

THE CAMPAIGNER

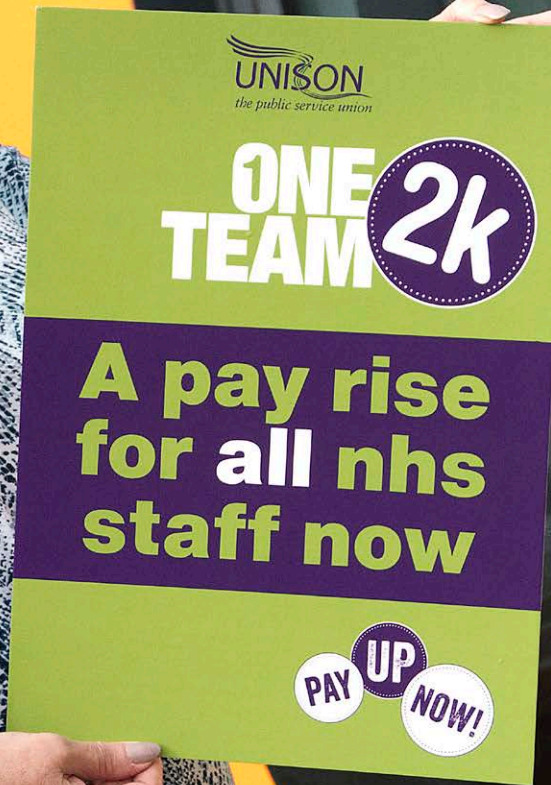
East Midlands Newsletter for UNISON Activists

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UNISON

East Midlands



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WELCOME

*from UNISON East Midlands
Regional Secretary Chris Jenkinson*



I would like to express my deep gratitude for the hard work and sacrifices of UNISON members, reps and staff in the East Midlands during these last difficult months.

Our union has proved resilient in exceptionally challenging circumstances and we should all be proud of our ability to maintain support to members despite the disruptions. Helping to keep their wellbeing at the top of the agenda for employers and government has only been possible through your efforts.

Since the start of 2020, nearly 150,000 new members have joined UNISON. Taking into account the number of people leaving the union during that time, UNISON's total membership has grown by more than 35,000 people.

Around 1,500 of those new members are from the East Midlands. During this period our region's activist base has also grown, including 50 new Health and Safety Reps who are already at work helping to keep our members safe.

It is inspiring to see our union operating at its very best, particularly when good news seems so rare.

As a new wave of coronavirus sweeps the country our members will be called upon once again, and they will want their union at their side, campaigning for a better deal for them and their families. When we emerge from this pandemic

there can be no going back to how it was before. No pay freezes and falling living standards, no job losses or threats of privatisation, no cuts in our pay and conditions to help balance budgets.

Our union must be a campaigning union, standing confident and making the case for better pay, safer workplaces, good conditions, and a return to in-house services where people, not profits are what matter.

In this newsletter, you will read about the brilliant work being done across our region; it is a celebration of what we do. That work has increased the strength of UNISON and now is the time to double down on those gains and increase our union's collective bargaining and political power to better serve our members.

We must continue reaching out to workers and encouraging them to join, as well as fostering and supporting UNISON's next generation of stewards as they organise their workplaces and ensure members' best interests are acted upon.

In these uncertain times, the credo of 'strength in unity' has never been truer, and only by maximising UNISON's influence in our workplaces can we secure a better future for every one of our members.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY REORGANISATIONS ‘NEED TO WORK’

UNISON is campaigning to prevent losses to local government services and skills in Northamptonshire after April 2021, when the eight existing Northamptonshire County, District and Borough councils will be abolished and two new councils formed.

In 2018 financial mismanagement led to a government decision to abolish all of Northamptonshire’s county councils and implement the creation of two new local authorities, West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire. Concerns about children’s services has also meant that a children’s trust has been set up to run from 1 November 2020.

Despite a struggle to bring the new councils’ programme team to the table, the six UNISON branches in Northamptonshire local government have been working hard to try and secure the best terms and conditions they can for new and existing staff.

To date UNISON has ensured that all existing staff will transfer to the new

councils under TUPE and secured an uplift in the redundancy scheme for members in Northampton Borough and South Northants council. The union has also negotiated better pay protection for staff in Kettering, Daventry, Northampton Borough and Northamptonshire County councils.

The measures bring these staff groups into line, as a minimum, with the other councils.

UNISON regional organiser Cathy Symes said: “There is still significant concern that these moves could lead to local services deteriorating, with the expertise of dedicated staff being lost to Northamptonshire’s local government.

“Because of this UNISON has launched the virtual ‘Northamptonshire Needs to Work’ community campaign. The campaign is calling on members, the local community and councillors to support local services and staff.”

BRITISH GAS 'FIRE AND REHIRE' BALLOT POSTPONED

after talks progress

Following the announcement from Centrica that it would dismiss all its British Gas workforce and re-employ them on lesser terms by the year's end, UNISON has continued to engage in talks with the business to see if a negotiated outcome is possible.

The union also made the necessary preparations to hold a lawful industrial action ballot, however, in recent weeks the negotiations between trade unions and the business have started to make some progress.

UNISON regional organiser Ed Bratt said: "This welcome progress has been achieved through the hard work of union negotiators and supported externally by the political pressure that has been placed on the business thanks to the excellent efforts of members contacting their local politicians.

"Both the trade unions and Centrica management recognise that more time is needed to explore further the grounds for a negotiated outcome that better protects our members but also plays a part in the business recovery that is required.

"Ultimately this may not be possible, but enough progress has been made to allow us some confidence that a settlement to put to members for a vote could still be arrived at."

With written and binding assurances from the business to pause the fire and rehire plans, UNISON, as well as the other unions at British Gas, have agreed to pause their industrial action ballots.

Ed Bratt said: "This could be revisited with immediate effect should it be required but there remains positive intent to find a negotiated outcome and this should be allowed to continue."

UNISON SUCCESSES IN DERBYSHIRE

at County Council-owned school and building firms

UNISON is continuing to win for staff at two companies created and owned by Derbyshire County Council, which are being run in partnership with a firm controlled by Suffolk County Council.

In September, around 1,000 members of staff were transferred from the employment of Derbyshire County Council into two local authority owned companies, Vertas (Derbyshire) Ltd and Concertus (Derbyshire) Ltd. The companies were formed with Suffolk Holdings Group, which is controlled by Suffolk County Council.

Approximately 950 domestic and caretaking school staff were transferred into Vertas, with around 35 staff building design staff moved to Concertus.

The firms have been established under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 as 'Teckal' companies, which allow public bodies to transfer services into new firms without the need for inviting contract bids.

The regulations stipulate that Teckal firms should be managed as if they are departments in a public body, enabling a large element of public control and accountability. These types of arrangements are becoming increasingly common, with both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County councils setting up similar firms.

UNISON has secured a number of agreements with the companies. These include the establishment of a formal consultative body, the promotion of union membership to new starters and ensuring staff receive the 2020 National Joint Council pay award.

UNISON regional organiser Keith Libetta said: "UNISON has been proactive in formulating good employment relationships with the new companies.

"In September we had no stewards being transferred to the new employers but to date we have identified approximately 5 or 6 members who are interested in becoming representatives."

UNISON ACTIVISTS LAUNCH 'FREEDOM FROM RACISM' BOOKLET

after workshop successes

UNISON East Midlands activists have been published a 'Freedom from Racism' booklet to help tackle structural discrimination in the workplace, following a series of successful online workshops.

Produced for people of all colours, Freedom from Racism does not contain advice but rather provides a framework to stimulate debate and conversation around systemic racism.

James Minto, regional representative to the National Black Members Committee, explained that the booklet was "borne out of Black staff finding they could not progress in their role" because of conscious and unconscious discrimination.

He said: "A very small group of us met to discuss and look at a way we could raise awareness to tackle systemic racism. We wanted to come up with something that people could use, that would invoke uncomfortable difficult conversations and

that could be taken to employers. We also wanted to encourage people to become activists in the fight against racism."

To begin with the group ran three webinars on race and racism at work, which were attended by UNISON members at Nottingham County Council.

James Minto said: "The response was amazing and from the information gained and the use of our own personal experiences we created the Freedom from Racism booklet for activists."

UNISON branch secretary Karen Eddy was one of those who helped produce the booklet.

She said: "Freeing ourselves from racism is a battle, a conscious decision to act; to recognise and expose racism where it occurs, to change systems and processes to remove oppression and bias from our world. It is by working together to be free from racism that we achieve positive change."

THE BIG VOTE

General Secretary Election 2020



The general secretary election is your chance to vote to elect the most senior person in the union. Being a member, or retired member, of UNISON entitles you to a vote if you were a member on 28 July 2020.

Who is the general secretary?

The general secretary represents you and the other 1.3 million members of UNISON in meetings with politicians across the UK, in discussions with employers and when working with other trade unions. They speak up for you and are the public face of your union, in the press, on TV and on social media.

Dave Prentis, the union's current general secretary retires at the end of 2020 after 20 years in the job. The law – and UNISON's rule book – says we have to elect our general secretary every five years.

Why should I vote?

This is your chance to have a say in who leads the union and who represents all our members. The election only comes around every five years so use your vote and make sure your voice is heard.

How do I vote?

The ballot opens on 28 October so please look out for your ballot paper, which will be sent by post to your home address. The ballot is being run on our behalf by an independent organisation called Civica Election Services (CES).

Make sure you post your completed ballot in plenty of time to CES by 5pm on November 27. It will be freepost, so don't worry about a stamp.

Your election pack will include the ballot paper, and the pre-paid return envelope. There will also be information about the candidates who are standing to be general secretary.

If anything is missing from your election pack, or you lose your ballot paper please call our ballot helpline free on 0800 0857 857 or on textphone 0800 0967 968. The helpline opens on 10 November and closes on 20 November.

Christina McAnea
Nominated by East Midlands Regional Council



Statement - East Midlands Regional Council

Regional Council believes Christina McAnea offers a clear, ambitious, and responsible program for UNISON.

As we enter a difficult and challenging time Christina's vast experience as a no-nonsense woman is precisely what UNISON members need.

Christina has a proven depth of character. She overcame adversity to become one of the most senior and successful women in the union. Representing a real departure from the past - she will be the first woman General Secretary with modern ideas for the future.

Regional Council believes Christina will quickly and successfully implement her ideas, helping to build a bigger, better, and stronger union.

STAFF BATTLE THE VIRUS HEAD ON

at Sherwood Forest Hospitals



As soon as the country was plunged into lockdown in March, staff at the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust leapt into action. Those who could work remotely were sent home, outdoor shower blocks were constructed, an extra mortuary was built and personal protective equipment (PPE) supply lines secured.

“It was amazing how quickly things were pulled together,” says joint UNISON regional convenor and the trust’s staff side chair and governor, Roz Norman, who looks after the concerns of 5,000 staff.

“Staff at the trust have been absolutely exceptional. Everyone’s been supporting each other. People have been coming in outside of work hours to help. Seeing how our organisation reacted was the best possible example of UNISON’s belief that the NHS is one team, where everyone plays their part in delivering high quality care for patients.”

The biggest crisis since the Second World War, the coronavirus pandemic has been horrendous for everyone, with frontline health and care staff battling the virus

head on.

As the number of infections and deaths continued to grow from spring into summer, Roz was at work in King’s Mill Hospital, Mansfield, making sure staff concerns were listened to and acted upon.

Roz said: “I was going around and making sure people were ok. It soon became clear that staff wanted someone to listen. People were fearful but they never gave up. They kept coming in even though they were scared.”

**THE NHS IS
ONE TEAM,
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DELIVERING
HIGH QUALITY
CARE**

As well as helping staff at her own trust – including assisting with the set-up of a buddy system for workers and ensuring that staff travelling 25 miles from King’s Mill to Newark

Hospital for self-isolation cover got petrol and travel time money – Roz was also working at a national level.

Roz is the chair of UNISON’s national health service group executive committee, which has been working alongside other NHS unions in setting guidance during the pandemic.

“UNISON has been leading the way in



developing national guidance that goes out to all organisations and all the way through the pandemic I've been really proud of our trust's role in that," explained Roz.

"We have developed policy after policy and turned them round in days and we're being used as an exemplar organisation because we've been ahead of the curve in implementing measures to ensure staff are safe and catered for."

As cases fell over the summer, pressure on the staff at the Sherwood Forest Hospital Trust began to lessen. Now, as once again the virus spreads at alarming rate, the trust's workforce is readying itself for

the difficulties ahead.

"As I came into work this morning I noticed that the lights were on in the shower cubicles. I thought 'they're using the showers again, because we've gotten patients in again'. But we are ready to meet it," said Roz.

"Covid is going to be with us for the foreseeable future. UNISON needs to ensure that all healthcare staff are supported in the public sector and the private sector. Myself and the rest of the branch are here to support and give advice to anyone who needs it."

A close-up portrait of Rachel Hodson, a woman with curly reddish-brown hair and light green eyes, wearing a blue and red striped top. She is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera.

UNISON'S NEW EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL MANAGER

Rachel Hodson plans to maximise the union's political leverage

I am excited about starting my new role as a regional manager for the East Midlands this month. It is an honour to work for the UK's biggest union and I am proud of UNISON's role in improving our members' daily lives. I'm looking forward to working with our activists across the region.

Outside of UNISON, I have served as a Labour councillor for 10 years and will be stepping down in May. During those years, it has become clear to me how the work we do as a union goes beyond our foremost role of providing a voice for our members in the workplace.



Representation is a vital part of what we do, but we need to be able to influence those in power if we want to improve our members' lives. Politicians cannot do their jobs without the input of the communities they represent, and workers are an important part of every community. This is as true for MPs as it is for local councillors. It's vitally important that our views are heard in town halls from Nottingham to Lincoln and everywhere in between, and all the way to Westminster. It our duty to reach the ears of key decision makers who have the power to improve the lives of our members and force them to act.

We are at our strongest when speaking out for our members. Whether the issue is improving pay and T&Cs, ensuring Covid-19 health and safety, calling for the creation of a National Care Service or lobbying to stop the miseries of Universal

Credit – we know that if we don't speak up for our members, no one else will.

We need to work together across the region to amplify our voice, with branches supporting campaigns across every sector where we represent workers, so our collective power is focussed on the issues affecting all of us. As a regional manager I will be supporting branches with strategic campaigning, so our collective voice generates wins for members.

**IF WE DON'T
SPEAK UP
FOR OUR
MEMBERS,
NO ONE ELSE
WILL**

Please get in touch with me if you need anything and, in the meantime, enjoy this newsletter. When you've finished pass it on, let someone else read about

all the excellent things our branches and activists do day in day out, helping to make UNISON our union.

UNISON HAS A LOT TO OFFER YOUNG PEOPLE

which is why activist Jess McGuire wants them to get involved

The figures for young trade unions members are stark: Just 6.3 per cent of low and middle income earners under 30 belong to a trade union. Despite the clear advantages of belonging to a union – unionised workplaces are safer, fairer and better paid – for young people, their voice is missing from large swathes of the labour movement.

UNISON is bucking that trend. Prior to the pandemic, the union had around 63,000 members under the age of 27 and around 20,000 more have joined since the start of the year. Activists like national young members committee chair, Jess McGuire, 23, from Lincoln, are working hard to ensure UNISON not only defends their interests but provides opportunities for them to thrive.

Jess, who works for Lincolnshire Country Council in business support, became her local branch's young members officer three years ago.

She said: "When I took the role I was the only active young member within my branch. I wanted to provide more of a voice for young people and make sure that their views were heard, not just at my branch but across the whole union.

"I then joined the East Midlands' young members group. It was from there that I realised that there were people like me that felt the same, who felt a bit isolated in their workplaces because of a lack of younger colleagues. It was a great way for us all to get together and share the issues we were facing."

Becoming active in the union helped Jess get over that sense of isolation and provided a platform for dealing with concerns affecting all young people, including a lack of career progression opportunities and mental health. Through UNISON, Jess says she has made new friends, developed her public speaking abilities and improved her skill set through union courses in leadership and health and safety.

"I WANT TO BUILD UP A BIGGER YOUNG MEMBERS NETWORK WITHIN THE UNION"

"You do learn a lot of new skills just by becoming active: In leadership, in planning and coordination, running campaigns and lots of other things that I wouldn't normally do in my regular job," Jess said.

"People usually join a union for the protective side of it, but they don't see that you can do all this additional learning and training and get your skills up and



progress yourself.”

Part of Jess’ union role involves chairing UNISON’s young members committee, which is launching a survey of young members to coincide with Young Workers Month in November.

“I want to build up a bigger young members network within the union. We’ve had thousands of young members that have joined since the start of the pandemic. It’s a massive achievement but we’ve got to do more as a union to activate them.

“With this survey we want to find out why they joined and what they want from the union, so we can figure out how best to

help. For my own perspective, I think young people are worried about losing their jobs because they haven’t been working as long and are easier to get rid of. I think they will be hit the hardest when councils and other employers do start looking at staff reductions. As a union, we need to be preparing for that and taking action.”



UNISON MUST READY ITSELF FOR COMING TORY ATTACKS

Says East Midlands NEC member Chris Tansley

During the coronavirus pandemic UNISON members in the NHS, social care and local authorities have been on the frontlines delivering vital public services. Many of our brave and dedicated public sector workers paid the ultimate price for putting their health at risk to help others. We will never forget the sacrifice they have made. So let me state this unequivocally: UNISON will not allow the government's atrocious mishandling of so much of the pandemic response to go unaccounted for.

It is heart-breaking that nationally UNISON has had to provide around £700,000 in welfare grants to members and their families as a result of the coronavirus. A

significant amount of these grants have gone to families who needed help covering funeral costs for loved ones, or assistance with food and bills because they were left destitute during the lockdown.

So much of the government's bungled handling of the crisis was predictable. The country was told by Boris Johnson that we would have a 'world beating' test and trace system. But rather than engaging local authorities with intimate knowledge of the communities they would need to monitor; billions of pounds of track and trace contracts have been handed to private firms.

The result? Two of the main beneficiaries of the track and trace debacle, Serco and



Sitel, failed to reach 40 per cent of those who had close contact with someone who tested positive. Despite so called management consultants being paid £7,000 a day, the nation still does not have a functioning test and trace system to meet the second wave this winter.

As a union, we should be in no doubt about who the government will target when the talk inevitably turns to the need to “balance the books”. There will be no mention of the billions wasted in contracts handed out to friends of the Tories during

the pandemic or that a decade of austerity, including 700,000 public sector job losses, severely hampered our ability to fight the virus. Instead, once again, public services and our members will be in the government’s sights.

We need to be ready to fight against renewed attacks on public services and attempts to steer the country back into austerity. Our members were there when the country needed them most, they must be not be repaid with wage cuts, job losses and outsourcing threats.

EAST MIDS MEMBERS BACK UNISON'S 2K PAY RISE CAMPAIGN


For all NHS workers

UNISON
East Midlands

“

I had to self isolate because my son had a cough the trust wouldn't pay me because I'm bank only. A pay rise would make life seem a little bit fairer.

Sharon, Bank Staff Nurse



ONE TEAM 2k

UNISON
East Midlands

“

After this pandemic I don't feel like I'm appreciated at all. A clap doesn't pay my bills!

Tracey, ODP



ONE TEAM 2k

UNISON
East Midlands

“

It would motivate me to continue to provide safe and excellent care to all those I support in vulnerable life changing experiences, which have been further complicated by the pandemic.

My husband has worked on the front line and even caught COVID so this would make us feel more appreciated for working even harder than usual during this pandemic.

Eleanor, Midwife



ONE TEAM 2k

UNISON
East Midlands

“

As the main bread winner in our household I know that the extra pay would make my life easier for us to be a bit more comfortable whereas we struggle at the moment.

Dawn, Clerical Administrator



ONE TEAM 2k



UNISON
East Midlands



This pandemic has demonstrated just how important the NHS and all those who work in it are to our society. Despite this, NHS workers are still struggling to cope financially, and all their dedication, hard work and bravery has not been rewarded. Clapping isn't going to pay our bills and we deserve more than this!

Grace, NHS Bank Nurse & UNISON Member

NHS staff are coming to the end of a three-year negotiated pay deal spread over 2018-2021. The increase for this year was 1.67%. This deal came as a result of extensive campaigning by UNISON.

The next NHS pay review date is 1 April 2021 but UNISON is asking for the date to be brought forward in recognition of the remarkable efforts of NHS staff through the pandemic, as well as the need to put the NHS and its staff in the best possible shape to face the winter and the year ahead.

Our One Team 2k campaign will only succeed if we can create maximum political pressure on the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. They need to commit now to funding a £2k pay increase for the NHS and to paying it early.

How you can help

- ▢ Get involved with our second round of activity set for 4-6 November.
- ▢ We need you and your friends and families writing/emailing your Member of Parliament, ask them to support the case for an early and substantial pay rise for the NHS.
- ▢ Write or email your local newspaper about what a pay rise would mean to you.
- ▢ Write to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor requesting that they commit to funding a pay rise of £2k - and ask them to act now rather than drag it out.
- ▢ Show your support for the campaign on social media using the hashtag #Oneteam2k.
- ▢ Post a video message of support to staff working in the NHS in your constituency.



JOBS FIGHT AT NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

Protests have been held against plans to reduce Nottingham City Council's budget by £12.5 million and cut around 250 jobs.

Applications for 150 voluntary redundancies have been invited by the council and there are plans to cut a further 100 jobs through a mix of compulsory redundancies and not filling vacant positions.

Councillors agreed to the cuts during a meeting on 5 October, at the same time as a trade union protest against the

austerity measures was conducted at the city's Brian Clough statue. It was the second protest in a month to be held against the cuts.

After the meeting, councillor and portfolio holder for finance, Sam Webster, said: "When Covid hit this year, the government looked to councils to step up in the fight against it, promising full financial support – a promise they have failed to deliver on, despite our frontline key workers rising to the challenge.



“The combination of a decade of austerity and unmet Covid costs is leaving all councils in a dreadful financial situation.”

UNISON has called on all elected councillors who say they oppose Tory austerity to support the use of the local authority’s financial reserves and borrowing power to defend against service cuts and job losses.

“Nottingham City Council UNISON members are concerned that service cuts to the most vulnerable will result and that further job cuts have not been ruled out,”

said UNISON regional organiser Catherine Mellors.

“Nottingham City schools have also raised the issue of potential cuts in schools to pay for the pandemic costs.”





The logo for UNISON East Midlands. It features the word "UNISON" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Above the "I" and "O" in "UNISON", there are three white, curved lines that sweep upwards and to the right, resembling a stylized flame or a wing. Below "UNISON", the words "East Midlands" are written in a smaller, white, italicized serif font.

UNISON
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