

Get Ready for Strike Action Next Monday!



JOIN US

15

APRIL

ON OUR PICKET LINE, 8AM - 10AM AT 2 BRISTOL AVENUE, LONDON, NW9 4EW

On behalf of our members, I am requesting all our supporters to join us on our picket line this **Monday 15 April between 8-10 am.**

This is the longest dispute in Barnet UNISON's history and the longest Mental Health Social Worker dispute in UNISON's history. Please read the letter from an ex-colleague below and if you are in the Colindale area or can be in the Colindale area Monday 15th, please get there for 8am-10am and show some solidarity. A little goes a long way.

These mainly women, many of them young, workers are saying "Enough is Enough!"

The following speakers are currently:

1. Libby Nolan UNISON President.
2. Jo Galloway Regional Secretary, UNISON London Region.
3. John McDonnell MP
4. Lord John Hendy KC
5. Shelly Asquith Health & Safety TUC
6. Sam Gurney Regional Secretary London, East and South East TUC
7. Kerie Anne Branch Secretary Tower Hamlets UNISON
8. Liz Wheatley UNISON NEC rep and Branch Secretary, Barnet UNISON.

More speakers to be announced later.

The Location of our picket line is **2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London NW9 4EW.**
Nearest tube station is Colindale.

Ex Barnet Council Mental Health social worker explains why she had to leave.



For the past two years Barnet UNISON has tried to engage with senior management in Adult Social Care to address the chronic exodus of experienced Mental Health social workers from the frontline Mental Health teams. There has been a catastrophic failure to understand the fundamental risks both for service users and staff because of the ongoing turnover of staff.

Our strikers have already taken 27 days of strike action and by the end of this next phase they will have taken **72 days of strike** which equates to **1,305 lost working days or 13,050 lost contacts** with Mental Health service users.

Below is a email which was sent by an ex Mental Health social worker. I will repeat what I have repeatedly said to senior management: ***“Don’t listen to me, listen to someone who actually works in these services, they are the ones who know what is happening and how bad it is.”***

After you have read the email below, I hope you can do one of the following:

1. Visit the picket line outside Colindale on Monday 15 April between 8-10 am
2. Send a message of support to contactus@barnetunison.org.uk

Best wishes

John Burgess, Branch Secretary, Barnet UNISON.

“Dear Executive Director Adult Social Care

I am writing to you as an ex-Barnet mental health social worker in the hope that when you read my experience it will encourage you to meaningfully negotiate with striking social workers.

I left because the conditions that social workers were working in were unsafe

for workers and unsafe for service users. I was part of efforts to alter this for 2 years. These efforts started as hopeful conversations with managers in which we expressed our concerns and were promised changes and ended with strike action as the situation worsened and none of the promises made by managers were fulfilled. In my first couple of weeks as a student mental health social worker in LBB I remember the Director of Adult Social Care asking me if I hoped to stay when I qualified. I replied that I couldn't see a reason to leave as the location was good, the work interesting and the team supportive but after trying my best to stay, I realised that doing so would be to the detriment of my health and wellbeing due to under-resourcing, a reliance on junior staff for exceptionally complex work and huge waiting lists growing ever longer (to name just a few reasons).

The community mental health social work teams work with adults with some of the most complex and enduring mental health needs. They work with adults whose mental health has impacted their ability to complete the activities everyone needs to do in order to survive such as eating, safely using their homes, taking medication and attending essential medical appointments. They also work with adults where there are safeguarding concerns including concerns about self-neglect which is the most common category of abuse found in adult safeguarding reviews. However despite the complexity and risk involved in community work, it is viewed as "non-specialist".

In my new role as a social worker in an NHS specialist mental health team my salary is 10% higher than it was in a community team while my caseload involves working with fewer adults at risk of serious harm and in which risk is shared among a multi-disciplinary team including psychiatrists, psychologists and community nurses who have decades of mental health experience between them. This experience safeguards the adults we work with and reduces the likelihood of individual practitioners feeling overwhelmed and stressed which is a leading cause of staff burnout in Barnet.

Alongside improved pay, more manageable caseloads, better resources and being able to learn from experienced mental health practitioners I also currently benefit from specialist training, better lone working practices and team administrative support. When I worked for LBB one of the arguments managers gave as to not provide a recruitment and retention payment was that social workers experience the same issues wherever they work and conditions and pay are the same everywhere. This is something said to keep social workers in their place and to stop them asking for improvements. I am proof that it is not true.

In the two months since I left LBB my mental health, physical health and work/life balance has improved. My colleagues who remain do so because they are trying their best to create working conditions that will enable them to

stay in their jobs so they can support residents of Barnet but so far management seems to be against its workers and against supporting adults in Barnet who would benefit from the expertise and support of specialist, experienced community mental health social workers.

Please meaningfully negotiate with UNISON before all the mental health social workers leave or become unwell. It is your responsibility to work with social workers towards a solution but at the moment it feels senior management are hiding their heads in the sand which feels insulting to the social workers whose health is being put on the line trying to provide the service that Barnet residents deserve.

Yours sincerely,
Ex Barnet Council Mental Health social worker.”

Barnet UNISON National Pay Meeting: Wednesday 24 April 6.30- 7.30pm

National Pay 2024

What are asking for?

£3,000 or 10%.

2 hour reduction of the working week without financial loss.

One additional annual leave.

One thing UNISON members know is as prices continue to go up they very rarely **go down!**

We are in the worst **Cost of Living Crisis in 77 years**, yet the rich continue to get richer and the rest of us are asked to pay more. Please see table below.

Table 4: Highest cost of living rises, 2009-23

Expenditure Item	House prices	Bus & coach fares	Electricity	Gas
Price rise 2009 - 23	65%	93%	180%	144%

All schools and council workers are working one day a week for FREE.

The RICH keep getting richer.

- British Gas profits leap from **£72m to £751m** in a year.
- SHELL continues to reap the rewards of soaring energy prices, bringing the year's grand total to **£22 billion**.
- Energy giant BP has reported its second highest annual profit in a decade, **£11 Billion**.
- MPs just awarded themselves a pay rise to **£91,346** in April.

Last years pay was NOT enough!

Last year you received your National Pay Award in November, but it was **NOT enough**, household costs such as rents, personal expenditure, food, travel, leisure and consumer durables all **rose faster than last year's National Pay Award**.



Over the coming months we will be leafletting workplaces and arranging online meetings to talk about the progress of the national negotiations. If you would like to know more about the campaign or arrange for a speaker at your workplace, please email contactus@barnetunison.org.uk

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Wednesday 24 April 6.30- 7.30

Join Barnet UNISON Zoom Meeting using the link below.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89074206415?pwd=OEo0L1NkQmFPSSsxU3dGeml vR0xyUT09>

Meeting ID: 890 7420 6415
Passcode: 779562

Barnet UNISON is organising a series of Pay meetings over the next three months to update members on the National Pay Negotiations.

UNISON proposal is as follows:

- £3,000 or 10%.
- Two-hour reduction of the working week without financial loss.
- One additional annual leave.

UNISON, Unite and GMB are in negotiations and will report back once they have had a formal response from the National Employers.

It is likely that UNISON will conduct a strike ballot of their members. It is important that all Barnet UNISON members are ready to VOTE. Last year Barnet UNISON was 6 votes short of a successful strike ballot.

This time we intend on delivering a massive VOTE on National Pay.

Pay Campaign – The Barnet Group



This week Barnet UNISON reps will meet with senior managers from The Barnet Group to hear their response to our pay claim. If there is a flat “no” from The Barnet

Group then UNISON will press on with the necessary steps to organising an official ballot.

If there is a credible offer then we will survey our membership for your view on whether to accept or not.

In the meantime we are arranging union meetings in the settings in order to brief you all about what is taking place and to hear your views. If you want a union meeting in your workplace or even to be held on TEAMS or zoom then please email: contactus@barnetunison.org.uk

This is our pay claim:

1. Backdate the London Living Wage increase to £13.15 to the 1/11/23 and maintain differentials between other grades in YCB.
2. Pay Overtime Rates of time and a half Monday to Saturday and double time Sundays and Bank Holidays.
3. Pay enhanced rates of 25% Saturday 6am to 10pm; 50% Sunday all day; 100% Bank holiday (25% = time and a quarter; 50% = time and a half; 100% = double time)
4. Pay an increased Rate of time and a third for night working (10pm-6am).

UNISON Service Group Elections: Make Your Vote Count!

Voting begins online and by post from 22nd April.
Barnet UNISON nominated:



Helen Davies , social worker and Branch Chair Barnet UNISON
Gabby Lawler, Branch Secretary, Havering
Anju Paul, careworker and current rep for London on Service Group Executive
and Barnet UNISON rep.

We nominated them because:

Pay and Funding

This racist, divisive, self-serving Government has to go but we have to be

prepared to organise our members whoever takes over to ensure that decent pay rises and proper funding for councils and schools are secured. We need a national strategy which makes good our demand that a new Government will deliver on these points. The fight over local authority funding and school funding should not be left to individual branches to fight alone.

Equalities

The Tories are prepared to accept millions of pounds in donations from racists and then tell us there is no money for services? Division over race, gender, religion, sex, sexuality is toxic for us and does nothing to secure a better standard of living for any one group except the wealthy. We do not accept that rights for LGBT+ workers diminishes the rights of anyone else. Instead these rights strengthen all our rights!

End Privatisation

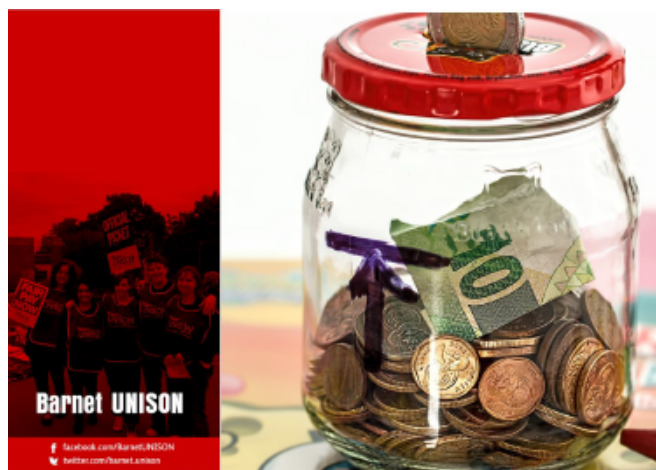
We are committed to continue opposing privatisation of public services. Privatisation has only made services worse and made the race and gender pay gap even bigger! Who are the people who are the cleaners, caterers, security workers and careworkers etc?

Anju, Gabby and Helen are committed to developing a strategy at a national level to deliver better Pay, Funding for Services and Equalities for our members. They have a track record of doing this for members at a branch level.

What is the Service Group?

We want everyone to vote in the Service Group elections. The Service Group the overwhelming majority of Barnet UNISON members are involved in is the Local Government Service Group. We will elect 3 people to represent London Local Government members. These 3 people will be discussing and shaping the views of UNISON nationally about our pay, terms and conditions and how to organize around the terrible funding gap for local government. It matters who our representatives are.

Pensions 1 to 1 meetings in Colindale Office.



Barnet UNISON is supporting this opportunity for staff to have 1 to 1 meeting about the Council Pension scheme.

The next Pension session is on **24 April**. The meetings will take place in Colindale in **room 1.3**. Staff will need to email pensions@barnet.gov.uk to book an appointment. It will be on **'first come-first served'** basis.

The future dates are:

1. 6 June
2. 11 July
3. 14 August
4. 11 September
5. 9 October
6. 5 November
7. 11 December

The Inspection Dilemma

Damned if you do; damned if you don't. When the inspectors come to town... The vast majority of people in the public sector are doing the best they can with very limited resources. Austerity, the pandemic, cost of living crisis – the strain and stress are relentless and intensifying. No wonder many people are trying to stop working as soon as this becomes financially viable!

The latest service to join the inspection regime is Adults and Health. Whereas Ofsted has inspected family services and schools for years, inspections in adult social services is unheard of until now. CQC will be inspecting the service provided by Barnet Adult Social Services over the next few weeks.

We advise our colleagues to be open and honest with the inspectors. The inspectors will speak as they find.

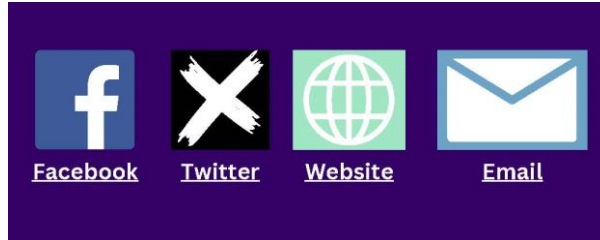
If the service is good, then nothing changes. We all get a pat on the back and carry on with the strains and stresses. At least there will be no purging of staff in a terrible blame game for a failing service. There will be no extra resources.

Indeed the more councils and schools have shown they can produce good results with less, the more money has been taken from them.

If the service is rated as bad, then there could be a purging of staff in a terrible blame game for a failing service. However, there may be extra resources. The financial squeeze on Family Service was relaxed once they were rated as inadequate. Who knows but the previous Director may have been able to run a service which was not so inadequate had she had the resources Family Service now has?

Money doesn't solve everything, but these words always ring hollow when spoken by people dripping in wealth and power.

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