

Frequently Asked Questions for Fórsa members of the **Local Government** and **Local Services division**

What should I do during the industrial action?

A detailed union instruction has issued to members of the Local Government and Local Services division. It outlines the work to rule and non-cooperation actions you should follow as part of this industrial action. It is very important that you are familiar with the instruction and understand it.

This FAQ is a guide to help with general queries and will be updated as a live document over the coming weeks.

If a manager asks you to carry out any task or action covered by the withdrawal instruction, explain that you are following the union instruction and that the matter should be raised at national level.

What does this FAQ document cover?

This document covers questions asked to date about the work to rule industrial action that starts on Wednesday 30th September 2026.

What is a work to rule?

There are many forms of industrial action. A work to rule is when a worker strictly adheres to the terms of their contract, and adheres strictly to their contracted hours or roster.

This means you should withdraw any goodwill to perform overtime and you should not undertake any unscheduled or unrostered overtime.

You must also only perform the duties associated with your grade and your role.

What about a vacant post?

Do not cover a vacant post.

NO cover is to be provided for a vacant post e.g. cover for maternity leave, retirement, career breaks, long term sick leave. If you are asked to do so you should advise your manager that you are following the union instruction.



What should I do if my manager asks me to carry out a task that is covered by the industrial action instruction?

If you are instructed to undertake a task that is covered by the current Fórsa industrial action instruction, you should advise your manager that you are unable to do so as you are complying with the union's lawful industrial action. Any request for an exemption or exception should be progressed through the agreed industrial relations and derogation process.

You can use this wording to respond to management:

'I am unable to undertake this task as it is currently covered by the Fórsa industrial action instruction. If management considers that an exception is required, the matter should be referred through the agreed derogation process.'

What is a derogation?

A derogation means that a certain type of work, or worker, is exempt from the union instruction. Usually these are only granted when maintaining the industrial action could have life threatening consequences.

The employer must request a derogation, which will be assessed by the National Executive Committee (NEC), and the NEC will determine whether a derogation should be granted or not.

If a member is on annual leave, should I cover the position?

Members can provide support and cover as normal when a colleague is on annual leave and/or short-term sick leave.

I am in receipt of a temporary higher appointment, should I continue to carry out the duties of a higher grade?

If you are in receipt of a temporary higher appointment you should continue to carry out your role and responsibilities associated with your post.

If you are not in receipt of a temporary higher appointment then you should not carry out the role, responsibilities or functions of a post of a higher grade. If you are asked to do so you should refuse and advise your manager that you are following the union instruction.

Do I carry on with my regular rostered overtime?

Yes, members who carry out regular rostered overtime should continue to do so. Overtime that is required to cover a vacant post should stop.



What about flexitime?

The intention of the union instruction is not to penalise members who operate alternative start and finish times within approved flexible working arrangements. Rather, the focus is on withdrawing discretionary flexibility, which assists the employer in meeting operational requirements, deadlines or project demands.

Members should continue to attend work and perform their normal duties. The union instruction is aimed at preventing the provision of additional flexibility and goodwill that would undermine the effectiveness of the industrial action.

Can I continue to accrue TOIL?

No. The union instruction to work strictly to your scheduled hours means that you cannot accrue TOIL, or perform overtime, unless this is part of an already agreed roster.

What constitutes an external agency?

A private company or entity being engaged by the local authority to undertake work on its behalf or with you, such as consultancies or external service providers. It also includes external organisations like:

- Local Government Management Agency (LGMA),
- County and City Management Association (CCMA),
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH),
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM),
- Department of Transport (DOT),
- National Transport Authority (NTA),
- Office of Public Works (OPW).

A derogation has been granted for engagement with An Garda Síochána, Tusla, the Department of Social Protection, other local authorities and elected representatives. This mean you CAN continue to engage with these organisations.

You should also continue to engage with Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) partnering with local authorities on housing and homeless services.

Rate payers and community groups, voluntary organisations etc, are also not considered as third parties.

I have been asked by my manager to engage with external management consultants/advisors, what should I do?

Members are being instructed to not cooperate with, or take direction from, or share information with, any external agencies/contractors/consultancy staff/external companies.

The only exception to this instruction is where this has been agreed with Fórsa, in which case, cooperation is permitted. Examples where this can be permitted might include attendance at Strategic Policy Committees, Area Committee Meetings, engaging with An Garda Síochána or other emergency services.

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Are all queries received from external organisations to be shelved until after the industrial action?

Yes, all queries from and information sharing with external bodies, should be shelved until the end of the action.

A limited derogation is currently in place with the LGMA for the purposes of managing the dispute only.

What about engineers, architects, planning agents and other professionals acting on behalf of planning applicants?

No. Members should continue to engage with engineers, architects, planning consultants and other professionals where this relates to the processing of individual planning applications and the delivery of normal statutory services.

The union instruction is aimed at external parties involved in broader organisational change, transformation, modernisation, service redesign or other reform initiatives. The distinction is between routine case-by-case planning functions, which may continue, and participation in wider strategic projects or programmes intended to advance change and modernisation, which are covered by the union instruction.

I work in a Community Development role, and much of my work involves engaging with third parties. How should I proceed?

In instances where disengaging during normal work hours would primarily affect members of the community, members should continue their work as normal. For example, if engaging with and supporting community groups, voluntary groups, resident's associations, schools, etc. is part of your core role, members should continue to carry out those functions.

However, if this work is outside of your core working hours, (for example, tenants meetings in the evening) and would involve overtime or TOIL, then this work should cease.

What about engagement with emergency services, including engagement with third parties in relation to health and safety?

Fórsa has confirmed to management that we will adhere to WRC protocols governing industrial action in the context of emergency and essential services.

Management have been asked to identify any areas that may impact on emergency services and to request appropriate derogations through the agreed channels. These requests will be considered by the National Disputes Committee in the first instance.

Members should continue to take any action necessary to address immediate health and safety risks or emergencies. In all other circumstances, members should comply with the industrial action.

If a derogation is granted, we will ensure members are updated, but unless a project is your core work or change management is your core role, members must disengage.

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I work in payroll, expenses, pensions and MyPay etc, what should I do?

You should continue to work as normal, in line with your contract, and follow the union instruction.

A key part of my role is to process data, should I continue to carry out these duties?

Yes. If your main duty and responsibility is to collect and process data, you should continue to perform this duty, however, you should not pass this on to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage or the LGMA for reporting purposes until the industrial action is over. If you are asked to do this you should refuse and advise your manager that you are following the union instruction.

If the data is processed through a shared folder, it must not be uploaded to or processed in that location unless management obtains a derogation. However, it may be processed using an alternative method that does not involve the shared folder.

My role solely relates to projects, should I continue to carry on these duties?

We have asked management to identify key projects which they are seeking a derogation for. Once this has been agreed, this document will be updated.

If I am asked to provide information in relation to, for example, KPIs, Stats, Productivity, monthly activities etc. what should I do?

Employers have been informed that if they require this information, they must write to Fórsa stating the reasons for this information, and we will consider the request.

So, unless we provide them with a derogation, members are not to process this information for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage or the LGMA. If a derogation is granted, we will ensure members are updated.

Should I attend national committee meetings?

Members have been instructed to withdraw from all national committees. If your manager requires your attendance they must seek a derogation. Unless this is provided, you should not attend. If you are asked to do so, you should refuse and advise your manager that you are following the union instruction.

What is classified as a "change programme"?

Any programme which involves changes to corporate policies, corporate structures, department reviews and/or structures, work locations for bodies of workers etc.

What about training and change programmes?

The current instruction is directed at meetings, workshops and training connected with change programmes and organisational reform initiatives. General professional development, mandatory training, CPD activities and routine skills training can continue unless they form part of a broader change programme.

The key consideration is whether the activity is designed to support or advance an employer-led change or modernisation agenda.

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We have a lot of change programmes underway in our department, what should we do?

Members are instructed to withdraw and disengage from all change programmes across the local government sector, unless a derogation has been granted.

I am a manager and there is an expectation I should insist my team carry out their normal duties. What should I do?

In response to the cost-of-living crisis over 62,000 Fórsa members voted to take industrial action, across all grades, to stand up for decent pay, fair working conditions and strong public services. The industrial action is legally protected, and all union members are expected to follow the union instruction.

If you are asked to do anything which undermines this instruction, you should refuse and advise your own line manager to escalate this through the usual industrial relations processes.

Where there is an already agreed roster in place for weekend work, and it is recorded as TOIL, do we continue to work the rostered shifts?

Yes, members should continue to work the existing agreed roster.

Can events in libraries continue?

Routine events delivered directly to the public, or by an external facilitator, during normal opening hours, may continue, where their cancellation would primarily affect service users or the community.

Events requiring additional overtime or TOIL should not take place, neither should events connected with organisational change, service redesign, modernisation or employer-led reform.

We are required to attend meetings in relation to ongoing Housing projects. Should this cease?

We have asked management to identify key projects which they are seeking a derogation for, once this has been agreed, this document will be updated.

My job involves paying invoices and raising purchase orders, should I continue with this work?

Yes, you should continue if this is your normal work.

