



7 June 2022

Issue Number 01

## **UNISON calls for a substantial pay rise of £2K or RPI for all local government & school workers**

UNISON, GMB and Unite lodged a pay claim for all council and school workers employed on NJC pay in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on Monday 6 June.

**The claim calls for a substantial increase of either £2,000 or RPI (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points, from 1 April 2022.**

The [full claim](#) is available on our [NJC pay website \(unison.org.uk/weneedmore\)](https://unison.org.uk/weneedmore) and has been submitted to the Employers' Side of the NJC.

The pay claim focuses on the rising cost of living and the need, now more than ever before, for a significant pay rise for all local government and school staff. At the end of this bulletin you'll find a summary of all of the reasons why this pay rise is needed.

### **Gearing up for the pay campaign!**

The Local Government Association (LGA), representing the NJC Employers Side, have told us they will be consulting councils on the pay claim in June, before responding in late July. It is crucial that we maximize political pressure on council and school employers during this period. We need everyone to make it absolutely clear to national and local government why a substantial pay rise is so vital. We hope this is useful when talking to members, potential members, councillors and others about why they should support our claim and campaign.

At the same time, we need to build awareness of our NJC pay claim at local level with members, by getting members engaged in the campaign as well. We can use our pay campaign to recruit those who haven't yet joined the union and ask members to become reps and workplace contacts so that we can build the strongest possible campaign. And of course, we need to ensure maximum publicity for the pay claim and campaign in the national and local press, media and social media.

**We need YOU to make our campaign a success. Read on to find out how you and your branch can get involved.**

# What your branch can do to help win a decent pay rise

To be successful we'll need everyone to get involved in this pay campaign.

UNISON is producing a wide range of resources for branches to run campaigns at a local level in support of a substantial pay rise for council and school workers. A range of materials are in production (although many are already available) and will be available for you to start using over the next month. These include:

- PowerPoint presentation for briefing activists and members in virtual meetings
- Members' leaflet
- Leaflet for use in schools
- A model motion for councils in support of our pay claim
- Model pay claims for use in academies and private contractors
- Postcards to send to your MP calling on them to support proper funding for councils so that a decent pay rise is properly funded.
- Social media/website/email ['we need more' graphics](#) for your campaign communications.

**Keep checking in:** Our pay campaign website [unison.org.uk/weneedmore](https://unison.org.uk/weneedmore) will be updated as these resources are produced.

## Campaign launch webinar – 7 June 2022

As featured in last week's branch circular, UNISON is holding a pay campaign launch webinar to brief activists on this year's claim. This is taking place at 12.30pm on Tuesday 7 June 2022. You may - just about - still have time to register for this on our [UNISON events page](#).

If you missed the webinar – no problem – you will be able to watch a recording of the webinar. The link to the webinar recording will be circulated to branches.

## Stay in touch with us

We welcome any comments or ideas from branches about how to build the campaign. Please email us at [NJCpay2022@unison.co.uk](mailto:NJCpay2022@unison.co.uk).

Read on to find out about the conditions claim and the context of the claim with the summary of arguments about why a substantial pay rise is needed.

# Conditions claim

UNISON has agreed with the other NJC trade unions that various conditions claims be included in the pay claim.

The claim calls for:

- A Covid-19 recognition payment
- A national minimum agreement on homeworking policies for all councils and the introduction of a home working allowance
- An urgent review of all mileage rates currently applying
- A review and update of NJC terms for family leave and pay
- A review of term time only contracts and consideration of retainers
- Reduction in the working week (without loss of pay) to 35 hours (34 in London) plus one additional day of annual leave

We will report more on this in a subsequent circular, but we are clear that, in line with the wishes of our members and the NJC Committee, UNISON's focus for the campaign and negotiations will be on the headline pay claim itself, with a strong and public demand for a £2,000 or RPI pay increase for all pay points.

## Context of the claim

Below is a summary of the key arguments made in the [full claim](#) for a pay rise of £2,000 or RPI (whichever is greater).

We hope that this is useful when explaining the need for a substantial pay rise.

- Council and school workers have endured a decade of pay freezes and below average pay awards
- Local government workers have lost on average 27.5% from the value of their pay spine since 2010
- The new cost of living crisis plus a standstill on NJC conditions has devalued low pay even further
- Just over half (51%) the cost of meeting this pay claim would be recouped by the government
- Further calls to central government for new funding for pay are needed
- The TU side urges local government employers to join us in making those renewed calls

## **COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

- A sharp rise in the cost of living is hitting our members hard
- They are experiencing the fastest fall in living standards since the 1950s
- Inflation is forecast to peak at over 10% this year
- Economic conditions are now unlikely to return to pre-Covid levels until at least 2024
- Support measures offered by the government are not enough

## **ECONOMIC BACKGROUND**

- Over the past 12 years, most NJC pay points have lost a third of their value
- Many of the roles hit by this long-term low pay are those likely to be worst affected by the cost-of-living crisis
- Local government will fail to attract or retain staff if wages fall further below the cost of living
- For 10 of the last 11 years, NJC pay awards have fallen below average pay awards in other sectors
- Household debt in the UK is now rising at its fastest rate since Covid-19 began
- UK household credit card borrowing in February 2022 saw the biggest increase since records began

## **COMPARING NJC PAY**

- NJC pay points 1-3 now all fall below the £9.90 UK Foundation Living Wage rate
- NJC pay would need to rise by more than 4% each year over the next three annual pay awards to meet the expected minimum wage target by 2024
- Deleting pay points on the pay spine should always be a last resort
- The NJC should seek to create some breathing room between the legal minimum and SCP 1

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PRESSURES**

- 78% of councils are experiencing some form of recruitment and retention difficulties
- COVID-19 workforce absences have restricted the ability recruit and retain staff
- Unemployment is at a record low and local government pay is stagnating - this will only make recruitment and retention harder

- Some traditionally low-paid retail jobs have overtaken local government pay at the bottom

## **PAY-RELATED CONDITIONS OF WORK**

- Covid-19 continues to put some strain on local government services and staff – a recognition payment would go some way towards recognising this
- All councils must have a homeworking policy in place and that it should include an allowance
- HMRC mileage rates which have remained unchanged since 2011-12 and do not reflect new cost of living rises to fuel – an urgent review of all mileage rates is needed ASAP
- NJC terms for Family leave and pay compares unfavourably and need a major review
- A review of term time only contracts is needed
- A reduction in the working week (without loss of pay) and an additional day of annual leave would help to offset historic low pay