

Durham Local Government UNISON Bulletin

30th June 2017



Schools Edition Update for TA's

USE YOUR VOTE. HAVE YOUR SAY

For those affected by the long-running Durham TAs dispute, there is now just over a week left to vote. As UNISON representatives continue to visit schools to discuss the offer and answer questions, many TAs are asking the following questions, which we have sought to answer below:

What is the new offer?

The council are putting forward a new grading structure for teaching assistants, which will result in 87% of UNISON teaching assistants being positively regraded immediately, and no TA facing any loss of salary before 2019. They have also added an additional week to the standard number of weeks worked by teaching assistants, and adopted a flexible approach which have in writing to the standard 37/40 hours contract – both of which are in recognition of the fact that TAs already work far more than core hours.

How did the offer come about?

This offer would never have been put on the table by the council without UNISON TAs campaigning efforts, strike action supported by the union and the robust negotiations over the last 6 months.

Who negotiated the offer?

UNISON negotiated with Durham Council to achieve this improved offer – and teaching assistants were involved throughout. Specifically, the new job descriptions developed by our teaching assistant representatives now more accurately reflect the valuable role you perform in our education system. These job descriptions are at the very heart of the grading structure and are central to the offer you have received from the council. Whilst we understand that the new structure is not perfect it is an improvement on the historical job descriptions which all agreed were not reflective of the work TAs do in schools.

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Is this offer an improvement on the previous offer?

Yes. Previously the council were threatening to “dismiss and re-engage” teaching assistants, forcing you all onto contracts with worse pay and conditions. The majority of people were going to be facing large pay cuts. Instead, the council are now offering a package where the vast majority of TAs will face a pay rise rather. For those where this offer is not the immediate solution UNISON has received a written agreement from Durham Council that they – and UNISON - will work with individual TAs to mitigate any future potential loss after the 2 years compensation period. We have written to all UNISON members who this affects outlining in detail how we will support them from now and until we can find a satisfactory solution for them.

What will happen if the offer is rejected?

If this new offer is rejected UNISON will of course want to re-open negotiations with the Council, however there is no guarantee that the Council will want to do that.