

Work Voice Pay MONTHLY



Issue: 36

“This crisis demands a response and that is what Unite is going to provide”, writes Sharon Graham.

My election as General Secretary last month delivered a mandate to return our Union to the workplace – to defend our reps and improve the pay and conditions of our members. We now need to turn these words into action.

The real issue that needs resolving in the wake of Covid is how together we can deliver a better deal for Unite members.

Unite cannot sit back whilst politicians play pass the parcel. Using sticking plasters to solve a deep rooted problems. For years, many of our industries have been pushed down – bad working conditions, poor pay and long hours have led to crisis point for many and now we demand change.

In my first week as your General Secretary I declared my intentions by meeting with our Representatives in dispute and by choosing the picket line over a conference hall in Brighton. It is time to do what it says on the trade union tin. Not because politics doesn't matter but because we have to get our priorities in order.

And now I have written to many of our Reps who face crisis – transport workers facing unrelenting pressure due to labour shortages caused by bad pay and conditions. Why? Because Unite now needs to come together to really develop and resource a concrete, fully funded industrial plan that delivers practical action. Not campaigns that last a few weeks and get forgotten, but plans that understand we need to stay as long as it takes. We need to begin the fight back.



In the weeks and months that follow I will be reaching out to Reps throughout our Sectors as we begin the process of building new Combines as the cornerstone of our industrial programme. This is where we will focus on agreeing concrete action to protect jobs and push up the pay, terms and conditions of Unite members.

Many of you have worked right through the pandemic, whether that be transporting nurses and teachers, delivering goods to critical services, making food for the population, keeping our streets clean or many other critical jobs. Union members have provided a lifeline for our nations. Now we need to make sure that workers don't pay the price for Covid.

In solidarity

Sharon Graham, General Secretary

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 4.8%

On 15 September the UK Government's Office for National Statistics (ONS) released the latest Retail Price Index (RPI) figure. This provides the RPI rate to 10 August 2021. It shows that prices are up 4.8% from a year ago.

Clothing and footwear are up 9.6%

Women's clothes have risen 14.5%, while new gear for the kids is 9.4% more expensive than last year. Men's clothes cost 9.1% more and footwear has also gone up by 5.6%.

Motoring expenditure is up 10%

The purchase of motor vehicles is up a whopping 11.3% but petrol and oil have gone up by even more over the last twelve months, costing 17.9% more.

Leisure goods are up 5.5%

The cost of toys, photographic and sports goods has increased 5.1% and gardening products cost 8.8% more. Books and newspapers are up 6.3%.

Catering is up 13.4%

Restaurant meals are a humungous 21% more expensive than last year, while the price of canteen meals has gone up by 6.7% over the period.

Fares and other travel costs are up 9%

Other travel costs have increased 12.3% over the last year.

Household goods are up 5.9%

Furniture is 9.5% more costly than a year ago while electrical appliances increased by 8.3%. Furnishings have gone up by 7.2% 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	4.8
Food	0.4
Catering	13.4
Alcoholic drink	2.0
Tobacco	2.6
Housing	4.3
Fuel and light	3.1
Household goods	5.9
Household services	1.9
Clothing and footwear	9.6
Personal goods and services	2.7
Motoring expenditure	10.0
Fares and other travel costs	9.0
Leisure goods	5.5
Leisure services	2.1

Sharon Graham's Fire and Rehire Speech at TUC Congress

Monday 13 September, Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham spoke on the fire and rehire composite on behalf of Unite the union. Here is the transcript:

Fire and rehire is an abhorrence. A legal mechanism used by bad bosses to slash labour costs under cover of a global pandemic. It is one of the scandals of our age!

Let's remember what fire and rehire actually is – Workers wake up one morning and have 45 days to accept an ultimatum from the employer which involves slashed wages and terms and conditions. If the new terms are not accepted, it means the sack. Very often there is no warning. This could mean workers losing their homes and their families and children being forced to move away from family, friends and neighbourhood networks, to seek work elsewhere.

When British Airways decided to fire 36,000 staff and rehire them on worse conditions, they did this because they saw an opportunity to make cuts and boost shareholder profits. An opportunity to put into place plans which were in the making a long time. The pandemic provided them with the opportunity. Colleagues, many of the firms employing this tactic are not doing so out of necessity – they are doing it because they can. They've thought 'now is the time'.

- BA had billions of pounds in reserve and no need to attack its own workforce.
- Go North West wanted to cut costs at their Manchester bus operation and saw a chance to do so.

But now fire and rehire is fast moving from opportunism to standard practice. One in ten workers has been subject to fire and rehire. As the composite demands we must support all legislative efforts to ban this practice.

We must support the bill being moved as a Private Members Bill by Barry Gardiner MP by every means at our disposal.

We must argue for increased consultation periods and better redundancy pay, of course. But we have to remember that on its own, a future legislative response will do absolutely nothing for the Weetabix staff about to go on strike in two weeks against brutal fire and rehire proposals being forced on them. Any future change in the law will do nothing to get justice for the British Gas engineers sacked for taking a stand. No, Congress we need action now.

Colleagues, I was elected on a mandate for change. On an industrial mandate to refocus my union on jobs, pay and conditions. Not to step away from the political arena, but to make building power at work our number one priority so that we can then move the politics from the grassroots up. And with Labour in opposition and a government reluctant to act, our response must now be industrial.

Our priority must be to co-ordinate a fightback at the workplace. We have all shown that fire and rehire can be beaten.

- At British Airways, we stopped the worst of the cuts.
- At Go North West, the firm backed down.
- At Synergy LMS, the GMB defeated the employer.

We can win and win more often, if we fully commit to delivering and focusing on building union strength and organisation at the workplace. It is true, depending on the circumstances, that strike action might not be enough. And that is why we need to share resources and strategies, so that together we can deliver campaigns and give all

our members the best chance of winning. That must start with real co-ordination – not just words but practical action.

It's time for change. It is time for a new deal. It's time that our focus was on winning at work. No politician is coming to save us. No Westminster project is going to deliver pay rises for our members or defend them from bad bosses. That is our job. We need to do it ourselves.

The set routine of policy demand, followed by rhetorical claims linked to media releases, and finished with a lobby, has not succeeded. It is time to change that. It must end. It doesn't work. It hasn't worked. We don't have to do what we've always done because we've always done it. That's why I want us to sit down as a movement and make some decisions. Put our priorities on the table and see what we can really do together. Put ideas into practice.

Now is the time to be bold, not retreat. Now is the time for trade unionism. For an organising, growing trade unionism. For having a go, for a fighting back trade unionism, rooted in the workplace. And for a progressive trade unionism that believes that solidarity is more than just a word on a banner.

Colleagues, remember what we are facing:

- Emboldened employers;
- Job cuts;
- Wage cuts;
- Attacks on reps;
- A mental health crisis in the workplace; and
- Fire and rehire.

It is time that we make a new deal with workers. That we really organise the unorganised. It's time that the labour movement was reborn. No more political tail wagging the industrial dog. Instead, a simple pledge to our workers – We know what you want from us. Trade unions that do what they say on the tin. Fight for our jobs, for our pay and our conditions. So I say to you, give us your trust and together we will defend your jobs. Help us build a movement and together we will stop the cuts to your pay and conditions. Join a union and earn your own dignity at work.

Congress, it's time for change. It's time to rebuild the movement at the workplace. I move the composite on fire and rehire.

Thank you.

Unite - Fighting for
JOBS
PAY
CONDITIONS