

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

## Council and school workers' pay

Significant pay award is vital after years of cuts and restraint



## Local government and school staff deserve inflation-busting pay rise, say unions

**Three local government unions, representing 1.4 million council and school employees, have submitted a pay claim that calls for an above-inflation wage rise.**

UNISON, GMB and Unite say a significant pay award is vital after years of local authority spending cuts and pay restraint.

The claim, which would apply from the start of April, is for council employees to receive a wage rise of 12.7%.

Council employees - including refuse collectors, librarians, teaching assistants, care workers, cleaners and catering staff - deserve better pay and working

conditions for providing vital community services, say the unions.

In their submission to employers, the unions point out that staff working in local government have seen 25% wiped from the value of their pay since 2010.

A wage rise exceeding inflation is the only way to recruit and retain staff, at a time when local authorities are struggling to sustain the workforce needed to

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deliver services to the public.

Unless councils and schools pay competitive rates, workers will find better-paid, less-stressful work elsewhere, the unions say.

Staff have also faced increased workloads because of austerity cuts and their finances have been stretched to the limit by the cost-of-living crisis.

Council and school workers are often in low-paid roles, earning little more than the minimum wage, which has a devastating effect on their household budgets, say the three unions. The pay claim also asks employers to consider the introduction of a minimum pay rate of £15 per hour over the next two years.

**UNISON head of local government Mike Short** said:

“Council and school workers provide invaluable services. They keep communities safe, educate future generations and look after the most vulnerable.

“But councils can’t function without staff. Many workers are struggling to make ends meet and unless they’re paid properly, more will quit for better paid work elsewhere.

“Employers must make a decent pay offer. And the government needs to invest properly in the local government and school workforce to ensure important services are fit for the future.”

**GMB national secretary Rachel Harrison** said:

“School support staff, refuse collectors, traffic wardens, social workers and more – the people who suffered from the government’s failed austerity policies and were on the frontline of the pandemic.

“And what’s their reward? Year after year of real-terms pay cuts, slowly grinding down their standard of living.

“It’s time local government employers gave workers a proper pay rise that will make their lives better. Their message is clear – we’re worth more.”

**Unite national officer Clare Keogh** said:

“The time for excuses is over. Local government workers have seen their wages plummet colossally in real terms in the last dozen years. Combined with the cost of living crisis, workers are struggling to survive financially.

“Local government workers need a pay increase that not only matches inflation but also begins to offset years of pay erosion.

“Low pay is impacting on essential council services with workers leaving in their droves to secure better paid and less demanding jobs elsewhere.”

*[The unions have submitted a headline pay claim of RPI plus 2%. This is based on the Office for Budget Responsibility’s RPI forecast for 2023 (published in November 2022) of 10.7%].*