

04 December 2019

RE: Northern Ireland Strike Action Dec 2019

BASW and SWU Members:

The Social Workers Union offers our wholehearted support to colleagues in public sector trade unions who are taking industrial action in Northern Ireland in relation to pay and staffing issues. SWU is equally committed to supporting where possible the main issues around pay and staffing levels.

The starting point is that this is a UNISON and NIPSA strike and we have not been asked to be involved in action or been part of the negotiations on the main issues. The system for balloting members is legally complex and we don't have the legal consultative ballot mandate for strike action presently.

As a matter of principle however we want to express our solidarity with colleagues taking part in lawful industrial action arising out of a dispute with their employers.

Our legal advice to SWU members is as follows:

- **Work normally:** SWU members are strongly advised to carry out their normal duties and we would urge them not to volunteer to work extended hours arising directly out of or in consequence of the dispute. Members should not at any time act in breach of their contracts of employment.
- **Respect for picket lines:** SWU may not lawfully encourage members to take part in secondary industrial action. Members may, however, choose as a matter of individual conscience, not to cross a picket line. Members who so choose should be aware that such action is likely to put them in breach of contract and may result in their employer taking disciplinary action against them.

SWU endeavours to provide advice, support and representation to any member facing disciplinary action in such circumstances.

If SWU members have any queries about this please discuss further with the Advice and Representation Service.

We wish our colleagues success in their current campaign.

Yours sincerely,



John McGowan
General Secretary
The Social Workers Union