



SOULBURY OFFICERS' SIDE PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE CLAIM 2021

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

The professional workforce covered by the terms of the Soulbury national agreement continues to support local authorities in discharging their statutory responsibilities in respect of schools and other educational settings, children and young people (CYP) and their families. Despite the many ongoing changes in local government and local authority functions, these remain key responsibilities in ensuring the highest standards of education and achievement for our young people.

The Soulbury Officers' Side represents educational improvement professionals, educational psychologists and managers of young people's & community services employed by local authorities.

We remain committed to the national negotiating arrangements and the national pay and conditions agreement for the Soulbury workforce. We believe that it helps employers accommodate these professional groups within a pay and conditions structure tailored to their specific needs and interests.

In 'normal times', Soulbury staff work with the whole school system and educational settings, both maintained and academies, to co-ordinate, to disseminate key information and to work with many stakeholders and partners ensuring continuity of service and provision.

We must pay tribute to the incredible professionalism and flexibility of the Soulbury workforce in their response to the unprecedented challenges posed by the Coronavirus pandemic for the last year. This underlines the need for them to be properly valued and supported in terms of pay and conditions.

The Officers' Side the Officers' Side agreed reluctantly to accept the pay offer for 2020-21, which included a commitment to further discussions at Joint Secretarial level on a without prejudice basis with regard to the current Soulbury pay structure. We were disappointed by the lack of progress in the discussions regarding our proposals for changes to the pay scales for Education Improvement Professionals and Educational Psychologists. The proposals would have cost very little when few Soulbury officers are paid at the bottom of the Soulbury pay scales and we are aware that some are paid more than the maximum of the appropriate scale. We seek more meaningful engagement on structural issues and a joint working party to consider the Soulbury pay structure should be a priority for the Soulbury Committee.

It is welcome that the Local Government Association responded to the pay freeze in the public sector as follows:

"The Government has no formal role in the decisions around annual local government pay increases which are developed through negotiations with the trade unions.

"Calculations around the affordability of pay increases take full account of the financial settlement given overall to local government but this is not the only factor involved. Thus, the Government cannot automatically impose a pay freeze in local government unless it uses a legislative route to do so."¹

The priorities of the submission are as follows:

- (1) A significant pay increase of at least 7% on all pay points, which will begin to address the substantial real terms cuts which Soulbury employees have, like other public sector workers, suffered since 2010.
- (2) A joint working group to consider the Soulbury pay structure and how the work of Soulbury officers has changed during the pandemic.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/spending-review-2020-day-briefing#public-sector-pay-and-the-national-living-wage>

LOCAL AUTHORITY SOULBURY SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Officers' Side believes that 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 was shown during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Coronavirus pandemic has shown the importance of support services to schools, children and young people. They benefit from the continuing support of a strong national pay and employment structure for the workforces involved.

Soulbury Officers adapted their working and delivery of services to address some local authority priorities during the pandemic, for example, EPs delivered the full range of their services online to schools and settings but also provided helplines for parents, children, young people and families within the community to provide advice and support a range of concerns but particularly around mental health.

Local authority work during Covid-19 had to go “across schools and settings” and deliver to communities directly. Recommendations in recent Local Government Association reports have referred to local authorities needing Soulbury officers to help them deliver their plans (<https://www.local.gov.uk/better-connected-how-local-education-and-childrens-services-england-have-responded-coronavirus> and <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/child-centred-recovery>).

The number of Soulbury-paid officers employed directly by local authorities has fallen, due to reduction, removal and outsourcing of services, while the remaining officers find their workload has increased significantly due to difficulties in recruiting or retaining colleagues in post. Other issues hampering morale and efficiency include ever-decreasing administrative support, loss of car allowances and parking, and an increased pressure on more and more officers to work from home without proper access to the necessary technological, administrative and professional support. Any recommendations from the SEND Review regarding the future work of EPs will also have to be taken into account in the future workforce needs.

Soulbury officers, however they are employed, will 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. 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 below inflation pay increases.

Pay for Soulbury staff – the Officers' Side claim

The Officers' Side believes that the pay scales for Soulbury officers should be increased significantly to address the considerations set out in this submission. The Officers Side unions are seeking an increase of at least 7% in the value of all Soulbury pay scale points and all pay-related and London allowances from 1 September 2021.

The Officers' Side notes that the claim submitted by the unions represented on the NJC for Local Government Services includes a substantial increase with a minimum of 10% on all points.

Recruitment and retention issues

The most recent Soulbury workforce survey, carried out in February-May 2018, showed that 63% of respondents reported that they had experienced difficulties when recruiting over the previous 12 months. This figure was far greater than the 22% of respondents who reported this in 2013. It was also shown that half of educational psychology service respondents were concerned about their authority's ability to fulfill the entirety of its statutory obligations in education. The proportion was about a quarter (27%) for the educational improvement service.

In a survey of Soulbury members (June 2021) 29% of Prospect members said that there were vacancies in their team, and where there were vacancies the majority (56%) had been for more than six months.

Another insight into recruitment and retention is provided by an analysis of advertisements for EP vacancies placed by LAs in the Association of Educational Psychologists' member bulletin.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
390	333	371	480	457	155 to date

It was reported that 11% of main scale posts are advertised at points A1-6, 41% advertised at points A2-7 and 41% advertised at points 3-8 – and many offer a starting salary of point 4 regardless of the scale being advertised. Most main grade vacancies are advertised using the maximum range available and many more senior vacancies are advertised on EIP scale points in order to offer more money than permitted by the EP B scale. Many authorities say that they are obliged to use agency staff and associates (where they are available) in order to try to meet statutory SEND deadlines, incurring higher costs than employing on Soulbury pay rates.

Pay in real terms

With a combination of pay freezes and below inflation increases from 2010 onwards, 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. This trend was reversed slightly by the 2.75% pay increase from September 2020. The Retail Prices Index was 1.1% in September 2020 but this was due to the exceptional economic conditions during the pandemic. RPI inflation was 3.3% in May 2021 and the latest Treasury average of forecasts

for RPI in the fourth quarter of 2021 available at the time of writing was 3.7%.²

Cumulatively, between September 2009 and September 2020, inflation rose by 34.3% when measured by the Retail Prices Index or 23.2% when measured by the Consumer Prices Index. Soulbury pay increases over this period, on the other hand, have an aggregate value of only 12%. If Soulbury officers' pay had risen between September 2009 and September 2019 in line with the increase in the Retail Prices Index, their pay rates would be much higher as set out below:

Soulbury pay shortfall

Education Improvement Professionals

EIP point 8	£54,803 compared to actual £45,243
EIP point 20	£73,020 compared to actual £60,283

Educational Psychologists

Scale A point 8	£62,429 compared to actual £51,538
Scale B point 8	£70,781 compared to actual £58,433

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.

With inflation expected to increase significantly, only a pay increase of at least at 7% will make the significant restoration needed to pay losses suffered since 2010.

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 2020, average earnings across the whole economy showed an increase of 23% compared to the Soulbury pay increase of 12% referred to above. Earnings across the economy rose by 2.8% between September 2019 and September 2020, while the Soulbury agreement for September 2020 provided a similar increase of 2.75%. The upward trend in earnings continues, with forecast annual rates of increase of about 3% for 2021 (whole year forecasts).

As expected, the short-term impact of COVID-19 included a sharp reduction in earnings but this was temporary. It remains important to improve the position of Soulbury pay relative to earnings in the wider economy in the long term.

Pay comparability with appropriate professional comparators

For education improvement professionals, 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 latest pay increase for most teachers in schools was 2.75% from September 2020. The NEU called for an increase in the order of 7% from September 2021 for all teachers in its evidence to

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994070/For_ecomp_June_2021.pdf

the School Teachers' Review Body.

The three 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 and education professionals. It is still the case that authorities will seek to recruit from senior levels of the teaching profession. The pay levels available are neither appropriate nor sufficient to allow this, so a pay increase of at least 7% is necessary.

Soulbury pay and professional comparisons

Soulbury Senior EIPs

Minimum point	£51,951	point 13
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Head teachers Group 5¹

Median salary point	£86,061	point L30
Typical range	£76,141 to £88,187	points L25-L31

Soulbury Lead EIPs

Minimum point	£60,283	point 20
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Head teachers Group 7

Median salary point	£99,681	point L36
Typical range ¹	£90,379 to £104,687	points L32-L38

Senior professionals in education²

Median salary	£68,852	
Interquartile range	£63,253 to £81,165	

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 (September 2019)

². "Senior professionals in education" taken from Incomes Data Research pay levels database

For educational psychologists, the greater range of salaries within the teachers' pay range could mean that psychology graduates will be tempted by the opportunity for higher pay within the teaching profession rather than opt to take much longer to train as an EP for lower financial rewards. Another appropriate professional comparator is with clinical psychologists employed and paid under the NHS Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. Most psychology graduates will look carefully at the training routes and pay structures of both careers before committing themselves to the 3 years' doctoral training necessary in order to become an EP. The greater number of clinical psychologist pay points and salary ranges are not reflected in the Soulbury Salary Scale. This restricts progression and opportunities for educational psychologists to take on additional professional and managerial duties.

Soulbury EP pay and professional comparisons

Soulbury Eps

Typical scale	£42,075 to £51,538	Scale A points 3-8
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Clinical Psychologist (NHS)¹

Typical scale range	£45,753 to £51,668	band 8a
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	£53,168 to £62,001	band 8b
Soulbury Senior Eps		
Typical scale	£51,538 to £56,554	Scale B points 3-6

Soulbury Principal EPs		
Typical scale	£58,443 to £62,090	Scale B points 8-11
Consultant Clinical Psychologist (NHS)¹		
Typical scale range	£63,751 to £73,664	band 8c
	£75,914 to £87,754	band8d
Clinical Psychologists also have possible career progression to Head of Service within the NHS which pays at Band 9 level¹		
Typical scale range	£91,004 to £104,927	band 9
NB the NHS also pays a London high-cost supplement at 20% of basic salary for inner London, 15% for outer London and 5% for fringe areas.		
<small>¹ Agenda for Change – Pay Rates (April 2020)</small>		

Pay in London

The Officers' Side continues to believe that Soulbury London allowances must be reviewed and increased. The low level of the allowances in comparison to teachers' and NHS London area differentials can constitute a further obstacle to recruitment and retention. They can in practice also distort the application of the national structure as some employers decide to use higher basic pay scales than elsewhere, leading to varying practice between employers.

REVIEW THE SOULBURY PAY SPINES AND THE WORK OF SOULBURY OFFICERS

The Officers' Side proposes a joint working group to consider the Soulbury pay structure and how the work of Soulbury officers has changed during the pandemic.

The Officers' Side would like to propose a joint working group to consider the issues below and make recommendations to the Soulbury Committee.

An immediate priority should be a joint review to consider how the work of Soulbury officers has changed, particularly during the pandemic, including issues such as additional workload, greater complexity of work, remote working and increased responsibilities.

Their role as critical workers has been underlined throughout the pandemic. They have provided a wide range of support to local authorities, schools, CYPs and parents – this work will continue to be highly significant in the post pandemic and recovery stages, for example in delivering the urgent priorities set out by the DfE in its' school improvement monitoring and brokering grant and over the next few years.

Another priority is for the LGA to work with the Officers' Side to ensure that the pay structure reflects the value of Soulbury officers' work. Few Soulbury officers are paid at the bottom of the Soulbury pay scales and we are aware that some are paid more than the maximum of the appropriate scale. The Officers' Side is proposing the following changes to the pay scales:

In the spine for Education Improvement Professionals, points 1-4 should be eliminated, making point 5 the first point of the spine. There should be two additional points after point 50.

In the scale for Trainee Educational Psychologists, point 1 should be eliminated, making point 2 the first point of the scale.

In the scale for Assistant Educational Psychologists, point 1 should be eliminated, making point 2 the first point of the scale.

In Scale A for Educational Psychologists, points 1-3 should be eliminated, making point 4 the first point of the scale. The three six point scales permitted to local authorities would then become 4-9, 5-10 and 6-11, with authorities retaining the right to choose which of those scales they use. There should be three additional points after point 11.

In the scale for Senior and Principal Educational Psychologists, points 1-3 should be eliminated, making point 4 the first point of the scale. There should be three additional points after point 18.

It has been reported to the AEP that at least ten local authority employers have moved their Principal Educational Psychologist posts away from Soulbury Scale B to enable them to pay higher salaries (there are also private sector employers delivering services for local authorities and schools that pay above Soulbury B scales). The current top of the scale for a Principal Educational Psychologist managing up to 70 or more EPs will be considerably less than that paid to a headteacher, while the range of strategic responsibilities continues to rise to enable local authorities to cope with the increasing expectations upon them.

The Soulbury agreement makes it clear that the third SPA point is not subject to any quota but far too few Soulbury officers are in receipt of that point. Not only should the criteria for the third SPA point be reviewed to ensure that officers are not unreasonably being denied progression but serious discussions should be held about the addition of a fourth SPA point.

CONCLUSION

We believe that any realistic assessment of the circumstances of the Soulbury workforce, in terms of authorities' ability to deliver key functions, will suggest that a pay increase in real terms is appropriate and necessary for Soulbury employees. It would not resolve the workload and other pressures faced by a highly committed and motivated workforce. It would, however, go some way towards showing Soulbury employees that their work during the pandemic is valued by local authorities. We therefore seek an increase of at least 7% in all Soulbury pay spine points.

**Soulbury Officers' Side
July 2021**