

Government's Spending Review 2020 – a 'slap in the face' to the teaching profession

On 25 November 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020, outlining the UK Government's spending plans for 2021/22. Whilst the Spending Review focused on spending decisions for Government departments in England, the spending decisions will feed through to UK Government funding for Northern Ireland through the Barnett formula.

Under the Barnett formula, the Northern Ireland Executive will receive an additional £0.9 billion, with £380 million of core funding and £540 million in relation to COVID-19.

In the Spending Review, the Chancellor announced that teachers and most other public sector workers who earn £24,000 or more will have their pay rise for 2021/22 'paused'. If this policy were to be implemented in Northern Ireland, virtually no teachers or further education (FE) lecturers would receive a pay increase in 2021/22.

The NASUWT has left the UK Government in no doubt about the unacceptability of the Chancellor's statement on teachers' pay for 2021/22.

Dr Patrick Roach, the NASUWT General Secretary, has stated: *'The short-sighted decision to freeze teachers' pay is out of step with public opinion and is a slap in the face to the teaching profession, particularly at a time when teachers have been serving on the frontline, risking their own health to maintain education and support for children and young people. The Chancellor's claim that a public sector pay freeze is necessary as private sector wages fell by nearly 1% in the six months to September is no justification for imposing further real-terms cuts to the pay of teachers.'*

Implications for teachers and lecturers in Northern Ireland

Teachers' and lecturers' pay in Northern Ireland is devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive, and the NASUWT continues to negotiate with the employers over the teachers' pay award for 2019/20 and 2020/21 and remains in dispute with FE employers over pay. The NASUWT will resist any attempts by HM Treasury or the Northern Ireland Executive to impose a pay freeze on Northern Ireland teachers and FE lecturers in 2021/22. The NASUWT will also work with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and affiliates to oppose the UK Government's policy towards public sector workers.



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