

ACTIVE!

UNISON
the public service union

MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE
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THE FUTURE STARTS HERE

P20

UNISON's impressive new Leeds HQ

P3,5,6&10

CORONAVIRUS: YOUR UNION IS WITH YOU

All the pictures in this issue were taken before strict rules on social isolation were introduced because of the coronavirus pandemic. The emergency also means that this edition of Active! is digital only.

COVID-19

Your rights at work & more...

The situation is changing quickly - so visit the UNISON Yorkshire & Humberside website for links to the latest guidance

As is the case across the country, UNISON branches in our region are advising, supporting and representing members as the nation adjusts to the challenge of COVID-19. These are difficult times for everyone, and our members are amongst those on the frontline, doing the critical work they always do in unprecedented circumstances. UNISON is here to help you and your families.

Members needing advice relating to the impact of COVID-19 on their employment may find the Y&H regional website useful in answering basic queries.

www.unison-yorks.org.uk

Links include...

- UNISON – Coronavirus: Your rights at work
- Public Health England guidance
- Local Government Association guidance
- NHS Staff Council guidance
- ACAS guidance for employers and employees
- UNISON: school closures guidance
- There for You: Financial help for UNISON members

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Humberside

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SO INCREDIBLY PROUD

It is hard to continue to find the words to express what an extraordinary time this is. Coronavirus is disrupting the lives of all of us in ways unimaginable just a few short weeks ago. Safe to say, none of us has experienced anything like this and none of us really knows what will happen next. But in such uncertain times for our communities and our country, there are positives and examples of real hope, courage, leadership and selflessness.

UNISON is at the forefront of the response. Whether it's working behind the scenes with other unions, the TUC and with government to make sure the policies are in place to protect workers and workers' pay during

this national emergency, or practically supporting members like you on the frontline of the response.

As I've said before, I am so incredibly proud of how this union is pulling together. In the most extreme circumstances the work done by our members in stepping up to the ultimate challenge of saving lives and keeping essential services running wherever possible is truly humbling. And the work done by our activists, and our staff to support our members in that endeavour is just as vital, important and impressive.

We are witnessing true public service every minute of every day during this crisis. Thank you, as ever, for all you are doing.



DAVE PRENTIS
GENERAL SECRETARY

Dave Prentis

NEEDLESS DEATHS

The courage, skill and dedication of our members on the front-line of this appalling pandemic is inspirational.

After years of contempt - justifying privatisation and government underfunding - we now see Tory politicians queuing up to heap praise on the public sector.

The hypocrisy is shameless. Austerity has been a systematic drive to privatise public services, erode our members' wages and enrich Tory supporters. But the lies behind all the pain and misery inflicted on society has been exposed.

Suddenly we are all in this together (remember David Cameron?) - interdependent and equal.

That's because this virus does not respect wealth and

power - although wealth and power determines who gets tested for the illness.

NHS and health and social care council staff, unlike royalty and members of the Government, have not been tested.

Nor have they been given the protective equipment they need to work safely. People are needlessly dying as a result.

Meanwhile the whole country shows its gratitude and respect for our heroic members who are keeping society functioning and risking their own health.

The Government thinks it can ride this wave until the crisis ends, only to revert to its attacks on public sector funding.

It needs to think again. Things have changed.



WENDY NICHOLS
REGIONAL CONVENOR

W. Nichols

RETHINK AT ACADEMIES TRUST

UNISON has won a rethink of a major shake-up at a multi-academy trust which would have led to wage cuts of up to £5000, dramatic changes to jobs and an increase in the gender pay gap.

After talks involving unions, management and the Local Government Association, the March 1 deadline has been shifted forward to September 1.

The Wakefield-based Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) which operates 32 schools across three UNISON regions - Yorkshire & Humberside, Northern and the East Midlands - initially refused to delay implementation. But under pressure from UNISON it has since agreed to look again at its proposals.

UNISON area organiser Sarah Keig said that while management had kept both UNISON and the GMB informed about the job evaluation exercise, neither union had been consulted about the details.

Sarah visited most of the schools in Yorkshire & Humberside to speak to members and she contacted other regions which did the same. "The overwhelming feedback was that whilst OGAT had been telling the trade unions that consultation with staff had taken place, it hadn't. There was a lot of anger amongst staff as some are set to lose thousands of pounds because of the changes to their jobs. There were also concerns about the actual job roles, which in some cases have changed dramatically."

COME AND HAVE A FLUTTER!!

SATURDAY AFTERNOON
AUGUST 1ST 2020

Coronavirus permitting why not join other UNISON members, their families and friends at our union's Doncaster Raceday on Saturday August 1, 2020?

It's a great day out and there's a special deal for UNISON members. You can get two grandstand tickets for the price of one at just £13.

Members can upgrade to the county stand – two tickets for a total of £30 (usually £32.50 each).

To book call 01302 3042000, quote UNISON RACEDAY OFFER, your membership number or UNISON branch code. Tickets are on sale now – offer closes at 5pm July 24, 2020.

UNISON
Yorkshire and
Humberside

There will be a refund on all tickets if racing is suspended.



COVID-19 PAY CUT SCRAPPED

Following massive pressure from UNISON, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust reversed a disgraceful decision to cut the pay of trainee nursing associates and end their training.

The trainees received letters telling them that, because of the coronavirus crisis, their training would stop, with no resumption guaranteed. Nursing associate training primarily involves on-the-job learning.

As part of the draconian decision they would also be expected to take a pay cut of up to £1,700 – even as they were deployed to the front-line in the fight against COVID-19.

However following some fantastic joint working between the region and the branch, and with members showing “great solidarity and resilience,” the move was scrapped.

The trust announced that trainees will be paid at the proper rate during the crisis and when training restarts they’ll be able to resume their places.

Regional organiser Sue Cookman said the decision had been a “PR disaster” that “flew in the face of government guidelines”. Nationwide, it has been decided that the vital work that trainees are doing might count toward their training.

Branch secretary John Campbell welcomed the trust’s change of heart, adding: “The members will be hugely reassured by this, as am I.

“I hope that we can continue to work constructively together with the trust, in partnership in the testing times that surely lie ahead.”

P10: practical support.



John Campbell:
Testing
times ahead



Sue Cookman:
NHS Trust’s
‘PR disaster’

BOOST FOR FRONTLINE STAFF

Rotherham Council is the latest local authority to sign up to UNISON’s ethical care charter.

Council leader Chris Read joined UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis to sign the document on February 19. Rotherham joins Sheffield, York, Leeds (stages 1&2), Hull and Bradford as signatories in the region.

The charter commits Rotherham Council to continue working with employers to help end zero-hours contracts and reflect travel time between home visits in care workers’ pay.

Under the charter all home care firms with council contracts will pay at least the £9.30 an hour real living wage from this April, meaning a pay rise for around 800 staff.

Regional secretary John Cafferty and regional manager Karen Loughlin both stressed how Covid-19 had highlighted the importance of home care workers.

Said John: “The current unprecedented pandemic has starkly brought into the open just how valuable but undervalued these workers are, particularly the home care workers.”

Karen added: “The current crisis has highlighted how key these front line staff are at supporting some of the most isolated and vulnerable members of society. Unlike many other organisations Rotherham Council has recognised the value of these staff by adopting UNISON’s charter.”

Photo: Pete Jenkins



Left to right:
Cabinet member for
adult social care David
Roche, council leader
Chris Read, UNISON
general secretary Dave
Prentis and branch
secretary Ruth Askwith



HEROES EVERY ONE

Consulting editor **Mary Maguire** reviews the media coverage of the coronavirus pandemic, pointing out that many of the front-line troops fighting the disease are UNISON members

The biggest news story the world has seen for many decades initially spluttered onto news bulletins between the devastating storms Brendan, Ciara and Dennis. A deadly new virus many thousands of miles away in a province of China had broken out and was heading to a newspaper near you.

At first, analysis and reporting was academic and factual with the South Yorkshire Post's typical "people returning to the UK from China have been urged to self-isolate". And boffins were given an airing to discuss symptoms, origins, expected trajectory and the likelihood of a vaccine being developed. Until, that was, the first two UK victims were tracked down to a York hotel (The Star).

This was followed quickly by the discovery of a third UK victim, who, according to the Telegraph & Argus contracted the virus in Asia, but not in China, and then there was a fourth.

Overnight, headline writers went into overdrive – using emotive language and declaring that the "deadly virus" had gripped the nation. "UK faces major outbreak", "Virus could be more deadly than Ebola" and "NHS could be overwhelmed". Although the remarks of the chief medical officer that "The NHS is well prepared to manage these cases", fell on deaf ears, apart from the Telegraph & Argus.

Headlines sparking fear and panic continued as Britons were evacuated from Wuhan, China and placed straight into a two-week quarantine. Intrepid reporters broke through to interview them, describing "British man's frantic escape from virus-hit China" (Mirror) and "Escape from Hell" as the final rescue flight landed at an RAF base (Sun).

News of "Britons infected at French ski resort" and a British couple among passengers confined to cabins on a cruise liner, was accompanied

by the sombre prognosis that the disease was "spiralling deeper into crisis" with one official warning of "wartime conditions". The UK declared the virus a "serious and imminent threat to public health".

The "hunt" for coronavirus carriers was stepped up, according to most commentators, as the "trail leads from Singapore to UK and France". And one boffin didn't help matters by declaring to the Hull Daily Mail, "the genie has escaped from the bottle".

None of the hyperbole, however, could capture the horror of what happened next. The most deadly pandemic for a century affected every single country, county and town.

News pictures of supermarket shelves stripped of such virus-fighting essentials as toilet roll, spaghetti and tins of tuna, fuelled panic as country after country started closing borders, cancelling sporting events and ordering citizens to stay indoors.

Each day brings fresh terror to our TV screens with mounting tallies of cases and deaths around the world. Here at home, the NHS struggles valiantly on as "the deadly virus claims more victims" (The Examiner). The BBC recovered its reputation as a public service broadcaster with its daily news updates, around the regions and the world, and advice and information.

Prime Minister Johnson was forced to hold daily press conferences in which the nation was exhorted to pull together, as the years of austerity exposed the weaknesses in our NHS and public services.

The media continues to forecast more deaths and a nation in lock-down for some months, and now, every single outlet, is fulsome in its praise of our fantastic NHS staff, our care staff, our council and public service workers, UNISON members, keeping us safe, battling an invisible enemy at great personal risk - heroes every single one. □



EACH DAY
BRINGS
FRESH
TERROR
TO OUR TV
SCREENS

Mary Maguire



COVID-19

Join UNISON now

www.join.unison.org.uk

ESSENTIAL COVER WHEREVER YOU WORK



Join UNISON online
join.unison.org.uk

**In these uncertain times
there's never been a better
time to join UNISON.**

- advice, support and help at work
- legal help for you at work and your family at home
- training to help develop your career
- plus a wide range of exclusive member discounts

Annual salary	Monthly cost
Up to £2,000	£1.30
£2,001–£5,000	£3.50
£5,001–£8,000	£5.30
£8,001–£11,000	£6.60
£11,001–£14,000	£7.85
£14,001–£17,000	£9.70
£17,001–£20,000	£11.50
£20,001–£25,000	£14.00
£25,001–£30,000	£17.25
£30,001–£35,000	£20.30
over £35,000	£22.50



It's absolutely vital to get the union's message out – especially under a Tory government with ambitions to destroy public services. Active! feature writer **Helen Hague** talks to activist, NHS worker and arch-communicator Rob Allen who was a key player in the Sodexo strike victory

When it comes to communicating, you could say NHS worker Rob Allen is a bit of a natural. After all, you don't get your own community radio music show without having the gift of the gab.

Away from the turntables, Rob, chair and communications officer for UNISON's 3,000-strong Doncaster and Bassetlaw health branch, is intent on engaging and delivering for members. And he's

unashamedly embracing social media to get the union's message out.

Former nightclub DJ Rob – he remembers favouring Blur over Oasis back in the nineties – has been working at Doncaster Royal Infirmary in pharmacy logistics, making sure drugs get to where they are needed, for well over a decade.

Social media is already transforming how members engage with the union, says Rob it has the potential to achieve much more, benefiting members and

helping unions deliver a fairer deal for workers.

Rob, 44, is no stranger to union struggles and activism: he grew up during the miners' strike and remembers joining his dad on the picket line outside Markham Main colliery when still at primary school.

He joined UNISON when he started working at the infirmary thirteen years ago. But, in what is a familiar journey for rank and filers who become activists, he became more engaged when he needed help from



THE UNION HELPED ME OUT SO MUCH WHEN I NEEDED IT. I WANTED TO DO THE SAME FOR OTHER PEOPLE

- ROB ALLEN

You can catch up with Rob Allen (opposite) on Deadbeat Club on Sine FM 102.6 community radio Thursdays at 9pm. If you live outside Doncaster listen live at www.sinefm.com

the union – and the union delivered.

For Rob, activism started after a rogue needle stick injury at work towards the end of 2017. It had ended up in general waste rather than the sharps bin. He was tested for hepatitis and had to wait two weeks for the results of an HIV test. “The union helped me out so much when I needed it. I wanted to do the same for other people,” says Rob.

Two colleagues nominated him as a steward and he hasn’t looked back. Since then, he has been on courses at Northern College in Barnsley, in organising, negotiating and health and safety, and has been “blown away” by UNISON’s education programme.

Rob knows first-hand the importance of education for stewards and lay officials – as branch chair he has to be ready for whatever comes along – calling out health and safety breaches, supporting members in individual disputes, promoting the cause when there’s a collective grievance. He played a vital role when catering members voted for industrial action in May last year.

Catering members at the two hospitals had their jobs outsourced to Sodexo last May and voted to strike over pay. The hospital trust had agreed a three-year pay deal back in April 2018. After just two days “Sodexo completely caved in,” says Rob. “We had local TV coverage on Look North and Calendar and coverage in local papers.”

Social media shares and retweets played a vital role in spreading the word and bolstering morale: there

were over 18,000 “likes” on an upbeat film of the strikers posted on the branch Facebook page. This showed solidarity in action, workers banding together – and banners aplenty against a lively soundtrack. The three-year pay increase was backdated – giving members between £800 and £3,000 back pay.

The Sodexo strike victory shows UNISON’s strategy of ensuring private contractors pay the agreed three-year NHS pay rise is achievable. Success breeds success – and social media posts from that picket line helped inspire outsourced domestic workers at Princess Alexandra hospital in Harlow to take industrial action. They too got a result.

Regional organiser Sue Cookman is quick to acknowledge the key role Rob played in the Sodexo victory.

“Rob was amazing, ensuring pictures and video footage of the strike went far and wide and getting local politicians down to the picket line.” Ed Miliband was among them.

On the final morning, as the victory sunk in, Sue, sheltering from the rain in a bus shelter, recalls Rob was prompting her to get a press release out sharpish. “It was as if I had an additional regional organiser at my side.”

And it wasn’t just a flash in the pan. “Rob has been unbelievably good. And he goes from strength to strength. As branch chair he is encouraging and engaging. Branch

communication has never been better.”

In his role as communications officer, Rob has beefed up the branch website, embraced twitter, instagram and Facebook, and set up WhatsApp members’ groups. He updates content regularly so sites don’t look stale.

He has more in store for the coming year – and hopes to get podcasts up and running on the union website, including interviews with stewards and members, on how members benefit from union courses.

Rob reckons unions must move with the times and recognise members “are far more likely to be checking their phones than checking for updates on the union noticeboard”.

Whatever the branch achieves Rob will be making sure people get to know about it – on Facebook and Instagram, twitter and maybe even the branch app he hopes to launch before the year is out ... □



“ROB WAS AMAZING, ENSURING PICTURES AND VIDEO FOOTAGE OF THE STRIKE WENT FAR AND WIDE”
- SUE COOKMAN





PRIDE, PASSION, PRACTICAL SUPPORT

UNISON members are facing unimaginable stress because of the pandemic, including a critical lack of personal protective equipment and woefully inadequate IT. **Peter Carroll** reports

UNISON is doing all in its power to protect members and their families through the Coronavirus crisis.

Vital advice is available on our website on all aspects of how the pandemic is affecting members' lives.

And regular updates are keeping members fully informed and supported as the effects of the illness on society are monitored. UNISON has raised its concerns at the highest levels about the lack of personal protective equipment for members, including NHS staff and the thousands of members who work in home and community care services.

Tony Pearson, regional head of health in Yorkshire and Humberside urged members to use UNISON's national link, set up for staff

to report the difficulties they are experiencing in obtaining personal protective equipment.

Tony said: "Our biggest request is that members go on that link to provide information about which trusts and which care homes have not got enough PPE to keep staff and those they care for safe.

"This is a particularly worrying issue in private nursing and care homes where we are being told that there are insufficient supplies of PPE.

"So it's vital members keep us informed because when we have information, we take it direct to government and keep the pressure on to get the equipment they need.

"This isn't about trying to make political points. There's a time to look at what has gone wrong but the priority

now is that we do everything we can to protect our members who are on the front-line saving people's lives."

He added that members were rightly being applauded and treated as heroes in a national expression of respect and gratitude. But without adequate PPE the heroes' lives were being put needlessly at risk.

Serious concerns have also been raised by UNISON about a lack of modern IT equipment in the NHS. A recent story in the Health Service Journal claimed there were many NHS staff who should be working from home, but who lack the technology to do so.

"This not acceptable. We know some members find it very difficult to work from home when some of their friends have to go in.



IT'S VITAL
MEMBERS
KEEP US
INFORMED



- You are pregnant
- You are disabled, over 70 or have an underlying health condition
- You're worried about paying your bills, about redundancy or being "furloughed"
- You're worried how your pension may be affected by COVID-19

It is also vitally important to keep members informed of the help that UNISON's welfare charity There For You can provide. (see panel).

The charity is helping more and more members during this crisis. As the website explains: "Some of our members are losing work and have no income because they are on zero hours contracts.

"Some are having their hours cut or being made redundant without redundancy pay. Many are also facing a situation where someone in the household is self-employed and family income has drastically dropped.

"Some members and their families are self-isolating and need emergency grants from There For You."

Examples include a member, Cath, who applied for help with funeral costs for her partner.

Because of the virus, only a private cremation was possible but the charity

has made a grant to cover cremation costs and living costs so her young son and herself can have a service to say goodbye to their loved one sometime in the future.

Countless other members have been helped through hardship thanks to the generosity of UNISON members. Activists have a vital role to play supporting There For You and ensuring it can continue to help our brothers and sisters when they are struggling. Branches are being asked to make donations to the charity by direct bank transfer.

General secretary Dave Prentis has expressed his pride at the way UNISON is pulling together in this unprecedented pandemic.

He said: "We are witnessing true public service every minute of every day. Thank you. I am so proud of the part being played by the UK's biggest union – members, activists and staff working together – in this national emergency.

"Whatever comes next, we have to keep going. And I know we will. Thank you, as ever, for all you are doing."

There For You embodies the essence of those commitments and deserves our passionate support. □

“WE KNOW SOME MEMBERS FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO WORK FROM HOME

That's because of the great camaraderie among our members.

"But some members should work from home and we want to see adequate equipment to make sure members can do that."

If members need advice about any aspect of the current crisis UNISON's national and regional websites can provide all the information you need.

There is detailed and up-to-date advice on what to do if:

- You think you or someone you live with has Covid-19
- You have to go to work
- You need protective equipment (PPE) to do your job
- You need to work from home
- You are affected by school closures or travel restrictions

THERE FOR YOU

You can join the UNISON's There for You lottery for as little as £1 a month and you could win cash prizes of up to £1,000. At least 50 per cent of the proceeds from each draw goes towards prize money, and every entry includes a donation to There for You. UNISON members and branches can play. Or you could make direct donations to: There For You, Unity Trust Bank, Sort Code: 60-83-01, Account number: 20215147



Tony Pearson



Dave Prentis



MAN OF THE MOMENT

Keir Starmer (above) was elected with a massive majority as the new Labour party leader. But he faces huge challenges, including coronavirus, Brexit and austerity says Mirror columnist **Paul Routledge**

Keir Starmer took over the leadership of the Labour Party amid the greatest crisis since World War Two. The coronavirus pandemic is still raging, millions are losing their jobs and we have a woefully inadequate Tory government.

He is the overwhelming choice of the party membership - and UNISON - and he will be defined by how he tackles this crisis in

coming months.

Welcoming Keir's victory, regional secretary John Cafferty said: "Finally, after a tortuous process, we can move on with a capable and competent leader to undertake the real task of getting a Labour government elected - a government that will look after ordinary working people and improve their lives."

And regional convenor Wendy Nichols adds: "Keir

has a proud reputation in support of the working class and the new deputy leader Angela Rayner is one of us. I look forward to working with them."

Yet, with Angela as his number two - Angela is a former regional convenor for UNISON in the North West - he still has to mount a credible Opposition at Westminster while uniting Labour as the party of the people. He has chosen



THE FIGHT
AGAINST
AUSTERITY
MUST
CONTINUE

a Shadow Cabinet of competent, experienced MPs to restore the credibility of Labour as a potential administration.

Yorkshire MPs will be back on the frontbench, including Rachel Reeves, shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; John Healey, shadow defence secretary; Ed Miliband, shadow business secretary and Louise Haigh, interim shadow for Northern Ireland while Tony Lloyd recovers from coronavirus.

From the outset, the new Labour leader joined a formal consultation process with Boris Johnson on measures to fight the Covid-19 emergency. While still grappling with the pandemic, Keir has to fashion a more convincing policy on Brexit. Talks with the EU are stalled – not least because the chief negotiators on both sides got the bug – but they must intensify by the autumn if the UK is to secure a trade agreement by December 31. Since his election Keir has already registered scepticism that the deadline can be met.

One alternative would be to seek a bargaining extension of current half-in, half-out arrangements for six months or more. That might be attractive to pro-Europe Keir, but would paint him as an unreconstructed Remainer in the minds of Labour supporters who “lent” their vote to the Tories.

Importantly for UNISON members, he comes into office committed to ending outsourcing in the NHS and local government, with a goal of making health as important as running the economy.

One legacy of the Corbyn years must not be forgotten: the fight against austerity,

which Jeremy made into a mainstream issue. Labour led the campaign to secure the jobs and incomes of workers hit by the corona crisis, and it’s vital that continues.

Until the unions brought up the issue, Tory ministers had simply forgotten about the plight of workers when they budgeted for an economic downturn. Faced with public outrage, they did a deal with the unions via the TUC on “furloughing” employees, for sick pay and other entitlements. Keir has to ensure that these provisions continue, in law if possible.

Thousands of UNISON members are giving their all to the NHS and care sector in the fightback against coronavirus. Their sacrifice cannot be allowed to be in vain.

Discreetly, he might also want to put in hand preparations for a general election – strange though that sounds. Commentators like my Daily Mirror colleague Kevin Maguire say an early poll is vital once the current crisis has passed. In our region, he has to prepare for an election for a Mayor of West Yorkshire and delayed council polls in May 2021.

The crisis has averted one potential disaster – the May 7 local elections. They’ve been cancelled, so existing councils will stay in power for another year. This gives the party some breathing space.

Labour was due to defend hundreds of seats in Rotherham (all 63 on the unitary authority) and a third of the metropolitan councils in Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Sheffield, Wakefield and Hull.

Keir’s party (how good that sounds) currently controls all these councils, making West and South Yorkshire the Red County. Fifteen seats on North East Lincs were also up for grabs.

The Tories made sweeping parliamentary gains across the region last December, and Labour’s private polling predicted “the worst local election performance in recent history” with a worst case scenario of 315 losses. Labour was predicted to lose Calderdale and Kirklees and possibly even Sheffield City, once hailed as capital of the Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire.

That calamity has been avoided, but our councils still face a tough year. As Leeds Labour leader Judith Blake points out: “Austerity is not over.”

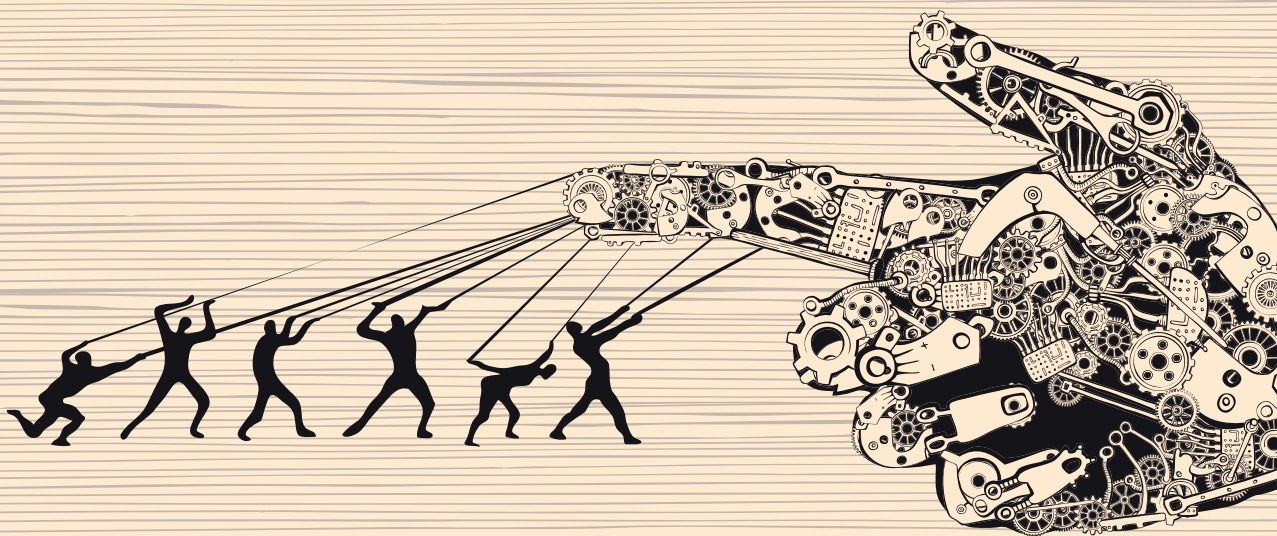
In the March Budget, Chancellor Rishi Sunak boasted that the Government is giving councils in the region £275 million for the current financial year. But this is £210 million below the £485 million taken from the region since austerity was imposed by the Tories in 2010. Councils are still being forced to cut services while increasing taxes by the inflation-busting limit of 3.99 per cent allowed by law.

One bright spot on the horizon is the agreement with the Government on a directly-elected Mayor for West Yorkshire.

The election will take place in May 2021, like the delayed council polls.

I hear several names as contenders: Susan Hinchcliffe, leader of Bradford Met, Tracy Brabin, MP for Batley and Spen and ex-Dewsbury MP Paula Sherrieff. □


COUNCILS
STILL
FACE
A TOUGH
YEAR



IN THE FIRING LINE

The fight is on to maintain and enhance workers' rights under a government set to come gunning for the trade union movement in general and UNISON in particular. **Mary Maguire** hears the views of regional convenor Wendy Nichols and regional secretary John Cafferty

The war of words over Brexit, leave or remain, may be done, but the battle to protect and defend hard-won rights and jobs is underway. What we can expect, by way of a deal with the European Union, is still unclear and so is its impact on workers' rights and the public services.

It is clear, however, that Boris Johnson's Tory Government, despite the votes "loaned" to it from some traditional Labour voters, has lurched even further to the right. And that spells bad news for our union.

We've already seen a taste of what's to come, with election promises to those areas that voted Tory for the first time being broken and with question marks over the NHS being on the table in any trade deal with Trump's USA.

As regional secretary, John Cafferty said: "Despite promises during and after the election, Johnson and the Tories have already proposed severe cuts to council budgets in the poorest areas. Many of them have voted Tory but now face massive reductions and cuts in services, with the money being transferred to councils

in traditional safe Tory areas".

The fear is that the Tories, with their mega-majority, will revert to type by using every chance to attack individual rights and lower legal standards of protection for working people.

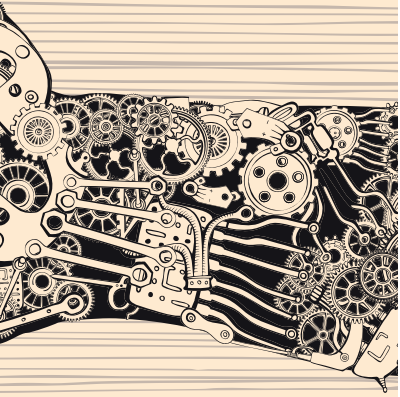
According to John, to get a deal done with the EU, or other countries, and to ensure that British goods and services are cheaper, the Tories will be determined to "cut labour costs so that the profits enjoyed by their friends in industry are bigger". He anticipates an all-out attack on wages and conditions.



WE CAN'T
ALLOW
ANYONE
TO
BECOME
A TARGET
OF HATRED

WENDY NICHOLS





That UNISON will be a primary target is not in doubt. As the biggest union in the country, operating primarily in the public services, UNISON may be all that stands between the worst ravages of the Tory Government and public service workers and the people who rely on those services. Defending and protecting its members, the vulnerable and those without power and influence is what UNISON does best.

Regional convener Wendy Nichols, points to the need for the union movement as a whole to remain united. Sickened by the surge in racism and racist incidents that seem to have been unleashed by the Brexit divide, Wendy says: "UNISON has a proud

record in opposing racism and fascism. Our public services rely on workers from other nations. Our union has members from all ethnicities and creeds and we won't let them down. I fear for community cohesion as a result of the divisions created by this damaging debate.

"But we won't allow this Tory Government to divide and rule. We can't allow anyone to become a target of hatred and abuse because of the colour of their skin or their accent. We will support and defend migrant workers' rights and resist the rise of nationalism and hatred."

Wendy and John emphasise the key campaigning priorities for UNISON post-Brexit. For a start, protecting workers and trade union rights won through the EU, such as health and safety regulations; holiday pay; equality, carer, maternity and working time rights and rights to consultation over TUPE and redundancies.

Another priority is to keep public services out of any new free trade deals and protect them from further privatisation. The union believes that trade deals must not lower UK environmental protection and consumer and workers' rights. Health and safety standards and regulations are also under threat.

UNISON will continue to argue the case for the best economic deal for members and public services, insisting that pay must not be underfunded as a consequence of a bad or no deal. And it demands a fair and humane migration system with the rights of existing EU

citizens working in the UK unilaterally guaranteed by the Government.

The union will fight to maintain and strengthen the equalities and human rights laws protecting women, black, LGBTQ+ and disabled workers from discrimination at work and in communities. Crucially UNISON will seek to maintain human rights and the law of equal treatment, shared by all the citizens on the island of Ireland, that underpins the Good Friday Agreement.

That will take all the strength that UNISON can muster, says Wendy; "It won't be easy. But, as trade unionists and public service workers, we've always had to live with and deal with the reality of political decisions."

She points to the battles the union faced and survived in the past - the Thatcher Government's vicious onslaught on trade unions and public services. She says the union has faced, "draconian anti-union laws, attempts to thwart the right to strike, attacks on union democracy, check-off rules, obstacles to recruiting, to organising, to affiliations and to our very right to exist. But we're still here and growing. We're not going anywhere".

John adds: "We held back the worst ravages of the last Conservative government, but it's probably going to get worse. The Tories feel their best way of keeping power is to neutralise opposition. I expect they'll try to make it much harder for us to back Labour through our affiliated fund. But we'll stand up for our members and working people in general. If that means conflict, then so be it." □



IF IT
MEANS
CONFLICT,
THEN
SO BE IT

- JOHN CAFFERTY



FUTURE PERFECT

It looks good, it does the job, it's in a great location and it saves money. **Peter Carroll** talks to regional secretary John Cafferty about the union's new regional HQ

UNISON's new regional centre for Yorkshire and Humberside is the start of a new era for the union, says regional secretary John Cafferty.

Quayside House, at 5,

Canal Wharf, Leeds is now fully refurbished and operational.

John points out that the move makes financial sense. UNISON was paying around £300,000 a year to lease the old regional centre Commerce House and

commercial rents in central Leeds are set to continue rising for the foreseeable future.

Not only will the move save UNISON money over the coming years, the centre will be a great and permanent asset for current



NEW ERA
FOR THE
UNION

At the new HQ - Left to right: activists Denise Goddard, Phil Turner, Camilla Sherwin, Abbie Stanley, Lesley Wray, Dave South and Jackie Lambert



UNISON members and those who are not even born yet.

John Cafferty said: "I am delighted because we have secured a regional centre for future generations.

"We have calculated that we will recoup the cost within 15 years. So apart from the upkeep costs, the building will be effectively cost free.

"We had to pay business rates when we leased Commerce House so there will be no extra cost in that respect.

"We only had three training rooms in Commerce House which obviously limited what we could provide for members.

"In the new building we have a training suite which has seven rooms with a variety of sizes.

"That gives us the ability to provide training for at least 120 members. We can hold very large meetings and that is often necessary.

"The building is, of course completely compliant with the Disability

Discrimination Act, with full lift access to every floor so that all our members can participate in the vital work we do.

"The break-out area is capable of accommodating two separate training groups at once which is a big improvement on the old office."

The hunt for new premises began in 2017 with the backing of regional convenor Wendy Nichols and her senior team.

John points out that

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WE CAN
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Area organiser
Dan Wood
and education
administrator
Tanya Shearer



WE CAN
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OUR
MEMBERS
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DESERVE

the new office will mean UNISON can cut spending on hotels. Evening training sessions will be far easier to arrange and save on costs for hotel rooms.

John said: "The move saves us significant sums of money and allows us to develop sub regional venues in places like Hull, Sheffield, Bradford and York.

"By using the Microsoft team video conference facility to connect branches, members can participate in the evenings without actually coming in.

"The new office means we have been able to install the new technology needed to

let us improve and extend services to members."

Another major advantage is that the new office is a few minutes from Leeds City station so it's very convenient for people coming in from elsewhere in the region. It was a ten to fifteen minute walk from the station to Commerce House.

The office is also close to bus services so public transport will often be the best option for members coming to the region centre.

John said: "Car parking is extremely expensive in Leeds so public transport is a better choice. And

this is very much in line with UNISON policy on proper funding to provide reliable and affordable transport links to all our communities.

"It's also in line with our commitment to fighting for urgent action to avert the environmental crisis across the world.

"The management team is delighted that we can now offer the facilities our members need and deserve.

"I know all these improvements will play a crucial part in ensuring that UNISON goes from strength to strength now, and long into the future." □

COVID-19

Members at the frontline

We want your stories, photos or videos

We really want to highlight the key work UNISON members are doing at this time of crisis. We want to try to raise their profile and get them recognition for what they do.

Send us your stories and photos

We would like stories and photos of UNISON members - and teams of members - highlighting the work that they are doing across **all** sectors of public service, including those less glamorous areas of work and the bits of public service that often get forgotten about.

**Please send your stories,
photos or videos to us at:
Y&H.digital@unison.co.uk**


Yorkshire and
Humberside



AN ABSOLUTE BUZZ!

Emergency call handler Elliot Carter got stage fright just before addressing 600 delegates at the TUC ... but now he wants to do it again, says fellow activist **Patrick Dennehy***

From learning to cook, to handling emergency phone calls, that's all in a day's work for Elliot Carter. But making a speech at the Trades Union Congress? That was absolutely nerve-wracking.

"Dave Prentis collared me after and said, "well done", that made me happy", he says.

A UNISON activist from Yorkshire, Elliot, 24, tells me he was petrified before stepping up. "I was on the verge of saying I can't walk up, but oh God, once you've done one, it's an absolute buzz, you want to do another. And I will."

"I didn't even know I was making the speech until I got there," he explains. "It was completely unexpected and I went in blind, as I was talking about apprenticeships."

Elliot's day job sees him working as a 999 call handler for the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

I put it to him that if making a conference speech was nerve-wracking, then how does he cope with some of the situations he must encounter on the phone?

"You just have to detach yourself," he tells me. "You know that you have to provide reassurance otherwise you could cause pandemonium. It's about offering care and compassion, but without getting too involved emotionally." It's obvious to see from this, why Elliot is a UNISON activist.

EMERGENCY

His main message is that people should think before they call.

"Everyone's call is an emergency to them, even if it's a broken toe, because they're worrying about things like how they'll get the kids to school. But that's why we also have the 111 service, I think we need to better signpost when

people should be calling 999."

What I'm most interested in is what attracted Elliot to the union and, in a story familiar to many, he explains how it was another member that recruited him.

"When I started at Yorkshire Ambulance Service, in 2016, I was talking about working in a students' union to a colleague, Sharon, who was a branch convenor. She asked me about becoming a branch rep and it went from there really," he says. "Our Treasurer, Diane, introduced me to all the young members' aspects and was influential in me becoming the young members' rep within the branch. From that point forward, I realised I could make a difference and get involved within the union. I think it's important to be in a union, but I'm biased."

Once he was in, Elliot quickly found himself progressing and now, he is a young members'



Elliot and fellow activists
at UNISON Centre, London

officer at his branch, co-chair of the regional young members forum, as well as a member of its national equivalent. "I was a bit sceptical of taking on these roles at first," he says, "but I thought you might as well go and do it because then you're actively making a difference."

"At branch level most of the time, I'm just chatting to people in the staffroom, signposting them where to go to get the advice and support they need."

UNCERTAIN

It's just a couple of weeks after the result of the general election when Elliot and I are talking, so from one union activist to another, it seems only right to ask him for his views on the outcome. "It frightens me," he says, "I am worried about the future, what's the next step, what's going

to happen? My mind is empty because it's all just so uncertain, there's a huge question mark out there now."

Unfortunately, it's something we will all have to live with, for now at least. However, being active in a union, is a positive, practical thing that anyone interested in joining the fightback can do. And that's certainly what Elliot plans to do. "My goal is to get more involved in TUC work in 2020," he says. "I still don't think people my age fully know what a trade union is. We need to emphasise the benefits."

Being an emergency call handler isn't your average nine to five job – in fact it typically involves twelve-hour shifts – so I'm curious to know how someone finds themselves in such a role. "I was 21 and I'd just graduated with a Forensics degree from Manchester Met," says Elliot.

"In all honesty, I'd only just learnt to cook scrambled eggs and beans on toast, so I really didn't know what I was going to do next. However, this job popped up and I knew I liked helping people, so I gave it a go and it went from there."

And is it something he sees himself doing for a while yet? "I want to further my career," he says. "I've got a good team around me, which is so important. You have to feel comfortable and enjoy going to work."

"You'd take it home if you thought too much about it." – that's something most union activists can sympathise with. "I go to the pub and there's a bloke in there, who always says 'How many lives have you saved today?' He might be joking, but I do enjoy it; it's great going home and knowing you've made a difference."

SUPPORT

As if all that isn't enough, Elliot also finds time to be a mental health advocate. He is a rep on the blue light programme – providing mental health support for 999 professionals – something he believes strongly in. "Everyone has suffered with some sort of mental health problem, but the support services aren't utilised enough."

I leave the last word to Elliot and ask him to sum up why people should join a union? "Because it's really worthwhile and you can make a world of difference."

Patrick is former UNISON branch secretary at the University of Bradford. Now a freelance journalist, he currently works in the digital industry as a content designer. □

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THERE'S
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MARK
OUT
THERE
NOW

ON THE WATERFRONT

UNISON activist Terry Sigsworth is rewriting health and safety guidelines for canal workers and is also health and safety officer for his branch. **Patrick Dennehy** talks to Terry and Pam Sian his branch secretary and regional deputy convenor for Yorkshire & Humberside

Photo: Steve Morgan



“It started as a seasonal job in 2001 just after I finished university, but I’m still here!” In that time 44-year-old Terry Sigsworth, hasn’t just grown into his job, he’s also become an integral part of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority branch of UNISON.

Terry is based at Standedge Tunnel visitor centre at Marsden. The canal tunnel here, one of the “Seven Wonders of the Waterways”, is the longest and highest in the United Kingdom. Originally part of a team looking after the canal, Terry tells me he has recently been given an exciting secondment looking after volunteers at the centre. “My favourite part of the job has always been working with people, so I am enjoying this!”

Despite attending meetings for several years, Terry only recently became an official rep. Pam Sian, Terry’s branch secretary, is full of praise. “He’s really taken to union duties”, she tells me, “I’m very proud of him.”

Pam has her own story to tell as when we speak she’s just one week shy of her thirtieth anniversary of joining UNISON – February 12, 1990. “On my first day of work, one of the ladies in the office gave me two forms and told me to sign them both before the end of the day. One was a pension form and the other was a UNISON application. A week later, I attended the AGM and the very next day I became the branch publicity officer.”

In the three decades since, Pam’s union work – which she describes as an absolute enjoyment – has gone from strength to strength, so much so that she is now seconded to union duties on full-time release five days a week. It’s clear that she loves what

she does though: “We’re the biggest and the best and for me it’s great to follow in my grandad’s footsteps because he was a union man.”

Not surprisingly, Pam is the longest serving member of the branch. As well as being branch chair, she is also chair of the national health and safety committee, regional women’s rep and a deputy regional convenor.

Health and safety is a common theme in this story as Terry became the branch health and safety officer just over a year ago and, combining that with his day job, he’s now rewriting the health and safety manual for the canal workers. He has also set up a workplace noticeboard to keep everyone up to date on relevant issues.

“The manual hadn’t kept up, so I’ve rewritten the whole thing from the bottom up,” he explains. “The Standedge Tunnel is over three miles long, so getting stuck in there wouldn’t be good!”

And how has it been received? “The people on the ground appreciate me doing it, they think it’s great and the bosses are pleased with it too. I think my colleagues are probably fed up with me asking them about it!”

Terry’s “make-things-happen” attitude clearly informs his UNISON work. “I’m an official rep now having qualified last November, and it’s great, I love having a go. The best thing about UNISON is you can get involved as much or as little as you want. It’s like a family; everybody looks after each other.”

Although her job is a consultation and engagement advisor, with the authority, Pam hasn’t been doing that role for five years, as a result of her UNISON commitments.

Terry has been on a couple of training courses at Northern College in Barnsley, which he says was a great experience. “I went there for health and safety rep training and again for my rep training and it was brilliant,” he says. “The training provided by UNISON is excellent and I would recommend it to anyone interested.”

So how does a canal worker, with a degree in environmental analysis, become a union rep? Terry puts it down to his family history: “My dad was a teacher and he was a union rep, so it’s in my family. It’s challenging but fun also. All I hope to do is make the workplace better for people.”

Balancing the roles of branch chair, regional women’s rep and deputy regional convenor among others, it’s clear that Pam wishes she had a few more people like Terry to help her out. “It’s tough recruiting members, especially the younger millennials,” she says. “The benefits of trade unions are not taught in schools. They don’t realise we’re not all about strike action.”

Despite their problems the branch is in rude health. Around half of the 600 employees are union members, the majority in UNISON. As Pam puts it: “If you can’t fight for yourself, why should anyone else fight for you?”

And as for the future of unions in the workplace? “It’s very important,” says Terry enthusiastically. “I’ll always keep chipping away at my colleagues.” And Pam? “If every one of us recruited one member, we’d be unbeatable. So, if we keep up with what we’re doing, we’ll get there.”

It’s clear that the future of UNISON in the hands of these two, is both safe and healthy. □

“IT’S LIKE A FAMILY; EVERYBODY LOOKS AFTER EACH OTHER



Pam Sian

Photo: Vicky Matthews



HUMAN DYNAMO

‘Inspirational’ Marjorie Black is nearing her 50th year as an award-winning police employee, but she also finds time to run ‘Canine and Kitty’ a dog and cat rescue. **Christine Buckley** reports

There’s no stopping Marjorie Black. The energetic and enthusiastic Marjorie is the longest-serving employee of West Yorkshire Police, clocking up 48 years. She’s also one of a very small number of employees to receive a special commendation

for ‘exceptional drive and enthusiasm’ in her work.

And at 71 she’s not about to quit the career she loves. She says: “I thrive off working life. Age is just a number and what I do keeps me young. I’m not planning on stopping anytime soon.

“The police is more like a family than a workplace. There is a great camaraderie.

Of course, with some of the work it can be tough, but you have to take the rough with the smooth and get on with it.”

Marjorie, who lives and works in Bradford, is currently in a three day a week job share in the central ticket office which deals with fixed penalty notices among other things. But in



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her lengthy stretch with the police she's worked across a range of departments including the CID and crime prevention. She says she's been involved in many aspects of police work since she started as a 22-year-old with experience only in shorthand and typing.

And Marjorie is also one of UNISON's longest standing members as she was quick to join its predecessor Nalگو as soon as she started her police career.

She recalls: "The papers were on my desk on my first day. We all joined Nalگو straight away on beginning work, it's what everyone did then. Some of the older UNISON members still call the union Nalگو."

MARVELLOUS

At work, Marjorie keeps in close touch with UNISON, which is trying to increase its membership in police forces, and she is well known to the branch officials as an outstanding member and an ambassador for good relations at work.

"It's a marvellous organisation and it really looks after its members. I've not needed to call on the union luckily, but I know people who have, and it has helped them a lot. Sometimes things go wrong at work and you need an organisation that's on your side and experienced union people to help you."

But the union and her collegiate and enthusiastic work ethic aren't the only ways in which Marjorie demonstrates a strong sense of community. In her spare time, she and her husband Clive together with Leeds-based police officer Nathalie

Tasker run a dog and cat rescue – Canine and Kitty.

The not-for-profit rescue helps abandoned dogs and cats find foster care and then hopefully permanent homes.

Running the operation is ceaseless work for the volunteers. As Canine and Kitty doesn't have charitable status, they have to do a lot of fundraising to pay vets' bills and other costs alongside ensuring the animals are cared for. Many of the cats and dogs, especially the dogs, have been found in distressing circumstances and some have suffered deliberate harm and neglect.

Nathalie says that it can be hard not to become very upset at the state of some of the animals, but she says Marjorie is forever calm, practical and positive. "Marjorie will say the dog might have suffered, but we've got it now and we can help. She's always looking forward and doesn't dwell on the problems."

And the rescue is very much a police-focused initiative. The animals sometimes are taken in after the police have been called to an incident or from their dealings with the social services.

Marjorie also advertises the dogs and cats she's trying to help in the force's internal notices service. Many have found their homes with police officers or other police workers. One spaniel, who was appropriately named Bobby, even went on the beat and became a police dog. Another became a therapy dog working with children and people suffering from dementia.

UNISON members have

also adopted their pets through her rescue service including West Yorkshire Police joint branch secretary Jane Nicholson who has welcomed three dogs into her home over the years.

Since 2006 when Marjorie first set up Canine and Kitty, the service has helped hundreds of dogs and cats find a better life.

REWARDING

Marjorie uses four dog foster carers and four cat ones. She doesn't foster herself because she has three cats and three parrots at home. Previously though she was a dog devotee and had two Westies. "It's very rewarding to give a dog a second chance. I've always had pets and I have an empathy with them, I can communicate with them."

And Marjorie is clearly a great communicator with people too. She says she loves that her working environment is vibrant, multi-cultural and full of a diverse range of people. "I love being with the people I work with and hearing their views on all sorts of things. I'm Christian, my husband is Jewish, and I work with Sikhs and Muslims. Everyone supports everyone else and we all learn from each other, we're tolerant and we're interested in each other's faiths."

Nathalie says many people are touched by Marjorie's vibrancy and caring nature. Says Nathalie: "She is probably the warmest, kindest woman I've ever met. She is always positive and she's more than just positive, that doesn't do her justice, she's dynamic and an inspiration." □

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EVERYONE
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WE ALL
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OTHER



IT IS VERY SELF-
EXPOSING TO
READ YOUR OWN
WORK OUT LOUD
TO STRANGERS

ANYTHING BUT RHUBARB

Nick Allen's increasingly acclaimed poetry is resonant with empathy, compassion and a grasp of telling detail. They're much-needed qualities in his full-on day job at the University of Leeds and his activism with UNISON. **Helen Hague** reports

Poets can have day jobs too - or two jobs even. At Leeds University, poet Nick Allen spends half his working week dealing with student complaints, and the other half as chair of UNISON's university branch.

The branch has nearly a thousand members. And after a decade of austerity and below inflation pay rises, in-work poverty and stress are the two most common problems for which members are seeking help.

Nick, 52, has always written poetry. But it wasn't until "an enabling presence" linked to the university's English department encouraged him, that he had the confidence to try and get published. That was five years ago. And he hasn't looked back.

His first pamphlet – *the necessary line* – came out in 2017, and last year he had two collections published. First - *the riding* - grounded in the nature and politics of the area in which he has lived most of his life West Yorkshire; swiftly followed by - *between two rivers* - a collaboration with Yorkshire artist Myles Linley, focusing on the landscape around the River Humber.

Poetry isn't just for private consumption. For the past two years Nick has been part of the four-strong collective that runs Rhubarb at the Triangle, a monthly open-mic evening in Shipley, an integral part of West

Yorkshire's thriving poetry scene. "It is very self-exposing to read your own work out loud to strangers," says Nick, who has overcome shyness and initial qualms. Thankfully it is a self-selecting audience and so a relatively safe space that offers camaraderie.

Many of Nick's poems have a lyricism steeped in close observation of nature. Take the opening stanza from *early morning Ilkley Moor*:

*early morning Ilkley Moor and the stars have recently quit their station
unattended a mossed-stump cross would put a god where none should be*

Some like Dante on the Westway*, written in the days after the Grenfell fire, are more political. "In the days before Grenfell, by hideous coincidence I had just finished re-reading Dante's *Inferno*," Nick explains. It shows. The poem is a searing read - and very pertinent as the Grenfell inquiry unfolds and people are crying out for answers and accountability.

Then there's *now that's what I call an eighties education* - "written after a while thinking about how we, as a country, ended up in this place with Brexit and Boris Johnson, it is probably my most overtly political poem thus far".

As a published poet with a growing reputation, Nick is forging stronger links with the university's English department. His new prose poem *make America great again* was inspired by a homeless woman Nick encountered in San Francisco. It is due to be published this spring in *Stand*, the prestigious international literary magazine edited in the English department. It is a work Donald Trump is unlikely to endorse - or indeed read.

in cups, published in 2017, is a short poem about an alcoholic, and bristles with understated empathy, as the opening and closing stanzas show:

*we've been here before I know
a new morning a new promise itching to be broken
before the new moon when the dog slips
its leash again*

*and you know better than any of us
no good will come and no god will come and you know this
as you reach again into the black well
of your hip pocket*

Given his full-on day jobs, maybe it's no co-incidence Nick Allen's poetry is resonant with empathy, compassion and a grasp of telling detail. After all, these are much-needed qualities when trying to support members through their problems - some brought on by low pay, precarious work and increasing workloads. In the past year alone, in the course of his union work, four members have spoken to Nick of suicidal thoughts.

For Nick, his union activism has always been important since he joined the university 25 years back. Now his reputation as a poet is on a roll and his determination to get the best for members undiminished. Watch this space and log on to the website to see what Nick Allen the poet is up to.

***the following from Dante...**

*Those who would cut corners, those who cried economise
On health and safety, need only cast their eyes
To accident and emergency or the community care centre*

*(those places our Prime Minister is too afraid to enter),
Let them see those frantic for news of missing brothers
The orphan flung from a window by a desperate mother*

*Let them see all this as their coffers overflow
Let them see all this and let those bastards know,
This was their austerity, their cherished gentrification*



IN THE DAYS
BEFORE GRENFELL,
BY HIDEOUS
COINCIDENCE
I HAD JUST
FINISHED RE-
READING DANTE'S
INFERNO

ABOVE AND BEYOND

When Lalinca Lunga (above) came to Yorkshire 15 years ago she couldn't speak a word of English. Now she acts as a highly articulate champion for new arrivals, says **Ryan Fletcher**



NOW
I FEEL
LIKE
THIS
IS MY
SECOND
HOME

Lalinca Lunga knew she had to do something to help the struggling families she came into contact with every day. The 41-year-old UNISON member and Leeds City Council housing employee had been in the same situation herself when she arrived friendless and without a word of English in

Yorkshire's cold climes.

Life is a succession of journeys and Lalinca has been on more than most. In 1999, when Lalinca was a teenager, she was sent by her parents from Angola, on the south west coast of Africa, to Portugal to escape the country's endemic corruption and dangerous political situation.

For six years Lalinca made a home in Portugal but when the love of her life, her husband Miguel, asked that she move to England with him, Lalinca left her university course and packed her bags, ready to set off into the unknown once again.

"I had to start everything from the beginning. Learn the language, learn the



I FEEL
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OF THE
UNION

culture, adapt to the food. When I moved in 2005 I had no friends, no English at all. I could not have a full conversation. I was upset and very frustrated,” Lalinca said.

“Miguel said to me ‘you need to go to college where you can learn and make friends’. To be honest I did and slowly slowly I learnt how to cope with the English culture and now I feel like this is my second home.”

BARRIERS

New problems arose when Lalinca became pregnant in 2008 with her son Daniel, now 11. But having worked so hard to learn English and build a life for herself and her family, Lalinca wasn’t going to let the barriers that far too many expectant and young mums face, stop her from getting where she wanted to be.

Lalinca said: “I was at Leeds Metropolitan university, which is now Leeds Beckett, studying PR and marketing. Miguel used to take Daniel to the car park so I could breast feed him. There were no high chairs or microwave or anything.

“I raised this with the university administration. I said ‘you know what as a mature student I have to breast feed my boy in the car’. There was nothing for children.”

After raising her concerns, Lalinca met the university’s vice-chancellor and helped to bring permanent change for students who were also mothers.

By 2014, Lalinca was making waves at Leeds council where she had landed a role as a tenant and community involvement

officer. Lalinca initiated the Positive Families project, which helps families access the support and services they need, after realising that many new arrivals to Leeds were going through the same struggles she had.

Working in the Burmantofts area of the city, where there is a high proportion of immigrant families, Lalinca identified a number of parents who would benefit from the support of a parenting programme.

Key to the success of the project was training a group of “parent champions” – volunteers who are parents themselves – to provide information and support to other parents within their networks.

The volunteers came from a variety of backgrounds so were able to share their experience and training, ensuring language or circumstances were no longer a barrier to families getting the support they needed or services they were entitled to.

DETERMINATION

By 2016, the project had been recognised as being the best in the UK and was named Parent Champion project of the year by the Family and Childcare Trust.

The project, which Lalinca describes as “my baby”, is still running strong and is testament to her determination, especially because Lalinca was still getting to grips with life as a Yorkshirewoman herself during that period.

“When Daniel saw the video of the project he said to me ‘Mummy your English was not on point!’,” Lalinca laughed.

Lalinca credits UNISON’s assertiveness course with helping her to get used to the mores of communication in English society.

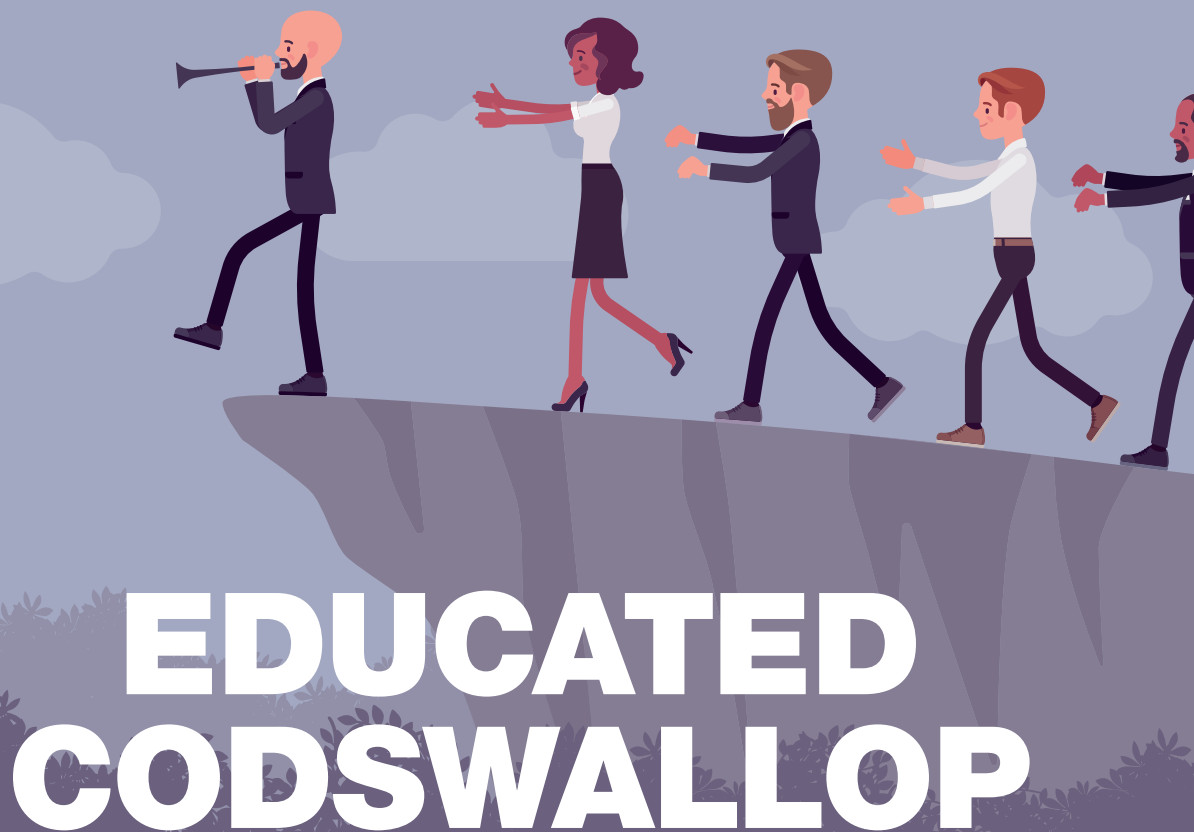
“Here people are very, very polite. Sometimes Portuguese speakers can seem rude in the way we say things. It is just a cultural difference but people can get offended. The assertiveness course really helped me to learn how to express my opinions and ideas without crossing the line and seeming aggressive,” Lalinca explained.

“I’ve really enjoyed all the UNISON training courses I’ve done. I always encourage people to join UNISON to protect their rights. I have been helped with childcare issues in my workplace and I feel very happy to be part of the union.”

It should come as no surprise that Lalinca, who also runs a support group for Leeds’ Portuguese speaking community in her own time, has made an impression within UNISON.

The union’s regional learning and development organiser Rose Bent said: “I found Lalinca to be very inspirational during the member courses she has attended. So much so that I thought she would be an ideal candidate for UNISON’s Nelson Mandela Award.

“The award is presented to someone who has supported and ‘gone above and beyond’ to represent black members, celebrating their achievements, courage and determination within the union and more widely in our society’. Despite the award going to someone else, this sums up Lalinca’s achievements perfectly.” □



EDUCATED CODSWALLOP

Peter Carroll urges us to remember that despite their superficial polish, educated professionals can be mad, bad and stupid... and that's only our prime minister

It is often said that, however old you grow, you never forget good teachers. I think that is undoubtedly true – but the bad (or mad) ones leave an equally indelible memory.

More than 50 years ago, I was in a class of 42 pupils at a Roman Catholic primary school in Bradford.

One of the senior teachers was universally feared because he had a policy of beating his young charges on the hands with a ruler for every 'sum' they got wrong. Tough love, you might say.

But he also had many dramatic things to tell us about religion.

I remember vividly when

he gave us a lesson about St Bernadette, one of three children in Fatima, Italy, to whom the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared to issue a warning about the imminent "end of days".

He claimed he had inside information that she had spoken from beyond the grave to a Cardinal or someone to say she was serving time in Purgatory for her earthly sins.

"She wasn't much older than you are when she died," he told his nine-year-olds.

"She had led a very holy life and only committed "venial" (minor) sins, yet she still had to spend 28 years in Purgatory before stepping through the

pearly gates.

"So just think of the sins that you have committed and will commit in future. Think of how many years you will have to spend in Purgatory – if you don't go to hell – for your sins."

So far, so insane, I think you will agree.

But the real bombshell was to come.

He said the Virgin had predicted that the world would end after a conflagration in the Middle East and that there was someone in his tight-knit group of religious maniacs who knew the date when the catastrophe would happen.

He had paid, I think, £10 (you



could buy a small car for that back then!) to book his place on a flight which would take those faithful few in the know to eternal safety.

Once he got the call, he would hot-foot it to the airport where the special aeroplane was waiting, permanently prepared for take off. The rest of us would be left behind to suffer an agonising death.

Even back then I had a sneaking suspicion that he had been duped by a clerical con-man and would never see his brass again.

(It reminded me of the man selling seagulls for a tanner on Blackpool promenade. A punter handed over his money and

asked which seagull was his. Pointing to the sky, the bloke said: "It's that one up there, just on the left".)

When I told my mother about all this, she looked genuinely shocked and went on to ridicule the whole episode - the teacher, the exclusive flight ticket, the existence of Purgatory and Hell, the impossibility of speaking from beyond the grave and the wickedness of terrifying kids with such baloney.

He wasn't typical of teachers in faith schools, even over half a century ago.

But one thing he taught me was that educated professionals like him, who were both sadistic as well as good at arithmetic, could also be profoundly stupid.

So what about the privately educated racists in our government who have for years encouraged hatred and division between people living in the same communities?

Who taught Boris Johnson that blaming minorities for the horrendous effects of untrammelled greed, by him and his corporate financial controllers, would yield enormous political power?

Well, who else but his dad, his prep school teachers, his "masters" at Eton and his "gentleman" Bullingdon Club thugs at Oxford?

When he spouts in Latin about the ancient world, he is obviously flaunting his supposed intellectual superiority to the "oiks" he despises.

He is also consciously echoing Enoch Powell, Thatcher's beloved mentor. That's Enoch - "If you want

a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour" - Powell in the 1960s.

Powell famously warned about the effects of immigration from the Caribbean to Britain thus: "As the Roman said, the River Tiber will foam with much blood."

This snobbery is intended to confer a quasi-religious respectability on racist politics because it was recorded over 2,000 years ago by a writer, let's remember, living in a ruthless, slave-owning imperialist super power.

The vast majority of people, though, supposedly in awe of his expensive classical polish, need an extra demotic nudge in the direction of white, heterosexual superiority.

Hence Johnson's slurs about "grinning picanninies with water melon smiles" and "bum boys" which have served to normalise bigotry at the highest, as well as the basest, level of public discourse.

Now his plan is to dazzle voters with fantastical capital projects.

Johnson is trying to sell the public mad, non-starter ideas like a multi-billion pound bridge between Scotland and Ireland.

Don't be like my mad primary school teacher and buy a ticket for something that simply will never happen.

Be like my late mum.

Johnson's cynical, greedy politics deserve only comprehensive ridicule.

And, of course, fierce organised opposition from UNISON and our sisters and brothers throughout our movement. □



JOHNSON IS TRYING TO SELL THE PUBLIC MAD IDEAS LIKE A BRIDGE BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND



PAUL ROUTLEDGE

MIRROR POLITICAL COLUMNIST

MIRACLE AT THE BLACK ROCK PUB

One 999 call from a hostelry in Wakefield vividly demonstrates the professionalism of the Yorkshire ambulance service. It also brought home the fact that despite a dramatic increase in demand and a lack of resources, 15 out of 16 emergency patients get vital treatment within the NHS target

The Bad Day at Black Rock wasn't just a Western movie. It was the day I called the emergency services from a pub in Wakefield - weeks ago now, but still fresh in the memory.

My big brother John had passed out, not from the effects of the ale because he'd had less than a pint of lager.

For the first time in my life I had to phone 999, and an extraordinarily patient and understanding call handler took me through a series of questions before deciding what action to take.

A paramedic came in a car, with all kinds of weird and wonderful kit to assess what was wrong - very low blood pressure, it turned out. He then called an ambulance and semi-retired (at 81!) bricklayer John was taken to Pinderfields hospital, where he continues to get top outpatient treatment.

As I say, this was a first for me, and a real eye-opener. The speed and professionalism of the service was fantastic. Absolute top marks, and thanks.

I was reminded of the event by reports of "failing" ambulance attendances. A BBC investigation showed

that some heart attack, stroke and burns victims were among seriously ill patients waiting over an hour, instead of the 18 minutes average laid down for 999 calls.

The problem affected 1 in 16 emergency cases in England, said the report. Hang on a minute, that means 15 out of 16 do meet the target, at a time when demand is rising and delays in A & E all too often leave crews queuing outside hospitals.

I think it's a miracle that they do as well as they do, bearing in mind the intense strain under which they work and the lack of resources under Tory austerity. My experience bears that out.

Cracking pub, by the way, the Black Rock. The "rock" being coal - it was a favourite of the miners.

BONUS STORM

Storm Ciara devastated West Yorkshire, bringing out the best in neighbours and emergency workers, and the worst in Tory politicians.

Craig Whittaker, MP for flood-hit Calder Valley, could only chunter that "the clean-up will be a major operation". I didn't see him with a mop and bucket.

Flood defences on the river were under-funded, inadequate and horrendously delayed by ministerial inaction. So Hebden Bridge, Mytholmroyd, Luddendenfoot (such great Yorkshire names!) Todmorden, Brighouse and Elland all got hit again.

Meanwhile, bosses at the Environment Agency shared bonuses of £1.5 million since the Boxing Day floods of 2015, while slashing 3,000 jobs and imposing real-terms pay cuts on the 10,000 still trying to do the work.

Reward for failure at the top, punishment for harder work at the bottom. No wonder agency staff are furious.

DEATH-DEFYING

Foghorn-voiced actor Brian Blessed returned to his native Yorkshire for a charity performance.

We could probably have heard him if he delivered his one-man show from his front door in Surrey.

But here's the gist of it. Two things annoy Brian, son of a Mexborough miner: "The politicians at times really do bore the bloody arse off me", and mentioning his age - he's 83.



MY BIG BROTHER JOHN HAD PASSED OUT



"It's not how old you are, it's how you are old. Death doesn't exist for me. I think life is the last word and death is not. We've all got something that nobody else has got, fulfil your dreams."

Amen to that, big Brian.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

Welcome to 'Welcome to Yorkshire' new chief executive James Mason, a former sports journalist, has been head-hunted to succeed disgraced Sir Gary Verity.

He promises to transform the troubled tourist body, kept alive by loans and grants of more than £1 million from councils in the region.

Mason, 41, former chief operating officer of Bradford City football club, was poached from sports agency First Point USA. Sir Gary was paid £243,000 a year, but his successor gets only £130,000 – still not bad for an organisation with only 30 staff.

Let's hope he brings more to God's Own county than cycle races.

GREENING OF YORK

You can't say York isn't ambitious. The council plans to ban private cars from the city centre in three years.

And it's bidding to be the first in the world to have driverless electric buses.

From 2023, only buses and disabled drivers will be allowed within the mediaeval walls, part of a plan to make the city carbon neutral by 2030 – 20 years before

the Government's national target.

Driverless buses will bring Blue Badge holders from a park and ride site to the pedestrianised streets in a £4 million trial scheme.

A breath of fresh air! York has seven million visitors a year, and they take their lives in their hands trying to navigate the narrow streets. Not to mention the locals.

All we need now is to train cycling students to obey the Highway Code.

LADY MUCK

Boris Johnson is excited about proposals for calling Old Oak Common, the provisional southern terminus of the London-Birmingham High Speed Line, "Margaret Thatcher Station."

That might not be such a bad idea. It would give work to lots of cleaners employed to clean up the graffiti inevitably splattered over anything with her name on it.

A bronze statue of the Iron Lady is due to be unveiled in her home town of Grantham, after siting it in Parliament Square was rejected for fear of vandalism.

The 20ft high monstrosity of a scowling Maggie will sit on top of a 10 ft high base to deter iconoclasts. No doubt she's saying to herself: "I knew some day my plinth would come."

Boom, boom!

GOOD INNINGS

Leeds United is joining Sheffield United in the Premier League, and the cricket season is upon us. Tykes must hope that Yorkshire's cricket team will do better than last year's

rating of fifth in division one.

Not bad, but not quite like the glory days of winning the county championship.

We still have one unique talent in the game. Yorkshire's last remaining traditional cricket bat maker, Ian Sampson, plies his craft amid shavings and sawdust in Wakefield.

Ian, 62, a native of Carlton, near Rothwell, might have gone down the pit, but his dad wouldn't have it, so he went to work for Slazenger's in Horbury before it closed in 2002.

A former rugby player for Batley and Hunslet, he took over the Warrior bat-making business and now turns out maybe two bats a day, using only English willow.

"It's a real labour of love," says Ian. Good to know that a traditional Tyke craftsman can still beat factory-made stuff.

PIER PRESSURE

If you've been to Brighton you must have seen the ruins of the West Pier, rusting offshore. There's even less to see of Withernsea pier.

Charging a penny, and opened in 1877, it once strode confidently 1,196 feet into the North Sea. Storms and frequent ship collisions destroyed the structure within thirty years.

Only the twin-towered gateway remains, but local campaigners have won a National Lottery grant to pursue plans for a new pier, half as long but twice as wide.

Good luck to them. The nearest rival is in Saltburn, 140 miles away. By boat. □



DON'T PUT UP WITH IT!

Jo Seery, a specialist lawyer at Thompsons Solicitors, explains the difference between acceptable workplace banter and harassment – and what UNISON members can do about it

The first thing to be said is that harassment is unlawful. And employers are liable if they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent it in the workplace.

So what is harassment? Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic*, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Unwanted conduct includes spoken or written words of abuse, imagery, graffiti, physical gestures, facial expressions, mimicry, jokes, pranks, acts affecting a person's surroundings or other behaviour.

Harassment is not harmless fun or banter. Whether conduct amounts to harassment depends on:

- The perception of the person complaining of harassment;
- The surrounding circumstances;
- Whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

The fact that an individual has not objected to the behaviour, or the perpetrator says harassment was not intended, does not prevent it from amounting to harassment.

The Equality Act prohibits three forms of harassment: that related to a protected characteristic; sexual harassment; or less favourable treatment because a person has submitted to or rejected sexual harassment, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment.

It is not only those subject to the conduct who are protected. Witnesses to harassment, those who are perceived to have a protected characteristic and those subject to unwanted conduct because they are associated with a person who has a protected characteristic are also protected. For example that would protect a worker wrongly perceived to be a Muslim who is subject to Islamophobia or a worker subject to derogatory comments because they care for a disabled child.

So what should you do if you think you're being harassed at work? You should tell the perpetrator that their conduct is offensive and your UNISON rep can help you to do this.

You should keep a record of what was said or done, who said or did it, when it took place (the date) and where it took place. It is important to note down if there were any witnesses. The best way of keeping a record is to note it down in a diary.

You should also lodge a grievance. Your employer has

a duty to prevent all forms of harassment in the workplace so it is important that they know when it took place. Again, your UNISON rep can help.

If the harassment does not stop or is not resolved, members have access to legal advisors through reps and through regional office.

The tight time limit for taking a case to an employment tribunal is three months less one day from the act of harassment or if there are a series of acts of harassment, the last act.

It is also a requirement to begin early conciliation before a legal claim is lodged. This involves contacting ACAS before the time limit expires. It is recommended that you seek the assistance of your UNISON rep first, but also keep an eye on time limits otherwise a legal claim may go out of time.

Apart from talking to your rep as soon as possible, a doctor may also be able to assist you depending on what has happened.

Above all it's important to remember that if you're being harassed, it's not your fault - and you shouldn't put up with it! □

***Under the Equality Act a protected characteristic could be age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity**



“YOU SHOULD KEEP A RECORD OF WHAT WAS SAID OR DONE

Jo Seery

COVID-19

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Share your stories

We know how concerned you are about the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) available to you.



We want to collect stories from as many workers as possible so that we can make sure the prime minister and other senior politicians hear what you have to say. You are in the front line – your views are the only ones that matter in this.

www.unison.org.uk

Click through to **PPE Alert**

OR www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/trouble-getting-personal-protection-equipment-ppe

If you fill in the form on the website link above we will make sure that what you say is heard by the politicians.

COVID-19

There for You

Supporting UNISON members
when life gets tough

Members experiencing financial and emotional difficulties can contact our welfare charity, There for You, which provides a confidential advice and support service for members and their dependants.



UNISON is responding to the national coronavirus crisis by offering practical help to members experiencing hardship.

- Financial hardship
- Help with debt
- Universal credit and other benefits
- General advice
- Credit unions

The usual path for help is through our network of branch welfare officers, but if you can't get in touch you can access the services through our website...

**[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/
services-support/there-for-you/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/)**