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Pay Claim for Local Government and Schools

UNISON, UNITE and GMB have submitted their pay claim for 2026-27. We are calling for:

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (whichever is greater)
- A minimum pay rate of £15 an hour
- A two hour reduction in the working week
- An increase of one day annual leave
- The ability of all school support staff to take a day of paid leave during term time
- The abolition of Level 1 Teaching Assistant role and instead all Level 1 role holders be moved onto Level 2

If the employers side seek a multi-year deal the unions' claim will include:

- o Year 1: £3,000 or 10% + £15 minimum hourly rate
- o Year 2: RPI + 3%
- o Year 3: RPI + 2%

We would also seek guarantees that any multi-year settlement would be accompanied by a review of the NJC pay spine being completed and agreed by all parties. Any multi-year agreement must include a reopener clause, allowing for a return to meaningful negotiations in the event of:

- Significant economic instability
- Volatile or unexpectedly high inflation

Since 2010, NJC workers have experienced a significant decline in the real value of their wages. When adjusted for inflation and the rising cost of living, the average NJC worker has lost approximately 26% of the value of their pay. This erosion has had a profound impact on the financial wellbeing of local authority workers, many of whom are now struggling to meet basic household expenses.

The long-term decline in pay has been exacerbated by recent economic shocks, most notably the ongoing cost of living crisis. Sharp increases in energy bills, food prices, housing costs, and other essentials have far outpaced NJC pay awards.

As a result, many workers are facing real hardship, with some forced to rely on food banks or take on second jobs to make ends meet. NJC pay increases have consistently failed to keep up with inflation.

This has led to a growing gap between earnings and the actual cost of living. The lower end of the NJC pay spine is now alarmingly close to the statutory National Minimum Wage and falls below the Real Living Wage, which is independently calculated based on what people need to live.

Local authorities are also feeling the effects of this pay crisis. The number of employees in England's councils has been falling year on year, with many councils struggling to recruit and retain staff. Low pay is a key factor driving this trend, particularly in essential frontline roles such as care work, refuse collection, and school support.

It is time to seriously address these issues. Only a substantial pay increase will do that.

Rochdale UNISON's Annual General Meeting

Rochdale UNISON will be holding our annual general meeting over 3 sessions on 4th March 2026 (you only need to attend one meeting but you are welcome to attend more than one if you want to). All members are welcome. The Annual General Meeting will elect your Branch Officers, Auditors, and Representatives and ratify the election of Workplace Stewards for the forthcoming year. Elections will also be made for National and Local Government Conference 2026.

The date of the AGM Wednesday 4th March 2026.

There will be 3 physical meetings available.

4th March – 6.30am @ Green Lane Heywood

4th March – 7.00am @ Green Lane Heywood

4th March - 1.00pm @ St Andrew's Methodist Church, Rochdale (Next to Aldi)

Please contact the branch on 01706 925952 or unison@rochdale.gov.uk to register your place at one of the meetings.

If you wish to stand for a position in the branch, please ensure that your nomination form is received at the Branch Office by no later than 14th January 2026. (Nomination forms can be obtained from the Branch Office)

Breakfast pastries / a complimentary buffet will be available at the start of the meetings.

Please put this in your diary or outlook calendar today. We look forward to seeing you there.

More funding needed to address school staffing crisis

School staffing shortages are harming children's education and safety, a survey by UNISON has found. Almost three in five (59%) support staff in schools reported having fewer colleagues than a year ago, with just 6% saying numbers have increased. More than three quarters (78%) said there were not enough workers to meet pupils' needs, with a similar number (77%) warning reduced staffing made it harder to keep pupils safe. The UK-wide survey of almost 3,000 school workers – including teaching assistants, technicians, caterers and cleaners – found the main reason given for the shortage was the failure of schools to replace people when they leave. UNISON says the knock-on effect is an increase in workloads and unpaid overtime for those who remain. But, despite their best efforts, they're unable to provide enough support to pupils, run clubs or cover classes. The union warns the situation is likely to get worse, as over three quarters (77%) of staff say they are worried about further budget cuts in the next 12 months, with almost two in five (38%) saying they're actively looking for a better-paid job.

UNISON head of education Mike Short said:

"This survey paints a bleak picture of an underappreciated workforce going above and beyond. But even so, staff believe pupils' education is suffering due to shortages. "The situation is bad news for everybody and simply unsustainable. Overstretched employees are taking on extra responsibilities and doing teacher-level work for support staff wages. "Schools need extra cash so they can replace people when they leave and afford fair pay rises for all their employees. "The forthcoming school support staff negotiating body should mean better recognition of the vital contribution made by the likes of teaching assistants, caterers and technicians. "Crucially, it must improve their pay and conditions, backed by the increased government funding that schools clearly need."