



August 2024

Grounds Management Association 2024 National Salary Framework Updates

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Background

The GMA National Salary Recommendations 2022 were produced in November 2021 when the predicted CPI inflation for 2022 was 2.3%. Immediately after the publication of the recommendations in February 2022, a combination of the war in Ukraine, global supply issues, energy shortages, and the continuing challenges of operating in a post-Covid world all led to a huge increase in inflation. This resulted in a cost-of-living crisis and meant that CPIH inflation for the year 2022 was 9.2%. This could not have been foreseen at the beginning of the year and consequently the 2022 salary recommendations were no longer viable for use that year.

Economic uncertainty and volatility continued throughout 2023 caused, in part, by the economic shock caused by the September 2022 mini budget and the subsequent increase in mortgage rates. During this time the GMA decided to review our pay recommendation methodology with the aim of changing our approach to salary advice and guidance. We also received feedback that it would be more helpful to have the pay uprates based in April each year as that is when the majority of pay awards, and changes to minimum wage and other financial considerations, occur.

We are also exploring the possibility of producing a more targeted salary benchmark for the sector. We are currently collecting additional salary benchmarking data in our industry survey which is running throughout August 2024. We tested this approach in 2023 and have enough data on grounds staff in Independent Schools to provide some basic benchmarking.

In the meantime, we have decided to provide annual uprates to the GMA National Salary Recommendations 2022. The remainder of this report will look to provide three things:

- An explanation of the key data used in determining the annual uprates
- An update of 2022 recommendations using the new methodology to apply to April 2022 and then 2023 and 2024. This would bring the recommendation up to date to April 2024.
- An example of possible future benchmarking data on Independent Schools using data from 2023 workforce survey.

We will also provide tables of each of the data used for uprating in the Annexes.

Uprating methodology

Our intention for the annual uprates was to provide a consistent, simple and transparent methodology that takes into account inflation, wage growth and predicted pay awards. In this way people can see how the exact annual uprate figures were derived and can replicate if they want it to apply to a different period of time (say for a January uprate) or for a different set of data (for example focusing only on private sector earnings growth).

Our proposed uprating methodology will use three data sources:

- Inflation
- Wage growth
- Pay awards

We will then take the average of these three figures as the uprating amount. This means the uprating will take account of both inflation, market rates (through wage growth) and be linked to realistic employer offers (through pay awards).

Previous pay recommendations considered actual and projected Consumer Price Index (CPI and CPIH) and Retail Price Index (RPI). This report, however, will take Consumer Price Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) as the key inflation figure, in line with Office of National Statistics (ONS) recommendations. We will use the 12 month % change in CPIH in April each year, which is available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/l55o/mm23>

Average earnings can be affected by changes to the rate of pay and also to the composition of employment (for example if more people work more hours this would increase average earnings). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) provide “decomposition” figures which show the contribution caused by changes in wages and employment composition separately. We have used the wages contribution only for 12 month change in average weekly earnings excluding bonuses and arrears as at April each year. This data is available here (column KA25 in 1.Decomp_WE):

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/averageweeklyearningsbysectorearn02>

Brightmine provide a regular analysis of pay awards made in the previous three months. Therefore the analysis in July represents pay awards that came into effect between 1 April and 30 June. This data is available here (paywall):

<https://hrcentre.uk.brightmine.com/survey-analysis/pay-and-benefits/>

A summary of the above data for April each year is provided in **Table 1**. A complete monthly breakdown of CPIH inflation and Earnings Growth: whole economy, public and private sector is provided in Annex 1. We are not permitted to publish the monthly pay award data from Brightmine as that is outside the permissions of the data license.

Table 1: Summary of Uprating data 2022-2024

	CPIH	Wage Growth	Pay Awards	Uprating
April 2022	7.8%	4.4%	3.0%	5.1% (2.1%)
April 2023	7.8%	7.1%	5.5%	6.8%
April 2024	3.0%	5.8%	5.0%	4.6%

The April 2022 uprating of 5.1% would be in replacement of (not in addition to) the 3% already included in the 2022 award. Therefore, it actually equates to a 2.1% uprate on the existing 2022 recommendations.

The uprate for 2023 is 6.8% and for 2024 would be 4.6%. This would equate to a total uprate over the last three years of 16.5% (a 13.5% increase on the original 2022 recommendations¹).

It should be noted that CPIH increased by 18.6% in the period covered by these awards (May 2021 – April 2024) so although the award figures seem high, they still do not fully cover the

¹ It should be noted that if employers have already award 3% based on the original 2022 recommendations, then the proposed uprate for 2024 should be increased by 2.1% to 6.7% to take account of the lower award that year.



recent increases in cost of living. This is the minimum uprate we would expect employers to provide in the circumstances.

Upated GMA Salary Scales 2024

The following bands reflect **minimum** recommended basic salary payment with effect from 1st April 2024 and are based upon a 37.5 hour week. *Please note these ranges relate to the minimum basic salary and are not “salary ranges”. There is no maximum salary specified for grounds staff as experienced staff in some sectors (notably professional sports) would be expected to earn well above the average in other sectors. If this is the case, these recommendations can be used purely as a recommendation for annual uplift.*

	Basic £ Salary p.a. Minimum Parameters		
Grounds Manager	43,391	to	67,219
Head Groundsperson	37,007	to	50,792
Deputy Head Groundsperson / Sole Charge	30,276	to	38,642
Groundsperson (Skilled)	28,314	to	36,120
Groundsperson	22,684	to	28,938
Junior Groundsperson (aged 17)	19,287		
Junior Groundsperson (aged 16)	16,017		

Bonuses, overtime and subsistence payments have not been included in the salary bands and are therefore additional. Employers should ensure they meet their obligations in terms of maintaining a healthy work-life balance and ensuring fair payment for overtime worked. This can be done in partnership with employees with agreements reached about the balance between overtime pay, time off in lieu and flexible working. The benefit value of any accommodation provided has not been included and should be negotiated separately.

Regional pay variations have been taken into account within the bands. Higher cost areas of the country would expect to make salary awards at the upper levels of the appropriate band. Regional differentials are: London Inner £4,662, London Outer £2,784 and Fringe Areas £833 - £1,672.

The recommended minimum pay rate for a groundsperson in London should be set at £24,600 (Outer) and £25,700 (inner) to ensure a Living Wage. We would also encourage employers to become a Living Wage Employer by gaining accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation.

Annex 1 Monthly CPIH and Wage Growth Data

Table 2: Monthly CPIH and Wage Growth (public, private, whole economy) May 2021 – May 2024

Month	CPIH	Wage Growth		
		Whole Economy (KA25)	Public Sector (KA2H)	Private Sector (KA2T)
2021 MAY	2.1	6.8	1.8	8.1
2021 JUN	2.4	6.6	2.0	7.7
2021 JUL	2.1	5.5	2.3	6.3
2021 AUG	3.0	4.7	2.2	5.3
2021 SEP	2.9	3.9	1.6	4.4
2021 OCT	3.8	3.8	2.5	4.2
2021 NOV	4.6	3.6	2.1	4.0
2021 DEC	4.8	3.5	1.9	3.9
2022 JAN	4.9	4.5	1.8	5.1
2022 FEB	5.5	4.4	1.9	5.0
2022 MAR	6.2	4.5	1.8	5.2
2022 APR	7.8	4.4	1.6	5.1
2022 MAY	7.9	5.1	1.9	5.9
2022 JUN	8.2	5.2	2.0	6.0
2022 JUL	8.8	5.5	2.3	6.3
2022 AUG	8.6	5.7	2.7	6.5
2022 SEP	8.8	5.8	1.9	6.7
2022 OCT	9.6	6.3	4.0	6.8
2022 NOV	9.3	6.5	4.4	7.1
2022 DEC	9.2	6.2	4.8	6.5
2023 JAN	8.8	5.9	5.6	6.0
2023 FEB	9.2	6.6	5.3	6.9
2023 MAR	8.9	6.6	5.3	6.9
2023 APR	7.8	7.1	6.0	7.4
2023 MAY	7.9	7.3	6.4	7.5
2023 JUN	7.3	7.5	6.7	7.7
2023 JUL	6.4	7.4	7.2	7.4
2023 AUG	6.3	7.5	7.0	7.6
2023 SEP	6.3	7.4	8.4	7.2
2023 OCT	4.7	6.0	5.9	6.0
2023 NOV	4.2	6.0	6.0	6.0
2023 DEC	4.2	6.1	6.1	6.1
2024 JAN	4.2	5.9	6.1	5.9
2024 FEB	3.8	5.8	6.3	5.7
2024 MAR	3.8	6.0	6.9	5.8
2024 APR	3.0	5.8	6.1	5.8
2024 MAY	2.8	5.2	5.9	5.0