AHCPS

To All AHCPS Members

Proposed Public Service Agreement 2026–2029

17 November 2026

Dear Member,

Following an extended and difficult period of negotiations, industrial action and further engagement between the Public Services Committee (PSC) of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Government representatives, proposals for a new Public Service Agreement were concluded on 11 November 2026.

The proposed agreement covers the period from 1 July 2026 to 31 March 2029 and provides for general pay increases totalling 9.75%, together with a further provision of up to 1% under the second phase of local bargaining.

The AHCPS Executive Committee has considered the proposals and is recommending that members vote in favour of their acceptance.

Before outlining the terms of the agreement and the Executive Committee's assessment, we believe it is important to acknowledge the considerable contribution made by AHCPS members throughout this dispute.

Background to the Negotiations and Industrial Action

The previous Public Service Agreement expired on 30 June 2026. Exploratory discussions between the PSC and Government failed to establish a basis for formal negotiations, with the trade union side seeking an agreement that would address the erosion of pay caused by inflation, provide for an increase during 2026 and make progress on outstanding issues including local bargaining and working arrangements.

Following consultation with members and branches, the Association conducted a ballot for industrial action, up to and including strike action. The result, announced on 22 September, was decisive: **87.9% voted in favour**, on a turnout of 64.6%.

The Association commenced a work-to-rule on 30 September. This involved members working strictly within their contractual obligations and observing their working time entitlements, together with restrictions on undertaking additional duties arising from vacancies, staffing shortages and other pressures.

When meaningful progress failed to materialise, the Association proceeded with a full 24-hour strike on Wednesday, 14 October.

The participation of members in pickets across the country was a powerful demonstration of unity and determination. It was particularly encouraging to see AHCPS members standing alongside colleagues from other trade unions, including Fórsa, on joint picket lines. That

solidarity reflected the collective nature of the campaign and the shared objective of securing a fair agreement for public servants.

The Executive Committee wishes to express its sincere appreciation to every member who supported the industrial action, particularly those who participated in the strike and incurred a loss of pay. We also acknowledge the considerable work undertaken by Branch Officers, activists and members who organised pickets, communicated with colleagues and helped maintain the effectiveness of the campaign.

The industrial action was not undertaken lightly. It involved inconvenience, additional pressures and, for those who participated in the strike, a financial sacrifice. However, it demonstrated that members were prepared to act collectively when negotiations failed to deliver an acceptable outcome.

Following the strike, the Government proposed a new process involving an independent third party, Kevin Foley, assisted by representatives of the trade union and employer sides. The planned strike on 21 October was suspended to allow this process to proceed, while the work-to-rule remained in place.

The subsequent engagement provided a route back to substantive negotiations and ultimately to the proposals now before members.

While no agreement can be attributed to any single action, the Executive Committee is satisfied that the determination of AHCPS members, alongside the wider public service trade union movement, was an important factor in securing meaningful engagement and an improved negotiating position.

Main Pay Provisions

The proposed agreement provides for the following pay increases:

Effective Date	Increase
1 September 2026	2%
1 April 2027	1%
1 August 2027	1%
1 November 2027	1.5%
1 March 2028	1%
1 June 2028	1%
1 October 2028	1%
1 March 2029	Up to 1% Local Bargaining
2 March 2029	1.25%

These general increases total **9.75%**, equivalent to approximately **10.17% when compounded**.

In addition, the agreement provides for a second phase of local bargaining worth up to 1% of basic pay costs, with an implementation date of 1 March 2029. There is a possibility that the proposed 1% Local Bargaining increase could be used a general round increase. If the full 1% is achieved, the combined cumulative increase would be approximately **11.27%**.

The first general increase of 2% will apply retrospectively from 1 September 2026, subject to ratification. **The Government had initially resisted any further pay increase during 2026**.

Revised salary scales accompany this note, allowing members to examine the effect of the proposed general increases on their salaries.

Other Significant Provisions

In addition to the general pay increases, the proposed agreement includes commitments concerning:

- **Local bargaining:** Progress on outstanding first-phase claims and provision for a further phase worth up to 1% of basic pay costs. AHCPS will consult its branches in preparing claims for the next phase.
- **Blended working:** Continued access to blended and flexible working arrangements, where appropriate and consistent with operational requirements, together with consultation before substantial changes to work organisation.
- **Artificial intelligence:** A commitment that the introduction or use of AI will not result in compulsory redundancies, alongside provision for a €150 million training fund.
- **Pensions and ASC:** Further structured engagement on pension matters, although no immediate general reduction in the Additional Superannuation Contribution has been secured.
- **Public service reform:** Commitments concerning workforce planning, recruitment, retention, skills development and organisational change.

Further details are set out in the accompanying Frequently Asked Questions. The full text of the proposed agreement can be accessed through the link provided in the email circular accompanying this note.

Considerations For and Against Acceptance

In considering the proposed agreement, the Executive Committee believes it is important that members are aware of both its positive features and its limitations.

Arguments in Favour of Acceptance

1. **Substantial general pay increases:** The agreement provides for general increases of 9.75%, worth approximately 10.17% when compounded, over its 33-month duration. These increases would provide a degree of certainty regarding pay over the coming years.
2. **Prospect of real pay growth:** Analysis by the Nevin Economic Research Institute suggests that the proposed increases, including the full local bargaining provision, would exceed projected inflation over the lifetime of the agreement. The actual outcome will depend on inflation and the implementation of local bargaining.
3. **Further local bargaining:** The agreement provides an opportunity to pursue additional improvements for particular grades and groups. This is particularly relevant to AHCPS, given the improvements to salary structures secured through the first phase of local bargaining.
4. **Commitments on working arrangements and job protection:** The provisions concerning blended working, consultation, artificial intelligence and protection

against compulsory redundancies arising from AI are important in the context of continuing public service reform.
5. **A negotiated resolution to the dispute:** Acceptance would provide a framework for pay and industrial relations over the next 33 months, allowing members and the Association to pursue other workplace issues through the established structures.

Arguments Against Acceptance

1. **No pay increase for July and August 2026:** Although the previous agreement expired on 30 June, the first increase under the proposed agreement is effective only from 1 September 2026. This falls short of the trade union side's objective of securing an increase from July.
2. **Inflation remains uncertain:** While current projections suggest that the increases would exceed inflation, this is not guaranteed. Higher-than-expected inflation could reduce or eliminate the anticipated improvement in real pay.
3. **Restrictions arising from the industrial peace clause:** The agreement places significant restrictions on industrial action concerning remuneration and other matters covered by its provisions during the lifetime of the agreement.
4. **Outstanding pension and ASC issues:** The agreement does not provide for an immediate reduction in ASC or resolve all outstanding pension-related matters, despite these being important issues for AHCPS members.
5. **Reform and productivity obligations:** The agreement contains commitments concerning reform, workforce flexibility and productivity without guaranteeing additional staffing resources for individual organisations or grades. These obligations may create further pressures for managers if not properly resourced.

View of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee has carefully considered the proposed agreement, including its shortcomings and the issues that remain unresolved.

It recognises the disappointment that members may feel regarding the absence of a pay increase for July and August 2026, the continuing application of ASC and the restrictions associated with the industrial peace clause.

The Committee is also conscious that the increases must be considered against the significant rise in the cost of living experienced by members in recent years.

Nevertheless, the Executive Committee considers that the proposals represent a meaningful improvement on the position that existed when negotiations broke down earlier this year.

The general pay increases, the provision for further local bargaining and the commitments concerning working arrangements and job protection provide a basis for an agreement which, taken as a whole, the Committee considers worthy of acceptance.

The Committee also recognises that the outcome was achieved following a sustained campaign involving consultation, a decisive ballot mandate, work-to-rule industrial action, strike action and solidarity across the public service trade union movement.

Having weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed agreement, the AHCPS Executive Committee recommends that members vote YES to acceptance of the Public Service Agreement 2026–2029.

This recommendation does not imply that every objective pursued by the Association has been achieved. AHCPS will continue to represent members vigorously on outstanding matters, including local bargaining, ASC, staffing, workloads, blended working and the implications of public service reform.

Next Steps – Ballot Arrangements

The Association is conducting an online ballot of members on the proposed Public Service Agreement 2026–2029.

The ballot will open on Wednesday, 18 November 2026, and close on Friday, 4 December 2026.

Full details of how to participate in the ballot, including the link to the online voting system, are provided in the email circular accompanying this note.

The email circular also contains a link to the full text of the proposed agreement. Members are encouraged to consider the proposals carefully, together with this note, the accompanying Frequently Asked Questions and the revised salary scales, before casting their vote.

The result of the AHCPS ballot will be communicated to the Public Services Committee of ICTU. The overall trade union position will be determined through the PSC's established procedures, taking account of the results of the ballots conducted by affiliated unions.

The PSC is expected to determine its position during the week commencing 7 December 2026.

I would strongly encourage all members to examine the proposals, consider the accompanying FAQs and revised salary scales, and participate in the ballot.

Finally, on behalf of the Executive Committee, I want to thank members once again for their commitment, patience and solidarity throughout what has been a demanding period for our Association. The unity demonstrated during the campaign has been a considerable source of strength and will remain important as we continue to represent members' interests.

Queries concerning the proposed agreement or ballot arrangements may be directed to info@ahcps.ie

Please ensure that this circular is circulated to all members in your branch. This circular is also available on the website.

Yours sincerely

Ciaran Rohan

Ciaran Rohan
General Secretary