

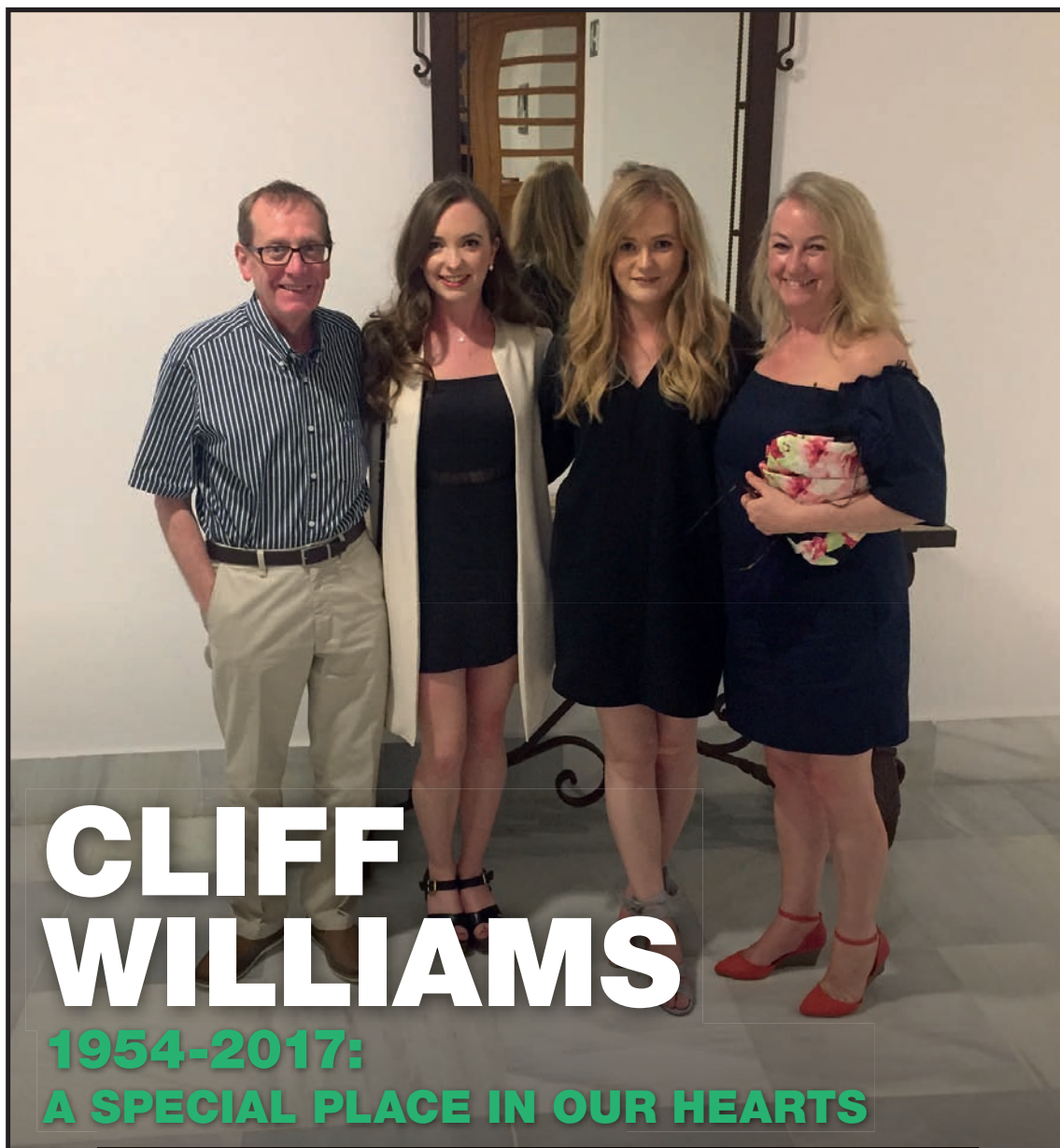
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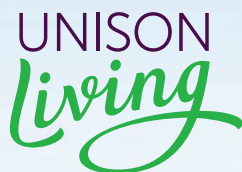
ACTIVE!

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE



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DAVE PRENTIS
GENERAL
SECRETARY

Dave Prentis

BIGGER AND BETTER

This year our union will reach an important milestone – our 25th birthday. A quarter of a century ago, UNISON was founded through the coming together of three great unions – NALGO, NUPE and COHSE. In the years that followed, so many people have written off both our union and our members. First we were told the union would not succeed, then in more recent years, we were told that UNISON couldn't last through the austerity years.

But those predictions were wrong. Our union has always taken

on the challenges thrown at us, not just surviving, but thriving, even in tough times. Now, as we look ahead to the next 25 years, this is the right time to show we can renew ourselves. The world – especially at work – has changed in the past two and a half decades, and so must we. We are already the biggest and best union in the country, but working together, we can be an even bigger and better union for all our members.

Of course, this time of celebration is also tinged with sadness. As you will all

know, our assistant general secretary Cliff Williams passed away in December. He was a champion for UNISON and our members – but he was also a champion for your region too. An adopted son of Yorkshire, Cliff served with distinction as your regional secretary. He will be missed by so many of you in his home region, and around the country, in the years ahead.



I'm really proud of you all



WENDY NICHOLS
REGIONAL
CONVENOR

W. Nichols

Throughout the region our members are leading campaigns against further privatisation of the NHS.

The backdoor privatisation of NHS services using so-called wholly owned subsidiaries is a clear example of the government's mission to destroy the NHS. But the Tories know that voters overwhelmingly support the NHS and are firmly against privatisation of the service.

So they insist they are not privatising services, even when they are blatantly handing over millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to companies like Richard Branson's Virgin.

The contempt in which they hold the electorate means they are confident we

will be too stupid to see through their lies. And of course they can rely on their own newspapers to hide the truth.

As our late regional secretary Cliff Williams said at the beginning of Cameron and Osborne's austerity regime, their goal has always been to undermine the public sector.

This same poisonous ideology has left local government struggling to provide the most essential public services.

The Tories continue to inflict squalor on our treasured public services while enriching the private sector fat cats with our money.

But our members are fighting to protect jobs and services on behalf of the public. I am enormously proud of them all.

● Page 16,17,18: Cliff Williams

Don't be daft, join a union!

When UNISON activist Liam Adam was dismissed from his post in a Yorkshire university after 25 years of unblemished service, he decided to 'stand up and be counted'.

His UNISON branch took up his case and referred it to Thompsons Solicitors who believed he had a case for unfair dismissal, *writes Peter Carroll*.

The employer had embarked on a restructuring exercise but refused to 'slot' staff into the new structure despite the

fact they had very similar job descriptions. Members had to be interviewed for their own jobs.

Liam said: "I was confident except that it was my first interview in 25 years and I didn't pass.

"All my years of service gone in as many minutes! I appealed but still the university wouldn't see sense. My appeal and the grounds for it were turned down."

So the case went to an employment tribunal, presented by a barrister and

regional organiser Leonie Sharp who 'kept calm and professional throughout' said Liam.

On day one of the hearing both parties conferred with the judge to agree a running order and the following day both parties questioned each other's cases.

UNISON won the case for unfair dismissal and the judge awarded compensation to Liam, who is now studying for a degree.

Said Liam: "In the

claimants' waiting room on the final day there was a woman on an adjacent table. She had just lost her case and her barrister was telling her that she should approach her insurers to see if they would cover her costs.

Leonie, my wife and I all looked up at the same time and, possibly louder than we should have, said 'or join a union'.

"Unions are here to protect members and this case did all of that in spades," said Liam.

Got a year to learn?

COURSE TITLE	COURSE DATES	CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS
Organising Steward - Online Version	23 April -15 June 2018	Friday, 6 April 2018
Branch Officer Training Weekend	12, 13 May 2018	Monday, 2 April 2018
UNISON Workplace Refresher	4, 5 June 2018	Wednesday, 2 May 2018
Organising Steward	4, 5, 6, 7, 8 June 2018	Wednesday, 2 May 2018
Discussion Leader	6, 7 June 2018	Friday, 4 May 2018
Negotiating Skills for Activists	11, 12, 13, 14, 15 June 2018	Monday, 7 May 2018
Women's Assertiveness	23, 24 June 2018	Monday 21 May 2018
Equalities in your Branch	26, 27 June 2018	Friday, 25 May 2018
Your Skills Your Future	2 July 2018	Friday, 1 June 2018
Health & Safety Representatives	2, 3, 4, 5, 6 July 2018	Friday, 1 June 2018
Building Confidence in Women	7, 8 July 2018	Monday, 4 June 2018
Confidence Building (Power to be You)	9 July 2018	Friday, 8 June 2018
Organising Steward	16, 17, 18, 19, 20 July 2018	Wednesday, 13 June 2018
Mentoring	23, 24 July 2018	Friday, 22 June 2018
Lay Tutor Training	25, 26, 27 July 2018	Monday, 25 June 2018
Autism Awareness (Open University)	31 July 2018	Friday, 29 June 2018
Organising Steward	3, 4, 5, 6, 7 September 2018	Friday, 3 August 2018
Branch Treasurer Online Accounting (OLBA) Training	5 September 2018	Friday, 3 August 2018
UNISON Learning Representatives	5, 6, 7 September 2018	Friday, 3 August 2018
Confidence Building (Power to be You)	10 September 2018	Friday, 10 August 2018
Organising Steward - Online Version	10 September - 2 November 2018	Friday, 25 August 2018

Application forms should be sent to your branch for approval. For courses later in the year and any other information please contact Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Education Team on 0113 218 2330.

We're leading the fight against 'NHS lite'

UNISON is leading the fight to stop NHS trusts transferring staff to private subsidiary companies – described as 'backdoor privatisation'.

Across Yorkshire and Humberside our members have held indicative ballots for industrial action and staged protests at hospitals threatened by the policy, writes *Peter Carroll*.

The regional media continue to cover the story and UNISON has growing political support for the campaign, spearheaded by Keighley MP John Grogan.

The Airedale and Bradford NHS trusts have both delayed transferring staff to a private company after hearing UNISON's arguments.

But in Harrogate, the trust ignored all the objections and has now transferred 320 non-clinical staff to a private subsidiary.

UNISON regional organiser Ray Gray said: "Trusts are saying that staff who are transferred will have their NHS terms and conditions protected.

"But if they change jobs or take promotion they

go onto local terms and conditions, earning slightly more basic salary but losing five days holiday a year and receiving greatly reduced sickness benefits and pensions.

"We have made it clear this will create a two-tier workforce and will drive staff away from the NHS. That is why we are campaigning so hard to prevent it happening in our region and beyond.

"In Harrogate we may have lost the first battle, but we are not going away. We are committed

to getting those staff back into the NHS and we will continue to represent our members and make sure they get everything they are entitled to."

Sara Gorton, UNISON's national head of health, recently told *The Guardian*: "This policy is all too quickly becoming the new normal. It is important to remember that staff have chosen to work for, and be part of, the NHS. They want to belong to the NHS team and not be seen as a disposable add-on."

● Page 24: Secret sellout

WHY NOT TAKE A PUNT ON UNISON'S DONCASTER RACEDAY?

SATURDAY AFTERNOON
AUGUST 4 2018

It's a great way to get away from it all and there's an exclusive special ticket offer for UNISON members

'Two for one' grandstand tickets

Total price: £13 (two tickets)

Offer closes: 5pm on July 27, 2018

To book tickets call 01302 304200 and quote 'the UNISON raceday offer', your UNISON membership number or UNISON branch code

(Please note there will be a £2.75 transaction charge on all ticket bookings)

UNISON
Yorkshire and
Humberside



FAKE NEWS!

A PINCH OF SALT

Who decides fact from fiction? Who checks the checkers? Active consulting editor **Mary Maguire** looks at attempts to sort fake news from the genuine article

Once upon a time, fake news was confined to April Fool's Day. Newspaper journalists would cleverly construct a story in such a way that you weren't quite sure at first. But the clue was always in the dateline on the newspaper – April 1.

These were obvious hoaxes, jolly japes where you knew you had either been had or you congratulated yourself on being a clever so-and-so and no-one, let alone a tuppenny ha'penny hack would ever get the better of you. In those days facts were facts and lies were, well, lies, damned lies or statistics.

The internet and 24-hour news changed all that.

Today we are bombarded every day from every angle with what can turn out to be fake news, 'alternative facts', rumours, misinformation and half-truths. A heavy dose of salt is needed with the morning news bulletins and our social media accounts.

Up there in the cloud, in la-la land, thousands of people seem to be busily making up their version of the news and inventing facts. It's become so desperate, that governments are taking a stand. The French Government, according to the Guardian, Look North and Calendar News, has forced Facebook to crack down on 30,000 accounts to stop the spread of fake news.

And here in the UK, with our own bumbling Brexit experience, The Yorkshire Post reports that a 'Government unit' at No 10 has been set up to counter fake news. It quotes the Prime Minister's official spokesperson saying the unit would combat 'disinformation by state actors and others'.

But is this itself fake news? How are we mere mortals supposed to know? Who are these state actors? Should I believe the Daily Mash which describes the Fake News Unit as 'like the A-Team but in a big red bus with lie written on side of it'?

Help is at hand. Editors can always spot a gap in the market. Not to mention a bit of self-interest: if no-one believed what they read in the newspapers, how could people make an informed choice about which government to elect, which soap powder to buy or which insurance to sign up for?

Fact-checking organisations and websites have sprung up to examine politicians' claims, but who checks the checkers and the tweeters?

The Wakefield Express, sister paper the Pontefract and Castleford Express, and the Halifax Courier, among others, stepped up with a handy guide to spotting fake news aimed at young people. Basically they said, check the source, check out the author, check out references and links, do a Google Reverse Image Search (google it) and if it's reported elsewhere it must be true. Seems a lot of checking if it's just a three-paragraph story.

And, just for fun, the YEP produced a set of 20 illustrated news stories, some real, some lies. I got only nine right.

There are some sceptics, however, who don't believe in fake news. BBC Today presenter Nick Robinson says: "What Facebook does, and what separate news channels for different opinions do, is give people the possibility to have their own facts." He recommends a verbal assault on any politician 'who uses the words fake news to describe something they don't like from their opponents'. There are other sceptics who don't believe in Nick Robinson. ■

“IN THOSE DAYS FACTS WERE FACTS”



Mary Maguire



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DEMO:
Step Up for Public Services

12 May 2018
11:00am - 4:00pm
London: Victoria Embankment to Hyde Park

This march is set to be a big one.

UNISON, the TUC and other trade unions are putting considerable support behind it. You'll join hundreds of thousands of like-minded marchers on the day.
Have your say and join the demonstration.



STAKES ARE HIGH

The Mirror's political columnist **Paul Routledge** says the Yorkshire and Humberside region will be a key battleground as the Conservatives lose their grip on power

This Tory government is on the skids over Brexit and a host of issues at home including the NHS. Theresa May's days look numbered.

The old saying 'never waste a good crisis' offers a double opportunity in Yorkshire.

Council elections in May and the battle over how we should rule ourselves offer scope for a regional referendum on the Tories'

loosening grip on power.

The long-running argument over partial 'home rule' for our county – the politicians call it devolution – is finally coming to a head.

And one by one, the pieces are slotting into place for a One Yorkshire deal with a directly-elected mayor for the region's five million people.

The Tories set their face against this solution, but even with their record of

riding rough-shod over people, they're running out of road.

Elected leaders of Leeds, Doncaster, Bradford, Wakefield, Kirklees, Hull, Calderdale and a clutch of rural areas - 18 out of 20 councils - have all agreed to the '1Y' formula. So have the TUC, the employers' body CBI and even Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York.

Only Sheffield and Rotherham have failed to



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WAY



sign up, making a pointless £1 million mayoral election for a city region in May inevitable.

But even that obstacle can be overcome if the mayor agrees to step down after a couple of years to allow One Yorkshire to motor ahead.

Nominations for the post have closed, with Dick Caborn, former Sports Minister and Barnsley MP Dan Jarvis emerging as front-runners for Labour candidate.

Jarvis would remain an MP, and serve only a couple of years as steel city mayor because he supports One Yorkshire, under which the post would be abolished.

I'm writing as UNISON Active! goes to press, and the pressure on government ministers to bow to Tyke tenacity is mounting. They have no Whitehall alternative to our home-grown idea.

One Yorkshire now seems to be the only viable option. IY could have a budget larger than some EU countries, and it will be a magnificent opportunity to show – post Brexit – what this country is made of.

While the devolution wrangle goes on, a more immediate national political challenge will impact across Yorkshire and Humberside – the council elections on May 3.

Unusually for city and town hall polls, this time the stakes are high. Tory MPs anxious about Theresa May's future fear that a nationwide surge for Labour could spell the end for her leadership.

Labour is gearing up to contest every part of the country, and Yorkshire is a key battleground. Hundreds of seats here were last contested in 2014, when the party was heading for defeat in a general election the following year.

But the mood is more optimistic now, following last June's parliamentary gains in Calderdale and Keighley, and increased majorities in constituencies that the Tories thought were winnable marginals. Hopes are high for fresh gains at local level.

The big prize is retaining control of Leeds, where all the wards are up for grabs after boundary changes. Leader Judith Blake is looking to strengthen Labour's grip, and I think she will.

It's an all-out battle in Hull, too, but only a third of seats are being contested in Sheffield, Barnsley, Bradford and Wakefield (all Labour controlled at present) and in Kirklees and Calderdale (both with no overall control, but could fall with only a handful of gains). There are no elections in Doncaster, Rotherham or York, or in the big rural county councils.

Labour should consolidate its hold in the cities and metropolitan boroughs, with gains also in the Pennine former mill towns. The trick will be to turn this local poll into something like a national referendum on Theresa May and her disastrous government.

And it's still vital to have

Labour in power locally to mitigate the impact of spending cuts on our communities. The era of austerity isn't over. More is on the way, which is why UNISON activists are needed to get out the vote.

Still, there are reasons to be cheerful. Theresa May's botched Cabinet reshuffle had little impact on Yorkshire Tories, because they haven't got many MPs in our region.

And the ones they've got aren't much cop. Out went Rotherham-born Justine Greening, sacked as Education Secretary, and Robert Goodwill, MP for Scarborough, from his job as Children's Minister.

In came Rishi Sunak, William Hague's low-profile successor at Richmond, appointed Conservative Party vice-chairman – one of thirteen. Maybe they're fielding a Rugby League team.

And Pudsey MP Stuart Andrew, who once got the wrong side of a Labour MP's fist in a House of Commons bar, became Minister for Bag Carrying in the Welsh Office.

Not an impressive line-up. Not when you compare them with Labour's local big-hitters like Hilary Benn, Yvette Cooper, Dan Jarvis and John Healey, up and coming front-bench performers like Paula Sherriff and Louise Haigh – and newcomers like Emma Hardy in Hull.

Parliament matters because that's where things get done, or fail to get done. It's the real cockpit of power. ■

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DEAL
”

Paul Routledge



HEART AND SOUL



Photo: Jim Varney

Diane relaxing with her 'lads'

Diane Collinson has the tough job of caring for children who can't find foster homes – and still finds time to be a UNISON activist. **Ryan Fletcher** reports

The eldest of six siblings Diane Collinson is a dab hand at looking after kids, which is just as well given her job at a North Yorkshire children's home.

It's a demanding position the 56-year-old UNISON rep admits, but memories of her own childhood in Sunderland spur Diane to give the children under her care the best start possible.

"From a very young age I always liked to look after people. I was always running around helping my mam out or looking after my brothers and sisters. You can't put a price on us all being together and sitting in front of that roaring fire – even though we had nothing," Diane explained.

"Now I look after kids that can't get foster placements. It's very challenging, but I really do care about them. If they can

remember one snippet of what you've done for them – that you put your heart into it – then that's going to help them out in the future."

Diane has spent nearly her entire working life caring for others. When she was 21, Diane joined the NHS as an auxiliary nurse at Newcastle General Hospital after 'flitting around' different shop assistant roles.

She spent 17 years at the hospital, during which time Diane met her partner, Geoff, 'at a karaoke in a pub near the Metro Centre'. The pair, who have been together for 24 years, lived on Tyneside until the untimely death in 1997 of Diane's beloved brother Dennis, 31, who suffered from diabetes.

"We decided to have a change and get away from the North East. Geoff was born in Harrogate and he got a job in York. At first we decided to

rent but we liked it so much that we bought here," said Diane.

"We live in a little village about ten miles outside of York. It's a beautiful place. There's fields just to the back of us and the river Ouse flows through two of them. We sometimes get blocked off if the river's up but the village doesn't get flooded."

AMBITION

Following the move, Diane continued her health service career, working at York hospital and later on as a physiotherapy assistant, until the mid-noughties, when she decided to work with young people.

The decision to fulfil a long-term ambition, 'it was something I wanted to do even before I wanted to go into nursing', turned out to be a good one.

"It was really nice looking

“THERE USED TO BE MORE TEACHERS, MORE FOSTER CARERS, JUST MORE SUPPORT IN GENERAL”

after the kids,” Diane said.

However, when Diane first began working with children in care, providing relief shifts at four group homes in York, there was ‘a lot more for the young people we looked after’. But over the 12 years Diane has been working, one of the homes has closed and ‘a lot of the services have been stopped – there used to be more teachers, more foster carers, just more support in general’.

TRAUMATIC

Diane has worked full time at a Harrogate children’s home for the last nine years and still enjoys the work, despite it being made more difficult due to cut backs. A union member since she joined the NHS at 21, Diane began taking a more active role after the support she received from her UNISON rep following a traumatic incident at work, where assaults against staff are a common occurrence.

“Apart from anything else it’s about emotional health and well-being. If you’re not

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I CARE
ABOUT
PEOPLE
AND
WHAT
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THEY
HAVE
”

feeling strong emotionally then the young people are going to pick up on it. You’ve got to be sound to look after them,” said Diane.

“After the incident I had a lot of help from my UNISON steward. I went on union courses for building self-confidence and assertiveness and the people who trained us were amazing. I felt empowered.”

Nor did her involvement stop with taking courses. Over the last year, Diane has become a workplace steward and a learning rep. One of her goals is to bring what she learnt during UNISON’s self-confidence course back to her work colleagues and the young people they care for.

“Self-confidence is at the root of why a lot of (the young people’s) behaviour can be difficult, because they feel bad about themselves”, explained Diane.

As with all determined people, Diane feels she still has much to achieve. She wants the young people under her care

‘to have more confidence and better outcomes’ and to put her experience in the public sector to good use within the union.

“I care about people and what rights they have and I’m prepared to stand up for them. Going forward I’d like to get more involved with UNISON,” said Diane.

But there’s also an understanding that there has to be a balance between the professional and personal – especially when your job is emotionally and physically draining.

Fittingly, Diane and Geoff have two rescue dogs: Bailey, a rottweiler-cross, and Dylan, a black labrador, who are ‘big lads and very gentle’. To get away from it all, owners and dogs jump into their motorhome and escape to Northumberland or the Cotswolds.

Diane said: “When we retire the plan is to go off for a year with the dogs in the motorhome and just do what we want. If we like it we might continue forever.” ■



Diane's CV

Diane Collinson has spent more than three decades working in the public sector. She joined the NHS as an auxiliary nurse in 1981 and worked at Newcastle General Hospital for 17 years. In 1998, Diane moved to North Yorkshire where she continued her nursing career at York Hospital before retraining as a physiotherapy assistant in 2001. However, Diane was determined to achieve her childhood ambition of working with young people and in 2005 she began working full time with children in residential care. She has worked at the Dovedale children’s home in Harrogate for the past nine years.

BRAVE WOMEN

Much of the battle for women's rights took place in Yorkshire and Humberside. **Mary Maguire** celebrates the centenary of a major breakthrough

The year was 1907. A group of 400 fustian weavers, on strike for better pay, joined forces at Hebden

Bridge with Adela Pankhurst, the West Yorkshire suffragette organiser. A few days earlier they had massed at the bridge and been inspired by Adela's mother Emmeline to join in the fight for a woman's right to vote.

The weavers, many of them women, who left school at the age of 10 to work on the looms, had been on strike since the previous July. They had the support of local people in their opposition to the 'knobsticks' – scabs doing their work.

Both Adela and Mary Gawthorpe, organisers of the local Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), marched with strikers to the homes of local employers to 'hoot' them. Stones were thrown and windows smashed.

Two local women were arrested, Jennie Baines was accused of 'watching and besetting' the employers' homes and went to prison for 14 days. Laura Wilson was given the same imprisonment for 'violent and inflammatory speech'. They were imprisoned in Armley gaol,



1907 arrest of Dora Thewlis

“
THIS
REGION
IS FAMED
FOR ITS
STRONG
WOMEN
”

Leeds – the first suffragettes to be thus treated in Yorkshire.

The suffragette struggle is littered with such actions and such sacrifices. And this year we celebrate the centenary of 'propertied' women over the age of 30 winning that right. That brought the vote to six million women. Most women had to wait until 1928 to get the vote on the same terms as men. Nevertheless, the 1918 win - to misquote the first man on the Moon - was a giant leap

forward for womankind.

It was a long road and much of it was travelled through Yorkshire and Humberside. Part of it in a WSPU votes for women caravan tour that kicked off in Whitby and brought the message through Goathland, North York Moors, Pickering, Scarborough, Bridlington, Driffield and Malton.

The votes for women battle may well have been first documented in 1851 in

ALL!

Yorkshire when the Sheffield Female Political Association was formed. It brought a petition to the House of Lords in support of giving women the vote. Several other attempts were made subsequently, without success.

PUBLICITY

Mild tactics such as organising meetings, distributing leaflets and presenting petitions, gave way to more direct action when, in 1903, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was set up by Emmeline Pankhurst, along with her daughters Sylvia, Christabel and Adela. These were the suffragettes.

They knew the value of publicity – and their well-documented actions grabbed the headlines, providing good pictures for the newspapers and cartoonists. Chaining themselves to railings, knocking off police constables' helmets, bombing Lloyd George's home or smashing windows, all brought their goal one step closer.

These heroes endured vicious and violent attacks and the dreaded force-feeding when they refused food in prison. Force-feeding was brutal, painful and inhumane. The jaws were forced open painfully wide with a steel or wooden gag and a tube inserted into the throat and food poured down. Sylvia Pankhurst described it:

"My gums, when they prised them open, were always sore and bleeding, with bits of loose, jagged flesh... sometimes the tube was coughed up three or four times before they finally got it down. Sometimes, but not often – I was generally too

much agitated by then – I felt the tube go right down into the stomach; a sickening, terrifying sensation ... My shoulders were bruised, my back ached... Infinitely worse than the pain was the sense of degradation".

In March 1907, a quarter of the women arrested during the suffragette attack on Parliament were from Yorkshire. There was 16-year old Dora Thewlis, a weaver from Huddersfield, famously pictured on the Daily Mirror front page as she was arrested trying to storm the Commons.

Or Lavena Saltonstall, a Hebden Bridge weaver and a vocal activist. She wrote:

"As I am a tailoress many people think it is my bounden duty to make trousers and vests and knit and crochet and sew, and thank God for my station in life. I am supposed to make myself generally useless by ignoring things that matter ... They think I ought to concern myself over clean doorsteps and side-board covers."

ESCAPED

Lilian Lenton a former dancer, vowed to set fire to two buildings a week until women got the vote and confessed in court to trying to set fire to a Doncaster house. She was imprisoned in Armley gaol and went on hunger strike. Legend has it she was released and followed, but evaded police by disguising herself as a delivery boy, escaped to Scarborough and later Holland.

Adela continued campaigning throughout Yorkshire and, sometimes with her mother, spoke at hundreds of public meetings

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and rallies, attracting 100,000 people at Shipley Glen and the following year a similar number on Woodhouse Moor. Her WSPU branch was instrumental in disrupting a visit to Bradford by Winston Churchill MP in 1910.

And, in 1913, Leonora Cohen a former milliner from Leeds, dressed in her finest, went to the Jewel House at the Tower of London and smashed the glass showcase with an iron bar. Her declaration on paper wrapped round the bar read: "This is my protest against the Government's treachery to the working women of Great Britain".

Brave women all. And I, for one, will never forget whenever I wave our UNISON flag that we share our colours with a group of women who really changed our world. ■



Mary Gawthorpe, 1908



UNFAIR, UNFOUNDED, VINDICTIVE

Ministers want to weaken justice for the injured to benefit fat cat insurance bosses, says **Tom Jones**, head of policy at Thompsons Solicitors

People get injured at work, they always have and unfortunately, always will. Whether it is because employers fail to put in place and enforce safety provisions or because health and safety is not given sufficient priority or that people simply don't think, every year Thompsons helps thousands of UNISON members who have been injured through no fault of their own.

For many years, the guilty

party in an accident has had to pay for the injured to have free or affordable legal advice. It has been an established principle that the 'polluter pays'. The Government - lining up with the bosses and the insurance industry - wants to undermine that right and limit access to the justice system for injured people.

Currently, if the part of an injury claim that relates to pain and suffering (ignoring any losses and expenses) has a value of £1,000 or less, it falls into the small claims

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UNISON'S
LEGAL
SERVICE
PROTECTS
MEMBERS
FROM THE
WORST
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OF TORY
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limit and the injured have to make a choice: pay for their own legal fees or fight the insurers on their own.

The Tories want to double the small claims limit to £2,000 for all personal injuries, including those at work, and to increase it by 500 per cent to £5,000 for road traffic accidents. They suggested this first in November 2015 but then in the summer, a weak Conservative government propped up by Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, included



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million. Meanwhile the insurers would save £1 billion annually.

Ministers haven't really even tried to justify this savage attack on injured people that is only going to take money from the State and enrich their mates. They say it's because of fraud in motor claims, but even then they rely on stats from insurers - and what has a (disputed and unsubstantiated) problem with fraudulent motor claims got to do with people injured at work or being knocked over as a pedestrian or a cyclist?

The 'bribe' to get the policy through has been that motor insurance will become cheaper; that insurers will pass on savings to motorists. But, given that motor insurers have already saved over £8 billion in the last five years from changes previously made to the personal injury system and premiums keep rising, people are right to be sceptical. A YouGov poll found that over three-quarters of the public do not believe that insurance companies will hand their customers any of the savings and the Government has gone on record to say that it won't force them to do so.

Despite Brexit taking up the vast majority of the Government's attention, ministers apparently still plan to use what precious parliamentary time there is to press on with these plans to reduce the rights of injured people.

Insurers paid out in 99 per cent of all cases last year, yet they say that there is a whiplash 'epidemic' and that we are in the grip

of a 'compensation culture'. They also, despite shouting from the rooftops about a 'claims crisis', didn't mention any issue with fraud in their annual reports to shareholders, even though City rules require them to do so if there is something amiss. They simply passed on the good news of increased profits and yet even greater dividends.

Our experience, working with thousands of personal injury claimants every day, is that the vast majority are people who have been genuinely injured, and if they weren't, we wouldn't act for them and the insurers should report those who do to the police and refuse to pay out.

These reforms are ultimately all about a huge cash cow for insurer fat cats. Their multimillion pound profits and salaries will continue to increase while those unfortunate enough to be injured will be left out in the cold.

UNISON's legal service protects members from the worst excesses of Tory policy, including a guarantee that members keep 100 per cent of any compensation secured. But an increase to the small claims limit would undermine union legal services.

Parliament's cross-party Justice Select Committee is looking into the Government's plans, and rightly so. It is vital that these unfair, unfounded and vindictive proposals face proper scrutiny. Like with Brexit, they shouldn't be pushed through without proper debate. Parliament and the public need a chance to stop these proposals before it is too late. ■

a similar set of proposals in the Queen's Speech, ignoring huge opposition to the proposals the first time around.

Every year these changes would stop hundreds of thousands of people injured through no fault of their own accessing free or affordable legal representation. The Government's own impact assessment shows that the already over-stretched NHS would lose £13 million a year and the Treasury would lose an annual £135



Tom Jones -
ministers
enriching
their mates

A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS



UNISON's assistant general secretary Cliff Williams (pictured left with his family) died of cancer in December. Cliff, our former regional secretary, was highly influential throughout UNISON and the union will sorely miss his analytical brain and wise counsel. 'We will also miss the most personally sympathetic, kind and supportive friend and colleague you could wish for,' says **Peter Carroll**

The death of Cliff Williams has brought a premature end to an outstanding career in UNISON stretching back more than 40 years.

Cliff left school at 16 and went to work for Yorkshire Water where he met his future boss Dave Prentis. He became a district officer for NALGO and rose to the position of district organisation officer. When NALGO merged with NUPE and COHSE in 1993 to form UNISON, Cliff became Yorkshire and Humberside regional secretary.

He was appointed

assistant general secretary of UNISON in 2010 and worked alongside the general secretary, overseeing all the regions and, among other major campaigns, masterminding the Fighting Fund scheme which has been so effective across the country.

As a lifelong Labour activist, he chaired the Yorkshire and Humberside party and was an executive member of the regional TUC and president for seven years.

Taxi drivers ferrying hundreds of mourners to his funeral in Scarborough were taken aback by the turnout.

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AND RIA
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One said: "Who was this bloke? I've worked around here for years and I've never see so many people turn up for a funeral"

At the service, his close friend and colleague, Tom Jones of Thompsons Solicitors, described the sort of 'bloke' he was.

Tom said: "Cliff placed great store on loyalty. He was fiercely loyal to his family, his friends and his union all of which were, in a way, one and the same. He demanded loyalty in return and he got it in abundance.

"Cliff was the person we turned to for a view and an opinion. He guided and

supported so many of us here today at various stages of our lives and he helped to guide our organisation too."

He went on to pay tribute to Cliff's commitment, saying he was 'ridiculously hard-working' – a fact which the many people who worked with him and for him over his long career would confirm.

DEMANDING

Those of us who so often answered our mobiles – day or night – to hear his simple, slightly chilling, question, 'Where are you?', and found themselves answering, 'Where should I be?' will know he was a demanding boss whose energy and tenacity were hard to keep up with. He set a cracking pace.

But as those same people know, he was also the most personally sympathetic, kind and supportive friend and colleague you could wish for.

His beloved wife Sharon and daughters Olivia and Ria were always his top priority, even though sometimes he was immersed in his work and away from home for long periods.

But those who had the pleasure of seeing the family together could see clearly that it was the love he shared with them that gave him his legendary strength and dedication.

Cliff's quiet, analytical character was his greatest attribute. He listened intently and grasped the situation rapidly, before offering a considered and invariably accurate solution to whatever the problem was.

And he would then make

sure that whatever he had proposed actually happened: as so many people have said about him over the years, he was a fixer, and countless UNISON members owe him a deep debt of gratitude.

Cliff was always politically connected and well-informed and he was a trenchant critic of the Government's austerity disaster long before others had identified the crisis it has created.

Under his guidance UNISON was at the forefront of the campaign against the BNP and other racist organisations, leading co-ordinated and organised action to expose their divisive agenda to the public.

That work is still being done, but it was vital that UNISON led the way in fighting racism with the full support and involvement of our regional secretary.

TARGET

In an interview with UNISON Active! in 2011, when he left Yorkshire and Humberside to go to London, Cliff warned of the consequences of an ideologically-driven agenda (Tory-Liberal Alliance) which would accelerate ever widening inequality and spread hardship and misery.

He said then: "We are looking at a structured social change designed to keep Labour out of government, drive wages down for the vast majority of people and de-stabilise the trade unions."

"We are the target of a concerted attack from the Government and their allies in the right-wing press."

"But unions were created out of conditions like these



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and we are all geared up to fight off these attacks in the months and years ahead."

He knew back then that this was going to be a long and bitter struggle for UNISON members, but he never shied away from a fight and that spirit stayed with him to the end.

When he left Yorkshire and Humberside Cliff said it felt strange to leave behind people he had known for years – not as 'associates' but as friends, and that he was sincerely grateful for all their professional and personal support.

And he said that while he would take care of all the regions in the country, he would always keep a special place for Yorkshire and Humberside in his heart.

It almost goes without saying, but there is no doubt we will keep a special place for Cliff in ours.

Cliff Williams, who was assistant general secretary of UNISON ■



ONE OF THE BEST

I first met Cliff in 1993 at the formation of UNISON. When I became regional convenor a few years' later, we became firm friends and have been ever since.

Cliff was one of the best people I know. He devoted his best working years to the service of our members and he will be missed so much. We were a very effective team in Yorkshire and Humberside – he as regional secretary, me as convenor – whether it was UNISON, Labour Party or TUC issues.

We worked together so well, in the truest meaning of the UNISON lay member and officer partnership that is such an important bedrock of our union. No 'them and us'. And it was down to our shared aims and values, about what was right for the union and its members.

Cliff had fantastic people skills, always encouraging people to go one better, helping develop potential and spotting likely leadership talent.

Cliff was quietly inspirational. If you wanted something done, he was your man. He was unbelievably bright. Cliff knew what to do, knew who to go to,

knew how to get things done. Dependable, reliable and loyal to our union, he just got on with it.

When there were difficulties to face in the union or with employers, or if we were dealing with some major issues, Cliff was always calm and supportive. He worked out a plan, discussed it and, in that way, we moved forward.

Cliff and I never fell out and I think that was because we had mutual respect, the same objectives and understood each other. But we did exchange banter – he was originally from Lancashire and me a Yorkshire lass, so we couldn't resist winding each other up at times. And the issue of eating was contentious. After a hard meeting, Cliff would like a pint and a packet of peanuts. I usually wanted something more substantial.

One time in New York, after 9/11, following a meeting with American trade union paramedics, we hadn't eaten and all I could find was a scone and half a pound of butter from a deli round the corner from the hotel. When I complained, Cliff retorted: "What's the matter with you? Stop moaning. You've had a scone

and butter – that's a two-course meal".

We had some great times together, some successes for the union and some laughs together – here at home and on solidarity visits to meet workers abroad or exchange visits to the European Parliament. But Cliff also supported me through my personal losses and I will never forget him.

I used to make Cliff a Christmas cake before I went on the NEC. When I last saw him, he asked me to make him one and put in plenty of brandy. I did as he asked. Cliff never got to eat that cake.

If that wasn't enough, we sadly lost another UNISON champion – Londoner Irene Stacey – who died in January. Irene was a good friend throughout the years; a selfless, tireless campaigner for the members.

We first met at a NUPE conference in Scarborough where I was appointed a teller and ended up sitting next to Irene. Irene was a dinner lady from the east end of London, with a down-to-earth, just-do-it outlook on life. I will miss both Irene and Cliff terribly. ■

Regional convenor **Wendy Nichols** pays a personal tribute to friends and colleagues Cliff Williams and Irene Stacey, both of whom died recently



CLIFF
KNEW
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DONE



...And from regional secretary John Cafferty

"I first met Cliff Williams in 1992, just before the UNISON merger, when we were then working for NUPE and NALGO.

Little did I know then the friendship would develop over the next 25 years. Cliff was appointed as the UNISON regional secretary in 1993 and remained so until his well-deserved promotion to assistant

general secretary in 2010. I had the privilege and pleasure of working with him over this time.

Over these years Cliff's endless energy and thoughtful approach combined with his vast managerial experience was responsible for the development, mentoring and guidance of many, many UNISON people both lay and full time,

myself included.

As the AGS responsible for 'regions and governance' Cliff was the glue which held UNISON together.

Cliff leaves a huge gap in UNISON and will be sorely missed by his wife Sharon, his daughters Olivia and Ria and his many, many friends. *Requiescat in Pace* Cliff.



there for you

supporting UNISON members
when life gets tough

- Financial assistance
- Debt advice
- Wellbeing breaks
- Support & information

Please make sure our members
are aware of the help that is
available in these difficult times.

UNISON members struggling
through an unexpected crisis can
get help from 'there for you' by:-

- ☑ Contacting their
Branch Welfare Officer
- ☑ Calling us on 020 7121 5620

You can also find out more
information by visiting our website

[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/
help-with-problems-at-home/
there-for-you/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/help-with-problems-at-home/there-for-you/)

Registered charity number 1023552


UNISON
the public service union



JUST GIVE IT A GO!

Ann is the first to admit that her early years at Morley High School weren't a great success. "Taking A levels was not even on the radar. I didn't pass my GCSE English and when I asked if I could take it again in the sixth form I was told - you're going to fail, get out of my classroom."

CHILDCARE

Ann, 41, was born in Leeds and lives in Drighlington with her husband Thomas and sons Thomas and Shaun. After leaving school she went into retail work but decided to try her hand at catering college where she did well. "I got as far as the restaurant manager course and then fell pregnant. The restaurant trade is not good for family life - it's crazy hours so I had to give it up."

Her next step was childcare and doing voluntary work at her children's school with some child-minding. It was work that fitted in with her family life, as did evening classes at Joseph Priestley College in Morley where Ann qualified as a teaching assistant Level 3.

"I started working for an agency in the education sector. It was really good, you got to know different people, how systems worked

A Return to Learn course had a major impact on Ann McKelvey's life and now she urges other UNISON members to sign up too. **Annie Mitchell** reports

Photos: Andy Paraskos

Leeds University has offered UNISON member Ann McKelvey a place on a learning and teaching degree course - not unusual at this time of year, with many students settling into their first term at university. However, Ann's route from school to university

has been far from usual. Her life took a turn after she enrolled on a UNISON Return to Learn Course and her next step is clear. She plans to complete her degree and take a post graduate certificate in education so that she can teach in adult higher education or night school.

“
YOU
NEVER
KNOW
UNTIL
YOU TRY
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in different places and it broadened your horizons. I never said no to a job. But it was hard going because the work wasn't guaranteed. I was lucky enough to be in work all through term times – but that still left 14 weeks with no money coming in."

QUESTIONS

Ann eventually landed a full-time job on reception at the Co-operative Academy of Leeds – an academy school with around 1200 pupils. Keen to use her qualifications, Ann applied for the post of work support assistant for English and got it - a job she has been doing for the past 18 months.

"I love where I am. When I'm in class I'm quite open with students about not passing English at school and what happened to me. I tell them that if they don't understand anything just ask – if they are not asking questions we don't know they've got a problem."

It was then that Ann received an invite from UNISON to a Return to Learn course at the Swarthmore Centre in Leeds. It was to have a major impact on her life.

"I had just taken on the job in the English department which had more clerical

elements to it and that drew me in. I thought this course could be interesting and handy."

The course started in September '16 and it quickly grabbed Ann's attention. "The way the sessions were presented was very good. Everybody was told from the word go that mutual respect was required and to recognise that everyone worked at different speeds and everyone should be given a chance to take part – it was a really nice environment.

"There were 10 sessions but it took eight months to complete because we worked out the timetable by mutual agreement. With 27 on the course it was good to have so many people with different backgrounds, from different countries and different workplaces. People were at different levels but everyone had the same goal. There was no discrimination and everyone was made to feel valued.

"We all helped each other and made notes for each other – we had different strengths and we would help each other. I had to prepare a report for the course and chose to do it on the Co-op Academy. I knew the Director Frank

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Norris from working on reception and he said come to his office in Manchester. He talked it through and he had prepared all sorts on power point – it really helped me."

Ann had expected her results to be comparable to GCSE level but was delighted when she achieved 'A' level equivalent. "My family were over the moon – we went to the ceremony where we got our certificates. We don't say a lot but I know the family were proud of me."

"The tutor inspired me to think about university because he was in his 40s when he went and he didn't become a tutor till later. I started to think I could do this. I thought I would apply for an access course, but Leeds told me it's not just about qualifications, but life experiences and accepted me on the degree course."

Ann is passionate about the opportunities that RTL brought. "I would recommend it to anyone - don't get put off or feel intimidated, just grab it with both hands and give it a go because you never know until you try. Knowledge is power." ■

ReturnToLearn

This is a course designed for adults who may have been away from learning for some time. Members from all walks of life and work backgrounds have benefited from Return to Learn. You'll find it not only helps you in your job but also outside work with things like taking part in group activities, helping the kids with homework, getting yourself heard and finding new opportunities. Many members go on to take qualifications in English and maths and lots have found it a helpful route into further and higher education. The course is run in a welcoming and supportive environment so it's not like going back to school! There are no exams to take. At the end you will receive a certificate from UNISON and the Workers Educational Association (WEA) which runs the course for the union.





SEE YOU ON THE ICE

It's a real family atmosphere at Sheffield Steelers ice hockey games – and UNISON members get nearly 60 per cent off. **Barrie Clement** reports

“IT'S TWO OR THREE HOURS OF SHEER FUN”

In these times of severe austerity a lot of families find it virtually impossible to go for a day out together. It's just too expensive.

Well deputy regional convener John Campbell may have the answer - certainly for those who live in South Yorkshire.

Why not take the family out to see a Sheffield Steelers professional ice hockey game?

The game is fast – sometimes furious – and UNISON members can get in for £10 a head compared with £17.50 at the box office – and kids go free.

Many UNISON members take advantage of the cheaper tickets over the season and there's no reason why you

shouldn't. Says John: “It's two or three hours of sheer fun and entertainment and the members who come think it's fantastic.”

And despite the macho image of the game and the 'rough and tumble' on the rink, most of the crowd are women and children, says John, who is one of the Steelers' biggest fans. “Whole families come out together, including grandmas and grandads.”

In comparison it can be stressful - and expensive - taking children to football matches. What do you say to them when they hear grown men and women effing and blinding at rival fans and players; at the ref or at no one in

particular?

“They learn new words - words you don't want them to learn,” says Tony Smith (pictured right opposite page). “To be fair, some grounds are worse than others, but it's not nice at times.”

ADVANTAGE

Tony is owner of the Sheffield Steelers and he has banned swearing in the stadium. Those who transgress are shown the door and those who continue to turn the air blue are permanently excluded.

The strict rule doesn't deter supporters. In fact it's seen as a great advantage. The Steelers regularly attract crowds of 6,000 to 7,000 to the Fly DSA

(Sheffield) Arena. That's not a million miles away from the kind of gate attracted by League One football sides in the region.

"It's a real family atmosphere and as soon as you enter the arena we put on a show with music and replays of previous matches on huge video screens above the rink," says Tony. "It's very exciting from the moment you sit in your seat. There is something about the sport that attracts families. It's the fastest indoor game in the world. There is speed and there's excitement. It's very, very quick. You don't want to take your eye off it for a second."

ROBUST

While there is a zero tolerance of bad behaviour among the fans, it doesn't stop them roaring their players on. And it doesn't stop robust exchanges between players on the rink. You can't expect much else when they often hurtle towards each other at a combined speed of 70mph. That can lead to 'disagreements', scuffles and even the odd full-on punch-up. "It's a tough game, but what happens on the rink stays on the rink. Basically it's a great show and that's why we've been successful. The vast majority of people who come to watch, come again. And they're a real cross-section, a bit like the UNISON membership," says Tony.

UNISON has been a key partner of Sheffield Steelers for about seven years. You will see the union's logo all over the stadium on match days and sections of the seating are set aside for them, their friends and their families.

"We've got a fantastic partnership with UNISON. It



YOU
DON'T
WANT
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OFF IT
FOR
A SECOND



benefits us and it also benefits the union, giving great exposure to the name."

BANKRUPT

Originally Tony owned a printing company, but decided to diversify and got into business manufacturing ice hockey shirts. When the Steelers came up for sale in 2010, it seemed a natural fit for the Sheffield businessman.

It has not been all plain skating. In fact the ice was a bit thin to begin with. Tony bought the bankrupt club from the liquidator.

When he took over the money from season tickets had all been spent, gates were down to about 1800 and only six out of the 28 corporate suites were in use. Ironically that first difficult year of Tony's ownership the Steelers won the league, 'but at what cost?' says Tony.

He believed the club was lacking identity – typified by its colours, which were dominated by teal – a medium blue-green nothing sort of colour. Tony decided the future was bright orange.

He encountered resistance

from some of the fans, but it remains the club colour to this day and fans turn up in droves decked out in it. These days all 28 corporate suites tend to be in use on match days - including one set aside for UNISON.

Plans for a purpose-built arena have been put to one side after a new management team at the arena signed a contract with the Steelers giving the club greater access to the whole building, more weekend fixtures and a proper merchandise shop instead of a small counter.

A key part of the club ethos is to reach out to the community. Players go out to schools and hospitals where children can have their pictures taken with them. Where UNISON members have links with local schools, block bookings at discounted rates are available so that the children and their parents can enjoy a day out at the Steelers.

Meanwhile John doesn't miss a home match: "Why would I?" ■



SECRET SELL-OUT



Indicative ballots on industrial action are underway across the region in protest at creeping privatisation of the health service. **Peter Carroll** reports

NHS staff in Yorkshire and Humberside are being asked whether they are prepared to take industrial action to halt privatisation plans proposed by health trusts across the region.

Ballots are taking place on the issue at Harrogate, Huddersfield, Mid-Yorkshire, Airedale and Bradford NHS trusts where management want to introduce separate private companies to supply services like portering, cleaning, ward catering and laundry.

UNISON, and other health unions including

Unite and the GMB, are deeply concerned that these proposed companies will slash the pay and working conditions for future employees and drive people away from the NHS.

And in the wake of the Carillion collapse with the loss of more than 20,000 jobs, UNISON is campaigning against any further privatisation in the NHS which would jeopardise patient care and usher in privatisation for the whole of the NHS.

Ami Singh, secretary of the Bradford health branch, said rumours about the planned

privatisation began to circulate last August when the West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts (WYAAT) was set up by trust managers.

Ami said: "We had heard rumours about estates and facilities being singled out, as well as domestic staff and porters, and we could see this eventually leading to the service being completely outsourced."

"We said, hang on a minute, we don't have any representation in this process because in the early days WYAAT was like a closed shop. So we started to gather evidence and enlist the support of MPs

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in the region to expose the plans for what they are – privatisation by the back door – and build a campaign opposing them.”

A ‘wholly owned subsidiary company’ was established in Barnsley last year with ‘sugar coated’ assurances to staff that their pay and conditions were not at risk.

But, says Ami, after only three months we are already in dispute with management over changes to people’s contracts.

Labour MPs across the region are backing the union campaign and Keighley MP John Grogan managed to get hold of the full business case for the proposed company at Airedale.

Ami said: “We looked into this and found there were 33 wholly owned subsidiaries in hospitals across the country.

“These all came from the same source in Gateshead which was the first trust to introduce such a company into the NHS.

“We discovered that giant accountancy firm KPMG had found a loophole which would allow these companies to avoid paying VAT. They are allowed to reclaim VAT on services and costs which they would not be allowed to do if they were within the NHS.

“HMRC have expressed concerns because it appears that the companies are set up to avoid paying tax and not for performing commercial activities. Trusts have been



LABOUR
MPs
ACROSS
THE REGION
ARE
BACKING
THE UNION
CAMPAIGN



employing specialist tax advisors for this reason.

“But we know that there is nothing to stop these companies being sold off again to other private companies and because of that, assurances to members about their future pay and conditions are not worth the paper they are written on.

“Morale is plummeting in the NHS and privatising services will only make that worse. We already have a crisis in recruiting and retaining NHS staff and the creation of a two-tier workforce, with people working side by side on different pay and conditions, would be hugely damaging.

“If the Government funded the NHS properly there would be no need to come up with elaborate tax avoidance schemes.

“Our members have indicated they would, as a last resort, be prepared to take industrial action because they are proud of working for the NHS and know that these plans will slash pay and conditions in future.

“We know that at Airedale they have earmarked £1.5 million cuts to pay and conditions and that would simply drive people away from the service so we will continue demanding full public consultation and we are calling on the relevant authorities to drop the plans.”

UNISON’s regional head of health Tony Pearson said the union was doing

all it could to let the public know what is proposed for their health care and the issue was now high up the media agenda.

Tony said: “Labour MPs in the region have publicly condemned the trusts’ plans, describing them as ‘disastrous’, and are collecting signatures for an early day motion so it can be debated in the House of Commons.

“Trusts tried to mask this privatisation by referring to the new providers as ‘wholly-owned subsidiaries’ but no-one was fooled.

“Our members know that these plans will damage the quality of patient care and play a key role in the Government’s privatisation strategy for the NHS.

“Introducing American insurance companies into the health system is a long-standing ambition of the current government yet public opinion is firmly against any privatisation in the NHS.

“That is why we are campaigning against these companies wherever they are being considered. Public opinion and political opinion is turning decisively against privatisation. As we witness disasters like Carillion, with directors receiving huge salaries and bonuses as 20,000 jobs were lost, the message is clear.

“Privatisation is not the way to run public services and has no place in the NHS.” ■



Ami Singh:
We’re already
in dispute

FIGHTING PREJUDICE

Most people raise money for charity by taking part in a fun run or a coffee morning, but Lubna Lazrak had a fight instead.

UNISON rep Lubna stepped into the ring in a front of a cheering crowd as part of a 'white collar boxing' fundraiser in York.

The 43-year-old police call handler spent eight weeks training for the event in aid of Cancer Research.

"It was daunting going into the ring with someone knowing you're going to be punching each other. But when you're in there you just have to get on and box," said Lubna.

"I didn't think I'd picked anything up during the training but I surprised myself because I had. We drew in the end. It was knackered but amazing."

A year later Lubna, who has worked at North Yorkshire Police's control room for 14 years, decided she wanted a different kind of fight and became a UNISON rep; a role she's now held for three years.

One of the reasons Lubna became more involved with the union was seeing the way her mum, Mina, was treated at work.

Mina, who moved with Lubna's father Abdoula to the UK from Morocco in the early 1970s, was forced to take early retirement from her job as an auxiliary nurse after Lubna said she suffered racially motivated discrimination and bullying – a problem that is all too common within the NHS.

"She was well liked and respected on the wards, but there was one particular group who decided to target her," explained Lubna.

"That's what really pushed me

Lubna Lazrak fought for charity and she also battles for her police service colleagues. **Ryan Fletcher** talks to a woman with indomitable spirit

Photos: Vicky Matthews

into becoming a rep. My mum and dad, who also worked as a health care assistant, had always been in UNISON and they were treated well."

In fact, Lubna enjoyed her union duties so much that she spent the last year on secondment at the Leeds UNISON offices, where she provided assistance to other reps, arranged meetings and gained valuable insight into the day-to-day running of the organisation.

Returning to work at the beginning of 2018 took a bit of getting used to. One of the first emergency calls Lubna took ended up on the news – but not for the usual reasons.

"It was New Years Day, I was on the night shift and it was the first time I'd been back into the control room," said Lubna.

"I got a call from a gentleman who rang 999 asking why a takeaway wasn't open. He said: 'it's licensed premises and I want to know why it's closed'. I said 'this isn't a 999 call' and with that he started swearing and I terminated the call. But he rang back about four or five times."

As well as handling – mostly legitimate – calls and communications for the police, Lubna is also focusing on attracting more black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) recruits into the control room.

Currently there are just two BAME employees within a control room of around 70 people. Lubna, who is a decade long member of the North Yorkshire force's Black Police Association, which works closely with UNISON, says this has to change.

She said: "We cover a wide



area and we speak to people from various ethnicities and communities, so it's important to have BAME staff who have knowledge of specific issues or concerns. It's also important that police staff more accurately reflect the makeup of the public in general."

As the first of her family to be born in Britain, Lubna, who grew up in York but now lives in Leeds, understands the joys and difficulties of belonging to different cultures.

Her father, known as Abbey, first came to Britain to work as a butler and chauffeur for an upper-class family. Mina followed him soon after and within a few years Yorkshire lass Lubna was born.

Each year during Lubna's childhood, the family would undertake an epic three day drive from York to Morocco to spend a month with their relations.

When Lubna was 16, both Mina and Abbey began working in the NHS, where they would stay for the remainder of their careers.

Sadly five years ago Abbey died from cancer aged just 60. Abbey was a treasured staff

member at York's Bootham hospital and his experience was the polar opposite of the kind of discrimination that Mina faced at the end of her career.

Lubna said: "His boss Julia Moon really looked after him when he was diagnosed. When he left he received letters from the directors saying how much they respected him and how much of a hard worker he was."

It was a difficult time for Lubna, who also escaped domestic abuse at the hands of an ex-partner during the same period, but her indomitable spirit and involvement with UNISON helped to get her back up on her feet.

"I'm very passionate about the union, it gives great opportunities and it's developed me as a person," Lubna said.

"My confidence was very low prior to becoming a rep but within the last couple of years I've challenged myself fully and I plan to do more. I just want to do as much as I can to help people."

It should come as no surprise that Lubna also has ambitions to put her gloves back on for another charity boxing battle. ■

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WHEN
YOU'RE
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YOU JUST
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GET ON
AND BOX
”

HE'S BEHIND YOU!



Blogger, Fairy Godmother and branch chair of Leeds Teaching Hospitals John Ingleson knows he'll need more than a magic wand to deal with poverty pay. **Helen Hague** reports

In his day job, John Ingleson helps put children to sleep before operations at Leeds General. But just before Christmas, well away from the operating theatre, his task was very different – keeping the children in front of him wide-awake, laughing - and even shouting back.

Oh yes it was!

For John, UNISON branch chair at Leeds Teaching Hospitals, was cast as the Fairy Godmother in Cinderella, the hospital's children's Christmas panto, swapping his theatre scrubs for a rainbow tutu, pink vest and, of course, fairy wings.

It was a fantastic show. But, back in reality, even the Fairy Godmother can't magic away the Government's pay cap, which is plunging working families into poverty. Unions may have no fairy dust to sprinkle – but they can highlight the injustice of it all and campaign for all NHS workers to get a decent living wage. And for a health service that's properly funded, with protection and support at work if members need it.

These are some of the key messages John, a man of many talents, is keen to get across through 'John's

Blog' which has appeared on the union's website since the start of last year. Alongside encouraging rank and filers to get involved, it gives insights into the pay campaign, the rise of food banks and growing inequality. It's all winningly delivered with a lightness of touch that informs as it entertains.

John, 39, is convinced the best chance of winning improvements in pay and conditions is getting more people involved in the union, building solidarity and whetting appetites for campaigning. For some, this will lead to training as a workplace rep and beyond.

ENGAGING

John, a big fan of the Manic Street Preachers, wasn't always active in the union, though he has been a UNISON member for 14 years. A snippet from his first blog in January last year explains what prompted him to get more involved eleven years ago. It's delivered in his hallmark style - chatty and engaging with a serious undertow.

"I became active (I'm sure colleagues would describe me as sedentary) when I witnessed a much-loved colleague falsely accused of bullying. Supporting her during that time ignited a wish to help people and show solidarity with colleagues at tough times - I'm basically like Erin Brockovich just hairier."

Since then he's been on union courses, joined the branch committee, become chair and thrown himself

“
IT'S MORE
THAN
JUST A
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FOR ME
”

into union activism on home turf, supporting members on the ground.

The Leeds General, particularly the Clarendon Wing where John still works, has played a huge role in his life. It is where he met Hayley, the student nurse he went on to marry. The couple's daughter and son were both born on the wing. "You can see why it's more than just a workplace for me", says John, an ODP (Operating Department Practitioner), assisting the anaesthetist in theatre.

LOBBYING

Since becoming the Leeds Teaching Hospital branch chair, John works two days a week on union business on site – the rest of the working week back in theatre.

He enjoys meeting colleagues from other departments and disciplines, working on individual cases and lobbying for improvements.

There is, he says, 'a lot of discontent about pay' and it's nothing to do with the NHS trust for which he works. John, like other health service workers, has suffered a 'real terms' pay cut as the Government-imposed one per cent rise is outstripped by inflation. But it is colleagues lower down the pay scales that are really feeling the pinch.

"So many of our members are coming to us now. We have a food bank collection at branch meetings, started two years ago by our welfare officer. We send it to the Trussell Trust. People in our branch have been

given permission to hand out vouchers. The number of members needing help has risen sharply in the past year."

REVITALISE

In the past three years, with a new leadership team at the trust, relations between management and unions have improved markedly, says John. In the past year, UNISON has helped revitalise the Leeds Teaching staff-side health and safety group. John is now secretary.

He's all for co-operation to achieve the best outcomes for patients and staff, for getting problems sorted before they escalate. But, he adds: "Sometimes you have to draw battle lines."

In neighbouring trusts, selected groups of staff such as porters and those managing estates are being outsourced to new companies wholly owned by the NHS. Terms and conditions remain the same – for existing staff. But the model raises the prospect of a two-tier workforce when new staff are taken on, says John. "We would not want to see that happening here". There's already talk (see page 24).

The engaged, informed membership John is helping to build through his role as branch chair and blogger-with-a-light-touch could be put to the test. And, if so, it's a safe bet there'll be no Fairy Godmother on hand to magic away the looming threat of a two-tier workforce. Old-fashioned solidarity could prove a lot more potent than fairy dust and magic wands. Not to mention a bit of timely blogging. ■



LET THEM EAT CAKE

Politicians can find billions of pounds to refurbish Parliament, but can't find the money to make buildings like Grenfell Tower safe, says **Peter Carroll**

The proposed £3.5 billion refurbishment of the Houses of Parliament that has now been approved by MPs has certainly given the Prime Minister's 'magic money tree' a good shake.

Engulfed as we are in a toxic cloud of Tory austerity (including, among many other outrages, no money for the NHS, eight year pay freezes, private companies squandering taxpayers' money straight into their own bank accounts, food banks and cruel benefits cuts to the most vulnerable) there's always enough in the kitty when the centres

of Establishment power in London demand it.

We are told that the Houses of Parliament are central to our heritage, an essential part of the fabric of these islands, a listed Victorian treasure which once boldly announced Britain's, now lost, imperial power to a grateful world. These buildings must be preserved, at all costs, for future generations to admire and even revere.

So the MPs and Lords will have to pack up and ship out into temporary accommodation for six years, picking their way through the ever-growing number of

rough sleepers on our streets, to take up residence in nearby Richmond House in Whitehall.

Gone are the proposals to devolve central government activities across the country by basing Parliament in the Midlands or the North. Not long ago, bursting the Westminster bubble and ensuring an equitable distribution of power and resources throughout the country was the talk of the political classes.

Against bitter opposition from staff in London and the South East commuter belt, the BBC moved some of its national operations to Salford,

“THERE IS SUCH A CHASM BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH”



reflecting its commitment to the whole country.

It was supposed to be a pioneering move by the BBC which other national institutions would emulate. But none have done so, not the politicians, the financial institutions or the press.

That's why there is such a chasm between the North and the South in terms of funding. In every area of state spending, including education and transport infrastructure, the vast majority of investment is targeted at London and the South East.

But within the financially overheated capital there are also huge discrepancies. The money earmarked for refurbishing Parliament seems even more indefensible when the horror of the Grenfell tower block is considered.

Ironically, refurbishing Parliament is said to be a health and safety issue because the buildings have a 'high pressure

steam heating system that could burst at any time' according to one MP. 8,000 staff are employed to keep the place running and it has a million visitors a year.

If only such concerns led to the government investing in buildings where ordinary people live. As one MP pointed out in the debate on the refurbishment costs: "I see no signs saying to visitors 'Welcome to the death trap'". But, tragically, there should have been such a sign at the entrance to Grenfell Tower. Meanwhile, up and down the country, UNISON is leading campaigns against further NHS privatisation as health trust bosses try to introduce 'wholly-owned subsidiary companies' to run porters, cleaning staff, ward catering and laundry.

COLLAPSE

The plan is to cut NHS pay and conditions for future employees, creating a two-tier workforce and driving dedicated staff away from the service because they cannot afford the basics of life on their ever-shrinking wages.

And after the collapse of Carillion, and the financial chaos at Capita, the spotlight is firmly on the waste of taxpayers' money being handed to private companies who proceed to rip off the public a second time by charging hospitals hundreds of pounds to change a light bulb or move a bed to an adjoining room. Privatising public services is now widely seen as a racket to enrich the few and provide poverty wages and crap services to the many



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- until they siphon off the profits to themselves and then go bust.

APPALLING

We have been warned that robots with artificial intelligence are waiting in the wings to take everyone's jobs with some economists predicting they could soon replace humans, not only in warehouses and car factories, but in medicine, the law, journalism and teaching.

So it's not far-fetched to think that the appalling way public sector workers are being treated is just a precursor to companies not needing to employ them at all. Just bring in computerised robots, cut out the wage bill altogether and keep all the profits.

But while there are people still toiling in warehouses, giant company Amazon has invented a device which tracks their workers' every movement and location and uses vibrations to nudge them in a different direction if the controller wants to.

In his novel 1984 Orwell predicted this Big Brother system of control would come to pass, but he could not have known how quickly robotics and artificial intelligence would advance.

So future generations might enjoy wandering round a refurbished Palace of Westminster, but in the here and now, we urgently need ministers to tackle the profound crisis in our public services by ending austerity - and to start addressing the implications for human beings of new technology. ■



Peter Carroll



PAUL ROUTLEDGE

Mirror political columnist

Saluting two giants of the union

UNISON has lost two much-loved and respected figures who had one thing in common: total commitment to the interests of the members - often at the cost of their own. In their different ways Rodney Bickerstaffe and Cliff Williams embodied the indomitable spirit of this great union

I've never before started off a column with a funeral. But the celebration of the life of Cliff Williams, former regional secretary of UNISON for Yorkshire and Humberside, was different.

Hundreds turned out for the occasion in Scarborough, and I wasn't surprised because he was a much-loved official who gave his life to fight for public service workers and their political causes.

And he did it without a university degree, after leaving school at 16 in Manchester to work in the water industry.

He showed that a workplace UNISON rep can rise to the top - he became the right-hand man in London to Dave Prentis - by sheer hard work and commitment.

Cliff's life and achievements [Obituary, page 16] are an example to all activists, not just because he 'made good' but because he brought a sense of belonging, of family, to trade union membership.

He had time for everybody, as did Rodney Bickerstaffe, UNISON's first general secretary, whose Requiem Mass I also attended in Doncaster a few weeks earlier.

'Bick' as he was affectionately known, had a higher national profile than Cliff. He welded three public-service unions into the one powerful body we have today, and he gave the country the National Minimum Wage.

These two men had one thing in common: a total commitment to the members and their interests, quite often at the cost of their own.

It is that spirit that still informs this movement, that makes it all worthwhile, even when the going is hard - indeed, especially when the going is hard.

I salute them both, and those who today aspire to be like them.

YORKLAND UBER ALLES

Yorkshire is God's Own Country, we all know that. But a real country, with an international football team?

Aye! It's now a member of the Confederation of Independent Football Nations, Conifa for short. Fifa, eat your heart out.

The team is based at Hemsworth Miners' Welfare Club, and has already played its first game against the Isle of Man. Other self-styled nations in the league include Greenland, Zanzibar and Tibet.

Away games sound a bit tricky. Get them yaks saddled up, bosses of the Yorkshire International Football Association.

CASHLESS SOCIETY

Unlucky postcode YO13 in the Scarborough area has been identified as one of the worst-provided with cash machines in the country.

Not surprising, really. Much of the postal district lies in the beautiful North York Moors, where there are more sheep than people.

I imagine they use Bitcoin, whatever that is.

WAKEY WAKEY!

My old school - Normanton Grammar, now a Junior Academy - was among more than twenty left in the lurch by the collapse of Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT).

Shortly before the failure, millions of pounds of schools' funds were mysteriously transferred into the trust's centralised account. Imran Hussain MP, has asked the Prime Minister why hundreds of thousands were taken from two schools in his Bradford East constituency.

She side-stepped the question, prompting Imran to liken the situation to the Carillion affair, adding: "As we see from the collapse of WCAT last year, the government's murky relationship with the private



I SALUTE
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sector runs much deeper.”

Nothing less than a public inquiry will satisfy parents and teachers caught up in the Wakey schools scandal. Not to mention old boys like me.

RED REVOLUTION

Red squirrels, cute little creatures, were wiped out in our part of the world by the terrible winter of 1962/3 and a fatal pox spread by invasive American greys.

But they're back. You can see them in the wild at the red squirrel viewing area at the Widdale Nature Reserve, Snaizholme, right at the top of Wensleydale.

And when the new Northern Forest, from Liverpool through the Pennines to Hull is planted, they may be reintroduced there, too.

Just thought you'd like to know that.

TRIPLE AS ART?

Leeds grieved while Hull celebrated. Why? Because one had its Euro-year in the limelight and the other had its hopes dashed.

Hull's City of Culture 2017 was an outstanding success, bringing 3.6 million people to more than two thousand events. Plus billions of investment.

Leeds wanted a slice of the action, spending big money on a bid to become European City of Culture 2023. But Brussels bureaucrats ruled that Brexit Britain will be out of the EU by then, so can't host the event. Much wailing and gnashing of teeth in Civic Hall.

Dunno why. Leeds is already a successful, vibrant city with a hugely-varied cultural scene from Carnival to opera, pop concerts to cycle races. Loiners don't need the stamp of European approval to know they're having a good time.

But councillors thwarted by Brexit refuse to give in. They plan a watered-down Yorkshire City of Culture Year, doubtless with chip sculptures, pudding dances, tripe art installations, that kind of thing.

DEATH BY TEXT

Air-raid sirens were decommissioned 25 years ago, so telecom boffins are drawing up plans for the government to alert us by text when nuclear Armageddon arrives.

As I don't do text, I'll miss the msg, but I suppose the bright light in the sky will be unmistakable – though not for long.

HEALTH WARNING

NHS bosses at my local hospital, Airedale General, Keighley, are setting up a company to run basic services like cleaning, portering and catering on the ward.

Local MP John Grogan denounced the plan as 'creeping privatisation', a charge denied by trust managers. But I believe him, not them.

It costs £350,000 to set up the company, and internal management documents say the change will save £7.5 million over five years. Trust bosses claim the new company would 'generate income from new sources.'

Oh aye? Like where? They promise to keep existing terms and conditions for current staff, but give no such guarantee for new employees.

Unison's Michael Parkinson went on Sunday Politics to denounce the scheme. "This will just create instability, workforce and recruitment problems and that will impact on long-term services and the quality of patient care. Privatisation is not the answer. Private companies create new and worse terms and conditions."

Now, the Airedale trick is proposed at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust, and in Bradford. In Huddersfield, about 380 porters, gardeners, cleaners and maintenance workers are affected.

Natalie Ratcliffe, UNISON's regional health organiser, says: "These plans will do nothing to protect the NHS, and can only hasten the process of creeping privatisation." ■

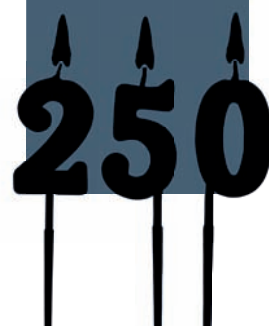
LEEDS IN THE LEAD

There were hospitals before the NHS, of course. And one, Leeds General Infirmary, has just celebrated its 250th anniversary.

LGI, as everyone knows it, started life 'for the relief of the sick and poor' in a private house by Kirkgate market in 1767, before moving to a purpose-built home near City Square four years later.

The hospital moved to its 'new' site on Great George Street in 1869, where it still stands in a complex of wings. Further expansion is planned, including a 'dedicated child-friendly environment for young patients'.

As the NHS comes up for its 70th birthday, it's good to know that Yorkshire was a pioneer in social healthcare at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.





MINISTERS SLEEPING ON THE JOB

Dodgy employers are failing to compensate 'sleep-in' care workers for paying them less than the minimum wage. **Iain Birrell**, of Thompsons Solicitors' Leeds office accuses the Government of taking its eye off the ball

There are around half a million home care workers in the UK - including many UNISON members - who are sometimes required to undertake 'sleep-in' working at the homes of those they are caring for. In November 2017 the Government finally set up a scheme to ensure bosses pay the National Minimum Wage (NMW) to their workers for sleep-in shifts. But, although a welcome if delayed move, the arrangements for paying backpay gives slapdash or exploitative bosses far too much rope.

Up to now the regulations have been that sleep-in shifts can count as work for which NMW is payable. Historically, however, many of the companies that offer the service have paid the workers actually doing the job a flat rate below the NMW. The new rules mean that these providers are now liable to pay (often substantial) sleeping time in arrears.

The government's new Social Care Compliance Scheme (SCCS) gives social care employers who have under-paid

workers for sleep-in shifts up to a year to identify what they owe.

Where a worker complains under the scheme about having been paid below the NMW, their boss will be contacted directly by HMRC. Incredibly, given that workers may have been underpaid for months or years and employers will know that, the SCCS requires providers to conduct a thorough review in order to identify and then pay out any wage arrears to their workers. The government gives them twelve months to conduct this review and then another three months to pay what they owe.

Providing all arrears are paid within the required timescales, by 31 March 2019, bosses who have exploited their workers for months or even years will face no financial penalties and no public naming and shaming. It's only employers who don't opt in to the scheme who will be subject to the full investigative process - including financial penalties, public naming and shaming and, potentially, prosecution.

Regardless of when an

employer enters the SCCS, the deadline for repaying arrears to workers will not be later than March 31 2019.

We welcome a system that ultimately leads to workers being paid what they are lawfully entitled to, but this new process is deeply flawed and allows incompetent (or worse) bosses to get away with their shady past at the expense of under-paid and hard-working employees.

Its implementation has also been confusing for providers. As late as February 2016, HMRC was issuing guidance that care workers were not entitled to the NMW for sleep-in shifts, other than in exceptional circumstances. Care providers followed that advice and the Government created a rod for its own back.

Once again, those who have really lost out are the workers who still have to wait for wages they are owed, while hoping their employer does not go bust in the meantime. The National Minimum Wage Act has been around since 1998 and the lack of clarity and delay is nothing short of a scandal. ■

“THE LACK OF CLARITY AND DELAY IS NOTHING SHORT OF A SCANDAL”



Iain Birrell, partner and practice lead of Thompsons Solicitors' trade union law group

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