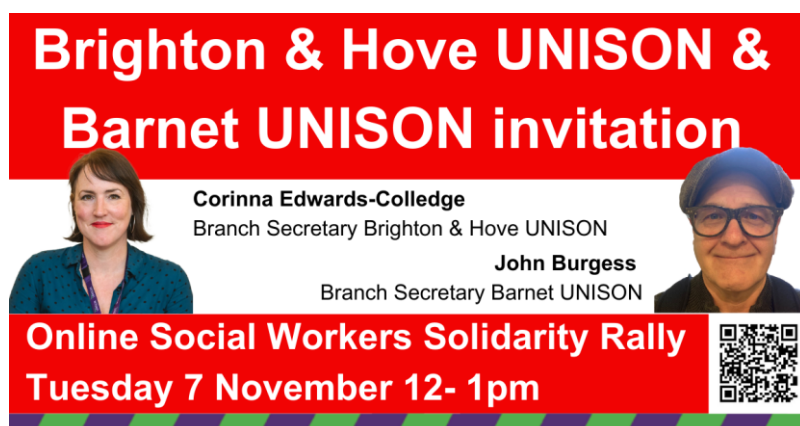


It's all about pay!!!

This e-news covers pay issues which cover more than half of our members. Read below for articles covering the Local Government Pay Award and the London Living Wage, mostly affecting our care worker membership.

But first – Read all about the coming days of action from our Mental Health Social Workers!

Join Brighton & Hove & Barnet UNISON social worker picket lines ONLINE Tues 7 Nov 12- 1pm




**Brighton & Hove UNISON &
Barnet UNISON invitation**

Corinna Edwards-Colledge
Branch Secretary Brighton & Hove UNISON

John Burgess
Branch Secretary Barnet UNISON

Online Social Workers Solidarity Rally
Tuesday 7 November 12- 1pm



This is an invitation from Barnet and Brighton & Hove UNISON inviting supporters to attend our Online Solidarity Social Worker picket lines on

Tuesday 7 November 12- 1pm

Here is the link for the meeting [ðŸŒŸðŸŒŸðŸŒŸðŸŒŸ](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87914968590?pwd=dDV1NFd5VkZRUxwQmZYeG5GWkRmdz09)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87914968590?pwd=dDV1NFd5VkZRUxwQmZYeG5GWkRmdz09>

Meeting ID: 879 1496 8590

We will have live feed from the picket lines in Brighton and Barnet.

We are in the worst cost of living crisis in 76 years and our members have had enough.

Statement from Mental Health social workers in Barnet



We are deeply disappointed that despite two years of social workers raising increasing concerns regarding the **safety and sustainability** of mental health social care, Barnet Council continues to deny that there is a recruitment and retention problem in mental health social work.

42% of social workers within the Mental Health Social Care Service **have left** within the past year whilst more still have formal plans to leave the teams within the next few months, meaning this **figure is closer to 50%**.

Furthermore, the majority of workers who have left have been those with by far the most experience, with many of these workers previously working their entire careers in mental health services within Barnet. When looking at information regarding the mental health experience of permanent staff members, **one team has lost 75% of the experience** within their team in less than one year. The result is that social workers who are recently qualified make up the bulk of the teams.

The loss of experienced social workers has significantly contributed to increasingly **high waiting lists**. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman consider it reasonable for a person to wait **4-6 weeks** for an assessment. The waiting list within Barnet is now **up to 15 months**. This time last year it was **6 months**, demonstrating the significant detrimental impact that not retaining experienced social workers is having on the service.

Mental Health Social Workers continue to express concerns that, as they are not able to assess and meet the needs for residents in a reasonable time, people with severe mental ill-health are not receiving the support they need to remain well and live in the community. This can lead to otherwise avoidable, or delayable, deterioration to mental health and can result in the person's compulsory admission to hospital on a mental health ward. Social workers have been raising that this is not fair on those who experience mental ill health, nor those who support them, such as family and friends. It is also **not in line with the principles or ethos of the Care Act 2014**, which is underpinned by a responsibility for local authorities to promote wellbeing and to prevent, delay, and reduce a person's needs for care and support.

The teams require a stable team comprised of **permanent and experienced** staff. This cannot be achieved when staff are leaving at such high rates. Mental Health Social Workers have therefore been asking Barnet Council to apply a Recruitment and Retention payment which is already in place for social workers within Family Services.

Alarmingly, despite all the evidence provided to Barnet Council, it continues to report inaccurate information regarding recruitment and retention, claiming much higher rates than are true. This has resulted in continued dismissal of the concerns raised by the workers.

According to the British Association of Social Workers, Social Workers have a responsibility to promote and work to the Code of Ethics, which has underpinned social work practice since 1975. The code sets out that social workers are expected to bring inadequate resources to the attention of their employers and that they should be prepared to challenge ineffective procedures and practice. Social Workers are regulated by **Social Work England** which sets out professional standards for all social workers in England. These standards **state that social workers should raise concerns** about unsafe practice and should challenge practices, systems, and processes where necessary.

Social workers therefore have a duty to raise concerns and advocate for those whom they serve. Mental health social workers in Barnet have been meeting these responsibilities throughout the two years they have been raising increasing concerns. We see industrial action as a necessary extension of our responsibilities as social workers to advocate for those we serve, particularly those who may not be able to advocate for themselves.

We are challenging the lack of a safe service and the unreasonable and increasing waiting lists which put the residents of Barnet at risk of harm. We are asking for a **recruitment and retention payment** to maintain a **stable and permanent workforce** of experienced staff. We will continue to advocate for the residents of Barnet and unless Barnet Council implements a reasonable recruitment and retention payment to keep experienced staff in Barnet, we will continue to return to the picket line come rain, shine, or more rain, to raise awareness and fight for residents.

Why? Because we are social workers and THIS is what social work looks like.

Signed

Barnet UNISON Mental Health social workers.

Breaking News: UNISON issues strike action notice for the next 5 months!



Julia Mwaluke, UNISON Vice President on Barnet UNISON picket line
UNISON sent the strike notification letter to Barnet Council laying out the dates of strike action to be taken by **Mental Health social workers** starting in November right through to **March 2024**.

The first day of strike action will start **Tuesday 7 November 2023**.

We are pleased to report that **Brighton UNISON** Adults social workers will be taking strike action on the **same day (Tuesday 7 November 2023)** Barnet UNISON Mental Health social workers are taking strike action. Their demand is similar to our demand, they want parity for Adults social workers with Family Services social workers who have retention payments.

Barnet UNISON has proposed a solution to this dispute which is based on rates **(7.5% to 25%)** that are already paid out to other social workers in Family services. According to evidence seen by Barnet UNISON, the numbers of staff leaving Mental Health social work teams exceeds those leaving Family Services social work teams who are all receiving recruitment & retention payments. Barnet UNISON is clear that recruitment & retention payments are likely to help stabilise the high turnover of staff across Mental Health social work teams and help retain existing staff.

The strike timetable for the next FIVE months is as follows:

- 7/8/9/14/15/16 November 2023.
- 4/5/6/7/8/ December 2023.
- 15/16/17/18/19 January 2024.
- 5/6/7/8/9 February 2024.
- 4/5/6/7/8 March 2024.

42% of social workers within the Mental Health Social Care **have left** within the past year whilst more still have formal plans to leave the teams within the next few months, meaning this **figure is closer to 50%**. Furthermore, the majority of workers who have left have been those with by far the most experience, with many of these workers previously working their entire careers in mental health services within Barnet. When looking at information regarding the mental health experience of permanent staff members, **one team has lost 75% of the experience** within their team in less than one year. The result is that social workers who are recently qualified make up the bulk of the teams.

*****Please note** that Barnet UNISON has lodged another **internal dispute** on behalf of the remaining social workers and occupational therapists working in **Adults** in response to the 2.6% recruitment and

retention offer made to this group of workers. Barnet UNISON is **unaware** of any recruitment and retention issues across this workforce and has made repeated requests for a breakdown of staffing levels across all the other social work and OT Teams. As of **Tuesday 24 October**, this information **has not been provided** despite several requests being made both in writing and in meetings.

*“We are challenging the lack of a safe service and the unreasonable and increasing waiting lists which put the residents of Barnet at risk of harm. We are asking for a **recruitment and retention payment** to maintain a **stable and permanent workforce** of experienced staff. We will continue to advocate for the residents of Barnet and unless Barnet Council implement a reasonable recruitment and retention policy to keep experienced staff in Barnet, we will continue to return to the picket line come rain, shine, or more rain, to raise awareness and fight for residents. **Why? Because we are social workers, and THIS is what social work looks like!**” (Barnet UNISON Mental Health social worker).*

“It is incredible that the employer prefers strikes over getting its facts straight and negotiating a solution. It is incredible that the only people who truly care about the services they provide are the ones on the frontline. Under the COVID pandemic we were heroes and now we’re supposed to accept that our viewpoints count for nothing? Enough is enough! These striking workers make sense and are prepared to fight for decent services. It is an honour to be with them.” (Helen Davies, Branch Chair Barnet UNISON)

*“My advice to the Council is to wake up and return to the negotiating table with a credible or risk further disruptions to Mental Health services. We know that the waiting list for services has increased from 6 months to 14 months. The impact of strikes and the constant staffing changes are all exacerbating a problem that needs addressing. Our members are clear that to deliver a safe service with no waiting lists they need to have a stable and experienced workforce. In the space of first 9 months in 2023, **14 out 31 staff** have left and last week another member of staff has given in their notice. This staffing churn is bad news for service users, and it impacts on the well-being of staff and the longer it continues there is an increased likelihood of more resignations.” (John Burgess, Branch Secretary Barnet UNISON).*

Local government unions agree to accept pay offer for 2023.

“UNISON and the other local government unions, GMB and Unite, yesterday decided to accept the employers’ pay offer for 2023, for council and school workers.

This means an increase of £1,925 on all NJC (National Joint Council) pay points, pro rata’d for part-time and term time only staff. This will be backdated to 1 April 2023.

Following the results of its ballots in the summer, UNISON’s NJC committee made the decision not to pursue industrial action.

In their joint statement, the unions thanked members for their patience while they worked to resolve the dispute.

UNISON’s head of local government Mike Short said today: “The local government unions have agreed a pay increase of £1,925 for council and school workers for 2023. Our first priority is to get this money into members’ pay packets as soon as possible.

"But pay in local government remains a major concern for UNISON, and we're planning a strong, positive campaign for a fair pay rise in 2024."

*****The above message was issued by UNISON HQ Thursday 2 November 2023. Barnet UNISON has been in touch with Barnet Council to ask that the back pay and new pay grades are in the November pay roll. We are waiting for confirmation that the new pay will be paid this month. Any questions please contact Barnet UNISON at contactus@barnetunison.org.uk**

[Click Here for further information](#)

Careworkers to receive no pay rise in 2023!

The London Living Wage Foundation announced the increase in the London Living Wage last week. It will move from £11.95/ hr to £13.15/ hr. Apart from the fact the TUC supports a minimum wage of £15/ hr, we are sure Barnet UNISON members on such low wages would rather have an increase than none at all.

So whilst we are hearing from the COVID Inquiry about all the disgusting shambolic chaos at the top of Government during the COVID years and thinking about those who suffered...this must include careworkers who risked their lives and the lives of their loved ones daily?

COVID is still with us...so is the Government...but the make up of Barnet Council has changed. Surely this would mean careworkers would be the first to receive their pay rise? Barnet UNISON has been told they will have to wait until next April to receive their pay rise.

The only workers in Barnet to not receive a pay rise in 2023 are the lowest paid – CAREWORKERS!

Apparently this is because Your Choice Barnet, part of The Barnet Group is running a deficit of over £400,000. Yet this did not stop the creation of a brand new Director of Finance post at over £100,000/ year (The Barnet Group already has an Executive Director of Finance)! Barnet UNISON will not let this rest here.

For now please write to contactus@barnetunison.org.uk with messages of support/ outrage and let us know you care about our care worker members.

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