



SOULBURY OFFICERS' SIDE PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE CLAIM 2024

This pay and conditions of service claim is submitted by the Officers' Side of the Soulbury Committee national negotiating body, comprising the Association of Educational Psychologists, the National Education Union and Prospect.

The professional workforce covered by the terms of the Soulbury national agreement continues to support local authorities in discharging their statutory responsibilities in respect of schools and other educational settings, children and young people (CYP) and their families. Despite the many ongoing changes in local government and local authority functions, these remain key responsibilities in ensuring the highest standards of education and achievement for our young people.

The Soulbury Officers' Side represents educational improvement professionals, educational psychologists and managers of young people's & community services employed by local authorities.

Soulbury officers work with schools and other educational settings to co-ordinate and disseminate key information and ensure continuity of service and provision. Their incredible professionalism and flexibility during the pandemic and their ongoing response to escalating demand underlines the need for them to be properly valued and supported in terms of pay and conditions. Soulbury officers are expert, highly skilled professionals whose jobs cannot be delivered by lesser qualified or experienced people without the potential for harm.

The Officers' Side reluctantly accepted the pay offers for 2022-23 and 2023-24, which continued the real terms pay cuts for Soulbury officers since 2010. We welcome the changes to the pay structure and the agreement to review on a without prejudice basis the role of the Soulbury Officer, the SPA system and London Area Payments. The review should include deletion of the points at the bottom of the Soulbury pay scales, noting that only two local authorities thus far have advertised posts for educational psychologists using the higher pay points.

The priorities of the submission are as follows:

- (1) A pay increase of at least RPI inflation plus 5% on all pay points and allowances, which will begin to address the substantial real terms cuts which Soulbury employees have, like other public sector workers, suffered since 2010.
- (2) Discussions to continue on the Soulbury pay structure, the role of the Soulbury Officer and London Area Payments.

SOULBURY PAY

The Officers' Side believes that its pay claim is supported by the available evidence on recruitment and retention, trends in pay comparability for Soulbury staff and the impact of below inflation pay increases.

Pay for Soulbury staff – the Officers' Side claim

The Officers' Side believes that pay for Soulbury officers should be increased significantly to address the considerations set out in this submission. The Officers Side unions are seeking an increase of at least RPI inflation plus 5% in the value of all Soulbury pay scale points and allowances from 1 September 2024.

Recruitment and retention issues

The last Soulbury workforce survey was carried out in February-May 2018, so it would be helpful for there to be another survey as soon as possible. It showed that 63% of respondents had experienced difficulties when recruiting over the previous 12 months, which was far more than the 22% of respondents who reported this in 2013. It was also found that half of educational psychology service respondents were concerned about their authority's ability to fulfill its statutory obligations in education. The proportion was about a quarter (27%) for the educational improvement service.

Another insight into recruitment and retention is provided by an analysis of advertisements for educational psychologist vacancies placed by local authorities (LAs) in the Association of Educational Psychologists' member bulletin.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
390	333	371	480	457	477	604	567	180*

*as at April 30 2024

An increasing number of authorities say that they are obliged to use agency staff and associates in order to meet statutory SEND deadlines. Many of the educational psychologists commissioned via agencies have previously worked for local authority services but have left because of the increasingly high workloads (which are exacerbated when staff leave) and the higher pay being offered by agencies. This incurs higher costs than employing on Soulbury pay rates and has a significant impact on budgets. A freedom of information request has shown that LAs have budgeted over £40 million to pay agency costs for educational psychologists.

There is an acute shortage of educational psychologists in many local authority areas. This was confirmed by a recent report from the Department for Education¹ that revealed:

- 88% of local authorities reporting difficulties recruiting educational psychologists, with 48% citing pay as a key reason.
- A third of local authorities reporting difficulties with retention of educational psychologists.
- 69% of local authorities 'not confident' they will be able to meet the demand for educational psychologist services if there is no change in funding, training and service delivery models.

¹ [Educational psychology services: workforce insights and school perspectives on impact \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 96% of those local authorities reporting recruitment and/or retention issues stated that these difficulties affected outcomes for children and young people requiring support.

One of the further impacts of the shortage of educational psychologists is seen in the percentage of English local authorities achieving their statutory deadlines for issuing Education, Health and Care Plans – currently below 50%.

Pay in real terms

The real value of Soulbury officers' pay has been cut significantly since 2010 and this has continued with the pay increases since September 2022. The Retail Prices Index (RPI) was 12.6% in September 2022 and 8.9% in September 2023, while the latest Treasury average of forecasts for RPI in the fourth quarter of 2024 available at the time of writing is 3.1%.²

Cumulatively, between September 2009 and September 2023, inflation rose by 60.7% when measured by the Retail Prices Index or 46.1% when measured by the Consumer Prices Index. Soulbury pay increases over this period, on the other hand, have an aggregate value of about 25%. If Soulbury officers' pay had risen between September 2009 and September 2023 in line with the increase in the Retail Prices Index, their pay rates would be much higher as set out below:

Soulbury pay shortfall

Education Improvement Professionals

EIP point 8	£70,493 compared to actual £49,878
EIP point 20	£93,925 compared to actual £65,794

Educational Psychologists

Scale A point 8	£80,302 compared to actual £56,540
Scale B point 8	£91,044 compared to actual £63,836

A pay increase of at least RPI inflation plus 5% is necessary to begin addressing the pay losses in real terms since 2010.

Pay comparability with employees generally

While the pay increases of Soulbury officers have been suppressed, average earnings elsewhere in the economy have continued to grow.

Between 2009 and 2023, average earnings across the whole economy showed an increase of 39% compared to the Soulbury pay increase of about 25% referred to above. The average for pay agreements was 6% in the three months up to February 2024 according to the Labour Research Department's Payline database. It is forecast that earnings will increase at an annual rate of about 4% in 2024.

Pay comparability with appropriate professional comparators

For education improvement professionals, the Officers' Side continues to believe that the importance of being able to recruit from senior levels of the teaching profession for many Soulbury roles means that pay comparisons with that group are relevant.

The examples below demonstrate the pay gap which has developed between pay for

²[Forecasts for the UK economy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Educational Improvement Professionals (EIPs) and the pay of school leaders. This gap is likely to widen, which will make it even more difficult for councils to recruit from senior levels of the teaching profession.

Soulbury EIPs

Minimum (point 8) - £49,878

Soulbury Senior EIPs

Minimum (point 13) - £56,976

Soulbury Lead EIPs

Minimum (point 20) - £65,794

Head teacher Groups¹

Points L6 to L18 - £53,380 to £71,729

Points L18 to L31 - £71,729 to £98,616

Points L24 to L38 - £83,081 to £117,067

1 Values of pay points taken from joint teacher union advice on reference pay points (September 2023) and the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (September 2023)

Pay for school leaders in Wales is higher than in England, for example, point L6 in Wales is £54,316, L18 is £72,985 and L24 is £84,536. This increases the pay gap referred to above for Soulbury officers who work in Wales.

For educational psychologists (EPs), the greater range of salaries within the teachers' pay range could mean that psychology graduates will be tempted by the opportunity for higher pay within the teaching profession rather than opt to take much longer to train as an EP for lower financial rewards. Another appropriate professional comparator is with clinical psychologists employed and paid under the NHS Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. Most psychology graduates will look carefully at the training routes and pay structures of both careers before committing themselves to the 3 years' doctoral training necessary in order to become an EP.

Soulbury EPs

Typical scale	£46,525 to £56,540	Scale A points 3-8
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Clinical Psychologist (NHS)¹

Typical scale range	£50,952 to £57,349	band 8a
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	£58,972 to £68,525	band 8b
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Soulbury Senior EPs

Typical scale	£56,540 to £61,848	Scale B points 3-6
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Soulbury Principal EPs

Typical scale £63,836 to £67,706 Scale B points 8-11

Consultant Clinical Psychologist (NHS)¹

Typical scale range £70,417 to £81,138 band 8c

£83,571 to £96,376 band 8d

Clinical Psychologists also have possible career progression to Head of Service within the NHS which pays at Band 9 level¹

Typical scale range £99,891 to £114,949 band 9

¹ Agenda for Change – Pay Rates (April 2023)

Pay in London

The Officers' Side believes that the London Area Payments for Soulbury officers should be reviewed. The current payments are £3,595 for Inner London, £2,372 for Outer London and £916 for the Fringe. This compares to the following:

London Weighting for employees covered by the NJC for Local Government Services is £4,082;

The NHS pays a London high-cost supplement at 20% of basic salary for Inner London subject to a minimum of £5,132 and a maximum of £7,746, 15% for Outer London subject to a minimum of £4,313 and a maximum of £5,436, and 5% for the Fringe subject to a minimum of £1,192 and a maximum of £2,011;

Sixth form colleges pay teachers £4,625 in Inner London, £3,082 in Outer London and £1,222 in the Fringe;

Schools pay teachers at least £6,182 in Inner London, £4,167 in Outer London and £1,309 in the Fringe.

The low level of the payments in comparison to those in education and the NHS are another obstacle to recruitment and retention. The Officers' Side believes that the aim should be for them to be in line with the payments for teachers in schools as soon as possible. This is the immediate priority for the Officers' Side, but we also wish to negotiate improvements to the areas covered by the Fringe Area Payment in line with best practice in other sectors.

PAY SPINES AND THE WORK OF SOULBURY OFFICERS

The Officers' Side welcomes the commitment to have discussions on a without prejudice basis to review the new Soulbury pay structure and the role of the Soulbury Officer.

The discussions about the role of Soulbury officers should include the additional workload, greater complexity of work, remote working and increased responsibilities that followed the lost education and development opportunities created by the pandemic lockdowns³, and the current impact of the cost of living crisis⁴. Workload has also been increased by the rise in mental health difficulties for young people and increased numbers of identified conditions like Autism. For example:

- In children aged 7 to 16 years, rates of probable mental disorder rose from 1 in 9 (12.1%) in 2017 to 1 in 6 (16.7%) in 2020. Rates then remained stable between 2020, 2021 and 2022⁵
- An exponential increase, 787%, in recorded incidence of autism diagnoses between 1998 and 2018⁶

It was welcome that some of the changes to the pay structure proposed in the last claim of the Officers' Side were agreed. The Officers' Side proposes that the following should also be considered:

- In the spine for Education Improvement Professionals, points 1-4 should be eliminated, making point 5 the first point of the spine.
- In Scale A for Educational Psychologists, points 1-3 should be eliminated, making point 4 the first point of the scale.
- Points 6-14 of Scale A are identical to points 1-9 of the scale for Senior and Principal Educational Psychologists. This overlap would be reduced if points 1-3 of the latter were eliminated, making point 4 the first point of the scale.

The review of SPA points should include consideration of the following:

- The joint Soulbury guidance on SPA points to ensure clarity and consistent application.
- A fourth SPA point.

CONCLUSION

We believe that a pay increase of at least RPI inflation plus 5% is appropriate and necessary to begin restoring the real terms pay cuts for Soulbury officers since 2010. It would also go some way towards showing them that their work since the start of the pandemic is valued by local authorities.

Soulbury Officers' Side
May 2024

³ [The longer-term impact of COVID-19 on pupil attainment and well-being.pdf \(nuffieldfoundation.org\)](#)

⁴ [Cost-of-living crisis: Impact on schools - Pupils and Families - NFER and Ask Research](#)

⁵ [NHS, 2022](#)

⁶ [Russel et al., 2021](#)