

Mette Le Jakobsen
Managing Director
Surrey Choices

Private and Confidential

Stuart Fegan
Senior Organiser
On behalf of GMB

20 February 2023

Dear Stuart

GMB Pay Claim 2023

I am responding on behalf of Surrey Choices to the Pay Claim submitted by GMB on behalf of Surrey Choices employees on Wednesday 8 February 2023.

The current economic pressures affecting everyone in the nation are not in question and I recognise the impact this has on Surrey Choices employees. As you know, I strongly sympathise with the need for an improvement in pay and conditions across Health and Social Care.

Response to the Claim

The claim, in summary, is seeking:

- Pay and conditions for Surrey Choices staff to be set at the same level as colleagues working for Surrey County Council (the owner of Surrey Choices), in equivalent roles.

Your letter stated:

“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”.

Whilst Surrey Choices has reported a modest profit in the past two years, as the company's published accounts show, we continue to carry a negative balance sheet. In addition, revenue is set to reduce very significantly in 2023-24, as part of an ongoing efficiency savings plan. Any pay uplift for the coming year is to be funded within the inflationary uplift that Surrey County Council will be awarding on the block contract for 2023-24.

We are not able to fund an increase to match terms and conditions to Surrey County Council equitable roles. However, we have tabled a proposed pay uplift for 2023, which weights the increase towards the lower paid employees, with an increase between 9% and 10% for Support Workers on the lower pay banding. We believe this represents a positive and progressive pay offer which demonstrates Surrey Choices' enduring commitment to improving pay for its employees through our commitment to being a Real Living Wage employer, and our commitment to reducing the differentials in pay between different contract types. It is worth also noting that a 9% rise for support workers in 2023-24 amounts to an 18% rise over two years when you also take into account the 1 April 2022 pay uplift; this is unparalleled in the care sector.

I would also like to draw your attention to the terms and conditions of Surrey Choices employees which are not mentioned in the claim, and these include:

- Enhanced occupational sick pay.
- Enhanced occupational maternity and paternity pay.
- Above statutory annual leave, including two days paid carer leave and an additional day annual leave for employees who have their flu and Covid jabs each year.
- Access to advancement, progression and comprehensive profession development
- A comprehensive welfare and support offer

Whilst Surrey Choices does not offer pay significantly above industry norms, our overall package does offer enhancements in other ways which appeal to prospective candidates and current employees.

Workforce Data

Provided below is the workforce data requested, including high level statistics on gender, age and length of service.

Age	Female	Male	Total
< 25	10	5	15
25-39	62	28	90
40-60	142	38	180
>60	24	6	30
	238	77	315

Length of Service

<1 year	53
1-5 years	136
6-10 years	64
11-20 years	31
>20 years	31
	315

Summary

Surrey Choices is not able to enter into negotiations on the claim. Any ability within the 2023-24 year's budget to enhance pay is being applied in the proposed April 2023 pay uplift to colleagues, which is weighted to support workers and has already been presented to both GMB and Unison.

Surrey Choices looks forward to receiving feedback in due course on the consultation by unions with employees which is currently underway.

Yours sincerely



Mette Le Jakobsen
Managing Director

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