

# Written Ministerial Statement

*The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.*

## Department for Communities

### IMPROVEMENTS TO TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR POSTS SUPPORTED DIRECTLY THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

*Published at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 15 December 2021.*

**Ms Hargey (The Minister for Communities):** It is important that the value of the Voluntary and Community Sector is recognised. I have listened to concerns about the ability to improve terms and conditions for employees.

I recognise the need for increased support to allow these crucial organisations to offer better terms and conditions and to help them recruit and retain the staff delivering for our communities. This is an issue that has been raised both individually and collectively by the Voluntary and Community Sector Group of the Joint Forum and individual Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.

Since taking up office I have been consistent in my view that we have a clear role in enabling fair work. Voluntary and Community sector posts supported through my Department's programmes should be allocated funding at a level that allows employer organisations in the Sector to offer "fair pay" and associated conditions.

I am introducing the following changes for directly funded organisations:

- I. allocations to allow employing organisations to ensure Real Living Wage (RLW);
- II. a consolidated 2% increase on current level of support provided by the Department for salaried posts (which has been calculated after ensuring the level of support to meet RLW rates);
- III. a 7% non-consolidated payment (which has been calculated following application of steps I. and II above); and
- IV. an increase in support to allow for an increase in employer's pension contributions from the Governments recommended minimum level of 3 % to 5%.

In addition, effective from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022, funded organisations will no longer be required to inform the Department of short term sick absences of up to five working days for their employees in posts supported by the Department. The current position requires such absences to be notified and funding is then withheld for these periods of absence.

Officials are now working to expedite delivery of additional funds to organisations to allow them in turn to make the changes that will benefit their employees. It is anticipated that payments will be issued from 16th December 2021.

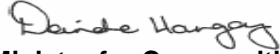
The range of improvements will further demonstrate my commitment to Community Wealth Building. As a strong advocate of Community Wealth Building, I appreciate the important role that fair work and improved terms and conditions can play in the recovery agenda, with a focus on achieving an approach to economic recovery that is more inclusive.

A fair funding approach will support a number of key pillars of Community Wealth Building, including creating a more just and fair labour market and more plural ownership of the economy.

The measures introduced will not only benefit lower paid individuals to have an improved standard of living but also build an enabling environment to support the Sector in attracting and retaining a workforce to achieve the best outcomes for the communities they work in.

My commitment to “fair funding” and “fair pay” is key to supporting both people and organisations in the VCS and is critical to enabling the full potential of the sector to be realised –not only today but in the future.

**Deirdre Hargey MLA**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deirdre Hargey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Minister for Communities**