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**PAY CLAIM FOR [INSERT YEAR]**

**SUBMITTED BY UNISON [JOINT TRADE UNION SIDE] TO [NAME OF ORGANISATION]**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This pay claim is submitted by UNISON on behalf of staff working for **[organisation]**.

The claim is set at a level that we believe recognises the following key points:

* Major increases in the cost of living over recent years have significantly reduced the value of staff wages
* Appropriate reward is needed to sustain the morale and productivity of employees at **[organisation]**
* Appropriate reward is needed for the increased workload and stress placed on staff.
* Average pay settlements across the economy have been running ahead of those received by **[organisation]** employees over recent years, which is leading to a recruitment and retention crisis
* £15 an hour is fast becoming a new benchmark for the minimum level of decent pay across the UK and to tackle low pay, the claim is calling for employers to work towards this target as soon as possible.

**2. SUMMARY OF CLAIM**

Our claim is for:

* **An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points**

This claim is in line with that made by the joint Trade Union Side to the National Joint Council (NJC)[[1]](#footnote-1) for pay and allowances in 2024/25.

**3. FALLING VALUE OF PAY**

The table below demonstrates the huge fall in living standards suffered by staff on NJC pay rates. Between 2010 and 2023, the majority of staff in organisations that implemented NJC pay saw their pay devalued by an average of 25% when pay awards were measured against inflation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1: Falling Value of Pay** | | |
| **Year** | **[organisation] pay increases** | **Rise in cost of living**  **(as measured by Retail Prices Index)** |
| 2010 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 4.6% |
| 2011 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 5.2% |
| 2012 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 3.2% |
| 2013 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 3.0% |
| 2014 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 2.4% |
| 2015 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 1.0% |
| 2016 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 1.8% |
| 2017 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 3.6% |
| 2018 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 3.3% |
| 2019 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 2.6% |
| 2020 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 1.5% |
| 2021 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 4.1% |
| 2022 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 11.6% |
| 2023 | **[Insert pay rise]** | 9.7% |

In contrast, prices for everyday goods continue to rise. Price changes to commodities that make up the RPI over the year to October 2023 are shown below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Table 2: Rises in prices for everyday goods** | |
| **Item** | **Average % increase to October 2023** |
| Housing and household expenditure | 10.4 |
| Food and catering | 9.8 |
| Consumer durables | 9.6 |
| Personal expenditure | 7.9 |
| Travel and leisure | 7.7 |
| Alcohol and tobacco | 2.7 |
| All goods | 6.4 |
| All services | 4.1 |
| All items | 6.1 |

*Source: Office for National Statistics, Consumer Price Inflation Reference Tables, Oct 2023*

Among household costs, some are rising significantly faster, with mortgage interest payments leading the way in jumping by 53.4% over the past year. The Resolution Foundation estimates that annual repayments for those re-mortgaging in 2024 are set to rise by £2,900 on average.

The price of housing remains one of the biggest issues facing employees and their families and though the rate of increase in house prices has slowed, private rental prices have seen average monthly rent for new tenancies in the UK push up by 9.6% to £1,283 in October 2023.

The cost of childcare was revealed by the annual Coram Family and Childcare Survey published in March 2023, which found that the average cost of a part time (25 hours a week) childcare place for a child under two in a nursery in Britain has risen 5.6% to £7,134 per year, while for a two-year-old that cost has jumped 6.1% to £6,912 per year.

Since 2009, some costs experienced by our members have increased faster than nearly all others – especially housing, bus travel, electricity and gas costs:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 3: Highest cost of living rises, 2009-23** | | | | |
| **Expenditure Item** | **House prices** | **Bus & coach fares** | **Electricity** | **Gas** |
| Price rise 2009 - 23 | 65% | 93% | 180% | 144% |

**4. FALLING BEHIND AVERAGE PAY RATES**

The ability of **[organisation]** to attract and retain staff in the long term will be damaged if the pay of its staff falls behind the going rate in the wider labour market.

This table shows how a decade of **[organisation]** pay awards compare with those in the private sector and wider economy.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 6: [organisation] pay awards Vs those in the wider economy since 2010** | | | |
| **Year** | **Across economy** | **Private services\*** | **[organisation] pay awards** |
| **2010** | 2% | 2% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2011** | 2.5% | 2.7% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2012** | 2.5% | 2.8% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2013** | 2.5% | 2.5% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2014** | 2.5% | 2.5% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2015** | 2.2% | 2.4% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2016** | 2% | 2% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2017** | 2% | 2.2% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2018** | 2.5% | 2.5% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2019** | 2.5% | 2.5% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2020** | 2.3% | 2.2% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2021** | 2% | 2.3% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2022** | 4% | 4% | **[Insert pay rise]** |
| **2023** | 5.6% | 6.0% | **[Insert pay rise]** |

*\*Does not include manufacturing and primary, as these are less accurate comparators*

Average pay settlements across the whole economy have seen salaries grow by 36.5% since 2010.

Average earnings growth across the economy is now running at almost 8.5% (apart from the pandemic period, this represents one of the fastest growth rate rates in over two decades)

Vacancy rates across the economy are at record levels, providing staff with substantial alternative areas of employment, often for better pay.

**Graph 2: Average earnings growth since 2020**

*Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Overview UK, November 2023*

As in the case of pay settlements, a gap between public and private rates has been a persistent feature of the economy over the last decade. 2020 saw the first sustained period since 2010 when the public sector has been running ahead of the private sector. However, faster growth in the private sector reasserted itself strongly between 2021 and 2023, before a record surge in public sector earnings growth over the last few months took the public rate to 8.6% in September 2023 against private sector earnings growth of 7.7%. The Office for National Statistics asserts that the public sector surge has been heavily influenced by one-off non-consolidated payments in the NHS and civil service over the last year.

**5. £15 MINIMUM WAGE - A NEW TARGET FOR MINIMUM PAY**

Many organisations, unions, and the TUC are now calling for a minimum wage of £15 per hour. For working families on low incomes, this would provide a desperately needed boost to their incomes, with the poorest 70% of households seeing a 6.9% increase in their forecast incomes.

The Foundation Living Wage has already reached £12 an hour and is due to increase again in the autumn of 2024. The Labour Party is committed to scrapping the current national minimum wage and introducing a “genuine living wage” based on the actual cost of living. By 2025, even the legal minimum rate could be closer to £15 an hour than £10 an hour.

£15 an hour is a target that must be recognised and addressed by employers.

**6. PAY-RELATED CONDITIONS OF WORK**

Our call for decent pay for our members also reflects the massive increase in productivity across local authority services as a result of significantly fewer workers providing almost the same services, despite major budget cuts. Cost savings are being achieved by simply getting more from staff, for less and less. Increased work intensity, accompanied by greater job insecurity and low or non-existent pay increases have characterised **[organisation]** working life for far too long.

Cuts are being met by reducing pay alongside other changes to terms and conditions, working patterns and processes. **[insert examples of local cuts e.g. to unsocial hours payments, car allowances, annual leave, sick pay increments. You may also want to make further local-specific points about the work done combatting Covid]**

Working against a background of severe budget cuts, NJC employees have been facing greater workload pressures. The fact that many employees have carried out their jobs while placing their own health and safety at risk has been a major cause of increased stress. Increased stress and declining morale pose a long-term threat to the ability of councils and schools to retain dedicated and skilled employees and provide a consistent quality of service. Recent LGA workforce data shows 90% of all councils reporting recruitment and retention problems.

Investment in the workforce is often seen as distinct from investment in better public services. However, there’s a clear link between decent pay and conditions and quality services - services that are responsive, reliable, consistent, caring and accessible. Continued improvement depends on decent pay, conditions and workforce training and development. In many cases, the service ***is*** just the staff, working face to face and often under difficult conditions.

**[Set out any evidence you can gather on the following factors**

* **Increasing demands on the service**
* **Reductions in staffing**
* **Staff feeling greater stress**
* **Staff suffering falling morale**
* **The impact of these pressures showing themselves in rising sickness absence, higher staff turnover or declining service standards**

**It is in this area that a short survey of staff may provide the most valuable material to support the evidence. An amendable basic pay survey is available** [**here**](http://www.unison.org.uk/documents/4375) **]**

The rewards employers will reap in return for investment in the well-being of their employees cannot be underestimated. An employer offering a pay cut in real terms for the next two years, on top of cuts in the last seven years, will struggle to retain or attract the existing and new skilled employees it needs for the future.

**7. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

The unemployment rate had been in decline from a peak of 8.5% in 2011 to 3.8% (the lowest level for 44 years) by September 2019. The impact of the pandemic saw that figure rise to over 5% in 2020, but has now returned to the pre-pandemic level of 3.8% as of February 2024.

Forecasts suggest this rate is unlikely to change significantly in the coming years. This means staff on low wages can shop around for better pay elsewhere.

**[If you can obtain figures for the organisation showing an increase in the vacancy rate (the number of vacant posts divided by the total number of posts in the organisation) set them out here. ]**

**[Median turnover rates are estimated at 14.7% in the public sector and 18.5% across the economy, so if you have figures on turnover rates that indicate your employer is suffering higher than average turnover, insert them here. (The turnover rate is calculated by taking the total number of leavers in a specified period - usually 12 months - and expressing the number as a percentage of the number of people employed during that period).]**

**8. AFFORDABILITY**

The affordability of this claim is clear from the latest **[organisation]** accounts, which show a surplus of **[£\_]** for **[latest financial year]**

**[If you have difficulty in obtaining the accounts of your organisation, Bargaining Support may be able to assist. Please contact** [**bsg@unison.co.uk**](mailto:bsg@unison.co.uk)**]**

**9. CONCLUSION**

There can be no doubt that all **[organisation]** employees have seen the value of their earnings fall considerably over recent years and evidence suggests that they are also falling behind pay settlements for comparable jobs.

Combined with these developments, the last year has seen intensified pressure placed on employees at the same time as greater job choices are opening up in an improving labour market.

This pay claim represents a very reasonable estimate of the reward our members deserve for their dedication, skill and hard work and the minimum improvement in pay needed to maintain workforce morale for delivering consistently high quality services.

**Appendix – Advice on drawing up a pay claim**

**1. Planning**

Plan the process for assembling claim well in advance and consult fully with members throughout. It’s advisable to start around three months in advance of the annual settlement date. Such a timescale will give you the time to conduct a survey of members if you judge that it would be helpful to the claim

**2. Information in the claim**

The amendable model pay claim above provides a starting point, but any claim will greatly benefit from the addition of information specific to the members represented.

Some very valuable information, covering the type of points listed below, can be gathered from the employer:

* Previous pay awards
* Turnover projections
* Impact of restructuring/reorganisation

## Pay bill and gender breakdown

* Annual accounts
* Directors’ pay awards

You can request information directly from the employer and if you have recognition the employer has a legal duty to provide bargaining information including on pay, conditions of service, staffing levels and financial information. See the [ACAS code of practice](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/2/q/CP02_1.pdf) for more information.

The Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) Regulations can give workers the right to be informed and consulted about an employers’ current situation and future plans. See the [ICE Regulations](https://www.unison.org.uk/upload/sharepoint/Briefings%20and%20Circulars/Information%20and%20Consultation.pdf) factsheet for more information.

You can access further background information about individual companies, particularly their financial results, by emailing UNISON Bargaining Support at [bsg@unison.co.uk](mailto:bsg@unison.co.uk)

A survey of members can also provide invaluable input to the pay claim and reveal particular issues faced by certain groups of staff, by writing the survey in a way that enables analysis by pay levels, gender, age, disability, race and sexuality. For a basic pay survey that can be amended to suit your claim, click here.

**3. Organising**

While it is always good to have a well researched, professional looking claim, it is vital to use pay negotiations as an organising and recruitment opportunity to give more power to your elbow. Make sure that you involve as many of your members as possible in preparing for negotiations.

Hold meetings to consult on the content of the claim. Set up a working group to research the issues and develop bargaining proposals. Use the issues raised in your negotiations to recruit new members. You will be most effective if your employer knows that the membership is fully involved and solidly behind you as their negotiators.

1. The National Joint Council is the joint negotiating body that brings together local government employers and the recognised unions (UNISON, GMB and UNITE). NJC pay and conditions agreements (including annual pay awards and salary scales) are implemented by the overwhelming majority of councils. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)