

Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
House of Commons  
London  
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**The political situation in Northern Ireland**

**26 January 2024**

Dear Mr Heaton-Harris,

Firstly, to introduce myself my name is Graham Agnew, and I am the branch Secretary for Community Union's Northern Ireland Education Branch.

At our branch meeting, which was held on the eve of thousands of public sector workers going on strike, branch members raised their concerns about the current political situation in Northern Ireland. It has now been three years since Educators in Northern Ireland have had a pay rise which means they are suffering from severe cost-of-living issues arising from drastic pay cuts and loss of services. Pay is not keeping pace with the rest of the UK. Currently newly qualified teachers pay in Northern Ireland averages around £24,000, whilst in England the minimum is now £30,000. The gap is widening, and this situation cannot go on and needs urgent political intervention.

Community members within the Northern Ireland branch have resolved to seek a political solution to this situation and we are writing to you, in order that you can work with the UK Government to provide this much needed solution.

The UK Government has made a significant offer that would help address the challenges facing public sector pay and Northern Ireland's finances. This money must be released, and we urge you to work with the Government to find a resolution to this intolerable situation and current stalemate which exists.

Community Northern Ireland Education branch has developed some questions which we will be placing before Parliament to ensure that political support is gained for this situation, which is having a devastating effect on thousands of Educators in Northern Ireland.

I urge you to do everything that you can to ensure that this situation does not continue.

I look forward to hearing from you, with a clear action plan of systems you will be putting in place to ensure that this stalemate for Northern Ireland Educators comes to an end.

Yours faithfully

**Graham Agnew**

**Branch Chair, Northern Ireland Education Branch**

**Community union**

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