustrations during 2025 was the failure of the six Regional Directors of People to implement the Career Pathway Review Agreement, particularly as it relates to the progression pathway from staff grade to senior grade. This pathway applies to Social Work in Primary Care and to the relevant professions outside of Primary Care.

Following limited engagement at regional level, and unsatisfactory engagement at national level, the matter was referred back to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) in late 2025. A hearing took place on 19th February 2026. The union's position remains that all staff who are eligible for progression under the agreement should be advanced to senior grade in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

Career progression and the implementation of the Career Pathway Review Agreement will remain a key priority for the division during 2026. To support this work, Robbie Ryan has been invited to commence Phase 2 of the Career Pathway Review, focusing on outstanding issues. The first meeting of Phase 2 took place on 23rd February 2026. Relevant National Professional Committees have also established a working group to engage on these matters alongside nominees from the DEC.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT)

During 2025, industrial relations within Children's Disability Services improved significantly, with the Joint Union-Management Forum meeting regularly and management sharing proposals with unions in advance of implementation. This more constructive engagement has been welcomed by members.

Workforce planning

Background

In 2022 and 2023, Fórsa requested that a workforce plan for CDNTs be developed using the framework outlined in *A National Model of Care for Paediatric Healthcare Services in Ireland - Chapter 9: Health Services for Children in Ireland - A Guide to Workforce Planning*.

As part of this engagement, the union highlighted the significant gap between current funded staffing levels and the staffing required to meet the needs of the population accessing services under this policy framework.

During discussions, the HSE indicated that it no longer considered this policy framework appropriate for workforce planning in CDNTs, stating that it did not reflect the integrated team structure.

Fórsa requested that this position be confirmed in writing by the HSE. To date, this confirmation has not been provided.

In the absence of an agreed alternative framework, the union's position remains that the existing model of care should continue to inform workforce planning for CDNT services.

Current position

In March 2025, the HSE advised that a Pay and Numbers Strategy was being developed for posts funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). Fórsa emphasised that all currently funded vacancies within CDNTs must be protected within this process, particularly in light of previous experience where vacancies funded by the Department of Health were decommissioned in December 2023. To date, formal confirmation that these posts will be protected has not been provided.

The absence of an agreed workforce plan continues to pose a serious challenge for the sustainability of CDNT services. Without a clear staffing framework, it is difficult to ensure that services can meet the needs of children, young people and their families.



Pay and numbers dispute protest, University Hospital Kerry, Tralee.

The situation is further compounded by the absence of agreed workforce plans for Primary Care and CAMHS services funded by the Department of Health. In January 2026, during the presentation of the National Service Plan to trade unions, the HSE stated that a Pay and Numbers Strategy for disability services had been agreed with the DCDE.

Fórsa immediately sought further details. At the time of drafting this report, this information had not yet been provided. This issue will remain a key priority for engagement during 2026.

Interim Discipline Managers

Recruitment to Interim Discipline Manager roles is currently underway, with the expectation that these posts will be in place by the end of the first quarter of 2026. The establishment of these roles represents a significant and long-sought improvement within Children's Disability Services.

Education Therapy Support Service

The Government has confirmed the establishment of the Education Therapy Support Service. During 2025, engagement took place between workplace representatives, the HSE and the Department of Education regarding the development of this service.

Workplace representatives remain actively involved in preparatory work and further engagement will continue as the service is developed.

National Disability Authority review

The National Disability Authority (NDA) review concluded at the end of 2025 and a draft report has been issued to Fórsa. Consultation with members will now take place regarding the report and its associated recommendations.

Assessment of need

Fórsa cited the HSE for a breach of the Public Service Agreement following the announcement that €20 million would be allocated to private providers to undertake assessments of need. Subsequent engagement resulted in agreement to establish a group to develop a service plan for the delivery of Assessment of Need (AON) services. The union is currently awaiting the terms of reference for this group.

National Autism Pathway Protocol

Fórsa received a presentation from HSE management on the proposed National Autism Pathway Protocol. Feedback from members has been submitted and further meetings are planned ahead of the protocol's planned implementation in 2026.

Assessment Officers and Liaison Officers

National representative groups have been re-established for both Assessment Officers and Liaison Officers. This work is being led by Assistant Industrial Officer Linda O'Sullivan. Members are currently compiling a list of industrial relations issues to be raised with management through these forums.

Roadmap for Service Improvement

The Roadmap for Service Improvement concluded in December 2025. Management is now engaging with Fórsa on the development of a successor plan.

The new programme is expected to include a number of initiatives currently under consultation with Fórsa members, including:

- Establishment of In-Reach Teams
- Development of a Single Point of Access model
- Creation of a Regional Disability Lead post
- Introduction of Case Coordinator roles

CDNM review

The review of Children's Disability Network Manager (CDNM) roles, provided for under the most recent Children's Disability Services WRC agreement, has commenced and is progressing well.

Improving Density and Representation

Workplace representatives from across Disability Services, including both Primary Care and CDNTs, continue to meet regularly to discuss the issues outlined above, along with other matters affecting members working in these services. These meetings allow representatives to share experience across teams and to identify practical proposals that could improve both working conditions for staff and service delivery for those accessing services.

The meetings form an important part of the union's industrial strategy and will continue throughout 2026.

Since the appointment of Assistant Industrial Officer Linda O'Sullivan, the number of workplace representatives across CDNTs has increased significantly, with approximately 60% of teams now represented. Work will continue throughout 2026 to ensure that the remaining teams also have workplace representation.

Community Healthcare Network Model (CHN)

Negotiations commenced at the Workplace Relations Commission in 2024 regarding the learning site evaluation of the Community Healthcare Network (CHN) model and the associated final report.

Fórsa was represented at these negotiations by members of the Divisional Executive Committee, the National Health Office team, a Network Manager representative and a Discipline Manager representative.

Two conciliation conferences were held. The second conference focused on:

1. Reporting relationships for all professions within the CHN model
2. Engagement processes arising from the themes identified in the Joint Learning Site Evaluation

In relation to reporting relationships, the HSE indicated that it was engaged in discussions with the INMO, but that no agreed position had yet been reached. As a result, Fórsa and the HSE were unable to progress discussions on the second issue.

Following a lengthy conciliation conference, the Workplace Relations Commission adjourned proceedings to allow the HSE additional time to progress discussions on the reporting relationship issue. Fórsa expected that the parties would reconvene in 2025 to conclude these discussions. In preparation for this, the union has continued engagement with Network Managers, Discipline Managers and Clinical Coordinators.

At the end of 2025, the Divisional Executive Committee sought the formal position of the management side regarding nursing reporting relationships before any return to the WRC or the introduction of new reporting structures.

It remains the union's position, as adopted by several divisional conferences, that any reporting structures within the CHN model must be agreed with staff and their unions before implementation.

Hospital Pharmacy

Implementation of the Hospital Pharmacy Agreement continued throughout 2025.

A significant milestone was achieved with the successful introduction of the Advanced Specialist Pharmacist (ASP) grade within the career structure. Approximately 70% of applicants were successful in securing appointment to the new grade.

The following items remain outstanding or continue to be progressed:

1. **PEM roles**
The grading of PEM roles in three specialist hospitals remains unresolved and will be the subject of further engagement during 2026.
2. **DPEM vacancies**
This matter has been referred to the sectoral Public Service Agreement dispute forum and is being progressed through that process.
3. **Advanced Specialist Pharmacist validation exercise**
Implementation is now progressing across the regions. Discussions will also take place regarding the future filling and development of these posts.
4. **Pharmacy Manager role**
Management has proposed addressing this issue through a letter of assignment, as no substantive change to salary is involved. An updated job specification will be shared with the union for agreement before letters issue.
5. **Pharmacy Regional Lead**
Preliminary engagement took place in late 2025 regarding the establishment of an explicit pharmacy leadership role within the new HSE Health Region structure. The union is awaiting a response from management.

Non-acute Hospital Pharmacy claim

This matter has been submitted as part of the local bargaining process.



Pay and numbers dispute protest, University Hospital Kerry, Tralee.

Professional groups

Hospital Pharmacy Technicians

Issues relating to pay and career structure for Hospital Pharmacy Technicians are also being progressed through the local bargaining process. Following representations from Fórsa, the HSE has initiated a review of the role and the associated eligibility criteria.

Audiology

A proposal for a unified career structure for Audiologists has been submitted as part of the local bargaining process.

Clinical Biochemists

A new national working group has been established to progress the local bargaining claim.

The Principal post has now been returned on a permanent basis to Beaumont Hospital.

Clinical Engineering

Issues relating to pay and career structure have been submitted as part of the local bargaining process. In addition, Fórsa has engaged with the HSE regarding its approach to Medical Device Regulation. These matters will remain active throughout 2026.

Clinical Measurement Physiologists

During 2025, Clinical Measurement Physiologists progressed a dispute with the HSE concerning:

1. The Workforce Review - Clinical Measurement Physiologists (CMPs)
2. The role of Clinical Measurement Physiologists in Chronic Disease Hubs
3. Breaches of the Public Service Agreement

A ballot for industrial action took place during November and December 2025, with action scheduled to commence on 30 January. This was averted following an agreement reached at the Workplace Relations Commission, which provides for an intensive six-week engagement process aimed at resolving the outstanding issues.

Counsellors in addiction services

Issues relating to pay and career structure have been submitted as part of the local bargaining process. During 2025, Fórsa also secured an incremental credit arrangement for staff transferring to the National Counselling Service.

National Counselling Service

Issues relating to pay and career structure have been submitted as part of the local bargaining process. Peer Support Workers (Mental Health) Issues relating to pay have been submitted as part of the local bargaining process.

Regulation and professional structures

CORU/Statutory regulation

Fórsa continues to meet regularly with CORU to discuss issues affecting HSCP members who are regulated, or due to become regulated. 2025 saw the conclusion of the transition period for Social Care Workers. By the end of the transition period, more than 21,000 applications for registration had been submitted to CORU.

Fitness to Practise complaints

The union continues to provide support to members who are the subject of Fitness to Practise complaints.

Engagement with key stakeholders

Throughout 2025, Fórsa continued to develop relationships with HSCP professional bodies, both individually and collectively, on matters of shared concern. These relationships represent an important strategic engagement. Fórsa has also worked to establish and develop a working relationship with the National HSE HSCP Office.

National Professional Committees (NPCs)

Fórsa currently has active National Professional Committees or national representatives in the following professions: Audiology; Clinical Biochemistry; Clinical Engineering; Clinical Measurement Physiology; Counsellor Therapists (National Counselling Service); Dietitians; Occupational Therapy; Orthoptics; Physiotherapy; Podiatry; Speech and Language Therapy; Social Care Work; Social Work; Psychology; Counsellors in Addiction Services; Counsellor Therapists; Hospital Pharmacy; Hospital Pharmacy Technicians; and Workshop Grades.

The NPCs meet regularly to advise and inform the work of the National Health Office team.

Tusla

Tusla restructuring

Restructuring within Tusla continued throughout 2025, with plans progressing towards the establishment of 30 Networks and 90 Integrated Teams nationwide. Management clarified that the January milestone would not involve abrupt changes and that affected staff groups would be included in discussions on reform. This approach has helped to ensure constructive engagement.

Many staff groups, including those working in Residential Services, are not directly affected by these structural changes. Fórsa will continue to engage with management throughout 2026 on any reform proposals and will maintain regular meetings with management to address broader industrial relations issues affecting members.

Job Evaluation Scheme (Clerical Administrative)

In October 2025, the union returned to the Labour Court regarding the issue of job evaluation for clerical and administrative members in Tusla. The scheme was originally closed in 2016 following instructions issued to Tusla by its parent departments, DPER and DCDE. The Labour Court issued its recommendation in November 2025.

The Health & Welfare Divisional Executive Committee (HWDEC) has considered the recommendation and has written to the employer seeking a meeting to discuss the outcome. Branches will be kept informed of developments.

Case allocation

In August 2025, management circulated a discussion document proposing the possible devolution of certain Social Work duties to the Social Care stream.

This document was issued to the Social Work and Social Care National Professional Committees for consideration and comment. The union is awaiting their feedback.

The document is not an agreed position, and members should continue to carry out their duties in line with existing arrangements.

Aftercare review

The independently chaired Aftercare Review Group, led by Christina Carney and John Smith, completed its work in November 2025. The union is awaiting publication of the final report. Once published, the report will be circulated to the HWDEC for consideration.

Early Years Inspectorate

Fórsa continues to engage regularly with management in the Early Years Inspectorate on matters including standard operating procedures, inspection processes, and the Peer Link programme. The union also acknowledges the longstanding contribution of Fiona Carthy, who stepped down as a representative during the year. Her commitment to representing Early Years Inspectors is greatly appreciated. The union also thanks Aileen Kennedy for her continued work representing members.

Educational Welfare Officers (EWO)

Fórsa continues to engage regularly with TESS (Tusla Education Support Service) on behalf of members in the Educational Welfare Officer branch. The branch remains active and has welcomed new members to its executive committee during the year. The branch is currently considering draft terms of reference for a new case management system, which members have been seeking for some time.

Violence and aggression in the workplace

The HWDEC has initiated a campaign addressing violence, harassment and aggression in the workplace, particularly affecting members working in residential services.

As part of this work, a survey has been developed to gather members' experiences. Members have provided detailed and candid feedback, which has been incorporated into the final version. The union has also worked with the Rape Crisis Centre on the language used in the survey. The survey is currently being tested with a small group of members before wider circulation.

Social Care Managers and Deputy Managers (Pre-HRA Hours)

An issue affecting a small number of members remains ongoing. Members employed in these grades prior to 2013 had Haddington Road Agreement hours imposed but did not benefit from the pro-rata reduction in hours introduced in 2022 when Haddington Road hours were reversed. The union continues to engage with the affected members and with management on this matter.

Tusla Career Pathways (HSCP)

The Tusla HSCP Career Pathway process remains ongoing and is progressing well.

Dental services

Following a period of leave taken by Denis Keane, responsibility for the Dental Services portfolio has transferred on an interim basis. Denis had submitted several local bargaining claims covering the following groups:

- Dental Surgeons (Senior, General, Senior Administrative and Principal)
- Dental Nurses and Senior Dental Nurses
- Dental Hygienists and Senior Dental Hygienists

Environmental Health

Responsibility for this portfolio has also transferred on an interim basis. A local bargaining claim for Environmental Health Officers has been submitted and remains under consideration.

Looking ahead

The work outlined in this report reflects the continued commitment of Fórsa members and representatives across the health and welfare sector. The division will continue to advance members' interests through collective bargaining, engagement with employers, and the development of strong professional structures. The contribution of workplace representatives and national committee members remains central to this work, and their commitment continues to strengthen the union's capacity to represent members effectively.

Local Government and Local Services division

report 2024-2026



Local Government and Local Services Division



Local Government and Local Services Divisional Executive Committee (DEC).

Divisional Executive Committee (DEC)

The following individuals were elected to the Divisional Executive Committee (DEC) for the 2025-2027 period:

Margaret Tuohy (Clare H&LG), Florie Hickey (Roscommon H&LG), Ray Kennedy (Offaly H&LG), Audrey Lambert (Dublin City LG), Pdraig McGivney (Cavan H&LG and third divisional representative on the NEC), Bernard McNeely (Donegal LG and Leas Cathaoirleach), Brian Madden (Galway H&LG), Ann Marie Maher (Laois LG),

Cladhna Dinneen (Cork H&LG), Margaret O'Dwyer (Kildare LG), Mairéad Costelloe (Kerry H&LG), Gerry O'Quigley (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown LG), Fiona Baskett (Longford LG), Noel McCarthy (South Dublin LG), and Michael Whyms (Fingal and Cathaoirleach).

Divisional Council

The divisional council comprises one delegate from each branch with members in the division, along with the DEC. The council convenes at least twice annually.

In February 2024, the division piloted Fórsa's first extended divisional council meeting. More than 60 delegates attended the residential event, which focused on policy implementation and development, as well as building organisational capacity at a local level across the sector.

This was repeated in February 2026, with over 70 delegates in attendance, including a number of representatives attending their first national union event.

Divisional strategy

The Local Government and Local Services DEC has agreed that all industrial priorities must be grounded in a strategy that promotes membership growth, capacity building, and density development. The division is committed to aligning this work with Fórsa's overarching strategic plan.

The strategic plan's core mission is to create:

- A union where members feel involved
- A union where activists feel empowered
- A union where staff feel heard and included

Fórsa aligns its bargaining objectives with activities that promote growth by developing strong branches and fostering active member engagement in efforts to improve pay, conditions, and influence. The division reviews membership levels regularly and has set clear membership growth targets.

Divisional staffing

As of 1st May 2024, Fórsa has established a dedicated staffing team for both the Municipal Employees and Local Government and Local Services divisions. This staffing structure enhances the focus on industrial priorities and supports the work of local branches.

The following Fórsa staff members are assigned to work in the division:

Richy Carrothers, Linda Casey, Aisling Cusack, Jennifer Flaherty, Eilí Grehan, Chris Harrison, Derek Kelleher, Amy Moran, Pdraig Mulligan, Carol Nevin, Jade O'Donohoe, Jay Power, Elaine Russell, and Eddie Walsh.

EPSU Local and Regional Government

Fórsa is a member of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), which represents eight million workers in 54 countries across Europe. EPSU acts as a strong voice for public service workers, advocating for policies that support workers, families and communities, and is committed to advancing a social Europe.

Richy Carrothers represents Ireland on the EPSU Executive Committee.

Public Services International (PSI)

Fórsa actively participates in Public Services International (PSI), a global federation of over 700 trade unions representing 30 million workers in 154 countries. PSI advocates to the United Nations, International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation, and other bodies, promoting workers' rights and universal access to quality public services.

Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan serves on the PSI executive board, while Richy Carrothers is a member of the PSI Local & Regional Government Network.

Local Authority National Council (LANC)

Fórsa's national secretary, Richy Carrothers, serves as the union-side secretary to the Local Authority National Council (LANC) - the sectoral negotiating forum comprising recognised trade unions, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the City and County Managers Association (CCMA) and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The LANC is chaired independently by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and also oversees the implementation of sectoral elements of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026.

Fórsa has sought improved structures and engagement to ensure that national bargaining arrangements in the sector are functional and fit for purpose. For the first time in decades, the terms of reference governing the work of the LANC have been finalised and updated. Critically, it fully reflects national bargaining structures and areas for negotiation. These include principles governing superannuation, promotion, grading structures, hours of attendance, annual, sick, special or study leave, maternity or parental leave, disciplinary action, grievance or other general conditions of service, flexible working and blended working arrangements.

Future of Local Government services

Fórsa remains at the forefront of efforts to strengthen local government.

The "More Power to You" campaign advocates for increased revenue and enhanced powers for local authorities. It seeks to improve community services through reforms in waste, water, housing, and energy.

In collaboration with SIPTU and Connect, Fórsa mobilised more than 30,000 local authority workers. Ahead of the 7th June 2024 elections, Fórsa engaged candidates and political parties to promote the reimagining of the local government sector. Strengthening local government is essential to delivering better services.

Organising for Power – divisional update

Following Fórsa’s adoption of the Organising for Power model which aims to build a high-participation, effective union – the division selected the Fingal local government branch as a pilot. The division has worked closely with the branch to build capacity, improve communication, and develop leadership within the workplace.

In line with Organising for Power principles, the division began mapping the workplace and assessing density levels to strategically allocate resources. The Fingal branch developed a strategy based on three core objectives, each with associated actions assigned to specific members:

1. Enhancing communication
2. Increasing branch capacity
3. Boosting member participation

Local bargaining

Local bargaining is a key element of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. It allows for negotiations on collective issues specific to grades or professions, with claims up to 3% of payroll costs. There are no automatic payments; unions must submit claims.

The local government and local services division contributed to Fórsa’s union-wide claim for clerical officers and related grades, submitted in December 2024 following comprehensive member consultation. In February 2025, Fórsa submitted a separate claim for administrative grades 4 to 7 (and equivalent grades in the Health, Education, and Civil Service sectors). All claims have been submitted and are awaiting finalisation.

Outsourcing

A central focus of the division’s work has been opposing the outsourcing of local government services. Despite protections in national agreements, the sector continues to face risks of outsourcing and privatisation. Some employers have sought to bypass requirements to present a

business case and consult staff representatives. Importantly, labour costs are not permitted to be included in business case calculations.

Disputes have arisen where employers have failed to adhere to national agreements and dispute resolution processes. Fórsa maintains that local government services must be delivered by local government workers. Strong, well-organised, and highly unionised workplaces are critical to resisting ongoing threats.

Remunicipalisation of waste

The remunicipalisation of waste services has remained a core objective of both the municipal employees’ division and the local government and local services division, as articulated through the More Power to You campaign.

Fórsa has played a central role in this campaign and was invited to provide expert testimony before the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action.

The Committee has since issued its final [report](#).

Of note is Recommendation 42, which states:

“The Committee recommends that the Department supports the establishment of a pilot scheme in Dublin City Local Authority to re-municipalise waste following Dublin City Council’s adoption of a cross-party composite motion calling for the re-municipalisation of household waste services in July 2019.”

This is a highly encouraging development and affirms Fórsa’s long-standing position that it is entirely feasible to insource household waste collection. The union believes that remunicipalising waste services is in the public interest – benefiting citizens, workers, and the environment – and that such services should be brought back under local authority control. Fórsa will continue to engage with campaign partners to determine the next strategic steps.

Veterinary services

Following prolonged negotiations spanning several years, Fórsa successfully secured comprehensive protections to pay and conditions ahead of any compulsory transfer of veterinary inspectors from local authorities to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). These outcomes were achieved following direct member engagement, including industrial action, to defend pay, conditions, professional recognition, pension entitlements, work location, and the regularisation of fixed-term contracts. In

early 2025, negotiations concluded successfully, and veterinary inspectors formally transferred their employment to DAFM.

A number of residual issues remain outstanding and are currently being progressed.

Professional committees

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly disrupted Fórsa's engagement with professional committees. In response, the DEC initiated the re-establishment and relaunch of several committees with a renewed focus on assessing and advancing industrial priorities. Fórsa has now reactivated professional committees to support this work.

Fire services

The Fire Services National Oversight Implementation Group (FSNOIG) continues to operate. Fórsa represents firefighters and senior officers in Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB), as well as senior officers outside Dublin, on FSNOIG. The group agreed to separate the representation of retained and full-time firefighters. The retained firefighters' subgroup is chaired by David Begg, and the full-time group by Kevin Duffy. Fórsa remains actively engaged in both forums, with ongoing representation on issues including internal structural reviews within fire services.

Dublin Fire Brigade

Following intensive discussions at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), Fórsa and the unions representing workers in Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) reached a successful agreement over a new emergency dispatch system, averting planned industrial action.

The outcome follows extensive engagement with Dublin Fire Brigade management after members voted in favour of industrial action in September. The dispute arose in response to proposals to introduce a new computer aided dispatch system (CAD) as part of the National Mobilisation and Communications (NMAC) project.

Concerns were raised by DFB members that the proposed system would apply to fire and rescue calls but not to ambulance calls. Members believed this partial implementation could result in unnecessary delays in the dispatch of DFB operated ambulances, potentially impacting emergency response times and public safety.

Under the agreement reached at the WRC, there is a commitment to retain and expand the Dublin Fire Brigade emergency room control centre. This

centre plays a critical role in managing fire and emergency calls for Dublin and the wider eastern region.

The agreement also provides for the appointment of an independent chair by the WRC to facilitate further high level discussions between all stakeholders involved in the introduction of the NMAC system. This process is intended to ensure that outstanding issues are identified early and addressed through meaningful consultation.

The resolution highlights the importance of engaging with workers and their representatives when introducing significant operational changes. While DFB members did not oppose the introduction of a new national system, their concerns focused on ensuring it is implemented in a way that safeguards emergency response and public safety.

Water

Fórsa has been actively involved in ongoing negotiations with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), and Irish Water, regarding the proposed transfer of 3,500 local authority water services staff to Uisce Éireann.

Before entering talks, Fórsa secured a ministerial commitment that no legal mechanisms would be used to force the transfer of staff. Despite this, documents later produced by Irish Water in November 2021 implied a full transfer of staffing responsibilities by 2026. Fórsa reiterated that talks had proceeded on the strict understanding that all transfers would be voluntary.

A significant breakthrough came with the Framework for the Future Delivery of Water Services, issued by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) in June 2022, which included the following commitments:

- No compulsory transfers of staff to Irish Water
- No compulsory redundancies
- Protection of existing pay and the possibility of additional performance-based rewards
- Legal protection of existing pension benefits
- Retention or enhancement of existing conditions of employment
- €3,000 incentive payment for transferring staff

- Option to remain employed by the local authority
- Voluntary redundancy available
- Continued access to collective bargaining

Fórsa and the other unions continue to work through the 'Water Services Transformation' agreed process that remains in place until the 31st December 2026. Members working in local authority water services may choose to be reassigned to other suitable work within their local authority or transfer to Uisce Éireann.

Referendum on public ownership of water

The Government has publicly acknowledged that public ownership of water services reflects the will of the Irish people and is a fundamental principle in the transformation process.

While the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage has expressed support for a referendum on public ownership – potentially alongside a referendum on the right to housing – no formal date has been announced. Fórsa and allied unions have consistently advocated for this referendum and remain disappointed at the Government's failure to honour its commitment.

Strong oversight and accountability mechanisms are essential to public ownership and are strongly supported by both the Government and trade unions.

[#KeepWaterPublic](#) [#NameTheDate](#)

The Future of Local Government

The Minister has acknowledged concerns raised by trade unions regarding the evolving role of local authorities and the increasing outsourcing of services traditionally delivered in-house.

The Government's most recent policy document lacks substantive detail or meaningful commitment to the revitalisation of the sector. It falls short of presenting a bold vision for local democracy and service delivery. An opportunity missed to reimagine the future of local government.

In response, the union continues to lead efforts through the reinvention of the *More Power to You* campaign.



Galway City Council lunchtime protest against council office relocation.

Job evaluation

In November 2017, the Labour Court rejected the union's claim for a job evaluation scheme on the grounds that no sufficient business case had been made. However, the Court indicated it would consider such a case if submitted. It also noted that the LGMA was to conclude job descriptions for clerical and administrative grades within six months of the hearing. While Fórsa completed and submitted the business case, the employer has yet to finalise the job description exercise.

After years of delay, the process resumed under the auspices of the WRC in July 2022. The LGMA committed to providing job descriptions and a written response by October 2022. However, when Fórsa returned to the WRC in January 2023, the LGMA abruptly ended the meeting and refused to engage further. In response, Fórsa's Divisional Executive Committee (DEC) voted unanimously to ballot members for industrial action. The ballot commenced in March 2023.

Fórsa members employed in local authorities voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action, up to and including strike action, due to the continued refusal of local authority management to establish a job evaluation scheme.

Many staff continue to carry additional responsibilities arising from the economic crisis, during which 10,000 local authority posts were lost. Despite this, the LGMA resisted the claim, leading to the collapse of negotiations.

The union subsequently implemented the following industrial actions:

- An indefinite ban on engaging with political representations (verbal or written) from 21st June 2023
- A telephone ban on 22nd June 2023, covering all forms of work-related communication, including mobile, landline, online platforms such as MS Teams, and social media
- Rolling and escalating industrial action thereafter.

Throughout summer 2023, the WRC facilitated a challenging conciliation process. As further escalation was planned, including a 24-hour email ban followed by a 48-hour phone ban – the LGMA threatened to withdraw blended working arrangements on “health and safety” grounds, despite Fórsa confirming that reporting and login arrangements remained unchanged.

The WRC intervened and brokered an agreement:

“Subject to the provisions of the next Public Service Agreement, the parties are committed to engaging on scoping out options for a job evaluation scheme in the sector.”

The following was incorporated into the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026:

“The parties agree to re-engage to progress the scoping exercise on options for a job evaluation arrangement in the local authority sector.”

This marks the first time a national agreement has acknowledged the possibility of a job evaluation scheme in the local government sector.

Fórsa members working in local authorities are a step closer to securing a comprehensive job evaluation process as the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) has confirmed broad agreement, under several headings, which it says will help towards agreeing “the mechanics and framework” of a job evaluation scheme for the local authority sector.

The developments were announced at the local government and local services divisional conference.

Fórsa believes that local authority workers deserve a fair, open, and transparent system of measurement to ensure the work they undertake is appropriate to the grade in which they’re employed. More than 80% of Fórsa members backed industrial action on the issue in 2023.

As reported to conference delegates at the divisional conference in May 2025, the union had continued to engage in intensive discussions with government and the Local Government

Management Agency (LGMA) representatives under the auspices of the WRC, and Fórsa believes the significant progress at the WRC is a major development, giving effect to conference policy to deliver a job evaluation scheme in the sector.

The WRC confirmed that broad agreement has been reached under the following headings:

- The parties are working towards the implementation of a job evaluation scheme based on the mechanics of the existing higher education scheme but tailored to the specific and unique requirements of the local authority sector.
- The principle of objectivity, transparency, impartiality and quality assurance will apply.
- The scheme will be operated centrally and jointly.
- The purpose of the scheme will be to evaluate the post, not the individual performance of the person currently in the post.

The WRC has identified several steps to be taken before the launch of a pilot scheme, including an engagement between the parties on agreement on job descriptions to benchmark evaluations against, assessors and the process of the assessment, and agreement on quality assurance.

Fórsa is seeking to further progress the scoping and planning phases in order to advance job evaluation in the sector.

The Public Service Agreement 2024-2026, section 4.4.2 states:

“The parties agree to re-engage to progress the scoping exercise on options for a job evaluation arrangement in the Local Authority sector.”

Challenging discussions continued throughout the following period. At a conciliation hearing at the WRC on the 15th December 2025, the WRC subsequently issued the following on 19th December:

Following broad agreement under a number of headings in May earlier this year, the Commission notes that progress has been made on some of the agreed next steps, as follows:

- The locations of the pilot have now been confirmed as Cork City Council, Meath County Council and Longford County Council.
- A Level 8 resource has been sanctioned to provide dedicated support for the further development of the scheme. Recruitment will commence in early January 2026.

- The parties will continue their constructive engagement locally to finesse the pilot scheme to ensure it is fit for purpose for the Local Authority sector. A chairperson, to be agreed between the parties, will be appointed to facilitate the development of a pilot framework of how the scheme will operate and bring it towards operationalisation within the criteria agreed in May 2025. If the parties are unable to agree a chairperson, the WRC will nominate a chairperson subject to the agreement of both parties.

The LGMA and Fórsa are working through the components of the higher education scheme to ensure that it is fit for purpose for the local government sector.

Blended working

In June 2022, Fórsa concluded a blended working framework with the sector, which included a provision for policy review. The union has since focused on implementing this policy across the 31 city and county councils.

All local authorities have adopted blended working models, generally allowing for up to two days per week, although this cap was never formally agreed. Through the WRC, the LGMA confirmed that no such national direction was issued. Fórsa formally triggered the review clause of the framework and has been negotiating with the LGMA to embed a formal agreement covering as many workers as possible, in line with the policy adopted at the union's divisional conference in May 2023.

Negotiations were substantially concluded, with key amendments agreed. However, appeals to external parties delayed finalisation. In March 2024, the WRC published its *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Request Flexible Working and the Right to Request Remote Working*, as required by the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.

In mid-2024, Fórsa concluded negotiations with the sector to revise the initial framework. Fórsa members working across local government sought to ensure more flexible working arrangements. Fórsa triggered the review clause in the framework to:

- Establish blended working across all local authorities
- Embed a culture of blended working into the sector

- Ensure that it is available to members to the greatest extent possible
- Underpin any revised and agreed policy with a fair, transparent and equitable appeals mechanism

Fórsa pursued the review and negotiated the revised blended working policy in the local government sector that was introduced at the end of May 2024. The updated policy represents a significant improvement, offering greater protections for members and incorporating a comprehensive appeals process. These changes align with the WRC Code of Practice for the Right to Request Remote Working, ensuring a fairer and more transparent approach.

Libraries and far-right agitation

For over a year, Fórsa members in libraries have endured harassment by agitators targeting library premises, intimidating staff, and attempting to remove materials they deem "inappropriate." While the central library on Grand Parade in Cork city became a focal point, similar incidents have occurred across the country.

In the absence of sufficient management action, Fórsa organised a solidarity protest on the 7th July 2023 outside Cork city library, which culminated in a march to City Hall. Over 500 people participated.

Library staff have been subjected to unsafe working conditions, verbal abuse, and live-streamed harassment on social media platforms.

Employers have clear responsibilities under health and safety legislation and under the *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work*, which explicitly includes bullying by clients and customers.

Fórsa demanded disclosure of safety statements and anti-bullying policies covering client/customer interactions.

In response to these ongoing threats, Fórsa wrote to local authorities outlining the following demands:

- An independent health and safety risk assessment, in consultation with library members and union representatives.
- Engagement with An Garda Síochána to develop emergency response measures.
- A review of library by-laws and legal avenues including exclusion orders or injunctions.



ICT workers at Fingal County Council.

Management has failed in its duty of care and has not shown leadership on this issue. In support of affected workers, Fórsa produced a suite of resources and held regular online meetings for library staff to monitor and respond to developments.

The union also engaged extensively with An Garda Síochána and supported a project led by UCD titled *Resisting Hate: New Foundations for Developing Safeguards and Toolkits for Public Librarians Against Reactionary Responses to LGBTQ Materials (STARR)*. Chaired by Fórsa national secretary Richy Carrothers, this initiative aims to tackle censorship, harassment, and the specific challenges faced by LGBTQI+ communities.

Fórsa continues to advocate for enhanced supports and protections for library staff.

ICT

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has issued new qualifications for IT/ICT grades. A representative working group was established and subsequently presented a position paper to the LGMA.

Local authorities face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining highly skilled ICT professionals. Fórsa believes an urgent review of ICT grading is needed to ensure alignment with comparable roles in terms of responsibilities and qualifications. Restructuring and investment in professional development are essential to maintain high-quality service delivery. The proposal includes the establishment of a National ICT Continuing Professional Development Committee (CPD) to support the ongoing development of the workforce and to assist in achieving national digital goals.

The divisional executive committee voted unanimously to ballot members working in ICT across the 31 city and county councils for industrial action as the only step currently available in response to years of inadequate engagement and delayed reform. The ICT professional committee identified the following headline areas requiring immediate and tangible progress:

1. ICT grading structure,
2. Establishment of the national ICT CPD committee,
3. A formalised national framework for out-of-hours work and compensation.

The professional committee has briefed members in local authorities, and the head of division hosted two mass online meetings: one on 19th November 2025, attended by 305 local authority ICT workers, nearly 20% of whom were non-members, and a further meeting with 60 attendees. Large numbers of new members joined Fórsa in the weeks preceding the ballot.

The ballot result was announced at the divisional executive committee meeting on the 9th December 2025:

Turnout:	98.4
Votes in favour:	86%
Votes against	1.6%

The DEC unanimously agreed on the 13th January 2026 that the first phase of industrial action would entail:

- Ending all out-of-hours ICT work,
- Non-engagement with external third parties, including the LGMA.

The dispute commenced on the 28th January 2026. On the 3rd February 2026, the WRC intervened in the dispute by way of an invitation to the parties to conciliation. The parties attended conciliation on the 6th February 2026 and following extensive discussions, the WRC issued the following:

- A high-level joint union management working group will be established with agreed terms of reference to include all three items that were in dispute.
- The group will comprise four members of the IT structure operating model review group (senior LGMA and CCMA nominees) and five members nominated by Fórsa. The work of the group will inform the IT structure operating model review as well as address the matters of continuous professional development and an out-of-hours framework.
- The first meeting of the working group will take place by early March at the latest.
- Management will share the terms of reference for the IT structure operating model review group; a list of its membership and a copy of the tender document associated with the review.
- A second conciliation conference has been scheduled for Thursday the 28th May 2026 at 10:00am.

The industrial action will remain paused to allow for meaningful engagement at the high-level joint union management working group.

Grievance and disciplinary

An overhaul of grievance and disciplinary policies across local government has been agreed.

Agreement has been reached at the Local Authority National Council (LANC) to comprehensively overhaul grievance and disciplinary policies across all 31 city and county councils.

The agreement marks a significant step towards the development of a single, sector-wide grievance and disciplinary policy for local government, to be negotiated collectively with trade unions. The aim is to ensure greater consistency, fairness and transparency in how such procedures are applied across the sector.

Since 2019, Fórsa has played the leading role in advocating for sector-wide approaches to grievance and disciplinary matters. The union has consistently highlighted the problems arising from the existence of 31 separate policies in a sector

employing approximately 33,000 staff. This fragmented framework has resulted in inconsistent practices and poorer outcomes for workers, leaving local government out of alignment with the rest of the civil and public service.

Concerns have also been raised about the fact that many existing grievance and disciplinary policies were never formally agreed with trade unions, a situation that has disadvantaged workers and undermined the principles of collective bargaining.

Under the LANC agreement, management and unions will now work together to develop modern, fit-for-purpose policies that apply consistently across all local authorities. Collective bargaining will be central to this process, reflecting its importance in grievance and disciplinary procedures.

Apprenticeships - Local Government sector

The union has been pushing the Department and the LGMA to improve the provision of apprenticeships in the sector. Data recently released confirmed that in 2025, the 31 city and county councils only managed to provide a total of 94 apprenticeship posts.

Overtime divisor

Clerical, administrative and analogous grade staff in local authorities will benefit from improved overtime arrangements from 1st August 2025. A new Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage circular confirms that the overtime divisor will be reduced from 37 to 35 hours per week, replacing the previous circular.

This change corrects a long standing anomaly that the division had been pursuing, dating back to the Haddington Road agreement, and ensures overtime is now calculated more fairly across the sector. Members are encouraged to read the circular for full details, including how overtime is calculated and how the new arrangements apply to work sharing staff.

The union is also pursuing the removal of the first hour of overtime provided without payment for a number of clerical admin Fórsa grades.

Workforce planning

Fórsa is actively engaged in the strategic workforce planning process. The union has ensured significant concessions in the national discussions with the Department so that the process was fair, open and transparent, creating the conditions in which management is required to negotiate with local branch representatives on the required staffing in each of the 31 city and county councils. Fórsa is pursuing several employers for non-adherence of the 'strategic workforce planning guidelines'. The overall process was due to be completed by the 31st March 2025; however, a number of local authorities have yet to complete the process fully.

The union has continued to support branches with ongoing briefings to maximise optimal staffing levels and ensure they are future-proofed.

Neurodiversity

Following a motion passed at the divisional conference in May 2025, Fórsa tabled a claim seeking to establish a neurodiversity policy across the local government sector.

The claim was presented at the Local Authority National Council (LANC). Neurodiversity is a trade union issue, and the local government sector needs to engage with Fórsa to develop a policy that recognises the importance of equality and inclusion. The motion passed at the divisional conference in May compels Fórsa to seek the introduction of a neurodiversity policy across the 31 city and county councils. The union issued the guide, developed in a collaborative effort between ICTU and Neuro Pride Ireland, with a wide array of other contributors from neurodiversity representative organisations. AsIAm, Ireland's Autism Charity, gave an excellent presentation to the divisional council as part of the union commitment to learning more about neurodiversity and to support greater inclusion and equality in both the workplace and the union.

Local Democracy Taskforce

Fórsa wrote to Minister James Brown after his appointment on the 27th January 2025, outlining Fórsa's vision for the enhanced provision of local services and the strengthening of local democracy in Ireland. In that correspondence, Fórsa also affirmed its readiness to engage constructively in the work of the local democracy taskforce.

On the 4th June 2025, the Government approved the establishment of a local democracy taskforce,

which will finalise a programme for the reform and strengthening of local government in Ireland. The establishment of the taskforce was a key commitment in the programme for government.

Fórsa made a comprehensive submission to the taskforce on the 29th August 2025.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published all the submissions received on the 6th October, including the Fórsa submission. This single [link](#) will bring you to the host page with all of the details as outlined.

At the time of conference preparation, Fórsa awaits the publication of the taskforce recommendations to the Minister.

People strategy

The sector published a draft paper on a 'People Strategy, 2026 - 2031'. Fórsa consulted widely amongst both the municipal employees' divisional executive committee and the local government and local services divisional executive committee, branches and divisional staff.

Fórsa's submission was issued on the 18th March 2026. Key elements of Fórsa's position included:

- **Staffing:** Local authorities need to significantly increase the FTE staff complement to ensure consistent and sustainable delivery of services to local communities across Ireland.
- **Mentoring opportunities:** The strategy opens avenues for mentoring, which could benefit both new and existing members through workplace improvements and union support for mentor training. The union wants to agree the process for mentoring and adding value to staff to retain and attract workers.
- **AI:** The sector must negotiate an appropriate AI policy through the Local Authority National Council (LANC) in order to protect public services and workers. This includes the delivery of services, enabling tools to support staff and issues pertaining to recruitment processes.
- **Job evaluation:** Fórsa welcomes the progress on job evaluation to date. However, Fórsa will be seeking to quicken the pace and rollout of job evaluation across the sector after the learning outcomes have been agreed in the three pilot sites. The union fundamentally believes that access to the job evaluation scheme is a central component in the recruitment and retention challenges.

- Blended working:** The commentary prioritises blended working policies simply predicated on business needs, performance management, and productivity without commitments to protect existing and recently renegotiated arrangements. Fórsa can evidence that thousands of workers identify blended working arrangements as a central reason for continuing to work in the sector. Blended working can help underpin the sector's stated aim to be the employer of choice, support retention and recruitment strategies, and the offering of more inclusion and diversity strategies. Recently, the union is witnessing the rolling back on entitlements to blended working, including the number of days on offer in some local authorities. Employers should be under no illusion that this will create unnecessary friction with workers and inevitably lead to industrial strife.
- Four-day working week:** The unions wish to agree pilots on the four-day working week across the sector. A shorter working week can bring benefits to everyone. For workers it means more time to themselves. For employers it can bring greater productivity, as well as attracting the best talent. For carers, a shorter working week can allow greater flexibility, supporting participation in the workforce. On a societal level, a four-day week also supports workers to take better care of their health and can have a positive impact on the environment by reducing carbon created by commuting, for example. The decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council, to pilot the four-day working week, has been an overwhelming success, so much so, the council has formalised the agreement for all staff to a reduced four-day week without the loss of pay, leading to significant increases of recruitment and retention, performance and health outcomes for staff. The four-day week is better for everyone and would greatly assist with the sector to become the employer of choice and underpin a commitment to retain and attract staff.
- Increased performance monitoring risks:** The strategy's focus on performance management redesign and data-driven monitoring may lead to increased surveillance and managerial discretion without clear protections, appeals processes, or collective bargaining safeguards. Fórsa requires further detail on this.
- Health and safety:** Many Fórsa members with public facing roles are reporting a sharp increase in harassment and intimidation as reflected in the employee satisfaction survey of Fórsa members working across local authorities. The union is calling for a joint union/management working group to tackle this prevailing problem.
- Workforce agility concerns:** Emphasis on workforce agility and mobility could justify role drift, erosion of specialist roles, and restructuring without proper consultation. This would be completely unacceptable to Fórsa.
- Transfer policy:** There should be a transfer policy across local authorities, both internal and between local authorities. This will assist with recruitment and retention and further support staff with commuting, as well as aid employers to be more family friendly.
- Overtime:** The union welcomes agreement on the change of the overtime divisor to reflect the removal of the "Croke Park Hours." However, as already raised at the LANC, Fórsa is seeking the removal of the free hour of overtime. The current expectation demanded by the sector that workers in those grades work for free is neither fair, reasonable nor sustainable. Fórsa is seeking equity with other comparators in the public sector. Failure to resolve this issue will result in a dispute.
- Recruitment standardisation risks centralisation:** Standardising recruitment templates and processes may reduce local autonomy, transparency, and slow recruitment, with potential weakening of local industrial relations and probation discretion. Fórsa will be insisting on the maintenance and expansion of the confined competition processes as previously negotiated. "Standardised 100-day induction programmes" must create space for the inclusion of trade unions to promote membership and union structures and involvement. Recruitment panels must be refreshed and made more reflective of societal demographics and structural changes across the sector and our society. Recruitment panels should be required to undertake training and to agreed minimum standards, including equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

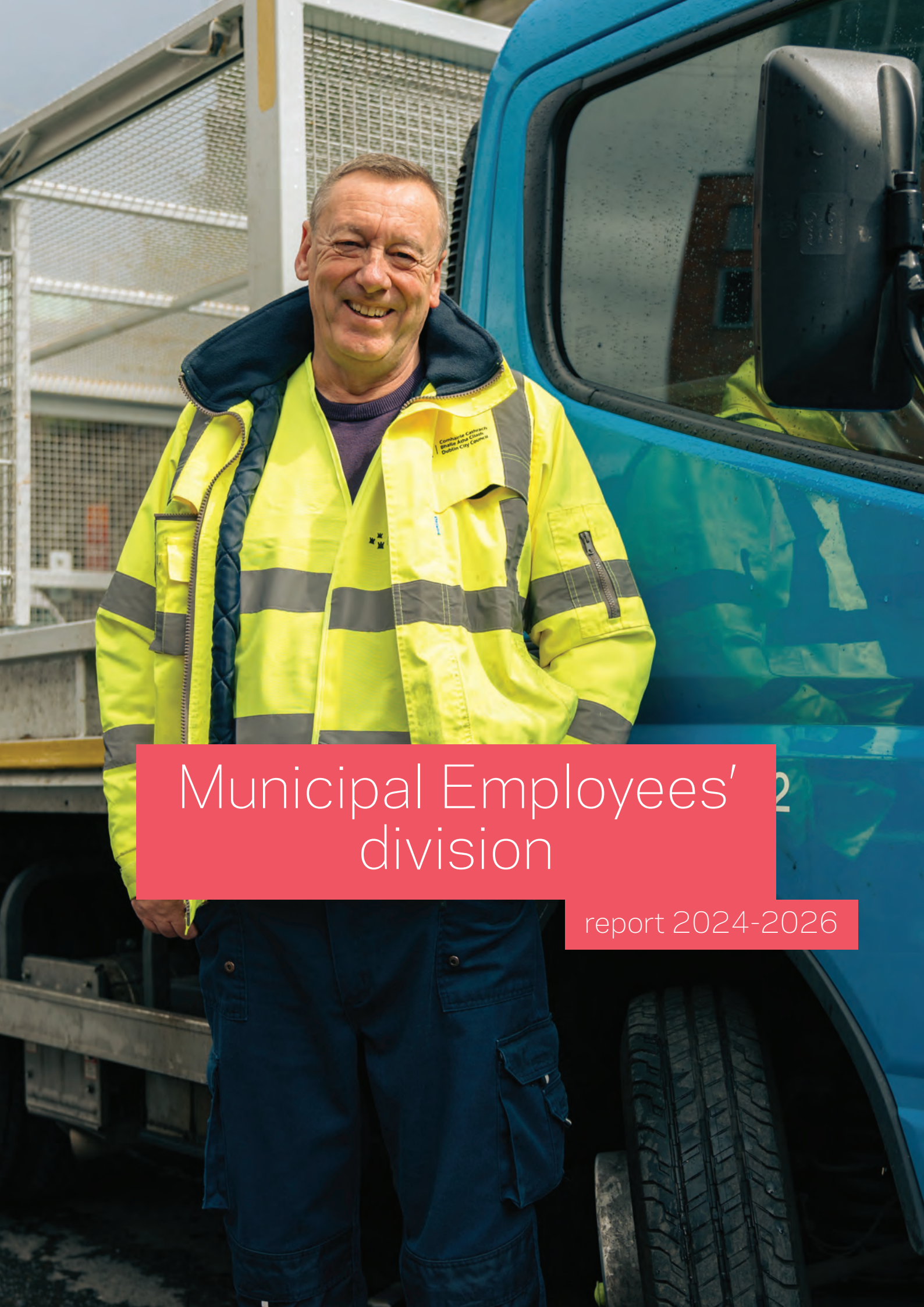
- **Upskilling:** The sector should agree with unions an ongoing voluntary skills audit for workers to improve their chances for personal development and career progression. This can include further education, personal development and career pathways. Local authorities need to offer workers the opportunity for upskilling, support and incentivising key areas; for example, that 20% of recruits to the public sector will be competent in the Irish language by the end of 2030.
- **Resource gaps threaten delivery:** The strategy lacks funding commitments for additional HR staff, training, ICT upgrades, and wellbeing initiatives, risking work intensification and making commitments aspirational without dedicated resources.
- **Grievance and disciplinary:** Fórsa welcomes the agreement to negotiate with the unions a new sector-wide grievance and disciplinary policy. This will also need to include dignity at work. All these matters must be reflected in the people strategy.
- **EDI and wellbeing positive:** While supportive of equality, diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing, the strategy fails to identify funding for reasonable accommodations, protections for staff with long-term illness, Long Covid, workload management, and resourcing for EDI training. Fórsa wishes to see a roadmap for EDI, including strategies to drive up recruitment and retention of disabled workers – including meeting the 6% minimum statutory employment target for disabled people as part of Government National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 – 2030. Fórsa has also tabled a claim for specific policy on neurodiversity across the sector that should be reflected in the strategy.
- **Outsourcing:** An end to the trend of outsourcing in local authorities. The provision of local services is a critical function of local authorities. Unfortunately, some local authorities in Ireland consistently seek to outsource a broad range of services. This often occurs without consultation¹¹ with unions,¹² contrary to the provisions of successful national agreements, which has led to frequent industrial disputes between unions and councils as employers. The drive to outsource services occurs in an environment in which successive public sector national agreements have made firm and clear commitments to use direct labour “where consistent with efficient and effective public service delivery.”
- **Energy and climate:** Support local authorities to lead micro-generation and community ownership of renewable energy projects. Experience shows that state-based investment is central to realising new forms of renewable energy and, in many countries, processes of local democratic participation recognise the degree to which innovation needs to be vested in local authorities to generate community buy-in, engagement and ownership in transition processes. In addition, local authorities have a key role in promoting and implementing energy efficiency measures. The sector needs more dedicated staff to assist local authorities and communities to make the necessary transition in order to be more environmentally sustainable and to support Ireland’s climate objectives.

Fórsa concluded by advising that the union engaged in the draft consultation process in good faith, which must be reciprocated by the sector with commitment and collaboration. For it to be meaningful, it needs to be more than a box-ticking exercise. All of the areas identified require dedicated and ringfenced resources, both financial and staffing.

Fórsa also requested that the 31 city and county councils engage employees in an annual confidential staff satisfaction survey. The survey should be agreed with unions in advance. As part of the finalisation of the people strategy, Fórsa believes that an independent equality impact assessment should be undertaken and IHREC invited to offer an assessment and recommendations.

11 <https://forsatradeunion.newsweaver.com/designtest/iq6pu5aws7j>

12 <https://forsatradeunion.newsweaver.com/designtest/11dwsne26u8>



Municipal Employees' 2 division

report 2024-2026

Municipal Employees' Division



Municipal Employees' Divisional Executive Committee (DEC).

Divisional Executive Committee (DEC)

Cian Russell; John Gaynor; Jason Boothman; Joey Malone (Vice President); Michael Clarke (Treasurer); Michael Murphy; Michael McLoughlin; Michael Kieran; Michael Ross; Shay Kavanagh (President); Thomas Cooney; Wayne Gibbons.

Thomas Murtagh is the Municipal Convenor at Dublin City Council.

Divisional strategy

The Municipal Employees' Divisional Executive Committee (DEC) agreed that all industrial priorities for the division must be grounded in a strategy that promotes membership growth, capacity and density development. The division is committed to ensuring that this work complements and contributes to the overall union effort to implement the strategic plan.

The strategic plan's core mission is to create:

- A union where members feel involved
- A union where activists feel empowered
- A union where staff feel heard and included

Fórsa aligns its bargaining objectives and priorities with activities that promote growth by developing strong branches and fostering active member engagement in efforts to improve pay, conditions, and influence. The division reviews membership levels regularly and has set clear membership growth targets.

Divisional staffing

As of 1st May 2024, Fórsa has established a dedicated staffing team for the Local Government and Local Services and Municipal Employees divisions. This staffing structure enhances the focus on industrial priorities and supports the work of local branches.

The following Fórsa staff members are assigned to work in the division:

Richy Carrothers, Aisling Cusack, Jade O'Donohoe, Jay Power.

EPSU Local and Regional Government

Fórsa is a member of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), which represents eight million workers in 54 countries across Europe. EPSU acts as a strong voice for public service workers, advocating for policies that support workers, families and communities, and is committed to advancing a social Europe.

Richy Carrothers represents Ireland on the EPSU Executive Committee.

Public Services International (PSI)

Fórsa actively participates in Public Services International (PSI), a global federation of over 700 trade unions representing 30 million workers in 154 countries. PSI advocates to the United Nations, International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation, and other bodies, promoting workers' rights and universal access to quality public services.

Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan serves on the PSI Executive Board, while Richy Carrothers is a member of the PSI Local and Regional Government Network.

Local Authority National Council (LANC)

Fórsa's national secretary, Richy Carrothers, serves as the union-side secretary to the Local Authority National Council (LANC) - the sectoral negotiating forum comprising recognised trade unions, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the City and County Managers Association (CCMA), and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The LANC is chaired independently by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and oversees the implementation of sectoral elements of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026.

Fórsa has sought improved structures and engagement to ensure that national bargaining arrangements in the sector are functional and fit for purpose. For the first time in decades, the terms of reference governing the work of the LANC have been finalised and updated. Critically,

they fully reflect national bargaining structures and areas for negotiation, including principles governing superannuation, promotion, grading structures, hours of attendance, annual, sick, special or study leave, maternity or parental leave, disciplinary action, grievance and other general conditions of service, as well as flexible and blended working arrangements.

Future of Local Government services

Fórsa remains at the forefront of efforts to strengthen local government.

The "More Power to You" campaign advocates for increased revenue and enhanced powers for local authorities. It seeks to improve community services through reforms in waste, water, housing, and energy.

In collaboration with SIPTU and Connect, Fórsa mobilised more than 30,000 local authority workers. Ahead of the June 2024 local and European elections, Fórsa engaged candidates and political parties to promote the reimagining of the local government sector. Strengthening local government is essential for delivering better services, supporting communities, and restoring public trust.

Local bargaining

Local bargaining is a key element of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. It allows for negotiations on collective issues specific to grades or professions, with claims of up to 3% of payroll costs. There are no automatic payments; unions must submit claims.

The Local Government and Local Services division contributed to Fórsa's union-wide claim for clerical officers and related grades, submitted in December 2024 following comprehensive member consultation. In February 2025, Fórsa submitted a separate claim for administrative grades 4 to 7 (and equivalent grades in the Health, Education, and Civil Service sectors). All claims have been submitted and are awaiting finalisation.

Outsourcing

A central focus of the division's work has been opposing the outsourcing of local government services. Despite protections in national agreements, the sector continues to face risks of outsourcing and privatisation. Some employers have sought to bypass requirements to present a

business case and consult staff representatives. Importantly, labour costs are not permitted to be included in business case calculations.

Disputes have arisen where employers have failed to adhere to national agreements and dispute resolution processes. Fórsa maintains that local government services must be delivered by local government workers. Strong, well-organised, and highly unionised workplaces are critical to resisting ongoing threats.

Remunicipalisation of waste

The remunicipalisation of waste services has remained a core objective of both the Municipal Employees division and the Local Government and Local Services division, as articulated through the More Power to You campaign.

Fórsa has played a central role in this campaign and was invited to provide expert testimony before the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action.

The Committee has since issued its final [report](#).

Of note is Recommendation 42, which states:

“The Committee recommends that the Department supports the establishment of a pilot scheme in Dublin City Local Authority to re-municipalise waste following Dublin City Council’s adoption of a cross-party composite motion calling for the re-municipalisation of household waste services in July 2019.”

This is a highly encouraging development and affirms Fórsa’s long-standing position that it is entirely feasible to insource household waste collection. The union believes that remunicipalising waste services is in the public interest - benefiting citizens, workers, and the environment - and that such services should be brought back under local authority control. Fórsa will continue to engage with campaign partners to determine the next strategic steps.

Fire services

The Fire Services National Oversight Implementation Group (FSNOIG) continues to operate. Fórsa represents firefighters and senior officers in Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB), as well as senior officers outside Dublin, on FSNOIG. The group agreed to separate the representation of retained and full-time firefighters. The retained firefighters’ subgroup is chaired by David Begg, and the full-time group by Kevin Duffy. Fórsa remains actively engaged in both forums, with

ongoing representation on issues including internal structural reviews within fire services.

Dublin Fire Brigade

Following intensive discussions at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), Fórsa and the unions representing workers in Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) reached a successful agreement to resolve a dispute over a new emergency dispatch system, averting planned industrial action.

The outcome follows extensive engagement with Dublin Fire Brigade management after members voted in favour of industrial action in September. The dispute arose in response to proposals to introduce a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system as part of the National Mobilisation and Communications (NMAC) project.

Concerns were raised by DFB members that the proposed system would apply to fire and rescue calls but not to ambulance calls. Members believed this partial implementation could result in unnecessary delays in the dispatch of DFB-operated ambulances, potentially impacting emergency response times and public safety.

Under the agreement reached at the WRC, there is a commitment to retain and expand the Dublin Fire Brigade emergency room control centre. This centre plays a critical role in managing fire and emergency calls for Dublin and the wider eastern region.

The agreement also provides for the appointment of an independent chair by the WRC to facilitate further high-level discussions between all stakeholders involved in the introduction of the NMAC system. This process is intended to ensure that outstanding issues are identified early and addressed through meaningful consultation.

The resolution highlights the importance of engaging with workers and their representatives when introducing significant operational changes. While DFB members did not oppose the introduction of a new national system, their concerns focused on ensuring it is implemented in a way that safeguards emergency response and public safety.

Water

Fórsa has been actively involved in ongoing negotiations with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), and Irish Water regarding the proposed transfer of 3,500 local authority water services staff to Uisce Éireann.

Before entering talks, Fórsa secured a ministerial commitment that no legal mechanisms would be used to force the transfer of staff. Despite this, documents later produced by Irish Water in November 2021 implied a full transfer of staffing responsibilities by 2026. Fórsa reiterated that talks had proceeded on the strict understanding that all transfers would be voluntary.

A significant breakthrough came with the Framework for the Future Delivery of Water Services, issued by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) in June 2022, which included the following commitments:

- No compulsory transfers of staff to Irish Water
- No compulsory redundancies
- Protection of existing pay, with the possibility of additional performance-based rewards
- Legal protection of existing pension benefits
- Retention or enhancement of existing conditions of employment
- €3,000 incentive payment for transferring staff
- Option to remain employed by the local authority
- Voluntary redundancy available
- Continued access to collective bargaining

Fórsa and the other unions continue to work through the 'Water Services Transformation' process, which remains in place until 31st December 2026. Members working in local authority water services may choose to be reassigned to other suitable roles within their local authority or transfer to Uisce Éireann.

The transition to the new water services model is now at an advanced stage. The majority of Fórsa members in water services have been successfully reassigned within Dublin City Council where requested.

Referendum on public ownership of water

The Government has publicly acknowledged that public ownership of water services reflects the will of the Irish people and is a fundamental principle in the transformation process.

While the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage has expressed support for a referendum on public ownership – potentially alongside a referendum on the right to housing –

no formal date has been announced. Fórsa and allied unions have consistently advocated for this referendum and remain disappointed at the Government's failure to honour its commitment.

[#KeepWaterPublic](#) [#NameTheDate](#)

Governance of Irish Water

Strong oversight and accountability mechanisms are essential to public ownership and are supported by both the Government and trade unions.

The Future of Local Government

The Minister has acknowledged concerns raised by trade unions regarding the evolving role of local authorities and the increasing outsourcing of services traditionally delivered in-house.

The Government's most recent policy document lacks substantive detail or meaningful commitment to the revitalisation of the sector. It falls short of presenting a bold vision for local democracy and service delivery. It's an opportunity missed to reimagine the future of local government.

In response, Fórsa continues to lead efforts through the reinvigoration of the More Power to You campaign.

Grievance and disciplinary

Agreement has been reached at the Local Authority National Council (LANC) to comprehensively overhaul grievance and disciplinary policies across all 31 city and county councils.

This marks a significant step towards the development of a single, sector-wide grievance and disciplinary policy for local government, to be negotiated collectively with trade unions. The aim is to ensure greater consistency, fairness and transparency in how such procedures are applied across the sector.

Since 2019, Fórsa has played a leading role in advocating for sector-wide approaches to grievance and disciplinary matters. The union has consistently highlighted the problems arising from the existence of 31 separate policies in a sector employing approximately 33,000 staff. This fragmented framework has resulted in inconsistent practices and poorer outcomes for workers, leaving local government out of alignment with the rest of the civil and public service.

Concerns have also been raised that many existing grievance and disciplinary policies were never formally agreed with trade unions, a situation that has disadvantaged workers and undermined the principles of collective bargaining.

Under the LANC agreement, management and unions will now work together to develop modern, fit-for-purpose policies that apply consistently across all local authorities. Collective bargaining will be central to this process.

Apprenticeships - Local Government sector

The union has been pushing the Department and the LGMA to improve the provision of apprenticeships in the sector. Data recently released confirmed that in 2025, the 31 city and county councils only managed to provide a total of 94 apprenticeship posts.

Workforce planning

Fórsa is actively engaged in the strategic workforce planning process. The union has secured significant concessions in national discussions with the Department to ensure the process is fair, open and transparent, creating the conditions in which management is required to negotiate with local branch representatives on staffing levels across the 31 city and county councils. Fórsa is pursuing a number of employers for non-adherence to the 'Strategic Workforce Planning Guidelines'. The overall process was due to be completed by Tuesday 31st March 2025; however, a number of local authorities have yet to complete the process fully.

Fórsa has continued to support branches through ongoing briefings to maximise staffing levels and ensure they are future-proofed.

At local level, Fórsa successfully concluded the strategic workforce planning process with Dublin City Council in Q3 2025. This agreement will deliver a significant increase in staffing numbers. It was further agreed with the chief executive that aligning staffing levels with population and business growth in Dublin city will remain a standing item for engagement. Staffing levels remain a key priority for the division and its members.

Neurodiversity

Following a motion passed at the divisional conference in May 2025, Fórsa tabled a claim seeking to establish a neurodiversity policy across the local government sector.

The claim was presented at the Local Authority National Council (LANC). Fórsa maintains that neurodiversity is a trade union issue and that the sector must engage to develop a policy that recognises the importance of equality and inclusion. The motion adopted at divisional conference mandates the union to pursue the introduction of a neurodiversity policy across the 31 city and county councils.

The union issued a guidance document developed through a collaborative effort between ICTU and Neuro Pride Ireland, alongside a wide range of contributors from neurodiversity representative organisations. AslAm delivered a presentation to the divisional council, supporting the union's ongoing work to deepen understanding and advance inclusion and equality across both the workplace and the union.

Local Democracy Taskforce

Fórsa wrote to James Brown following his appointment on Monday 27th January 2025, outlining the union's vision for strengthening local democracy and enhancing the provision of local services in Ireland. The correspondence also affirmed Fórsa's readiness to engage constructively with the work of the local democracy taskforce.

On Wednesday 4th June 2025, the Government approved the establishment of the taskforce, which is mandated to develop a programme for the reform and strengthening of local government. Its establishment was a key commitment in the Programme for Government.

Fórsa submitted a comprehensive response to the taskforce on Friday 29th August 2025. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage subsequently published all submissions on Sunday 6th October, including that of Fórsa. These are available [here](#).

At the time of conference preparation, Fórsa awaits the publication of the taskforce's recommendations to the Minister.

People strategy

The sector published a draft 'People Strategy 2026–2031'. Fórsa consulted widely across both the municipal employees' divisional executive committee and the local government and local services divisional executive committee, as well as branches and divisional staff.

Fórsa's submission was issued on Tuesday 18th March 2026. Key elements of the union's position include:

- **Staffing:** Local authorities must significantly increase staffing levels to ensure consistent and sustainable delivery of services to communities across Ireland.
- **Mentoring opportunities:** The strategy presents opportunities to develop mentoring structures. Fórsa is seeking to agree processes that add value for staff and support retention and recruitment.
- **AI:** The sector must negotiate an appropriate AI policy through the Local Authority National Council (LANC) to protect public services and workers, including implications for service delivery, workplace tools, and recruitment.
- **Job evaluation:** Fórsa welcomes progress to date but will seek to accelerate the rollout of a job evaluation scheme following learning from the pilot sites. Access to job evaluation is central to addressing recruitment and retention challenges.
- **Blended working:** The draft strategy prioritises business needs and performance metrics without sufficient protection for existing arrangements. Fórsa can demonstrate that blended working is a key factor in retention. Any rollback of arrangements risks unnecessary industrial tension.
- **Four-day working week:** The unions are seeking pilot programmes across the sector. Evidence from South Cambridgeshire District Council demonstrates significant improvements in recruitment, retention, performance and staff wellbeing following the introduction of a four-day week without loss of pay.
- **Performance monitoring risks:** Increased reliance on data-driven performance management may lead to heightened surveillance without appropriate safeguards. Fórsa requires further detail on protections and appeals mechanisms.
- **Health and safety:** Reports from members indicate a sharp increase in harassment and intimidation in public-facing roles. Fórsa is seeking a joint union-management working group to address this issue.
- **Workforce agility concerns:** Increased emphasis on mobility may lead to role dilution and restructuring without adequate consultation, which is unacceptable.
- **Transfer policy:** A standardised transfer policy, both within and between local authorities, is required to support recruitment, retention and work life balance.
- **Overtime:** Fórsa welcomes the revised overtime divisor but continues to seek the removal of unpaid overtime expectations. Failure to resolve this issue may lead to a dispute.
- **Recruitment standardisation:** While consistency has benefits, over-centralisation risks undermining local autonomy and industrial relations. Fórsa will seek to protect agreed recruitment processes and ensure appropriate union engagement, including within induction programmes. Recruitment panels should be trained to agreed minimum standards, including equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).
- **Upskilling:** The sector should agree with unions an ongoing voluntary skills audit to support personal development and career progression. This should include access to further education, structured development opportunities, and defined career pathways. Local authorities must provide opportunities for upskilling and incentivise key areas, including targets such as ensuring that 20% of recruits to the public sector are competent in the Irish language by 2030.
- **Resource gaps threaten delivery:** The strategy lacks funding commitments for additional HR staff, training, ICT upgrades and wellbeing initiatives. This risks work intensification and undermines delivery, leaving key commitments aspirational in the absence of dedicated resources.

- **Grievance and disciplinary:** Fórsa welcomes the agreement to negotiate a new sector-wide grievance and disciplinary policy. This must also incorporate dignity at work provisions. These matters should be fully reflected in the final People Strategy.
- **EDI and wellbeing:** While the strategy is broadly supportive of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing, it does not identify funding for reasonable accommodations, protections for staff with long-term illness, Long Covid, workload management, or EDI training. Fórsa is seeking a clear roadmap for EDI, including measures to increase the recruitment and retention of disabled workers, and to meet the 6% statutory employment target under the Government's National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030. The union has also tabled a claim for a dedicated neurodiversity policy, which should be reflected in the strategy.
- **Outsourcing:** Fórsa is seeking an end to the ongoing trend of outsourcing in local authorities. The provision of local services is a core public function. However, some local authorities continue to outsource a wide range of services, often without consultation with unions and in breach of national agreements. This has led to recurring industrial disputes. These developments occur despite successive public service agreements committing to the use of direct labour "where consistent with efficient and effective public service delivery."
- **Energy and climate:** Fórsa supports a strengthened role for local authorities in leading micro-generation and community ownership of renewable energy projects. International experience demonstrates that state-led investment and local democratic participation are essential to securing community buy-in and delivering effective climate transition. Local authorities also play a critical role in advancing energy efficiency measures. Additional dedicated staffing resources are required to support local authorities and communities in delivering a just and sustainable transition, and to meet Ireland's climate objectives.

Fórsa advised that it engaged in the draft consultation process in good faith, which must be reciprocated by the sector through meaningful commitment and collaboration. For the process to be credible, it must be more than a box-ticking exercise. All of the areas identified require dedicated and ringfenced resources, both financial and staffing.

Fórsa also requested that the 31 city and county councils undertake an annual confidential staff satisfaction survey, to be agreed in advance with unions. As part of the finalisation of the People Strategy, Fórsa considers that an independent equality impact assessment should be undertaken, with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission invited to provide an assessment and recommendations.

Industrial – other

Dublin City Council Caretaking Services

A high-level caretaking working group was established in Q2 2025 to modernise and enhance caretaking services within Dublin City Council. The group comprises senior housing management, HR representatives, Fórsa and SIPTU convenors, and union officials.

Engagement to date has been constructive, delivering improvements including increased access to machinery and significant enhancements to PPE. A new grounds maintenance sub-section is being established, which will increase staffing levels.

This review aligns with the broader taskforce work relating to Dublin city. Caretaking staff provide an essential frontline service to tenants, and the continued development and resourcing of this function remains a priority for Fórsa.

Dublin City Council Hugh Lane Gallery

Fórsa secured a number of significant gains for members in the Hugh Lane Gallery, including the introduction of a Sunday premium allowance with substantial retrospective payments, and the extension of shift allowances to officer grades in line with attendant grades.

In total, Fórsa secured approximately €100,000 in retrospective payments for members.

The gallery is scheduled to reopen as part of the Parnell Square Cultural Quarter. Fórsa is engaging with management regarding the associated increase in staffing requirements across all grades.

Dublin City Council waste services

Fórsa, alongside other trade unions, has lodged claims for increases to Sunday premium payments and night shift rates.

Bilateral discussions with waste management and Dublin City Council HR are ongoing, with engagement expected to intensify during Q2 2026.

Technological University Dublin

Progress on staffing issues at Technological University Dublin has been slow and protracted, with management citing significant financial constraints.

Local representatives have continued to advocate strongly for the development of career pathways for general operatives and porters, as well as the filling of vacant posts. Staffing remains the primary concern for members, and Fórsa will prioritise progress on this issue throughout 2026.

Dublin City Council Parks/Greening of Dublin City

Plans to pedestrianise and green parts of Dublin city, including areas such as Dame Street, will result in an expansion of responsibilities for parks staff.

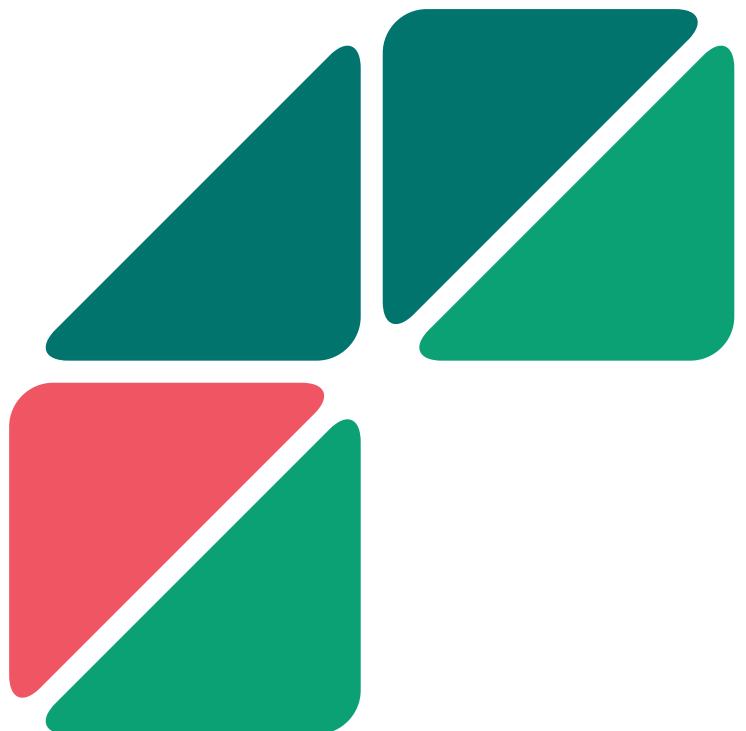
Fórsa is engaging with Dublin City Council Parks and HR to ensure that increased service demands are matched by appropriate staffing levels.

Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council

The proposed introduction of a new vehicle usage policy in Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council has raised significant concerns. Local representatives are actively engaging with management, and further discussions are planned to address necessary amendments to the policy.

Coolmine Sports and Leisure Centre

Claims have been lodged across all grades in Coolmine Sports and Leisure Centre, drawing on relevant public service agreements. Engagement with centre management and the Coolmine Community College management board is expected to commence in the coming period.





Services and Enterprises division

report 2024-2026

Services and Enterprises Division



Services and Enterprises Divisional Executive Committee (DEC).

Executive summary

This section outlines the principal developments since the 2024 national report. The Aer Lingus IALPA pilots' dispute concluded with a Labour Court recommendation providing staged increases to mid-2026 and introducing a unified 'one pilot, one contract' structure, which continues to inform aviation bargaining.

Recognition advances in aviation included the establishment of structured engagement and industrial relations mechanisms at Emerald Airlines, ASL and 2Excel. Outside aviation, driver testers in the Road Safety Authority secured a comprehensive indemnity and insurance agreement following escalation, providing formal coverage and a pathway to access the Irish Motor Insurance Database.

Divisional membership continues to grow, with almost 7,500 members, representing an increase of approximately 12%.

Organisation

Since the 2024 national report, the division has advanced key industrial and organisational priorities across aviation, cultural institutions, non-commercial semi-state agencies, community employment schemes, and commercial and private bodies.

The 2025 divisional conference period was marked by high levels of activity, with 2026 focused on implementation and escalation where required. This report captures developments over the period, with particular emphasis on areas of new progress, escalation, or implementation.

Divisional strategy

Phase 1 of the divisional strategy – organising to build a stronger and more effective union – remained central. Work progressed across four focus areas:

1. An integrated organising pilot at the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), aligning organising, industrial strategy and communications
2. Improved data and mapping to support communications and density building
3. A standardised approach to organising, communication and delivery
4. Support for branch development

Priorities for 2026 included the A Better Deal campaign, pay campaigns, the protection of hybrid and remote working arrangements, and the advancement of recognition.

Divisional Executive Committee (DEC)

The following activists were elected to the Fórsa Services and Enterprises divisional executive committee at the 2025 divisional conference, or were subsequently co-opted:

Leonard Sheils (An Post), chairperson; Daniel Langan (IALPA), vice chair; Jake Allen (Cabin Crew), third divisional representative on the National Executive Committee (NEC); Mitchell Brophy (RSA Professional); Cormac Craven (Marine New branch); Mark Masterson (An Coimisiún Pleanála); Geraldine Hickey (IAA executive grades); Ken Nolan (CE Supervisors); Ciaran Kissane (State Enterprises No.1); James O’Loughlin (ATO); Sinead Cronin (Coillte); Andy Mullins (ATC); Brian Morris (Health and Safety Authority); Owen Kelly (IALPA); Ian Patel (Eir executive grades).

Staffing

Hazel Nolan is head of division, supported by Carol Foster as senior personal assistant.

Industrial and organising support is provided by Lisa Connell, Ruairí Creaney, David Field, Eugene Gargan, Deirdre O’Connell and Jim Sheridan. Administrative support is provided by Sarah Creane and Michelle Burchael.

A number of staff changes took place during the period:

- Jennifer McKenna moved from administrative support to the human resources department in March 2025
- Eileen Smith moved from cabin crew organiser to another divisional team in September 2025
- Katie Morgan moved from head of division to deputy general secretary (operations) in February 2026
- Sarah Wyer left her role as IALPA administrator in 2025

The division wishes all colleagues well in their new roles.

Aviation

Fórsa represents members across airlines, airports, aviation regulation and aviation-related services in Ireland.

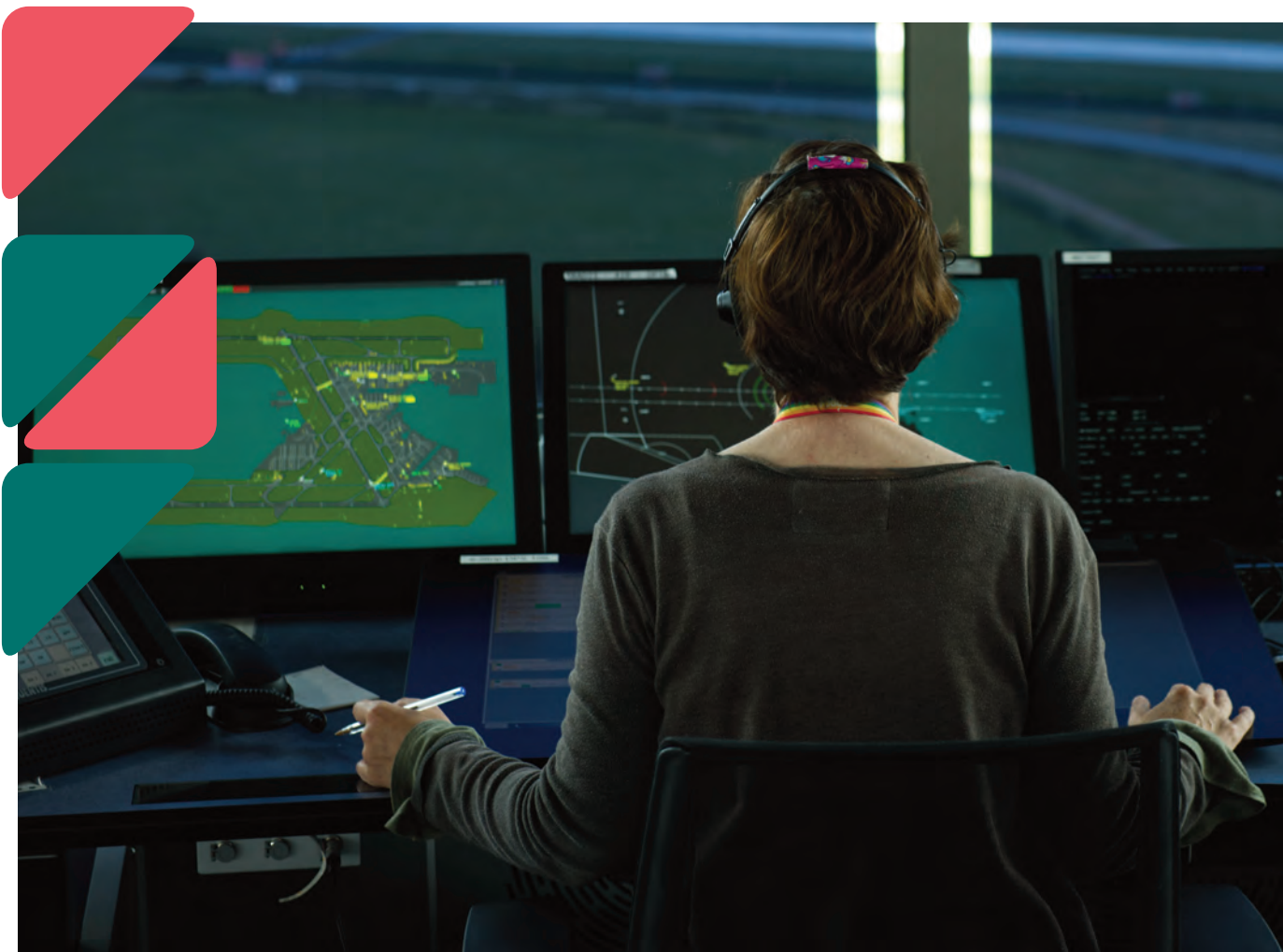
Fórsa aviation sub-group

The division maintains an aviation sub-group, comprising the national secretary, officials assigned to aviation, and divisional executive representatives from aviation branches. The group meets regularly to focus on protecting employment within the sector and to support the development of campaign initiatives.

IAA aviation stakeholders forum

In 2023, pursuant to Article 76 of the Air Navigation and Transport Act 2022 (40 of 2022), the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) established the Aviation Stakeholders Forum to support the maintenance and improvement of aviation safety and to promote a positive safety culture.

The forum provides an opportunity for civil aviation stakeholders to engage on matters of mutual concern. Fórsa is represented by the national secretary and elected representatives from aviation branches.



Aviation employments

Dublin Airport Authority

Fórsa negotiated pay increases of 4% from March 2024, 3% from March 2025 and 3% from March 2026. The IAESA branch continues to pursue collective bargaining rights for members, with progress being made under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).

Shannon Airport Group

The WRC conciliation service is currently facilitating negotiations on a successor to the 2023 pay agreement, which expired at the end of 2025.

Irish Aviation Authority (IAA)

Collective labour agreement negotiations commenced in 2024 and were referred to the IAA Internal Disputes Resolution Board (IDRB).

An enhanced agreement was secured, providing for:

- A 6% pay increase over two years
- Removal of incremental points on scales
- An additional 1% for administrative staff at the top of scale
- Pay progression improvements for safety grades
- A €500 lump sum for a defined cohort of members.

The agreement was unanimously accepted by members in a ballot.

Discussions continue regarding the introduction of a job evaluation scheme for administrative members. At the time of writing, the terms of reference for this process have not yet been finalised.

In the air safety area, the union opposed proposed changes to the recording of hours worked while members were travelling abroad to perform their duties. A compromise acceptable to members was subsequently reached.

AirNav Ireland

In 2024, negotiations concluded on a new collective labour agreement (CLA) covering the period January 2025 to December 2029. The agreement provides for pay increases of 17.1% (compounded) over four years, including a minimum increase of €1,200 for lower-paid workers.

Under sectoral bargaining provisions, the outcome will be applied from the first full pay period in 2025. A number of allowances, including standby and call-in payments, will attract general round increases of up to 3% per annum over the lifetime of the agreement.

A review mechanism is included to protect the value of the pay increases. The agreement also accelerates progression by removing two incremental points from most pay scales. A once-off payment of €900 will be applied to all pay scales in September 2025.

Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) also secured improvements, including revised salary scales, increased rates for student controllers, and an enhanced two-year call-in scheme.

Staff shortages within the ATC grade continue to raise fatigue and health and safety concerns. The removal of additional payments for ad hoc overtime in December 2025 has exacerbated these issues. Retention remains a key concern. Fórsa has referred these matters to the Internal Disputes Resolution Board (IDRB).

Bristow (Coast Guard helimed and SAR services)

Bristow Ireland Limited (BIL) has assumed full responsibility for helicopter operations, with CHC withdrawing from Coast Guard activity.

A pay agreement concluded in 2023 provides for a 10.25% increase over the lifetime of the agreement, including 2.5% backdated to January 2022, alongside improvements to pension provisions. The agreement remains in place until the end of 2026.

The transfer of employment from CHC to BIL gave rise to several industrial relations issues, particularly in relation to terms and conditions. A key issue is the use of "factoring", whereby standby hours are only partially recorded. This has implications for Flight Time Limitations (FTLs) and the availability of members for rostered duties.

These and related matters were presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport in December 2025.

IALPA (Coast Guard SAR)

Search and Rescue (SAR) pilots secured improvements to pay and conditions following their transfer from CHC to Bristow. The transfer of SAR operations was completed in February 2026.

The current CLA expires in March 2027, with negotiations for a successor agreement scheduled to commence later in 2026.

Aer Lingus

IALPA

In summer 2024, IALPA members engaged in a significant industrial dispute, including eight hours of strike action and a two-week period of industrial action.

The dispute concluded following acceptance of a Labour Court recommendation providing for pay increases of 17.75% across a series of phased adjustments:

- 2% from 1st January 2023
- 1.75% from 1st July 2023
- 2% from 1st October 2023
- 3.5% from 1st January 2024
- 1.5% from 1st October 2024
- 3% from 1st January 2025
- 3% from 1st January 2026
- 1% from 1st July 2026

This equates to a cumulative increase of 19.2% between January 2023 and July 2026.

The recommendation also provided for improvements including a 15% increase in overnight allowances. The union also secured the principle of 'one pilot, one contract', bringing all Aer Lingus pilots onto a unified pay structure. As a result, newer pilots benefited from additional increases of up to 10% above the general pay terms.

In November 2024, IALPA secured equal pay and conditions for pilots during pregnancy, following a campaign by the IALPA Female Working Group. This ensures that pilots assigned to ground duties during pregnancy retain access to variable pay.

Cabin crew

Pay negotiations took place during 2024 and 2025 under the existing Group of Unions agreement. The agreement covering 2023–2025 included additional pay improvements in 2024, comprising a 1.5% consolidated increase and a further 1.5% or €50 (whichever was greater) as an unconsolidated payment in November 2024.

In 2025, management proposed extending the agreement into 2026. A 4% offer linked to efficiency measures was rejected by members, with 97.8% voting against the proposal.

Following further engagement, management withdrew the proposed efficiencies and tabled a revised 4% offer for 2026. This was also rejected by members, with 98.1% voting against the proposal on the basis that it was insufficient.

Further discussions took place in early 2026. An initial meeting was held in February, followed by a further meeting in March. The matter remains ongoing.

Progress was also made on a number of industrial issues, including agreements on PY arrangements, the introduction of new onboard services and routes, and revised compensation structures.

Ryanair

IALPA

Membership and organisational capacity within Ryanair continue to grow in advance of collective labour agreement negotiations scheduled for later in 2026.

Cabin crew

Work during the period focused on strengthening representation, organisation and engagement among Fórsa members.

Key developments included:

- Securing release arrangements for workplace representatives
- Ensuring adherence to fair procedures in disciplinary and HR processes
- Representing members in complex casework

Fórsa also participated in the establishment and ongoing development of the Ryanair European Works Council, strengthening worker representation at European level.

Membership growth was supported through improved onboarding processes, structured engagement with members, and strengthened branch organisation. Fórsa also participated in ETF Ryanair transnational aviation network (TAN) and aviation forum meetings.

Engagement structures with management were maintained, including agreed meeting formats and regular dialogue on operational and industrial matters. Preparatory work for upcoming pay negotiations is ongoing. Fórsa also contributed to broader aviation policy discussions, ensuring that issues affecting Ryanair workers were reflected in national forums.

Emerald Airlines

IALPA

In December 2025, IALPA members voted to reject a management proposal to amend the existing collective labour agreement (CLA). The proposal was rejected as it would have disproportionately benefited a narrow cohort of staff and included a reduction in paid sick leave entitlements. It also proposed extending the current agreement to 2030.

The current CLA expires in March 2027, with negotiations for a successor agreement scheduled to commence before the end of 2026.

Cabin crew

During the reporting period, progress was made in strengthening Fórsa's engagement with Emerald Airlines. This included ongoing support for members through casework and participation in internal investigation processes, alongside continued efforts to stabilise and grow membership within the airline.

Recruitment materials were developed to support organising activity, and Fórsa initiated formal engagement with management to pursue union recognition and establish a structured industrial relations framework.

Progress was also made on pay and conditions through the development of the Dublin-based cabin crew pay agreement for 2026, which introduces defined pay scales, incremental progression, and additional payments. These developments represent a strengthening of representation and organisational capacity within the airline.



Aer Lingus women pilots, members of IALPA.

IAESA

Membership across management and office-based grades in Emerald Airlines has continued to grow, with Fórsa providing ongoing local representation and support to members.

ASL Airlines

IALPA

IALPA secured union recognition at ASL Airlines following the service of notice for industrial action in December 2025. Union representatives are now engaged in negotiations on the first collective labour agreement covering pilots' pay, terms and conditions.

2Excel

IALPA

IALPA has secured union recognition at 2Excel and is currently engaged in negotiations with management on a collective labour agreement covering pilots' pay, terms and conditions.

Fly4

IALPA

IALPA continues to build membership and organisational capacity within Fly4.

Non-commercial state agencies

An Coimisiún Pleanála

A number of industrial relations issues were progressed through sustained engagement during the reporting period. Remote working arrangements remained a central issue, with individual cases pursued to protect existing arrangements, while broader engagement took place on probation processes, resulting in strengthened and more consistent application of procedures.

Engagement also took place on the organisation's disciplinary policy, resulting in clearer procedural safeguards and improved protections for members. Within the Inspectorate, the union responded to management proposals to introduce new performance metrics and monthly reporting requirements under a "forecasting and appraising" framework. The union issued a directive of non-cooperation, and this was fully observed by

members. This collective position secured full consultation with the union and prevented unilateral implementation. Discussions are ongoing, with a revised proposal expected for consideration.

Coimisiún na Meán

Following the establishment of Coimisiún na Meán, members transferred from the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) into the new organisation. Fórsa secured the retention of existing terms and conditions and agreed an industrial relations forum to address staff issues.

The recruitment of additional staff has contributed to a significant increase in union membership within the organisation.

Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU)

The Energy Safety Inspectorate has engaged locally on issues relating to pay disparity. Organisational change is ongoing within the CRU, with the union engaging to ensure that members' terms and conditions are protected.

Fórsa is also representing a group of inspectors in relation to indemnity arrangements associated with their duties.

Fáilte Ireland

In 2024, the union and management reached agreement on the resolution of Sunday premium payments. However, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform did not approve implementation of the agreement. The matter has been referred to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).

Health and Safety Authority (HSA)

Since 2022, members in the HSA inspectorate have been in dispute regarding a proposed pilot scheme for out-of-hours work. Fórsa's position is that the level of remuneration proposed is insufficient, alongside a number of additional concerns identified by members.

Management has revised its proposal and submitted it to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Fórsa is awaiting a response. A pilot scheme is currently being implemented on a voluntary basis, with a review scheduled for May 2026. Management has indicated that new entrants to affected grades may be required to participate in out-of-hours work. This position is being challenged by Fórsa, with a hearing scheduled at the WRC in April 2026.

Members in the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) section of the HSA are also engaged in a WRC process concerning workload and caseload issues.

Institute of Public Administration (IPA)

A restructuring process is ongoing within the IPA, with Fórsa engaging to address issues arising for members. The union participated in a job evaluation process which resulted in upgrades for a number of members. Discussions are ongoing in relation to a small number of outstanding cases. Fórsa continues to meet regularly with IPA HR management to address issues affecting members.

Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA)

Membership within IMMA continues to grow. Issues relating to senior leadership restructuring and pay disparities at senior level remain ongoing. The matter is currently before the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), with Fórsa seeking a resolution. Progress is dependent on approval from the parent department, the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport.

Marine Institute

A dispute relating to seagoing days for laboratory analyst members has been referred to the WRC. While some progress has been made, the matter remains unresolved. The union has also raised concerns regarding the use of fixed-purpose and fixed-term contracts.

Management has engaged external consultants (Mazars) to review the organisation's structure, and the Marine Institute is currently in the process of addressing staffing issues following a strategic review. Fórsa's position is that this process should contribute to resolving outstanding staffing issues. Several local issues, including role descriptions and salary placement for staff moving between roles, continue to be addressed through the local industrial relations forum.

National Concert Hall (NCH)

Membership within the National Concert Hall continues to grow.

The WRC advisory service is currently chairing the group of unions within the organisation, comprising Fórsa, SIPTU and Connect. Engagement has presented some initial challenges, but progress is being made in advancing the agreed agenda.

A key issue for Fórsa remains the need for meaningful negotiation and consultation prior to organisational change, including before the advertisement of posts. This is particularly relevant in the context of planned redevelopment within the NCH.

National Library of Ireland (NLI)

An ongoing legacy issue affecting Library Assistant Grade I staff remains unresolved. Management supports the correction of the relevant pay scale; however, approval is required from the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform.

The issue arises from the discontinuation of the staff officer (SO) grade, with affected staff not transferred to the executive officer (EO) scale at the time.

The matter has been raised with the non-commercial state agencies oversight body. Fórsa is awaiting a response from the parent department regarding a resolution.

Local Fórsa representatives meet regularly with HR, improving communication between management and staff.

National Museum of Ireland (NMI)

Membership within the NMI continues to grow.

Engagement between Fórsa and management is regular and structured, with clear processes for addressing collective issues and escalation to the museum council where required.

A key outstanding issue relates to a business case arising from the consolidation process for visitor services officers (VSOs), specifically the deputy front of house officer (DFO) grade.

A report was carried out by Sean McHugh, involving consultation with affected staff and identifying the pay scale (EO) at which the DFO grade should be remunerated. A business case was submitted to the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport. At the time of writing, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform has not approved the proposal and has queried the basis for the grading.

Fórsa has made clear that this is not a formal job evaluation outcome, but a benchmarking exercise undertaken collaboratively with staff. The situation remains unresolved, with members performing duties at this level without appropriate remuneration. Fórsa has advised that this position is not sustainable. A meeting is scheduled with management to determine next steps.

Separately, in March 2026 the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media of Ireland, Patrick O'Donovan, announced the establishment of a new museum in Limerick under the remit of the NMI, including a national women's museum. Given existing resourcing pressures, a general meeting of members has been convened to discuss the implications. Further engagement with management will follow.

Personal Injuries Resolution Board

A dispute has arisen in relation to unilateral changes to the blended working policy. The matter has been referred to the WRC and is currently subject to local-level discussions under its auspices. Fórsa and the AHCPs consider that a workable draft policy has been developed and plan to engage with members in advance of finalisation. Local joint consultative committee (JCC) engagement on other matters is ongoing.

Road Safety Authority (RSA)

Insurance and indemnity dispute

Fórsa secured a significant outcome in February 2026 following notice of industrial action. The dispute arose due to the absence of full indemnity for driver testers involved in incidents with uninsured vehicles. The union sought comprehensive indemnity coverage and improved insurance verification procedures.

Members voted 95% in favour of industrial action, with an 85% turnout. Strike action was scheduled for 20th February. Prior to the planned action, the union secured agreement on its core demands. The agreement provides for:

- Changes to operating procedures to allow staff to verify insurance
- Formal confirmation of full indemnity for driver testers
- Clearer guidance on post-incident procedures.

It also includes a project plan to provide access to the Irish Motor Insurance Database, with implementation targeted within nine months of the necessary regulatory changes. Fórsa representatives will participate in a working group overseeing delivery of this commitment.



Driver testers dispute at Road Safety Authority (RSA).

End of temporary employment

Fórsa members led a campaign to secure permanent employment within driver testing services.

In September 2024, it was announced that 70 additional permanent driver tester posts would be created. As of February 2025, all RSA driver testers are now employed on a permanent basis for the first time in almost a decade.

Travel and subsistence dispute

A dispute arose following unilateral changes to the travel and subsistence policy. Fórsa issued a directive instructing members not to apply the revised arrangements.

The dispute concluded in February 2025 following acceptance of an agreed resolution between the parties.

Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)

Unilateral changes to established rostering arrangements, in breach of the Atypical Working Agreement, were referred to the WRC. The matter is currently in abeyance.

Members have raised concerns regarding a reduction in flexibility in working arrangements, including the impact on remote working and work-life balance. Issues affecting members include family-related arrangements and broader health considerations.

The introduction of mobile clocking-in systems has increased monitoring of working time but has not been accompanied by access to flexitime arrangements for remote workers.

Concerns have also been raised regarding role erosion and the lack of transparency in internal job evaluation processes, including the apparent non-application of the national job evaluation scheme.

Special EU Programmes Body

Fórsa, in conjunction with NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance), has negotiated an industrial relations agreement with management.

Teagasc

The former Teagasc general and professional branches have merged to form a single branch, strengthening representation and coherence in engagement with management.

Several legacy issues affecting grades including staff officer, college administrators, regional managers and assistant and principal grades are being progressed through the WRC conciliation service, the non-commercial state agencies oversight body, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform. Some issues are being progressed jointly with SIPTU.

At the end of 2025, Teagasc received revised budgetary parameters from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Public Expenditure. Ongoing engagement with senior management is taking place in relation to the implications, including potential restructuring and changes to work practices.

Commercial bodies

An Post

The final phase of a two-year pay agreement was implemented in 2025, providing increases of 3% in January and 1% in June. The agreement has now expired and negotiations on a successor agreement are due to commence.

Supervisory and management grades received market movement pay adjustments. Outstanding discrepancies are being pursued with the company and through the Labour Court-appointed monitoring group.

A further point on the clerical scale was secured through the consolidation of a 2.5% productivity allowance into core pay.

The triennial review of the pension fund restored 100% pensionability of pay and provided for a 7% increase for pensioners, while employer contributions remained at the previously agreed rate. Although the fund remains stable, removal or increase of the agreed 2% contribution cap would affect sustainability at this stage.

Engagement with HR improved during 2025 following a period of limited interaction. Issues relating to term-time conditions have been raised, with the union seeking restoration and improvement through a review process in 2026.

Coillte

A collective labour agreement concluded in 2024, providing for pay increases through to 2028, was accepted by members.

The agreement provides for higher increases for lower-paid grades, alongside annual percentage increases and lump sum payments across the workforce.

Drogheda Port Company

A 30-month pay agreement was concluded, providing for increases of 4% from January 2025, 3% from January 2026, and 3% from January 2027. Negotiations have commenced with East Terminals (a sister company of Drogheda Port Co.), with discussions expected to conclude during 2026.

Uisce Éireann

Membership continues to grow within Uisce Éireann.

Fórsa, alongside other unions, negotiated a three-year pay agreement covering the period 1st January 2026 to 31st December 2028. Key elements include:

- Pay progression totalling 9% over the lifetime of the agreement (3% annually)
- Annual range refresh across all grades
- Continuation of the performance-related, market-based pay model
- Retention of performance-related awards, with revised provisions for retiring staff

The R2000 agreement has been updated and is now known as the R2025 agreement, incorporating provisions relating to staffing levels, overtime and on-call arrangements.

P&O Maritime

A collective labour agreement was accepted by members, providing for pay increases of 4.2% in 2025, 3.2% in 2026 and 2.5% in 2027.

Pobal

Fórsa is engaged in a campaign to secure improved pay for workers in the Better Start (Pobal's early years' service), reflecting the skills and responsibilities associated with these roles.

A dispute arose following the failure to implement agreed pay increases and to engage on issues relating to the role. Following a ballot, members commenced work-to-rule action in September 2025, which escalated in November.

Engagement at the WRC in December resulted in proposals including:

- An additional day of annual leave
- Full backdating of outstanding pay
- An independent evaluation of the role
- Union participation in induction processes
- A structured industrial relations process chaired independently

These proposals were accepted unanimously by members. The evaluation process is expected to commence in March.

Oberstown Children's Detention Centre

Oberstown transferred from the Health and Welfare division to the Services and Enterprises division during the period.

Membership has increased and the union issued a safe staffing instruction following engagement at the WRC and at local level. The matter has been referred back to the WRC, with a further hearing pending.

A key emerging issue is the planned increase in bed capacity, which presents immediate operational challenges in the absence of adequate staffing and resources. The union continues to engage on this issue.

Other employments

Barristers

Fórsa has commenced organising among state-funded criminal law barristers.

Community employment supervisors

Members accepted a pay proposal arising from a review of funding arrangements under a WRC agreement. The agreement provides for:

- A 2% increase in basic pay from 6th April 2026
- A further 2% increase from 1st November 2026

The increases apply to supervisors and assistant supervisors across the CE, Tús, RSS and JI programmes. The Department of Social Protection has agreed to reconvene in 2026 to review additional matters relating to pay scales and long service increments.

Eir

A pay agreement concluded in 2024 provides for increases over three years, including:

- 6.5% for lower-paid employees in year one
- 11% for employees earning up to €50,000
- 10% for employees earning up to €70,000

The branch continues to engage with management on making Sunday premium payments pensionable.

Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA)

Fórsa has secured pay increases of 5% in 2023 and 3% in 2024. Work is ongoing to increase membership and to establish a formal recognition agreement within the organisation.

Local employment services (LES)

Fórsa and SIPTU have jointly campaigned to protect local employment services and job clubs in response to the Government's tendering process. Engagement continues with employers and the Irish Local Development Network to mitigate job losses and protect services.

Premier Lotteries Ireland (PLI)

Members accepted a pay agreement providing for a 7% increase over two years.

An issue arising from the non-application of increases to allowances was subsequently resolved.

Fórsa is engaged at the WRC in relation to a field sales restructuring process and the unilateral introduction of performance management arrangements for certain staff.

The union is also working with French union counterparts within FDJ to establish a European Works Council, with support from Syndex.

Vodafone

The performance bonus system remains in place. Fórsa and the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) continue to engage with the company on cost-of-living issues within the framework of the current pay agreement.

Appendices



Appendix I: Financial statements

Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	33,043,511	30,326,631
Rental income		497,967	508,134
Interest on deposits, government stocks and dividend income		1,466,584	1,019,984
Gain on disposal of fixed assets		36,634	
Gain on disposal of investment properties		428,000	
Fair value gain on investments		1,459,501	1,888,603
(Loss)/ gain on disposal of investments		(87,355)	351,688
Other income		67,555	161,407
		36,912,397	34,256,447
Expenditure			
General and other administration expenditure		(30,322,982)	(27,415,961)
Surplus for the year before tax	6	6,589,415	6,840,486
Tax	8	(71,612)	(304,751)
Surplus for the year after tax		6,517,803	6,535,735

Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Surplus for the year after tax		6,517,803	6,535,735
Remeasurement of defined benefit plans	16	(1,643,000)	2,038,000
Fixed assets revaluation gain/(loss)	9	84,367	(1,029,528)
Total comprehensive income for the year		4,959,170	7,544,207

General Fund

Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	24,828,083	22,611,205
Investment income			
Interest on deposits, government stocks, and dividend income		192,257	233,587
Fair value gain on investments		30,464	49,187
Other income		381	541
		25,051,185	22,894,520
Expenditure			
Administration, establishment, and general expenses		(22,234,248)	(20,591,227)
Net other finance income	5	697,000	559,000
Depreciation on office equipment	9	(275,450)	(276,637)
Amortisation of intangible assets	10	(215,176)	(215,176)
		(22,027,874)	(20,524,040)
Surplus for the year before tax	6	3,023,311	2,370,480
Tax	8	(52,484)	(30,958)
Surplus for the year after tax		2,970,827	2,339,522

General Fund

Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Surplus for the year after tax		2,970,827	2,339,522
Remeasurement of defined benefit plans	16	(1,643,000)	2,038,000
Total comprehensive income for the year		1,327,827	4,377,522

Developing World Fund
Statement of income and expenditure
For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	929,912	846,677
Expenditure			
Projects		(771,342)	(653,333)
Surplus for the year before tax		158,570	193,344
Tax		-	-
Surplus for the year after tax		158,570	193,344

Developing World Fund
Statement of total comprehensive income
For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Surplus for the year after tax		158,570	193,344
Total comprehensive income for the year		158,570	193,344

Contingency Fund

Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	1,549,854	1,411,128
Investment income			
Interest on deposits, government stocks, and dividend income		1,244,568	766,191
(Loss)/gain on disposal of investments		(87,355)	351,688
Fair value gain on investments		1,429,037	1,839,418
Rental income		497,967	508,134
Gain on disposal of fixed assets		36,634	
Gain on disposal of investment properties		428,000	
		5,098,705	4,876,559
Expenditure			
Investment consultancy fees		(85,183)	(133,512)
Depreciation on buildings and refurbishment	9	(788,431)	(798,722)
Legal costs of disputes		(42,960)	10,755
Property management charges		(102,818)	(68,838)
Impairment loss on fixed assets and investment properties		(781,068)	(606,354)
Strike pay		(877,641)	
		(2,678,101)	(1,596,671)
Surplus for the year before tax	6	2,420,604	3,279,888
Tax	8	(19,128)	(268,291)
Surplus for the year after tax		2,401,476	3,011,597

Contingency Fund

Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Surplus for the year after tax		2,401,476	3,011,597
Fixed assets revaluation gain (loss)	9	84,367	(1,029,528)
Total comprehensive income for the year		2,485,843	1,982,069

Benefit Fund

Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	565,590	634,441
Investment income		29,759	20,206
		595,349	654,647
Expenditure			
Benefit expenses		(301,973)	(257,202)
Overhead expenses		(45,738)	(43,683)
		(347,711)	(300,885)
Surplus for the year before tax		247,638	353,762
Tax			
Surplus for the year after tax		247,638	353,762

Benefit Fund

Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Surplus for the year after tax		247,638	353,762
Total comprehensive income for the year		247,638	353,762

Branch Fund

Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	5,170,072	4,823,180
Investment and other income		67,174	160,864
		5,237,246	4,984,044
Expenditure			
Administration and general expenses		(4,497,954)	(4,341,032)
Surplus for the year before tax		739,292	643,012
Tax	8	-	(5,502)
Surplus for the year after tax		739,292	637,510

Branch Fund

Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Surplus for the year after tax		739,292	637,510
Total comprehensive income for the year		739,292	637,510

Statement of financial position

As at 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Non-current assets			
Tangible fixed assets	9	14,087,091	14,773,744
Investment properties	9	5,610,000	6,765,000
Intangible assets	10	324,264	539,440
Investments	11	54,286,446	48,860,664
Pension asset - net	16	19,006,629	19,690,629
		93,314,430	90,629,477
Current assets			
Investments	11	3,339,871	3,675,842
Debtors	12	4,416,845	6,595,650
Cash and cash equivalents	13	42,137,979	37,066,582
		49,894,695	47,338,074
Current liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	(1,740,576)	(1,444,278)
Net current assets		48,154,119	45,893,796
Total assets less current liabilities		141,468,549	136,523,273
Provision for liabilities and charges	15	(377,419)	(391,313)
Net assets		141,091,130	136,131,960
Funds			
Accumulated funds excluding other reserves		127,636,790	121,118,987
Other reserves:			
Remeasurement of defined benefit plans		12,850,000	14,493,000
Revaluation reserve		604,340	519,973
Total fund balances		141,091,130	136,131,960

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	2025 €	2024 €
Surplus for the year before tax		6,589,415	6,840,486
Non cash adjustments			
Interest and dividend income		(1,466,584)	(1,019,984)
Fair value adjustment on investments	11	(1,459,501)	(1,888,603)
Fair value decrease/(increase) on investment properties	9	583,000	(55,000)
Impairment loss on fixed assets	9	198,068	661,556
Depreciation of property and equipment	9	1,063,881	1,075,359
Amortisation of intangible assets	10	215,176	215,176
Loss on disposal of investments	11	87,355	
Gain on disposal of fixed assets	9	(36,634)	
Gain on disposal of investment properties	9	(428,000)	
Changes in defined benefit pensions	16	(959,000)	(1,111,000)
Movement in provisions	15	(13,894)	(338,640)
Total non-cash adjustments		(2,216,133)	(2,812,824)
Net changes in working capital			
Decrease/(increase) in debtors		2,375,249	(3,541,877)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors		296,298	(496,308)
Net changes in working capital		2,671,547	(4,038,185)
Income taxes paid		(268,056)	(305,663)
Net cash generated from (used in) operating activities		6,776,773	(316,186)
Investing activities			
Purchase of property and equipment	9	(654,295)	(878,444)
Purchase of intangible assets	10	-	(180,761)
Purchase of investments	11	(8,548,837)	(10,970,341)
Proceeds from sale of investments		4,831,172	4,604,111
Proceeds from sale of fixed assets and investment properties	9	1,200,000	4,100,000
Interest and dividends received		1,466,584	1,019,984
Net cash used in investing activities		(1,705,376)	(2,305,451)
Net change in cash and cash equivalents		5,071,397	(2,621,637)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January	13	37,066,582	39,688,219
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December	13	42,137,979	37,066,582



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