

POEM FROM A SCHOOLS STEWARD

Unison, Zoom, WhatsApp Group and Me

In compliance with the country's health orders,
Restricting in-person meetings, restrictions on
boarders.

We meet via Zoom a collection of characters,
Righting the wrongs of the education parameters.
Checking our emails for the details of the link,
Carol at the helm, making us think.

Coffee brewing, pens and notes pads ready,
Janet looks for her glasses, "oh there on her head
already".

One member in the group chillaxes to music from
Tom Jones,

Then we have **Kim** quietening her dogs with their
loud overtones.

Identifying the wrongs, keeping our members in
schools safe.

**That's the job of us stewards a harmonious work
place.**

- J.D 09/02/2021

**A 10% PAY RISE PALES IN
COMPARISON TO:**

- £37 Billion wasted on Track and Trace.
- £2 Billion in Covid contracts to Tory donors.
- The fact that Amazon paid no tax during 2020 in the UK, despite making £44 Billion in Europe during 2020.

**A PROPER PAY RISE IS WELL OVERDUE, IT IS
VITAL FOR WORKERS. ALL MONEY SPENT ON
THE ABOVE, OUR SERVICES AND STAFF
DESERVE FUNDING TOO.**

**“We without question should
have a pay rise, teaching
assistants work so so hard,
work with a multitude of
children with SEN, work
tirelessly and on minimal wage.**

At present I work at a nursery school.
My role is a teaching assistant
however I feel like I'm, a nurse,
counsellor, and teacher; the role is
endless and with the pandemic with
no choice of our own we were told
nursery schools to remain open to
look after vulnerable and key worker
children, who was looking after us?



**ANONYMOUS
BCC - TEACHING ASSISTANT**



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**VOTE REJECT ON THE 1.75% PAY
INCREASE**

Many council workers are low paid.

- The reality of council work is quite different to the outdated stereotype of a cushy 'job for life' - many local government workers are low paid:
- 16% (or 86,188 people) don't earn £10 an hour - UNISON's goal for all members.
- 8% (or 41,205 people) don't even earn the real living wage - the rate the Living Wage Foundation deem enough to live on.
- A 10% pay rise would mean all council and school workers earn a real living wage.

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FAREWELL FROM DONALD MCCOMBIE, LIFELONG LEARNING COORDINATOR

Sadly, I have to say farewell as the Branch Lifelong Learning Coordinator.

The Tory Government has ended the Union Learning Fund (ULF). The ULF was created in 1998 by the then Labour Government and has provided workplace learning to thousands of workers on hundreds of subjects.

This is a blatantly political attack on union learning by the Tories. It is ironic that they talk of promoting workplace learning on the one hand whilst removing the ULF on the other.

We had been promised another year's funding, but the Tories have chosen to renege on the agreement.

In the last nine years our Learning Project has delivered:

- Over 10,000 learning places to members.
- Over 1000 workshops.
- Over 30 workshop subjects
- Won 6 learning awards

Equality and diversity have been at the heart of everything we have done by working in harmony with the Self-Organised Groups.

Additionally, members have been given opportunities to participate in a variety of creative activities, such as the Friendship Festival, UNISON singers and the Global University of Lifelong Learning course.

The details are contained in a unique free illustrated booklet '*For the Love of Learning*' available free from the Branch Office.

Although the informal learning events and workshops will be reduced, the rest of our UNISON Learning programme will be available via the Branch and Regional Office

Contacts:

Charlie Friel, Birmingham Branch

Gurdeep Singh, West Midlands Region.

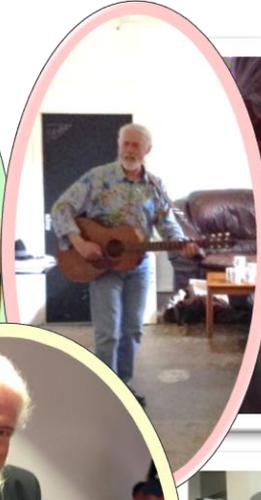
**The Union Learning Fund is dead...
but long live UNISON Lifelong Learning.**

I thank you for all your support and friendship over all the years. I remain a member of the extended UNISON family, so I look forward to our next meeting. It has been a privilege.

In Solidarity,

peace and light

- Donald McCombie



SPECIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE 2021

UNISON's Special Delegate Conference took place digitally over two and a half days in June. This conference was a policy making conference to replace the normal annual National Delegate Conference that could not take place in its usual form due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic. Having a digital conference enabled some important union business to be discussed and decisions to still be made in lieu of an in-person conference. It is hoped that in 2022 National Delegate Conference will resume as normal.

Please see below reports from our Branch delegates to Special Delegate conference.

I was proud to be elected to represent Birmingham Branch at conference. This year was very different because it was held online over two and a half days.

Conference started with the President, Josie Bird's speech and a tribute to Dave Prentis. She said that the pandemic has exacerbated structural inequality and that we will continue to fight to end austerity. She also added that Unison activists should be classed as key workers as they fought for PPE, better treatment for our members and continued to protect jobs and pay.

Voting proved to be very slow in the first session and many people complained that they were not getting the links before the vote closed but this was sorted for the afternoon and following sessions. However, I am not confident that votes were accurately recorded for the Branch Resources Review motion.

The first motion debated was The Branch Resources Review. The debate had many speakers both for and against. Our delegation agreed to vote against but unfortunately it was carried. All other motions were themed around:

- The Impact of Covid 19 on Unison members, public services and working life
- Securing an equal and sustainable post pandemic settlement

Our delegation voting strategy was to vote for all other motions and they were all carried with no card votes required.

Delegates who wished to move and/or speak to motions had to pre-register and although I registered to speak I was not sent an invite to do so which was disappointing and I missed the chair hopping and finger crossing that you wouldn't get 'point of ordered' whilst waiting to speak

Our General Secretary, Christina McAnea addressed conference on the second day and urged the Government to bring forward the Covid public enquiry; ditch plans to compel care workers to be jabbed and to invest in the public services that have kept the UK running during the pandemic.

I enjoyed conference but really missed interacting with other delegates, the lunchtime events, fringe meetings and social events particularly the stand up to racism gig. Let's hope things return to normal for next year's conference.

- Carol Garfield

I have only attended one conference which was the Women's Conference in February 2020, so I understood the way conferences are done. The National Conference was done over 2.5 days in AM and PM sessions and was confusing at times but due to the WhatsApp group that David set up that helped with any questions, also the Zoom meetings beforehand.

There was a lot covered in the short timescale which didn't give the chance to really debate the issues and the fact that you had to decide beforehand if you wanted to speak on a Motion and register which was a bit awkward, but it was realistically the only way it could be done.

I did enjoy it, as there was a lot to read and hear about what is happening nationally. I would say to anyone go to conference and it does open your eyes to what is happening across the country not just in Birmingham and West Midlands.'

- Tracey Perry

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

I will concentrate on the Local Government Conference that took place on Sunday 13 June. It was the union's first virtual sectoral conference since the start of the pandemic and was attended by around 400 delegates from across local government in UNISON.

The sector has been decimated by over a decade of Tory cuts. Despite bearing the brunt of the crisis, workers are set to pay again now as the Government looks to make further austerity cuts.

The government recently made a derisory 1.5 percent pay offer to local government workers in England and Wales.

The first motion discussed at the conference was on the future of local government. It voted to oppose privatisation of services and to campaign to bring services back in house. It also voted to better coordinate local disputes, to campaign for a proper funding settlement and to develop a clear industrial strategy to fight for better pay.

Conference also pledged its support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in the face of government racism and to campaign for employers to develop action plans to be carbon net zero by 2030.

It also backed fully funded comprehensive education, to equip workers to challenge online sexual harassment and for homeworking as a reasonable adjustment for disabled workers.

Conference also passed a motion condemning the campaign against reforms to the Gender Recognition Act and urging all branches to campaign for trans equality.

National Delegate Conference took place also virtually from Tuesday 15 to Thursday 17 June. The first morning saw the most contentious debate of the week on a new Branch Funding formula. As the Branch Treasurer, I felt the change did not go far enough in changing the balance of funding in the union to reflect the greater pressure on local branches due to the fragmentation of the public sector workforce since UNISON was created. It only increased the overall portion of subscription income going to Branches from 23% to 23.5%. For this reason, and the fact that the review that produced this formula had not looked at over 60% of money spent on Regional and National Staff, our Branch voted against the proposal.

Despite all votes at Local Government being hitch free, the voting system chose this moment to go into glitch mode with many delegates having trouble in voting. We were advised the motion was passed and that they felt the vote was accurate.

The Conference moved at a much slower pace, but motions were passed calling for a full enquiry into Government handling of the pandemic, Campaigning on Climate Change, and calling for made changes and improvements in Health and Social Care. This last debate reflected how the pandemic revealed a real crisis in social Care both in provision and also the pay and conditions of care workers.

- David Hughes

The Local government conference this year was held as normal during the month of June – 13th June for one day. However, owing to COVID 19 Restrictions Still being in place it was held virtually online at the weekend on a Sunday only instead of the usual full weekend at a live conference venue.

The set up was very interesting 'Virtual Reality' the Conference Host/Chair and a couple of other staff were in as studio set up representative of a realistic conference venue, with conference style background / layout as much as possible minus the live studio/venue Audience. The Audience Participation was done from special direct links from home/other venue. It was recorded live for participation and monitoring purposes.

Several varied motions were presented by individuals direct from their homes across the UK and the odd Conference Standing Order report direct from the studio as per normal conference. Speakers had to be nominated in advance and pre-register as part of the booking process, unlike normal conference where you can just decide to speak on the day.

Voting was electronically co-ordinated using electronic que-cards and an online voting system, which was supported by conference literature as usual. I did find it challenging though trying to vote as the que cards and voting system to me were slightly out of sync que card mentioned one motion to vote for by the time I got to the voting screen voting had sometimes closed or they were presenting the next motion ready. I queried this officially but was told there was not an official problem. However, I am aware of at least one other person who seemed to find it out of sync also! It was frustrating.

The presentation of motions was grouped as normal where applicable, sadly not all persons go the opportunity to present etc.

Members were waiting patiently in the wings 'to go live on stage' but sadly time was called for one reason or another and their opportunity to speak was cut short before it even began.

Timing was fairly strict as per normal conference as there was a full agenda as normal. Overall conference seemed to go fairly well considering this was the first such live event.

- Alison Gooden

COP26 – CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The Glasgow COP26 in November is fast approaching and the eyes of the world will be watching intently.

What is COP26?

It is the 26th 'Conference Of the Parties', which is a United Nations summit.

Why is it important?

It is the place where the United Nations will discuss the effects of Climate Change upon the world. It will also be the place where Nations will report on what they have done to control carbon emissions of the past 5 years, since the Paris COP21 meeting.

Why are carbon emissions dangerous?

Almost all scientific evidence shows that the rise in carbon emissions are having a significant damaging effect upon global warming. This in turn is creating an exponential growth in climatic disasters such as floods, wildfires, increased temperature, melting ice caps. This has a devastating effect upon the environment and human and animal communities. In short, the whole planet is at risk as a result of human activity.

COP26 is intending to secure Net Zero emissions by 2050 by phasing out the use of fossil fuels, stopping deforestation and speeding up investment in renewable energy sources and electric vehicles.



**UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

Additionally, it hopes to protect communities and natural habitats by joint international working and financing.

Is this all too late?

No, but scientists are agreed that urgent international action needs to be taken now. But the United Nations can't agree on anything can they? Yes, they can and they must. In 1987 the first universally ratified UN treaty was agreed to stop the use of CFC's (chlorofluorocarbon) in aerosols and refrigerators, which was destroying the ozone layer. This United Nations action stopped the decay and the ozone layer is recovering. This must be replicated on carbon emissions.

Is this a young person's issue?

It is an issue for everyone and the whole planet. Young people internationally have taken a decisive role in addressing climate change. They should be applauded and supported in their actions.

Are we in the broad labour movement doing enough?

No, we need to step up to the mark and use our local, national and international labour links to achieve the agreed political and social actions. Isolated acts of civil disobedience will achieve nothing.

There will be a number of Trade Union initiatives in the lead up to COP26 and a Global Day of Action on 6th November involving demonstrations in Glasgow, London and elsewhere.

One world, one solution and as Bob Marley wrote... One love.

- Donald McCombie
UNISON Birmingham Branch

“ We all work hard and had adjust to working from home with little support from council. Most of us have brought our own equipment to enable us to work. The section I work in is mainly GR3 so lowest grade in Business Support so 1.75% offer is an insult and does not cover the increased cost of my utilities.

I am based in Adult Social Care, during the pandemic I've been working in areas where I am registering peoples deaths and need for enablement. Covid has increased the death rate and that there have been more people who are having to rely on the council to pay for the funerals. Without admin doing the job we do, and it does get distressing none of the other areas can function.



TRACEY PERRY

BCC - BUSINESS SUPPORT OFFICER



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Download a pay poster for free here to put in your window, showing you support a fair pay rise for Council and School workers:

<https://shop.unison.site/product-category/council-and-schools-pay/>

“ We deserve the pay because we worked throughout the pandemic and looked after vulnerable children and key workers children we were not recognised like the NHS.

The NHS did an amazing job, so did we. We have not had a pay rise for many years now and we are working really hard to keep our children safe in education. Please recognise us for our hard work.

ANONYMOUS
BCC - OFFICE ADMIN ASSISTANT

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A pay poster with a light green background. It features a quote in green and purple text. Below the quote is a photograph of a person's hands working on a laptop. The UNISON logo is in the top right corner. At the bottom, there is contact information for Birmingham Unison, including a website, Twitter handle, and Instagram handle.

Check your emails and complete your pay ballot by Thursday 23rd September 2021.

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

Local Government workers are mostly women and are amongst the lowest paid in the country. Council and school workers have endured years of pay freezes –

25% has been wiped from the value of pay since 2010.

UPDATED SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND FITNESS TO PRACTICE GUIDANCE

UNISON has worked with the social worker regulator Social Work England (SWE) to update SWE's fitness to practise referral guidance for employers and social workers.

The updated guides are in links below.

There is improved synergy and read-across between the two guidance documents. UNISON views these documents as 'two faces of the same coin'.

There should be the same understanding for the employer as the Social Worker.

We will keep the updated guidance under review as part of our regular meetings with SWE.

We have organised a webinar to brief members on how to respond to a fitness to practise referral made to SWE and when to make a self-referral about their fitness to practise. It will also help members decide what (if anything) to declare when they join to the register for the first time, restore to the register or renew their registration.

UNISON and SWE speakers will take members through fitness to practise procedures and what is expected regarding a social worker's ability to practise safely and effectively.

The webinar will take place on Thursday 23 September 2021 at 12.30- 1.30pm.

The link for social workers to register for the webinar is:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1765564303187493647>

After registering, applicants will receive an automated confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. For those who can't attend, a recording of the webinar will be made available online after the event.

Click here to read the full guidance:

<https://birminghamunison.co.uk/2021/09/09/updated-social-work-england-fitness-to-practise-guidance/>