

AHCPS submits local bargaining claims for higher civil servants

ANDY PRENDERGAST

The Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants has submitted two local bargaining claims under the Public Service Agreement, with a latter focus on addressing “pay progression bottlenecks”.

Under the Public Service Agreement (PSA) 2024-2026, there is a 1% local bargaining component, with another 2% to be applied in a successor agreement.

The AHCPS, representing over 3,000 Assistant Principals and Principal Officers across the Civil Service, has submitted the following two claims under the local bargaining clause, as part of its “continued efforts to secure fair, strategic, and impactful improvements to pay and progression structures for our members.”

Claim 1: 1% Claim to Enhance the Existing PCW Payment

The AHCPS is seeking to double a 1% payment linked back to a Social Partnership deal from the mid-1990s, the Programme for Competitiveness and Work, bringing it to 2% for all grades where it currently applies.

This claim is based on the “significant growth in responsibilities taken on by AHCPS members since the PCW 1% was introduced.” The value of the PCW payment has not changed “despite the evolving complexity of public service work.”

This enhancement would be “fully funded from the ring-fenced 1% allocation under the PSA and aims to address long-standing anomalies while recognising our members’ critical contributions to public sector leadership and reform.”

Claim 2: 2% Claim for Assistant Principal (AP) and Principal Officer (PO) Grades

A separate claim targets the AP and PO grades, proposing structural improvements “to address pay progression bottlenecks, retention challenges, and evolving job demands.”

These proposals include:

- Removing Point 1 on both AP and PO scales so officers start on current Point 2.
- Reducing the Long Service Increment (LSI) qualification period from 3 years to 1 year.
- Increasing the maximum point of both scales by 2.5% (including Higher scales).

These targeted adjustments fall within the 2% local bargaining allocation and are “aimed at retaining leadership talent, supporting career progression, and strengthening public service delivery capacity.”

PRODUCTIVITY

Both claims, the union says, “are the result of careful analysis and member feedback, and we believe they represent fair and strategic use of the local bargaining provisions within the PSA.”

The union notes that there “may be productivity/reform requirements in return” in return for these claims.

The AHCPS hosts its annual delegate conference in Portlaoise this Friday.

To be discussed at the conference is a motion on merging the standard AP and PO scales with the relevant higher scales, after point 6 for AP and after point 5 for PO, making the salary scales longer and “further incentivising staff and boosting morale”.

Also to be discussed are several motions on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Artificial Intelligence. On the latter, the union’s executive wants to advocate for “responsible and ethical AI use in the civil and public service”, to ensure AI adoption “protects job quality and public service values” and for support training and upskilling for staff working alongside AI.

The guest speaker at the conference is Robert Murtagh, Unions 21’s Director for Ireland. Mr Murtagh will discuss the “positive application of AI in the public and civil service”, and “emphasise the power of union membership in promoting a collective voice for workers.”