

Dear Member

Welcome to September's e-newsletter. There's a lot going on and we are looking for a website editor!

- Next Branch meeting Tuesday 12pm 2nd October, venue to be confirmed
- University Immigration Student Advisory Service (ISAS) at breaking point
- Save the London Met Students from Deportation
- Bank Holidays and Closed days – key facts you need to know
- Pensions – University proposals affect staff receiving 10% flexible benefit and not in BPAS, USS or GPPS
- Pay Negotiations and trade union side agreement
- Join us in marching against for a future that works, Saturday 20th October, London and Public meeting and protest in Birmingham
- Poverty rockets in Cameron's Britain
- Are you the missing link?
- Victory for the people of Walthamstow over racist EDL
- Website editor wanted

University Immigration Student Advisory Service (ISAS) at breaking point:

UNISON and UCU have written to the Vice Chancellor highlighting serious concerns over both the operational running of the service and the University proposal to reduce the number of dedicated senior immigration advisors from 4 to 1 replacing them with support staff who will be expected to provide a reduced level of immigration advice along with a wide range of tasks. The recent branch meeting heard how 5 out of 7 immigration staff have left or given in their notice over the last 10 months leaving ISAS at breaking point. We believe there is a serious risk *that* the VISA applications may not be processed in time and students are not receiving the support they should be. UNISON have submitted a robust and rigorous alternative business case to the University that is currently being considered. UNISON's last branch meeting voted to support staff in ISAS in any way they requested. *Should we not receive a satisfactory response in the near future then it is likely we will be going to press over this.*

Save the London Met Students from Deportation

London Met University recently had their licence revoked to teach International students placing both staff jobs and students at risk. UNISON with UCU and NUS are campaigning against the decision to deport students from London Metropolitan University. This decision will affect 2,600 international students and our campaign is demanding that they are allowed to complete their studies. Please spread the word. Please also write to your MP about this and also ask that they sign the Early Day Motion. Links to model letters are at the foot of this posting.

For more information please go to:-

<http://www.unison.org.uk/education/higher/>

Sign the petition: Amnesty for international students at London Metropolitan University

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/amnesty-for-international-students-at-london-metropolit.html>

Write to your MP:

Send a letter to your MP too here- it only takes 1-2 minutes! Ask them to sign Early day motion 437

<http://www.nus.org.uk/en/letter-writing/support-for-london-metropolitan-university-and-international-students/>

Bank Holidays and Closed days – Key facts you need to know

- The University proposal makes bank holidays and closed days into normal working days and just gives you another day off instead
- You no longer receive enhanced pay for working bank holidays and closed days
- There is likely to be an increase in bank holiday working as the cost to the University is cut
- If there are not enough volunteers then you can be made to work a bank holiday as a normal working day in your contract
- You may be required to book bank holidays and closed days off out of your annual leave. Your annual leave will be 40 days (25 days plus 15 bank holiday and closed days).

What can we do about it?

- Sign UNISON's petition online at <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/keep-bank-holidays-closed-days-and-weekends-special.html>
 - Pass the petition around on email and facebook etc
 - Make sure you go to a 'one to one' and say you believe Bank holidays are not normal working days and should be paid differently
 - Get your friends to join UNISON – we are saying to the University these proposals are not acceptable, have shown the University examples of other Universities who are paying more for bank holidays and are seeking further legal advice
 - If you have a letter or old University policy showing you should be paid at a higher rate we want to hear from you
- We are meeting the University again on 24th September to discuss the proposals.

Pensions – University proposals affect staff receiving 10% flexible benefit and not in BPAS, USS or GPPS

The University has begun consultation with the support staff trade unions over the University proposal to automatically enrol staff into the government NEST scheme. Government legislation now requires nearly all staff to be enrolled in a qualifying pension scheme. Staff in BPAS or GPPS or USS are **not** affected as these are both qualifying pension schemes

571 staff (band 100 to 500) are affected by the proposal. UNISON and UNITE previously argued to limit the financial impact on staff and the University are proposing to phase in the minimum amount required (Staff who wish to pay more can transfer the 10% flexible benefit they receive into the GPPS scheme).

The University are setting up 2 group meetings for each member of staff and you can also request an individual meeting.

If you are affected you should have received a letter from the University. The University will be consulting over the proposals and we would encourage all staff to be engaged in them. UNISON and the other campus unions have requested more information on the legal status of flexible benefit and staff that don't have to be automatically enrolled in, for example staff earning less than £8105 per year, under 21 or over the state pension age. We have also asked for wider options around GPPS to be explored, for example being able to choose the level of contribution staff make rather than it being fixed at 10%

BPAS

We also believe the University should re open BPAS to all staff as it's a much better scheme and if they can afford a final salary pension scheme for senior management and academics they can afford it for support staff.

If you are interested in Pensions and ensuring everyone has a decent pension then why not get involved with UNISON?

We are next meeting the University on Monday 24th September, so please email Matt Raine m.j.raine@bham.ac.uk if you have any questions or comments you would like brought up.

Pay Negotiations and trade union side agreement

As the largest support staff trade union, UNISON are leading negotiations on a new trade union side agreement. This may sound like something dull and technical but it is important as:

- Trade unions can agree to change your contract of employment on your behalf
- Unity is important in achieving a good deal for all staff on pay, bank holidays, attendance procedures, stress, disability and all the policies that affect all of us at work

UNISON believe that any agreement needs to be based on democratic principles. Just as we take all important decisions to branch meetings and ballots, we believe the number of members in a union should be reflected in the votes each union has.

Our consultative ballot on pay has now finished with a majority of members voting to note the University pay offer and not take further action. Once we have concluded the union side agreement we will be continuing negotiations with the University over this years pay.

TUC March for a future that works – Saturday 20th October. Joint UNISON/UCU coach from the University meet at 8am for 8.30am departure. Tickets £5 from any branch committee member. 5 Reasons to join the march:

1. **NHS Privatisation and budget cuts** – Hospitals can now take 49% private patients, prioritising them over NHS patients as their budgets are cut
2. **68 is too Late!** The Pension age is going up to 68 and will be reviewed by the government each year
3. **Employment rights for everyone are being cut.** The right to compensation for unfair dismissal, health and safety inspections, the cost of employment tribunal and much more are all being made worse

4. The Cost of Living has gone up whilst wages stagnate

5. Schools are being privatised, new buildings slashed. Many New buildings for Schools have been scrapped whilst other Schools are being handed over to unaccountable organisations. On 20 October hundreds of thousands of people will gather in central London to march for a future that works.

They'll be taking to the streets because they believe that government spending cuts and privatisation are not the way to get us out of recession. Instead, these cuts are standing in the way of delivering the jobs and growth that we need.

UNISON members believe cutting vital public services hurts the most vulnerable members of our society. People who can least afford to pay the price of the recession caused by the bankers. We also know that austerity isn't working - and most forecasts suggest that we face years of stagnation. The coalition government has got it wrong and they need to replace austerity with policies to create a future that works.

We care about healthcare, education, local services and policing. That's why we are marching in London on 20 October. If you care too, join us.

Together we can send a strong message to ministers to insist they deliver an economic policy to create jobs and growth, a society that benefits from world class public services and a commitment to a fairer future.

For more details please email Rory Shannon at roryshannon@live.co.uk

TUC march in Birmingham as Cameron and Osborne come to Birmingham for the Tory party conference

Saturday 7th October. Birmingham UNISON members are meeting at 10.30 outside Primark, on New Street

Public Meeting this Saturday, 22nd September, 'Why we're marching for a Future that Works!'
2pm, Saturday 22nd September, The Council House, Victoria Square B1 1BB. Speakers inc. Caroline Johnson, Birmingham Council UNISON, Lee Baron, Chair West Midlands TUC, Sian Ruddick PCS Union.

Poverty rockets in Cameron's Britain

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/news-and-comment>

So many children in Britain are living in poverty that the charity Save the Children has launched a campaign over it.

The charity usually runs campaigns to raise money for children in poorer countries. An estimated 3.5 million children in Britain are now living in poverty.

Life is getting harder for older people, too. A new report says that millions of pensioners are cutting back on food because of poverty.

For people aged between 65 and 74, real income has plummeted by 11 percent since 2008. At the same time the cost of living has soared.

Are you the missing link?

UNISON members have a very direct way of getting their message across to politicians - through political lobbying. When you join UNISON you are given the opportunity to opt in to what we call the UNISON Labour Link (formerly known as the Affiliated Political Fund or APF).

UNISON Labour Link is using the Labour party's policy making process to argue for strong public services and submitted a number of ideas to the recent National Policy Forum. In line with UNISON's policy positions Labour Link has argued that an end to the privatisation culture of the last 30 years is vital if popular and decent public services are to be developed in the future.

Every branch has the right to send a delegate to the local UNISON Labour Link meeting, and the post is currently vacant within our Branch. If you think you might be able to give up four Saturday morning mornings every year, and are a Labour Party Member, please contact Rory Shannon for more details: roryshannon@live.co.uk

Victory for the people of Walthamstow over racist EDL

It was a day of celebration that has delivered a humiliating defeat to the racist thugs of the English Defence League (EDL).

The EDL wanted to stage its provocative anti-Muslim march through the multicultural borough in north east London as part of its campaign to spread race hatred. It was a failure.

The EDL called it a "make or break" day for its dwindling band of supporters. It promised to mobilise over 1,000 people for its Walthamstow demonstration. Only 150 turned up. They were blocked, diverted and finally told that their rally had to be abandoned.

In contrast between 3,500 to 4,000 people turned out to oppose them. UAF along with the "We Are Walthamstow" campaign brought together trade unions, community and faith groups, and many others in a magnificent display of unity.

Go to www.uaf.org.uk for more information

Get Involved

With so much going on we are always looking for more members to get involved. There's loads of different ways you can get involved, for example with branch communications, helping with equality for members or health and safety, becoming a rep and much more.

Can you help with updating our website?

We need a volunteer who can spend about 30 minutes each week updating our branch website. It's easy to use. If you can help please let Matt know m.j.raine@bham.ac.uk

Please forward this onto to non members in your area (but don't use University group lists) and print off for staff not on email

Not a member? Join UNISON today and have a voice in the University's largest support and professional staff trade union. You can join by filling in the attached form or join online at <http://www.unison.org.uk/membership/>