



## Police Federation for Northern Ireland

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Mr Simon Hoare MP  
Chair, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Via email only: [simon.hoare.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:simon.hoare.mp@parliament.uk)

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Dear Mr Hoare

### **Energy and the cost of living in Northern Ireland**

I am aware that your committee is addressing this subject on Wednesday and thought it would be worthwhile if you heard directly from us on how officers are being affected.

Our men and women are presented with the double whammy of soaring energy and foodstuff costs and no meaningful pay award to deal with the inflationary crisis.

Our position is further exacerbated by low pay levels for officers setting out on their career and those with several years' experience. Constables at the lower end of pay scales are particularly badly hit.

### **Current PSNI Pay Scales**

Trainee officer	£21,441
Constable Probationer	£24,780
Constable Year Two	£25,902
Constable Year Three	£27,030
Constable Year Four	£28,158
Constable Year Five	£30,411
Constable Year Six	£34,950
Constable Year Seven	£41,130

As you will see from the above table, a Constable has to be in service for five years before they earn above £30,000 per annum. In the current economic climate, that level of pay fails to adequately compensate for the often dangerous situations officers find themselves in when acting to safeguard and protect communities in our divided society.

Monthly deductions for taxation, National Insurance and pension mean that without overtime, officers at the lower end of the pay 'ladder' (Year Three) receive approximately £1,500 net take home pay month.



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The average monthly rent for a residential property in Northern Ireland is £742 according to PropertyPal.

High fuel costs for both property and vehicle account for a further £250. The Office for National Statistics reports that food prices are rising at their fastest rate for 45 years. In the year to October 2022, food price inflation reached 16.2%, up from 14.5% in September. Consequently, an officer's monthly food bill is conservatively estimated at £200. Other outgoings such as vehicle repayments and vehicle taxation, insurance and maintenance vary widely but for this exercise are estimated at £200 per month.

Taken together, this fixed monthly expenditure comes in at £1,392 which leaves the Year Three officer with disposable income of £108. Any ambition or aim to buy a property is unrealistic and unattainable.

Many younger officers are being forced to live at home as they are unable to afford to rent or buy their own property.

By way of comparison, it is worth noting that less scrutinised and less stressful employment offers considerably more attractive options, as follows:

Sainsbury Average Base Salary (PayScale.com)	£36,000
Software engineer (average)	£43,668
Software developer (average)	£33,804
Deputy Principal Grade NI Civil Service (Middle Manager)	£39,748
UK Personal Security Guard (average, uk.indeed.com)	£28,659
NHS nurse (average in 2021, according to RCN)	£33,384
Pharma Sales Rep (average, uk.indeed.com)	£35,729
Plumber (average, UK.talent.com)	£32,004
Electrician (average, UK.talent.com)	£34,521
Train Driver (median figure, UK.talent.com)	£75,250
Train driver (entry level)	£53,000

From day one, police officers in Northern Ireland face a terrorist threat that is rated 'substantial'. Only recently, dissident republican terrorist attempted to murder two of our young officers in Strabane with a subsequent failed attack on a PSNI Station in Londonderry.

Officers have to maintain a high level of vigilance with many unable to live in the areas they are from or explain what they do for a living. Visits to relatives in certain areas deemed high risk are only possible on a rare or occasional basis.

Such is the level of dissatisfaction that younger officers are leaving the Service. There has been a recent spike in officer resignations from Probationer to somewhat more experienced officers.

Under a recent Freedom of Information, the PSNI reported how 102 officers had left within two years of completing their probationary period. The total who served less than a three-year period stood at 124.



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Low pay, a terrorist threat level that is unique to Northern Ireland, restrictions on private lives including reduced secondary employment opportunities, worrying numbers deciding to resign and the most heavily scrutinised Police Service in western Europe combine to make a job in policing in Northern Ireland more of a rather poorly paid vocation than a profession.

### **Devolved Government**

There is a chronic inability by devolved Government Departments to act in a timely manner when it comes to police pay.

For the past five-six years, pay awards that should have been effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September have been delayed for months. In fact, discussions have often commenced on a new pay award without the current settlement being implemented.

Simply put, given attitudes over pay in recent years, our devolved administration has low or no regard for the work that officers do. They are a convenient political 'football' when it suits one side or the other. Our criticism isn't reserved for politicians who sit on the Northern Ireland Executive, although they must shoulder the bulk of the blame.

An overly bureaucratic approach that stems from the system of enforced coalition in Northern Ireland mean senior civil servants have little incentive to make decisions on police pay in a timely manner. Indeed, starting last year incremental pay progression was coupled with the main pay award denying officers their contractual entitlements.

This exacerbates the cost-of-living crisis for our members. It is time for unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles on the annual pay award to be swept away. Furthermore, to deal with soaring energy and related costs, a complete review of police pay is urgently required to end slippage and restore pay levels.

Officer morale is plummeting and without meaningful Governmental intervention, it gives me no pleasure in warning your committee that we see further damage being inflicted. In this situation, the losers aren't only police officers, but the entire community and its rightful expectation to be able to rely on a professional, responsive and caring public service.

Should you wish to explore this matter further, I should be only too happy to engage with you and your colleagues.

Yours sincerely

L J Kelly  
PFNI Chairman