UNISON
the public service union

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NEWSLETTER
JUNE 2023

VOTE FOR STRIKE ACTION

Birmingham City Council employees, schools' staff, Birmingham Children's Trust and Acivico are being balloted over strike action to end a decade of pay cuts. This is a UNISON national ballot, GMB and UNITE are also balloting.

It is vital that members vote when that ballot drops through your letterbox, so that we can fight for better pay. Ballot papers will be posted to you in a red envelope (so very easy to spot!) like the one shown from 23rd May. Make sure you return your ballot in the envelope provided, no need for a stamp.

This year's pay offer isn't a percentage increase, it is a flat rate offer of £1,925 – this is the same offer as last year, with no increase on their offer, despite inflation skyrocketing, bills and the cost of living rising astronomically.

You can calculate what your salary would be with this increase by using the UNISON pay calculator:

https://unisonpaycalculator.co.uk/

We think its terrible that the offer will not give members even an increase on what was offered last year, never mind not matching inflation.

We are asking you to vote for strike action. We know this is not something you do lightly and its always our last resort, but after years of declining pay, **its time to rise up to get pay up!**

Your ballot paper needs to be posted back by Tuesday 4th July.

EVERYONE needs to play their part and by taking 5 minutes to mark your ballot paper and post it back, you are becoming part of something that will not only show your employer that your current pay is not good enough to live on, but it will aid the preservation of Local Government for generations to come by retaining and recruiting the staff who make a difference.

Lost Ballot Papers

If you lose your ballot paper or need assistance with it, contact our helpline on 0800 0 857 857 - it is open from 5th June to noon on 28th June. Or log onto unison.org.uk/my-unison/ where you can also request a replacement ballot paper.

For more information visit:

www.unison.org.uk/payup2023

SIGN THE PETITION NOW

Oil giants like BP and Shell are amassing colossal profits while the ordinary people struggle to pay skyrocketing energy bills.

All because Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is failing to address the gaping loopholes in the windfall tax on oil and gas giants. We cannot let this injustice continue.

We need your help to ensure wealth is shared more fairly and to ease the burden on hard-working families. Please join me in signing UNISON's petition today, urging the Chancellor to close the loopholes and enforce a more effective windfall tax on oil and gas companies:

By signing the petition, you're joining a growing movement demanding change. We can learn from other countries that have successfully implemented windfall taxes – raising billions to support public services and reduce energy bills for everyone. The UK can achieve this too, but we need your support.

Our united voices can make a difference – let's show the Chancellor and the government that we won't stand idly by as working households bear the brunt of this crisis.

It's time for big oil and gas companies to pay their fair share!

With your support, we can make a difference in the lives of countless people across the UK.

UNISON Action - Petition to tax oil & gas giants

CONTACT US

If you have any articles or ideas for our next newsletter, contact Nicola Moran, the Communications Officer who writes the newsletters on:

Nicola.Moran@birminghamunison.co.uk

HELP WITH ENERGY BILLS

Fuel poverty is still affecting many in the UK right now, with energy bills rising rapidly while energy companies make massive profits – we know its ordinary people who are suffering.

Fuel poverty can especially have adverse impacts on the wellbeing for young children, those with disabilities, over 65 or with health conditions.

There are a number of schemes open to Birmingham residents to help – from free installation of central heating, switching energy suppliers, support with fuel debts, energy saving measures and energy efficient appliances.

Available schemes:

LEAP - (Local Energy Advice Partnership) can provide help and advice with energy switching, free energy saving measures, money advice and check if you're eligible for insulation, a new appliance or even a new boiler. Please call LEAP on 0800 060 7567 or apply for leap online.

ECHO - (Emergency Central Heating Offer) is a scheme that offers emergency assistance to fuel poor or vulnerable households (owner occupiers only) to repair or replace broken or condemned boilers.

HEART is an initiative to support fuel poor and vulnerable households through the replacement of old, inefficient fridges, fridge/freezers, washing machines and electric cookers with modern, efficient alternatives.

ECO FLEX – (Energy Company Obligation Flexible Eligibility) is a government scheme which provides funding for energy efficiency Improvements in the home such as a new central heating system, upgrades to the existing heating system and/or insulation.

For enquiries about Eco Flex please contact AgilityEco at birminghamsoi@agilityeco.co.uk

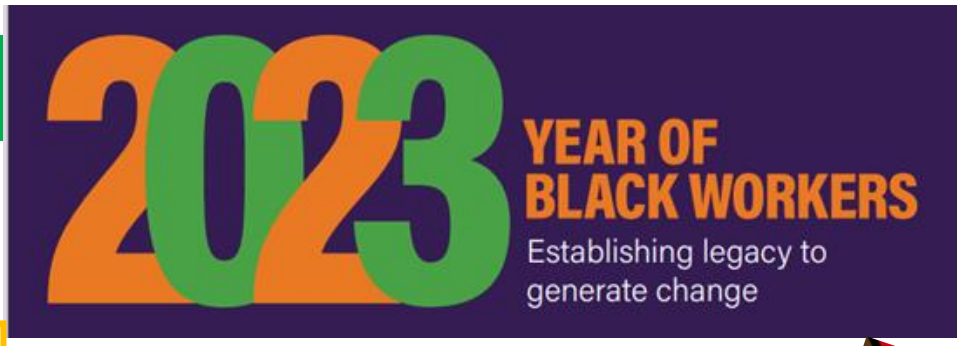
Energy Company Obligation (ECO) requires energy suppliers to set aside a fund to install energy saving measures. These help households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions.

Primarily aimed at owner occupiers and private rented tenure households, the scheme may support those who are not eligible for some of the other means-tested schemes but are vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home.

Council Tax energy rebate discretionary fund is a discretionary fund administered by Birmingham City Council to support households with rising energy costs.

Equalities

2023 is the Year of Black Workers in UNISON, as voted for at National Delegate Conference 2022, and following on from the Year of Disabled Workers 2022.



Is it #TimeFor30?

At Young Members Conference 2022, a motion was brought to conference to increase the upper age limit for Young Members to 30, from 27 and under.

This has many factors to it, including that many younger people are not becoming members or becoming active in UNISON until later now, due to changes in employment and training.

After this passing at their conference, Young Members have submitted a rule amendment to National Delegate Conference this year, which would change the definition of a young member in UNISON from 26 and under to 30 and under.

Birmingham UNISON Branch are supporting tis rule change at National Delegate Conference 2023.

Young Members are also asking for members views on this – let them know what you think on their survey – open to all members, young and not so young!

Young Members #Timefor30 survey

Year of Black Workers at National Delegate Conference*

The National Black Members have submitted the following motions to NDC:

- Motion 4: Equality is UNISON Business
- Motion 52: Cost of living crisis and Black Workers

There will be a fringe meeting at NDC, the fringe will examine the inequalities Black workers continue to face in Britain today and will discuss the rising cost of living and racial inequalities. The reality is that Britain is failing in all areas of race relations today, racially motivated hate crimes are increasing, Black women maternal deaths are four times higher than for white women, and poorer outcomes for Black workers and communities on all measurable metrics, we still have a long way to go in addressing these inequalities.

Bi+ and trans, non-binary and gender diverse meetings

If you identify as either bi+ or trans, non-binary and gender diverse, your next network meeting is on 7 July. Both meetings will be hybrid. For those that do attend in person, UNISON will cover the cost of your travel.

UNISON Bi+ Network Meeting
Friday 7th July 2023,
10.30am - 1.00pm
UNISON Centre, London (hybrid)

Fill out the google doc with your info to attend:
Bi+ Network Meeting Form

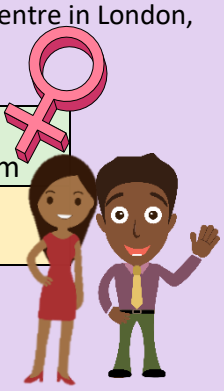
UNISON Trans, non-binary and gender diverse network meeting
Friday 7th July 2023,
2.00 - 4.30pm
UNISON Centre, London (hybrid)

Fill out the google doc with your info to attend:
UNISON Trans, non-binary and gender diverse network meeting form

Disabled Members Network Meetings

Each year, meetings are held for disabled women, Black and LGBT+ disabled members and for members who are native British Sign Language (BSL) users. The meetings take place in June and August at UNISON Centre in London, UNISON pays for travel and lunch. Find out more and sign up for the June dates below.

Deaf (Native BSL Users) Meeting Wednesday 21st June, 11am – 1.30pm	**Disabled Women's Meeting** Thursday 22nd June, 11am – 1.30pm
LGBT+ Disabled Members Meeting Wednesday 21st June, 2pm – 4.30pm	**Black Disabled Members Meeting** Thursday 22nd June 2pm – 4.30pm



For more information and a registration form please contact disabilityissues@unison.co.uk

UNISON – Free Accidental Death Cover

UNISON is committed to offering members valuable membership services and we wanted to highlight one of your key membership entitlements which is arranged by UNISONProtect as an approved provider.

Your UNISON membership entitles you to free insurance cover, which pays your loved ones £5,000 if you die from an accident.

Cover is for UK residents aged 18-69. It lasts for one year and then you can renew it again for free. For full details please click on the link below.

https://app.pelorous.com/media_manager/public/178/docs/myaccount/PolicyWordingADC5000V8.pdf

Whether you're renewing your free cover or setting it up for the first time - register online today, it only takes a few minutes.

Click on the link below to register today.

Register for accidental death cover here

Plus, do you know that your family (UK residents aged 18-69) are also eligible for the cover. Simply ask them to complete the form too.

Following your registration, a UNISONProtect representative will telephone you to set up your free cover and explain the other benefits available.

It's quick and easy to apply and is yet another reason why it pays to be a UNISON member.

Training Courses for Members

UNISON West Midlands offer a range of training and courses for members, all of which take place online. See below list of upcoming training courses.

- **Introduction to Mindfulness**
  13th June 2023, 10.00 – 12.30pm

- **Developing Your Self-Confidence & Self-Assertion**
  21 & 29 June 2023 –
  the course is split over two sessions 21st June & 29th June, 9.30am – 12.30pm

- **Advanced Excel and Spreadsheets – AM** 3 Tuesday mornings, 9.15am – 10.45am
  27th June – 11th July 2023

- **Advanced Excel and Spreadsheets – PM** 3 Tuesday afternoons, 1.15pm – 2.45pm
  27th June – 11th July 2023

- **Managing my Menopause**
  28th June 2023, 6pm – 8pm

Find out more about upcoming courses for members here:
UNISON West Midlands Courses

UNISON HELP WITH DEBT

Many people are struggling to make ends meet while the cost-of-living spirals, even a small change in circumstances can turn a manageable situation into a debt problem that threatens your home or your family's wellbeing. Whatever the amount, debt can feel stressful, overwhelming and all-consuming.

UNISON Debtline can help you deal with all sorts of debt, from credit cards to mortgage arrears, to county court judgment claims. We can help give you the best chance of keeping your home if you're at risk of repossession.

https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/debtline-support/

Shopping discounts

UNISON members can shop online with www.UNISONrewards.com and earn cash back savings.

There are hundreds of online retailers to browse – like B&Q, Argos, and Tesco so you won't be short on choice.

Whether you're on the hunt for the perfect present, food shopping, or looking for a last-minute bargain your membership entitles you to free and exclusive access and there is even a **free £10 welcome bonus for joining**!

West Midlands Personal Injury Settlements

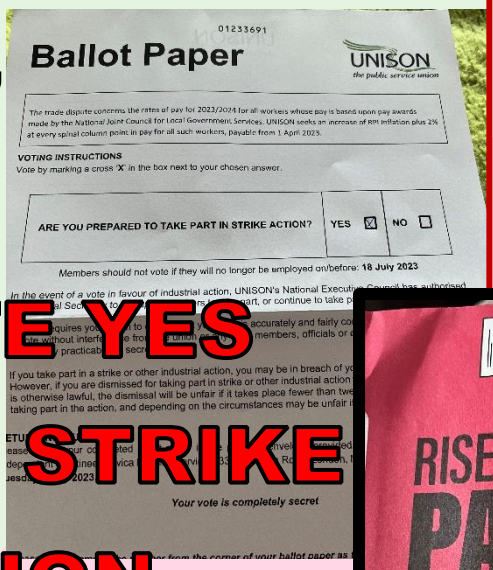
In April 2023 Personal Injury Settlements were recovered for members in the West Midlands to the amount of £136,824 in compensation for personal injuries.

This is just one example of what UNISON can do for its members. Safety of members is a top priority for our Branch and we take it very seriously – these wins are important but so is ensuring the safety in our workplaces when these things happen as well as in general.

From the above amount, Birmingham UNISON Branch members who put in personal injury claims received £7,500 in compensation.

It is really important to report any health and safety concerns to your line manager when you notice them and if you have concerns that you want to discuss with the union – please contact our Health and Safety Officer: Abdul Sattar via email: Abdul.Sattar@birminghamunison.co.uk

This Member has voted, have you?



VOTE YES FOR STRIKE ACTION

School Budgets reach breaking point

With new research from UNISON showing that pupils have lost out on an average £5,384 of funding since 2010, write to your councillors to demand fair school funding and ask them to write to the Secretary of State for Education.

On a daily basis, this means larger class sizes, reduced access to student support services, cuts in extra-curricular activities provision like after-school clubs and trips, and reduced specialist support for SEND pupils.

It also means pupils and staff are learning and working in unsafe buildings, many of which contain asbestos and materials that were never intended to still be in use.

This is why UNISON members are emailing their local councillors, asking them to write to the Secretary for Education and ask for more money for schools.

UNISON wants Secretary of State for Education Gillian Keegan to consider the impact that chronic underfunding has had on our schools and on the life-chances of children and young people,

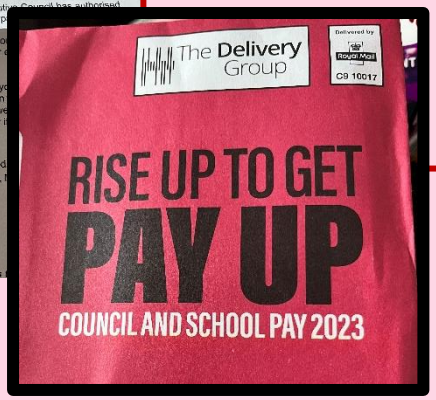
UNISON, along with other education unions, will also be lobbying Parliament on 20 June to 'Save our Schools'.

Recent research has shown that:

- Even with increased funding promised for each pupil in the Autumn Statement, funding remains significantly below 2010 levels.
- A pupil who started school in 2010, will have lost out on £5,384 of funding as a result of government cuts and inflation.
- Between 2010/11 and 2022/23, per pupil spending fell from £7,274 to £6,982 - a drop of 4%.

Click here to email your councillor to fight for school funding:

Email your councillor



Reasonable Adjustments for Mental Health

What reasonable adjustments for mental health are

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.

Disability is defined as a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Some people might not recognise their mental health condition as a disability, but it's important that employers are aware that it could be.

The law (Equality Act 2010) says that employers must make reasonable adjustments for:

- workers
- contractors and self-employed people hired to personally do the work
- job applicants

Employers must make reasonable adjustments when:

- they know, or could reasonably be expected to know, someone is disabled
- a disabled staff member or job applicant asks for adjustments
- someone who's disabled is having difficulty with any part of their job
- someone's absence record, sickness record or delay in returning to work is because of, or linked to, their disability

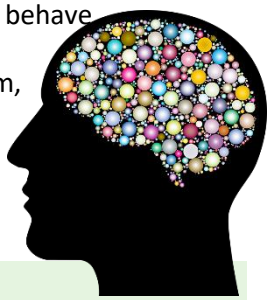
Employers should try to make reasonable adjustments even if the issue is not a disability. Often, simple changes to a person's working arrangements or responsibilities could be enough to help them stay in work and work well.

Find out more about reasonable adjustments for mental health here:

[ACAS Website - Reasonable Adjustments for Mental Health]

Making reasonable adjustments for mental health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and behave.



If an employee has a mental health problem, it's important their employer takes it seriously and with the same care as a physical illness.

Mental health problems can:

- happen suddenly, because of a specific event in someone's life
- build up gradually over time
- be hard to spot because everyone has different signs and signals
- be hidden because many people find it difficult to talk about their mental health
- fluctuate over time which means that an employee's ability to cope with the demands of the job might change
- When making reasonable adjustments for mental health it's helpful to remember that:

every job is different, so what works in one situation might not work in another

every employee is different, so what works for one employee might not work for another

mental health fluctuates over time, so what works for an employee now might not work in the future

Employers and employees should work together to agree and review reasonable adjustments over time to make sure that the adjustments work well.

Benefits of reasonable adjustments for mental health

Reasonable adjustments for mental health can help employees to stay in work while recovering from or managing a mental health condition. They can also help employees work safely and productively.

Reasonable adjustments for mental health can help employers to:

- retain employees, reducing recruitment and training costs
- reduce absence and associated costs
- make sure that people at work are well, safe and productive
- create a healthy work culture, building mental health awareness and demonstrating a commitment to good practice