

**RCM**  
**FAIR PAY**  
**OVERDUE**  
**NORTHERN**  
**IRELAND**

**Vote**



**Yes**



**#FairPayOverdueNI**

Investment in midwives is an investment in high quality safe care



## Letter from the Northern Ireland Director

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to ask you to take part in this industrial action ballot and **vote YES to secure fair pay for HSC staff working in Northern Ireland.**

We did not take the decision to ballot you lightly but we believe that we need to stand together and say fair pay is overdue for midwives and maternity support workers.

This booklet explains why we are recommending that you **vote YES for industrial action.**

We have been campaigning for fair pay in the HSC in Northern Ireland but so far without adequate response. We believe that if midwives and maternity support workers use their vote and vote YES in this ballot we can send a very clear message. We are campaigning for a negotiated settlement that is at least as good as the pay awards and reform of Agenda for Change achieved in England, Scotland and Wales.

I believe that HSC staff have to be valued and fairly rewarded for the work they do. Staff who are demoralised cannot deliver the quality of care that HSC users, including mothers or babies, deserve **Investing in staff is an investment in better care.**

Our Workplace Representatives will work with managers to ensure there is cover during the initial work stoppage (it is intended to be similar to the cover on a bank holiday) and action short of a strike.

We are currently proposing to start our action in mid-February with strike action. We are also proposing to take action short of a strike which will highlight the goodwill that you give to the HSC every day, for example all the times you work unpaid overtime and miss your breaks.

I am asking you to **vote YES to both strike action and action short of a strike** because this will enable us to take the forms of action I have highlighted.

Please make sure you use your vote and send a strong message that midwives and maternity support workers deserve to be valued and deserve fair pay.

Best Wishes

**Karen Murray**  
Director RCM Northern Ireland

## What Taking Industrial Action Means for RCM Members

In 2018 RCM members in England, Scotland and Wales voted to accept a three year pay deal combining a pay award and reform of Agenda for Change (AfC) from 01 April 2018- 31 March 2021. The reforms improved starting salaries and made it quicker to reach the top of the band. Funding for these increases was from the Treasury, with the expectation that equivalent money would be made available in Northern Ireland through the Barnett Formula. In February 2019 the Department of Health imposed a one year pay uplift in Northern Ireland; this however did not achieve pay parity for RCM members in Northern Ireland in line with the other UK countries and did not address the reform of Agenda for Change. Despite numerous meetings with the Department of Health and employers during 2019 the RCM were unable to agree an offer put forward by the Department of Health and employers as it did not achieve pay parity for HSC staff in Northern Ireland.

In November 2018 the RCM consulted on pay and almost 95% of you who responded said that you would be willing to take industrial action up to and including strike action. The RCM Board met in November 2019 and approved an industrial action ballot of midwives and MSWs in Northern Ireland over pay. During November 2019, the RCM held workplace meetings across Northern Ireland, during these meetings you told us again that you are willing to take industrial action to achieve pay parity. Industrial action is always a last resort and we only ask because we believe it is absolutely necessary.

We are campaigning for a negotiated settlement that is at least as good as the pay awards and reform of Agenda for Change achieved in England, Scotland and Wales.

We want to achieve the same in Northern Ireland that we were able to achieve in England, Wales and Scotland. This is a fundamental attack on your pay and we have to take a stand. We believe that if midwives and maternity support workers in Northern Ireland stand together and vote yes, you are prepared to take industrial action then we will have the best chance of getting a fair deal for RCM members in Northern Ireland. This is an unprecedented attack on HSC pay in Northern Ireland because:

- Pay in Northern Ireland has now fallen seriously behind England, Wales and Scotland.
- RCM members in England, Scotland and Wales agreed a three year pay deal in 2018 that increased starting pay and pay on promotion, and decreased the number of incremental pay points in bands to make it quicker to reach the full rate for the role.
- Demoralised staff can not give the quality of care that women and babies deserve, investment in staff is an investment in care; and midwives, maternity support workers and other HSC staff have faced nine years of pay restraint. Fair pay is overdue for RCM members in Northern Ireland.

We are working with the other HSC trade unions to all campaign together for fair pay. We believe that if midwives and maternity support workers stand together and vote yes to industrial action we have the best chance of getting a fair deal for HSC staff.

Industrial action involves members of a trade union working together to achieve a goal; in this case we are trying to achieve a fair pay deal for midwives and maternity support workers.

You can only take part in industrial action if you are a member of a trade union and your trade union has balloted you for industrial action and achieved a yes vote in that ballot. There are two types of industrial action, strike and action short of a strike.

We are proposing that we start our action with a short stoppage. We are also proposing that we then take action short of a strike which will highlight the goodwill that you give to the HSC every day, for example all the times you work unpaid overtime and miss your breaks. This will be kept under review. We are asking you to **vote yes to both strike action and action short of a strike** because this will enable us to take the forms of action we have highlighted.

Action short of a strike can be just as disruptive to your employer as a strike so just as effective and we have chosen action that will cause disruption to your employer but not disrupt women and their babies.

If we do take industrial action we will not put women or babies at risk and will not ask you to break your code of conduct. It is not against the NMC code of conduct for midwives to take industrial action. The NMC put out a statement confirming this. It says: "Like many other professions, nurses, midwives and nursing associates have the right to take part in lawful industrial action, including strike action."

You can read the rest of this statement on the NMC website <https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/news-and-updates/update-on-industrial-action>

When taking action in 2014 and 2015 we maintained safe services. We believe that the treatment of HSC staff in Northern Ireland will affect care because staff that are demoralised cannot deliver the quality of care that HSC users, including women and babies, deserve. We believe that investing in staff is an investment in better care.

Our Workplace Representatives will work with managers to ensure there is cover during the stoppage, which is intended to be similar to the cover on a bank holiday. Emergencies will be covered and no women or babies will be left on their own. Our action will not put women or babies at risk.

We will be balloting all RCM members who are currently employed on Agenda for Change terms and conditions in the HSC in Northern Ireland. This is because legally we can only ballot members who will be called to take part in the action.

The ballot papers will be sent to you in the post on **Monday 6 January**. The ballot will **close at midday Wednesday 29 January**. To respond in the ballot you have to send your ballot paper back by post, the envelope is prepaid so you don't need to put a stamp on it. To make sure the ballot paper arrives by midday on **Wednesday 29 January** we recommend you put it in the **post as soon as you can**.

There will be two questions on the ballot paper:

1. **Are you prepared to take strike action? Yes/No**
2. **Are you prepared to take action short of a strike? Yes/No**

You need to place a cross in either the yes or no box for each question (and we are recommending that you vote yes to both questions). Please do not mark the ballot paper anywhere else because this could mean it does not count.

The RCM is recommending that you **vote yes to both strike and action short of a strike**. We are making this recommendation because we believe that taking action is our only chance to get fair pay for midwives and MSWs in Northern Ireland.

We believe that if we stand together we can achieve pay parity for HSC staff.

Please make sure you use your vote. We did not take the decision to ballot you lightly and we understand that it won't be easy for you to vote for industrial action.

Voting yes will send a strong message that midwives and maternity support workers deserve fair pay and investing in staff is an investment in better care.

You can find out more information by visiting our website [www.rcm.org.uk/fairpayoverdueNI](http://www.rcm.org.uk/fairpayoverdueNI) and reading the FAQs; if you have any questions please ask your Workplace Representative; attend your local meeting or email [paycampaign@rcm.org.uk](mailto:paycampaign@rcm.org.uk)

Tweet your support for the campaign @MidwivesRCM using the hashtag #FairPayOverdueNI or email us at [paycampaign@rcm.org.uk](mailto:paycampaign@rcm.org.uk)

**Vote**  **Yes**

## Why You Should Vote Yes

The RCM is recommending that you **vote yes to both strike action and action short of a strike**.

Here are some reasons why you should vote yes:

### 1. Taking industrial action works

When we took action in England in 2014 we got the Department of Health and employers to the negotiating table. They agreed significant improvements to the original offer. We are now campaigning for a negotiated settlement in Northern Ireland that is at least as good as the settlement achieved in England, Wales and Scotland.

### 2. Treating HSC staff unfairly hurts HSC users.

There is clear clinical evidence that shows HSC staff who are demoralised cannot deliver the quality of care that HSC users, including mothers and babies, deserve. HSC staff have to be valued and fairly rewarded for the work they do. Investing in staff is an investment in better care.

### 3. Pay in Northern Ireland has now fallen seriously behind England, Wales and Scotland.

A midwife in Northern Ireland may now be earning up to £2,000 less than their colleagues in England and Wales and even less when compared to midwives in Scotland. You can see a full comparison of pay across the UK by visiting our website <https://www.rcm.org.uk/supporting/fair-pay-overdue-in-northern-ireland/>

### 4. There is currently a shortage of midwives

There is a shortage of midwives in Northern Ireland and many more are telling us that they want to leave midwifery. In order to retain and recruit midwives to deliver high quality safe maternity care to women and their families in Northern Ireland we must ensure they are paid equally and fairly in line with their colleagues in Great Britain for doing the same job.

You can send a message to local decision makers asking them to support our campaign for a pay increase in line with our colleagues in Great Britain and to influence the Treasury to fund this increase for HSC staff across Northern Ireland. Fair pay in Northern Ireland is long overdue.

The RCM has produced postcards that you can send to your MLAs and MP, speak to your local Workplace Representative in the first instance if you want to send postcards to local decision makers.

You can find the details of your local MP and your local MLA by visiting:

[www.niassembly.gov.uk/your-mlas](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/your-mlas)

<https://members.parliament.uk/constituencies>

The logo features the text 'RCM FAIR PAY OVERDUE NORTHERN IRELAND' in white and blue, centered within a circular graphic of concentric orange and white rings.

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### **The Royal College of Midwives**

The Royal College of Midwives is the voice of midwifery. We are the UK's only professional organisation and trade union led by midwives for midwives and the maternity teams which support them. The vast majority of the midwifery profession are our members.

The RCM promotes midwifery, quality maternity services and professional standards. We support and represent our members individually and collectively in all four UK countries.

We influence on behalf of our members and for the interests of the women and families for which they care.

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