

## What do UNISON and the Mental Health social workers hope to achieve with the strike?



A recruitment and retention payment of **20%**. This is less than the 25% recruitment and retention payment already given to some Barnet Children and Family social workers. Children and Family social workers receive between **15% and 25% recruitment and retention payment**, Barnet Council offered adult social workers the equivalent of a 2.7% payment for two years only.

We feel that the payment will encourage more members of staff, particularly the most experienced, to stay in Barnet this reducing the **frequent and destabilising turnover** we have been experiencing. In addition, it aims to attract new permanent, experienced social workers who may be opting for work in better paid boroughs. It is only when we have stable staff numbers and crucially staff with significant experience in addition to newly qualified that **we will be able to lower our waiting lists** and provide the timely and quality care that we want to give to residents.

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## Why are Mental Health social workers planning to strike?



There is a chronic retention issue within the Mental Health Social Work Teams, **13 permanent and locum staff have left – or in some cases come and gone – within the last 10 months.** A lot of the permanent staff we have lost are the most experienced staff which means the teams are disproportionately made up of newly qualified staff.

We have a **large waiting list for allocation of a social worker**, some people are waiting over a year to see a social worker in which time they are likely to become more unwell or feel distressed because they aren't getting the support they need. We deal with very complex situations, working with people in vulnerable situations including adults at risk of self-inflicted harm or harm from others.

We carry out needs assessments to facilitate discharges from hospitals for people with mental ill-health and while hospital discharges are prioritised so allocation takes place relatively quickly, sometimes a wait can still contribute to delays with discharge. As hospital discharges and high-risk situations are prioritised, it can mean that we can't prioritise seeing people until a situation worsens and cannot do the work we want to do as social workers to put in place things that could prevent or reduce the risk of a situation worsening.

The stress from working in challenging conditions without the resources needed takes its toll on Mental Health social workers and contributes to high staff turnover. When staff leave then it can take a while for their cases to be reallocated which impacts the experience that Barnet residents have of Mental Health services and contributes to longer waiting lists.

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### **Camden UNISON NSL Strike Victory!**

After 57 days continuous strike action (9 ½ weeks in total) Camden NSL strikers have accepted a pay offer which is genuinely very close to what they were asking. The workers' pay rate was under £13/ hr and they were looking for an increase to £15.90/ hr. They won:

- £15/hr this year (backdated) which equates to an 18.1% or just over £5k pay rise.
- £15.90/hr next year
- £16.50 or RPI (Retail Price Index inflation), whichever is greater in year 3.

As Liz Wheatley, Camden UNISON Branch Secretary and NEC rep for London says: "This is our biggest win yet and absolutely underlines how right we were to go for indefinite action at the start!"

Thanks for all the messages, donations etc, they all made a real difference"

In declaring the dispute over, the NSL members made this video for our Mental Health strikers:



[Click the above image to watch the Solidarity Video](#)

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## The Barnet Group UNISON Members Say Pay Matters!

# The Barnet Group

We asked these questions and received the following results:

Are you satisfied with your level of pay?

**91% said NO**

Do you think something should be done to increase your level of pay?

**92% said YES**

Turnout was 60%. This means that if this would have been a ballot for industrial action we would have met the threshold for taking industrial action. We will be discussing the outcome at our reps meeting and with members over the coming weeks.

So a big thank you to all those who participated!

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## Disaster Appeals: Morocco and Libya

Perhaps it is a sign of the general chaos and the global destruction of our standards of living that disasters can take place within just a couple of weeks of one another. No doubt local issues and poor infrastructure have exacerbated what would have been challenging circumstances anyway but this is no reason to look away from the terrible damage now inflicted on people in Morocco and Libya from earthquake and floods.

Our sympathies go out to those caught up in these disasters. If you can assist by making a donation to the Emergency efforts then this article highlights the organisations ready to receive donations for both Morocco and Libya:

[Libyan flooding prompts emergency appeals - UK Fundraising](#)



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**Our mailing address is:**

Barnet UNISON, Room 1.9, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale  
London NW9 4EW

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