Unite the union

PAY 2026 UNITE UPDATE

UNITE IN NATWEST

Finance Sector Update

Across the finance sector, pay negotiations have followed a familiar pattern: **low starting offers, movement only after challenge, and final outcomes shaped by Unite member response.** Banks did not improve their positions because they chose to, **they moved because members made their collective voice heard.**

How the Banks Compare

BANK	LBG	HSBC	BARCLAYS	NATWEST
IS THE EMPLOYER IN PROFIT?	YES	YES	YES	YES
SHAREHOLDER DIVIDEND AWARDED?	YES	YES	YES	YES
WORKER PAY UP OR DOWN IN REAL TERMS?	UP[1]	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN
EXECUTIVE PAY UP OR DOWN IN REAL TERMS?	UP	UP	UP	UP
ARE WORKERS BONUS ELIGIBLE?	YES	YES	YES	ONLY C-GRADE AND ABOVE
UNITE PAY CLAIM	RPI +	RPI +	RPI +	RPI +
EMPLOYER OFFER #1	BELOW RPI[2]	BELOW RPI	BELOW RPI	BELOW RPI[3]
UNITE BALLOT RESULT #1	ACCEPTED	REJECTED	REJECTED	REJECTED
EMPLOYER OFFER #2	N/A	RPI +[4]	PROPOSAL UNDER NEGOTIATION	BELOW RPI[5]
UNITE BALLOT RESULT #2	N/A	ACCEPTED	TBC	REJECTED
EMPLOYER OFFER #3	N/A	N/A	N/A	UNDER NEGOTIATION
UNITE BALLOT RESULT #3	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBC

[1] LBG average pay in line with or above RPI in the last two years; real terms pay cuts in previous years.
[2] LBG pay awards ranged from 3% to 4.8% for workers in range, with a non-consolidated cash payment for those above pay range maximum.
[3] NatWest asserts that the overall payroll budget (the funding for the fixed pay rises in the matrices and the discretionary award pot) was in excess of the then-current RPI figures at the time of balloting.
[4] For all HSBC workers up to 120% of salary range. For the first time Unite in HSBC won a pay award for workers above 120% of range.
[5] NatWest asserts that the overall payroll budget (as stated previously, with the additional funding for the enhanced offer) was in excess of the then-current RPI figures at the time of balloting.

Unite member FAQs

We've listened carefully to member feedback throughout this process. Below, we respond directly to the main concerns raised.

1. What is Unite doing to progress pay?

Within minutes of the ballot closing, Unite informed NatWest of the outcome and a first meeting was held today (Thursday 30th April). Unite will negotiate in good faith and we remain committed to doing all in our power to reach a fair pay settlement for all.

On Tuesday 28th April, Unite officials asked questions on pay at the NatWest AGM, putting the concerns of Unite members directly to the board. Unite will take all reasonable steps to reach a fair pay settlement and provide our members with the certainty and reward they deserve, including taking opportunities to speak directly to decision makers and raise the profile of the current situation on pay.

2. Why has communication been limited?

Employers across the finance sector often use embargoes to keep aspects of sensitive negotiations such as pay confidential during the negotiation stage, with most of these embargoes lifted when the offer is published for a member ballot. For Pay 2026, the use of embargoes significantly expanded and in many cases the bank chose not to lift these embargoes. The bank has the right to do this, however, this significantly restricts what and how we can communicate with members. Unite in the finance sector has agreed a commitment to push back on the expanding use of embargoes to ensure that members have greater insight into the negotiation process and are equipped with all necessary detail to allow them to make informed voting decisions in pay ballots.

3. Why weren't key details of the enhanced offer fully explained before the vote?

Unite provided all information that we could within the restrictions imposed by embargoes. The main impact of this is that we could not communicate the details of the breakout clause in any greater depth than we did. Unite pushed back hard, but the employer chose to maintain the embargo on the specific details that had been agreed even after a ballot of members had been agreed.

4. Why are all offers put to ballot?

Not all offers are put to ballot. During the negotiation period, the Bank and Unite work through discussions to try to reach a position where an offer is suitable to present to members. A ballot only takes place once the bank has shared its final offer and is unwilling to consider further proposals from Unite.

Our role is to:

- Negotiate the strongest offer possible.
- Challenge low or inadequate proposals.
- Put the outcome to members to decide.
- When the bank says, "final offer," neither Unite nor the bank get the final say, members do.

When a final offer is presented, the member ballot tests whether that offer meets the expectations of our members. If the offer does, then a majority of members vote to accept it and the offer is

implemented; if a majority vote to reject the offer, Unite returns to negotiations with a clear mandate that improvements are required and seek to negotiate these with the employer.

5. Why hasn't the offer met the RPI claim?[6]

Unite has consistently pressed hard for the bank to agree an offer aligned to RPI. This has been a consistent approach taken by pay teams across the finance sector. In the majority of cases, initial offers put to ballot did not meet the RPI position and were rejected by Unite members.[7] Further rounds of negotiations have secured offers that came closer to, or met, that position.

6. Why was there only one newsletter for the revised offer and no newsletter issued with the second pay ballot?

This year, embargoes placed on the negotiation process prevented us from communicating in the usual way. These restrictions limited our ability to provide updates and meant that members did not have the level of information they would normally expect.

The bank made joint communications on the intranet a condition of the enhanced offer. While we have issued joint communications in previous years, this has always been in addition to, not instead of, independent member-only Unite communications. However, this year the bank objected to Unite issuing independent updates or commentary alongside the joint communication approach. This meant that the ballot was issued initially with no additional context. Following overwhelming feedback from our members, the Unite FAQ document was issued shortly after the ballot opened which articulated the enhanced offer in detail and Unite answered hundreds of queries from members on the offer.

7. Do you agree that the intranet examples were misleading?

The intranet scenarios issued by the bank were accurate but selective. For instance, it was only after pressure from Unite that a scenario for an A-grade worker was published and none of the published scenarios featured a worker who had received a discretionary award or who did not benefit from an uplift in pay through the enhanced offer.

Our own communications set out how the whole offer works in practice, including how discretionary elements are applied, rather than how they might work in a best-case scenario. It is important to us that members understand the reality of how the offer is likely to be delivered.

We also appreciate members recognising the work of Unite reps in taking the time to fully explain the pay offer in granular detail, to help members make an informed choice in the pay ballot.

[6] The employer maintains a view that the overall payroll budget (the funding for the fixed pay rises in the matrices and the discretionary award pots, as well as the additional funding for the enhanced offer) was in excess of the then-current RPI figures at the time of balloting.

[7] The consistent position regarding RPI across the finance sector was that no pay team would recommend any pay offer that saw any workers receiving a pay rise below RPI.

8. **Why was the enhanced offer on top of discretionary elements rather than only on top of the fixed pay element? Does this not have the effect of reducing the impact of discretionary awards for recognising performance or reducing pay gaps?**

Unite pushed for increases to be applied to fixed pay only for all workers whose fixed pay figure was below an agreed threshold linked to RPI; instead the bank crafted an offer that assessed total compensation (including any discretionary payment) and topped up pay to a new guaranteed minimum for some workers below the salary range maximum.

9. **Why have salary ranges not kept up with inflation?**

Pay progression and salary ranges have not kept pace with inflation or the increasing demands of roles.[8] This means that, for many colleagues, movement through pay ranges has failed to reflect the rising cost of living or the skills, responsibilities, and expectations placed on them over time.

Unite has consistently raised concerns that existing structures do not adequately reward experience, development, or role complexity. This remains a live and unresolved issue, and it will continue to form a key part of ongoing and future negotiations with the bank as we push for fairer pay progression and more realistic salary ranges for members.

10. **Why did Unite not share the % of the rejection on this occasion?**

Based on our experience, sharing detailed percentages can shift attention onto how close a result may have been and whether any specific pockets of workers rejected the offer. We feel that the correct focus should be on working at pace to negotiate an enhanced offer that meets the Unite pay claim or at the very least is at or above RPI.

What matters most is the outcome itself. Members engaged in higher numbers than ever before and voted to reject the offer. This sends a strong message to the bank that the current offers have not gone far enough.

Our focus is on using that mandate to push for a better outcome for all members.

In summary

- Member turnout was higher than in previous ballots.
- Engagement continues to grow.
- Member expectations are clear and consistent.
- Unite pay teams and members at other employers in the finance sector have stood together and won RPI+ pay rises.
- Members in NatWest have sent a strong and unequivocal message: the bank's revised pay offer does not go far enough.
- This result gives Unite a strong and credible mandate to return to negotiations.
- Real progress is achieved when members stand firm together, and we will use this collective strength to push for a better outcome for all.

[8] The employer has stated that salary ranges are reviewed to keep in line with market movement and not intended to keep pace with inflation.