

**#Support #BarnetUNISON Mental Health social workers on their picket line  
#CostOfLivingCrisis**

## **London Borough of Bullies?**



Our striking mental health social workers could be forgiven for wondering who they're working for after senior managers put out a mass communication to all workers in Adults Services downplaying the issues faced by colleagues in the mental health teams.

The email neglected to mention the 2 years of discussions with senior management where the social workers had explained the difficulties and experienced no response to the problems they were raising. It was only after the 2 years and the high turnover of disillusioned staff that the colleagues embarked on strike action to try to impress on senior managers how strongly they felt and how urgent a solution was needed.

Only after 27 days of strike action taken over 6 months did management finally agree to go to ACAS for negotiations. These fell apart as management failed to provide solid evidence for their assertions that the issues faced by our strikers are common to ALL social work and OT teams. UNISON is prepared to accept that there are issues in other teams but we are clear we need to see the evidence which supports this.

There are areas of the Council where recruitment and retention payments are being made which have had no involvement of the trade unions. It is in the gift of managers to award these payments where they feel it is justified. UNISON cannot comment as to whether they've been made on the basis of individuals having "itchy feet" or whether the process was as rigorous as the policy suggests it needs to be. This means if Adult Social Care senior managers are really convinced there are

recruitment and retention problems across the department then they do not need the blessing of UNISON to make those payments. These managers have already authorised these payments to 16 staff members (according to the Council's Pay Policy 2024-25 at Appendix A4 Recruitment and Retention payment information). UNISON has been consulted regarding payments to Family Service social workers and HGV drivers. In these areas the management produce regular updates showing clear evidence of the issues they face and the efforts they have made recruiting and retaining staff. UNISON has provided senior management in Adult Services with this information regarding the Mental Health Social Work teams. Senior management has not provided UNISON with this kind of data supporting the claims they have made in their email circular.

It is true that recruitment has taken place in the mental health teams, however, this dispute is about recruiting and retaining **social workers with experience of working in mental health.**

## Service Group Elections

### SERVICE GROUP ELECTIONS 2024

Dear Barnet UNISON member, **Barnet UNISON** has **nominated** the following candidates, **Helen Davies** who is standing for the General Seat, **Gabby Lawler** who is standing for the Female Seat and **Anju Paul** who is standing for the Reserved Seat.

However, you can vote for who you want. The key thing is that **you VOTE.**



Branch Secretary for Havering UNISON and was previously an active rep in Housing for over 15 years along with having held a number of other branch officer positions over that time. She is an active participant in regional lay structures using her positions to influence and foster space for change. She actively supports the transformation of our union to a fighting one which organises members rather than primarily provides a service.

**Gaby Lawler Female Seat**



Has been representing Greater London Region for the last 2 years as a low paid female worker. She is a care worker and as a Barnet UNISON rep ensures her residential workplace has a UNISON density of over 80%. She is representing care workers in the National Home Care Forum and has been leading a fight for improved pay for the last 4 years across The Barnet Group where she works. Anju never hesitates in giving support to others fighting back and has attended a number of picket lines and recorded messages of support for other campaigns both in the branch and for others.

**Anju Paul Reserved Seat**



Branch Chair of Barnet UNISON and is practicing social worker in Adults Services. She has been part of a leadership team in the branch which has seen a victory for repairs workers fighting for sick pay for a colleague injured at work; a turnout in the National Pay ballot which fell short of the threshold by just 7 votes and a current dispute with social workers in the Mental Health teams who are fighting for their service and a recruitment and retention payment as the Children's and Families social workers have.

**Helen Davies General Seat**



**BE HEARD: USE YOUR VOTE**

## What we stand for.

### Pay and Funding

This racist, divisive, self-serving Government must 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.**

## Whatever you do please use your vote.



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## 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 since 2002-03

Dependents from	House prices	Rent & council fees	Electricity	Gas
Price rise 2002-23	15%	15%	100%	100%

**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.
- SHEL, 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, \$71 billion.
- MPs just wanted to receive a pay rise to £71,345 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 rent, 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 briefing 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](mailto:contactus@barnetunison.org.uk)

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**Wednesday 24 April 6.30- 7.30**

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<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.

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## **£1 million Taken from Care Workers**

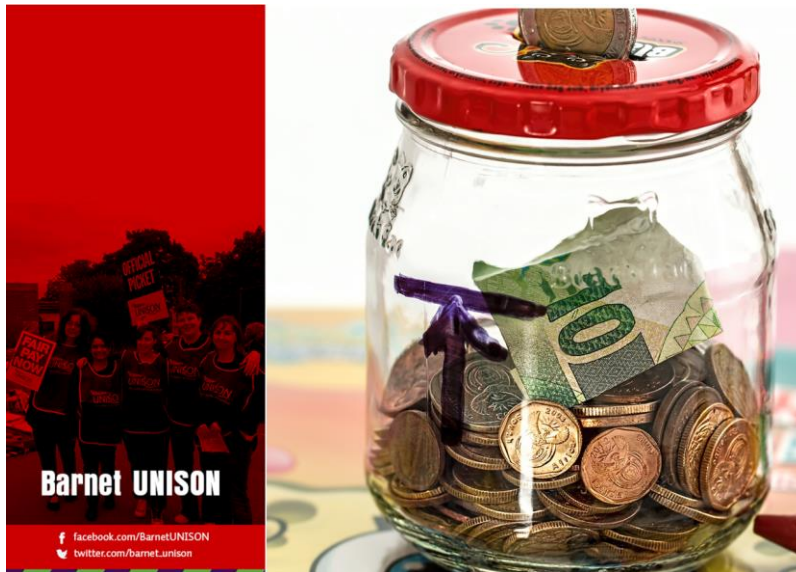
At negotiations last week UNISON received the news that the cost of settling the claim in full for our low paid members on the TBGflex contract (predominantly care and support workers) would cost £1million. The Barnet Group told UNISON it has no money fund this.

UNISON and its predecessor unions have had a lifetime of being told there is never money to fund pay rises for the lowest paid. Our suggestion is that The Barnet Group has to start finding the money from somewhere. The CEO has announced his resignation. If this post were left empty, this would save between £250 – 300, 000 per year. Also, there is a bizarre arrangement whereby Barnet Homes and Your Choice Barnet pay TBGflex money for hiring the staff....all of these companies are managed and wholly owned by The Barnet Group. The account of TBGflex is showing a very healthy balance which could be used to fund the claim.

We will be having a further discussion with The Barnet Group but so far this dispute is looking like it is going in one direction only!

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## 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.

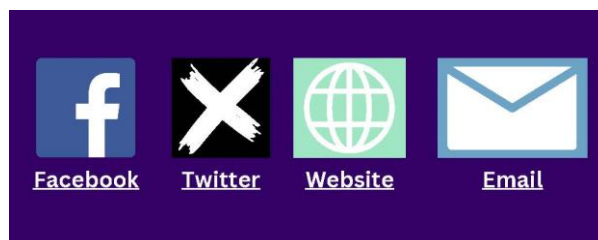
The next Pension session is on **24 April**. The meetings will take place in Colindale in **room 1.3**. Staff will need to email [pensions@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:pensions@barnet.gov.uk) to book an appointment. It will be on **'first come-first served'** basis.

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

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