

# THE NEXT GENERATION

## Stepping up the minimum wage campaign

UNISON's campaign to celebrate, defend, and improve the National Minimum Wage (NMW) gets into its stride in this 10th birthday year. The introduction of the NMW was a massive achievement, and we are determined to make sure it is properly celebrated.

In partnership with the British Youth Council, Child Poverty Action Group, Institute of Employment Rights, the National Union of Students, Trades Union Congress, and YWCA England & Wales, we are gearing up for a birthday party and lobby of MPs on the birthday itself – 1 April 2009.

But it is not all about celebration. We know that in these credit crunch times we have a responsibility to keep reminding people about how essential the NMW is for many workers, and also how we want to see it improved.

UNISON gave detailed written and oral evidence to the Low Pay Commission (LPC) making the case for: a living wage (reaching £7.45 an hour by October 2010); bringing apprentices within the scope of the NMW for all hours worked; an end to the age discrimination created by the age bandings – we say the



rate for the job must be paid; and that there is a real need for the right to be paid the NMW to be better publicised and better enforced.

The LPC will report its recommendations to government by the end of February 2009. "We simply cannot afford to go back to

the bad old days when there was no statutory minimum wage," said Stuart Reeves, chair of the national young members' forum. "But we know that in the current climate we could well see an attack on it. Already a senior Tory has said if they ever got into government they would simply let it wither away until it was worthless. We need young members – every member of the union – to get behind this campaign and really make a difference."

A website is being launched to keep everyone in touch with the campaign and to encourage members to get involved with local activity in the lead up to the birthday party and to encourage active lobbying of MPs at the House of Commons on the day itself.

All regions have been sent a full briefing including suggestions on how local campaigning can be focused and involve young members in winning wide public support for the NMW, and also making the case for the improvements we want.

To find out more and get involved, get in touch with your regional young members contact (see the back of this newsletter).

## Member profile

## Young and active



Name: **Lauren Eves**

Age: **24**

Job: **Occupational therapy assistant (volunteering while training to be an OT)**

Branch: **North West Wales UNISON**

I work as a volunteer at an acute mental health unit with people who have a range of mental health problems. A friend who also works there is the branch welfare officer and suggested I join UNISON, which I did about 18 months ago.

The branch secretary then asked me if I'd like to stand for election to be the young members' officer for the branch, and I said yes. When I went to the annual general meeting I also got elected as branch disabled members' officer!

In October I attended UNISON's Disabled Members' Conference in Chester, but I was the only young member there. It's a good event but I think it needs to be better publicised with more information to young members. There's a lot of opportunity to meet and network with people, but for me the best session was the health care meeting for members who work in health. In terms of disability issues I want to say to young members especially to try to be strong and not to be scared of being open about mental

health disability. It's a disability that can't be seen, so it can easily be ignored if we don't discuss it openly.

I'm getting a recruitment drive organised at my branch over the winter period and will be asking people to join at the induction session when we get a new intake.

I think it's important for young people to get involved. You can do as much or as little as you like – just so long as you do something, and the skills you pick up can look good on your CV.

## Votes at 16

UNISON has again called for a lower voting age in general and local elections.

The Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) has been consulting on a proposal to lower the voting age, and UNISON's response was clear: Yes to the right to vote from age 16.

Back in June 2006 young members won the backing of UNISON's national delegate conference for the right to vote at 16. A year later, on becoming prime minister, Gordon Brown announced to parliament that he intended to set up a commission (the YCC), part of whose remit would be to consider a reduction in the voting age from 18. It's nice to know we are so influential.

UNISON immediately welcomed this move and also called for young people to be fully involved as members of the commission and in the commission's consultation.

The consultation deadline was 20 January 2009, and a summary of responses will be published online no later than 20 April at [www.ycc.uk.net](http://www.ycc.uk.net).

## Are you in a UNISON family?

We are interested in finding young members whose parents and grandparents are or were members of UNISON or one of its predecessor unions (COHSE, NALGO or NUPE). Similarly, if you are in a family where your parent(s) and any siblings are all currently members of UNISON we'd like to hear from you.

As well as possibly providing a good human interest feature, it will also give us the chance to look at the anecdotal differences between the generations and their attitude to trade union membership and activity.

If you think you might fit the bill, and your relatives are happy to be interviewed, please get in touch with Rebecca Findley, UNISON press officer on [r.findley@unison.co.uk](mailto:r.findley@unison.co.uk)

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# Crunch time?

James Anthony, young members rep on UNISON's national executive council highlights the NEC's response to the financial crisis as well as work on the minimum wage and votes at 16.



A major issue for the NEC (and indeed everyone) is the financial crisis. At our October meeting we agreed a statement on the economy setting out UNISON's policy position. It's unclear if there was a link in the NEC calling for a significant interest rate cut just hours before the Bank of England announced one.

It has been great to see the government responding and in particular maintaining spending in public services, and in the face of calls for public spending cuts from the Tories and Lib Dems There is still much more to do, and the government needs to ensure it is on the side of people like our members in this crisis.

At our December meeting the NEC agreed that the union must ready itself for further (and stronger) attacks on the public sector, our pay and our pensions. Both the Tories and Lib Dems have already attacked 'gold plated'

public sector pensions, but when responding Dave Prentis put it, "More tin foil than gold plated."

Since national delegate conference a key focus of my work has been on the National Minimum Wage. In its history the minimum wage has never been more important in the current economic climate. At conference UNISON committed itself to using the its 10th birthday to celebrate the achievements of the minimum wage but also to fight to end the discriminatory age rates and the exemption for apprentices. Since then we have worked with partners in other trade unions and youth organisations such as YWCA England and Wales, NUS, the Child Poverty Action Group, and the British Youth Council to develop the campaign. We held a really great seminar in November to thrash out the issues and unite around the campaign, information has gone out to regions so they can take forward the campaign locally, and plans for the birthday celebration in Parliament

are coming together (I hope to see you there to celebrate and lobby your MP). I was also really proud to have been on our delegation to the Low Pay Commission where I was able to argue strongly for a living wage, without discrimination.

Another key issue is votes at 16. UNISON played a key role in outflanking ministers and getting a commitment to votes at 16 through Labour's National Policy Forum and I was proud to speak in support of the policy when it was successfully approved by Labour Party conference. There is now a consultation open on the voting age ([www.ycc.uk.net/votes](http://www.ycc.uk.net/votes)). We are putting together UNISON's response, but individuals can also respond.

Believe it or not the NEC election cycle is about to start all over again, and candidates will soon be seeking nominations. It's been a privilege to represent young members, but I will be too old to stand for the young members' seat again. However, any member of UNISON who will still be under 27 on 24 June 2011 can stand; if you want more information then get in touch or watch out for the details online.

I'm really keen to keep members up to date with what I'm up to on your behalf. To keep a closer eye on me check out my blog [www.young-unison.blogspot.com](http://www.young-unison.blogspot.com). If you want to get in touch then email [j.anthony@unison.co.uk](mailto:j.anthony@unison.co.uk) or other contact details found in the UNISON diary.

# Young members' weekend 2009 Manchester



UNISON is the UK's biggest trade union with 1.3 million members  
More than 75,000 of our members are aged 26 and under

This year's young members weekend takes place 8-10 May in Manchester and the themes are campaigning on key issues for young workers. This will include the National Minimum Wage, gun and knife crime and votes at 16.

It's a great chance to meet, work and socialise with up to 120 other young members, find out more about the union, and learn key organising skills. If you will be under 27 years old on 10 May 2009, ask your branch secretary about attending. Alternatively you can contact your regional staff contact via UNISON on 0845 355 0845, or email your full name, branch, region and membership number to [young.members@unison.co.uk](mailto:young.members@unison.co.uk)

Weekend costs (including meals, accommodation, travel, childcare and other appropriate and properly incurred expenses) will be reimbursed by UNISON.

Please note that numbers are limited and that registering your interest does not guarantee you a place at the event.



## Contact UNISON

Gary Williams is UNISON's young members' officer. You can contact him by emailing [young.members@unison.co.uk](mailto:young.members@unison.co.uk) or by writing to him c/o MPU, UNISON, 1 Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9AJ. For more information or to join UNISON call on 0845 355 0845 or 0800 0 967 968 (textphone). Lines open from 6am to midnight Monday to Friday and 9am – 4pm Saturday. You can also visit our website at [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk).

*This newsletter is also available to UNISON young members in large print, braille and on disc.*

## Organising materials

UNISON produces a wide range of publicity materials that can be used for recruiting and organising members. There are also plenty of items that are specific to young members. If you want to order materials for use in your branch check it out with your branch secretary first, then visit [www.unison.org.uk/catalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/catalogue).

To contact your regional member of staff for young members call **0845 355 0845**  
Textphone 0800 0 967 968

## Regional young members staff contact details

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