

BRANCH LINES

UNISON West Sussex Branch newsletter • www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk

Further Education staff strike for better pay!

Will council
staff be next?

SEE PAGES 2 AND 6



SEE INSIDE

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INTRODUCTION



In this edition we bring you up to date with a series of fundamental issues affecting trade unions and their members. The government's ideologically-motivated Trade Union Bill has had much of its punitive content strongly challenged by peers in the House of Lords. We hope their continued pressure will yield significant concessions,

if not total rejection of the Bill when it is next read in the Commons.

UNISON has conducted a national consultation asking you for your opinions on EU membership, so it can decide its own approach in the run-up to the June referendum. You can read the results on page 7.

We discuss concerns over cuts to social care budgets and their impact on mortality rates and the health and wellbeing of social care staff.

The case against the outsourcing of public services grows louder and stronger. We feature local examples of contract failures.

Finally, we give you the latest position on the NJC pay campaign below. It will be really important for all our members to support the union's lead. The more who take part the more effective our case.

Dan Sartin, Branch Secretary

NJC Pay latest

UNISON's Industrial Action Committee met in mid April to consider a request from its Local Government Committee to conduct a ballot for strike action.

However, the matter was referred back to the Local Government Committee for branches to oversee a further consultative ballot of UNISON members asking if you would support strike action, or whether you wish to accept the employers' final two-year pay offer.

The outcome of this ballot would be reported back to the Industrial Action Committee who would make a final decision on whether there is sufficient support to proceed with a formal ballot for industrial action. We will report back as soon as possible once we receive information from our national office. Look out for updates on our website.

BRANCH APPEARS ON SOUTH TODAY

UNISON West Sussex has recently appeared twice on South Today

The first featured Branch Secretary Dan Sartin being interviewed about the commissioning fiasco at Adur and Worthing Councils where our members' jobs are at risk. You can read more on page 14.



The second featured our member Susanne Gillissen whose badly handled salary overpayment by Capita caused her huge personal stress. Her story highlights deeper concerns voiced by six schools about Capita's payroll service. Read more on page 5.



Branch Annual General Meetings

The branch's annual general meetings (AGMs) took place in the main council office hubs around the county at the end of March.

Special guest speaker at all three venues this year was Peter Scott-Presland, author of 'Amiable Warriors: the official history of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality'. Peter gave thought-provoking presentations at all venues.

Members approved branch officers and workplace representatives for 2016/17, as shown in the

last edition of Branch Lines.

Branch Secretary Dan Sartin reported on the branch's new recruitment strategy and actions to retain retired members within the union once they leave their employment. He told members the branch was engaged in around 25 local collective negotiations at any one time, and had either formally or

informally supported over 450 individuals in the past year. This shows the level of pressure in the modern, public service workplace.

Branch membership continued to be healthy. It was holding up in spite of the reduction of the workforce due to outsourcing and redundancies.

Branch priorities for the year were agreed by the branch committee at the annual branch development day in April.

TWICE

on BBC's South Today news.



Branch Secretary



Council u-turn on Chief Exec role

The County Council recently appointed Nathan Elvery as its new Chief Executive, after being without someone in the role since 2014.



Nathan Elvery

Instead of an overall head of the management structure, the council split the job two years ago, appointing a Chief Operating Officer and a Transformation Director, in a bid to save money.

Branch Secretary Dan Sartin said: "This u-turn, just two years after the scrapping of the post, exposes the problems caused by constant tinkering in meaningless senior-level restructures. It has resulted in a costly £27,000 consultant-led head-hunting exercise. This is an extraordinary amount of taxpayers' money to be handing to 'head-hunters'

for just one job. It is not as if we have a good track record of keeping our chief officers, who only seem to last a couple of years. An ad in the national press would have achieved the same result.

"The additional £30,000 in salary cannot be justified. What is the new chief executive doing that the previous incumbent wasn't? The council should modernise its executive pay policy and bring itself up-to-date with the national mood. No-one is worth £190,000 a year. That cash would have been better spent supporting essential care services."

Chichester University 'insources' cleaning contract



Clive Behagg



The University of Chichester has brought its cleaning services contract back in-house after being outsourced to Nviro for the past 10 years. UNISON was involved in negotiations with colleagues from the University and College Union (UCU).

Vice Chancellor Professor Clive Behagg, made the announcement to all staff there last month: "We recognised at the outset that the best service for the university might not be the cheapest. Part of the tender process was to produce a 'shadow-bid' for the cost of returning the service in-house.

"In January the Executive Team unanimously agreed that the service should do just that. This was then endorsed by the Board of Governors, with changes starting from 1 May. All current Nviro staff will be transferred ('TUPEd') to the university and will benefit from our more beneficial terms and conditions.

"They will continue to receive the Living Wage (as defined by the Living Wage Foundation, not Mr Osborne's less favourable version) and will then also enjoy enhanced conditions for sick pay, pensions, flexible working and staff development."

The university had previously made sure its contracted Nviro staff received the 'proper' Living Wage, which was no mean feat. It's a

concept that's still rejected by the County Council.

Professor Behagg went on to voice concerns about using contract staff to deliver a service: "For some time now I have had concerns about the delivery of this service by means of outsourced provision. In my view, it makes no sense in an institution that works hard to share a common vision across its workforce to include in that workforce indirect employees that have very different terms and conditions of employment, unless there is a compelling reason to justify outsourcing.

"Nviro have done a good job of service delivery, but there is no doubt our cleaners are currently employed on less favourable terms than the rest of us.

"Initially the in-house cleaning service will cost more to deliver, but over the next few years we believe we can manage this into a far more effective service and gain benefits that way.

Branch Secretary Dan Sartin said; "The university's refreshing approach to contract management shows an understanding of the damage done by creating two-tier workforces. UNISON believes that public services are best provided in-house and that in reality, compelling reasons for outsourcing rarely exist."

CAPITA CONTRACT UPDATE

THE GOOD

The branch continues to negotiate with both Capita and the council to improve services and staff treatment. Much progress is being achieved:

1. UNISON is to be involved in the future governance of the contract;
2. there will be a performance indicator for staff turnover;
3. exit interview data will be reported to the union;
4. localised surveys of Capita staff will be conducted;
5. information on service issue resolution has been expanded and published on The Point; and
6. improvements regarding how restructures are conducted have been made.

We've been working hard to get Capita's sickness process reviewed. Our view on the misapplication by Capita of sickness processes has largely been accepted. Several formal warnings issued to staff have been revoked. Capita has instituted a programme of training in sickness management for its managers and is giving more hands-on support to them than it had previously. We shall see more emphasis on the welfare aspect of managing staff sickness, and more flexibility applied. UNISON believes we have made

significant progress and members will see the benefit.

We have also been working hard with both the council and Capita to resolve the over-use of short-term contracts for staff. The casualisation of work in the public sector is something to be resisted, as it is bad for services and staff. We have not yet cracked this, but are working on it for you.

THE BAD

Capita is offshoring five specialist IT roles to India. This means five redundancies of course, but none have been compulsory due to acceptance of voluntary packages. However UNISON remains very concerned that:

- this vital IT service could deteriorate if provided from India;
- the local economy will suffer as jobs are exported – in conflict with the council's economic agenda;
- staff morale will deteriorate; and
- this may not be the last offshoring we will see.

UNISON raised this with the council's chief officer when it was proposed a year ago. That led to a suspension of the plan, but this time the move looks set to happen. UNISON will continue to raise these worrying developments with Capita, the council and media.

THE UGLY

Capita's payroll service has come under question by a number of West Sussex schools who are trying to move to a different supplier. UNISON believes the staff are doing their best in a difficult situation, but mistakes still happen. One such affected a UNISON member, Susanne Gillessen. She was overpaid by Capita whilst their employee. She brought this to Capita's attention at their Orpington and head offices but was repeatedly assured there was no mistake. When she came to leave Capita to start a different job in a local school, Capita discovered their error and reclaimed as much money from her final salary as they could. They did not inform her and left her almost destitute.

Capita then instigated proceedings through a debt collection agency to reclaim the rest. UNISON believes Susanne should not be subject to this treatment and has been supporting her throughout.

The case reveals a shocking catalogue of failures and disregard by senior management. UNISON has been unable to get a resolution after four months. This story was on BBC South Today, 15 April. UNISON will always support our members, and ensure that failings and injustices are righted.

Important grievance upheld

UNISON took out a collective grievance on behalf of three members of the WSCC Harm Reduction Team who work with drug and alcohol users.

The UNISON members found out – through a Cabinet decision paper – that they were due to be outsourced to a charity. They had not been informed by their managers or consulted. Nor had UNISON been involved, despite the extensive consultation and involvement protocols we have in place. The grievance was upheld in all its key respects. The grievance officer, a very senior manager at WSCC, made a number of recommendations.

These include:

- better induction and guidance for managers about staff and union involvement in commissioning;
- more emphasis on communications with staff;
- a review of how service user views are utilised; and
- the creation of additional guidance for managers on how to consult in the precise circumstances of this outsourcing.

Judith Taylor, the rep who supported our members,

said: “We are pleased with the outcome and believe it will improve the situation for members faced with similar circumstances in future.”

In the end, two of the three staff found jobs with the NHS and so did not TUPE-transfer. The whole episode was a salutary lesson for the council of the expense of outsourcing and the risk to its services if staff decide to go and work elsewhere, rather than be treated poorly and TUPE-transferred.



FE staff take industrial action

Local UNISON members joined thousands of other staff at further education colleges across England in a one-day strike over pay, causing major disruption to lessons.

The protest was against a recommended pay freeze by the Association of Colleges (AoC), following several years where staff have had very low or non-existent pay rises, resulting in a real-terms pay cut for some of

up to 17 per cent. Further Education has seen recent funding cuts of 25 per cent.

UNISON will now write again to the AoC and individual colleges who have not yet made an offer to seek to reach a settlement

for 2015/16. UNISON local government members may soon be formally balloted on industrial action. This follows firm rejection of the employers’ pay offer in the union’s recent indicative ballot.

We will post more information on our website as we receive it.

TRADE UNION BILL CHALLENGED IN HOUSE OF LORDS

The Lords have inflicted a triple blow to the government's controversial Trade Union Bill.

They overwhelmingly voted for three amendments, on:

1. electronic balloting;
2. facility time; and
3. union funds for political campaigning.

The government will now have to rethink plans before the Bill returns to the Commons. During April the Lords will vote on the government's attack on 'check off' (automatic salary deduction of union subs). Its removal will force unions into contacting their members asking them to change to direct debit, which will be costly and time-consuming. No employer has ever said they were not happy with current arrangements.

We hope peers will challenge the government on this crucial issue too.

- Peers voted by 320-181 to commission an independent review of electronic ballots for strike action;
- 248-160 against a cap on facility time; and
- where the Bill requires Labour-affiliated union members to 'opt in' to paying a political levy, they voted 320-172 to apply those changes to new members only, with a 12-month transition period.

Branch Secretary Dan Sartin said: "The government has tried to force this Bill through parliament. As with tax credits, peers have rightly held them back. The Bill is a dog's breakfast of measures all aimed to cripple both trade unions and the Labour Party. It is a uniquely partisan piece of legislation thinking only of the Tory party's political interests. It has nothing to offer working people or the country."



UNISON to campaign for the UK to stay in Europe

UNISON is to campaign for the UK to stay part of the European Union, and will be encouraging its 1.3 million members to vote remain on 23 June.

This follows an extensive UK-wide consultation across UNISON's branches. 78% of UNISON's health, local government, education, energy and police branches wanted the union to take a stance in the EU referendum. Of these, the overwhelming majority (95%) wanted UNISON to campaign for the UK to stay in Europe.

The fear that Brexit would mean the loss of many workplace rights was the most important issue in the coming referendum, according to UNISON's overwhelmingly female membership. This was closely followed by worries about the plight of the country's public services if Britain opted to go it alone.

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said: "UNISON may have had its doubts about Europe in the past, but now the chips are down and exit is a real possibility, public sector workers know that the services they deliver, and the public that relies on them, will be much better off in than out."

Join UNISON – Membership Form

Please fill in the form and send to UNISON West Sussex,
Central Attic, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ

1 Tell us about you

Title	First name											
Surname/family name		Date of birth / /										
Home address												
Postcode												
email												
Phone number (please indicate if home, work or mobile)	National insurance number (from your payslip)											
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Please give your ethnic origin: <i>(tick one box)</i>												
<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> Black African										
<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian UK	<input type="checkbox"/> Black UK										
<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian other	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Caribbean										
		<input type="checkbox"/> Black other										
		<input type="checkbox"/> White UK										
		<input type="checkbox"/> Irish										
		<input type="checkbox"/> White other										

2 Tell us about your job

Employer's name
Your job title/occupation
Workplace name and address
Postcode
Payroll number (from your payslip)

3 What you will pay each month

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions.

Annual pay	▼	Your subscription
Up to £2,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1.30
£2,001–£5,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£3.50
£5,001–£8,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£5.30
£8,001–£11,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£6.60
£11,001–£14,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£7.85
£14,001–£17,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£9.70
£17,001–£20,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£11.50
£20,001–£25,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£14.00
£25,001–£30,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£17.25
£30,001–£35,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.30
over £35,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£22.50

4 Choose your political fund

One of the ways UNISON works on your behalf is through political campaigning. Your subscription includes a political fund payment so you won't pay any extra, but in UNISON you choose how you want that money to be used.

Please tick one box only.

- Our Affiliated Political Fund takes UNISON members' views directly into the Labour Party, working to promote UNISON policies.
- The General Political Fund is used to pay for branch, regional and national campaigns but is independent of any political party.

5 Choose how you wish to pay *Please tick ONE box only*

EITHER deduct from salary:

I wish to join UNISON and authorise deduction of subscriptions from my pay by my employer.

Signature

OR pay by direct debit:

please complete the direct debit form below

I wish to join UNISON and authorise deduction of subscriptions by direct debit

Date

Please go to unison.org.uk/privacy-policy to see how we will protect and use your personal information

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the form and send to UNISON West Sussex



Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To: The Manager	Bank/building society
Address	
Postcode	

Name(s) of Account holder(s)

Bank/building society account number

Branch sort code

Service User Number

Reference number (for office use only do not complete)

Please pay UNISON Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with UNISON and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account



Increased mortality rates: are budget cuts to blame?

Preliminary data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) showed that in just one year, there were 5.4% more deaths (almost 27,000) in England.

Deaths had fallen steadily since the 70s, but began to reverse in 2011 – the year government cuts to social care budgets started to take effect. The year-on-year rise, to a total of 528,340 deaths, is the highest since 1968. There were more deaths last year than any since 2003.

In spite of UNISON's protests, West Sussex County Council resolutely reinforced national policies by:

- Raising eligibility thresholds for adult social care, cutting many vulnerable people out of council support;
- Closing three brilliant day centres for elderly and disabled people and downgrading services at one other centre; and
- Increased charges for day centre meals and 'Meals

on Wheels' far in excess of inflation, whilst freezing council tax for non-disabled residents.

Many public health experts put the rise in deaths down to the growing crisis of elderly care. Recently, five chief executives of West Sussex social care charities warned of an 'impending crisis' for people using social care services in the county.

UNISON believes there is no greater condemnation of central and local government policy than thousands of excess deaths. The UK is crying out for a new economic policy, as even on its own limited terms, austerity has failed. Now we also know that many people are likely to have paid the ultimate price for that failed political choice.



“Councils should run utilities!”

“Privatisation of services has made them less accountable. Councils should be able to run utilities as part of moves to ‘roll back the tide’ of privatisation”, Jeremy Corbyn has said.

“English councils should have similar powers to cities on the continent, where local authorities have control of water and energy services.”

He told the Association of Labour Councillors conference in February he

wants councils to become ‘public entrepreneurs’ with greater freedom to spend taxpayers’ money and to borrow to fund investment and public services.

“Privatisation isn’t just about who runs a service,

it’s about who services are accountable to,” he said. “It’s about who shares the rewards, about protecting the workforce and getting a good deal for local people who use the services. We will give councils greater freedoms to roll back the tide of forced privatisation. It locks people out of decision-making, makes services less accountable, too often means a bad deal for taxpayers, communities and for those that work in the services too.”

Contract extended after damning report

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) has granted a two-year, £55 million contract extension to its outsourced highways contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) in spite of serious failures in the agreement being raised by auditors. Their report unearthed 'systemic failures' in the way the contract was managed and other weaknesses.

Auditors were unable to say whether £20 million of work was value for money. It appears that millions of pounds of tax payers' money was lost because of overcharging by BBLP due to the inappropriate application of the contract.

Dan Sartin, UNISON West Sussex Branch Secretary said, "It seems extraordinary that the council has extended the

contract for two years when only last year it came to light that the council had been overcharged by millions of pounds by BBLP.

"At the very least, BBLP has a lot of questions to answer about their role in this overcharging. It's not the kind of partner the council needs. It was this scandal last year that resulted in the council's own audit

function only giving WSCC commissioning a 'limited assurance' rating and yet here we are extending the contract with the very same company that was overcharging us.

"Examples like this show very clearly that councils are big enough to run their own services and can do so at better value to the local ratepayer."



Going the extra mile for Social Workers

One of our members recently suffered severe mental health problems caused by workplace stress.

Mistakes had been made and admitted to, but the union's legal team provided robust mitigation, leading to a positive outcome. However, the case was subject to investigation by the Health Care Professional Council (HCPC), so for two years no social work provider would employ our member, even though no judgement had been passed and the HCPC was happy for them to continue working.

Due to the complexity of the case, UNISON provided a barrister at the formal hearing. Not only did the union pay for this, but also for training to help our member identify and cope better with workplace pressures, travel to London for the course and HCPC hearing, hotel costs and for solicitor support throughout the legal process.

The hearing decided there should be no sanction and

no further action taken. It stated our member was: "a competent and committed social worker who had done everything to rectify the mistakes made."

This outcome has allowed our member to return confidently to social work. They told us: "When I was newly qualified, I was told that in social work 'things happen' and your employer will not always support you. This all came true in my situation and I would strongly advise anyone involved in social work to join the union. Without it I don't know how I would have coped."

WORKPLACE REP PROFILE

Lorraine Solti

Branch committee member Lorraine is a senior laboratory technician at United Learning's academy The Regis School.

She has been a workplace rep for over seven years. With two other technicians, her work involves preparing science lessons for teachers of years 7 to 13 pupils and ordering chemicals and equipment ready for use.

Lorraine has attended several stewards' training courses, including employment law, schools seminars and taken part in several marches such as the fair pay march in London in 2009. Lorraine also has experience of being involved in 'TUPE' negotiations.

As well as technicians, she represents other members including teaching assistants (TAs), admin staff and cleaners. The most common issue they raise is the lack of a significant pay increase in recent years. Her employers are viewed as generous for low-paid staff in that they pay the living wage (as calculated by the Living Wage Foundation, not



George Osborne), but pay increase requests for more skilled workers have not been met. Such members no longer feel they are fairly paid for the skills they bring to their roles.

When some support staff - especially TAs - leave, they are often not replaced. For example, when Lorraine joined there were five posts in her own team of technicians. There are now just three.

Lorraine enjoys being a workplace rep, being able to meet other reps and training with them. The positive feedback and appreciation she receives from her members makes her role really enjoyable.

Are CLC grants the best use of tax payers' money?

Below are just three examples of grants given to 'community interests' by the County Council's Worthing Area County Local Committee (CLC) in March: one of 14 CLCs around the county.

- Nearly £2,000 to provide track suits and costumes at a dance competition.
- Nearly £5,000 to replace a storage garage for a football club.
- Over £3,000 for stoolball equipment and trophies.

Not only does UNISON feel such awards are an

inappropriate use of tax payers' money, it is alarmed at the number of interests in grant awards declared by councillors on such committees. No less than 6 of them declared personal interests in bids presented to this committee meeting. It begs the question: are bids

genuine calls for support from community groups or a way for councillors to promote and fund their own interests? There appears to be no scrutiny of CLC decisions, especially when services are suffering from severe cuts.

We would encourage all UNISON members to try to attend these local, public CLC meetings and strongly challenge the inappropriate allocation of limited council resources.

'One you' public health campaign

Public Health England launched a new health campaign, 'One You', which aims to help adults combat future disease by encouraging them to make small changes to their lifestyle today.

Whether it's eating healthier food, drinking less alcohol, quitting smoking or just being more active, making changes in middle age can double your chances of being healthy at 70 and beyond.

UNISON West Sussex members between the ages of 40 to 60 are encouraged to complete 'How Are You', a free online health quiz that will provide personalised recommendations to help them take action where it's most needed. Go to www.nhs.uk/oneyou to take part.



NEWSPAPERS FIRST TO LEARN OF LOCAL JOB LOSSES

UNISON first learned about proposals by Central Sussex College to close the Haywards Heath and East Grinstead campuses from an article in the local press.

The college did not have the courtesy to inform students, parents or the relevant unions about this decision in advance of the press release. These proposals follow on from the failure of the college over recent years to manage its finances, leading to a 'black hole' of several million pounds.

UNISON West Sussex Branch Secretary Dan Sartin said, "It is very disappointing that the college management apparently think so little of their staff and students that this shocking news first saw the light of day in a press release. There is law on the correct way employers must deal with trade unions and we will be looking at this very carefully."

Seconded staff resolve grievance

Social care staff within the Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) Team (now seconded from the County Council to the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust - SPFT), have successfully resolved a long-running, serious grievance with their employer. This is largely due to significant and persistent support from UNISON West Sussex over several months.

The grievance had to be taken out against their own employer (WSCC) though the cause of the grievance was actually something only within the power of SPFT to resolve. This made matters much more complicated than usual. Though AMHP staff remain council employees (and subject to the

same terms and conditions of employment), they are managed and deployed locally by SPFT. As the secondment agreement had been recently extended for a further two years (to 2018), it was important for all staff to be able to resolve serious issues satisfactorily with both employers.

Though workload issues continue to be a concern (as in most social work settings), at least staff now feel they can negotiate successfully with both their employers. The grievance required SPFT to take major action, which they were finally compelled to do, to the satisfaction of UNISON members who can now work in a happier and more conducive environment to the challenging work they do.

Remain a UNISON member when you retire

West Sussex Retired Members' Secretary Ruby Cox outlines some of the benefits of retaining union membership after you retire.

"If like me, you were an active union member, you might feel you've fallen off a cliff when you retire! UNISON has a parallel structure for retired members so there's plenty to get involved in and it's very rewarding. I've met lots of new friends and like-minded souls.

"Retired members' groups such as ours focus on how we can support the branch, protecting the rights of older and vulnerable people. Others meet socially. There's room for both.

"Most union members understand the benefits of solidarity and sticking together. Becoming a retired member ensures you're part of a network keeping you informed, offering advice when you need it and giving you the opportunity to speak out about things that matter to you.

"Just because we're retired doesn't mean we don't care about what happens to younger members, including ex-colleagues still in work. As a retired member you'll still be part of an organisation striving to create a better society for all.

"You can still enjoy a wide range of union benefits (e.g. legal representation for non-work issues, discounts, financial advice) and you're still very much a member of the branch. You can be involved in whatever way suits you best. To find out more, email rubbycox86@yahoo.co.uk



DAN SARTIN
UNISON West Sussex Branch Secretary
BBC SOUTH TODAY

Commissioning fiasco at AWC

Adur & Worthing Councils (AWC) are presiding over a chaotic and unnecessary commissioning fiasco for a new joint voluntary services contract, putting the jobs of 8 branch members at risk.

After decades of grant funding to local charities Adur Voluntary Action (AVA) and Voluntary Action Worthing (VAW), AWC put the work out to competitive tender.

However, they did not confirm its full value: 40% of funding was from West Sussex County Council, whose public health funds are under threat.

Understandably, winners Brighton Community Works are reluctant to sign. They would be accepting staff liabilities they cannot afford, putting their cash reserves at risk. But by bidding in such an uncertain environment, for a botched contract, they have inadvertently put staff at risk of redundancy and compromised the social capital generated by AVA and VAW.

UNISON West Sussex asked AWC to provide three months' emergency bridging funding to try to sort out the mess, which has been done.

Branch Officer James Ellis is supporting our members: ensuring they get the legal advice they need to protect their jobs and services.

Branch Secretary Dan Sartin was interviewed about the fiasco by BBC South Today for their evening bulletins on 5 April. He said: "Far from being more efficient or cost-effective, the whole process has cost AWC thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money and endangered the services."

UNISON: ON YOUR SIDE AT WORK

Former West Sussex County Council child care officer Fran Lindsay was involved in two harrowing assaults made against her by service users in the same week at the special needs children's home where she used to work. These left her with severe back, neck and shoulder injuries resulting in her having to endure surgery and take 13 months off work to recover.

"I'm still working through the mental trauma of the incidents, but I think I'm getting there. I'm now working for another local authority and starting to enjoy my work again. It's taken a long time though," said Fran.

"The support from UNISON was great throughout my case, both with professional advice and financial assistance. Thompsons (the union's solicitors) coordinated all

the legal processes for me, including completing



complicated paperwork. At the time I was in no fit state to think rationally as I was still recovering from the injuries.

"Like all legal processes, it took a long while to conclude, but I'm pleased to say we were eventually successful. I received compensation for the criminal injuries I had suffered, but though I'm back at work and starting to enjoy life again, I'm still quite anxious in some situations.

"No-one can predict when incidents like this might happen. It involved me at the time, but it could happen to anyone. I'd strongly recommend anyone involved in social care to become a UNISON member."

Legal support outside the workplace

The council's learning and development officer Nicci Stringer benefited hugely from legal support provided by UNISON's solicitors, Thompsons.

Unfortunately, she was involved in a road traffic accident on her way home from work. Her car was hit from behind causing personal injury and subsequent time off work. The vehicle was a write-off.

Nicci tried to claim through her own insurance company, but they told her she was not covered for this type of injury. She was advised by a friend to contact the union.

The branch office put her in contact with Thompsons, who successfully guided her through the legal process, gaining compensation payment of nearly £3,000.

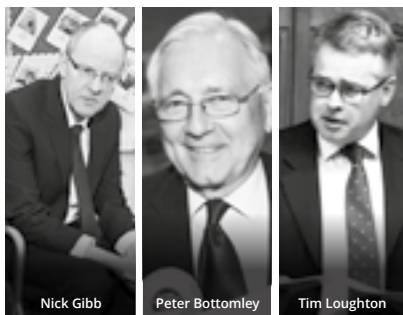
"The incident was traumatic enough for me," said Nicci. "I didn't know how to start making a claim, especially as my own insurers couldn't help. I didn't appreciate the union could fight my case as it happened outside work. UNISON made

the whole thing much easier for me to deal with during a very stressful time. It really helped take the pressure off me and I was very pleased with the result."

Our solicitors will often fully support your claim when 'no win, no fee' firms will not, even if it occurs outside the workplace. However, they reserve the right not to take a case they don't think they can win. We hope no-one ever has to go through Nicci's experience, but it's good to know someone is on your side if you do.

West Sussex MPs deselected as charity patrons

Recent public opinion regarding the continued support by Tory MPs who voted for disability cuts while acting as patrons for disability charities has resulted in three notable local casualties.



Nick Gibb

Peter Bottomley

Tim Loughton

Tim Loughton, MP for East Worthing and Shoreham, Sir Peter Bottomley, MP for West Worthing and Nick Gibb, MP for Bognor Regis have all been deselected as patrons of local mental health charity Coastal West Sussex Mind.

The move to oust Tim Loughton was started by a local resident via a petition which gained over 3,000

signatures in just a few days. Other MPs are being targeted by a campaign through DPAC (Disabled People Against Cuts).

Katie Glover, CEO of Coastal West Sussex Mind, said: "Our Board of Trustees decided to cease the role of Patron as of 8th April, and we have written to our four existing Patrons to advise

them of this decision."

There is little doubt that this is yet another scalp for campaigners aiming to highlight the incompatibility of some Tory MPs representing certain charities whose users often rely on the very benefits the Conservatives want to cut.

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"Thanks for all your support and input over the past months: a very heartfelt and sincere thanks to you, and best wishes."

(UNISON West Sussex member to Casework coordinator)

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