



Barnet UNISON  
Barnet House  
1255 High Road  
Whetstone  
London  
N20 0EJ

Telephone: 020 8359 2088  
[contactus@barnetunison.org.uk](mailto:contactus@barnetunison.org.uk)  
[www.barnetunison.me.uk](http://www.barnetunison.me.uk)

11 February 2021

Dear John

**Re: COVID Thank you payments**

I have spoken to you before about the impact on frontline workers during the COVID pandemic.

They are a group of workers who are unable to work from home and as such they are having to deal with the extraordinary pressures of working in the COVID workplace.

Every day they travel into work they risk contracting the virus and the possibility of taking it home and infecting a members of their family, some of whom may be high risk.

This level of daily stress is undoubtedly taking its toll on the health and wellbeing of this workforce.

Another glaring fact is that this workforce is largely low paid and yet they are missing out on benefits accessed by those who can work from home.

During the whole of the pandemic there have been some changes in the restrictions, some of which have favoured those staff who are able to work from home. For example staff who work from home were able to go on holiday abroad safe in the knowledge that if they had to isolate it would have no impact on their job as they could still work from home. This benefit is not applicable to a frontline worker. A frontline worker who went on holiday abroad would have to isolate. They would lose pay as they would not be able to report to work. It is important to note that there is a large group of workers in Street Scene who have family overseas.

Then there is the matter of travel costs. Staff who can work from home are saving money (another benefit not applicable to the lowest paid) whereas the lowest paid are still having to pay travel costs to work.

In a number of meetings I have mentioned that there has been a growing sense of grievance and anger at what is perceived as a two- tier workforce: those that have to go into work and those that can work from home.

Over the last nine months I have been sent many links to articles in the public domain where employers have made one-off thank you payments to their workforce.

I submit a few examples:

- Lidl gives all frontline staff a £200 'thank you' bonus as supermarkets rush to reward their employees. <https://inews.co.uk/news/business/lidl-thank-you-bonus-frontline-staff-supermarkets-reward-employees-845291>
- £500 bonus for health and social care staff. <https://www.gov.scot/news/gbp-500-bonus-for-health-and-social-care-staff/>
- Sainsbury's rewards employees with 10% bonus payment. <https://employeebenefits.co.uk/sainsburys-rewards-employees/>
- Aldi to pay 'amazing' staff 10 per cent bonus for hard work during coronavirus pandemic. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/aldi-pay-bonus-hard-work-coronavirus-pandemic-a4397336.html>
- Morrisons thanks army of colleagues with threefold increase in bonus for next 12 months. <https://www.morrisons-corporate.com/media-centre/corporate-news/morrisons-thanks-army-of-colleagues-with-threefold-increase-in-bonus-for-next-12-months/>
- Waitrose staff to get bonus in recognition of coronavirus 'sacrifices'. <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/pay/waitrose-staff-to-get-bonus-in-recognition-of-coronavirus-sacrifices/603711.article>
- Tesco rewards staff with 10% bonus payment. <https://employeebenefits.co.uk/tesco-bonus-payment/>

The majority of frontline workers are some of our lowest paid and loyal staff across the Council workforce and without their attendance public services would grind to a halt. In light of this please take this letter as our formal proposal for Barnet Council to make a thank you offer to all frontline workers.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely

JOB

John Burgess  
Branch Secretary  
Barnet UNISON

Cc: Jon Bell Assistant Director Human Resources