

The Soulbury Committee

OFFICERS' SIDE

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Employers' Side Secretariat
The LGA
18 Smith Square
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13 December 2022

Dear David,

Soulbury Pay – Officers Side's Pay and Conditions Claim 2022

Thank you for your response to the pay claim of 14 November. The unions have consulted members and there was a clear and forceful rejection of the pay offer. A pay increase of £1,925 and 4.04% on allowances are both well below our pay claim for a pay increase of at least 9% and the RPI inflation rate for September 2022, which was 12.6%.

We were disappointed that you described the pay offer as final. The unions also felt that there was a failure on the Employers' Side to engage with the evidence on issues like recruitment and retention during the meeting of the Soulbury Committee held on 25 October 2022. Delivery of educational psychology and educational improvement services depends on the goodwill of Soulbury officers, which is now at risk.

Soulbury officers are working in extremely difficult circumstances and are becoming increasingly despondent and angry about employers not appearing to recognise the value of their work and making little effort to redress chronic shortages of Soulbury officers. Educational psychologists (EPs), in particular, are dealing with the escalating needs of children and young people (CYP) with a range of difficulties that are linked to the lack of specialist support services to support early intervention. This severely reduces the capacity of schools to meet the needs of their CYP who then require support at a higher and more expensive level.¹

¹ More children being referred to Alternative Provision because of lack of access to specialist support services – OFSTED Report November 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-for-primary-age-pupils-in-england-a-long-term-destination-or-a-temporary-solution/alternative-provision-for-primary-age-pupils-in-england-a-long-term-destination-or-a-temporary-solution>
Increase in numbers of Educational, Health and Care Plans being issued
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2021-22>
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082518/Special_educational_needs_publication_June_2022.pdf
Significant increase in number of SEND Tribunals
<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/send-review-needs-tackle-huge-rise-tribunal-hearings-lga>

The above issues are worsened by significant recruitment and retention problems which reinforce our pay claim – for example - the AEP has carried adverts for 575 vacancies so far this year, which is already almost 20% higher than the advertised vacancies for 2021 referred to in the claim. As a result, at least two thirds of local authorities are struggling to recruit EPs and increasing numbers of them are engaging EPs via recruitment agencies instead of employing them directly (the response to a freedom of information request from one local authority resulted in figures showing that the daily cost of an employed EP (including on-costs) is £346 whereas the daily cost of a locum EP via an agency is £563 ie over an extra £200 per day).² EPs have also been motivated by the more attractive pay of locum work and some have made the decision to leave or reduce their local authority employment. These already critical recruitment and retention problems will get even worse without the improvements in pay for which we call, with significant deleterious effects for our CYP and schools

Members felt strongly that the pay offer was unacceptable for the above reasons and we are considering all options as we continue to engage with them. We call for an urgent meeting with the Employers' Side to consider an improved offer in line with our pay claim .

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely



DAVID POWELL
Officers' Side Secretary

Increase in numbers of CYP being suspended/permanently excluded from schools

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england>

Record numbers of CYP being referred to NHS services for mental health difficulties

<https://www.healthcareconferencesuk.co.uk/news/2022-5-24/record-high-number-of-children-treated-for-mental-health-problems-in-uk>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-for-primary-age-pupils-in-england-a-long-term-destination-or-a-temporary-solution/alternative-provision-for-primary-age-pupils-in-england-a-long-term-destination-or-a-temporary-solution>

Increase in numbers of Educational, Health and Care Plans being issued

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2021-22>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082518/Special_educational_needs_publication_June_2022.pdf

Significant increase in number of SEND Tribunals

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/send-review-needs-tackle-huge-rise-tribunal-hearings-lga>

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² Recent Local Government Ombudsman Report (70% of LAs are struggling to recruit EPs)

<https://www.localgov.co.uk/Delayed-EHC-Plan-highlights-recruitment-crisis/55080>

<https://app.croneri.co.uk/whats-new/ombudsman-highlights-councils-ep-recruitment-problems>

Social Care departments are actively reducing their reliance on recruitment agencies because of poor use of public money

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2022/11/21/dfe-plan-restrict-agency-use-adcs-interview/>