

Young members take a lead

Young members in UNISON wasted no time in responding to the call to campaign against the cuts.

Young people will be among those hardest hit by the Con-Dem government's attacks on public services, facing an assault on all fronts: training, education, health, housing, and of course jobs, pay and pensions.

On 29 September, UNISON organised protests across the UK, and three young members went to Brussels to join the European TUC demonstration against austerity and for jobs and growth. With at least 100,000 trades unionists from across Europe taking part, it was a massive show of opposition to the cuts programmes being instituted by European governments. Young people were in the forefront of the march.

Graham Smith, chair of UNISON's national young members forum, said "We sent out a positive message that says 'we want jobs, we want services, we don't want cuts'. We know we're in for the long-haul on this fight, but what a great way to start!" You can see a short film of the demonstration at unison.org.uk/young and go to [facebook.com/youngunison](https://www.facebook.com/youngunison) for pictures.

Holly Prosho from Leeds Metropolitan University branch (and also a member of the NYMF), spoke at a joint trade union rally in Leeds city centre. It was Holly's first time as a public speaker alongside representatives of Public and Commercial Services Union and the



From left to right: Holly Prosho addresses a joint trade union rally in Leeds city centre – Graham Smith, Lisa Kelly, and Geri Cowell from the NYMF joined the ETUC demo in Brussels

Communications Workers' Union.

Holly told the audience of mainly young people, "We need to support young people to build a strong foundation to support this country for generations to come. Instead, at a time when already one in four young people are not in education, training or employment, the Con-Dem government have shown their true colours by scrapping the future jobs fund. It's not just our jobs at risk – our services are at risk too [and] are vital, especially for the lowest paid in our society. We will fight to save our services."

By the time you read this, many young members will have been involved in lobbying their MPs and councillors around the comprehensive spending review. If you have stories

about UNISON activity – lobbying and campaigning against the cuts – please send your report and pictures to young.members@unison.co.uk

Keep up the pressure

We are taking part in what will be a long campaign, and it's vital to keep the pressure on politicians. You can play your part by getting involved with your branch's and region's activities, and – for example – making time to organise and participate in lobbying your MP or councillors at their surgeries.

National minimum wage news

The adult rate (for those aged 21 and over) of the national minimum wage went up by 13 pence an hour on 1 October from £5.80 to £5.93 an hour.

The youth development rate (for 18 – 20 year olds) rose from £4.83 to £4.92 an hour and the minimum wage for 16–17 year olds increased from £3.57 to £3.64 an hour. The adult rate also changed in that it now applies to those 21 and over, not 22 and over as previously.

For the first time – and following campaigning by UNISON with key partners – apprentice pay

was brought within scope of the minimum wage framework with a new apprentice rate of £2.50 an hour.

The rate increases, although very small, were significant in that the previous (Labour) Government agreed to bring them in against the calls of big business for a freeze. Interestingly the new Government did not take the opportunity this time to overturn that decision. The creation of

an apprentice rate is also important. While very low, it does bring consistency to the minimum rate that can be paid and for the first time gives apprentices a statutory mechanism to challenge any underpayment.

UNISON is continuing to make the case for significant improvements in the level paid and for an end to the age discrimination. In September the union submitted evidence to the Low Pay Commission for the next round of the National Minimum Wage review, calling for a living wage of £7.60 per hour by October 2011.

The concerns now are that the Con Dem government will use their cuts agenda to freeze or cut the rate next year. Even before the election a Conservative spokesperson was quoted as saying that the Tories' plan was to let the minimum wage whither away over time.

Back to school

Four young members attended UNISON's leadership school in September at Stoke Rochford.

It was four days of union members and staff working together to look at concepts of leadership and think about their own roles as leaders, and putting it into practice to help fight the Con-Dem cuts. Project groups presented their ideas for taking forward UNISON's campaigning, with a particular focus on engaging and working with community groups and other potential allies. The school reconvenes in mid-November to review progress and discuss the next stage of implementing plans.



Leading opinions: Vikki Garratty, Oliver Foster-Burnett, Irene Mbwanda, Asha Wolfe-Robinson

Meet Vikki Garratty

Vikki is 21 years old and works for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council as a clerical officer. Next Generation interviewed her in September at the union's Leadership School.



a better start in life. But it's quite demanding, there often isn't enough time to get done what needs to get done. And the wages are cack! Some older colleagues get paid more but for less demanding and responsible jobs.

How did you get involved in UNISON?

I joined the day I started work. My manager told me I could join if I wanted to, but I wouldn't need to. That made me determined to join! During the miners' strike in 1984/5 my grandparents were involved in supporting the miners – taking them firewood and food and so on – and maybe that had an impact on me too.

What are you doing in UNISON now?

Well, I did union learning rep training in 2009 and my branch education officer said he heard good things about me, so I suppose I was talent-spotted, and I became the branch young members officer. Then I attended the national young members weekend in May this year and met someone from my region – Holly – and we agreed to start reviving the

regional young members organisation in Yorkshire and Humberside. As a result I got elected as the regional young members convenor and Holly and I got the regional positions on the National Young Members Forum.

What are you doing to recruit and involve young people?

We've got a project we're working on to have a stall at Leeds University Freshers Week. We're putting together a joining pack with some info and some freebies. We've also got a prize draw with a UNISON MP3 player as top prize.

What would you say to young workers?

Join up and get involved. It's a lifelong investment for you, your family, and your friends. Through my union work I feel a lot more confident in myself, and recently I was able to help and advise a friend about a redundancy situation. If you want to help people in your workplace get a better deal, UNISON is the way to do it.

Thanks Vikki and good luck.

Tell us a little about your job?

I'm in workforce administration, which basically means I book staff – such as nursery and childcare workers – on training run by in-house and external providers.

What do you like and dislike about your job?

I really feel like I do an important job as the training helps people progress in their careers, and better trained staff also means helping kids get

Need help? In these difficult times, many of us need practical help and information. UNISON Welfare, an independent charity exclusively for UNISON members and their dependants, can help with confidential support, signposting and information, well-being breaks, financial support and debt advice. If you need their help, call **UNISON Welfare on 020 7551 1620**, or for debt matters **UNISON Debtline on 0800 389 3302**, or visit: **unison.org.uk/welfare**

Get your mates to join online

Tell your colleagues they can now join UNISON online at: www.unison.org.uk/join

Regional young members staff contact details

Region	Name	Email
Eastern	Ann Vinden	a.vinden@unison.co.uk
East Midlands	Adrian Morgan	a.morgan@unison.co.uk
Greater London	Jamie Brown	j.brown@unison.co.uk
Northern	Dawn Nicholson	d.nicholson@unison.co.uk
Northern Ireland	Marianne Buick	m.buick@unison.co.uk
North West	James Rupa	j.rupa@unison.co.uk
Scotland	Janet Stewart	j.stewart@unison.co.uk
South Eastern	Kelly Tomlinson	k.tomlinson@unison.co.uk
South West	Mark Phelan	m.phelan@unison.co.uk
Wales/ Cymru	Ryan Williams (Swansea)	r.williams@unison.co.uk
Wales/ Cymru	Tanya Reardon (Cardiff)	t.reardon@unison.co.uk
West Mids	Becci Head	r.head@unison.co.uk
Yorks/Humb	Imelda Bennett	i.bennett@unison.co.uk

facebook

Young members on Facebook

Don't forget you can join in and find out about young members activity and news on Facebook – search for **youngunison**.



Be a conference delegate

It's essential that we get as many young members' voices heard at all levels of UNISON – and one way is by becoming a conference delegate. Whether that's national delegate conference, service group conference, or a self-organised group conference, you need to be talking to your branch secretary now to make sure they know you are interested, and you need to watch out for news from your branch about how and when they elect their delegates.

Want some top tips on how to get to be a conference delegate? Go to the young members webpage at unison.org.uk/young



Keep in touch with UNISON's campaigning – and find out how you can get involved at unison.org.uk