

## NJC Pay Rates

If your organisation's pay rates are based on National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) rates, you will know how difficult it is to get up-to-date information about them – so I have tried to publicise them whenever they are announced. These rates are nationally negotiated between trade unions (GMB, Unison and Unite) and the National Employers for Local Government Services, who negotiate pay on behalf of 350 local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

NJC rates are intended for use in local government, but some voluntary sector employment contracts link salaries to NJC rates, which means the organisation has to comply with the nationally negotiated changes. Other organisations may choose to use the national rates only as a guide.

The most recent increase, covering **1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022** and backdated to 1 April 2021, was very belatedly announced on 28 February 2022. The increase is 1.75% on all pay points and allowances covered by the negotiations.

The unions had asked for a 10% increase; the employers offered 1.5%, increasing it to 1.75% during negotiations. This 1.75% offer was eventually agreed by Unison and GMB, with Unison's head of local government saying they had "decided it's time to accept so council and school workers can get the wage increase they were due, and the back pay they are owed from last April. The focus will now be pushing for an inflation-busting rise for 2022." The general secretary of GMB called it "a pragmatic deal". Members of the third union, Unite, rejected the offer and as of 1 March, were planning industrial action in some local authorities.

There are 43 scale points (SCPs) on the NJC pay spine, going up to an annual salary of £47,665 for 2021-22 (an increase of £820 over 2020-21). For SCPs over 43 some local authorities produce their own scale points up to 59 (£64,935 – an increase of £1,117 over 2020-21), but these are not official NJC rates.

The NJC's letter to employers on 28 February 2022 set out the annual and hourly rates for SCPs 1-43, encouraged employers to implement this pay award as swiftly as possible, and recommended that where an employee has left employment since 1 April 2021 and requests back pay, the employer should pay any monies due to that employee from 1 April 2021 to the employee's last day of employment. The letter is attached.

Although the NJC negotiates the pay, terms and conditions of local authority staff, there are no national determined jobs or pay grades in local government. Each authority decides where to place its employees on the pay spine, taking into account factors such as job size and local market conditions.

The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) provides information about NJC pay rates for the UK voluntary sector, but is not party to the negotiations. NICVA publishes scale points up to 59, but emphasises that points above 43 are for guidance only and do not form part of the NJC pay scales. NICVA also provides basic guidance on setting pay in individual voluntary sector organisations, emphasising this should be an objective process appropriate to each organisation. I would hope the NJC information published by NICVA would be circulated by comparable umbrella bodies in England, Wales and Scotland, but in all the years I've been producing legal updates, I've never been aware of this happening.

## **Resources**

- *Local government services pay agreement 2021-22* - Letter to employers with annual and hourly pay for 2021-22 for scale points 1-43 and 2020-21 comparison, and recommendations to employers about back pay. National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC), 28 February 2022.
- *NJC payscales for 2021/22* - Article with link to NICVA's payscales with NJC pay points 1-43, non-NJC points 44-59, and guidance on setting pay for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, 2 March 2022 <https://tinyurl.com/mvrfe786>
- *Pay increase agreed but strike threat remains for some* - Local Government Chronicle, 1 March 2022 <https://tinyurl.com/mhmmxstv>
- *Salaries*- NCVO KnowHow basic guidance on setting salaries, including salary policies and job evaluation <https://tinyurl.com/thbxhv7d>

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