



# **Joint Negotiating Committee *for* Youth and Community Workers**

**Staff Side Pay and Conditions Claim 2025**

**Submitted by Unite, UNISON, NEU and UCU**

June 2025

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# Summary of Claim

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The Staff Side's headline claims:

1. For a substantial pay rise of at least 10% or £3000 whichever the greater.
2. Maintain recognition of the importance of the Level 6 qualification for Youth Workers.
3. 37 hours a year mandatory CPD to address and identify skill gaps within the service and to support workers dealing with increasingly complex challenges faced by young people
4. To address work-life balance and time off in lieu by:
  - a. Making the guidance on work-life balance mandatory and ensuring compensatory leave (TOIL) is always accrued for extra hours worked.
  - b. That each working week (that does not include a residential) should contain two consecutive days that are designated as non-working days and that any TOIL accrued for residential work should be separate from these designated non-working days.
  - c. Reducing the standard working week for full-time youth and community workers to a 35-hour working week with sufficient time for planning and admin, with a further commitment to work towards a four-day week, without loss of pay, going forward.
  - d. The JNC agreement be amended to replace "up to eight evening sessions per fortnight" with 'eight evening sessions per fortnight as a maximum'
  - e. Opportunities should be created for workers to reduce the number of evening sessions worked with twilight sessions on a regular basis to improve work life balance.
  - f. A twilight session starting from any time after 3.30pm and ending no earlier than 7pm will be recognised as an evening session.
5. Joint working to call for key worker status for JNC youth and community workers.

# 1. Rebuilding our youth services

- 1.1 The Joint union are fully supportive of the Government’s decision to develop a National Youth Strategy, but we agree with the Chief Executive of UK Youth on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025 that *“this should be the moment to turn the tide on one and a half decades of under investment”*<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 Restoration of decent pay and conditions for youth and community workers must be at the heart of the government’s national youth strategy. The impact of over a decade of austerity on youth services has been profound and devastating. Since 2010, local authority spending on youth services has fallen by 73% in England and 27% in Wales—a real-terms reduction of over £1.2 billion and £16.6 million respectively<sup>2</sup>. These cuts were not limited to funding alone; they were accompanied by efforts to undermine the profession itself, including the deskilling of youth work roles and attempts in some quarters to dismantle JNC professional standards, which remain the benchmark for high-quality youth and community work.
- 1.3 These decisions have had long-term consequences for young people—particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds—for whom youth work is often a critical lifeline.
- 1.4 Youth work makes a difference. It equips young people with the confidence, skills, and resilience they need to navigate complex challenges. It offers safe, inclusive spaces for learning, personal growth, and relationship-building<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.5 Young people report that youth work is life-changing, life-enhancing, even lifesaving. It addresses loneliness, enables belonging and social action, builds resilience and provides support with difficult and dangerous situations. Youth work provides something to look forward to, a space to gain support while relaxing, having fun, learning, and trying new experiences. This is especially true for young people with multiple challenges in their lives.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.6 At a time when young people are facing mounting pressures—including a growing mental health crisis, increased school absenteeism, and the harmful influence of online extremism—youth work offers a proven, responsive, and non-judgemental approach that meets young people where they are.
- 1.7 The evidence is compelling:
- The closure of youth centres in London led to a 10% increase in crime among 10–15-year-olds in deprived areas<sup>5</sup>. Young people in these same areas became 12% more likely to be suspended from school.
  - The Safer Lives Survey in the report of the Youth Violence Commission found that overwhelmingly the most popular response from young people about how they would feel safer was ‘the provision of more youth centres, sports clubs, and other youth activities in their local areas.’<sup>6</sup>
  - All-Party Parliamentary Group for Knife Crime on the impact of youth centre closures in 2020 found a strong negative association between closures of youth centres and increased knife crime<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/25/labour-spending-less-youth-work-tories-did-analysis>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ukyouth.org/2025/01/uk-youth-urges-government-to-increase-spending-on-youth-services/>

<sup>3</sup> The contribution of professional youth work to the personal development and social participation of socially vulnerable youngsters: A Dutch longitudinal cohort study, Sonneveld, J., Metz, J., Manders, W., Schalk, R., & Van Regenmortel, T. 2020

<sup>4</sup> Building understanding of the value of youth work, Dr Tania de St Croix . 28 April 2022.

<sup>5</sup> The Impact of Youth Centres on Crime research: <https://carmenvillallera.com/research>

<sup>6</sup> <https://centrepoin.org.uk/news/quality-youth-work-key-preventing-crisis-young-people>

<sup>7</sup> Securing a brighter future: The role of youth services in tackling knife crime, APPG Knife Crime, March 2020

- Research published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS)<sup>8</sup> found that teens affected by youth club closures due to austerity performed 4% worse in exams and faced other social challenges. The report concluded that for every £1 spent on the youth service up to £8 is generated in voluntary activity by the young people themselves.
- Youth work costs under £50,000 per person, compared to over £200,000 if that young person enters the criminal justice system<sup>9</sup>.
- Between 2009 and 2020, serious youth violence cost the UK £11 billion—with costs continuing to rise.<sup>10</sup>
- A Ministry of Justice report<sup>11</sup> also has highlighted a clear association between reduced funding for youth provision and an increase in crime rates for some young people.

1.8 Despite its proven value, youth work remains a non-statutory service and is too often first in line for cuts. Yet the savings made by reducing provision are dwarfed by the long-term financial and social costs of increased demand for statutory services and rising levels of crisis among young people.

1.9 It is unrealistic to expect the voluntary sector to compensate for the withdrawal of local authority funding. Effective youth work requires structured partnerships between statutory and voluntary providers, with sufficient and sustained investment.

1.10 The time has come to restore and reinvest in youth services. That means recruiting and investing in youth and community workers themselves. We must make sure that youth and community work is paid properly and fairly for this vital work. We must protect the profession, encourage more people to enter the service through JNC professional standards, sustainable funding, and reaffirmation of our commitment to giving every young person access to high-quality support.

## 2. Over a decade of real terms pay cuts

2.1 Youth and community workers have faced over a decade of pay cuts and workload increases that are pushing the service over the edge.

2.2 Over the course of 2024, youth and community workers have seen their household costs, including mortgage repayments, energy bills, and childcare, significantly outpace JNC pay increases. Mortgage interest payments led the way, jumping by 18.8% over the past year<sup>12</sup>, followed by the typical household electricity and gas bill, which rose almost 10%. Water charges increased by 8.1% and the average cost of childcare and council tax also rose significantly.

2.3 These increases have left many JNC workers reliant on credit cards and loans to make ends meet – incurring debt that is carried forward month to month. Despite inflation rates returning to more conventional levels, this debt burden is one of the many reasons (along with historic loss in value) why JNC pay needs to rise above inflation.

<sup>8</sup> <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/how-cuts-youth-clubs-affected-teen-crime-and-education>

<sup>9</sup> The social cost of youth work cuts: Preventing youth offending through youth work 2023

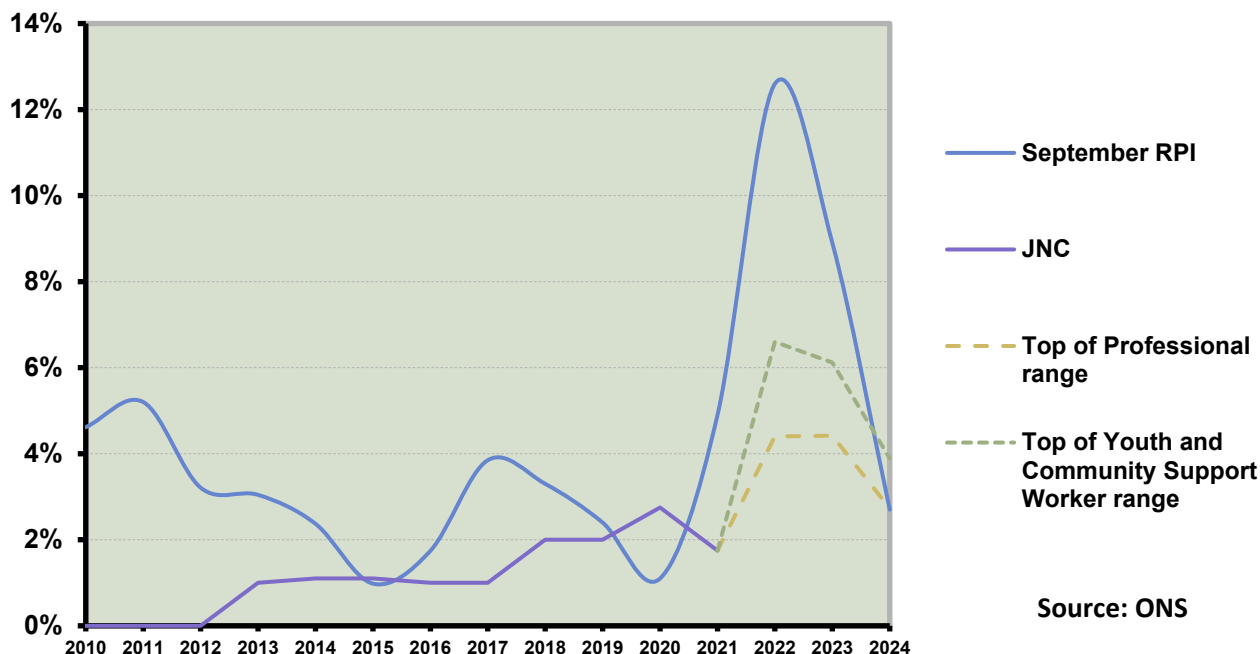
<sup>10</sup> Irwin-Rogers, K., Muthoo, A., Billingham, L (2020) Youth Violence Commission Final Report

<sup>11</sup> Newton, A., May, X., Eames, S., Ahmad, M., Economic and social costs of reoffending analytical report Ministry of Justice

<sup>12</sup> Office for National Statistics, Private Rent and House Prices UK, November 2024

2.4 Since 2009, pay increases for the majority of youth and community workers covered by the JNC have nearly all been below the level of inflation – resulting in a staggering decline in real terms pay of around 50% for the more senior and experienced grades between September 2009 and 2024 (illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 3 below).

**Figure 1: JNC rises compared to RPI inflation (September 2011 - 24)**



2.5 Figure 1 clearly shows that, for most of the last decade, inflation has consistently outpaced pay awards. While the temporary dip in inflation during the pandemic allowed the 2020 pay rise to close the gap slightly, the subsequent surge in inflation has more than erased those modest gains.

2.6 The Staff Side firmly believes that urgent action is needed to halt further erosion of wages and to shield workers from the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Addressing this issue is essential—not only to restore fairness, but also to make youth and community work a viable and attractive career once again. Without such intervention, the sector’s recruitment and retention crisis will only deepen.

2.7 Given the continuing pay gaps in the sector, it is also important that we make meaningful progress on finding concrete solutions to pay inequality in the sector, as agreed in previous negotiations. Staff Side are happy to continue discussions on this important element through the JNC in the coming twelve months.

2.8 As can be seen from the tables below, when the basket of goods is broken down it is clear that several of the elements that are driving the rises in the RPI relate to key basics like travel, clothing and housing costs, while longer term evidence shows that food costs remain high compared to the previous decade<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/costoflivinginsights/food>

**Table 3: 7 of the 14 groups in the RPI basket of goods increased by 4.5% or more in April 2025**

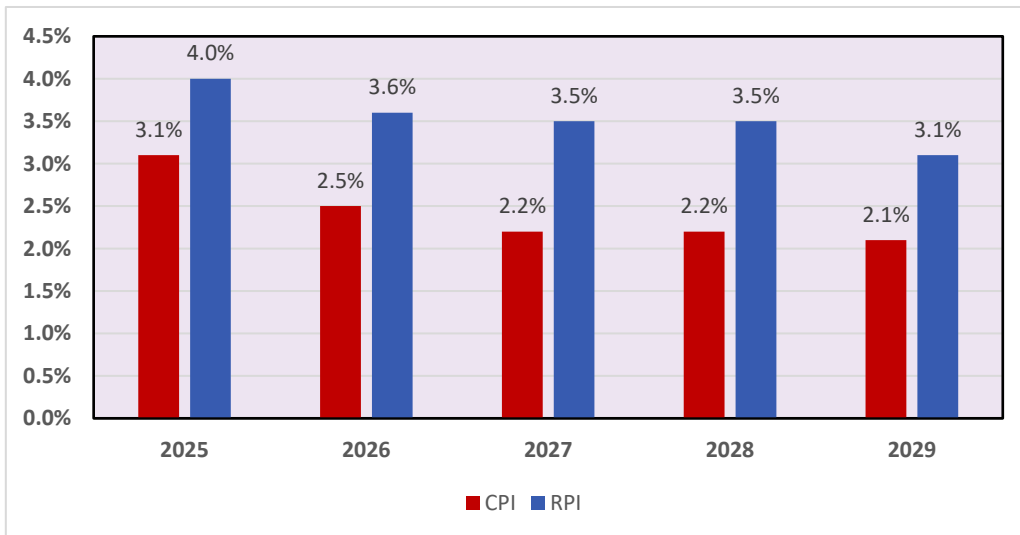
Broad Categories	% annual increase
Fares and other travel costs	11.6
Tobacco	8.6
Housing	6.4
Fuel and light	6.4
Household services	5.6
Clothing and footwear	5.5
Leisure services	4.8
Catering	4.4
Food	3.8
Alcoholic drink	3.6
Personal goods and services	3.4
Leisure goods	1.1
Household goods	0.5
Motoring expenditure	-0.7

Source: ONS May 2025

2.9 Housing<sup>14</sup> costs also continue to rise fast in many parts of the county with the Office for National Statistics reporting that “Average UK private rent increased by 7.4% in the 12 months to April 2025 (provisional estimate. Average UK house prices increased by 6.4% in the 12 months to March 2025.

2.10 It is crucial that the value of staff wages do not fall back even further against predicted rises in the cost of living. The Treasury’s summary of city and independent forecasts expect RPI to remain at a median of 4% throughout 2025 (current RPI is 4.5%) and 3.6% in 2026<sup>15</sup>. The full 5-year forecasts are shown in the graph below. It should be stressed that forecasts have been unreliable in recent years with global instability causing large error margins in the predicted rates of inflation.

**Figure 2: Forecast annual increase in cost of living (RPI and CPI)**



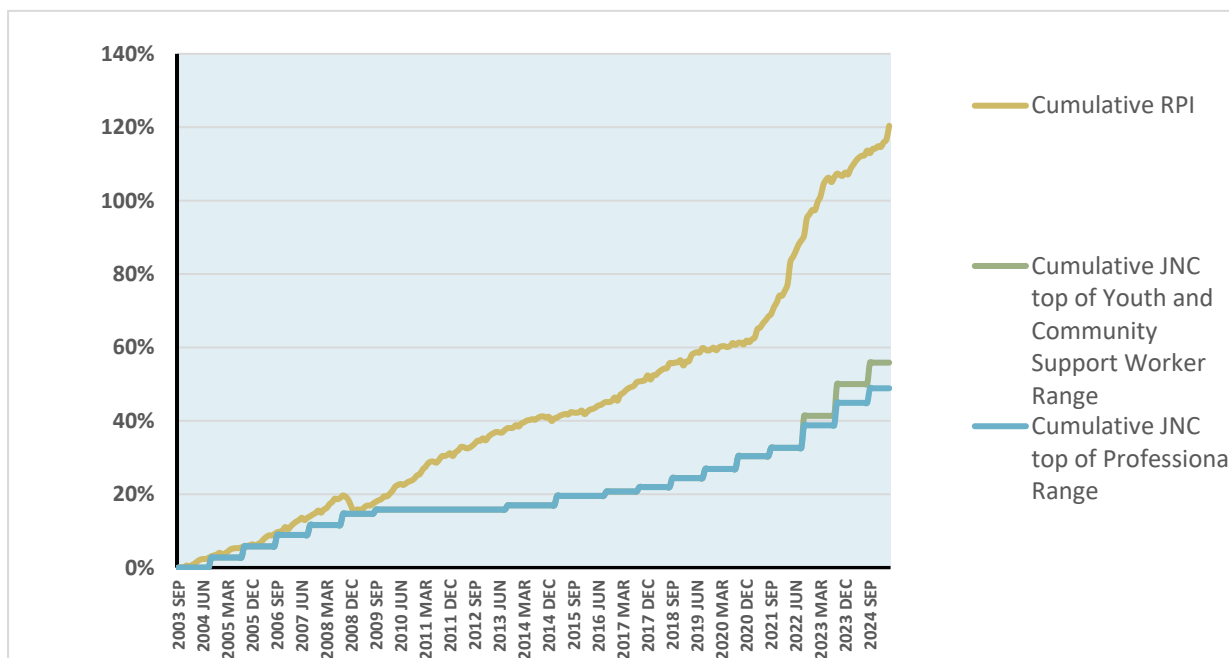
Source: HM Treasury Forecasts for the UK Economy, May 2025

<sup>14</sup> ONS Private rent and house prices, UK: May 2025

<sup>15</sup> HM Treasury, Forecasts for the UK Economy, May 2025

2.11 Figure 3 below shows the cumulative increase in JNC earnings have diverged starkly from RPI since 2009/10.

**Figure 3: Cumulative loss of earnings from the JNC compared to RPI**



Source: ONS

2.12 The real-terms pay cuts since 2009 have severely undermined the spending power of youth and community workers. Had their wages kept pace with RPI inflation<sup>16</sup>, most would now be earning several thousand pounds more per year—not to increase their standard of living, but simply to maintain it. Table 1 demonstrates the extent to which inflation has eroded earnings, showing how far current salaries fall short of where they should be. These losses are not abstract figures—they reflect the tangible impact of government-imposed austerity and employer inaction on the daily lives and financial security of workers and their families.

2.13 **The Staff Side therefore calls for an increase of at least 10% or £3000 whichever the greater.**

<sup>16</sup> The Staff Side considers the Retail Price Index to be the appropriate measure of inflation. The Government still refers to RPI as its preferred measure when considering student loans, private pension uprating and index linked gilts and bonds. RPI is still widely used as the preferred measure in private sector pay settlements. Significantly, unlike other measures, the RPI includes housing costs, which are clearly a major component of workers' expenditure.

**Table 1: Pay Scales – Loss of earnings since September 2009**

		Pay Spine Sep-2009	Pay Spine Sep-2024	Pay Spine if it had matched RPI inflation between September 2009 and 2024	Loss of earnings 2009 – 2024	Real terms loss % 2009 – 2024	
Youth and Community Support Worker Range	1	£14,143	-	£25,528	-£3,957	-5.2%	
	2	£14,733	-	£26,593	-£5,022	-12.3%	
	3	£15,324	-	£27,660	-£6,089	-18.8%	
	4	£15,917	-	£28,730	-£7,159	-24.8%	
	5	£16,509	£24,786	£29,799	-£8,228	-30.4%	
	6	£17,100	£25,115	£30,866	-£8,966	-33.6%	
	7	£17,697	£25,411	£31,943	-£9,747	-36.9%	
	8	£18,291	£26,089	£33,015	-£10,141	-37.9%	
	9	£19,047	£26,954	£34,380	-£10,641	-39.0%	
	10	£19,636	£27,631	£35,443	-£11,027	-39.8%	
	11	£20,591	£28,724	£37,167	-£11,658	-41.0%	
	12	£21,525	£29,791	£38,853	-£12,277	-42.1%	
	13	£22,489	£30,896	£40,593	-£12,912	-43.1%	
	14	£23,485	£32,040	£42,390	-£13,565	-44.1%	
	15	£24,166	£32,818	£43,620	-£14,017	-44.7%	
	Professional Range	16	£24,875	£33,631	£44,899	-£14,483	-45.3%
		17	£25,574	£34,431	£46,161	-£14,945	-45.9%
18		£26,279	£35,236	£47,434	-£15,413	-46.4%	
19		£26,975	£36,035	£48,690	-£15,870	-46.9%	
20		£27,673	£36,837	£49,950	-£16,328	-47.4%	
21		£28,461	£37,737	£51,372	-£16,850	-47.9%	
22		£29,352	£38,757	£52,980	-£17,438	-48.5%	
23		£30,219	£39,751	£54,545	-£18,009	-49.0%	
24		£31,091	£40,749	£56,119	-£18,585	-49.4%	
25		£31,968	£41,755	£57,702	-£19,162	-49.9%	
26		£32,847	£42,760	£59,289	-£19,744	-50.3%	
27		£33,726	£43,765	£60,875	-£20,325	-50.7%	
28		£34,613	£44,783	£62,476	-£20,908	-51.1%	
29		£35,496	£45,792	£64,070	-£21,493	-51.5%	
30		£36,377	£46,803	£65,660	-£22,072	-51.8%	

### 3. Pay comparators

- 3.1 There continues to be widespread concerns about the ability to recruit and retain youth and community workers, despite a public consensus on the need for youth and community services. Recruitment and retention across local government is being badly damaged by the pay of its staff falling behind the going rate in the wider labour market.
- 3.2 National Youth Agency (NYA) research<sup>17</sup> in 2025 shows that years of austerity has pushed youth work out of secure public sector employment and it is now predominantly delivered through the voluntary sector (69%), and as a result there is a significant shortage of professionally trained practitioners. A lack of stable career pathways deters new entrants, further deepening the workforce crisis.
- 3.3 The report points to a predominance of low pay and unstable jobs, with a quarter (25%) of youth work jobs now paid below the national living wage, and nearly a third (29%) being temporary or zero-hour contracts. The average salary of £21,084 falls far below the UK national average of £36,920.
- 3.4 Since 2021, 4,500 practitioners have left the sector linked to funding cuts of £1.2bn. This has led to challenges for employers looking to recruit into new job roles with half (49%) of youth work job listings not requiring a formal qualification. This trend has been further confirmed by data from youth and community courses that highlight that they are now struggling to recruit people to train for the youth and community worker profession.
- 3.5 A gap between public and private rates has also been a persistent feature of the economy over the last decade and even though private sector average earnings fell sharply over the pandemic, it recovered and rose far beyond rates seen throughout the last decade.
- 3.6 According to IFS analysis<sup>18</sup> the rise in inflation over the last few years hit public sector pay much harder due to government pay restraint. Overall, between December 2019 and November 2023, inflation-adjusted average private sector pay grew by 2.3%, whereas public sector pay fell by 0.3%. Real public sector pay at the end of 2023 was still 1% lower than its level at the beginning of 2007 while real private sector pay increased by 4% from 2007 to 2023.
- 3.7 The better pay settlements in 2024 did not lead to pay restoration. Importantly of all the public sector agreements, local authority pay has fared among the worst. In 2024 the local authorities pay rises were significantly below those achieved in the NHS, for teachers and other public services such as police and civil servants. For example, civil servants in England received pay rises of 5% while most NHS workers, teachers and members of the armed forces received pay rises of between 5.5% and 6% as well as some bottom loading for groups such as junior doctors to increase their pay still further. Police officers and staff had an increase of 4.75%.
- 3.8 In none of these cases were the pay rises sufficient to recoup the losses felt over the previous 14 years of pay cuts, but they were importantly above inflation and, crucially for this claim, they were also higher than the JNC offer.

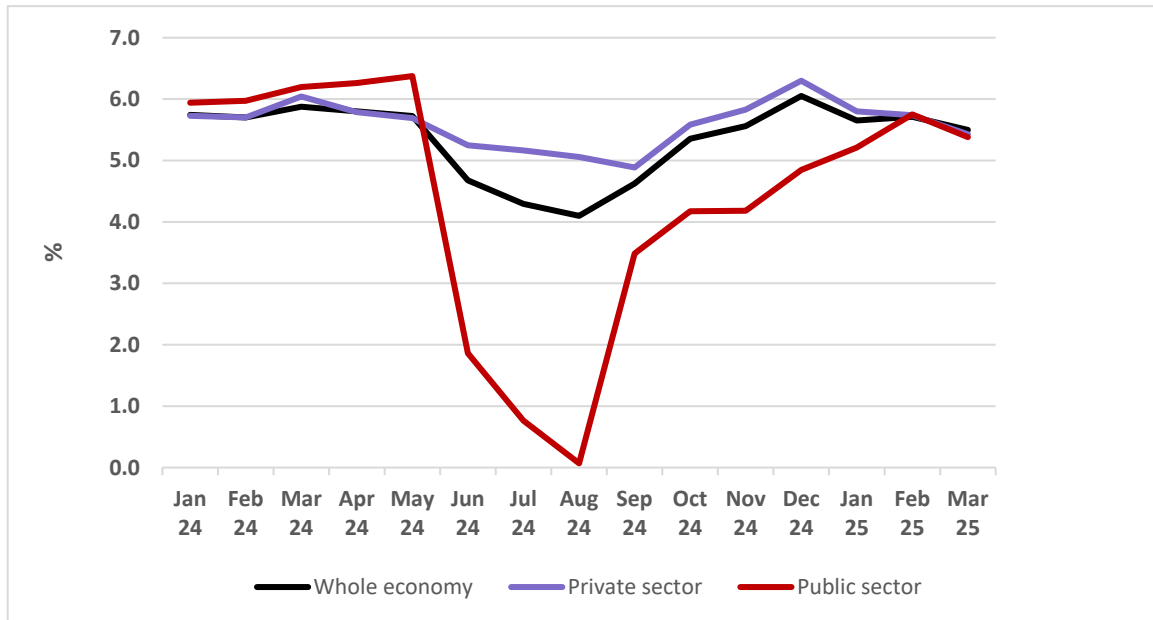
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<sup>17</sup> <https://nya.org.uk/youth-work-workforce-crisis-urgent-action-needed/#:~:text=Workforce%20in%20Crisis,further%20deepening%20the%20workforce%20crisis.>

<sup>18</sup> <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/recent-trends-public-sector-pay>

3.9 This trend is shown in average earnings figures, where while there was some growth in public sector earnings in 2023 and early 2024, this was predominantly caused by pay rises and lump sum payments received by NHS workers and others. These payments were not received by youth workers and as can be seen from Figure 4 below public sector pay again fell behind throughout 2024 and early 2025.

**Figure 4: Average Weekly Earnings - total pay, % changes year on year, 3-month average**



Source: ONS

3.10 The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2024 provisional results record the median annual gross pay of youth and community workers<sup>19</sup> as £27,401 and the mean as £26,900. The median pay of a full-time youth and community worker was £31,656 while for those working part-time the median annual pay was £14,994. A quarter of all youth and community workers are recorded as earning £18,777 or less and 80% earning £35,777 a year or less.

3.11 The same ASHE 2024 occupational data give the median pay for all social workers<sup>20</sup> as £40,697 and the mean at £39,236. The median for full time social workers is £42,668 and mean is £42,397. For teachers, the ASHE 2024 occupational data states that the median for all teaching and educational professionals<sup>21</sup> is £40,812 and mean is £41,009. For full time workers the median is £44,960 and mean is £46,482.

3.12 When we consider the classroom teachers pay rates 2024 (Tables 5 sets out the joint union recommended pay structures<sup>22</sup>) we can see that this is broadly comparable to the professional range of the JNC. However, teachers with management responsibilities can expect to be paid significantly above these scales. Of particular note are the significantly better London Area Allowances teachers receive compared to the JNC (Table 6).

<sup>19</sup> ASHE 2024 Provisional data, Table 14.7a Annual Gross Pay, SOC 3221

<sup>20</sup> ASHE 2024 Provisional data, Table 14.7a Annual Gross Pay, SOC 2461

<sup>21</sup> ASHE 2024 Provisional data, Table 14.7a Annual Gross Pay SOC 23

<sup>22</sup> <https://neu.org.uk/pay-scales>

**Table 5 Joint Union Teacher Pay Scales for Qualified Classroom Teachers (from 1 September 2024)**

	England	Wales	Inner London	Outer London	London Fringe
	01-Sep-24	01-Sep-24	01-Sep-24	01-Sep-24	01-Sep-24
<b>Main Pay Range</b>	£ p.a.	£ p.a.	£ p.a.	£ p.a.	£ p.a.
<b>1 (minimum)</b>	£31,650	-	£38,766	£36,413	£33,075
<b>2</b>	£33,483	£32,433	£40,609	£38,318	£34,974
<b>3</b>	£35,674	£35,039	£42,536	£40,322	£37,141
<b>4</b>	£38,034	£37,739	£44,556	£42,430	£39,495
<b>5</b>	£40,439	£40,710	£47,069	£45,000	£41,870
<b>6 (maximum)</b>	£43,607	£44,802	£50,288	£48,532	£45,037
<b>Upper Pay Range</b>					
<b>1 (minimum)</b>	£45,646	£46,446	£55,415	£50,210	£47,031
<b>2</b>	£47,338	£48,168	£58,138	£52,068	£48,719
<b>3 (maximum)</b>	£49,084	£49,944	£60,092	£53,994	£50,471

**Table 6: Annual London Allowances**

Teachers Main Pay Range	Inner £ p.a.	Outer £ p.a.	Fringe £ p.a.
<b>1</b>	£7,116	£4,763	£1,425
<b>2</b>	£7,126	£4,835	£1,491
<b>3</b>	£6,862	£4,648	£1,467
<b>4</b>	£6,522	£4,396	£1,461
<b>5</b>	£6,630	£4,561	£1,431
<b>6</b>	£6,681	£4,925	£1,430
<b>Teachers Upper Pay Range</b>			
<b>1</b>	£9,769	£4,564	£1,385
<b>2</b>	£10,800	£4,730	£1,381
<b>3</b>	£11,008	£4,910	£1,387
<b>Youth and Community workers (JNC)</b>	<b>£3,605</b>	<b>£2,369</b>	<b>£924</b>

3.13 The Staff Side believes that an increase of at least 10% or £3000 across all pay points and 10% on allowances would help to reduce the pay differential between youth and community workers and other comparable professions.

**Table 7: Staff Side Claim**

		Pay Spine Sep-2024	2025 claim of at least 10% or £3000
Youth and Community Support Worker Range	5	£24,786	£27,786
	6	£25,115	£28,115
	7	£25,411	£28,411
	8	£26,089	£29,089
	9	£26,954	£29,954
	10	£27,631	£30,631
	11	£28,724	£31,724
	12	£29,791	£32,791
	13	£30,896	£33,986
	14	£32,040	£35,244
Professional Range	15	£32,818	£36,100
	16	£33,631	£36,994
	17	£34,431	£37,874
	18	£35,236	£38,760
	19	£36,035	£39,639
	20	£36,837	£40,521
	21	£37,737	£41,511
	22	£38,757	£42,633
	23	£39,751	£43,726
	24	£40,749	£44,824
	25	£41,755	£45,931
	26	£42,760	£47,036
	27	£43,765	£48,142
	28	£44,783	£49,261
	29	£45,792	£50,371
	30	£46,803	£51,483

## 4. Work-life balance and time off in lieu

- 4.1 Youth and community workers continue to face excessive workloads, long hours, and rising stress levels. The JNC framework was originally established to support staff in managing their time effectively, ensuring adequate rest, work-life balance, and the capacity to deliver the high-quality services that communities need and deserve.
- 4.2 However, a sharp decline in staffing has drastically increased pressure on those who remain, resulting in heavier workloads for fewer staff.
- 4.3 TUC analysis has repeatedly highlighted that public sector staff are working excessive amounts of unpaid overtime. 3.8 million people did unpaid overtime in 2024, putting in an average of 7.2 unpaid hours a week. For those workers, that's equivalent on average to £8,000 a year of wages going unpaid for work done—contributing an estimated 31 billion of unpaid overtime. As with previous years public sector occupations were disproportionately working this unpaid time<sup>23</sup>.
- 4.4 This level of goodwill is unsustainable and must be acknowledged. The Staff Side is clear: all hours worked should be properly paid, and employers must urgently address the issue of unpaid overtime.
- 4.5 More than a decade of cuts—amounting to over £1 billion<sup>24</sup>—has left the youth service hollowed out. Workers have taken on broader responsibilities, endured redundancies, and propped up services through long hours. The resulting stress and mental ill-health are now widespread and worsening across the sector.
- 4.6 The evidence is stark: long hours contribute to serious mental and physical health problems, increased fatigue, workplace accidents<sup>25</sup>, lower morale, and high turnover<sup>26</sup>—ultimately reducing the effectiveness and productivity of services<sup>27</sup>.
- 4.7 According to the latest Health and Safety Executive analysis of data from the Labour Force Survey<sup>28</sup>, 1.7 million workers reported work-related ill health in 2023/24. Of those, an estimated 776,000 cases were due to stress, depression, or anxiety—figures that remain significantly above pre-pandemic levels. Sectors most affected include health and social care, education, and public administration—where youth work is heavily embedded.
- 4.8 As the risks of excessive working hours become clearer, many organisations are beginning to explore new, more sustainable working models.
- 4.9 Despite this, youth and community workers continue to face unmanageable demands. Many are required to work regular evening and weekend shifts without appropriate compensation or time off in lieu (TOIL), contributing to a culture of unpaid overtime that is neither fair nor sustainable.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/uk-workers-put-ps31-billion-worth-unpaid-overtime-during-last-year-tuc-analysis>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/youth-services-cuts-exceed-1bn-in-a-decade>

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl\\_pdf/2003/hsl03-02.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl_pdf/2003/hsl03-02.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/352.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8129.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <https://press.hse.gov.uk/2024/11/20/hse-publishes-annual-work-related-ill-health-and-injury-statistics-for-2023-24/#:~:text=Approximately%20half%20of%20those%20reporting,from%20910%2C000%20in%202022%2F23.>

- 4.10 Once again, the Staff Side stresses that unpaid hours must not be the default. Workers must be properly compensated for the full extent of their labour.
- 4.11 This trend is harming not only individual workers, but also the quality of youth services overall. When staff cannot plan their time, rest adequately, or maintain balance in their lives, service delivery suffers—and so do the young people they support.
- 4.12 In response, the Staff Side is calling for a comprehensive package of measures to address overwork and stress. These changes are essential to improving the wellbeing of youth and community workers and to restoring a sustainable, resilient youth service.
- 4.13 **The Staff Side calls on the employers to address work-life balance and time off in lieu by:**
- **Making the revised guidance on work-life balance mandatory and ensuring compensatory leave (TOIL) is always accrued for extra hours worked.**
  - **That each working week (that does not include a residential) should contain two consecutive days that are designated as non-working days. Any TOIL for residential work will be separate from these designated non-working days.**
  - **Reducing the standard working week for full-time youth and community workers to a 35-hour working week with sufficient time for planning and admin, with a further commitment to work towards a four-day week, without loss of pay, going forward.**
  - **The agreement be amended to replace “up to eight evening sessions per fortnight” with ‘eight evening sessions per fortnight as a maximum and opportunities should be created for workers to reduce the number of nights with twilight sessions on a regular basis to improve work life balance’.**
  - **A twilight session starting from any time after 3.30pm and ending no earlier than 7pm is recognised as an evening session.**

## 5. Professional Standards

- 5.1 The National Youth Agency (NYA) is currently consulting with stakeholders in the sector in relation to changes in the qualifications framework.
- 5.2 In their collective response to these proposed changes Unite, UCU and NEU have expressed serious concerns about proposals to deskill the youth and community worker qualifications and sideline the JNC and its crucial role in regulating and standardising youth work qualifications. These include shifting towards modular training, community-based learning, the recognition of prior learning (RAPL), and confusing proposals to introduce Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND) alongside existing qualifications.
- 5.3 The Staff Side has now met with NYA on a number of occasions and has emphasised the importance of maintaining the Level 6 qualification for Youth Workers. This is crucial to maintain the high standards of the profession and appropriately remunerate those working with vulnerable young people reflecting this qualification.
- 5.4 Given the Government’s commitment to services for young people, it is vital that the JNC works together to ensure a youth work qualifications framework that strengthens the profession, upholds the

highest standards, recognises the professional status of youth work and ensures that young people receive the quality support they deserve.

5.5 To uphold the quality and effectiveness of youth and community work, the Staff Side also asserts the critical need for a robust Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework.

5.6 Youth services continue to face evolving and increasingly complex challenges faced by young people. These include dealing with the growing crisis in adolescent mental health catalysed by the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, where social isolation and increased loneliness, stripped many young people of critical interpersonal experiences that built social coping skills and resilience. The growth of social media has also dramatically increased the exposure of young people to harmful content, exacerbating anxiety and depression as well as access to dangerous ideology, for example amongst young men drawn to the toxic masculinity and violent misogyny.

5.7 The Staff Side believes that introducing mandatory 37 hours of CPD annually for all youth and community workers, would help ensure continuous professional growth and the application of up-to-date best practices in supporting young people, and allow the service to better meet these new challenges. This commitment to ongoing development and rigorous entry standards is essential for the restoration, protection, and future sustainability of a high-quality youth service

5.8 **The Staff side is therefore calling for:**

- **Maintain recognition of the importance of the Level 6 qualification for Youth Workers.**
- **37 hours a year mandatory CPD to address and identify skill gaps within the service, to support workers dealing with increasingly complex challenges faced by young people.**

## 6. Key worker status

6.1 During the Covid- 19 pandemic, JNC qualified youth and community workers were formally recognised as key/critical workers – acknowledging their essential contribution to society. This recognition not only elevated the professional standing of youth workers but also highlighted the significance of their skills and training.

6.2 Key worker status remains a major aspiration for our members. Youth and community workers ARE their services—without them, the vital support our young people rely on cannot be rebuilt or sustained. These essential workers continue to deserve the recognition their role warrants.

6.3 The case remains as strong today as it was then: youth and community services are proven, preventative interventions that offer life-changing outcomes. By engaging young people on their own terms, these services enhance educational engagement, reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour, and develop vital social and life skills, all while helping to keep young people safe.

6.4 The Staff Side maintains that this classification should not be temporary or situational. Permanent recognition as key workers is both appropriate and necessary. It would provide long-overdue

acknowledgment of their societal contribution and open access to key worker benefits—such as support with housing—in areas where the cost of living poses a barrier to recruitment and retention.

- 6.5 We therefore renew our call for joint action across the sector to campaign for key worker status for JNC youth and community workers. A year has passed without progress—this must now be treated as a priority.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The Staff Side has presented a strong case for a substantial real-terms pay increase for youth and community workers, highlighting serious recruitment and retention challenges in the sector. To prevent further deterioration of these essential services, urgent action is required from employers to address the continued decline in wages.
- 7.2 A pay rise of either 10% or £3,000—whichever is greater—across all salary levels would represent a meaningful step toward reversing years of eroding pay, particularly while efforts continue to finalise the essential grading matrix review.
- 7.3 In addition to the pay element, the claim proposes a set of forward-thinking improvements to working time arrangements and time off in lieu under the JNC agreement. These changes are designed to support the wellbeing and work-life balance of youth and community workers, ultimately enhancing the quality-of-service delivery.
- 7.4 The claim asserts the need for stronger protections for professional standards to be maintained within the sector and access to continued professional development to help the service rise to the modern challenges that faced by young people.
- 7.5 Youth and community workers make a significant contribution to local communities and society at large. They are highly skilled and deeply committed professionals. Our proposal to jointly campaign for their recognition as key workers is intended to affirm the value and respect that they rightly deserve.
- 7.6 In light of these points, the Staff Side is calling for open and comprehensive negotiations on all aspects of this claim.