

BRANCH LINES

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



THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS!

But what about next year? Branch officers look back at 2021 and look ahead to 2022. | SEE PAGES 5–11, 18–21, 23, 24

**VIRTUAL
BRANCH
AGMS**

SEE PAGE 17

SEE INSIDE

NJC pay latest 2 • Parking 4 • Capita contract 5 • Schools section 6–9
Year of the disabled worker 14 • Branch officer nominations 16 • CYPL section 18–21
Social worker of the year 22 • Adults' services convenor 23 • Win £20 with UNISON 24



It's been a year since we last published Branch Lines. And what a year it was! None of us

could have predicted how our working lives would change due to the pandemic and indeed, how those changes may continue as

virus variants develop. But it's also been a year of incredibly hard work for the branch. Though we've been able to mostly work at home, our workloads seem to have increased as employers attempt to make changes in response to both the demands of coronavirus and the impact of government cuts to local

services. Unfortunately, next year promises more of the same, so in this edition we've taken the opportunity to look back at our achievements in 2021 and share with you our concerns for 2022. A very happy new year to all UNISON West Sussex members.

Dan Sartin,
Branch Secretary

NJC PAY OFFER AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOT LATEST



At the time of going to press, the NJC ballot on pay and industrial action had been concluded but the results were unknown.

During the pandemic our members kept communities safe, cared for the most vulnerable, and ensured schools remained open throughout successive lockdowns. Despite this, you were offered a pay increase of just 1.75%. With inflation running at over 3%, this is a real-terms pay cut. It comes after a decade of declining pay. The value of your pay is now 25% lower than it

was in 2010. Year after year, it's been chipped away.

That's why we asked 375,000 members working in 40,000 workplaces across most of the UK to vote for strike action. This would be the first local government pay strike since 2014. We know going on strike is not something you do lightly. Your job is incredibly important, and people rely on you. But your employer made you, and other

council and school workers, an unfair offer. The government promised to, "do whatever is necessary," to support local authorities through Covid-19. The UK's recovery from Covid-19 surely cannot mean more public sector austerity?

The pay offer falls far below what council and school workers need and deserve.

Many local authorities had already budgeted for a larger pay increase than the one on offer, and that extra money from the government should be used to provide a decent pay rise.

Once ballot results are known, we will let you know through our usual channels. We will also provide detailed guidance should the ballot result be in favour of industrial action.



COVID-19: WSCC'S POSITION



With the emergence of omicron, changes to national guidance will see no changes to WSCC current working arrangements (although some minor impact to isolation requirements).

Where there is a business need to do so, staff can attend the workplace. But staff who do not need to come into an office to work should continue to work from home.

Timescales for the planned wider return to offices to work from January 2022 will need to be more flexible, but where an activity can be done better face-to-face, staff are still able to meet in the workplace, ensuring all Covid measures are followed.

The council encourages mask-wearing as much as possible when moving around workplaces. It has

recently reviewed the use of other measures such as gender-specific toilets and one-way circulation systems.

If you need to come into a council building to work but you have concerns, you can ask your manager to either review your existing Covid-19 employee risk assessment, or complete a new one.

WSCC's approach reflects the need to balance the risks of opening up to deliver services, against potential increased levels of sickness absence.

If you have concerns, please contact the branch for advice.

HAY, SMG4 AND AFC PAY

The branch is pleased to inform UNISON members at WSCC who are on HAY, SMG4 and agenda for change (Afc) grades that their annual pay award will be aligned to national joint council (NJC) pay awards for the pay years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

This follows a request made by the branch to Becky Shaw, WSCC chief executive, which has since been agreed. This means that when the NJC award is confirmed for 2021-22 it will be backdated to 1 July 2021 for WSCC staff on HAY, SMG4 and Afc grades.

Please look out for further communications from the branch on NJC pay.

THANK YOU

"Just wanted to say again how much I appreciate what you have done. The result today was far better than I could have expected and this is mainly down to you and the huge amount of work you gave to my case at such short notice. You are a credit to your service."

MILEAGE AND PARKING

For the moment, there is nothing further to report on WSCC's mileage allowance plans as we are waiting for a response from HR. We've been informed that WSCC will move from its initial position, but have no further details at time of going to press.



WSCC is carrying out another parking review and UNISON is included in a working group. Although currently suspended at UNISON's request, charging at County Hall, Chichester has not been permanently abolished. The branch is pushing for charging to be removed to have a consistent approach across all sites.

The criteria for priority parking may need to be revisited. The recent closure of children & family centres will also have an impact on parking as those staff whose designated

workplace is now County Hall North will need to have access to parking that allows them to carry out visits during the day.

There is concern among Chichester staff about parking and mixed messaging. Registrars and other staff who are required to attend the workplace to carry out their role do not have a choice to work from home and will be disadvantaged if they are forced to pay for parking when other staff can choose to work from home. UNISON has taken this up with the executive director.

MARJORIE COBBY HOUSE CLOSURE



Marjorie Cobby House, Selsey

WSCC has decided to close the CQC registered short-term residential care and rehabilitation centre for adults, Marjorie Cobby House in Selsey, even though it was rated as 'good'.

The centre provides rehabilitation facilities for people discharged from hospital where they could be fully assessed before returning home. The pandemic has resulted in fewer referrals to the centre, and with a government push for hospitals to discharge patients directly to their homes, use of the centre has reduced. However, there are

many people whose situation is too risky to be discharged immediately to their home. The council's solution is to discharge them to residential care homes, but such homes have very little experience of rehabilitation work and are set up primarily to offer long-term support. There is therefore a risk, in UNISON's view, of some people losing their independence sooner due to lack of rehabilitation services.

The decision is a direct result of central government cuts.

There are few comparable employment alternatives in the local area, even though the service is working hard to find redeployments for staff, especially in the Chichester and Bognor Regis areas. Some staff have already left and are working for local care agencies.

It is currently anticipated that the service will not take any more customers from 4 January 2022 and that closure will take place around 22 March 2022.

CAPITA CONTRACT COMES BACK TO WSCC!

But future of customer service centre remains unclear



County Hall, Chichester

We are pleased to report that after years of campaigning by UNISON West Sussex, the county council has decided to bring the large majority of its services currently managed by Capita back under WSCC control by October 2022.

Members might remember the independent research we commissioned previously which demonstrated the inefficiency and costliness of the contract for council tax payers and staff, plus the TV appearances the branch made as part of that campaign.

"We welcome that the council has agreed to do this," said branch secretary Dan Sartin. "We were dissatisfied with Capita's service quality and treatment of its staff, especially in the early days, but we've been pleased to see the gradual insourcing

of several services over the years as the reality of poor service provision dawned on the council."

IT services were the latest to return to WSCC in October. Most IT is now back in house, though one smaller IT service was transferred to another private sector employer XMA based in Nottingham (though West Sussex staff remain locally deployed). The insource was conducted hurriedly with little meaningful staff consultation, so the branch is working with the council to make sure the insourcing

of a much larger number of staff begins in good time. The following remaining Capita services will also transfer back to WSCC:

- accounts payable (one way to buy)
- business services (administration)
- payroll, HR shared services and HR services to schools
- procurement
- online service delivery

There is though uncertainty about the future of the customer service centre. Roughly one third of staff in the customer service centre deliver entry-point services for adults' services and children's services. They will return to WSCC.

However, the council intends to continue to use an outsourced model for the other two thirds who deliver other customer services (roughly 35 staff) and will need to start a tender process soon to see who delivers the service next. That would be the fifth company to run the service since 2004.

If that tender process is successful, those 35 of around 400 Capita staff would not return to WSCC. This would mean that the running sore of a two-tier workforce would remain, with staff working side by side in the same office on radically different terms and conditions. UNISON finds

Continued on the back page

Schools & Academies

Branch schools' convenor Keith Manville and branch officer supporting academy-based members Zoe Walker look back at 2021 and bring us up to date on issues affecting members working in schools.



COVID AND VENTILATION IN SCHOOLS

Keith explains, "We have raised concerns about school ventilation both at national and local levels. We continue to pressure the DfE to take urgent action to improve ventilation in schools and provide funding, where concerns are identified.

"The branch has pushed this concern with WSCC which has now agreed to use high efficiency air purifying technologies with other ventilation measures where appropriate.

"This is a positive step, but more could be done. We will continue to press for funding support. School members with concerns about ventilation should raise a H&S concern to the school leadership team and seek advice from the branch.

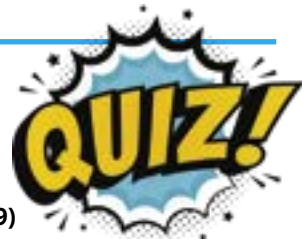
"Covid risk assessment concerns have been less frequent since the start of the autumn term, but they are now increasing, especially with the high infection rates in Mid Sussex and the emergence of the

omicron variant. The branch has received written assurances from WSCC, particularly where COVID infection in schools has been formally reported. We've secured changes to HR guidance about sick pay, triggers and entitlement and an agreement on how this should be managed under NJC terms. The joint union advice on COVID remains relevant. Go to [www.unison.org.uk/where you work/education](http://www.unison.org.uk/where-you-work/education) for more info.

"The Covid situation remains very fluid. Please read UNISON's H&S advice (emailed to school members) and contact us if you'd like further advice. We will challenge employers on any health & safety concern."

QUIZ - KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Zoe Walker asks all members; "How well do you think you know your rights in the workplace? Take our quick quiz and see if you can answer the following." (Answers are on page 9)



Q1 What is the maximum number of hours per week a worker can be forced to work (unless they agree to work more)? **39 / 48 / 60**

Q2 Are you legally entitled to a break? If so, how much, how often?

Q3 Which of the following are employees entitled to as a statutory right? **the right to not be discriminated against / the right to a safe working environment / the right to to a minimum of 5.6 weeks paid**

holiday per year (pro rata for part time employees) / the right to not be bullied, harassed, or victimised in the workplace / the right to not be dismissed unfairly.

Q4 Name one or more of the 'protected characteristics', defined by the Equality Act (2010) which cannot be used to treat a person unfairly, or used as a reason for dismissal.

Q5 Can my employer discriminate against me if I join UNISON?

HOW DO WE SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF?

Zoe explains: “We can advise you on your rights at work and give you support when you’re faced with HR processes. This includes the following:

- sickness absence and securing adjustments to return to work;
- disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures: our reps will prepare you for the hearing, accompany and support you;
- industrial disputes: we help organise staff when you need to take collective action;
- employment tribunals: if you are unfairly dismissed and UNISON believes there is a case to pursue, we will seek advice from our regional office and have access to legal advice. If UNISON lawyers feel the case is viable, UNISON will pay legal fees and take your case all the way to court (it’s important to remember there are criteria that need to be met, strict time scales and a legal view on viability);
- local dispute mechanisms: most issues can be resolved without the need for court action, but members benefit from advice given in response to their enquiries and have access to extensive case work support.

“Here’s an example showing how UNISON supported our members in just one month, November 2021. We managed 70 formal cases:

- 67% were with WSCC;
- 57% were for sickness absence, 10% of these

cases were related to long COVID;

- 25% were disciplinary issues;
- 11% were grievances where members needed to raise a complaint against their employer.

“During 2021, on average UNISON also gave informal duty responses advising members averaging 77 a month (the highest was January with 127 member requests for advice).

“This year, we have been involved in 25 collective school consultations, 18 restructures, five TUPE transfer processes and two involving terms and conditions. It has been a difficult year for school staff working throughout the pandemic. As key front-line workers, you never know what is around the corner, but it’s important to know that if anything does happen, UNISON has your back and is there to support you.”

BROADWATER CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, WORTHING

Keith reports, “It is always good to share examples of exemplary practice. One example of this was shown by the senior leadership team at Broadwater CE Primary School in Worthing, which should be congratulated for a positive approach when consulting on a TUPE insourcing of wrap-around care for pupils.

“Following consultation with UNISON, the school decided (against HR advice) to move

impacted staff onto NJC pay rates at the point of transfer. This meant our members saw a positive impact to their pay and were given clear job descriptions, instead of waiting nearly a year to receive them. The school had budgeted correctly and accepted UNISON’s position. It’s a good example of how we can work jointly with school leaders, and how our members benefit from UNISON’s involvement in representing their interests.”

UNISON SCHOOL REPS AND MEMBERS

Zoe said, “Our schools’ reps and members are the lifeblood of our union. We value your support and all the work done by our reps and activists. There are many significant challenges ahead of us, which is why UNISON and membership remains relevant, particularly in schools.

“Here are the new school stewards and reps we’ve recruited in 2021:

- **Debra Cannons**, Greenway Academy (Castle Trust), Horsham
- **Wendy Haider**, Globe Primary (REAch2 Academy Trust), Lancing
- **Juliet Healy**, Bishop Luffa School, Chichester
- **Nicola Long**, White Meadows Primary Academy, Littlehampton
- **Chloe Powell**, Globe Primary (REAch2 Academy Trust), Lancing
- **Anthony Whiffin**, Bersted Green Primary, Bognor Regis

And here are those who have left. Thanks to them all for their support and the very best to you all in your next steps:

- **Tracey Clift**, Heene CE Primary, Worthing
- **Ellena Demetriou**, Chichester High School (Kemnal Academies Trust)
- **Gyillmard Horsfield**, Bishop Luffa School, Chichester

- **Gabriel Jeffery**, Herons Dale Primary, Shoreham-by-Sea

“Thank you to all our members and activists for all you do in support of UNISON West Sussex. If you would like to get involved and become a UNISON rep please contact myself or Keith. If you know of a colleague that isn’t in UNISON, or is thinking of joining UNISON, don’t delay! Make sure they are aware of this support. Ask them to call 01243 777636 and discuss membership with our admin team. Or join online at unisonwestsussex.org.uk/join/. As a valued member, if you ever find yourself in a similar situation, UNISON can be there to support and advise you.

Keith and Zoe concluded by saying: “If there is one message we would like to give it is; “Join the relevant, recognised trade union. We are in this and stronger together. If we organise and support each other, we can bring about change. We’re a union that fights for its members.”

GLOBE PRIMARY ACADEMY, LANCING

This school is part of the REAch 2 academy chain. As part of a restructure, the academy wanted to downgrade teaching support assistants (TSAs).

UNISON’s position was that the proposed downgrading was against ACAS guidance and could potentially open up REAch2 to an unequal pay claim. We maintained there was no acceptable justification for downgrading. It did not make business sense as staff in this role

would be the lowest paid in the county and therefore highly likely to seek alternative employment. REAch2 agreed to review the proposal.

Following discussion with UNISON, they agreed not to go ahead with the downgrading of TSA posts and acknowledged the upset and anger UNISON members felt about this issue.



Globe Primary Academy, Lancing

UNISON SCHOOL CONVENOR, REPRESENTING YOU

Keith said: "I am the dedicated branch convenor working on school issues with the main employer. Branch officer Zoe supports our academy school members. As convenor, I'm involved in consultation and policy reviews with WSCC, as well as providing support on case work and individual requests for advice.

"UNISON West Sussex branch officers are involved in the following school forums:

- West Sussex schools' joint consultation committee (JCC);
- West Sussex schools' health, safety and welfare committee;
- West Sussex school forum;
- Regional UNISON SE school forum;
- Regional SE local government committee;

and

- UNISON national sector school committee.

"Whatever your concern you can be assured UNISON can raise it at local, regional and national levels. UNISON helps shape national policies in the school sector, including on health and safety, academisation and NJC terms and conditions."

POLICY AND RESTRUCTURE CONSULTATIONS

UNISON has been consulted on new WSCC policies for school staff, including revisions to the sickness absence policy, industrial injury policy, and changes to other policies supporting diversity in the workplace.

Keith reported, "We supported our members through several restructures and TUPE processes including examples which have fallen short of our expectations. UNISON raised complaints on several collective restructuring issues in the last year. This resulted in changes to processes.

"There is now an agreed escalation process for managing complaints about HR advice to schools, but members should firstly contact the branch."

QUIZ ANSWERS

- Q1** You can't work more than 48 hours a week on average – normally averaged over 17 weeks. This law is sometimes called the 'working time directive' or 'working time regulations' (WTR).
- Q2** The WTR also stipulates you must have at least 20 minutes break away from the workstation or normal place of work if you work more than 6 hours.
- Q3** All of them, except the last one! Unfortunately, you don't have protection from unfair dismissal unless you have two years' service or more in your job or unless the reason for dismissal would automatically be unfair. For example, for whistle-blowing in the public interest, raising health and safety concerns or because of pregnancy.
- Q4** Age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, or maternity.
- Q5** Your employer cannot discriminate against you for joining or being in a trade union. UNISON is the only trade union recognised by WSCC to represent school support staff.

CASUAL CONTRACTS AND EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

Helen was employed by Bluebird Care to provide 24-hour live-in care for people in their own homes.

Like many workers in this sector Helen had a zero-hour contract. However, since her start date in 2016 has worked regular hours.

Through no fault of Helen's this work stopped abruptly due to the changing needs of the person she cared for and Bluebird could not offer her alternative work for a period of two weeks when she expected to be working.

UNISON supported Helen to write to Bluebird advising them that she had gained

employment rights due to her pattern of work over the preceding 4.5 years. This working pattern was originally 3 weeks on and one week off for the first year, changing to 2 weeks on two weeks off for the remaining 3.5 years.

Bluebird's policy is for continuity of care. Therefore, Helen felt obliged to accept the work and had no time off. UNISON helped her argue that her contractual hours were over 100 hours each month.

Bluebird accepted the position and made a payment to Helen to cover the period when she was expecting to work but no work could be provided.

Helen now has another person to support long-term and there have not been further breaks in work offered.

She said; "I was so glad I had decided to join a union two years before this happened as the help I had from the caseworker was second to none. It gave me a knowledge of employment rights and the support to carry out negotiations I would not have been able to do on my own. Well worth the £10 a month I had been paying!"



MEET KIERA, BRANCH YOUNG MEMBERS' OFFICER

Kiera Hilder works as a child and family worker currently based in the adolescent and family resource service (though this is subject to restructure, as described on page 18).

Her role involves working directly with teenagers, parents and siblings on a wide range of problems including anger management and substance abuse, aiming to help those families make positive changes.

She's has spent the past year as the branch's 'young members' officer': representing the interests of those aged under 27 years old.

"I've attended courses with other young members' officers from around

the country aiming to encourage more young people to join the union.

"I think it's true to say that many younger workers don't always see the benefit of being a union member until unfortunately it's too late. Without the formal support of a union behind them, young workers can find themselves suddenly out of a job, often with little or no compensation.

"What's most important to me is to defend younger members who can be the subject of workplace discrimination because of their age and perceived inexperience, even though they work hard and do a good job.

"Some people can be very patronising towards younger workers. They assume that because we are young, we're not as good as someone older and more experienced, which is mostly untrue.

"I want to challenge stereotypes and help raise the profile of younger people in the workforce."

Kiera was elected to UNISON's ruling body, its national executive council, in June 2021 to represent UNISON members across the UK.

To find out more,
email kiera.hilder@westsussex.gov.uk

UNISON WEST SUSSEX BRANCH CASEWORKER

MEET AMANDA GODFREY



Amanda joined the branch team two years ago as caseworker for members working for employers including the care sector, charities and schools. She has also been heavily involved in some complex collective cases within the council such as TUPE transfers, grievances and redundancies.

"Starting work at the beginning of the pandemic meant I had to be very flexible in my approach to cases," says Amanda. "I've adopted a 'hybrid' model of working meaning I can work from home most of the time yet be able to meet face-to-face when required, making sure I thoroughly risk assess each meeting and use lateral flow tests in advance." Amanda is a CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development) qualified, highly experienced professional with a background working in a wide variety of employers such as the NHS, charities, the voluntary sector, academy chains and local government. During her time working for WSCC she managed the occupational health (OH) and the employee assistance programme contracts.

"But perhaps my most intense learning experience was earlier in my career when I worked for the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB). During the 1990s I had to represent people at employment tribunals which was when I first became interested in employment law.

"I believe the branch has good partnership working with the council, working together effectively to find constructive and fair solutions. It's one of the things that gets me out of bed in the morning, knowing I can do my job well because given the chance, both the council our members can work mutually well together." When she is not working for UNISON, she is a coach for a local running club in Chichester.

"We believe our members are well served by the quality of branch officers and reps we have added to our team over the years," said branch secretary Dan Sartin.

"Amanda is a great addition to our already strong team and has had considerable success representing our members in the couple of years she's been with us."

Membership Form

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

We use this address to send you information core to your membership such as your membership pack, UNISON election information and any information relating to ballots if relevant

We use this to contact you about trade union activities and services

This information helps us find the best UNISON branch to support and represent your needs

This information helps your employer and us confirm your identity

Your subscription rate is determined by how much you earn

¹ Tell us about you

Title	First name		
Last name			
Home address			
			Postcode
Email			
Phone		Date of birth	

² Tell us about your job

Employer's name	
Your job title or occupation	
Workplace name and address	
	Postcode
Payroll number	NI number

³ What you will pay each month

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions

Annual pay	Core subscription	£14,001 – £17,000	£9.70	<input type="checkbox"/>
£0,000 – £2,000	£1.30	£17,001 – £20,000	£11.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
£2,001 – £5,000	£3.50	£20,001 – £25,000	£14.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
£5,001 – £8,000	£5.30	£25,001 – £30,000	£17.25	<input type="checkbox"/>
£8,001 – £11,000	£6.60	£30,001 – £35,000	£20.30	<input type="checkbox"/>
£11,001 – £14,000	£7.85	£35,001 – and over	£22.50	<input type="checkbox"/>

Instruction to deduct the subscription from my salary

By signing the below I wish to join UNISON and authorise deduction of subscriptions from my pay by my employer

Signature	Date
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This information tells us whether you wish to contribute an additional 5% toward UNISON's campaign fund. This voluntary contribution will be taken annually in October as a single deduction by Direct Debit. Further information is available at www.unison.org.uk/changes

This information is standard direct debit mandate information

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

We are legally required to keep your information up to date. You can amend your details via My UNISON at www.unison.org.uk/my-unison

☐ Email ☐ Text ☐ Phone

By ticking these boxes, you are giving your consent for UNISON to contact you by these means about how we campaign on your behalf.

⁴ Campaign fund contribution

UNISON stands up for its members and speaks out publicly on the issues that affect them. To continue this work we ask for a voluntary 5% campaign contribution by Direct Debit when you join. Please tick your preference below:

☐ Campaign Fund

The campaign fund promotes better public services, enables the union to talk with politicians of any party about the work our members do and supports the union's equalities work.

☐ UNISON Labour Link

Labour Link campaigns for UNISON policy on the NHS, your employment rights and for quality public services within the Labour Party locally and in Parliament.

☐ No thank you

I do not wish to contribute to campaigning at the moment. Those who choose not to opt in will not be disadvantaged in any way as compared with members who do opt in.

☐ If you selected 'No thank you' – by ticking this box you are giving consent for UNISON to contact you in future about our campaign funds. We will do this using the contact details you provided on this form.

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



To the manager bank / building society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Account number

Branch sort code

Office use only

Service user no.

9 7 0 0 5 0

Office use only

Membership number

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

Date

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

2022: YEAR OF THE DISABLED WORKER

Branch equality officer (disabilities) Sarah Etherington looks forward to a very special year.

"In 2019, UNISON's national delegate conference agreed to make 2021 the 'year of the disabled worker' in recognition of the issues and disadvantages faced by our disabled members and to celebrate the contribution workers with disabilities make to the workplace. Despite being postponed as a result of the Covid pandemic, this fantastic year-long celebration will now take place in 2022. We have a huge range of workshops and webinars on offer every month throughout the year. "Here's a few examples of those you can sign up to:

- 4 February: cancer in the workplace (to coincide with world cancer day);
- 3 May: dealing with asthma in the workplace (world asthma day);
- 1 July: long-Covid and post-viral disorders (What is long-Covid? What other post viral disorders affect people in the workplace? Are they a disability covered by the Equality Act 2010? How can UNISON support members impacted by post viral illnesses?);
- 10 October: mental health awareness (world mental health day); and
- 4 November: the disability pay-gap (disability pay-gap day).

"Other topics covered include: epilepsy, autism, learning disabilities, endometriosis, dementia and access to work."

To book a place email membereducationse@unison.co.uk with your membership number. Contact the branch if you need it.

HELP ELECT WEST SUSSEX'S MARILYN!

Our UNISON region's 'south east rep of the year' Marilyn Cox is standing as a candidate in UNISON's forthcoming 'service group' elections, starting in April.

Marilyn, based at Field Place Infants School, Worthing, needs all our members' support so our branch can successfully influence the union's policy in the local government service group. Marilyn is standing for the 'low paid female' seat within that group.

There are seven service groups within UNISON, representing members from a wide variety of professions and workplaces. It's important West Sussex members vote, just as they recently did for Billie Reynolds during the union's 'Labour Link' elections, which saw Billie successfully elected with West Sussex votes. In West Sussex, our members are shared among five of the union's seven service groups as follows:

- local government
- health
- higher education
- community
- water/environment/transport

Service groups determine the bargaining strategy and influence the development of employment terms & conditions within those groups for members, so they're an important part of the negotiating structure within the national union.

Voting starts on 20 April and ends on 18 May with results made public on 10 June. We know it's a very early advance warning, but please look out for Marilyn's name on the ballot papers when they arrive!

We will let you know the outcomes in June.

MARILYN'S UNISON MEMBERSHIP STORY

Marilyn Cox tells us why she joined UNISON many years ago and why she believes union membership is invaluable for public sector employees.

"In April 2022 I will have worked at Field Place Infants School for thirty years. I've seen lots of changes, good and bad during this time.

"When I first started work in the school there was no union representation apart from the former NUT (National Union of Teachers, now part of the NEU National Education Union). "Through time, I saw that we only had a voice during the LSA (learning support assistant) meetings, but that wasn't enough. I picked up the phone one day and joined UNISON. I suppose I then became an 'evangelist' and quickly started to spread the good news to the other LSAs.

"Within two months. I had recruited about twenty fellow colleagues and quickly found we had a voice and a platform to seek change and support.

"During the years UNISON has become our great friend. We know we are not alone! UNISON has been there for us during personal bereavements, redundancies, grievances, and we know only too well the great fight they have provided for us during the Covid pandemic.

"I know that I have become a stronger person and have more belief in my abilities because UNISON has encouraged me to push



Marilyn Cox

myself and to represent my colleagues in the workplace. At Field Place we have about 90% union membership.

"I now want to learn and know more, and to be a voice for the very low paid in our union - for those who earn so little yet do such an important job in their workplace. It's time - in the words of JFK to say, "Ask not what the union can do for you but what you can do for the union."

BILLIE ELECTED AS SE LABOUR LINK REP

Huge thanks go to West Sussex Labour Link members. You made the difference! Thank you for voting for Billie Reynolds, the branch's nomination for national Labour Link committee.

Billie was duly elected by 1,042 votes to 854. West Sussex members no doubt made the positive difference Billie needed to get elected to this vital national committee that governs UNISON's relationship with the Labour Party.

Billie joins branch secretary Dan Sartin who is also a serving member of this committee, elected by the union's national executive committee (NEC).



Billie Reynolds

BRANCH OFFICERS FOR 2022/23 ELECTIONS

The branch committee has nominated the following members to serve as branch officers in 2022/23.

As part of the union's democratic process, nomination forms for any of the positions below are available from the branch office. The annual election process for workplace representatives has also started. The nomination period for all positions ends on 9 February.

If you are interested in taking on any role, please contact the branch secretary to find out more or request a nomination

form from the office. **Currently, we have no branch nominations for the officer posts of: membership, welfare, pensions, communications, international and WSCC convenor (other departments).**

Branch committee meets six times per year on Zoom (and hybrid online and physical meetings are anticipated for the future when physical meetings are possible). If you would like to get more involved with the branch, as a committee member or workplace rep, now is the time. Please get in touch!



Branch Chair
Ian Harvey



Branch Vice-Chair
Sarah Etherington



Branch Secretary
Dan Sartin



Deputy Branch Secretary
Karen Daubney



Equalities Officer (Women)
Carla Hardy



Equalities Officer (BME)
Olu Oyedele



Equalities Officer (Disability)
Sarah Etherington



Equalities Officer (LGBT+)
Karen Fenn



Health & Safety Officer (1)
Karen Daubney



Health & Safety Officer (2)
Carla Hardy



Labour Link Officer
Dan Sartin



Branch Treasurer
Jennie Barrett



Retired Members' Secretaries
Jennie Gudgeon/Margaret Guest



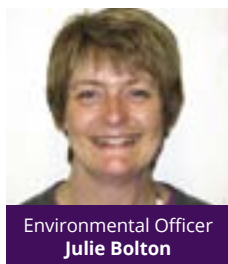
WSCC Adults' Services Convenor
Gerard Robson



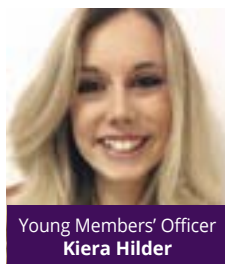
WSCC Schools Convenor
Keith Manville



Children's Services Convenor
Sarah Etherington



Environmental Officer
Julie Bolton



Young Members' Officer
Kiera Hilder



Education Co-ordinator
Briony Stilliard

BRANCH AGMS 2022

Branch 'virtual' annual general meetings will take place at the end of March 2022. Dates and times are as follows.

- **Tuesday 29 March** 12.30–1.30pm via MS Teams
- **Wednesday 30 March** 4.30–5.30pm via Zoom
- **Thursday 31 March** 6.30–7.30pm via Zoom

Details of how to register for a meeting will be sent out via email and advertised on the branch website nearer the time.

We will be holding a raffle at each of the three AGM meetings with the same great prizes at each event:

1. Star prize of £150 Amazon or One4All voucher
2. Second runners up prize of £50 Amazon or One4All voucher

3. Third runners up prize of £25 Amazon or One4All voucher

After registration, we will send you joining instructions and the electronic link you will need (or telephone number if joining by landline). We will also send you a link to the agenda for the meeting.

To be included in the raffle, you will need to

register for your ticket before 12noon on the day of the meeting. To win a raffle prize you will need to be present at the AGM you have registered for. Only one prize can be won per member. The draw will take place at the end of each meeting. You will need to be present at the end of the meeting to claim your prize.



Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator
Briony Stilliard

Children, young people and learning

Sarah Etherington (pictured), branch convenor for children, young people and learning (CYPL), guides us through some of the varied and complex work she has been involved in throughout 2021. But first, a bit of background.



BACKGROUND

IMPROVING AFTER OFSTED

Following WSCC's 'inadequate' rating by Ofsted in its inspection of services for children in May 2019, the secretary of state for education appointed a commissioner, John Coughlan, to oversee improvement.

Sarah explains; "WSCC made a public commitment to change. It not only recognised that significant improvements were required to deliver the kind of service our children need and deserve, but also that there was an imperative need to radically overhaul the council's model of service, in order to implement more effective and sustainable services to the most vulnerable children in our county."

WSCC's children's social care consultation stated; "We developed a comprehensive 'transformation programme' ('children first') that coordinates a whole service re-design through a robust programme of work to implement an improved and sustainable service model that is being progressively introduced."

Sarah continued; "The huge amount of work taking place to restructure services is mainly as a result of the Ofsted inspection in 2019, but also as a result of cuts to local government funding and grants. Lucy Butler (executive director CYPL) has stated the council is on a 3 to 5-year journey to improve services."

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE CONSULTATION

"Consultation took place on a new model of social work practice (family safeguarding model) which is at the heart of the service's transformation programme.

"It started in October with the new structure being implemented in Feb 2022. We are supporting members in the following services during this restructure, which affects about 350 staff:

1. family support and protection (FS&P);
2. child and family intervention services (CFIS);
3. assessment & intervention (A&I); and
4. adolescent and family resource service (AFRS) teams.

"There will be no redundancies. New 'child exploitation' and 'solutions' teams will be introduced but AFRS and CFIS will no longer exist. FS&P will become the family safeguarding model teams and A&I will become smaller.

"There is a change to the geographical areas of operational responsibility for revised A&I teams and the new family safeguarding teams. There will be three geographical areas rather than two, aligned to early help hub structures.

"I submitted a detailed response on behalf of UNISON members and made representations for specific groups of staff and for individuals.

"As a result of representations made the grade 7 children & family worker roles will be reviewed and evaluated to ensure that their work is understood and recognised."

CLOSURE OF CENTENARY HOUSE AND MOVE TO BRIDGE HOUSE, WORTHING

Sarah has also been closely involved in corporate projects affecting CYPL members and beyond. Perhaps the most significant of these is the closure of Centenary House, Worthing.

"I represent UNISON on the project board and attend meetings with CYPL managers. My fellow convenor for adults' services, Gerard Robson, (see page 23) is attending meetings for adult social care managers.

"The move is being used to trial 'smarter ways of working' as there are fewer desks than people and no-one will have their own desk unless they need it for reasonable adjustments. With staff working from home and attending the office on some days it will be



interesting to see how this works out in practice.

"Feedback from our branch's survey with CHD members tells us the majority want to be in the office 2-3 days a week for their emotional wellbeing and professional support. However, some need to be in the office full-time due to not having suitable workspace at

home or for health reasons.

"I highlighted issues on reasonable adjustments to HR and the project board to ensure these are planned in to the office move and available as soon as those staff move across. I also raised issues about heating at CHD (as did managers) and portable heaters have now been installed on some floors as the boiler is not working.

"Some teams have been trialling working at Bridge House since December. Building work is still going on so it's not yet ready for all staff. It's also unclear when a permanent IT system can be installed but wifi is available. This may not be sufficient if a large number of staff using the building at the same time so it's unknown when all staff will move across.

"Members who have concerns are able to raise this with UNISON and we can escalate on their behalf."

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER PAY



"WSCC introduced a new pay scheme on 1 July aiming to recruit and retain qualified children's social workers. Together with HR, here's what we achieved."

1. Social workers automatically progress to grade 10 after ASYE (assessed and supported year in employment) year rather than having to go through a panel which was notoriously difficult to get through;
2. Social workers now progress from bottom of grade 10 to top of grade 11 automatically;
3. We negotiated a 'fast track' progression route from grades 10 to 11 and we hope a fast track to grade 12 will soon be announced.
4. A market related supplement of 12.5% is applied to social worker front-line roles and 10% to their managers.



EARLY HELP (EH)

“A public consultation took place on EH proposals to increase targeted support to children & families with the greatest need, retain 11 of the 43 children & family centres and merge the ‘find it out’ (FIO) centres for young people into these 11 centres. As a result, there are now 12 centres. These are being rebranded as ‘family hubs.’

“UNISON surveyed our West Sussex members and identified several concerns including:

1. loss of neutral confidential spaces allowing a safe space to talk;
2. loss of universal services and early intervention, potentially leading to more serious problems further down the line;
3. lack of available space for other CYPL services and external partners to deliver interventions;
4. accessibility of services particularly in rural areas with poor public transport;
5. staff emotional well-being if working in isolation and losing informal support from colleagues if not working in same location;
6. mental health difficulties due to the pandemic and the need for more universal and early intervention services to identify needs and offer support;
7. choice of children & family centres to remain open which may leave many communities without access to face-to-face services; and
8. young people could disengage from services without a dedicated space suitable for them. There is greater need for services for young people who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

“We submitted a detailed response to the public consultation. Myself and the deputy branch secretary worked on a members’ consultation response in September when the staff were faced with organisational change proposals and submitted a response on behalf of UNISON members.

“The new structure has just been implemented on 1 January 2022, but it’s unknown currently how many redundancies there will be as redeployment is still being sought and staff have notice periods that extend into early 2022. The branch is working as hard as it can for members who want to remain in employment.”

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

"A consultation on the structure of the leadership and organisation of the directorate took place in October. The next phase of redesigning the service will be consulted on in the new year and we will be contributing to that process."

CONFERENCING AND REVIEW SERVICE

"This involved a redesign of the child protection adviser and independent reviewing officer roles. The consultation started in July, with a new structure in place since October. Outcomes of this restructure are not yet fully known but we anticipate there may be a collective grievance for members unhappy with both the results and processes used."

SOCIAL WORKER STRESS AND WORKLOADS

"Excessive workloads and working hours are a key concern. UNISON continues to raise these issues with Lucy Butler and the directorate leadership team. We've supported a number of members with sickness absence procedures as a result of work-related stress."

RELOCATION OF OTHER CYPL STAFF

"A consultation on this is taking place now regarding other staff affected by closures of children & family centres and 'find it out' centres, with many staff proposed to move to the main WSCC buildings. Temporary solutions will be provided for many others until a longer-term solution is found."

JOINT APPROACH TO H&S PAYS DIVIDENDS

Branch negotiations officer Brian Walter reports on a successful joint working approach developing a health & safety (H&S) policy for the Grace Eyre Foundation (GEF): a charity supporting people with learning disabilities, autism and/or mental health issues in West Sussex.

Though the charity had H&S procedures in place, they needed an overhaul, especially as the pandemic brought greater pressure on managers. One person within the charity had overall H&S responsibility but at the joint consultative committee (JCC), UNISON recommended a bipartisan approach including training reps, convening H&S panels and introducing quarterly inspections. To their credit, this was fully embraced by the charity.

"A couple of our members had a keen interest in H&S," explained Brian, "so we were able to start training straightaway, and have that in place before the second quarterly inspection. "It's a fact that most of our H&S reps tend to be male, so we were especially keen to encourage women to come forward to be trained and contribute to discussions. We now have a potential female rep who will focus on working practices and procedures and how to improve the ways things are done from an H&S perspective. "H&S policy was reviewed with significant contributions from UNISON.

"Our aim is to make the service as self-sufficient as possible in H&S," said Brian, "so it is less dependent on UNISON officer input. It's a win-win for everyone: the service has its own well-trained and active staff, and we have members capable of constructively working with managers for the benefit of everyone and learning new skills beyond the scope of their day-jobs.

"It's an exemplary model for other partners to follow and we thank Grace Eyre for adopting such a positive approach."

WEST SUSSEX'S VIVIAN BECOMES SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR!

We are delighted to report that UNISON member and WSCC advanced social worker (Horsham fostering team) Vivian Okeze-Tirado, recently won two national social work awards: the social justice advocate award and the overall social worker of the year award. These are amazing achievements, and we pass on our heartfelt congratulations to Vivian and the team supporting her.

In a video celebrating her achievements, Vivian said, "I don't come to work just to satisfy my manager. I don't come to work to tick boxes. I see the positive in people and it's about building them up."

"Following the murder of George Floyd in America in May 2020, I spoke to colleagues about how I deeply felt about this tragedy and wrote an open letter to the press explaining my feelings and calling for the society to show empathy and rise up for justice and equality."

"I felt we needed to do something locally to support our foster carers to handle the issues around race and racism for the young people they care for. We created a workshop to discuss these issues and to help youngsters build their self-esteem."

"The whole focus was on finding solutions. Our easy-to-remember diversity acrostic poem, reminds people of the

solutions we found to working with diversity and becoming culturally sensitive practitioners."

Vivian continued, "I am particularly pleased about my poem being expanded into a book called 'Diversity Acrostic Poem – Working with Diversity and Developing Culturally Sensitive Practice in Social Work and Social Care,' published by VOT last April."

"If you come to work with the mindset of wanting to make positive change, then you're in the right profession."

Branch secretary Dan Sartin said, "UNISON works closely with our members as a branch, often at times of personal stress to them because of our role and what we do. So, we know just how committed, generous and inspiring our members are, and understand the vitally important role our members

play in supporting vulnerable residents of West Sussex."

"We congratulate Vivian and are proud of her, as a member of our branch winning a prestigious national award, as we are of all our branch members, working hard to do wonderful and important things."



Vivian Okeze-Tirado

MEET GERARD: BRANCH CONVENOR FOR ADULTS' SERVICES

Gerard Robson reflects on his first year in this new role.



"I'm based in the Worthing community social work team for two days a week as an assistant care manager. For the other two days I am now seconded to UNISON as a convenor.

"I was elected into the role last year as I wanted to do more for UNISON and more for my colleagues. The union work is varied and just as challenging as social care. There's lots to learn and a lot of responsibility.

"I've spent my working life in local government: in adult social care and in community services. I have been a member of UNISON for ten years and a workplace representative for five.

"There's a lot of cross-over in my roles as they are both about understanding people's circumstances and complex processes and supporting people through them. It needs me to be a good listener, have empathy, be able to explain those processes and influence them.

"I continue to do 'workplace rep' duties and I work alongside individual members who are in need of support, often in

challenging circumstances regarding their jobs. I'm also now involved in collective work with groups of members undergoing changes to their jobs.



"This last year I've certainly learned to use IT in a more efficient way. I hope I've become better at using video conferencing: in that way I can attend more meetings and support more members.

"I've found that not meeting people face-to-

face and not being able to 'read the room', means I have had to improve my questioning and reflection skills. So, I'm developing a series of questions for when I meet members and employers. I can then ensure we're following the right process and supporting members correctly.

"Learning to be a convenor is much like learning social care: reflection is important in order to become aware of 'where I'm at'. I've had great support from a very small team and I'm thankful for the time they've invested in me. I now know about how much unseen work branch officers do and it's difficult to describe, as much of the work involves confidentiality about members' cases and likewise in collective work.

"It's not an easy job and it involves many skills that are used in social care: listening, reading and analysing, using values and of course following process and policy.

"The greatest reward is probably the same as in social care, which is seeing a job well done, a beneficial conclusion and a smile of thanks."

WIN £20 FOR YOURSELF AND ANY NEW RECRUIT!

To take up this offer, existing members need to recruit a friend to the UNISON West Sussex branch by 14 February 2022.

In return, the existing member and the new member will both receive a £20 'One4All' shopping voucher which can be used in over 100 stores and online. Existing members can recruit as many members as they like to receive more vouchers.

The new member must join within the qualifying period online or using a membership form. This offer cannot be

used after 14 February 2022 and is only applicable to new members who are eligible for the UNISON West Sussex branch (our sister branches are not participants in this scheme). Vouchers may take up to eight weeks to arrive after new membership is verified.

The existing member must advise the branch of their nominated new joiner before 14 February 2022.

Complete, cut-out and post or scan and email this slip to **office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk** or send to 20:20 offer, UNISON, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Existing member's name:

Existing member's email:

I nominate [insert name]:

to join UNISON West Sussex.

Story continued from page 5

this completely unacceptable and sees it as a continuation of the same failed approach of the last ten years. Staff turnover is too high in private sector call centres and WSCC will not improve this by contracting for inferior pay and conditions for these staff.

UNISON has met with the council and is seeking input to the tender process so real scrutiny is put on tendering companies' approaches to pay and conditions. We also will want to understand

what the Plan B is if there is no suitable company found through tendering.

Branch chair and Capita workplace rep Ian Harvey said, "We will support our members through any TUPE process.

"But I want to dispel a couple of myths currently circulating in the workplace: firstly, it's simply not true that staff will have to apply for their own jobs. The TUPE process makes sure their jobs are safely transferred

to the new employer without an application process. Secondly, new employers cannot pick and choose which employees they take back. All jobs with existing people in post are transferred over as part of the process. There is no cherry-picking."

The branch will continue to work hard to get the best outcomes for members and is focussed now on its customer service centre members who are not currently in scope for insourcing.