

Work Voice Pay MONTHLY

Issue: 32



We must address the challenges of COVID in the workplace and at the bargaining table, argues Sharon Graham

We are now beginning a third period of lockdown. Many members will still be working from home or be furloughed. Others will have to go to work and rightly will want to be kept safe, whilst yet more will be facing bosses intent on using COVID as cover for cuts that are often unnecessary.

Regardless of the specifics, what is clear is that we are facing a growing threat to jobs, to terms and conditions and to organised workplaces and that this threat is going to last for some time to come. The pace of automation is speeding up and many companies are looking to make homeworking permanent. For many members, the 'new normal' will be very different from what we knew before. To protect our futures we will have to address these challenges directly, in the workplace, at the bargaining table and not discounting all forms of action.

We must come out of the other end of this crisis having learnt the lessons. For example, we have shown that we can mount effective campaigns even in the worst of circumstances. We need to start pushing back employers wherever we can. Look at Barnoldswick, where we helped our Shop Stewards who faced down their employer and saved the site. And with the development of Crisis Leverage we have shown that we have the tools available to give us a chance of winning. Now it is about the mind-set, we cannot simply batten down the hatches.

We know that Westminster will not be the answer to our problems. Politicians have not and will not deliver for us. We will have to put the stake in the



ground and fight for our own futures. We must focus on fighting for jobs at the workplace. It won't be easy but we will need to focus on the real issues being faced by members at work. We will need energy and imagination to keep finding and developing the best tools and strategies. We will need to harness our experience, insights and passion to win for workers. The good news is that we are Unite the Union - more than a million members led by thousands of reps, shop stewards and activists. We have the resources within ourselves to take this on and ensure workers do not pay the price again.

In solidarity

Sharon Graham, Unite Executive Officer

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produced its latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) in November 2020. This can be a useful tool for activists to benchmark against in pay rounds. See how your pay compares to the median pay of workers in your industry or region.

Industry and Regional Data

CODE	STANDARD INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION	MEDIAN £ PER WEEK	ANNUAL % CHANGE
A	Agricultural, Forestry and Fishing	495.00	3.3
B	Mining and Quarrying	808.60	5.1
C	Manufacturing	575.00	-3.0
D	Electricity, Gas Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	785.70	2.5
E	Water Supply; Sewage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	630.80	-0.5
F	Construction	588.00	-9.5
G	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	480.80	-1.7
H	Transportation and Storage	605.00	0.8
I	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	383.30	-6.1
J	Information and Communication	795.30	3.8
K	Financial and Insurance Activities	800.40	1.9
L	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	680.00	-3.4
M	Administration and Support Service Activities	501.40	1.9
N	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	651.10	1.7
O	Education	634.50	0.7
P	Human Health and Social Work Activities	563.40	2.0
Q	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	486.90	-0.3
R	Other Service Activities	507.70	1.3

ONS NATIONAL REGION	MEDIAN £ PER WEEK	ANNUAL % CHANGE
United Kingdom	585.50	0.1
England	589.90	-0.4
Northern Ireland	528.60	-1.1
Scotland	592.70	2.7
Wales	537.80	0.6

ONS NATIONAL REGION	MEDIAN £ PER WEEK	ANNUAL % CHANGE
London	760.70	3.1
East	574.90	-1.0
East Midlands	552.00	3.1
North East	521.40	-2.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	538.90	0
North West	559.60	1.7
South East	608.60	-0.9
South West	550.10	-0.3
West Midlands	552.50	0

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

ASHE also records the average median pay for occupational groups.

Occupational Data

CODE	STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION	MEDIAN £ PER WEEK	ANNUAL % CHANGE
1	MANAGERS DIRECTORS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS	852.90	-1.1
1.1	Corporate Managers and Directors	918.00	-2.3
1.2	Managers and Proprietors	593.70	-2.5
2	PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS	776.90	1.1
2.1	Science, Research, Engineering and Technology Professionals	810.70	-0.9
2.2	Health Professionals	745.30	0.7
2.3	Teaching and Educational Professionals	776.00	2.8
2.4	Business, Media and Public Service Professionals	781.20	0.6
3	ASSOCIATED PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS	609.50	-2.4
3.1	Science, Engineering and Technology Associate Professional	555.80	-2.4
3.2	Health and Social Care Associated Professionals	509.30	0.0
3.3	Protective Service Occupations	769.10	2.5
3.4	Culture, Media and Sport Occupations	521.00	-5.3
3.5	Business and Public Service Associate Professionals	645.10	-3.8
4	ADMINISTRATIVE AND SECRETARIAL OCCUPATIONS	462.60	1.2
4.1	Administrative Occupations	469.50	1.7
4.2	Secretarial and Related Occupations	419.60	-1.7
5	SKILLED TRADES OCCUPATIONS	507.00	-6.3
5.1	Skilled Agriculture and Related Trades	411.20	0.0
5.2	Skilled Metal Electrical and Electronic Trades	566.70	-7.1
5.3	Skilled Construction and Building Trades	509.50	-6.7
5.4	Textile Printing and other Skilled Trades	401.80	-7.2
6	CARING, LEISURE AND OTHER SERVICE OCCUPATIONS	401.90	2.5
6.1	Caring Personal Service Occupations	402.80	3.7
6.2	Leisure, Travel and Related Personal Service occupations	397.60	-3.0
7	SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE OCCUPATIONS	395.00	0.1
7.1	sales occupations	375.00	0.6
7.2	customer service occupations	431.90	0.8
8	PROCESS, PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATIVE	476.90	-5.3
8.1	Process Plant Machine Operatives	444.00	-3.9
8.2	Transport and Mobile Machine Drivers and Operatives	507.90	-6.8
9	ELEMENTARY OCCUPATIONS	397.00	0.4
	Elementary Trade and Related Occupations	406.20	-2.3
9.2	Elementary Administration and Service Occupations	392.80	0.9
10	ALL EMPLOYEES	585.50	0.1

Cost of Living – Going Up

The latest RPI figure shows inflation at 0.9%

On 16 December the UK Government's Office for National Statistics (ONS) released the latest Retail Price Index (RPI) figure. This provides the RPI rate to 10 November 2020. It shows that prices are up 0.9% from a year ago.

Clothing and footwear are up 2.2%

Women's clothes have risen 4.8%, while new gear for the kids is 1.5% more expensive than last year. Other clothing is also up by 3.9%.

Household services are up 2.9%

Each of the areas within household services has gone up faster than headline inflation over the last twelve months. Items include postage 5.6% higher, phone bills up 3.9% and domestic services costing 2.6% more.

Leisure goods are up 1.9%

The cost of toys, photographic and sports goods has increased 4.7% and CDs and tapes cost 2.4% more.

Personal goods and services are up 2%

Personal services (such as dental charges and residential and nursing home fees) which are up 4.2% on last year.

Leisure services are up 2.2%

Foreign holidays cost 2.8% more than a year ago but due to lockdown restrictions you'll be hard pushed to get one at the moment. TV licences and rentals are now 2.9% more costly than last year.

Fares and other travel costs are up 4%

Bus and coach fares have increased by a massive 12.3% over the last year. Rail fares are also up 2.2% on a year ago and other travel costs are 3.3% more expensive.

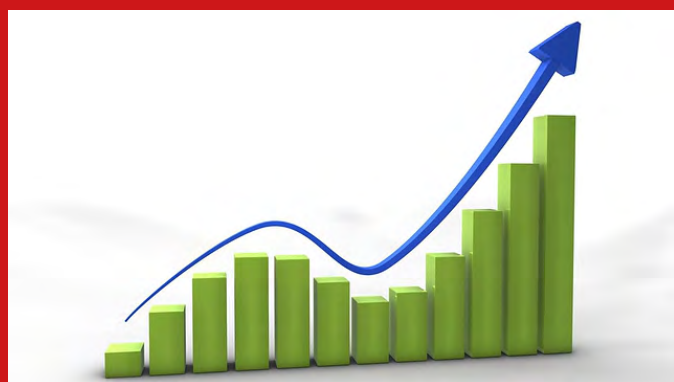
Housing is up 1.9%

Rent is 2.1% more costly than a year ago and council tax and rates have gone up by 3.9% over the same period.

NOTE: Why RPI not CPI?

Unite strongly recommends using the Retail Price Index (RPI) for negotiations because it more closely reflects the actual price rises experienced by Unite members. The RPI has been going since 1947. It is still used to decide prices such as mobile phone bills, rail fares, student loans and 'sin' taxes e.g. alcohol.

Some employers prefer the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which the government introduced in 2004 as a measure of inflation. The CPI is calculated using a different mathematical model which tends to make it lower. It includes the spending of groups not usually relevant to our negotiations. It doesn't include the price rises our members experience in paying for mortgages or foreign holidays.



RPI Items Breakdown

Here are the latest figures for all the retail price index (RPI) items.

RPI ITEMS	Annual Change
ALL ITEMS	0.9
Food	-0.6
Catering	0.6
Alcoholic drink	0.8
Tobacco	3.4
Housing	1.9
Fuel and light	-9.6
Household goods	1.2
Household services	2.9
Clothing and footwear	2.2
Personal goods and services	2.0
Motoring expenditure	-0.9
Fares and other travel costs	4.0
Leisure goods	1.9
Leisure services	2.2

Bitesize Bargaining

Lockdown is back – so it's time for a recap

As we enter the latest and what we all hope will be the last COVID-19 lockdown, *Work Voice Pay Monthly* has been looking at some of the key issues that can be addressed through collective bargaining – and the tools we have that can help.

The [Work Voice Pay Lockdown Agreement Template](#) is a great starting point. This agreement sets out a framework for the union and employer to manage changes to working life during the pandemic. It covers temporary homeworking, work to be done in the workplace during the crisis period and temporary lay-off periods (furloughs). You can use as little or as much of the template as is useful.

For those who must still go to work as they “cannot reasonably do so from home” making sure the workplace is safe is a top priority. To help, we produced a [Work Voice Pay COVID-19 checklist](#) covering issues such as access points, entering and moving around the workplace and welfare facilities such as toilets, locker rooms, rest areas and canteens as well as general policy. It is designed to be signed-off and monitored by management, union reps and a health, safety and environmental professional.

If your employer is considering homeworking arrangements beyond lockdown, you may also want to negotiate arrangements to ensure that it is done in a way that is fair, safe and voluntary and that the union has a say about how it is rolled out. Our [Work Voice Pay Homeworking Agreement Template](#) can help with this.

When members are still going in and taking on additional risks by working for an employer that is doing well from the pandemic (think supermarkets and online delivery services) they will want to demand their share of the rewards. If you are negotiating on pay, it is important to know whether management claims about the finances stand up. This is especially true of employers who plead poverty due to the financial impacts of the crisis as justification. The crisis makes it hard to get a view of company finances just using the latest accounts. So, to help with this we have produced [Work Voice Pay guidance on Crisis Disclosure](#), to help you ask the right questions and demand your right to answers.

Of course, any new changes to [furlough arrangements](#) should also be negotiated. The UK Government has recently extended the Job Retention Scheme to the end of April 2021. The government contributes 80% towards wages up to a maximum of £2,500 a month. (Employers have to pay for all National Insurance Contributions (NICS) and pensions, as well as wages for any hours worked.) However, whenever possible reps will want to get employers to top-up the 20% pay gap left from the government's contributions. Any pay proposals taking members below the real living wage (see <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>) will be especially hard to accept, as this would not leave them with enough money to support a minimum standard of living. Also remember that if members are unable to work due to lack of childcare employers can and should be using the scheme to furlough them.

Employers should also be asked to '[medically exclude](#)' any staff that can't work from home and can't come in to work because of self-isolation (for example after being exposed to someone with COVID-19 or following a period overseas). This is important to make sure workers are not being pushed into flouting the rules for financial reasons – putting more workers at risk. When an employee is medically excluded they have the right to normal pay (including bonuses) for up to 26 weeks, as long as they've been in their job for a month or more.

Lockdown Agreement Template:

<https://unitetheunion.org/media/3468/new-lockdown-agreement-with-bonus.docx>

COVID-19 checklist

<https://unitetheunion.org/media/3045/wvp-covid-19-checklist-final.pdf>

Homeworking Agreement Template:

<https://unitetheunion.org/media/3369/wvp-template-homeworking-agreement.pdf>

Guidance on Crisis Disclosure:

<https://unitetheunion.org/media/3042/wvp-crisis-disclosure-v3-template-and-glossary-290420.docx>

Real Living Wage:

<https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>

Government Furlough rules:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

Medical exclusion:

<https://www.gov.uk/medical-suspensions-from-work>



**Lockdown is back –
KEEP SAFE**

Staying Safe

You may now only leave your home for work if you cannot reasonably work from home. That leaves a lot of workers still having to deal with the health and safety at work issues brought up by COVID-19. This includes, but is not limited to, people who work in:

- Critical national infrastructure sectors (Chemicals, Civil Nuclear, Communications, Defence, Emergency Services, Energy, Finance, Food, Government, Health, Space, Transport and Water)
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Childcare or education
- Essential public services

If you are one of these workers try to make sure:

- You have a current up to date risk assessment detailing procedures for protection of workers. Ensure consultation is taking place including production of guidance around risk assessments. Challenge if this is not taking place.
- Your employer is providing all you need to stay safe including facilities for washing, soap and hand sanitisers. Also appropriate training, instructions and signage.
- Workers can self-isolate with no loss of pay and that there are management procedures in place to protect vulnerable people in line with government guidance and the Equality Act 2010.

For more information on staying safe at work during the pandemic, read the latest government advice and take a look at our Work Voice Pay COVID-19 Checklist and Unite's Coronavirus Work Rights guidance. Other resources can be found in material compiled by Hazards and by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://unitetheunion.org/media/3045/wvp-covid-19-checklist-final.pdf>

<https://unitetheunion.org/media/2981/006-unitecoronavirusguide-20-03-27-v10b.pdf>

<https://www.hazards.org/infections/coronavirus/index.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/index.htm>

