

Falkirk fallout

The media hubbub surrounding the Falkirk Labour Party selection procedure and its consequent response from Ed Miliband may have caused some concern for Branch members. It is worth noting that UNISON has always given its members the choice of opting in to its affiliated political fund, that gives them a say in the democratic processes of the Labour Party, or of opting in to the General Political Fund, independent of any political party. UNISON's processes are democratic and transparent, and nor has it ever operated the arrangement whereby the union pays Labour Party membership fees for new members.

Capita concerns

Capita plc is supplying WSCC 'back office' functions for the next ten years from October 2012. UNISON met with WSCC and Capita Officers as early as November 2012 to relay concerns about some aspects of performance of the IT part of the contract. We are pleased to report that WSCC has just announced it is improving the speed with which faults will be rectified and equipment can be ordered. UNISON still has concerns about the time taken to supply specialist equipment for disabled WSCC staff and we are supporting some members with a Grievance against their employer.

Capita itself has been consulting on 16 redundancies from its IT Service, 5 redundancies from HR & Payroll, and a significant number of 'out of town' location moves. UNISON Reps Mervyn Sams and Cathy Leng have been assisting members. There are a number of serious concerns about how Capita goes about consulting with its staff, for which the branch is currently in dialogue with the firm's managers. More news on this in our next issue.

Branch backs campaign for Teaching Assistants

Delegates at UNISON Local Government conference have backed an emergency motion to save Teaching Assistants. This follows recent calls from a right-wing think tank for them to be sacked.

Jon Richards, UNISON head of education, said: "If the Coalition makes serious moves to take teaching assistants out of classrooms, they'll have a fight on their hands. They know schools would crumble without their hard work and dedication."

Conference instructed the service group executive to mount a campaign to "defend and promote the role and contribution of teaching assistants in providing our children with quality education."

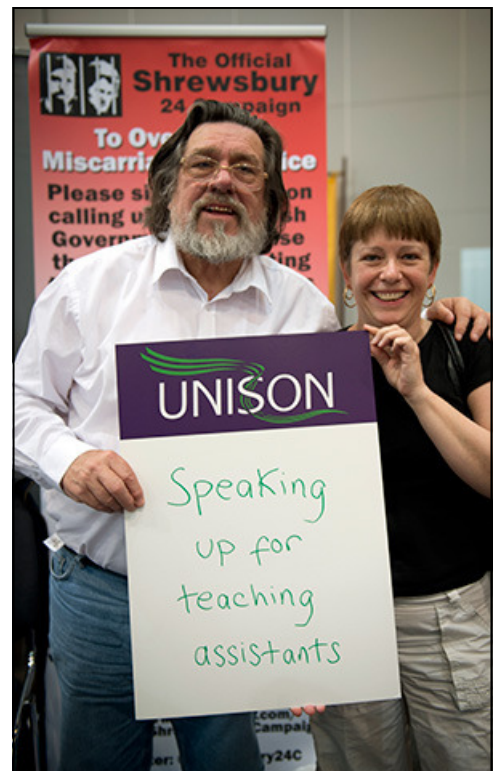
UNISON West Sussex Branch Secretary, Dan Sartin said: "Our branch will back this campaign. TA members carry out vital work in our county to ensure schools are inclusive environments for all children to learn in, including those with special health or educational needs. These plans seek to turn the clock back to a time when vulnerable and less able children were segregated from mainstream education and barred from ever reaching their potential."

In a recent UNISON survey over 95% of head teachers said that teaching assistants added value to their schools and enhanced the learning environment for all pupils.

Dan continued, "Teaching Assistants will need to use the resources our union can provide to protect themselves from Gove's attacks. This means we need more members to train as workplace reps so

we have a rep in every school. We also need more TA's to join our union to support each other in the battles ahead."

"If you are a TA, you can support this national campaign. Our union is stronger when we stand together. Please give us a call



Actor and trade unionist, Ricky Tomlinson backs UNISON's campaign

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Case work—do's and don'ts

Casework Coordinator Tim Harrison writes...

If you find yourself being called to a formal disciplinary hearing, you must be written to and given notice. If you work for Capita they must give you at least 3 days notice, if you work for WSCC, at least 5 working days notice. For other employers, check your staff handbook or the relevant policy. If you wish UNISON to support you, DO contact either your workplace Rep or the Branch office without delay.

If you have been disciplined and you feel you have been treated unfairly, you do have the right of appeal within certain time limits. The disciplinary outcome letter will set this out, and it is crucial that you lodge your appeal within that timeframe. If you DO wish UNISON to support you, then your appeal will have more chance of success if you can prove that evidence was overlooked by the panel, the policy was not followed, or a significant mitigating factor was ignored.

If you are subject to a sickness policy, and you are disabled, the Equalities Act obliges your Employer to make what are called 'reasonable adjustments'. If your work is suffering as a result of your disability, DO contact us.

If you are subject to a Capability/Performance Improvement Plan DO get in touch with us at the outset. In most cases we find that staff have either not been trained properly, not been brought up-to-date with training, or staff or management are unclear as to their expectations/job descriptions.

If you have an issue with a colleague or your manager, the WSCC Behaviour in the Workplace policy does recommend that you have a quiet word with the person in question and say what effect it has had on you and ask them to stop the behaviours in question. If they fail to change, then you are at liberty to go to your Grievance Officer.

UNISON will always ask you if you have taken any action to resolve the issue using this approach. The number of grievances lodged which are unsuccessful because the offender is unaware of the offence caused is numerous.

DON'T use Facebook or Twitter to make any comment that could be used against you by your 'friends', 'followers' or employer. Nor should you copy the world and her wife into sensitive emails if you have problem at work.

DON'T take hasty action without discussing your situation with UNISON first. If in doubt, talk to your Rep or the Branch office before you act!

News in brief

Branch Deputy moves on

Deputy Branch Secretary Simon Holder has been successful in applying for a UNISON post in the West Midlands. We wish Simon all the best for the future. The Branch Committee has elected Karen Daubney, Branch H&S Officer, to take over as Deputy for the interim period from September until elections take place in the usual cycle in January. We welcome Karen to the role, pending agreement of secondment arrangements.

Parking solution?

WSCC managers are preparing to roll out a parking permit allocation system in County Hall North, Horsham. Not everyone will be happy but UNISON believes this is the fairest way of allocating scarce parking resource. The lack of spaces was making life very difficult for staff who need to travel to fulfil their duties. There is no question of staff being charged to park, which will be a relief to many given the constant cost of living pressures faced by members.

Personal injury service

A UNISON West Sussex member injured by a faulty public telephone box door recently received £750 compensation. No deduction from the settlement was made, as they were using the free UNISON personal injury legal service, one of the benefits of membership.

Expensive outsourcings

UNISON has raised concerns about the outsourcing of the WSCC Reablement service for many months. We contributed recently to the 'end of project' report so managers could learn lessons from what went wrong. Chief amongst our concerns was that an incredible 933 days of Officer time was spent on outsourcing this relatively small service—time which would have been better spent improving Reablement as an in-house exemplar.

HAY pay consultation

The WSCC pay consultation for HAY managers has been delayed slightly this year though is due any day now. Any award will be backdated to July 1st, and the Branch will be in touch with its members on HAY grades shortly.

UNISON WEST SUSSEX — RECRUIT A NEW MEMBER

If you recruit a new member to our branch, we will send you a £10 high street store voucher. Just make sure your name is included on the 'recruited by' section of the form/s we send you, and when your friends/colleagues return their completed membership forms to our office we will send the voucher/s straight to you. There's no limit to how many you can claim!

Please send me ____ [insert number] UNISON Application Pack/s to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Workplace: _____

Please return to: UNISON West Sussex, Central Attic, County Hall, West Street, Chichester PO19 1RQ.

Pay settlement imminent

The Branch balloted its members on NJC pay over the 1% pay offer. 54% of you voted to accept with 46% against. This pretty closely matched the outcomes nationally, with 59% voting to accept, and 41% against. Following the consultative ballot, UNISON's NJC Committee met and voted to accept the 1% offer, whilst noting the offer was derisory. National Conference this year has voted to commit the union to a new pay campaign for the 2014/15 award with a view to galvanise members to take action in support of pay claims.

200+ jobs to be lost at CSC

Cuts to funding plus gross financial mismanagement has resulted in a multi-million pound deficit at Central Sussex College. More than 200 teaching and support staff jobs will go by July 31st, and staff remaining are being asked to sign up to new contracts of employment. UNISON has been supporting its members through the consultation and resultant processes, and improved some terms within the new contract. Reps Harry Vine and Gill Marshman, also caught up in the proposals like other staff, have been doing sterling work advising members with support from the Branch office.

Branch backs campaign for Teaching Assistants

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in the branch office if you would like to get involved, and find out how we can support you."

For the national campaign, UNISON needs you to tell us about the positive impact TA's are making in your schools and for your children. Send your stories and examples to education@unison.co.uk You can download the new summer edition of *UNISON in Schools* for more details at <http://acrobat.unison.org.uk/acrobat/21261.pdf>

In West Sussex we can support the campaign by adding more TAs to our membership and by holding meetings to discuss the campaign. For a visit from a branch officer, please get in contact using the phone number above, or email office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk

Conference calling—

This year's branch delegates, Tom, Karen, Wendy and Karen report back from Liverpool 2013

Three of us, Tom, Karen, and Wendy were conference virgins, all needing to be guided by Karen Fisher, the 'experienced one'. So we all arrived in Liverpool by lunch time on Saturday, a little jaded from working all week but keen to discover how all this would work. New delegates are invited to attend a briefing from the Regional delegates where the way conference runs is explained. After this a briefing for all delegates is held and all of the West Sussex reps met up for the first time. We returned to our hotel and booked the restaurant for a meal, over which we got to know each other a bit and planned out the next day (the food was tasty too!).



Although we had met a few times at UNISON meetings we were not friends, however that has now changed. It was a pleasure having a young member with us, but it certainly brought home just how old we ladies have become. References to Billy Fury, Tommy Cooper, and Ricky Tomlinson were way too outdated for Tom, the Branch's Young Members' Officer! He did however impress us with his ability to socialise with and join in with three much older people. We look forward to working with him in the future.

The Local Government conference began with a speech from the Mayor of Liverpool. He spoke very passionately about Liverpool, and the problems the city has faced over the last couple of decades, and his membership of UNISON of which he was very proud. Issues raised at Local Government conference were very similar to what we are facing here in West Sussex county: cuts to services, erosion of terms and conditions, and outsourcing of services.

Facility time was the subject of the Motion put forward by our branch, due to us having our facility time cut by 30% this year. The Branch Secretary was keen for our branch to 'move' the motion (propose it to conference) and as Karen Fisher was the only delegate who had attended before he asked her to make the speech for Branch. This was a nerve-racking experience



not made any easier by cameras going off every time Karen looked up! But our motion was carried (passed) and will therefore influence how the national union responds to attacks on facility time.

Debates at Conference were lively including discussions on the austerity measures causing real hardship across the country, with the bedroom tax, universal credit and the so-called Taxpayers Alliance coming in for particular criticism. Attending conference is very tiring, but rewarding as you certainly feel more connected to the union as a result. We would certainly recommend it!

Successful outcome with outsourced employer

One newly outsourced employer wanted to make drastic reductions across a range of terms and conditions including annual leave, maternity pay and sick pay for new starters, potentially creating a two-tier workforce on significantly different contracts. Following extensive negotiations UNISON West Sussex managed to deflect the worst of the proposals and achieve an acceptable outcome, the best of which was to preserve current maternity pay arrangements and maintain decent sick pay.

Timely support at Outreach 3-way

Management at this Crawley-based charity proposed to reorganise a number of part-time job-shared roles, one of which our member undertook, into a smaller number of full-time posts. With help from UNISON, the member presented alternative proposals, with the support and agreement of their job-sharer. Management agreed to withdraw their proposals and continue with existing arrangements.

Support at Carers Support West Sussex

Management at the Crawley-based charity proposed to change job roles which would involve travelling on a countywide basis. Our member has a disability which prevented them from driving for lengthy periods. With advice from UNISON West Sussex and after discussions with their manager, the employer agreed to redefine the job to include working from home and limiting the requirement to drive long distances every day.

Help for members facing pension changes

Members at housing association Affinity Sutton have been faced with the closure of their Local Government Pension Scheme and offered alternative, less attractive schemes. Because UNISON has a first-class pensions section at our London HQ we were able to support local members by obtaining advice and holding a discussion session with affected members. Next steps are to discuss a recruitment campaign in Affinity Sutton, one of the largest housing associations in the region.

Schools' changes

The Branch has also been supporting members in a large number of schools in the busy period of the final academic term. As school rolls fall, so Head teachers often look to reduce their support staff budgets. Our members have faced redundancy situations in schools across the County, as well as changes to roles and downgrading. We have helped a large number of members and preserved jobs on some occasions. The Branch has also found a wide variety of approaches to consultation processes, some of which we believe are unlawful, and are in discussion with WSCC to ensure greater consistency of schools' approaches. Consultations prior to academy conversions, which then involve the TUPE transfer of staff, have also taken place across the County, and Branch reps and officers have been on hand to visit schools and help individual members.

Getting over overpayments

One of our social worker members was signed off work by their GP due to ill health in October last year. Their manager failed to enter the right dates onto SAP until November, with the result there was an overpayment of wages made of nearly £1,400. A meeting was held with UNISON in January where, unusually in our experience, the manager accepted full responsibility for the error and apologised profusely. An agreement was achieved to split the overpayment and write off £700 for the member. The member was permitted to use a number of days unpaid leave, which she couldn't take as she was off sick, to reduce the remaining debt and re-payment terms of £20 per month were agreed when originally Pay & Employment Services wanted £100 per month. If you are overpaid, get in touch with us as soon as possible as sometimes P&ES will set up deductions with no notice, ignoring holiday seasons.

On the case

Our member in a West Sussex school had major surgery in 2010 which affected his ability to work. His Head teacher felt he was working to 30% of capacity and put him on a Performance Improvement Plan. However, his objectives were not measurable or achievable, and advice from Occupational Health and WSCC HR was being ignored. UNISON helped our member lodge an appeal, which was upheld. He is now being properly assessed and steps are being put in place to support him at work. Our member is delighted as he feared he was being fast-tracked out of the school.

Ill health retirement success

Our member suffered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and was dismissed by WSCC in May 2011 due to ill health. Her Occupational Health assessor at ATOS recommended that she did not qualify for Ill Health Retirement, claiming that other forms of treatment had not been attempted. Her GP was furious, and adamant that she should get IHR. UNISON appealed the decision to deny IHR in September 2011 and this was not upheld. Sadly, her health continued to deteriorate but a further appeal was lodged in November 2012. This was upheld confirming our view that the policy had not been correctly applied in the first place, and we are hopeful that she will now be paid her pension at the highest rate, backdated to May 2011.

Social work grievance

Our member was injured when she was assaulted by a service user and her car damaged. Whilst WSCC agreed they would compensate her should her car insurance increase as a result of the claim, they refused to accept liability or put her in a position of no detriment. A grievance was lodged alleging managers had failed in their duty of care and for the uninsured loss. The grievance was partially upheld and lone working processes amended, and an out of court settlement reached on the insurance claim.