



MISSION-DRIVEN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

**THE CASE FOR FAIR
PAY AGREEMENTS**

Joseph Evans

March 2025

ABOUT IPPR

IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is an independent charity working towards a fairer, greener, and more prosperous society. We are researchers, communicators, and policy experts creating tangible progressive change, and turning bold ideas into common sense realities. Working across the UK, IPPR, IPPR North, and IPPR Scotland are deeply connected to the people of our nations and regions, and the issues our communities face.

We have helped shape national conversations and progressive policy change for more than 30 years. From making the early case for the minimum wage and tackling regional inequality, to proposing a windfall tax on energy companies, IPPR's research and policy work has put forward practical solutions for the crises facing society.

IPPR
8 Storey's Gate
London
SW1P 3AY
E: info@ippr.org
www.ippr.org
Registered charity no: 800065 (England and Wales),
SC046557 (Scotland)

This paper was first published in March 2025. © IPPR 2025

The contents and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors only.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Summary | 5 |
| 1. Introduction | 7 |
| 2. How sectoral collective bargaining works | 8 |
| What is sectoral collective bargaining? | 8 |
| The economic effects of sectoral collective bargaining | 8 |
| International examples of sectoral collective bargaining | 9 |
| The role of sectoral collective bargaining in the UK’s economy | 11 |
| 3. Mission-driven fair pay agreements | 14 |
| The government’s current approach | 14 |
| Assessing the government’s current approach | 15 |
| Expanding mission-driven fair pay agreements | 16 |
| Policy changes to facilitate mission-driven fair pay agreements | 20 |
| 4. Limits of mission-driven fair pay agreements | 22 |
| Workforce challenges in market-driven labour markets..... | 22 |
| Learning lessons from other countries..... | 24 |
| Lessons and priorities..... | 26 |
| Conclusion | 27 |
| References | 28 |

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Evans is a researcher at IPPR.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank George Dibb, Ashwin Kumar, Sarah Mulley, Henry Parkes and Maya Singer-Hobbs (IPPR) for their insight and feedback during the research process; Annie Williamson and Melanie Wilkes (IPPR) for their help developing an earlier version of this project; James Hoctor (Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung) for arranging research interviews with experts in Germany, Sweden, Norway and Ireland; Jodie Reed (Ipsos Partnership) for arranging research interviews with experts and practitioners in the childcare sector; Janet Williamson (Trades Union Congress) for providing detailed comments; and Abi Hynes, Richard Maclean and Piers Ford for editing and designing the report.

Many of the research findings and recommendations behind this report have been elaborated through structured interviews with businesses, trade unions, professional bodies and academics. Thanks to everyone who participated in research interviews from Cardiff University, Early Education, Early Education and Childcare Coalition, Early Years Alliance, Fafo Research Foundation, German Trade Union Confederation, GMB, Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, Institute for Employment Relations, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, King's College London, London School of Economics, Lund University, Maynooth University, National Day Nurseries Association, National Housing Federation, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Old Square Chambers, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, Prospect and Bectu, RMT, SIPTU, Social Enterprise UK, Stockholm School of Economics, Trades Union Congress, UNISON, Unite, University of Southampton, University of Strathclyde, University of Sydney, University of Warwick and USDAW.

Finally, thanks to the Alex Ferry Foundation for making this research possible.



Download

This document is available to download as a free PDF and in other formats at:

<http://www.ippr.org/articles/mission-driven-industrial-relations>

Citation

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is:

Evans J (2025) *Mission-driven industrial relations: The case for fair pay agreements*, IPPR.

<http://www.ippr.org/articles/mission-driven-industrial-relations>

Permission to share

This document is published under a creative commons licence:

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/uk/>

For commercial use, please contact info@ippr.org



SUMMARY

Keir Starmer's government was elected to deliver a series of national 'missions'. Achieving these missions will require the government to mobilise businesses and workers in key sectors of the economy. But some missions rely on sectors which are struggling to meet demand, even before the additional challenge of mission delivery is added to the mix. If the government doesn't resolve workforce challenges in these sectors it risks missing key milestones in its Plan for Change.

Fair pay agreements are a policy tool which could help the government to achieve its missions. In fact, the government is already using fair pay agreements as a way of resolving workforce challenges in sectors connected to its missions. Starmer's government is establishing 'negotiating bodies' to produce fair pay agreements for people working in adult social care and school support staff, sectors which will be instrumental in delivering on its health and opportunity missions. Fair pay agreements in these sectors will determine training standards, pay, and terms and conditions for businesses and workers.

The government's plans for fair pay agreements mark the expansion of truly sector-wide collective bargaining in two new labour markets. While most collective bargaining in the UK is conducted by individual employers with their staff, sectoral collective bargaining is a process where representatives of employers and workers negotiate an agreement which determines training, pay and working conditions for all employees in a sector of the economy. Around 20 per cent of workers in the UK are currently covered by sector-wide pay structures, some negotiated through sectoral collective bargaining.

Sectoral collective bargaining was historically more widespread in the UK: in the 20th century, institutions like Trade Boards, Wages Councils and Joint Industrial Councils determined the pay and conditions of employment in large sections of the UK's labour market. The UK's Trade Boards were established in 1909 in sectors characterised as 'sweated trades' by Winston Churchill, who was then President of the Board of Trade: sectors where there is "no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the bad, and the bad employer is undercut by the worst". Reforms undertaken by the Thatcher and Major governments abolished these institutions and sectoral collective bargaining has since declined sharply.

The government is not trying to reverse these changes. Instead, it is using fair pay agreements as a policy lever to resolve workforce challenges in sectors closely connected to its missions – an approach we call 'mission-driven fair pay agreements'. It has also chosen to focus on two sectors where the state is the primary purchaser of services. This mission-driven approach has led the government to focus on adult social care and school support staff. This is a bold and novel approach to resolving workforce challenges in key sectors of the economy. If these fair pay agreements are successful, they could provide proof of concept for a modern approach to industrial relations, with potential application in other sectors.

This report explores the extent to which fair pay agreements could tackle workforce challenges in other sectors. Our analysis indicates that there is a case for applying the government's 'mission-driven' approach to **childcare, rail and construction**. These sectors will help to deliver on the government's Plan for Change, and the government can also leverage the state's purchasing power in these labour markets.

Childcare: The early education and childcare labour market has several parallels with the adult social care sector; given that the government is already using fair pay agreements as a policy tool to resolve workforce challenges in the adult social care sector, it would be sensible to apply the same logic to childcare. The government has committed to increasing the availability of nursery-based childcare in its opportunity mission, and ministers plan to work in partnership with the sector to reform training and support for the workforce. The success of the government's early years provisions will ultimately depend on its funding commitment to the sector and its ability to resolve challenges in the childcare workforce. **We recommend that the government should establish an Early Education and Childcare Negotiating Body to bring together representatives of providers and workers to agree national standards for fair terms and conditions for early years professionals, including national pay rates linked to qualifications and continuing professional development.**

Rail: Through Great British Railways, the government will become the monopoly employer in rail as franchises come under public ownership. The government is committed to creating an integrated industrial relations framework and a workforce strategy while establishing Great British Railways. **We recommend a new Great British Railways Negotiating Body to provide this integrated industrial relations framework, ensuring that pay, terms and conditions apply consistently to everyone employed on the railways.** In addition to supporting the creation of Great British Railways, the Negotiating Body would support the government's economic growth mission by supporting the delivery of high-quality rail services.

Construction: The prime minister wants to 'get Britain building' but industry leaders warn that the UK doesn't have enough construction workers to meet the government's pledge to build 1.5 million homes, let alone wider infrastructure projects. There are already several sectoral collective agreements in the construction sector, but these only cover a minority of construction workers, especially in the fragmented housebuilding labour market. **We recommend that the government should strengthen existing sectoral collective bargaining arrangements by ensuring that all contractors in publicly funded construction projects comply with collectively agreed workforce standards. It should also establish a new Public Housebuilding Negotiating Body to improve skills supply and raise standards on publicly funded housing projects.** However, the government would need to ensure that raising standards through the Negotiating Body does not perversely disincentivise publicly funded housebuilding by raising labour costs which do not apply to the private market. To address the risk of disincentivising publicly funded housebuilding, the government should leverage its procurement and convening power to encourage developers in the private market to comply with the terms agreed by the Public Housebuilding Negotiating Body.

To establish negotiating bodies in childcare, rail and construction, we recommend that the government should take the following steps:

- 1. Establish new Negotiating Bodies in law.** Legislation should define the Negotiating Body's remit and the organisations which will be involved in negotiations.
- 2. Secure the buy-in of businesses and unions to ensure that Negotiating Bodies endure over the long term.** This means ensuring that the process of bargaining and the outcomes of fair pay agreements respond to the needs of both employers and the workforce. The most durable sectoral collective bargaining structures persist because they benefit both sides of the negotiation process.
- 3. Train and adequately resource anyone involved in negotiating fair pay agreements.** For new Negotiating Bodies to be successful, they will require the involvement of well-trained and resourced negotiators. This should include training and preparing representatives of employers and workers to negotiate with one another, as well as supporting relevant officials to facilitate the bargaining process.

1. INTRODUCTION

Keir Starmer's government was elected to deliver a series of 'national missions'. Achieving these missions will require it to mobilise businesses and workers in key sectors of the economy. But some missions rely on sectors that are already struggling to meet demand, even before the additional challenge of mission delivery is added to the mix. If the government doesn't resolve labour market challenges in these sectors it risks missing key milestones in its Plan for Change.

This labour market risk is particularly stark in relation to the government's growth ambitions. To achieve sustained economic growth, the prime minister wants to 'get Britain building': the government has pledged to build an additional 1.5 million homes by the end of this Parliament and to make it easier to build major infrastructure (Prime Minister's Office 2025b). But the UK doesn't have enough construction workers to build 1.5 million homes by 2029, according to industry leaders (Race 2024). Beyond housebuilding, the government also wants to accelerate the construction of infrastructure like nuclear plants, trainlines and windfarms – projects which will add more pressure to an already stretched labour supply in construction (Prime Minister's Office 2025b). Construction is suffering from the second-greatest worker shortage of any UK industry, and the sector struggles to attract younger workers, who are put off by a lack of diversity, low pay and job insecurity (Rebeiro 2025; Boury 2025).

The government is already using fair pay agreements as a way of resolving labour market challenges in sectors connected to its missions. It is establishing Negotiating Bodies to cover people working in the adult social care and school support staff sectors, which are crucial for delivering on the government's health and opportunity missions. The Negotiating Bodies will produce a collective agreement on the minimum pay, terms and conditions of employment in these sectors. Labour also pledged in its Make Work Pay policy paper to assess whether sectoral collective bargaining would benefit other sectors (Labour Party 2024b).

This report explores how fair pay agreements could support the government's mission-based approach by resolving labour market challenges in specific sectors of the economy. The report is structured in three sections.

1. An outline of how fair pay agreements work, including a survey of the evidence on the economic impacts of sectoral collective bargaining; a review of international examples of sector-level negotiation; and a summary of the role of sectoral collective bargaining in the modern British economy.
2. Assessment of how the government could expand its mission-driven approach to fair pay agreements in childcare, rail and construction, as well as policy changes which it should adopt to facilitate sectoral collective bargaining.
3. Analysis of the challenges of introducing fair pay agreements in market-driven labour markets.

2. HOW SECTORAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WORKS

The government's plans mark the expansion of sectoral collective bargaining into two new sectors of the economy. Sectoral collective bargaining is an established practice in industrial relations and evidence shows it can have economic benefits, but it plays a stronger role in the industrial relations systems of other countries than in the UK. To set the scene for a discussion of the government's approach of 'mission-driven fair pay agreements', this chapter provides the following.

1. An outline of how sectoral collective bargaining works, including a survey of the evidence on its economic impacts
2. A review of international examples of sector-level negotiation
3. A summary of the role of sectoral collective bargaining in the modern British economy.

WHAT IS SECTORAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING?

Sectoral collective bargaining is a process where representatives of employers and workers negotiate a collective agreement for all employees in a sector of the economy. The government refers to these sector-level collective agreements as 'fair pay agreements'. This process is distinct from firm-level bargaining, where an individual employer negotiates with representatives of its workforce, because sectoral collective agreements cover many employers in order to set minimum standards for training, pay and working conditions across an entire sector.

THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF SECTORAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

In economies with sectoral collective bargaining, this process is always one of several forms of bargaining. Even in countries where sectoral collective bargaining is the predominant means of setting the pay and conditions of employment for workers, there is always a role for some form of national- and/or firm-level bargaining. This makes it hard to distinguish the economic impacts of sector-level bargaining specifically. Instead, it is possible to assess whether different collective bargaining systems, in which sectoral collective bargaining has a greater or lesser role, produce different economic outcomes.

In general, we can say that countries with collective bargaining systems where sectoral bargaining is predominant are associated with the following.

- **Higher employment and lower unemployment:** Countries where bargaining takes place predominantly at a sectoral level are associated with higher employment and lower unemployment than those where bargaining happens only at firm level and there is no coordination of wages. This is especially true in countries where there is predominantly sectoral collective bargaining and strong coordination of wages (OECD 2019).

- **Lower pay inequality:** Wage inequality is lower in countries where workers are covered by sectoral collective bargaining, compared to countries with firm-level bargaining only (OECD 2019).¹

The OECD has found that the best economic outcomes in terms of employment, productivity and wages are reached when sectoral collective bargaining plays a strong role but where sectoral agreements leave flexibility for firm-level agreements. More decentralised systems that simply replace sectoral with firm-level bargaining tend to be associated with somewhat poorer labour market outcomes. Equally, more centralised bargaining systems – those which do not leave flexibility for firm-level agreements – tend to be associated with lower productivity growth, if the coverage of agreements is high (OECD 2019).

Some studies have suggested that sectoral collective bargaining can support stronger productivity growth. Compared with countries with decentralised or no collective bargaining, those with sectoral collective bargaining report a stronger coupling of real wage and productivity growth (Paternesi Meloni and Stirati 2023). Sectoral collective bargaining can be particularly beneficial for companies that are technology leaders: as less innovative and unproductive firms are pushed out of the market by standardised sectoral wages, more innovative firms can capture their market share. Such an approach might be particularly useful for countries like the UK with a long tail of unproductive firms behind leading frontier firms (Haldane 2018). Well-functioning collective bargaining institutions, particularly when associated with high coverage, can also allow for more differentiation in terms of wages and working conditions than statutory rules, can foster skills development and skills use in the workplace, and allow for the effective dissemination of good working practices (OECD 2018).

The effects of sectoral bargaining on the relative productivity levels of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are less clear. Sector-wide regulation of wages and working conditions could prove cost-effective for SMEs, which do not usually have specialised HR departments with the knowledge to set wages and working conditions in accordance with labour law regulations. However, the empirical evidence is mixed: there is no convincing evidence available to confirm that sector-level collective bargaining has a significant effect on productivity or innovation by firm size (Grimshaw 2024).

Coordinated structures of collective bargaining are especially important in distributing the risks and opportunities of transformative economic changes associated with a zero-carbon growth agenda and digitalisation (ILO 2024). Some argue that national-level coordination, with scope for local agility and adaptation, is a prerequisite for decision-making in the face of uncertainty (Grimshaw 2024).

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES OF SECTORAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

In two-thirds of OECD countries, collective bargaining takes place predominantly at firm level. Sectoral collective bargaining plays a stronger role in some continental European countries, although even within these countries there are important differences in their industrial relations systems (OECD 2019).

Table 2.1 outlines the types of collective bargaining systems, and the countries associated with them. Each system is distinguished according to the extent of ‘centralisation’. This refers to the extent to which pay, terms and conditions are set centrally (ie through national or industry-level collective bargaining),

¹ This finding is particularly stark considering OECD data shows that the UK has the highest incidence of low pay and the ninth highest incidence of high pay out of all OECD countries (OECD 2025).

compared to ‘decentralised’ models (which focus on either firm-level or no collective bargaining).

TABLE 2.1: TYPOLOGY OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SYSTEMS²

| Collective bargaining system | (1) Predominantly centralised | (2) Organised decentralised | (3) Largely decentralised | (4) Fully decentralised |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Role of sectoral agreements | Strong | Strong | Limited | Little to none |
| Role of firm-level agreements | Little to none | Strong | Strong | Strong |
| Economic effects | Associated with lower productivity growth | Best for employment, productivity and wages | Associated with somewhat poorer labour market outcomes | Associated with somewhat poorer labour market outcomes |
| Associated countries | France Italy Spain Belgium | Germany Denmark Sweden Norway Finland | Ireland Australia Japan Greece | United Kingdom Canada South Korea United States |

Source: OECD 2019

The following section explores an international example for each type of collective bargaining system.

1: Predominantly centralised

Definition: Sectoral collective bargaining plays a strong role and there is limited space for firm-level bargaining to deviate from centralised agreements (OECD 2019).

France: Collective bargaining coverage in France remains very high, even though only 10.8 per cent of French workers are members of a trade union (OECD 2021a). This high level of collective bargaining coverage is driven by two factors: collective agreements apply to all employees in a company, whether they are trade union members or not; and the contents of sectoral agreements can be extended to all the employers in a sector through an application by one of the parties to the Ministry of Labour (Vincent 2019).

2: Organised decentralised

Definition: Sectoral collective bargaining plays an important role but also leaves significant room for firm-level collective agreements (OECD 2019).

Germany: Collective bargaining at a sector level forms a crucial part of Germany’s system of industrial relations. While the coverage of collective agreements has fallen in recent years, bargaining at sector level between individual trade unions

² Our typology is adapted from OECD 2019, but our category of ‘predominantly centralised’ bargaining systems is a simplified merger of two categories from the OECD’s typology: ‘predominantly centralised and weakly coordinated’ and ‘predominantly centralised and coordinated’.

and employers' organisations is still the central arena for negotiating pay and conditions (Fulton 2020). The bargaining coverage in Germany has a strong bias towards particular sectors. Coverage is still relatively high in the public sector, where two main agreements cover most public service workers, as well as in most of the manufacturing industries (ESPU 2021). However, it is lower in many of the private service sectors as well as in some tech industries such as information and communication (Müller and Schulten 2019).

3: Largely decentralised

Definition: Firm-level collective bargaining is dominant but sectoral bargaining also plays a role (OECD 2019).

Ireland: Collective bargaining coverage in Ireland is 34 per cent and bargaining predominantly takes place at the local or company level (OECD 2021b). However, there is an established framework for sectoral collective bargaining in the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) system. A JLC is an independent body which sets the employment conditions and minimum rates of pay for employees in a certain sector (Citizens Information 2023). JLCs operate in sectors where collective bargaining is not well established, and wages tend to be low (Workplace Relations Commission 2025).

4: Fully decentralised

Definition: Collective bargaining is essentially confined to firm level (OECD 2019).

New Zealand: Industrial relations are primarily conducted at firm level in New Zealand. Union density and collective bargaining coverage are relatively low, standing at 17.7 per cent and 18.6 per cent respectively (OECD 2021c). New Zealand's previous Labor government attempted to expand the role of sectoral collective bargaining in the economy, but the legal system they established was dismantled by the new National government just a year after it was approved by parliament (MBIE 2025).³

THE ROLE OF SECTORAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN THE UK'S ECONOMY

The OECD defines the UK as having a 'fully decentralised' bargaining system, where bargaining is mostly confined to the firm or establishment level (OECD 2019). As a proportion of the total workforce, fewer workers in Britain today are covered by collective agreements than at any time in the post-war era, when union membership was much higher and institutions like the Wages Councils and Joint Industrial Councils determined the pay and conditions of many workers. With a few exceptions, multi-employer bargaining has all but disappeared from the UK's private sector (Wright 2023).

The historic role of sectoral collective bargaining

The UK now only has a loose patchwork of sectoral collective agreements and industry-wide minimum pay and standards. This was not always the case: just over 30 years ago, industry-wide pay setting was commonplace and determined the salaries of many British workers.

Wages Councils were statutory bodies established to regulate minimum wages and working conditions for specific industries or sectors, which operated between 1909 and 1993. First known as Trade Boards and later as Wages Councils, they were first established in sectors characterised as 'sweated trades' by Winston Churchill, who was then President of the Board of Trade: sectors where there is "no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the bad, and the bad employer is undercut by the worst" (Hansard 1909). The

3 For more information about New Zealand's attempt to expand sectoral collective bargaining, see chapter 3, section 'Limits of mission-driven sectoral collective bargaining'.

Attlee government refashioned the Trade Boards as Wages Councils in 1945, which existed until they were progressively abolished by the Thatcher and Major governments (Hughes and Dundon 2018).

Joint Industrial Councils (JICs) – industry-level joint boards of employers and trade union representatives, first established in 1918 – facilitated engagement between employers and workers across most sectors of the economy. Most councils facilitated the negotiation of voluntary sectoral collective agreements, and some were established to set encompassing, sector-wide pay and conditions. The most prominent example was the NHS Whitley Council, which set the pay and conditions of NHS staff from the health service’s foundation in 1948 until it was replaced by the Agenda for Change structure in 2004 (NHS Employers).

The present role of sectoral collective bargaining

Despite the sharp decline of sectoral collective bargaining at the end of the 20th century, sector-wide pay setting still plays a role in some parts of the UK economy. The pay of 20.6 per cent of employees in the UK is wholly or partly determined by a national or industry agreement, with most of these workers concentrated in the public sector (DBT 2024d). People working in local government, higher education, fire and rescue services, offshore energy, civil engineering or film, television and theatre production are covered by sectoral collective agreements which extend across all other workers in their industry. The picture is slightly different at a national level: there is a higher share of employees in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland whose pay is determined by an agreement set at a national or industry level than in England.

However, for most workers whose pay is determined by a national agreement, that agreement is not reached through ‘sectoral collective bargaining’. Instead, most are set by Pay Review Bodies: independent, advisory, non-departmental public bodies which provide evidence-based advice and recommendations on pay for public sector workers.

TABLE 2.2: UK SECTORS WITH SECTORAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND PAY REVIEW BODIES

| Sector | Relevant negotiating bodies | Type of agreement |
|------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Local government | National Joint Council for Local Government Services (LGA 2025a) | Sectoral collective agreement |
| Higher education | Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (UCEA 2025) | Sectoral collective agreement |
| Construction | National Joint Council for the Engineering Construction Industry (NJCECI 2025) Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC 2025) Building and Allied Trades Joint Industrial Council (FMB 2024) Joint Industry Board for the Electrical Contracting Industry (JIB 2025) Scottish Joint Industry Board for the Electrical Contracting Industry (SJIB 2025) Joint Industrial Board for Plumbing Mechanical Engineering Services (JIBPMES 2025) National Joint Council for the Thermal Insulation Contracting Industry (TICA 2022) | Sectoral collective agreement |

| | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Fire and rescue services | National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Service (LGA 2025b) | Sectoral collective agreement |
| Film, TV & theatre production⁴ | Pact/Bectu Scripted TV, Major Motion Picture and Construction Crew Agreements (Bectu 2025) | Sectoral collective agreement |
| Offshore energy | Offshore Energies UK Energy Services Agreement (OEUK 2025) | Sectoral collective agreement |
| NHS | NHS Pay Review Body (NHSPRB 2025) | Pay Review Body |
| Doctors and dentists | Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (RBDDR 2025) | Pay Review Body |
| School teachers | School Teachers' Review Body (STRB 2025) | Pay Review Body |
| Armed forces | Armed Forces' Pay Review Body (AFPRB 2025) | Pay Review Body |
| Police | Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB 2025) | Pay Review Body |
| Senior civil servants | Review Body on Senior Salaries (RBSS 2025) | Pay Review Body |
| Prison officers | Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB 2025) | Pay Review Body |
| National crime agency staff | National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body (NCARRB 2025) | Pay Review Body |

Source: Author's analysis

There are eight Pay Review Bodies covering the armed forces, doctors and dentists, NHS staff, prison officials, schoolteachers, senior civil servants, border force officials and police officers (Office for the Pay Review Bodies 2023). Pay Review Bodies set pay and terms of employment for public sector workers which apply at a national level. Pay and conditions are not negotiated through a process of 'bargaining' – the bodies instead review evidence from official statistics and stakeholders to provide recommendations to government. As such, they are not examples of 'sectoral collective bargaining'.

Table 2.2 provides a non-exhaustive list of some of the main sector-wide collective agreements currently in force in the UK, distinguishing sectoral collective agreements – ie those negotiated through a process of sectoral collective bargaining – from Pay Review Bodies.

Sectoral collective bargaining in devolved nations

A higher share of workers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their pay set at an industry or sector level than in England (DBT 2024d). This is likely a reflection of the higher proportion of public sector workers in the devolved nations compared with England. However, there are examples of sectoral collective bargaining in Scotland which do not exist in England. In Scotland, for example, sectoral bargaining structures have survived in industries where in England bargaining has been lost, like the Scottish Bakers agreement, and in sectors where there has never been any equivalent in England, like the Employers in Voluntary Housing group. Sectoral negotiations in agriculture also take place on a statutory basis through the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board (LRD 2021). The equivalent body for England and Wales – the Agricultural Wages Board – was abolished in 2013 by the Coalition government (DEFRA 2012).

⁴ This is not a comprehensive list of the sectoral collective agreements in film, television and theatre production. See Bectu's website for a list of other sectoral collective agreements in creative industries: see <https://bectu.org.uk/get-involved-in-the-union/agreements-grading-schemes/>

3.

MISSION-DRIVEN FAIR PAY AGREEMENTS

The government has adopted a mission-driven approach to fair pay agreements. Labour is being prescriptive about which sectors it thinks would benefit from fair pay agreements and is focussing its efforts on establishing negotiating bodies in these sectors. Plans to establish negotiating bodies in the adult social care and school support staff sectors will help the government to meet its health and opportunity missions.

This chapter analyses the government's approach, explores how 'mission-driven fair pay agreements' could be applied to other sectors of the economy, and outlines policy changes which the government should adopt. We conclude that there are other sectors beyond adult social care and school support staff which would benefit from mission-driven fair pay agreements. If the government wants to continue with its 'top-down' approach to introducing fair pay agreements, we recommend that it should establish new negotiating bodies in **childcare, rail and construction**.

THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT APPROACH

Sectoral collective bargaining only determines the pay and working conditions of a minority of workers in the UK and is far from the predominant form of industrial relations. The OECD recommends a model of combined sector and enterprise level collective bargaining, as seen in Germany and Scandinavian countries, because it is associated with higher employment, lower unemployment, better integration of vulnerable groups and less wage inequality than fully decentralised systems like the UK's (OECD 2019). However, the UK's industrial relations system is clearly a long way from this model.

Moving to this kind of collective bargaining system would amount to a dramatic change in the predominant forms of industrial relations and would require a significant cultural shift among businesses and trade unions. The government is not attempting to shift the UK's collective bargaining system to this kind of model, and it is also not attempting to expand sectoral collective bargaining across many sectors at once. This was the method adopted by the Labor government in New Zealand, which established a 'bottom-up' approach to expanding sectoral collective bargaining. Under New Zealand's proposed system, businesses or unions could themselves initiate a process of sectoral collective bargaining; the government merely provided the legislative framework to enable this.

Instead, the British government is adopting what can be characterised as a 'top-down' approach. It is being prescriptive about which sectors it thinks would benefit from fair pay agreements and is using legislation to establish negotiating bodies in these sectors. It is also focusing on sectors where the state has a systemic influence on the labour market as the primary purchaser of services: this provides the government with additional leverage to shape workforce conditions and to create new sectoral collective bargaining structures. This has led it to focus on two parts of the UK's labour market which are predominantly publicly funded: adult social care and school support staff.

ASSESSING THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT APPROACH

The government's plans to create a new Adult Social Care Negotiating Body (ASCNB) and reinstate the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) mark the implementation of truly sector-wide collective bargaining in two new parts of the economy. Referring to the ASCNB, the government anticipates that "by empowering worker, employer and other sector representatives to negotiate pay and terms and conditions, sectoral agreements will help to address the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector, in turn supporting the continued delivery of high-quality care" (DBT 2024a). This is a bold and novel approach to resolving workforce challenges in key sectors of the economy. If these negotiating bodies are successful, they could provide proof of concept for a modern approach to industrial relations, with potential application in other sectors.

The shared case for these negotiating bodies is that they cover labour markets which are predominantly publicly funded: the SSSNB will cover support staff in state schools, while the ASCNB focusses on a sector where most services are purchased by the state via local authorities. This means that the government can use its purchasing power to shape pay and working conditions in these sectors. Despite this similarity, the ASCNB and SSSNB are focussed on resolving different labour market challenges. Re-establishing the SSSNB will give school support staff a Negotiating Body solely focused on their sector, and ensure that staff in all state-funded schools, including academies, are covered. The ASCNB, on the other hand, is designed to resolve a different set of labour market challenges.

School Support Staff Negotiating Body: the government's case for reinstating the SSSNB is that there should be a forum which is solely focussed on determining the pay and conditions of the nearly 800,000 school support staff in England (DBT 2024b). School teachers have their own pay review body but support staff, who make up over half the school workforce, are not covered by an equivalent (DfE 2024). Currently their terms of employment are determined by the same Negotiating Body as council workers. The reinstatement of the SSSNB will also ensure that school support staff working in academies enjoy the same terms of employment as support staff in non-academised state schools (UNISON 2025).

Adult Social Care Negotiating Body: adult social care is a very different labour market to school support staff. While adult social care is predominantly publicly funded by the Department for Health and Social Care, and local government has statutory obligations to deliver care for residents, most care services are ultimately delivered by private or independent providers (Bach-Mortensen et al 2024). The government's case for establishing the ASCNB is that sectoral collective bargaining can help to address the major challenges in this labour market. The primary challenge, as the government sees it, is that adult social care providers struggle to recruit domestic workers because of low pay, poor terms and conditions, limited career progression and poor access to learning and development. The government characterises the sector as exhibiting evidence of 'market failure': pay has not risen in response to excess demand, due to the monopsonic power of local authorities within care markets and the binding constraint of local authority funding. The sector instead relies on international recruitment to boost labour supply (DBT 2024c). The ASCNB also forms part of the government's plans for a National Care Service (Collyer Merritt 2024).

In addition to labour market challenges, the government has prioritised establishing negotiating bodies in sectors where they threaten the delivery of its missions. We refer to this approach as 'mission-driven fair pay agreements'. It is also clear that the government is introducing sectoral collective bargaining in labour markets where it can leverage the state's influence as the primary purchaser of services.

In the next section we outline how the government could build on its mission-driven approach to fair pay agreements by focusing on **childcare, rail and construction**.

EXPANDING MISSION-DRIVEN FAIR PAY AGREEMENTS

The government has adopted a mission-driven approach to fair pay agreements. Establishing negotiating bodies in the adult social care and school support staff sectors will help it to meet its health and opportunity missions. There are other sectors beyond adult social care and school support staff which would benefit from mission-driven fair pay agreements. If the government wants to continue with its ‘top-down’ approach to extending fair pay agreements, we recommend the establishment of negotiating bodies to cover **childcare, rail and construction**.

Childcare

Workforce challenges

Early education and childcare providers often struggle to retain staff, while many workers experience low pay. More than eight in 10 nurseries, pre-schools and childminders have seen an increase in the number of staff members leaving the sector compared to two years ago (Virdi 2024). 57 per cent of nursery professionals said they were considering leaving the sector altogether in 2023. The top reasons these professionals cited for considering leaving the sector were feeling undervalued by government, job-related stress, poor pay and a sense that staffing shortages were compromising their ability to deliver quality services (Hardy et al 2023). Organisations like the Early Years Alliance and the National Day Nurseries Association told the Low Pay Commission that current levels of pay in the sector are too low and that this is having a negative impact on recruitment (LPC 2025). A stark example of the impact of low pay in the sector is the proportion of the early years workforce on benefits: in 2018, 44.5 per cent of childcare workers were receiving state benefits or tax credits, compared with 30 per cent of teachers (Foley and Roberts 2024).

There are clear parallels between the adult social care and childcare labour markets. Early education and childcare is a large, mostly publicly funded sector where much of the workforce is employed by a complex, mixed market of private and voluntary providers. The government’s monopsonic influence in the childcare labour market constrains employers’ ability to adjust pay to reflect demand. Childcare employers told the Low Pay Commission that they believe the funding provided by the government is below the cost of providing a decent service, contributing to low pay and recruitment difficulties in the sector. The hourly rates paid by councils have not increased nearly as much as wages, which form around 70 per cent of nurseries’ costs. In common with social care, the consequence of funding constraints was a recruitment and retention crisis. The net result of this is “less reliable, flexible childcare for parents and less consistent, lower quality early education for children”, according to the National Day Nurseries Association (LPC 2024).

Mission drive


The government has committed to increasing the availability of nursery-based childcare in its opportunity mission, and ministers plan to work in partnership with the sector to reform training and support for the workforce (Prime Minister’s Office 2025a). The success of the government’s early years provisions will ultimately depend on its funding commitment to the sector and its ability to resolve workforce challenges. The childcare sector’s reliance on public funding gives the government systemic influence over pay and working conditions in the sector. This influence is set to increase from September 2025: around 80 per cent of pre-school childcare hours in England

will be publicly funded once the new childcare entitlements are fully rolled out (Farquharson 2024).

The case for sectoral collective bargaining

Many of the factors that led the government to prioritise the establishment of a Negotiating Body in adult social care also exist in the early education and childcare sector. Given that the government is already using sectoral collective bargaining as a policy tool to resolve workforce challenges in the adult social care sector, it would be sensible to apply the same logic to childcare.

The government's case for establishing the Adult Social Care Negotiating Body is that sectoral collective bargaining can help to address the major challenges in the adult social care labour market. The primary challenge, as the government sees it, is that adult social care providers struggle to recruit because of low pay, poor terms and conditions, limited career progression and poor access to learning and development. The government characterises the sector as exhibiting evidence of 'market failure': pay has not risen in response to excess demand, due to the monopsonic power of local authorities within care markets and the binding constraint of local authority funding (DBT 2024c). As outlined above, these conditions are all markedly similar to the childcare labour market. The government states that "by empowering worker, employer and other sector representatives to negotiate pay and terms and conditions, sectoral agreements will help to address the recruitment and retention crisis in the [adult social care] sector, in turn supporting the continued delivery of high-quality care" (DBT 2024a). It would be sensible to apply the same logic to early education and childcare.

 **Recommendation: The government should establish a new Early Education and Childcare Negotiating Body. The body should bring representatives of providers and workers together to agree national standards for fair terms and conditions for early years professionals, including national pay rates linked to qualifications and continuing professional development.**

A key aim of the Negotiating Body should be to address providers' difficulty retaining staff and the workforce's experience of low pay and poor working conditions. To improve retention, the body should be tasked with creating a hierarchy of roles which are linked to training qualifications and clear pay bands. This structure would recognise the need for and value of qualifications while providing a clear path that encourages the workforce to train and progress. To improve pay and working conditions the Negotiating Body should complement progress towards better funding with a workforce strategy and stronger skills development for the sector. The Negotiating Body could also collect data on the sector which would strengthen the Department for Education's ability to address workforce challenges.

The Negotiating Body should avoid duplicating existing bargaining arrangements. For example, the Early Education and Childcare Negotiating Body should not overlap with the remit of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body once it is established. The Department for Education will need to identify these overlaps to avoid them.

Rail

Workforce challenges

Industrial relations in the UK's rail sector currently involves negotiations between train operation companies (TOCs), Network Rail and various trade unions. The employers in these collective agreements are the individual TOCs, which operate passenger rail services under contracts with the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail. The government's plans for Great British Railways (GBR) will

phase out the rail franchising system, with contracts set to enter government control as they expire. As the government becomes the monopoly employer, it will need to ensure that GBR is equipped to facilitate collective bargaining with the relevant trade unions in the rail sector.

Mission drive

Renationalising rail services under Great British Railways (GBR) was a commitment in Labour's 2024 manifesto. To deliver high-quality rail services, GBR will need to foster positive industrial relations with the workforce by engaging constructively with all relevant trade unions in the sector. Most of the British public currently feel train services are bad value for money (YouGov 2025). The impact of industrial strikes and staff shortages has caused significant disruption on the rail network and contributed to people's views that this vital public service is an unreliable option. Putting in place a positive industrial relations framework will improve people's experience of rail travel and support the connectivity that drives inclusive economic growth.

The case for sectoral collective bargaining

Recommendation: The government should establish a Great British Railways Negotiating Body. This Negotiating Body would provide an integrated industrial relations framework for Great British Railways (GBR), ensuring that pay, terms and conditions apply consistently to everyone employed on the railways.

Labour has already committed to create an integrated industrial relations framework and a workforce strategy while establishing Great British Railways (GBR) (Labour Party 2024a). In line with this commitment, the Negotiating Body should be established alongside GBR.

Construction

Workforce challenges

Starmer wants to 'get Britain building' but there are severe workforce shortages in the construction sector. Construction is suffering from the second-greatest labour supply shortage of any UK industry, with 16 per cent of construction businesses experiencing workforce shortages (Rebeiro 2025). To meet demand, the UK will need an additional 225,000 construction workers by 2027, but the sector struggles to attract younger workers, who are put off by a lack of diversity, low pay and job insecurity (Boury 2025).

Mission drive

The Home Builders Federation and the UK's largest housebuilder, Barratt Redrow, have warned that because of these challenges, the UK does not have enough construction workers to build the 1.5 million homes the government has promised (Race 2024). Beyond housebuilding the government also wants to accelerate the construction of infrastructure like nuclear plants, trainlines and windfarms – projects which will add further pressure to an already stretched labour supply (Prime Minister's Office 2025b).

The case for sectoral collective bargaining


Fair pay agreements could help to resolve the workforce challenges in construction. The sector is already covered by a patchwork of sectoral collective agreements which provide security of labour supply for employers and security of terms of employment for workers.⁵ However, the fragmented nature of housing construction

⁵ There are a number of joint councils and industrial boards which facilitate sectoral collective bargaining in the construction sector. For a list of the main negotiating bodies in the construction industry, see table 2.2.

means that only a minority of construction workers are covered by these agreements (Wright 2024).


The engineering construction sector is a good example of how sectoral collective bargaining benefits both employers and workers. The National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI), which sets terms and conditions for workers on engineering construction projects, has several benefits. Before the NAECI was established by employer associations and unions, frequent poaching of skilled workers, leapfrogging wage claims by unions, and rogue contractors seeking to undercut industry benchmarks led to widespread industrial unrest across the sector (Korczyński 2003). According to the employers and unions who negotiate the NAECI, the agreement enables UK engineering construction industry employers and clients to remain globally competitive; provides attractive terms and conditions and greater security of employment for the workforce; and establishes a sound foundation for further improvements to industry productivity (NJCECI 2024).

Sectoral collective bargaining also plays an important role in sustaining the labour supply for construction projects. Sectoral collective agreements have been used on major civil engineering projects like Heathrow Terminal 5 (Deakin and Koukiadaki 2009) and the London Olympics site (Druker and White 2013). These agreements have successfully minimised industrial disputes, protected worker safety, maintained high productivity and ensured projects are completed on time and to budget (Wright and Brown 2013). Some sectoral collective bargaining structures in construction help to maintain a consistent skills pipeline by registering and training apprentices. For example, apprentices in the electrical contracting industry are registered by the Joint Industrial Board for electrical contracting under an approved Apprenticeship Training Scheme and in line with the applicable framework standard for the UK (JIB 2025).

 **Recommendation: The government should establish a new Public Housebuilding Negotiating Body to determine the pay and conditions of construction workers employed on publicly funded construction projects.**

The Negotiating Body could improve security of supply for employers by developing a skills pipeline and security of employment for workers by raising working standards. Improving skills and working standards in parts of the housebuilding labour market where the government has purchasing power could catalyse improvements in the wider sector, benefitting both employers and the workforce. A Negotiating Body focused on public housebuilding should also complement existing sectoral collective agreements in the sector. Where it is not possible to improve the terms established in existing agreements, the Negotiating Body would defer to those agreements.

However, there are limits to this approach. By seeking to improve working standards in the publicly funded housebuilding sector, the effect of the Negotiating Body could be to raise the cost of labour on publicly funded housing projects without systemically improving working conditions in the rest of the labour market. This would risk disincentivising the construction of publicly funded housing, which would clearly run contrary to the government's ambitions.

 **Recommendation: To address the risk of disincentivising publicly funded housing, the government should leverage its procurement and convening power to encourage employers in the private market to comply with the terms agreed by the Public Housebuilding Negotiating Body.**

The government could leverage its procurement power to ensure that all contractors in publicly funded housing schemes comply with existing industry-

wide framework agreements. Policymakers in local government already use procurement levers to shape fairer working conditions: for example, the Greater London Authority encourages private developers to pay the London Living Wage and to comply with labour and trade union rights (GLA 2021). The government could also convene developers in the private market to encourage them to comply with the terms agreed by the Public Housebuilding Negotiating Body.

POLICY CHANGES TO FACILITATE MISSION-DRIVEN FAIR PAY AGREEMENTS

For sectoral collective bargaining to work effectively, three conditions need to be met (Wright 2024).

1. It must be supported by workers and their representatives.
2. It must be accepted by employers and their representatives.
3. The state must support the regulation of the bargaining process.

The government can address (1) and (2) by securing the buy-in of representatives of employers and workers. It can address (3) by establishing new Negotiating Bodies in law and by training and resourcing civil servants to facilitate bargaining.

Establish new Negotiating Bodies in law

The government must establish new Negotiating Bodies in law. Legislation should define the Negotiating Body's remit and the negotiators who will be involved.

The government's approach to creating the new Adult Social Care Negotiating Body (ASCNB) and the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) is to establish, in primary legislation, the necessary powers for Ministers to create the Negotiating Body through secondary legislation. The advantage of relying on secondary legislation is that it allows the government to establish the Negotiating Body quickly and gives Ministers the powers to amend its remit in response to the needs of the government and the negotiators. The disadvantage is that the principle of parliamentary sovereignty does not apply to secondary legislation, meaning it can be challenged in the courts and potentially struck down (Sisson 2024). To address this challenge, the government must ensure that new Negotiating Bodies secure buy-in from negotiators.

Secure buy-in from employers and workers

For sectoral collective bargaining to be effective, the government needs to establish encompassing institutions that can negotiate over sector-wide workforce challenges (Grimshaw 2024). These institutions can bring significant benefits if they endure over the long term, encouraging employers and the workforce to engage and negotiate with each other in good faith.

There is a risk that fair pay agreements will not be successful if they do not secure buy-in. The government's current approach of relying on primary and secondary legislation will allow Ministers to create new Negotiating Bodies at pace, but they will be vulnerable to being dismantled equally rapidly in the event of a change of government.

The most durable sectoral institutions and agreements persist because they benefit both sides of the negotiation process. The parts of the private sector which have retained sectoral collective bargaining structures – like engineering and construction – have done so because employers and workers both see a value in negotiating terms of employment at a sector level.

To ensure that these institutions endure over the long term, the government must secure buy-in on both sides of the negotiating table. **The government must therefore ensure that the process of bargaining and the outcome of a sectoral collective agreement respond to the needs of both employers and the workforce.**

Properly resource and equip negotiating bodies to bargain

For new negotiating bodies to be successful, they will require the involvement of well-trained and resourced negotiators. **The government should train and adequately resource anyone involved in negotiating fair pay agreements.** This should include training and preparing representatives of employers and workers to negotiate with one another, as well as supporting relevant officials to facilitate the bargaining process. Institutionalising the experience of sectoral collective bargaining into the practice of employers, workers and government officials will help to ensure the longevity of new sectoral collective bargaining structures.

4.

LIMITS OF MISSION-DRIVEN FAIR PAY AGREEMENTS

The government's current approach to introducing fair pay agreements has limits. While it allows ministers to leverage the state's purchasing power in predominantly publicly-funded sectors, this lever is not available in market-driven labour markets. To establish sectoral collective bargaining in predominantly market-driven labour markets, the government would need to introduce a clear legal framework for creating Negotiating Bodies and producing fair pay agreements. The success of fair pay agreements in market-driven labour markets will depend on whether businesses and workers think that sector-level negotiation is in their shared interest.

In this section, we assess the limits of mission-driven sectoral collective bargaining and outline the lessons the government would need to learn from devolved administrations and other countries if it wanted to establish fair pay agreements in predominantly market-driven labour markets.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES IN MARKET-DRIVEN LABOUR MARKETS

There is potential for fair pay agreements to operate successfully in market-driven labour markets: the presence of sector-wide collective agreements in various parts of the UK's labour markets sector proves as much. However, the government is not currently introducing fair pay agreements in predominantly market-driven labour markets, where it cannot leverage the state's purchasing power.

There are many sectors that have pressing workforce challenges but where the labour market is overwhelmingly market-driven, meaning the government will struggle to use the state's purchasing power as a lever to shape labour market outcomes. In Table 4.1, we compare sectors of the economy based on the prevalence of workforce challenges and the government's purchasing power. This analysis reveals that agriculture, retail, hospitality and other service sectors experience significant recruitment challenges, low pay, poor access to training and development, lack of voice and lack of national constituency. However, these are predominantly market-driven sectors where the government has limited ability to leverage the state's purchasing power.

TABLE 4.1: COMPARING THE LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES OF DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE UK'S ECONOMY

| | Recruitment difficulties | Low pay | Low pay | Poor access to learning and development | Lack of voice | Lack of voice | Lack of national constituency | Lack of national constituency | Government purchasing power |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| | Average vacancy ratio, 2021-24 | Median hourly pay, 2023 | Share of workforce below 2/3 median pay, 2023 | Share of employees receiving training in the last 3 months | Trade union density, 2023 | Collective agreement coverage, 2023 | Share of workforce employed in small organisations, 2023 | Lack of existing sectoral collective agreements | Sector is predominantly publicly funded sector |
| | % | £ | % | % | % | % | % | Y/N | Y/N |
| Accommodation and food services | 5.1 | 10.5 | 47.4 | 20.8 | 2.3 | 7.5 | 50.5 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Admin and support services | 2.5 | 13.5 | 20.9 | 20.9 | 9.3 | 13.9 | 43.1 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Other service activities | 3.3 | 14.0 | 22.0 | 23.7 | 14.5 | 15.5 | 52.2 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Wholesale, retail, repair of vehicle | 3.0 | 11.9 | 27.6 | 18.8 | 10.4 | 15.7 | 39.3 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Arts, entertainment and recreation | 3.3 | 13.2 | 22.1 | 23.5 | 13.7 | 15.1 | 38.5 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | [u] | 12.2 | 31.5 | 19.6 | [u] | [u] | 63.7 | ✗ | ✗ |
| Information and communication | 3.7 | 23.3 | 6.2 | 24.6 | 6.0 | 8.0 | 30.7 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Construction | 2.6 | 17.5 | 12.4 | 24.0 | 9.2 | 11.7 | 38.3 | ✗ | ✗ |
| Manufacturing | 3.1 | 16.4 | 12.1 | 22.1 | 16.5 | 21.2 | 22.1 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Mining and quarrying | 3.3 | 22.1 | 5.9 | 23.2 | 12.9 | 26.7 | 21.2 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Prof, scientific, technical activ. | 3.6 | 21.4 | 7.1 | 27.2 | 8.9 | 11.9 | 34.4 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Real estate activities | 2.5 | 16.1 | 10.9 | 30.5 | 14.8 | 14.4 | 44.3 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Financial and insurance activities | 3.8 | 23.1 | 4.7 | 28.2 | 7.7 | 14.7 | 22.7 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Electricity, gas, air cond supply | 4.5 | 20.3 | 5.4 | 34.5 | 30.9 | 36.3 | 19.9 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Water supply, sewerage, waste | 2.9 | 15.4 | 10.4 | 23.3 | 22.0 | 42.0 | 28.2 | ✓ | ✗ |
| Health and social work | 4.1 | 14.4 | 15.6 | 41.2 | 36.9 | 44.7 | 27.0 | ✗ | ✓ |
| Transport and storage | 2.7 | 14.1 | 14.3 | 20.6 | 33.9 | 45.4 | 19.4 | ✗ | ✓ |
| Public admin and defence | 2.4 | 18.2 | 4.4 | 36.2 | 41.5 | 62.3 | 16.5 | ✗ | ✓ |
| Education | 2.4 | 16.5 | 17.7 | 36.1 | 45.7 | 57.7 | 15.8 | ✗ | ✓ |
| Source | ONS Vacancies by industry | IPPR analysis of Annual Population Survey, July 2023 - June 2024 | IPPR analysis of Annual Population Survey, July 2023 - June 2024 | IPPR analysis of Annual Population Survey, July 2023 - June 2024 | DBT Trade union statistics 2023 | DBT Trade union statistics 2023 | IPPR analysis of Annual Population Survey, July 2023 - June 2024 | IPPR analysis | IPPR analysis |

Source: Author's analysis

LEARNING LESSONS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Introducing fair pay agreements to these sectors would require a clear legal framework for establishing negotiating bodies and implementing collective agreements into contracts of employment. If the government wanted to introduce such a legal framework, it would need to learn lessons from governments in the UK's devolved nations and in advanced economies around the world which have taken similar steps. Wales, Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand have in recent years attempted to introduce new sectoral collective bargaining structures. In the section below, we outline these attempts and draw out lessons for the government.

Wales

The Welsh government is expanding the role of sector-wide engagement and negotiation in both the public and private sector. The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act passed by the Senedd in 2023 aims to improve public services through “social partnership working, promoting fair work and socially responsible public procurement”. The bill establishes a statutory Social Partnership Council, creates a statutory duty on Welsh ministers to consult the Council on the delivery of wellbeing objectives, and places a statutory duty on certain public bodies to “seek consensus or compromise” with recognised trade unions (Welsh Parliament 2022).

The Welsh government has also adopted a social partnership approach to promote fairer working practices in the private sector through Fair Work Forums in social care and retail. The Social Care Fair Work Forum allows representatives of trade unions, employers, stakeholders and the Welsh Government to work together to influence national priorities and policy regarding fair work in the social care sector in Wales (Welsh Government 2025b). The Retail Forum promotes dialogue between the Welsh Government, trade unions and employer representatives, and aims to inform a shared vision for a successful, sustainable and resilient retail sector that offers fair, secure and rewarding work (Welsh Government 2025a). These forums do not constitute ‘sectoral collective bargaining’ but instead a softer form of partnership to promote tripartite working in the sector. The Welsh Government’s Fair Work Commission concluded that tripartite arrangements have a key role to play in building capacity for, and gaining wider acceptance of, sectoral collective bargaining (Welsh Government 2024).

Scotland

The Scottish Government’s Mather Review, also known as the Working Together review, concluded that ‘social partnership’ could address sector-wide challenges in workforce pay, working conditions and skills development. The review also emphasised that establishing sector-wide minimum terms and conditions would marginalise firms seeking an advantage through ‘undercutting’ competition, either by paying lower wages and offering poorer terms and conditions or by

poaching skilled workers from those who invest in workforce training, and would instead encourage businesses to compete on innovation and quality (Mather 2014). The Fair Work Convention in Scotland was established in April 2015 following a recommendation from the Working Together Review. It was created as an independent advisory body to Scottish Ministers, with the aim of driving forward fair work in Scotland (Fair Work Convention 2025). The Fair Work Convention has since undertaken inquiries into two sectors of the Scottish economy – construction and hospitality – but so far they have not led to the development of sectoral collective bargaining structures in these sectors.

The Scottish Government also explored introducing sectoral collective bargaining to Scotland’s adult social care sector. As part of its plans to create a National Care Service, the Scottish Government tried to develop a sectoral bargaining model. Sectoral bargaining was one of the four main aims of its National Care Service Fair Work Stream (Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland 2023). Their proposal for a National Care Service stalled and the National Care Service Bill has now been delayed, along with plans for a new sectoral bargaining model (Scottish Government 2024).

Ireland

There is an established framework for sectoral collective bargaining in Ireland: the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) system. A JLC is an independent body which sets the employment conditions and minimum rates of pay for employees in a certain sector. JLCs, which comprise an equal number of representatives of employers and workers, negotiate an Employment Regulation Order (ERO) to set out the employment conditions and minimum rates of pay for the sector they represent. Once an ERO has been reviewed by the Labour Court and signed by the Minister, it is given statutory effect and becomes legally enforceable (Citizens Information 2023). Employers in those sectors are then obliged to pay wage rates and provide conditions of employment not less favourable than those prescribed (Labour Court 2025).

JLCs operate in sectors where collective bargaining is not well established, and wages tend to be low (Workplace Relations Commission 2025). There are currently JLCs in nine sectors of Ireland’s economy, although only three EROs are in force – for the contract cleaning, security and early learning and childcare sectors (Labour Court 2025) – and several JLCs are no longer operational due to non-participation of employers. JLCs have existed since the postwar period: the legal framework for JLCs is enshrined in the Industrial Relations Act 1946, which replaced Ireland’s Trade Boards (Irish Statute Book 2025).

New Zealand

In 2018, the Labor government created a Fair Pay Agreements Working Group to explore the case for sectoral collective bargaining across New Zealand’s economy. The working group was chaired by Jim Bolger, former Prime Minister of New Zealand for the National Party. The group recommended that government should create a system of worker-initiated, sector-wide collective bargaining structures which would “create a level playing field where good employers are not disadvantaged by paying reasonable, industry-standard wages” (Fair Pay Agreement Working Group 2018). The system had tripartite support among businesses, unions and government officials when it was proposed. However, by the time the Fair Pay Act was introduced to New Zealand’s parliament in 2022, this consensus had broken down: major business groups, including BusinessNZ and the Restaurant Association of New Zealand, publicly opposed Fair Pay Agreements (Anderson 2023). The system was dismantled by the incoming National government just a year after it was approved by parliament (MBIE 2025).

LESSONS AND PRIORITIES

If the government seeks to expand fair pay agreements into market-driven labour markets it must draw lessons from these examples. It could encourage businesses and workers to reach consensus on the case for sectoral collective bargaining through tripartite reviews – like the Scottish Mather Review or the New Zealand Fair Pay Agreements Working Group – but the New Zealand experience suggests this does not always end in consensus. Sectoral collective bargaining in market-driven labour markets relies primarily on introducing a legal framework to facilitate the organic growth of sectoral collective bargaining structures. This could be modelled on Ireland’s Joint Labour Committees or New Zealand’s Fair Pay Agreements although again, finding a framework which satisfies both businesses and workers is challenging.

If the government wants to expand sectoral collective bargaining into market-driven labour markets it should consider two interrelated options.

1. Bring businesses and workers together to agree a model of sectoral collective bargaining which satisfies both parties.
2. Create a legal framework to facilitate the organic growth of sectoral collective bargaining structures.

The sectors which would most clearly benefit from sectoral collective bargaining are identified in our analysis in Table 4.1. Agriculture, retail, hospitality and other service sectors experience significant recruitment challenges, low pay, poor access to training and development, lack of voice and lack of national constituency. These are challenges which fair pay agreements could help to resolve.

CONCLUSION

Fair pay agreements are not a panacea for resolving problems in the labour market, but they are an important policy tool which can shape better economic outcomes. The government clearly recognises this in its plans to create negotiating bodies to cover the adult social care and school support staff sectors. As this report has outlined, the government can extend this approach into other sectors where the state is the primary purchaser of services, like childcare, rail and public housebuilding. It could also explore the case for a legal framework to facilitate the introduction of fair pay agreements in predominantly market-driven labour markets.

Whichever path the government chooses, its plans constitute a bold and novel approach to resolving labour market challenges. If fair pay agreements are successful, they could provide proof of concept for a modern approach to industrial relations – one where employers and staff are brought together to improve labour market conditions across entire industries, with potential benefits for both sides of the negotiating table.

REFERENCES

- Anderson G (2023) 'Troubled Life and Imminent Death of FPA's in New Zealand – Lessons for the UK?', comment, Institute for Employment Rights. <https://www.ier.org.uk/comments/troubled-life-and-imminent-death-of-fpas-in-new-zealand-lessons-for-the-uk/>
- Armed Forces' Pay Review Body [AFPRB] (2025) 'Armed Forces' Pay Review Body', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/armed-forces-pay-review-body> [accessed 17/02/2025]
- Bach-Mortensen AM, Goodair B, Degli Esposti M, Corlet Walker C and Barlow J (2024) *Evidencing the outsourcing of social care provision in England*, Oxford University Department of Social Policy and Intervention. <https://www.spi.ox.ac.uk/sitefiles/main-public-output-full-report-final.pdf>
- Bectu (2025) 'Agreements & Grading Schemes', webpage. <https://bectu.org.uk/get-involved-in-the-union/agreements-grading-schemes/>
- Boury A (2025) 'What Are The Biggest Challenges In The Construction Industry? – & How To Tackle Them', *Access Construction*. <https://www.theaccessgroup.com/en-gb/construction/resources/challenges-in-construction-industry/>
- Citizens Information (2023) 'Joint Labour Committees', webpage. <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/industrial-relations-and-trade-unions/joint-labour-committees/>
- Collyer Merritt E (2024) 'Social care in England: Current situation, case for a strategy and further support for unpaid carers', *House of Lords*. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/social-care-in-england-current-situation-case-for-a-strategy-and-further-support-for-unpaid-carers/>
- Construction Industry Joint Council [CIJC] (2025) 'Homepage', webpage. <https://cijcemployers.co.uk/>
- Deakin S and Koukiadaki A (2009) 'Governance Processes, Labour–Management Partnership and Employee Voice in the Construction of Heathrow Terminal 5', *Industrial Law Journal*, 38:4, 365–389. <https://doi.org/10.1093/indlaw/dwp022>
- Department for Business and Trade [DBT] (2024a) *Factsheet: Adult Social Care Negotiating Body in the Employment Rights Bill*. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67125b24386bf0964853d800/adult-social-care-negotiating-body.pdf>
- Department for Business and Trade [DBT] (2024b) *Factsheet: School Support Staff Negotiating Body in the Employment Rights Bill*. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67125b4c8a62ffa8df77b391/school-support-staff-negotiating-body.pdf>
- Department for Business and Trade [DBT] (2024c) *Final stage impact assessment: Establish a Fair Pay Agreements process in the Adult Social Care sector*. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/671259d59cd657734653d7e5/impact-assessment-establish-a-fair-pay-agreements-process-in-the-adult-social-care-sector.pdf>
- Department for Business and Trade [DBT] (2024d) 'Trade union statistics 2023', tables. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/trade-union-statistics-2023>
- Department for Education [DfE] (2024) 'School support staff body reinstated', press release. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/school-support-staff-body-reinstated>
- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs [DEFRA] (2012) 'The future of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales, Agricultural Wages Committees, Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees', consultation outcome. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-of-the-agricultural-wages-board-for-england-and-wales-and-agricultural-wages-committees-and-agricultural-dwelling-house-advisory-committees-in-england>
- Druker J and White G (2013) 'Employment relations on major construction projects: the London 2012 Olympic construction site', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 44:5-6, 566-583. <https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12038>

- European Public Service Union [ESPU] (2021) 'Collective bargaining developments in the public services', webpage. <https://www.epsu.org/article/collective-bargaining-developments-public-services>
- Fair Pay Agreement Working Group (2018) *Fair Pay Agreements: Supporting workers and firms to drive productivity growth and share the benefits*. <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/27938-fair-pay-agreement-working-group-report>
- Fair Work Convention (2025) 'Homepage', webpage. <https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/>
- Farquharson C (2024) 'What you need to know about the new childcare entitlements', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*. <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/what-you-need-know-about-new-childcare-entitlements>
- Federation of Master Builders [FMB] (2025) 'BATJIC wages and holidays', webpage. <https://www.fmb.org.uk/resource/batjic-wages-and-holidays.html>
- Foley N and Roberts N (2024) *Childcare workforce in England*, House of Commons Library. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9948/CBP-9948.pdf>
- Fulton L (2020) *Codetermination in Germany: A Beginner's Guide*, Institute for Codetermination and Corporate Governance. https://www.boeckler.de/fpdf/HBS-007746/p_mbf_praxis_2020_32.pdf
- Greater London Authority [GLA] (2021) *The GLA Group Responsible Procurement Policy: Delivering Social Value Through our Supply Chain*. https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_group_responsible_procurement_policy_2021.pdf
- Grimshaw D (2024) 'Introduction: International experiences of multilevel collective bargaining and lessons for implementation', *International Labour Review*, Volume 163, Issue 4, 517-713
- Haldane A (2018) *The UK's Productivity Problem: Hub No Spokes*, Bank of England. <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2018/the-uks-productivity-problem-hub-no-spokes-speech-by-andy-haldane>
- Hansard HC Deb. (28 April 1909). vol. 4, col. 388. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190601040154/https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1909/apr/28/trade-boards-bill>
- Hardy K, Stephens L, Tomlinson J, Valizade D, Whittaker X, Norman H and Moffat R (2023) *Retention and return: Delivering the expansion of early years entitlement in England*, Early Education and Childcare Coalition. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/646ca30371a2ef6a657e9309/t/65482050ded6710668b8b62a/1699225681784/Retention+and+Return.pdf>
- Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (2023) 'Update on Fair Work: workstream activity from Scottish Government National Care Service team', webpage. <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/update-on-fair-work-workstream-activity-from-scottish-government-national-care-service-team/>
- Hughes ES and Dundon T (2018) 'Wage Councils could address endemic pay inequality in the UK economy', University of Manchester. <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/about/news/wage-councils-could-address-endemic-pay-inequality-in-the-uk-economy/>
- International Labour Organization [ILO] (2024) *Social Dialogue Report 2024: Peak-level social dialogue for economic development and social progress*. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/02_ILO_Social_Dialogue_2024_Full-R8.pdf
- Irish Statute Book (2025) 'Industrial Relations Act, 1946', webpage. <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1946/act/26>
- Joint Industrial Board [JIB] (2025) 'The Joint Industrial Board', webpage. <https://www.jib.org.uk/>
- Joint Industrial Board for Plumbing Mechanical Engineering Services [JIBPMES] (2025) 'Welcome to the JIB-PMES', webpage. <https://www.jib-pmes.org/jib-pmes-home/>
- Korczyński M (2003) 'Centralisation of Collective Bargaining in a Decade of Decentralisation: The Case of the Engineering Construction Industry', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 28:1, 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2338.00038>
- Labour Party (2024a) *Getting Britain Moving: Labour's Plan to Fix Britain's Railways*, policy paper. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/GETTING-BRITAIN-MOVING-Labours-Plan-to-Fix-Britains-Railways.pdf>

- Labour Party (2024b) *Labour's Plan to Make Work Pay: Delivering A New Deal for Working People*, policy paper. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/LABOURS-PLAN-TO-MAKE-WORK-PAY.pdf>
- The Labour Court (2025) 'Employment Regulation Orders', webpage. <https://www.labourcourt.ie/en/industrial-relations/employment-regulation-orders/>
- Labour Research Department [LRD] (2021) *Scotland's collective bargaining 2021: A report for the STUC*. <https://www.stuc.org.uk/resources/scotland-collective-bargaining.pdf>
- Local Government Association [LGA] (2025a) 'Local government services', webpage. <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support/local-government-services>
- Local Government Association [LGA] (2025b) 'National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services', webpage. <https://www.local.gov.uk/national-joint-council-local-authority-fire-and-rescue-services>
- Low Pay Commission [LPC] (2024) *Low Pay Commission Report 2023*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e0b1f93f6945001103601d/E03071356_NMW_LPC_Report_2023_Accessible.pdf
- Low Pay Commission [LPC] (2025) *Low Pay Commission Report 2024*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/679ce5e8a9ee53687470a34e/Low_Pay_Commission_2024_report.pdf
- Mather K (2014) *Working Together Review: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland*, NHS Scotland. <https://www.staffgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/media/1385/working-together-review.pdf>
- Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment [MBIE] (2025) 'Fair Pay Agreements legislation', webpage. <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/employment-and-skills/fair-pay-agreements>
- Müller T and Schulten T (2019) 'Editorial', *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 25:3, 255-257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1024258919874710>
- National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body [NCARRB] (2025) 'National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-crime-agency-remuneration-review-body>
- National Joint Council for the Engineering Construction Industry [NJCECI] (2024) *National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry*. <https://www.njceci.org.uk/download/naeci-2024-2025/?wpdmdl=2692&refresh=67247e12091961730444818>
- National Joint Council for the Engineering Construction Industry [NJCECI] (2025) 'Homepage', webpage. <https://www.njceci.org.uk/>
- NHS Employers (2024) 'The history of pay in the NHS', webpage. <https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/history-pay-nhs>
- NHS Pay Review Body [NHSPRB] (2025) 'NHS Pay Review Body', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/nhs-pay-review-body>
- OECD (2018) *OECD Employment Outlook 2018*. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2018/07/oecd-employment-outlook-2018_g1g8f61d.html
- OECD (2019) *Negotiating Our Way Up: Collective Bargaining in a Changing World of Work*, OECD Publishing: Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/1fd2da34-en>
- OECD (2021a) *France: Main indicators and characteristics of collective bargaining*. <https://web-archive.oecd.org/temp/2021-02-17/580072-collective-bargaining-database-france.pdf>
- OECD (2021b) *Ireland: Main indicators and characteristics of collective bargaining*. <https://web-archive.oecd.org/temp/2021-02-17/580081-collective-bargaining-database-ireland.pdf>
- OECD (2021c) *New Zealand: Main indicators and characteristics of collective bargaining*. <https://web-archive.oecd.org/temp/2021-02-17/580094-collective-bargaining-database-newzealand.pdf>
- OECD (2025) 'Incidence of low and high pay', webpage. <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/incidence-of-low-and-high-pay.html>

- Office for the Pay Review Bodies (2023) 'About Pay Review Bodies', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-review-bodies-and-police-boards-introduction/an-introduction-to-pay-review-bodies-and-police-boards>
- Offshore Energies Association [OEUK] (2025) 'Energy Services Agreement', webpage. <https://oeuk.org.uk/industry-support/energy-services-agreement/>
- Paternes Meloni W and Stirati A (2022) The decoupling between labour compensation and productivity in high-income countries: Why is the nexus broken?, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 61:2, 425-463. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12713>
- Police Remuneration Review Body [PRRB] (2025) 'Police Remuneration Review Body', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/police-remuneration-review-body>
- Prime Minister's Office (2025a) 'Break Down Barriers to Opportunity', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/missions/opportunity>
- Prime Minister's Office (2025b) 'Prime Minister clears path to get Britain building', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-clears-path-to-get-britain-building>
- Prison Service Pay Review Body [PSPRB] (2025) 'Prison Service Pay Review Body', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/prison-services-pay-review-body>
- Race M (2024) 'UK 'doesn't have enough builders' for Labour's 1.5m homes', *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yg1471rwp0>
- Rebeiro M (2025) 'True extent of construction labour shortage revealed', *Construction Wave*. <https://constructionwave.co.uk/2025/01/20/true-extent-of-construction-labour-shortage-revealed/>
- Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration [RBDDDB] (2025) 'Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/review-body-on-doctors-and-dentists-remuneration>
- Review Body on Senior Salaries [RBSS] (2025) 'Review Body on Senior Salaries', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/review-body-on-senior-salaries>
- School Teachers' Review Body [STRB] (2025) 'School Teachers' Review Body', webpage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body>
- Scottish Government (2024) 'National Care Service: Ministerial statement', webpage. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-care-minister-statement-on-national-care-service/>
- Scottish Joint Industrial Board [JIB] (2025) 'Welcome to the Scottish Joint Industry Board', webpage. <https://sjib.org.uk/>
- Sisson K (2024) 'Introducing sectoral bargaining in the United Kingdom: Why it makes sense and how it might be done', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 55:5, 446-471. <https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12444>
- Thermal Insulation Contractors Association [TICA] (2025) *The Thermal Insulation Contracting Industry National Agreement 2019-2021*. <https://tica-acad.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/TICI-National-Agreement-2019-2021.pdf>
- Vincent C (2019) 'France: the rush towards prioritising the enterprise level', in Müller T, Vandaele K and Waddington J (eds) *Collective bargaining in Europe: towards an endgame, Volume I*, European Trade Union Institute: Brussels. <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/CB%20Vol%201%20Chapter%2011.pdf>
- Virdi A (2024) 'Eight in 10 early years settings struggling with staff retention, survey finds', *Children & Young People Now*. <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/news/eight-in-10-early-years-settings-struggling-with-staff-retention-survey-finds/>
- UNISON (2025) 'A new deal for school support staff', webpage. <https://www.unison.org.uk/about-2/schools/sssnb/>
- Universities & Colleges Employers Association [UCEA] (2025) 'Collective pay negotiations', webpage. <https://www.ucea.ac.uk/our-work/collective-pay-negotiations-landing/>
- Welsh Parliament (2022) 'Fair work and better public services? The Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill', webpage. <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/fair-work-and-better-public-services-the-social-partnership-and-public-procurement-bill/>

- Welsh Government (2024) *Fair Work Commission recommendations: progress report 2024*.
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2024/4/2/1713277473/fair-work-commission-recommendations-progress-report-2024.pdf>
- Welsh Government (2025a) 'Retail Forum: Terms of Reference', webpage.
<https://www.gov.wales/retail-forum/terms-reference>
- Welsh Government (2025b) 'Social Care Fair Work Forum: Terms of Reference', webpage.
<https://www.gov.wales/social-care-fair-work-forum/terms-of-reference>
- Workplace Relations Commission (2025) 'Employment Regulation Orders', webpage.
https://www.workplacerelements.ie/en/what_you_should_know/hours-and-wages/employment%20regulation%20orders/
- Wright CF (2013) 'The Effectiveness of Socially Sustainable Sourcing Mechanisms: Assessing the Prospects of a New Form of Joint Regulation', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 44:1, 20-37.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12000>
- Wright CF (2023) *Organising beyond the employment relationship: Unions, collective bargaining and supply chain coordination*, Trades Union Congress.
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-product-files/2023-01/TUCOrganisingBeyondtheEmploymentRelationship.pdf>
- Wright CF (2024) 'Multi-employer collective bargaining in liberal market economies: Reasons for survival and reinvigoration', *International Labour Review*, 163:4, 677-691.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ilr.12445>
- YouGov (2025) 'Are train services in Britain good value?', webpage.
<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/are-train-services-in-britain-good-value>



GET IN TOUCH

For more information about the Institute for Public Policy Research, please go to www.ippr.org

You can also call us on +44 (0)20 7470 6100, e-mail info@ippr.org or tweet us @ippr

Institute for Public Policy Research

Registered Charity no. 800065 (England & Wales), SC046557 (Scotland), Company no, 2292601 (England & Wales)