

FAQ's

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I've heard St Mungo's don't have the money to pay us 10%?

Senior management have consistently said they couldn't afford to pay us more than the 1.75% pay award in 2021/22. They offered a £500 one-off payment in Summer 2021, which members overwhelmingly rejected. They increased this offer by a mere £200 at ACAS, along with a maintaining their temporary increase to mileage rates for another 6 months. This offer would have cost St Mungo's around £145,000 – less than the £188k salary of our CEO.

It's clear that Senior Management aren't serious about negotiating and offering a decent pay rise, even when it's equally clear they can afford to pay more.

Taking a look at their cash balance alone, which according to their own financial statements is their primary financial indicator, St Mungo's have to keep a minimum cash balance of £14m, as agreed by the Board of Trustees. Yet they have had an end of year cash balance consistently above £20m since 2018. Last year, this stood at £22.5m, £4.5m above the upper end of their agreed range.

It's a similar story for their reserves. Their minimum unrestricted reserves need to be £10m, yet they are currently £13m - at the very top end of their reserves.

A 10% pay rise for 2021/22 alone would cost £4.6m. In 2021/22, St Mungo's top 32 employees alone were paid a total of £2.7 million between them and they have recently began advertising several overpaid non-jobs in 'transformation', most recently for a £130k role as an Executive Director of Transformation. The money is there – it's just not going to right people.

Why is Unite campaigning for 10%?

Inflation is currently at 14% (RPI) and was around 11% at the end of the 2021/22 pay year. In the last year, gas prices rose by 132%, electricity prices by 66%, mortgage interest payments by 26% and petrol and oil costs by 22% - over the same period NJC pay increased by (on average) 7%. In order for our pay to keep up with the cost of living, we believe that 10% is what workers need and deserve in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, especially given we kept the organisation afloat during the pandemic.

As we are on the NJC pay scales, similar to local government workers, we have faced real terms pay cuts year after year, meaning whilst our pay packet increased nominally in 2021/22 by 1.75%, we received a massive real terms pay cut. Workers on NJC pay scales have lost on average 25% from the value of their pay since 2010 and for 11 of the last 12 years, NJC pay awards have fallen below average pay awards in both the private sector and across the whole economy.

How would this work without deviating from NJC pay scales?

Through adding a multiplier onto the current NJC pay scales, we would avoid deviating from them and this would be easily done. A multiplier of 8.25% would be added onto all pay scales for 2021/22 and 2022/23. This would equate to a 10% pay rise for 2021/22 and would vary for the current pay year, as the NJC pay reward this year is £1,925 for all staff, amounting to different percentage for each person (around 10% for those on the lower end of the NJC pay scale and 4% for those on the upper).

Would we accept less than 10%?

We've been clear that Unite is open to negotiations and as a democratic organisation, any offer that Senior Management want to present is put to a vote amongst members. However, so far, the SMT (Senior Management Team) have only made two counter-offers, the first was a £500 one-off payment, in July, and second a £700 one-off payment recently during the ACAS negotiations. Both were overwhelmingly rejected by members.

Where does the current NJC pay award come into this?

We are going on strike for a 10% pay rise, backdated to the previous pay year. The reason we believe it should be backdated is because a real terms pay cut is a permanent pay cut, unless corrected.

A pay award of £1,925 was agreed at the NJC level for the current pay year, 2022/23, along with a 4% increase to London weighting. This means those in Outer London, would get a pay award of £2,229 and Inner London, £2,355, in total.

This would amount to around a 10% increase for those on the lowest NJC pay and around 4% for those on the highest NJC pay. The SMT agreed to pay some of this early, however, it's important to note that this isn't additional money that the SMT are giving on top of the current pay award – they are merely paying some of it earlier.

What's happening now?

Ballots have been sent out. Please return your ballot asap when you receive it and we urge you to vote YES to strike action when you receive your ballot, as it's clear it's the only way we're going to get a fair pay rise. If you haven't received your ballot, please contact Jacob (jacob.sanders@unitetheunion.org) or David (david.oladele@mungos.org).

What is a strike ballot?

A strike ballot is when workers vote on whether they would like to take strike action. The union has to give the employer 7 days' notice that it's going to ballot members and provide a list of job titles and workplaces, along with the number of people they are balloting against each.

The minimum period a ballot can run is 7 days, but it is usually a minimum of 2 weeks.

For a ballot to be successful at least 50% of those entitled to vote must participate in the ballot and a majority of those voting must vote "in favour" of action.

Will We Go On Strike?

Once the ballot has closed, Unite has to notify the employer and members as soon as possible of the result. If successful, the ballot mandate lasts for 6 months. The union must give the employer 2 weeks' notice of any action before it can take place. A ballot that demonstrates strong support for strike action can often be enough to make the employer change its position.

It is illegal for workers to be disciplined or treated unfairly because they take part in trade union activity, including strike action.

Will I Get Paid If I Go On Strike?

Your employer will not pay your wages while you are on strike. Instead, Unite the Union will pay you strike pay. Unite the Union's current rate for strike pay is £70 per day. This is tax free. Whilst strike pay isn't intended to fully compensate wages, for many workers this will come close to or equate a full day's wages. Any employee can participate in a lawful strike, although only Unite members will receive strike pay.

Unite is the second-largest union in the country. It has significant financial resources which, among other things, allow for more generous strike pay than virtually any other union. If you work regular hours and your annual wages are less than £27,000 you will get more money while on strike. For those whose earnings are £27,000 per year or above, income will be lower on strike days, but probably not by a very large amount. For example, a worker earning £30,000 a year will be worse off by about £8 for each strike day, and a worker earning £35,000 a year will lose about £21 a day. However, it's important to remember that whilst some workers will lose money, we are striking for a fairer pay rise and withdrawing our labour is the only way to achieve this at this point.

A strike can have more of an effect on shift workers if the strike falls at a time when they would have worked a lot of hours. Fortunately, the Unite Housing Workers' Branch has additional funds which can be used for discretionary payments which will top up the standard amounts paid by Unite centrally. The Branch has decided to prioritise shift workers who are at risk of being left out of pocket. To learn more about this or if you feel that your shift pattern means your working hours fall disproportionately on the scheduled strike days, please contact jacob.sanders@unitetheunion.org or unionreps@mungos.org.

Is strike action effective?

Yes. Shelter recently won a higher pay rise through strike action. Elsewhere, Unite members have been winning inflation busting pay rises through strike action such as:

- Members working at Abellio London buses have won an 18% pay rise recently
- Over 200 Luton airport staff have received a 28% pay rise
- Parking attendants and CCTV camera operators across Brent and Ealing won 19% and 17% pay rises respectively
- Felixstowe port workers won a 15.5% pay rise

Sometimes, a successful ballot and the threat of strike action is enough to bring senior management back to the table, but some of the above victories show just how effective collective action can be, when Senior Management refuse to come to the table and make any serious offers.

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