

# Talk in UNISON

Speaking up for support staff at the University of Birmingham

## Vice-Chancellor's pay in the spotlight after real-terms pay cut imposed on staff

Professor Sir David Eastwood will soon be the third-highest paid Vice-Chancellor (VC) in the UK, after the VC of Bath University was forced to step down over their excessive pay package.

Former government minister Andrew Adonis said "[Bath University] is the worst case of fat-cat pay (£486,000) but there are many others paid far too much and the spotlight is now on them to cut their pay sharply or resign." David Eastwood's pay has risen by more than 3% to £439,000, helped by an increase in his bonus to £50,000.

This is not surprising, as he sits on the same remuneration committee that sets his pay and decides what the 'parameters' for senior pay will be! Surely a better use of his salary would be bursaries or hardship funds for students?

UNISON have written to the University requesting the minutes of the remuneration committee and its constitution. At the same time as a massive salary, the VC also receives a rent-free house, maintained by University staff, and use of a chauffeur driven car.

### University hypocrisy over low pay – time for the Living Wage of £8.75

The University continues to refuse to pay around 500 of its staff the Living Wage this winter.



Pictured: UNISON members joined a protest outside the clocktower on "Unfair Pay Day" in November 2017

Roger Godsiff, MP for Hall Green, raised the issue of the Living Wage with the Vice-Chancellor before Christmas and met with UNISON reps beforehand. UNISON have now written to the VC calling for a meeting with him to discuss the Living Wage.

## CAL refuse to address flawed performance scheme

Following our last newsletter, UNISON have had several meetings with senior managers from the College of Arts and Law (CAL) and HR to discuss their Performance and Expectations framework, which sees Band 400 staff being constantly monitored by their team leaders and having every aspect of their performance scored every few months.

Disappointingly, the university is refusing to address the fundamental flaws in the scheme, despite a partial equality impact assessment from HR which indicates that many aspects of the scheme are likely to

discriminate against staff based on gender, race, and disability. Worryingly, a full impact assessment has not yet been carried out, even though the scheme has been in use for nearly a year in the College.

UNISON will continue to meet with managers to make it clear we think the scheme is not fit for purpose and undermines the PDR process. If you work in CAL and have any concerns about the scheme, please get in touch with a UNISON rep.



CAL are watching...

**Keeping you updated** -We send regular updates on campaigns, news and events by email. If you don't currently get branch emails, please email Lee on [l.crutchley@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.crutchley@bham.ac.uk). You can use a work or personal email.

## Fire Safety: The Basics

Trade unions play an important role in the workplace to bridge the gap between expert opinion and the concerns of people on the ground. We're here to make sure that any concerns you have are listened to and that expert advice is not being disregarded or ignored. The University is currently reviewing its fire safety policy. This has included an increase in the frequency of drills and risk assessments. We are your representatives in this process, dedicated to making sure you have a voice and that any risk to your safety is minimised.

We represent all staff when it comes to health and safety, precisely because hazards like fire affect us all. When we improve things or make a workplace safer, it protects our members as well as other staff (though do always remember that we're stronger and have a greater voice if more people join!).

With this in mind, we ask everyone reading this article, whether you are a UNISON member or not, to think about their workplace and ask themselves the following:

- Do I know how to get out of every building I work in if the fire alarm sounds? What if the door I usually use to get in and out is blocked?
- When did my building last have a fire drill? Was it conducted at the right time

to understand how easy it is to evacuate the building?

- Does everyone attend fire safety training every two years (as a maximum)? Are new starters given an induction that specifically explains fire safety within their workplace(s)?
- Does my building have fire wardens who take charge of evacuating the building when the alarm sounds? Are there enough of them at all times the building is open?
- Are fire exits and other key routes in and out of the building kept in good repair and clear of debris?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, or if there is anything else that concerns you about fire safety in your building, please get in touch with your UNISON Health and Safety Officer:



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## Car Parking and sustainable travel update

Discussions with the University about car parking are ongoing and we hope to have some positive news in the Spring. As well as total parking capacity we are looking into what appears to be an ongoing reduction in Pay-As-You-Go £1 parking. This contravenes the University sustainable travel policy, as Pay-As-You-Go encourages staff to use public transport or their feet when it is practicable to do so, for example during good weather. We will continue to work with local councillors to ensure adequate and affordable car parking, as well as looking at ways we can influence decisions on University station, which clearly requires more capacity.

**Did you know UNISON offer a wide range of training courses and workshops, and that you can often get paid time off for these?**

**Visit [www.learninunisonwm.org.uk](http://www.learninunisonwm.org.uk) to find out more.**

## Holocaust Memorial Day –Read, Remember, Commemorate

From 1941 to 1945, a systematic attempt was made by the Nazis to annihilate Europe's Jewish population, resulting in the deaths of six million Jewish men, women and children. This followed eight years of persecution and anti-Semitic propaganda. This is known today as the Holocaust or Shoah (Hebrew for "calamity").

Anti-Semitism has been present in European culture for hundreds of years in the form of periodic attacks, pogroms (an organised massacre of a particular ethnic group) and state-sponsored persecution. The Holocaust was the horrific result of a long history of marginalisation, scapegoating and violence. In many countries around the world, this persecution and victimisation of minority and vulnerable groups continues today.

On 27 January 2000, representatives of 46 governments met in Stockholm to discuss ways to ensure the Holocaust was not forgotten by future generations. After the meeting, all countries signed a declaration to commit to the remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust (more information can be found at <http://hmd.org.uk/page/stockholm-declaration>).

Following this, the UK committed to setting aside a day per year on the anniversary of the Stockholm declaration to remember the victims of the Holocaust as well as the victims of other genocides.



**HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY 27/1**

This will take the form of a number of events around the country – in the West Midlands this includes a community led service on **Sunday, 28 January, 14:00-15:30, to be held in The Council House, Victoria Square**. Details of other events and information can be found on the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website: [hmd.org.uk](http://hmd.org.uk).

You can also use this website to access information about the Holocaust and the crimes the Nazis committed against other groups as well as information and commemorations of genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

## New report into Equal Pay in Higher Education launched

A new Equal Pay report showing a 14.1% gender pay gap has been launched by the national employers association (UCEA) in partnership with UNISON and other Trade Unions. The report highlights equal pay issues specifically in Higher Education.

A gender pay gap is the percentage difference between the average pay of male employees and female employees for a given group. From April 2017, all large organisations in England, including most HEIs, are required to annually collate and publish overall median and mean gender pay gaps, along with related information on bonuses and the numbers of women and men by pay quartile.

Examining a gender pay gap is not the same as doing an equal pay review; the latter focuses on whether men and women are paid equally for doing work deemed of equal value. The Equal Pay

Act 1970 made paying differently for work of equal value illegal. Directly or indirectly discriminating based on gender (or other protected characteristics) is also against the law.

An organisation-wide gender pay gap analysis covers all levels of work. Gender pay gaps can therefore occur where men and women are distributed differently across the workforce. Gender pay gaps, while not in themselves unlawful, can spotlight areas that require investigation by employers. Differential distribution of women and men in the workforce is often referred to as 'occupational segregation'. Horizontal segregation is the tendency for women and men to be concentrated in different occupations

The Full report and more information can be found at <http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/empres/epl/.eandd/pay/>.

## Confessions of a... *cleaner*

A fictional account of a day in the life of a university cleaner, based on real events

I get up around 3.30am, shower, grab something to eat and then scurry for my first bus due 4.45am. I'm quite lucky because others don't live where buses run late so they have the added expense of car upkeep. There is never anyone around at that time in the morning (which sometimes worries me, as a woman on her own, in the dark). I hope the bus is on time - I've another bus to catch after this. If we are late clocking on at 6am we get chewed out. At least the Union stopped them docking our pay for being late.

I make it off the bus in time for a quick chat with my team in the clock room: if they're finishing at 9, we won't see each other once we start work. We go to our buildings and clean for three hours. If we're seen talking, the non-cleaning staff might comment to the boss and we'll get in trouble. They don't come in until 8am though, so it's quite lonely without any people around. It doesn't happen as often as it used to, but sometimes you'll be posted in a building where the staff are friendly and don't mind chatting to you. It's rare though. Just saying hello with a smile would be nice if we're a regular face - we're all human. We're rotated around a lot to cover leavers and sickness, so that also makes it hard to get to know people. Mind you I don't blame the leavers, wouldn't you go elsewhere for more money and being treated better?

I'm full time, so when there are not enough of us, I get sent to where I'm needed after 9am. I'm sent to a new building today to cover someone who's sick. You'd think managers would understand why we might be sick more often: we're on our feet scrubbing for hours at a time. You end up with back pain, aching feet, sore knees, not like a desk job. Also, I'm cleaning toilets and get exposed to germs all day. Yet, we are reluctant to take time off and make ourselves worse, because the managers are really tight when it comes to sickness monitoring. We are paid the least out of all the jobs in the University, so it's false economy to come down hard on us for being sick compared. My daughter is an admin so I see the differences in management: she takes a day sick and nobody bats an eyelid despite her wage being higher. I took a few days off last month because my flu was so bad I couldn't get out of bed - I was told if I went sick again in the next six months I'd be hauled up. Now, what if something happens? What if I slip on some ice and can't get into work?

Speaking of immune systems, did you know, there are rooms on campus where students are going to the toilet in bin bags we have to clean, without any training in removing bodily fluids? Nothing's been done despite our complaints—no signs saying use the toilets, any extra protective clothing, no training, nothing. We're expendable. People don't realise what we have to put up with- even making sure you clean up after yourself would help us. If it was our managers having to move urine filled bin bags I bet something would be done immediately. We don't have useable cleaning kit as it is: I've lost count of the number of people who ask me why the toilets smell. We aren't given decent products and equipment, is the answer. Complain to the managers, not us, if your areas aren't up to scratch, we are powerless.

I finish at 2pm. I ache from head to toe - this job doesn't get any easier and if you pick up an injury, carrying on just makes it worse. It's payday today but my slip isn't right. Again. Sometimes I think it's not worth doing the overtime because I spend a silly amount of time making sure I get paid right for it.

We're all on monthly pay now, management imposed it on us. I can't get my head around it. I'm used to having something to pay each week. There's still a lot of bad feeling about this - managers thought they could just roll us onto monthly pay because they didn't understand how it works when you're weekly paid. We live hand to mouth; we don't have savings to get us through until the next pay. I think that causes the most trouble here: you've got those above you with no idea how the other half live. They pay us the least, expect the most work from us, and then look surprised when some of us need foodbanks. Come and live my life, Eastwood, you'd have a steep learning curve!

It's Friday and I'm looking forward to not having to mop until Monday, my shoulders are killing me... just need to put the equipment away and clock out. I appreciate my weekends more than ever now. A while ago we were told we'd be doing weekends on a rota, with no extra pay. Did you know that? Thank you for looking out for us UNISON, is all I can say. The union is so important, particularly when many of us are scared of losing our jobs. We need them more than ever!