



FIXING PUBLIC SERVICES

ERNMENT – NHS & AMBULANCE SERVICE – HIGHER EDUCATION – SOCIAL CARE – POLICE STAFF – PROBATION –
CE STAFF – PROBATION – FURTHER EDUCATION – CIVIL SERVICE – SCHOOLS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT – NHS & AMBULANCE
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"Fixing Public Services is about restoring the devalued pay and conditions of our members, who have suffered from years of cuts and austerity. Our belief is simple - work should pay."

"Fixing Public Services is about listening to the voices of our members, who possess an intimate understanding of what is needed to deliver effective services and the efficient use of resources, ensuring they are directed where they are most needed and not squandered."

"Fixing Public Services is about a supported and resourced workforce that provide public services both they and the public can be proud of again."

Simon Day
GMB Public Services Section President

"GMB members working across public services deserve so much more than they have been expected to endure over the last 15 years. Austerity, chronic under-funding and under-resourcing of vital public services, a cost-of-living crisis and a global pandemic, have all put public services and the people that provide those services under extreme pressures."

"The workers that have kept services running under those extreme pressures are GMB members working across all public service sectors. If we are to fix our public services, we must invest in the workers that deliver those services. We must understand the issues they face every day at work and empower them to campaign and build to achieve real change."

"This is our opportunity to stand together and make work better for all."

Rachel Harrison
GMB National Secretary

INTRODUCTION

Workers across public services are underpaid and increasingly overworked. They are unhappy in the knowledge that the services they staff do not work like they should do. They too, like all of us, are users of public services and experience the frustration of trying to use services that don't work for those who need them.

We want public services that are properly invested in and that don't fritter away money to private companies to plug gaps, whilst cutting jobs and services due to budget constraints.

GMB fights for a welfare state where everyone receives quality health and social care, from birth to death.

A health and care service run by workers who are not stressed, underpaid and who are protected from the diseases they treat.

Where every child receives a good, well-rounded education and, if they wish, is able to pursue higher education without amassing vast amounts of debt.

Where everyone has access to a job with good terms, conditions and pay, and union recognition, which is not destructive to the wider environment or their own health and wellbeing.

Where everyone has access to safe, good quality housing, whether owned privately or provided by the state – and everyone is entitled to these things; regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, ability, sexuality, immigration status or religion.



SCHOOLS

School Support Staff make up the largest sector within GMB and are employed across schools and academies in all regions and nations. Every school has its own issues, with some of the common ones being special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), outsourcing, staffing shortages, funding and job creep (performing duties above their pay grade) to name a few.

GMB has campaigned for many years for the re-instatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) and whilst this is currently being re-established, not all school support staff issues will be addressed by it. Many issues will still need to be tackled by local campaigning. Fixing Public Services will focus on SEND and Outsourcing.

SEND

As a direct result of positive societal awareness of SEND, there has been a considerable increase in demand from parents wanting their child to have an Educational Healthcare Plan (EHCP) and specialist provision, to achieve the best tailored education that is appropriate for their child.

Austerity resulted in a lack of government investment into the future of our country. We have seen an adverse effect on pupils'

behaviour within both specialist settings and mainstream schools.

Schools are facing massive staffing shortages, whether it is staff that are off work due to mental exhaustion, or staff leaving the profession because of the issues listed above, as well as low pay and a lack of tailored training. The pupils suffer because of all of this.

GMB's SEND campaign can be tailored to what is most important to members. Suggested actions are contained within the four sections of the SEND Toolkit. Complete each section, decide on which element of the campaign is most appropriate to you and your colleagues, elect a campaign co-ordinator (rep) and contact GMB for support in building the campaign.

S – Safe Staffing Levels

Could include campaigning for more robust behaviour policies that are designed to support the member (employee) not just focussed on the child, or recruiting Healthcare Nurses to support with the administration of medicines.

E – Evaluate for Fair Pay

This could include ending Level 1 Teaching Assistant Grades, or re-grading jobs locally



and better designed for all support staff roles, providing a proper career path.

N – Nurture our Future

Neurodiversity policies for the whole workforce.

D – Develop our People

Identify a training need, such as behaviour training or SEND including the new level 5 Teaching Assistant apprenticeship and either individually or collectively campaign for better training in school.



"I have been working in schools as a Teaching Assistant for 10 years. I joined due to my passion and love for children and educating the next generation. Over the last five years I have seen staff morale decrease and workloads increase. Now in school we are teaching phonics, managing behaviour plans and supporting our most vulnerable SEND children. Doing all of this without the training and without the pay increase. I have experienced acts of violence from children in my time in education and it has taken a massive toll on my mental health. This is not an unusual story. There are many staff across Leeds where this is a regular occurrence. We cannot go on like this. We do the job because we love the children. But our mental health and morale is at an all time low. The good will is running out. We need to stand together. It's time things change."

Rachel, Teaching Assistant, NO Region???

Campaign Asks

Ask your region for a SEND Toolkit today and work with your colleagues to build a campaign.

Outsourcing

Private catering, cleaning and facilities companies have been tendering and winning public sector contracts for years. When this happens, employees transfer employment to the new provider under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE). Whilst TUPE protects the pay and most terms and conditions of employment upon transfer, there are three areas that are not protected: 1) the recognition of a trade union; 2) the rights to non-statutory policies remaining, such as managing attendance, disciplinary and grievance; and 3) the right to their annual pay award. These employees are often the lowest paid, part time and predominantly female. The erosion of pay uplifts annually has resulted in GMB members only receiving minimum wage rates, whilst colleagues on public sector contracts doing the same jobs are earning more.

GMB members also report many other issues working for some of these private employers – bullying and intimidation, pensions and pay discrepancies and delays which also impact benefit payments, restructure uncertainties and loss of hours due to restructuring.

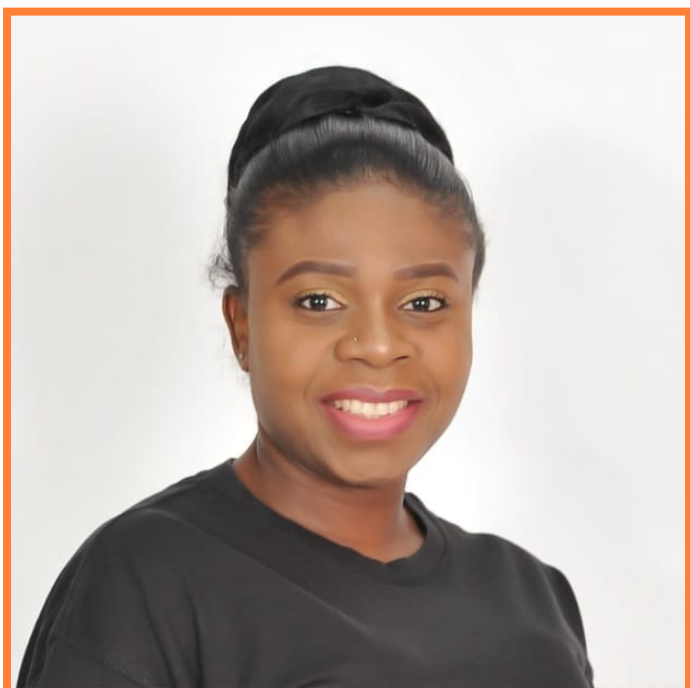
In a recent survey of GMB members working in schools catering, cleaning and facilities:

- 52% had transferred contracts more than once.
- 38% who had transferred from a Local Authority to a private contractor said their health and wellbeing was affected by the transfer citing stress, financial pressures, increased pressure at work and lack of communication about the changes to their jobs.
- 27.6% said that policies had changed when they transferred.
- 83% who had transferred from a Local Authority to a private contractor said if they had the choice, they would go back to working directly for a Local Authority, free school, voluntary aided school or academy trust.

- 38% employed by private contractors said they did not receive the annual NJC pay award.
- 36% employed by private contractors said their employer recognised a Trade Union/s, compared to 73% of members employed by a Local Authority and 56% employed by a multi academy trust.
- 53% working in school catering who had transferred from a Local Authority to a private contractor said that the quality of school meals had worsened since the transfer.

Campaign Asks

- Get involved in a local campaign or run your own with your colleagues.
- Ask your colleagues what their issues are and see if a campaign can be launched to make work better for them.
- Common issues for members in schools are working unpaid hours, no breaks, working at levels above what you're getting paid, violence, SEND, etc.
- See Campaign Checklist at the end of this document / on the back page.



"I have worked for Caterlink for four years and we get paid the London Living Wage. However, prior to transferring we received NJC pay and annual pay rises.

"Caterlink said they would honour all of our pay, terms and conditions after the transfer, but they haven't and now we earn less than we should. We are having to take industrial action to resolve this.

"It is an outrage that companies who bid for public sector contracts promise they will keep everything the same then once they win the contract, they alter the terms."

**Angela, Catering Assistant
Southern Region**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Authorities have been starved of funding since 2010 when the Conservative led coalition government introduced austerity. Years of underfunding, pay freezes and caps have impacted the workforce as well as service users. The transformation of government with new elected mayors and the abolition of a layer of government is also expected to raise issues around pay, job levels and local democracy.

Many local authorities have also outsourced different services or set up wholly owned subsidiaries (WOS) individually or with other employers. GMB is committed to campaigning against any further outsourcing and seeks the return of services in house.

Pay

Local government pay negotiations via the National Joint Council (NJC) are not fit for purpose. Employers use the Local Government Association to make full and final pay offers without any negotiations. The employers do not meet with or negotiate with trade unions, calling into question the credibility of the bargaining arrangements. We need to consider how we can escape the restraints of national bargaining, whilst keeping a seat at the table.

One way to get money into members pockets outside of the annual pay round, is by campaigning for improvements to Part 3 NJC 'Green Book' Terms. These could include pay and grading, working arrangements, allowances and enhancements.

Equal pay also remains an issue in many local authorities and GMB has live claims across the country and nations.

Starting local disputes will put the life back into local government national negotiations and will rejuvenate the union at a local level, building strength and getting organised for national ballots.



"Local government workers have borne the brunt of austerity and the chronic underfunding of councils. Services and jobs have been slashed, but the work has increased for the staff that remain."

"Years of pay freezes and caps have had a detrimental impact on workers take home pay. We are underpaid, overworked and another poor pay offer will be even more damaging on staff morale."

"We really are worth more."

Sonya, Branch Secretary, Southern Region

Campaign Asks

- Consider a campaign for you and your colleagues – Equal Pay, Part 3 or another issue
- Get involved in a local campaign or run your own with your colleagues.
- See Campaign Checklist at the end of this document / on the back page.

NHS & AMBULANCE SERVICE

"The NHS remains the single entity that keeps the fabric of our society together in a shared set of values. Established on the principle that no person should worry about how they pay for the care they receive when they fall ill, no matter who you are, and for the last 77 years the NHS has been the service that has looked after us all. We should never forget that the forging of the NHS was inspired and delivered by Trade Unionists. It is our ideals of collectivism that saw its conception, and so far, longevity. Skilled workers up and down the country and from across the globe helped build our NHS from the rubble of war including many of the Windrush Generation. The NHS has been the most successful achievement of our labour movement. The deliberate dismantling of the service by the successive Conservative led governments between 2010 and 2024 meant that privatisation accelerated, vital services were cut, and workers saw their pay stagnate and working conditions degrade."

CEC Statement, Our National Health Service GMB Congress 2025

There are many issues facing staff working across the NHS and Ambulance Services in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These include under-funding, staffing shortages and service pressures, deteriorating

pay, terms and conditions, especially for those in outsourced services.

Staffing & Service Pressures

Insufficient funding, increasing demand and staff shortages are the biggest causes of the problems facing the NHS today. The current NHS Long Term Workforce Plan is projected to be 10,000 new Nurses behind in 2025 and there is a significant shortfall of other healthcare professionals. Ambulance crews often experience severe delays in handing over patients at hospital emergency departments, waiting times in emergency departments remain high and the ability of NHS staff to respond to patients quickly and safely is an area of great concern to GMB members. This drives a perpetual cycle of mounting pressures on the workforce.

Inadequate staffing levels also has a direct impact on patient care. Patients experience delays in getting the care and medication they need. Responses to emergency calls are delayed. The most valuable resource the health service has is its staff. They are the ones providing care for NHS patients and therefore the wellbeing of the workforce needs to be a priority.



Outsourcing

Services within the NHS have continued to be outsourced to reduce costs. Staff who transfer to private providers inevitably face poorer pay and conditions and insecurity at work. Patient transport has been impacted in some areas and has been transferred from NHS trusts to private companies. Many experienced, knowledgeable staff are lost through these changes and this has a profound knock-on effect on service users and on discharges and admissions to community hospitals.

New research undertaken by GMB and published at Congress 2025, shows that at least £1.8 billion per year is being spent on private companies by the NHS in England. £300 million was spent by ambulance service trusts in the past three years.

Despite the new Labour government's statements of the 'biggest wave of insourcing in a generation', we have yet to see progress. Quite the opposite. Sir Jim Mackey, CEO NHS England Transformation, who has been put in charge by the Secretary of State to oversee the abolition of NHS England, has openly said to all NHS trusts that they should now consider setting up wholly owned subsidiaries (WOS) to support with efficiency savings. WOSs are VAT dodging organisations set up by NHS trusts in an attempt to reduce costs. Workers and services are outsourced into the trust owned organisations, but effectively out of the NHS, and away from NHS pay, terms and conditions. GMB is fundamentally opposed to WOSs and has successfully campaigned against their formation.

Campaign Asks

- Get involved in a local campaign or run your own with your colleagues.
- See Campaign Checklist at the end of this document / on the back page.



"Austerity never worked under the Conservative Party and the NHS has been neglected since 2010.

"Privatisation has never benefited any of our services. It is financially uneconomic, and quality suffers. The budget restrictions introduced by government are not adversely affecting senior managers. They are affecting hands on Nurses and Carers. We are having to nurse patients on corridors and squeeze them into nonclinical unsafe areas.

"The impact of university fees has made it an unattractive profession for people to pursue. Low pay for all staff, especially the lowest paid who are on minimum rates of pay, makes working in the NHS unattractive and creates issues with recruitment and retention of staff.

"We need to pay NHS staff what they are worth, end university charges for all caring professions so that people are attracted to the NHS and bring back in-house all outsourced services."

**Martin, Nurse,
North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

SOCIAL CARE

GMB members working across all areas of social care face many issues in their day to day working lives.

Whether this is adult or children's, residential or domiciliary, shared lives or foster care. Low pay, insecure work and the lack of professional recognition they deserve as skilled workers in this most crucial public service, are very real issues for GMB members.

The new Labour government is introducing Sectoral Collective Bargaining, which will see Fair Pay Agreements (FPA) delivered via the Adult Social Care Negotiating Body (ASCNB). GMB will take a seat at the negotiating table and strive to deliver for GMB members working across adult social care.

However, there are many campaigns that can be run at a local, regional and national level, that will deliver for care workers outside of the ASCNB. Fixing Public Services will focus on Sick Pay and Union Recognition.

Sick Pay

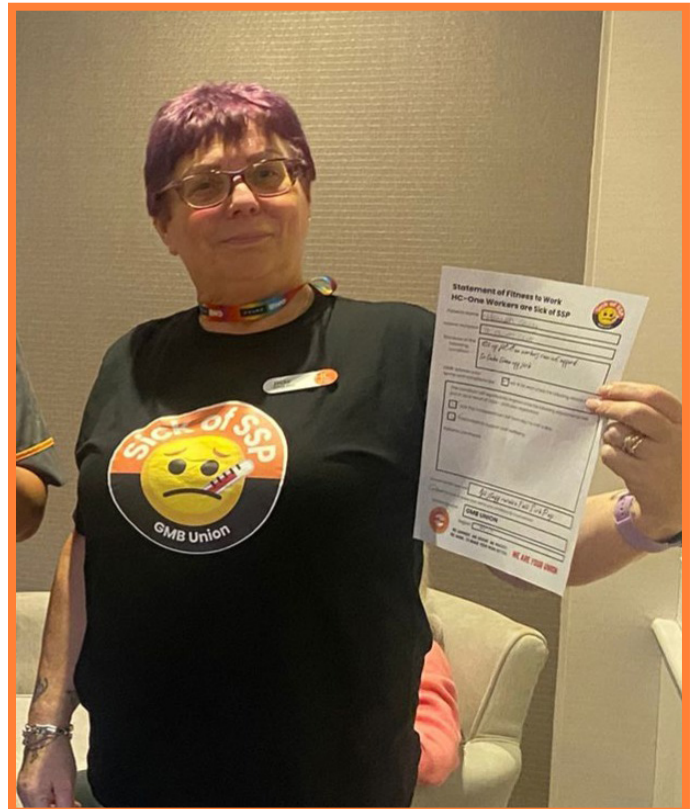
GMB members are clear that one of the most important factors affecting their employment terms and conditions is a significant lack of suitable sick pay. Most care workers only receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) which means that for the first three days, they are unpaid and only receive £118.75 afterwards.

The Employment Rights Bill (ERB) proposes improvements to this, but still does not go far enough to establish reasonable sick pay.

GMB care workers deliver care for the sick and elderly in a role that has a high physical and emotional toll, whilst exposing them to sickness they cannot afford to take the time off to recover from. Many care workers are forced into making a choice between attending work when ill, potentially putting in harms way those they care for, or stay off work but be unable to heat their homes or put food on the table.

Workers should not be financially penalised for being ill, especially when there is a high probability that illnesses were contracted whilst at work.

GMB's Sick of SSP campaign has seen members signing and presenting to employers a petition in the form of a Sick of SSP Fit Note and has seen great success in workplaces, including HC-One where sick pay has been substantially improved to remove the waiting days and increase the rate of sick pay to begin at £40 per day, and Maria Mallaband where two waiting days have been dropped and the sick pay day rate has increased.



"During the Covid-19 pandemic our company went into lockdown two weeks ahead of government guidelines, we were lucky, if that's what you could call it, as we had basic PPE, gloves, masks and aprons. But we were still scared. Scared of what was happening and what might happen to us, our families and our residents. We lost 27 residents to covid."

"Our only saving grace through this awful time was that the government funded our pay and we received a full wage if off sick with covid. However, the rug was pulled out beneath us in June 2022 and it was back to basic SSP. Covid was still prevalent, nothing had changed. Had the last two years meant nothing to our 'Kind Care Company'?"

"A member survey identified that one of the top priorities to them was to have full sick pay. We decided to get staff to sign a petition to let the company know how they felt. The petition was followed by the signing of Sick of SSP Sick Notes. Over 150 new members joined to support the campaign, we handed the Sick of SSP to HC-One Head Office. During the following pay negotiations, sick pay was front and centre and 487 new members joined."

"We had members tell their stories of hardship due to no sick pay directly to the company bosses. We succeeded with the removal of the SSP waiting days and sick pay being paid from day one. The following year we succeeded in a further increase to our sick pay receiving a £40 a day for the first three days of absence."

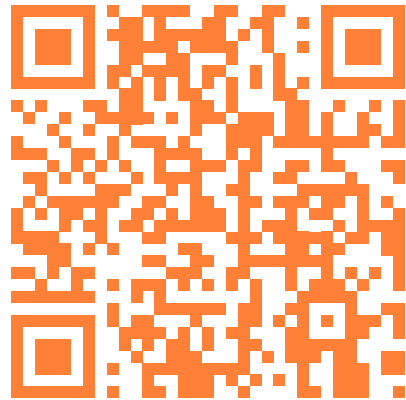
"Every year we win more because we demonstrate workers that are engaged in the campaign, this is something they want and they aren't afraid to show it."

Jacky, Assistant Chef
North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

Campaign Asks

- Run a campaign for sick pay, or improved sick pay, in your workplace
- Survey members, bring them together to sign a petition, present the Sick of SSP Fit Note to your employer.
- Push for employers to make sure workers are properly supported and staffed so that colleagues are less likely to become sick and need the sick pay.

Scan the QR code below to check out the Sick of SSP webpage today!



Union Recognition

There are an estimated 20,500 employers across Adult Social Care and an estimated 2.1 million workers. Most of these employers do not recognise a trade union and employ workers on the most basic of terms and conditions.

The ERB contains provisions for two significant factors that will provide GMB an improved opportunity to organise in these workplaces and gain recognition to support care workers.

- 1) The introduction of Fair Pay Agreements for the Adult Social Care Sector providing a negotiating body that the GMB will sit on to negotiate minimum terms and conditions of employment for care workers to be legally enforceable.
- 2) A legal and enforceable right of access to all workplaces for trade unions which will for the first time grant us access to many of these homes that have previously been inaccessible.

However, the GMB is not alone in the FPA and that right applies to all trade unions, so it is vital that we continue to build and organise in the sector, gaining recognition agreements that will enable us to negotiate improvements beyond the minimum terms set by the FPA and best support our members.

This work has already started in Domiciliary Care with Recognition Agreements signed with Be Caring, but there are many care providers across adult social care we should be considering.

Campaign Asks

- Identify care homes which provide opportunities for us to grow membership and fight for those members.
- Arrange meetings of members and identify workplace leaders to help build frameworks of support.
- Push for recognition with the employer identifying the benefits of working with a trade union to organising the workplace and resolving disputes in a more inclusive manner. Even where formal recognition is not achieved swiftly, building that link with a wider number of homes will prepare our improved opportunities to gain recognition

when the Employment Rights Bill and Fair Pay Agreements are implemented.

- Get involved in a local campaign or run your own with your colleagues.
- See Campaign Checklist at the end of this document / on the back page.



"I have worked in Adult Social Care for most of my adult life, supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Being a carer, I understand the challenges care workers face, and the vital, often unrecognised, role we play in society."

"I believe strongly in raising the profile of care. Carers possess a unique set of skills and emotional strength that not everyone can offer. Not many people can do the job we do, and it is time we are recognised as professionals alongside our colleagues in the wider healthcare sector."

"The word 'Carer' needs protecting and elevating. As an active GMB member and on the National Care Committee, I am committed to advocating for better conditions, fair pay and professional respect for all care workers in every branch of Social Care."

"I believe in the power of collective voice and continue to work with colleagues and the union to drive meaningful change in our sector. I look forward to being able to support care workers across the union in their union recognition campaigns."

Stacey Blair
GMB National Care Committee

POLICE STAFF

Police staff should not be a forgotten key worker within public services.

They are at the centre of a storm, not seen to be as valuable as Police Officers, rarely mentioned in government dispatches and having their jobs indefinitely covered by Police Officers. Governments talk about the need to invest in more Police Officers, but fail to recognise the importance of Police Staff roles.

GMB members working across Police Forces do some of the most crucial roles – Admin Assistants, Custody Detention Officers, Public Community Support Officers (PCSO), Crime Scene Investigator, Vehicle Technician, Fingerprint Expert – to name but a few.

Like other public services, GMB members who are Police Staff are feeling the impacts of under-funding, under-resourcing, staffing shortages, stress and burnout and deteriorating pay and conditions.

Decivilianisation is also a very real issue for Police Staff with more Police Officers covering their work, but on higher rates of pay.

Fixing Public Services will focus on changing the narrative and empowering workers to raise their voices.

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE & RAISE YOUR VOICE

Campaign Asks

A national network of reps

Members have worked hard to ensure there is a trained rep in every workplace and ensure a new rep replaces the one that retires. Reps ensure they are trained and added to the WhatsApp group and email groups where they are assured of information, advice, guidance and support. Reach out to your National Rep today and make sure you're on communication lists.

Be aware of recent membership growth and how it was achieved

Membership growth has been consistent and significant for Police Staff thanks to members

and reps working hard to switch the narrative around about which union is the union for police staff to join, and emphasising that GMB is not too small and can offer the same level of service, if not better, than any other union. Once the message is accepted momentum develops and it soon becomes the mantra that GMB is the only union worth joining. Ask a work colleague to join GMB today.

Take on the battles

Reps and branches take on all the battles to build the reputation as a fighting, campaigning union that achieves results for its members. They do not shy away from addressing the major pieces of business change and – publicly and loudly – fight those battles gaining a lot of members. Not all battles are won but being seen as trying over and above the rest gathers people to the GMB cause. Support the local campaigns in your workplace.

GMB reps are to be PIP/PIM trained

This is a major selling point of membership and will attract non-members. Make sure your work colleagues know about this vital service is a part of GMB membership.

Assist with workplace mapping

Reps need to identify the strategic strongholds and make sure the best people possible are in place in these areas to help recruit and service. We need a lead rep in control rooms, custody and PCSO and then a rep (or reps) at each site. Not a GMB rep? Volunteer to be one today.



"I recruited a lot of members when I joined GMB. Then we, as a branch took on all the battles to build the reputation as a union that does stuff and will fight and achieve some results for its members. I told people 'if you want to know which union to join just ask our members and they will tell you'. We also had some quite major pieces of business change and rather publicly and loudly fought to the end of those matters gaining a lot of members and traction.

"Myself and another rep are Post Incident Procedure trained which is a really important service of value to our members.

"I have done detailed workplace mapping. I know policing well having been here for twenty years. We identified the strategic strongholds and embedded good reps in these areas to recruit and service. Our branch plan this year is to extend this modelling.

So having a lead rep in control rooms, custody and PCSO and then having a rep or reps at each site. We are focussed on growing our reps in line with our membership which then creates further membership. We have worked hard to recruit reps.

"I don't think much of the increased recruitment has been anything ground breaking or mystical but down to hard graft to gain that traction using what works from the trade unionist's toolbox."

**Kate, Branch President
Wales & South West Region**

PROBATION

Pay

We seek to restore probation pay levels after years of zero and below inflation pay awards. The historically high period of inflation in recent years – the cost-of-living crisis – which coincided with a rigid three year pay settlement led to a big drop in real terms pay for probation staff, on top of the already major pay erosion suffered since 2010. (While the cumulative value of total probation staff pay rises from 2010 until 2024 has been 11%, the cost of living has risen by 81.2% over the same period).

For illustrative purposes, if a member was on a salary of £30,000 in 2010, the total value of probation service pay awards would raise this to £33,300 today. If pay had kept up with the rising cost of living it would now be £54,360. This represents a £21,060 cut in the real terms value of pay. In other words, to return pay back to its 2010 value a 63.2% pay rise would be required. (ONS: Consumer Price Inflation Reference Tables, figure is for 12 months to January of respective year & tables Nov 2024, published Dec 2024).

The erosion of real terms pay has contributed to the loss of experienced and highly skilled staff. Experienced staff are leaving the careers they love to earn higher salaries elsewhere. Excessive workloads and inadequate staffing levels have led to a failing service. The probation service is in a dire state and there is consensus that there remains a clear risk for this to become catastrophic in the very near future if action is not taken.

Restoring pay for probation staff is a crucial element of addressing the recruitment and retention crisis in probation which has only been exacerbated by the prison capacity crisis whereby 2,800 prisoners were released early last year. All these early releases placed additional workload pressure on a probation service already at breaking point. It is forecast that the system could run out of prison spaces again by July 2025 so the need for another early release scheme must be a very real possibility. Prioritising prisons over probations does not work for us.

Campaign Asks

Support the campaign. Advise members of what we need and how we can get it.

Work together and with our sister unions in all locations to get pay on all agendas.

Talk to colleagues who are not members of GMB SCOOP and ask them to join as it is the only way they will have their say on their pay.

Workloads

We continue to campaign for progress on resolving the excessive workloads and staff shortages in the probation service. Such shortages have led directly to the basic failure of the probation service to deliver core functions and accredited programmes.

The prison capacity crisis and various early release schemes have placed additional pressures on to the probation service.

The government has instigated an independent review of sentencing with one of its three guiding principles being to 'expand and make greater use of punishment outside of prison'. This means that a properly resourced and effective probation service will be critical to deliver the outcome of this review and acceptable pay for probation staff must be a part of that investment.

Campaign Asks

- Support the campaign. Advertise the Operation Protect Campaign Materials.
- Work your contracted hours.
- Record on Sphere where you have been negatively impacted by workloads.
- Report the impact of the Change programmes.
- Support the Wear Something Yellow on Friday Campaign.
- Ask that workloads and operation protect are on all team meeting agendas as standing items and press for solutions to excessive workloads and high levels of staff ill health.



"Over the past three years, as the National Representative for GMB SCOOP, I have seen staff of all grades negatively impacted by high workloads and bullying and aggressive behaviour from colleagues. We have consistently campaigned to work with the employer to address how individuals are supported who are experiencing work related stress and anxiety.

The capacity crisis in the prison estate has required a number of early release schemes which have resulted in additional cases coming into the probation case load.

The impact of the unparalleled cost of living rises over the last three years and the rise of the National Living Wage have further reduced the salary of probation staff in comparison with other areas of work.

There is a lot of work to be undertaken to improve the culture of the Probation Service to make it an organisation that people will look to work in because of its positive inclusive culture and GMB is committed to progress that work."

**Peter, GMB SCOOP National Representative
Wales and South West Region**

FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education

Key issues experienced by GMB members in Higher Education in the main are linked with funding problems due to the status of universities as charities and not public sector organisations. There is not any public funding for university teaching, so they have to rely on student fees as their income.

Many universities borrowed to fund expansions of facilities and accommodation for overseas students. However, Brexit led to big decline in EU students and much stricter visa requirements have led to a reduction in applicants from non-EU countries also, such as China, India and Nigeria. The latest government announcement on migration control will worsen this situation further.

Many universities also outsource their facility management services, or set up wholly owned subsidiaries, as a way of managing costs. This ultimately impacts on GMB members providing those services being at risk of deteriorating pay and terms.

"Being a GMB rep in a university is challenging with all the issues faced by our members, especially around workload. Workers in Higher Education are overworked and undervalued. This needs to change and I am committed to supporting GMB reps and members around the Union in their campaigns for better pay and terms."

**Sandi, GMB National HE Rep
Midlands Region**



FURTHER EDUCATION

This sector suffers from high staff turnover because of stagnating wages. Whilst there are hopes that the Skills England drive for more apprenticeships will generate more students and income, there has been no progress yet made.

GMB and other unions are entitled to make representations to the employer body nationally on annual pay uplifts, but the employer body can only recommend pay increases, they cannot enforce them. Therefore, in order to secure improved pay and terms for GMB members working across Higher Education, we need to run local pay campaigns and claims.

Campaign Asks

- Get involved in a local campaign or run your own with your colleagues.
- In Higher Education – work with your region to survey members and put local pay claims in.
- See Campaign Checklist at the end of this document / on the back page.

CIVIL SERVICE

There are over two hundred bargaining units across the civil service, including the Legal Aid Agency, Environment Agency, other departments, arm's length bodies and executive agencies. Each requires pay negotiations involving management and trade unions. Before delegation there was a single set of pay and terms of conditions of employment for all civil servants.

The current arrangements are a waste of public money. Reducing the number of bargaining units would lead to savings which could be used to improve pay. Pay progression in role was abolished and the value of take-home pay has declined by about 30% in a decade. There is an equal pay problem that means staff in the same building in identical roles but working for different departments are being paid different rates.

Proposals to restructure government departments might lead to more centralisation but they are likely to begin at the top.

Run a Local Campaign

GMB member Lock Keepers in Southern Region and employed by the Environment Agency voted in May 2025 for strike action at the River Thames, over safety fears. Budget driven decisions have put people and property at risk. GMB says that the budget set for the staffing of the weirs and locks on the River Thames was half of what was actually needed.

There are only 52 permanent staff on the river, plus 10 temporary posts which expire at the end of this year and have yet to be filled. According to a 2008 Environment Agency Assessment, more than 100 staff were needed during peak season.

Climate change has seen an increase in severe weather and flooding, with workers managing multiple weirs while being denied the required 24-hour or 48-hour rest periods between shifts – posing a safety risk to both the public and staff.

GMB members stood together on a local issue of importance to them. You can do it too.



"Myself and my colleagues have voted for industrial action because of inadequate staffing, resulting in health and safety concerns."

"During the summer we should have 90 staff on duty, but are being expected to cover 45 locks and weirs with just 52 staff. It's simply not safe. Not for us and not for the public."

"We urgently need more staff so that we can keep boaters safe, as well as try to prevent and control potential flooding."

Richard, Weir & Lock Keeper, Southern Region

Campaign Asks

- Get involved in a local campaign or run your own with your colleagues.
- See Campaign Checklist at the end of this document / on the back page.

CAMPAIGN CHECKLIST

Grow the GMB

- Not a GMB member? Join today – www.gmb.org.uk/join
- Ask a work colleague to join the GMB

Get Organised

- Become a GMB Rep or Workplace Contact – www.gmb.org.uk/our-union/gmb-reps/develop-yourself-gmb-rep
- Make sure your contact details are up to date.
- Assist with mapping work in your workplace

Communicate

- Put a GMB notice on the noticeboard in your workplace
- Join a local campaign group and agree to pass on updates to other colleagues
- Arrange a GMB workplace meeting – online or in person
- Survey your work colleagues / GMB members to understand what issues at work are most important to them right now
- Promote your campaign – contact the press, write to your councillor or MP, set up a petition and involve the public
- Ask members to share their stories

For more details on how you can get involved with the Fixing Public Services Campaigns in your area, email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

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