

# BRANCH LINES

UNISON West Sussex Branch newsletter • [www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk](http://www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk)



## COST OF LIVING CRISIS

**Public service workers under pressure: how should we respond?**

SEE PAGES 3 AND 11



### SEE INSIDE

NJC pay latest 2 • Mileage & parking 4 • Covid latest 4 • Reasonable adjustments for disabled workers 8 • Education White Paper 9 • Capita insourcing latest 10 • Bridge House transfer 11 • Adults' services recruitment 12



impact of government decisions resulting in a cost

We cover many important issues in this edition, not least the devastating

of living crisis. We bring you up to speed with the latest pay settlement and claims. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for all UNISON members to vote in pay ballots when requested. Low ballot turnouts give employers carte blanche

to impose less favourable settlements. We have the ability and numbers to change that, but we need you to vote!

**Dan Sartin,**  
*Branch Secretary*

## NJC PAY 2021–22 SETTLED

**NJC pay for 2021-22 has now been settled with the offer of 1.75% implemented by all NJC employers. They have paid backpay, and have been provided with NJC pay rates applicable from 1 April 2021.**

Despite the cost of living crisis, 'abstentions' from members in the 2021-22 local government NJC pay ballot meant we could not take industrial action. 70% of members were prepared

to oppose the 1.75% pay offer with strike action but far fewer members than the government's 50% ballot threshold returned ballot papers sent to home addresses (the method we

have to follow by law). We need to change this if we are to take serious action to beat the cost of living crisis and a decade of real-term pay cuts. UNISON must consider how it needs to change to improve turnout, but members too need to engage with their union at the times they are needed to if they are not satisfied with sub-inflation pay settlements.

## NJC PAY CLAIM FOR 2022–23

**At time of going to press, UNISON is consulting with members on its NJC pay claim for 2022-23.**

The NJC committee formulated two options for consultation with members:

- **OPTION A: RPI plus 2%**  
RPI is currently at 7.8%. Members are facing huge cost of living increases. For example, with the energy price cap increasing, the average energy bill is expected to rise by over £700 a year. Rental prices are up by 8.3%, and fuel by 27.4%.



- **OPTION B: a flat rate of £2000 on each pay point**  
This would help to address low pay while giving all members a

significant increase. To illustrate this if it was implemented: for pay points 1–3 it would represent an 11% increase. Pay points 15–21 would get an 8% increase, and 33–40 a 5% increase.

To get the pay you deserve, watch for news from your union. Ensure your email address is up-to-date, and recruit your colleagues who are not yet members!

**Now is the time  
for fair pay!**

# COST OF LIVING CRISIS

**Following the chancellor's spring statement, UNISON members are justifiably angry. The reward for their service and hard work through the pandemic is yet another real-terms pay cut and more broken promises. The growing gulf between wages and prices mean millions who were hoping for a lifeline have been abandoned.**

Difficult financial choices are having to be made by ordinary working people. Can they afford their commute? Can they buy their weekly food shop and heat their homes? Or are they unable to return to work because their childcare costs are too high? With energy and food inflation at nearly 30% and 5% compared with 2021, many people simply can't afford healthy ingredients nor the fuel to cook them.

Despite promising the pay freeze would end last October, the funding needed to deliver this in the face of record inflation was nowhere to be seen. Instead, public sector workers could see their gross salaries reduced by about £1,750 in real terms.



There is a real danger that care, school, council and health staff will leave their jobs to find employment where better pay rates can help shield them from rapidly increasing prices. Falling pay means there won't be the staff to provide the essential services communities rely on.

Cutting fuel duty by a few pence won't end the financial pain our members are feeling at the pumps. Less affluent households are being driven off the road.

Nor will gimmicks such as cheaper solar panels pay the bills or put food on the table for families having to choose between heating and eating.

The government's proposals do nothing to address the bigger picture

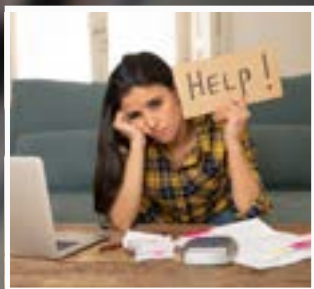
of child poverty. When will the government realise it doesn't matter how many more hours children spend in school or completing endless tests, they will not be able to learn while they are hungry, cold or sleepy? Higher standards in certain areas of the country will never be reached, despite the best efforts of overworked, underpaid teachers and support staff.

As government proposals continue to shift the burden of taxation from the wealthy to workers UNISON will be working with members and fellow unions to make sure the government knows that these measures are simply not acceptable.

Public service workers deserve a decent pay rise. Families deserve to be able to afford the basic necessities. Communities deserve decent public services.

It's important UNISON members are prepared to get organised to challenge these unjust and deliberate government measures.

That may mean taking difficult decisions and actions, but without resolute support this government may well try to get away with it again and working people could suffer even more.



## STOP PRESS

# MILEAGE AND PARKING

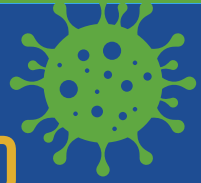
**The UNISON branch has engaged with WSCC on the cost of living crisis and how it is impacting on our members in West Sussex.**

A core part of this is the problems facing our members who, though not obliged to use their cars for council business, do so and claim the NJC mileage rate of 46.9 pence. Constructive negotiations continue and at time of going to press the branch is seeking:

- a temporary increase to the mileage rate, which will be reviewed for affordability and removed if we see the restoration of previous petrol prices;
- to provide updated examples to staff to explain the triangular travel policy for claiming mileage: the policy doesn't reflect how staff now work and is confusing in understanding what can be claimed;
- a statement of commitment from WSCC not to introduce parking charges at any council building for staff and to permanently remove the currently paused charges at County Hall, Chichester.

We will keep members updated.

# WORKING AT WSCC WITH COVID RESTRICTIONS LIFTED



**From 24 February all English Covid restrictions were lifted. Like West Sussex County Council (WSCC), UNISON encourages caution when members are asked to return to workplaces.**

We encourage our WSCC members to make the best use of the hybrid working model: working from home, and working from offices where it supports them, and benefits the work they do. If managers seek to apply unreasonable and arbitrary approaches to hybrid working arrangements, get in touch with us for advice.

The ending of Covid restrictions does not mean risk assessments disappear. If you have concerns, you can still ask your line manager for a risk assessment to be completed on health & safety grounds before you enter a workplace. You will still have the option of wearing masks in WSCC buildings, which we support.

For some members who must attend workplaces to do their council job, for example those in care settings, free lateral flow tests (LFTs) will continue to be available. Government guidance on which workers should benefit from free LFTs is wholly inadequate. The branch is in dialogue with WSCC to support other staff in front-facing roles beyond those specified in central government guidance.

For any UNISON member employed by WSCC you must not go to the workplace if you have:

- Covid-19 symptoms;
- tested positive; and/or
- been in contact with someone who has tested positive (where applicable).

UNISON supports WSCC's cautious approach to returning to the workplace and is pleased to see it is not following the more reckless approach of authorities such as Somerset where staff who test positive will be allowed into the workplace. If you have any concerns, please get in touch with us at: [office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk)

## NEWSFLASH!

WSCC has agreed to fund LFTs over and above government guidance to frontline staff in CYPL, Adults and SEND schools.

# GRACE EYRE: A MODEL FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW

**Branch negotiations officer Brian Walter reports on very welcome improvement in pay agreed with the Grace Eyre Foundation (GEF): an organisation supporting people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health issues.**

"Continuing UNISON's very positive and constructive relationship with GEF, I'm delighted to report that the employer has agreed to introduce incremental pay scales for all staff resulting in pay increases of between 5 to 10%.

"The new arrangements are tapered so the lowest paid receive the biggest percentage pay rise. Hopefully, these new arrangements will help retain staff in a very competitive environment.

"GEF was already a 'real

living wage' employer but wanted to help address members' concerns about the cost of living crisis in this year's pay award. To help even further, GEF has agreed to pay a further one-year non-consolidated lump sum for the small number of staff who would otherwise have not received a pay increase, (or a very small one), which will go some way to helping employees through these difficult times.

Brian continued: "It's great to have a negotiated outcome that focuses on the

lowest paid and awards them a genuine pay rise. It's a far better deal than the real-terms pay cut experienced by public sector staff.

"I believe it's a model others should follow. Well paid, committed and loyal staff whose work is appreciated by their employer provide a much better experience for service users.

"GEF have also agreed to review their approach to subsistence claims for support workers. For example, they should not be out of pocket if the service user they support needs accompanying to a local café and they have no choice but to pay to eat with them. It's a significant issue for those members affected.

"GEF should be given every credit for their pragmatic, people-first approach to pay and reward."

## CROYDE BAY HOLIDAYS

**We're excited to announce that the UNISON member discount at our Croyde Bay holiday resort in North Devon has been increased to 20% off! UNISON members will now get the discount on all regular tariff rates.**

Book now to get this discount for summer! Rooms, cottages and lodges available. This discount applies to regular tariff rates and

**20% OFF**

is not valid with any other promotions or discounts. New bookings only. Valid UNISON membership number required at time of booking and stay. Member must be staying in accommodation.

Book online at [www.croydeunison.co.uk](http://www.croydeunison.co.uk) or call **01271 890890**.

# 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

## <sup>1</sup> Tell us about you

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

## <sup>2</sup> Tell us about your job

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

## <sup>3</sup> 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
-----------	------

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](http://www.unison.org.uk/changes)

This information is standard direct debit mandate information

Please go to [unison.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://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](http://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.

#### <sup>4</sup> 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



# REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DISABLED WORKERS

WSCC exemplifies an alarming national problem in the area of making reasonable adjustments (RAs) for people with disabilities. The council's data on disability is incomplete, but UNISON is working with the council's new equality and diversity lead to rectify these issues.

UNISON West Sussex's disability officer Sarah Etherington has supported several cases where insufficient IT has been installed or there is incompatibility between systems preventing members working effectively, sometimes resulting in grievances being made against the council.

Nationally, UNISON is one of the founding members of the disability employment charter, calling for a new legal duty on employers

to respond to RA requests within two weeks, because current legislation makes it difficult for disabled workers to get justice when things go wrong.

A survey of over 5,000 UNISON disabled members (pre-pandemic) found that a shocking 67% had had some, or all, of the adjustments they needed refused. Many said that they didn't even get a response to their request, but were just ignored. Even where employers agreed to adjustments, 23% of

members said they waited a year or more for them to be put in place.

Sarah is a member of the UNISON South East forum for disability and will continue to work closely with WSCC to improve its approach to RAs.



## PAY PROTECTION INTRODUCED AT SLT

**Academy chain Sussex Learning Trust (SLT) has agreed to introduce pay protection mirroring that of WSCC. Previously there was no guidance available to members on this issue. This change was introduced following work done between UNISON and SLT when reviewing redundancy policies.**

Members working for SLT can now be assured that if for example, as part of a restructure, you are

redeployed to a lower graded post you will be entitled to receive pay protection. This will be paid on the following

basis, to help you adjust to your new salary: Year 1 100% Year 2 60% Year 3 40%.

It makes good business sense to support pay protection for redeployment at lower grades as it can negate the need for compulsory redundancies. It can also help with staff retention and avoid the need for costly and time-consuming recruitment, interviewing and training activities.

All credit goes to SLT for adopting this principle.



# EDUCATION WHITE PAPER

SEE OUR  
WEBSITE  
FOR THE  
FULL STORY

**The government's message is simple – academise! A damaging response that will result in unnecessary structural change and having no evidence of changing pupils' classroom experiences or gaining better educational outcomes. This White Paper is short on new ideas.**

Government policy has led to an incoherent and messy education landscape, with different arrangements for academy and local authority-controlled schools. It would be better advised to focus on removing barriers to those on low incomes and in areas of deprivation, including access to:

- digital skills;
- breakfast and after school clubs;
- sports and performing arts opportunities and equipment; and
- mental health support and catch-up tutoring following the pandemic.

Both nationally and locally, schools are chronically underfunded. Nothing can be delivered without increasing investment and improvements to the wages, terms and conditions of all education staff. Nothing in the White Paper addresses the pay and conditions of school support staff, only teachers. There is no commitment to increasing inadequate funding levels, no strategy for addressing child poverty, food poverty or the attainment gap, no attempt to deal with workloads or address the mental health concerns for pupils and education staff. Nor does it commit to any funding increase in SEND schools.

A focus on quality teaching is right, a focus on the key skills needed and good grades to get a decent job is also right, as is a desire to address the learning gap, but this will take more than lofty headlines to deliver. For the White Paper not to recognise the pivotal role played by support staff, while simply creating more academies, shows just how far ministers are from understanding the needs and concerns of school communities.



## BRANCH AGMS AND ELECTIONS

**The branch 'virtual' AGMs held at the end of March were quorate and a big success. The list of raffle prize winners (shopping vouchers) is below. Congratulations to all winners and thanks to everyone who attended.**

- Charles Gauntlett (WSCC) £150
- Nikki Mayhead (Schoolsworks Academy Trust) £50
- Clive Newnham (WSCC) £25
- Vanessa Cummins (WSCC) £150
- Nicole Gardner (WSCC) £50
- Tim Stanton (WSCC) £25
- Craig Rough (WSCC) £150
- Helen Burrows (Bluebird Care) £50
- Karen Fisher (GBMET) £25

The branch officers and reps for 2022–23 (featured in the January edition of Branch Lines) were all unanimously approved at the AGMs. New officers were recently elected to vacant positions by the branch committee: welfare: **Karen Fenn** and international relations: **Chris Hughes**.

# COME AND MEET US IN MAY!



**Branch officers will be visiting some of the main council buildings during May to meet existing members, help with any problems and hopefully recruit some new members to UNISON.**

During the pandemic, we haven't been able to get out to meet people face-to-face very easily, but we're looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible. As well as meeting existing and recruiting new members, we have also booked rooms at each venue so we can hold 'mini surgeries' with anyone who is experiencing workplace problems. Please feel free to approach us and we'll do what we can to help. Here's where and when we will be during May from 10am onwards at each venue:

## **Tuesday 10 May**

**Horsham County Hall North**

## **Wednesday 11 May**

**Bognor Regis, Durban House**

## **Thursday 12 May**

**Worthing, Bridge House**

## **Tuesday 17 May**

**Crawley Library (third floor)**

## **Wednesday 18 May**

**Shoreham Glebelands**

## **Thursday 19 May**

**Horsham County Hall North**

Lookout for the UNISON pull-up banners. We will announce more surgery dates shortly on our website.

# CAPITA SERVICES TRANSFER UPDATE

**A consultation period for all staff affected by the insourcing of roles from Capita to WSCC has just finished. Approximately 350 staff are affected.**

UNISON's Capita rep Ian Harvey said: "Thanks to those who fed back their views. It really helped us understand the most concerning issues and formed the basis of discussions with employers." Here are just two of many important issues we raised:

1. A two-tier workforce will be created within the council if WSCC transfers employees on Capita terms, conditions and salaries. What happens, for example, if new starters after transfer are paid according to WSCC pay and grading whilst experienced and loyal employees are left on salaries that are significantly lower? What if they were then expected to train their new, higher paid colleagues in this scenario?
2. Customer service centre social care team members were also concerned that WSCC does not pay 'incentive schemes'. UNISON is opposed to performance related pay, but fully understands the team's reliance on this payment ('the bonus') due to their low salaries and the devastating impact if it were to be taken from them.

We have also raised other issues concerning specific teams such as the workplace location of the online service delivery team (OSD) and members who are based far away from the county of West Sussex yet still work efficiently at distance.

We hope to have a positive response to our concerns before the actual transfer of staff begins (for some in June, for most on 1 October).

The branch will provide more information for members in the coming weeks.



## UNISON: HELPING YOU PAY YOUR ENERGY BILLS

**In April, energy bills for a typical household went up by 54% a year and, at the same time, national insurance payments increased by almost 10%. Meanwhile, inflation is hitting record highs, the weekly shop is more expensive than ever and for over a decade public sector pay increases have lagged behind the cost of living.**

Now more than ever, with the cost-of-living crisis hitting unprecedented levels, UNISON members – particularly those on lower incomes – need financial support.

UNISON's charity, There for You, provides vital support for thousands of members every year, but this year's winter fuel grant programme was over-subscribed in days – even after it was increased by 50%.

Winter fuel grants were increased from £40 to £200 per member. National UNISON set aside £200k but it went straight away, helping 1,000 members. The winter fuel grant programme will be launched again later this year. Discussions are underway to determine the level of support the union can offer low paid members during these critical times. The West Sussex branch will alert members when any new grants become available.

## TRANSFER TO BRIDGE HOUSE, WORTHING

**By the time of Branch Lines going to press, all members based at Centenary House, Durrington (CHD) should have been transferred over to Bridge House and CHD will have been closed.**

IT solutions have been gradually introduced and should be fully operational. However, the transfer of staff has not been without challenge, especially following the radical change to working practices resulting from the Covid pandemic.

Members have convincingly demonstrated that many can work very effectively from home, with little or no need to formally and regularly attend offices to do their job. Hybrid working is being encouraged by WSCC, helping it to make savings on office space, utilities and travel costs as well as helping it meet its green targets.

However, UNISON has raised concerns that should some team managers opt to insist their staff work more regularly from offices, then the decreased ratio of desks to staff (1:2) could result in insufficient office space being available. WSCC is unwilling to support a 'working from home' allowance (for heating, lighting, etc) because the council views this as a choice. However, if not enough office space is made available to staff, then 'smarter' working from home is the only solution, and therefore not a choice for many.

UNISON will be closely monitoring the situation at Bridge House, especially in the weeks after Covid restrictions are eased by WSCC on 19 April.

# ADULTS' SERVICES RECRUITMENT

**Recently, UNISON agreed a pay and reward offer for adults' services social workers (SWs) and occupational therapists (OTs) with WSCC. They reviewed the grading of posts and considered pay in relation to neighbouring local authorities, comparing the type of work done in each role.**

The aim was to recruit and retain SWs and OTs in the face of stiff competition in the south-east region. The scheme focuses purely on fully qualified staff as that is where most recruitment pressures are found.

However, justifiably, assistant care managers (ACMs) and OT assistants

also called for a review of their roles, even though they are 'non-qualified'. Many members in such roles do not want to become fully qualified but do want to see better opportunities being made available. Therefore, UNISON is discussing options around career pathways and development

opportunities and the use of apprenticeships to make sure these roles are not overlooked. We will link this work to the parallel issues for non-qualified staff in CYPL.

Indeed, even for some qualified staff their role remains out of scope. Only front-line case holders and those who manage risk are in scope, but WSCC has given a commitment to review other qualified roles within the service. We will report on developments as they arise.

## CYPL TO STAY AT WSCC

**UNISON convenor for CYPL Sarah Etherington reports that the department for education (DfE) has decided that children's services should remain within WSCC, pending a reinspection by Ofsted.**

Sarah said, "Thanks to the many dedicated UNISON members working across children and young peoples' services, the council has fought off the threat of being taken over by a children's trust. It's a tremendous achievement. Credit and thanks must go to all UNISON members who have worked so hard to achieve this excellent result."

## YOUR BRANCH IS BACKING MARILYN!

**The West Sussex branch has many brilliant reps, but our rep from Field Place Infant & Nursery School in Worthing, Marilyn Cox, is one of the best! So much so, she won an award for rep of the year from our region in 2017.**

We've encouraged Marilyn to stand for election to UNISON's local government service group executive because we think she will do a brilliant job representing local government members in West Sussex and across the south east.

Ballot papers were issued on or shortly after 28 April, by email and post: use which method you prefer. If you haven't yet voted, please find your email or postal ballot and take part by 25 May!

