



SURREY CHOICES

Pay and Conditions Claim 2023

Regional Secretary: Justin Bowden

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Introduction

This pay claim is submitted by GMB on behalf of our members employed by Surrey Choices from the anniversary date of our agreement 1st April 2023.

Rationale for Pay Claim

We have undertaken an extensive Net Promoter Score Pay Survey of our membership with Surrey Choices and recognise the following:

- All members who responded reported it harder to afford everyday essentials (rent, mortgage, food, and fuel) than last year.
- Were 'unhappy' with Surrey Choices pay rates compared to other organisations in social care
- Want to see Surrey Choices pay move in line with inflation (RPI) and with Surrey County Council pay rates for equivalent roles

Inflation and the Cost of Living

GMB are submitting this pay claim against a background of continuing economic uncertainty with the cost-of-living crisis and the consequences of Brexit engulfing the UK, especially with the rate of inflation (RPI) projected to continue at 7% by the end of 2023 (Source HM Treasury). The Government CPIH figure, which includes housing, has reached 9.2% (December 2022) but is also expected to remain at 5.1% by the end of the year (Source HM Treasury). Prices are continuing to increase with significant increases in December 2022 in Housing (15.2%) and Food and Catering (15.5%)

This is an important factor for our members, and it is reasonable to ask for a pay award which responds to rising costs for our members to feel financially secure and to maintain their buying power in the market.

RPI, CPI and the case for using RPI

In 2011 the Government replaced RPI with CPI as its preferred measure of inflation. CPI tends to be about 1 percentage point lower than RPI. Trade unions, including GMB, argue that RPI remains the best inflation index for measuring the actual cost of living.

RPI costs

Many of our members costs continue to rise by RPI: several taxes (including vehicle excise duty), mobile phone contracts, rents (where index linked), regulated rail fares, and Student Loans Company repayments are all still increased by RPI.

Problems with CPI

CPI was created in the early 1990s by the European Union as a technical measure to monitor Member States' compliance with the Maastricht Treaty. It was not intended to be the headline measure of consumer price changes.

Unlike RPI, CPI does not take account of housing costs (such as council tax, mortgage interest payments, house prices and buildings insurance). The only reason for excluding these items is that a pan-European approach to comparing these items could not be agreed. *GMB believe there is no justification for excluding housing costs from inflation rates.*

CPI also includes items such as foreign students' tuition fees and foreign exchange rate commissions that are difficult to justify in a measure of domestic inflation.

Our Pay Claim

1. A substantial increase in basic pay with flow through to allowances of above the rate of inflation (RPI). Pay and Conditions for Surrey Choices Staff to be set at the same level as Surrey County Staff in Equivalent Roles.

We recognise that Surrey Choices has remained a profitable company throughout the recent period with shareholder funds increasing throughout 2020, 2021, and 2022 (Source: Credit Safe Key Financials) Therefore, this claim is set at a level that GMB believes is reasonable, proportionate, and affordable to the company

Bargaining Data

We ask for this information below for meaningful collective bargaining and acknowledge for this to take place Surrey Choices is obliged to give recognised independent Trade Unions (such as the GMB) this information under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992 (TULRCA). We request this information will be provided as soon as possible from the date of this claim being submitted

(08.02.23). Do let us know if there is any further clarification needed regarding this information.

- The current number of Surrey Choices employees covered by our Collective Pay Negotiations at the Eastleigh Depot as of 8th February 2023 broken down by:
- Age
- Gender
- Total Service with Surrey Choices

Conclusion

Inflation is continuing to remain high and will do so throughout 2023-24, and our members will see rises to the cost of their living, for them and their families. This is a crucial time to help your workforce be resilient to some potential economic difficulties the UK may face over the next year particularly as the UK continues its path of leaving the European Union and recovering from the global Covid Pandemic.

The Surrey Choices workforce show a high degree of engagement with the objectives of the company. This level of engagement can be maintained and used to ensure that Surrey Choices is a successful business going forward provided that the item in this claim is seriously addressed.

Therefore, our pay claim represents a reasonable, proportionate, and affordable estimate of the reward GMB members deserve for their dedication, skill, and hard work, and the minimum investment in the workforce by the company to maintain morale and engagement to ensure consistent delivery of high-quality services which customers and service users of Surrey Choices can expect.

Stuart Fegan
Senior Organiser