



SOULBURY OFFICERS' SIDE PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE CLAIM 2016

This pay and conditions of service claim is submitted by the Officers' Side of the Soulbury Committee national negotiating body, comprising Prospect, the Association of Educational Psychologists and the National Union of Teachers.

Despite the many ongoing changes in local government and local authority functions, the professional workforce covered by the terms of the Soulbury national agreement continues to support local authorities in discharging key statutory responsibilities in respect of schools, children and young people.

The Soulbury Officers' Side - representing educational improvement professionals, educational psychologists and young people's & community service managers employed by local authorities - remains committed to the specific national negotiating arrangements and national agreement which help employers accommodate these professional groups within a pay and conditions structure tailored to their specific needs and interests.

The key points of the submission are as follows:

- The greatest problem facing our members has, of course, has been the massive scale of loss of posts in Soulbury services over the past few years, which, coupled with the increasing demands upon them, has led to worryingly high workloads. The national agreement must continue to support the remaining Soulbury services in recruiting and retaining officers and managing these ever increasing workloads.
- Soulbury officers have, like other public sector workers, suffered substantial real terms cuts in the value of their take home pay through a combination of pay freezes, pay limits and pension contribution increases since 2009.
- They have also suffered from significant changes in conditions of service entitlements in many places, again disadvantaging them to a greater extent than other local government workers.
- A substantial increase in pay is therefore needed following the multi-year pay freeze and below inflation increases of recent years. The Officers' Side therefore seeks a substantial increase in the value of all Soulbury pay scale points and all pay-related and London allowances from 1 September 2016.

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SOULBURY SERVICES

The Officers' Side reaffirms its belief in the central role of local authorities and their Soulbury-paid professional officers in delivering State-funded education provision and services to schools and to young people.

Although the context of local authority services is changing – and the number of Soulbury-paid officers employed directly by local authorities has been drastically reduced - the Officers' Side believes that local authorities must still be permitted to maintain a strategic role in education and services for young people.

The availability of specialist advice, guidance and support from all Soulbury Officers becomes ever more important as the range of issues on which such advice is needed by schools becomes increasingly diverse. Local authorities now have some extra responsibilities for young people eg those for Special Educational Needs (SEND) up to the age of 25 which have in turn increased the importance of educational psychology services. Proposals to stop local authorities undertaking both long standing and newer roles - whether put forward by Government or by authorities themselves - are misguided.

The Government's recent consultation on future school funding arrangements, *Schools national funding formula*, includes the statement (para 5.7, page 57) that *"We are reforming school improvement policy in the context of the overall drive towards a school-led system. This means that we expect local authorities to step back from running school improvement from the end of the 2016/17 academic year."* Although the Secretary of State for Education has withdrawn her proposal in the White Paper, *Education Excellence Everywhere*, to transfer all local authority maintained schools to academy status, all schools becoming academies is still the Government's policy and therefore local authorities would lose any direct involvement in schools.

The Soulbury associations fundamentally reject many of the views and proposals being put forward by the Government in these documents. We believe that local authorities are both an essential strategic tier in the education service and a vital provider of support to schools. The alternatives being advanced - which would force schools into ever-increasing reliance on the "private sector" or unstable arms-length mutualised arrangements for provision of support services and force them into the very much unproven arms of academy trusts - are both less robust and more costly.

The emerging scale of opposition to the proposals makes it increasingly clear that this is a view that the vast majority of local authorities continue to share. We are confident that the LGA and its constituents will continue a robust defence of the crucial role of local authorities in promoting and facilitating school improvement and in supporting schools to secure positive educational outcomes for all their children and young people.

In the meantime, Soulbury officers continue to work as part of a national education service delivered locally. The Soulbury agreement must provide a competitive and credible employment proposition within a national framework of pay and conditions in order to help recruit and retain staff with the skills and experience required by that service. Beginning the process of redressing the uncompetitive position of Soulbury staff relative to other comparable groups of professionals in terms of pay and career prospects and progression is therefore essential.

SOULBURY PAY

The Officers' Side believes that its pay claim is supported by the available evidence on recruitment and retention, trends in pay comparability for Soulbury staff and, in particular, the key comparator group of school leaders, and the impact of pay freezes and below inflation pay increases.

Recruitment and retention issues

The most recent Soulbury workforce survey, carried out as at September 2013, was published in April 2014. The Officers' Side believes that a further workforce survey should be carried out in order to determine the current picture in terms of staffing numbers and patterns in recruitment and retention. Consideration should also be given to how we might jointly investigate how schools are responding to the loss of support from local authorities and the impact in terms of both cost and quality of services sourced from elsewhere.

In the meantime, the Officers' Side reminds the Employers Side that the 2013 report showed that despite the substantial reduction in the number of officers working in local authority Soulbury services, authorities were still reporting problems in recruiting to posts which they did seek to fill. One in four authorities had, in the previous 12 months, experienced recruitment difficulties in appointing EIPs while two thirds had experienced difficulties in recruiting main scale EPs. Vacancy rates for both groups were higher than for school teachers. Half of authorities had cited issues with the quality of applicants attracted to advertisements, while one third had specifically cited problems with inadequate pay. There is little to suggest, given the absence of a further workforce survey and the further pay restrictions of the past three years, that these problems will have lifted.

Another indicator of recruitment and retention issues is the rising number of advertisements for educational psychologist vacancies received by the Association of Educational Psychologists. Advertisements were received for 241 vacancies in 2013, 460 vacancies in 2014 and 494 vacancies in 2015. Meanwhile, many local authorities are having to use agency staff in various capacities eg in order to meet statutory SEND deadlines incurring employment costs which are higher than Soulbury pay rates.

Pay in real terms

With a combination of pay freezes and below inflation increases since 2009, the real value of Soulbury officers' pay has been cut significantly, even before the impact of other matters such as increased pension costs on their take home pay.

Cumulatively, between September 2009 and September 2015, inflation rose by 20.3% when measured by the Retail Prices Index or 15.0% when measured by the Consumer Prices Index. Soulbury pay increases over this period, on the other hand, have an aggregate value of only 3.22%. If Soulbury officers' pay had risen between September 2009 and September 2015 in line with the increase in the Retail Prices Index, their pay rates would be very much higher as set out below:

Soulbury pay shortfall

Education Improvement Professionals

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| EIP point 8 | £48,351 compared to actual £41,487 |
| EIP point 20 | £64,425 compared to actual £55,280 |

Educational Psychologists

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Scale A point 8 | £55,081 compared to actual £47,261 |
| Scale B point 8 | £62,450 compared to actual £53,584 |

As noted above, Soulbury officers have also faced significant increases in pension contributions, greater than those for most other local government employees, under the LGPS's tiered contribution arrangements. Most Soulbury officers are now paying 8.5% or even 9.9% of their pay in pension contributions compared to 7.2% or 7.5% in 2009, cutting the value of their take home pay further.

Pay comparability with employees generally

While the pay increases of Soulbury officers have been suppressed, average earnings elsewhere in the economy have continued to grow.

Between 2009 and 2015, average earnings across the whole economy showed an increase of 10.3% compared to the Soulbury pay increase of 3.22% referred to above. Earnings across the economy rose by 2.45% between September 2014 and September 2015 alone, while the Soulbury two year agreement for September 2014 to September 2016 provided only an increase of 2.2% in March 2015. The upward trend in earnings continues, with forecast annual rates of increase of 2.8% for 2016 and 3.3% for 2017 (whole year forecasts). Pay increases for Soulbury officers which are below increases in earnings in the economy generally must not continue indefinitely.

Pay comparability with school leaders

The Officers' Side continues to believe that the importance of being able to recruit from senior levels of the teaching profession for many Soulbury roles means that pay comparisons with that group continue to be hugely relevant.

The two examples below - which relate to the current equivalents of what were, for many years, the agreed pay comparators for Soulbury roles - suffice to demonstrate the pay gap which has developed between Soulbury pay and the pay of school leaders. It is still the case that in the case of such roles, dealing as they often do directly with school leaders, authorities will seek to recruit from senior levels of the teaching profession. The pay levels available are neither appropriate nor sufficient to allow this.

Soulbury and Head Teacher Pay - September 2015

Soulbury Senior EIPs

| | | |
|---------------|---------|----------|
| Minimum point | £47,640 | point 13 |
|---------------|---------|----------|

Head teachers Group 5¹

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Median salary point | £78,726 | point L30 |
| Typical range | £69,652 to £80,671 | points L25-L31 |

Soulbury Lead EIPs

| | | |
|---------------|---------|----------|
| Minimum point | £55,280 | point 20 |
|---------------|---------|----------|

Head teachers Group 7

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Median salary point | £91,187 | point L36 |
| Typical range ¹ | £82,676 to £95,766 | points L32-L38 |

*1 "Typical pay range" points taken from most recent STRB Pay Survey (September 2008 table 3 p34-35)
Values of pay points taken from joint teacher union advice on reference pay points (July 2015)*

Pay in London

The Officers Side continues to believe that Soulbury London allowances must be reviewed and increased. In themselves, they are a further obstacle to recruitment and retention, with pay comparisons with school leaders in London being particularly unfavourable. In practice, they distort the national structure by prompting some employers to use higher pay scales than elsewhere, leading to varying practice between employers.

Other changes affecting Soulbury officers

Finally, it should not be forgotten that the problems of Soulbury pay levels have been exacerbated for many officers by changes to working practices which have further disadvantaged them. The 2013 Soulbury workforce survey showed that almost half of authorities responding said they had or would review terms and conditions and working practices, almost always with the aim of reducing costs or requiring additional commitment from officers, and just over one fifth were proposing freezes in pay progression. Again there is no evidence that issues of this kind have gone away or previous actions of this kind reversed.

Conclusion

The Officers Side realises that pay offers of 1% have again been made for 2016 in other local government negotiating bodies but believes that this approach should not be automatically adopted for Soulbury staff and that a more realistic assessment of the pay position should be made for this independent negotiating group. Our view remains that a significant pay increase would benefit both our members and their employers.

EXTENDING THE SPA SYSTEM

The Officers' Side proposes that the Structured Professional Assessments system should be extended in order to allow flexibility for the award of a fourth SPA point.

The Structured Professional Assessments ('SPA') system was established in 2001 in response to the implementation of changes to the school teachers' pay structure which provided significant pay increases for leadership group teachers and experienced classroom teachers. Its intention was to help maintain a competitive pay structure and provide additional recognition and reward for Soulbury-paid officers.

The SPA system has now been in place for fifteen years and has become well-known and familiar to Soulbury officers. Recent discussions on further joint guidance on the application of the SPA criteria and processes will, we hope, lead to a fuller understanding of the current system on the part of local authority HR officers, in particular ensuring that more Soulbury officers have access to the third SPA point. Although the Soulbury agreement makes it clear that the third SPA point is not subject to any quota, the 2013 Workforce survey showed that only 9% of EIPs and 12% of EPs were in receipt of that point. While these figures are likely to have risen (in part due to the work which has been done to promote understanding of the system), they are still likely to be unreasonably lower than they should be.

The Officers' Side now wishes to propose an extension of the SPA system to allow the allocation of a fourth SPA point. This would inter alia provide authorities with a pay mechanism specifically aimed at promoting retention rather than recruitment. The Officers' Side wishes to be clear that the criteria for a fourth SPA point need not be the same as those for the award of the first and second SPA points and those for the third SPA point.

May 2016