Welcome...

Welcome to the Hampshire UNISON newsletter. As part of the new Branch communications strategy we wish to keep our members informed of current campaigns, workplace issues and features on our Branch activists and the work they do to support members.

The Branch has worked tirelessly over recent months to support members in both employment and workplace injury cases, not only Hampshire County Council employees but members in Schools, Further Education colleges, the University of Winchester and those employed by an increasing number of private, community and voluntary sector employers.

Our activists continue to engage in talks and consultations with the employers to protect jobs, terms and conditions of employment and fight to protect Services for benefit of all in Hampshire.

The branch has been campaigning on National Issues on behalf of members. Campaigning on fair pay for our members has always been a priority but in recent weeks the focus has turned to the Trade Union Bill that’s been progressing through Parliament (see opposite). We want to hear about issues affecting your workplace, so if you would like to contribute an article to a future newsletter then contact the Branch Office at UNISON@hants.gov.uk

Dave Anderson
Branch Secretary

Fighting to drop the Trade Union Bill

This autumn, MPs voted to pass the trade union bill – which threatens the basic right to strike. The bill undermines your basic right to take strike action.

The bill introduces a minimum strike ballot threshold, undermining the fundamental right to take lawful strike action. For the first time, employers will be able to break strikes by bringing in agency workers to cover for strikers. This could have big safety implications, leading to the worsening of public services.

The Bill proposes huge restrictions on peaceful picketing and protests. Striking workers will have to tell their employer all of their plans, although the restrictions on the use of social media two weeks before a strike were dropped.

Other proposals in the bill include a specific attack on UNISON reps in the public sector, with a threat to restrict further the facilities time your reps are allowed to support members. Restrictions on how Trade Unions collect member subscriptions are likely to have a damaging impact on overall union membership.

Hampshire UNISON has campaigned on your behalf against the Bill, with activists and members writing to their local MPs and attending the Parliamentary lobby in early November. The Bill still has to pass through the House of Lords… so we’ll keep up the fight on your behalf for as long as it takes! See Twitter using #TUBill

let us work for a better future drop the Trade Union Bill

2,500 Trade Unionists queued outside the Houses of Parliament to lobby their MP on 2nd November.
Hello from
Mel Valentino
the Hampshire
UNISON
Woman’s Officer

I have been doing this role for two years now and I feel this position is more important than ever for our female members.

With looming workforce reductions and changes in welfare benefits we really need a voice!

If you want to contact me please feel free on 07982 633240 or via email at: melanie.valentino@gmail.com

Branch Education...
Interested?

Are you an activist? Are you interested in gaining the skills that you need to carry out your role – then you need to look at the South East Regional Education Programme!

By the time you read this, the new Regional Education Programme will be finalised and published. If you are interested in finding out what courses are available, then you can look at the Regional Education website: www.unisonsoutheast.org.uk/union_education

Interested? Then please get in touch with me Gina Hynard, your branch Education Co-Ordinator to discuss your training needs. You can contact me via the Branch Office e-mail unison@hants.gov.uk or work gina.m.hynard@hants.gov.uk

My aim in this is to make sure that you have the skills and confidence you need to carry out your role in the workplace and training will be the key!

The branch will support you in whatever way they can but if you are a newly elected Steward or Health and Safety Rep and have yet to undergo training, then have a think about what courses will benefit you and your members.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Gina Hynard
Branch Education Co-Ordinator

Report from Hampshire UNISON Retired Members’ Section

Joe Hannigan and Diana Barnes were the Hampshire delegates at the annual Retired Members’ Conference in Brighton in October, and will be reporting in due course. Major topics were Care for the Elderly (including better conditions for care-workers), and ensuring that older people can access necessary services which are increasingly only available online.

Pat is Chair of the South East Regional Committee, and on the National Committee, and she is also involved in the National Pensioners’ Convention (NPC), so reports back to both organisations, and we keep in touch with all sorts of developments.

Attendance at our regular open meetings has been disappointing – we appreciate that it is difficult for people to get to the meetings at Falcon House, and next year’s meetings have been booked in the Denning Room in The Castle in Winchester, which is nearer to transport links. It will also mean we shall be able to gather for lunch beforehand and make these events more of a social occasion, as well as being useful and informative.

Mike Perkins, our Hon. Sec. of many years, and who serves in other TU and left organisations, is in his 80s, and is now going to take life a bit more gently.

Our Membership Secretary, Sue, has re-organised the database but felt the pressure of other involvements, and Diane, our Treasurer, has done sterling work with the Finances but would like to step down. So we urgently need more people to get involved with helping to run the Section!

We hope to have Neil Duncan-Jordan (NPC) to talk to us about Pensions in the near future. Is there a topic, social or political, you would like to find out about from a speaker, or a place where you would like to go for an outing?

Finally, please come to our AGM in the Denning Room at the Castle, on March 14th, when we will have a speaker as well as managing the business, and we will meet for lunch in Winchester beforehand. Look out for the official AGM invitation which will be circulated shortly!
The Prevent Duty – an activist’s view

Steve Squibbs
Steward, Barton Peveril College

What is it?

Prevent is a key component of the government’s anti-terror strategy. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 enshrines elements of Prevent in law, including the “Prevent duty”. This specifies that public bodies have a duty to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.” Relevant employers must provide training to staff in its implementation.

Defending ‘British values’?

Prevent centres on tackling what the government calls “non-violent extremism”, and defines extremism as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.” However, the assertion that these values are intrinsically British – and not shared by others – has drawn accusations of racism. It is also a very ambiguous definition of extremism, which may include political views that are not in any way supportive of violence.

Freedom of Speech

According to this narrative, views that attempt to give a political context to radicalisation (British foreign policy, racism, war) are cast as giving cover to terrorists in the form of “justifying grievances”. One may agree or disagree with such views, but they are neither extreme or illegitimate. Attempts to present them as such will crush open debate and create a climate of fear in schools and colleges, where children and staff avoid discussing issues for fear of being labelled extremist.

Prevent targets Muslims

Most of the training packages for Prevent stress that it is about targeting all forms of terrorism, including far-right and not just “Muslim extremism”. However, in practice Prevent overwhelmingly targets Muslims, who made up 90% of those referred to Prevents anti-radicalisation programme between 2007 and 2010, despite being less than 5% of the population. Prevent has been widely criticised for casting all Muslims as a ‘suspect community’ and encouraging racial profiling.

The TUC passed policy opposing Prevent earlier this year, and UNISON has expressed deep concerns about the potential for discriminatory behaviour and a breakdown in trust between staff and public service users. A detailed UNISON factsheet is available on their website. If you have any concerns about Prevent, the training sessions, or its application in your workplace please contact the branch in the first instance.
Get Involved!

Being a member of UNISON is more than just a membership card; it’s about what we build together to become a more powerful union. UNISON relies on its members and their time to run the union. UNISON workplace representatives (reps), stewards and other activists are the most important link between the union and its members.

The different kinds of UNISON representatives and activists include:

- workplace contacts
- workplace stewards
- union learning representatives
- young members officers
- equality representatives
- health and safety representatives.

Hampshire Branch AGM 2016

The Hampshire Branch Annual General Meeting 2016 will be held over four meetings in four different locations again in 2016. The locations will be:

Monday 7th March 2016 at 6pm at Dame Mary Fagan House, Basingstoke

Tuesday 8th March 2016 at 6pm at AFC Totton, Salisbury Road, Totton

Wednesday 9th March 2016 at 6pm at Havant Plaza, Havant

Thursday 10th March 2016 at 6pm at Kings Room, Falcon House, Winchester

All members are welcome to attend one of the above meetings. Further details of the meetings will be available on our website www.hampshireunison.org in due course.

For help and advice contact the Branch Office

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