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We need a £2,000 pay rise!

The three local government unions, representing 1.4 million council and school employees, have submitted a pay claim for staff in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to receive a pay boost of at least £2,000 each.

UNISON, GMB and Unite say only a significant rise will help protect services and enable staff to weather the growing cost of living pressures following a decade of local authority cuts and pay restraint.

The 2022 claim, which would apply from the start of April, would see council employees receive either a £2,000 rise at all pay grades or the current rate of RPI (presently 11.1%), whichever is higher for each individual.

This would lift all council and school employees back above the real living wage of £9.90 per hour (outside London). Staff working in local government have seen an average of 27.5% wiped from the value

of their pay since 2010. The squeeze on household budgets has a pronounced effect on council workers, many of whom are in low-paid roles and are currently paid little more than the minimum wage, say unions.

As well as dealing with increased workloads because of austerity cuts, staff have been further stretched by the challenges of the pandemic and spiralling day-to-day costs. Council employees – including refuse collectors, library staff, teaching assistants and care workers – deserve better pay and working conditions while providing vital community services.

UNISON head of local government Mike Short said: "If the pandemic showed anything, it was that council workers provide invaluable services to keep communities safe. Time and time again they went above and beyond to look after people in their area. But they can't run services on thin air. Many staff are struggling to make ends meet and unless they're paid properly, many will decide to quit for better paid work elsewhere. Employers and the government need to invest properly in the local government and school workforce to ensure the important services on which everyone relies are fit for the future."

School Clothing Grants

UNISON is offering financial support to cover the costs of school clothing to members, who are experiencing financial difficulties, due to COVID-19, the cost of living crisis or other circumstances.

Grants of up to £70 per school-age child are available. Only one application can be accepted per household.

To be eligible, you must meet the following:

You are a member for at least four weeks and have paid four weeks' subscriptions before 24 June 2022;

You are financially responsible for the child/children and receiving Child Benefit for them;

You (and your partner if applicable) have savings/rolling bank balance(s) of no more than £1,000.

And either:

Your household has a net income of less than £26,000 per annum, or
You are in receipt of Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, or Tax Credit payments.

You can complete the application form online

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/06/School-Clothing-Grant-2022-Application-Form.docx>

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Contact UNISON direct if you need your membership number 0800 0 857 857.

Further Education unions reject 2.25% pay offer

UNISON and the other further education unions have jointly rejected a 2.25% pay offer for 2022/23 from the Association of Colleges (AOC).

The offer, made last Thursday, is not binding, meaning that individual colleges are under no obligation to implement it.

And it is in stark contrast to the claim that the unions jointly submitted in March – for a pay rise of 10% on all points, with a minimum uplift of £2,000, all colleges to become accredited Living Wage Foundation employers and for significant movement toward agreements on workload in colleges.

A joint statement from the unions – including GMB, NEU, UCU and Unite – points out that the offer follows a decade of real terms pay cuts for further education staff, which has seen pay fall behind inflation by more than 35% since 2009.

"During an unprecedented cost of living crisis, and with inflation currently at a 40-year high and set to rise further, this offer is insulting," the statement adds. "The employer body has chosen not to use significant increases in core central government funding to invest in college staff, despite unions campaigning alongside AOC to secure it.

"None of the measures proposed by AOC will solve the college workforce crisis, which the employer body itself describes as being the 'worst in two decades'. The failure to make an offer which will properly uplift pay and address unmanageable workloads could now see this crisis worsen further."

Leigh Powell, UNISON National Officer for Education and Children's Services, commented: "While this offer is appalling for all staff, after 12 years of stagnant pay, it is particularly bad that nothing further has been offered to staff at the lowest end of the pay scale – those that will be hit the hardest in the current cost of living crisis. The employers are still refusing to become accredited Foundation Living Wage employers," she added. "Low-paid workers will not get the help they need until all colleges make a proper commitment to do this. Every single worker is entitled to a decent wage."

Please check that your UNISON colleagues have received this newsletter electronically—if not please ask them to contact the branch on 01706 925952 or email_unison@rochdale.gov.uk so we can update their membership record