

Swindon social workers confirm two week strike



GMB, the union for public services, has announced that social workers within Swindon Borough Council will be taking two weeks of strike action, commencing Thursday 31 August.

The dispute centres around protecting the Emergency Duty Service, the out of hours service providing 24-hour emergency care to vulnerable people, and preventing a pay cut [see Notes to Editors 1 for previous press releases on the dispute].

The council has announced that these staff will lose around £700 per month from Friday 1 September, following a recent pay and regrading review [2], due to the removal of a 20 per cent unsocial hours payment.



Talks with Swindon Borough Council took place on Thursday 27 July to seek to avoid industrial action, with council officers agreeing to respond with new proposals by Friday 11 August to GMB, but have failed to do so, leaving GMB with no choice other than to call strike action [3].

The union is further warning that such a huge pay cut will see workers forced to leave for similar roles in other authorities or with other employers, which will jeopardise the viability of the service [4].

Andy Newman, GMB Branch Secretary, said:

“The last thing that social workers want to do is to take strike action, but they are being forced into this drastic step due to a planned pay cut.

“At the talks with Swindon Borough Council officers, GMB were surprised by the lack of urgency from the employers, who are not even offering pay protection, which is the usual mechanism of continuing to pay a higher salary for a transition period after a pay-cut.

“Already many of the staff are looking for other jobs, many are stressed and feeling unwell, and GMB has even heard from social workers saying that they are afraid that the financial worry may be impacting their work.

“Senior officers of the council breaking their word about coming back to GMB with new proposals has made our members even more angry.

“It’s time for Swindon Borough Council to get serious, and negotiate a solution to this problem, rather than continuing to stick their heads in the sand.”

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Member requiring help?

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