

Sheffield delivery drivers strike against unfair wages

Drivers for the food delivery couriers Stuart and Just Eat have this week begun striking action against their employers across Sheffield.



Businesses the drivers would usually serve included McDonald's, and picket lines have been drawn across all chain restaurants in the city to shut down deliveries.

A new restaurant chain will be added to the picket line each week. The strikes have been largely organised by members of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB).

Mohammed Mahmoud, 41, has been a delivery driver for over a year, and attended the protest outside of the Sheffield Fargate McDonald's.

He said: "At first it was really good, and now they're trying to reduce the payments. It makes a difference- let's say in a week you might lose £150 to £200. That's if you're a full-time driver."

Mr Mahmoud explained that the drivers get paid based on each delivery drop they do, rather than hourly.

"If I'm paid £5.50 for a drop and I go inside and it takes 20 minutes, I'm losing. For those 20 minutes I'm not getting paid.

“As the driver it shouldn’t be like that. I should just be picking up and dropping off. For me to earn good money, I shouldn’t be waiting. We lose around two and a half hours a day, just for waiting.

“So you might be getting 7 or 8 pounds an hour, which doesn’t make sense because you have your car, fuel, and insurance. It’s a hassle.”

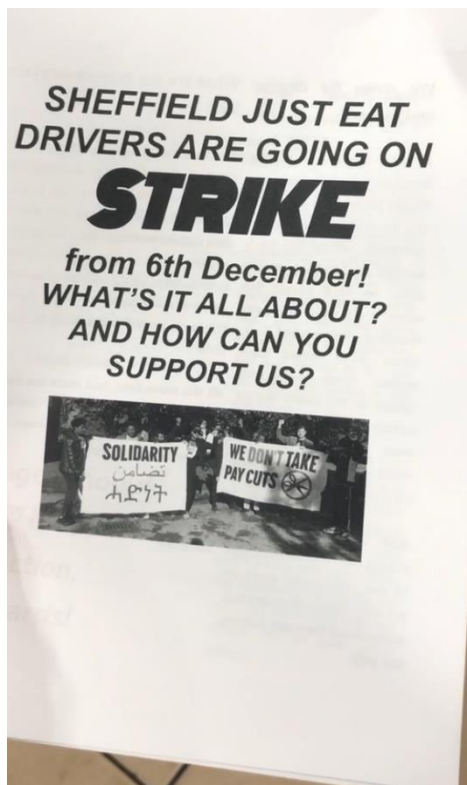
Mr Mahmoud isn’t just providing for himself, but his family too. He said “Everyone’s doing this for their family. Family comes first.”

Despite his presence at the picket line, Mr Mahmoud has doubts.

“To be honest, I don’t think anything’s going to change regarding payments. Once the decision has been made from the hierarchy, nothing can be done.

“The only thing we should be focusing on is the timing. If we can fix the timing, and the delivery is ready when I arrive to drop and go, then I can be busy every hour and earn more than minimum wage.

“The last thing bosses want to think about is increasing our money. But to solve the timing will mean everything.”



Leaflets were being handed out by attendees to those entering McDonalds, and passers-by.

Members of the public showed their alliance with delivery drivers by attending the strikes too.

Jo Baker is a postgraduate student at the University of Sheffield, and a waitress.

Ms Baker said: "I've been following what the couriers have been doing for some time. I was there a couple of years ago when Deliveroo drivers were picketing Wagamama's a few years ago.

"I just think they're some of the most marginalised and exploited workers in the city. They're a majority migrant workforce. I've heard that they're going to be cutting the courier's wages by 24% I think? And that's just not on.

"If anything with inflation, and the fact they've been working through the whole pandemic and not been on liveable wages while working 60 or 70 hours a week, they should be having a pay rise."

Stuart have made the decision to bring in a 24% cut in the base rate of the pay of their drivers per delivery.

Ed Maltby is a volunteer with the IWGB in Sheffield. He has been helping organise the union since 2019, which he explained began with a group of socialists handing out leaflets to drivers on West Street.

Mr Maltby said: "The first thing the union wants is for them not to do that. And the second is to implement a new, higher base rate of pay."

The previous base rate per delivery for drivers was £4.50. Stuart's aim is to see this brought down to £3.40, but with a per-mile bonus.

Mr Maltby said: "If you think about that in reality, it means that drivers are basically just being made to drive further and therefore work faster to get the same amount of money."

Most of the delivery drivers are responsible for their cars, so need to buy their own petrol, as well as sorting out their tyres, MOT, and insurance.

"If you're not using the per-mile bonus as Stuart are using it now, as an excuse to pay people less, you should still get higher pay for going further because of the physical risk involved in driving," Mr Maltby added.

"So, the union are saying rather than go down to £3.40 plus mileage, we want to go up to £6 as a base minimum drop, plus mileage."

Mr Maltby has high hopes to 'win' the dispute against Stuart in Sheffield, citing a postponement from the company to implement the new pay structure.

"But we don't just want to win in Sheffield, we want to win nationally," he said. "And that's why the drivers here are calling out Stuart drivers in all other towns and cities across the country to get involved in this action.

“We know Sheffield is leading the way but we’re very confident we’re going to draw other cities in with us.”

Mr Maltby had a final message for Stuart: “Give in. Give in immediately and do what the union says.”

More picket lines are to be announced in the coming weeks, until demands for action are met.

Follow The IWGB Couriers on Twitter to stay updated with their strikes: [@SYorksCouriers](https://twitter.com/SYorksCouriers)