



briefing

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Positively Public fact of the month!!

If a future government has to reduce its debts

- 53% of people think it should increase taxes
- 35% of people think it should reduce spending on public services

Source: Ipsos MORI

Campaign News

A million voices for a fairer society

UNISON has launched a new campaign for a fairer society that puts people and public service before profit and private interest.

“A million voices for change” aims to bring together UNISON’s demands across a range of issues and service areas, and involve activists and members from around the country, to send a clear message to politicians that now is the time for real change.

We want to see policy changes that protect people from redundancy, repossession and homelessness. We want to see changes to the way our economy is run, ending the wasteful speculation that created the crisis. Instead we need an economy based on good jobs in environmentally sustainable and socially useful sectors.

Public services, and the values they embody, are fundamental to this vision. We are asking every branch, every member, and everyone in the wider public who supports our aims, to add their voice to our campaign for change.

To find out more and “add your voice” visit the new web pages at www.unison.org.uk/million

Celebrating public service workers

The recession is placing huge demands on our public service workers. And UNISON members are rising to the challenge.

We want to celebrate this work and so we’re sponsoring the “public servant of the year” category in the Guardian’s public services awards.

The deadline for entry is 17 July. If you or your co-workers have achievements to celebrate – or if you want to highlight the achievements of other services you use or know about in your local area – visit the website for details of how to enter:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/publicservicesawards>

Campaign to save public baths

Coseley residents are campaigning for public baths to remain open to the public, after the council voted for the facilities to close in August because of funding problems. The campaign to save the baths is supported by UNISON and the National Union of Teachers, as well as the Brierley Hill Amateur Swimming Club who use the baths for training.



Campaigning for public libraries

The public library service in Waltham Forest is under threat due to the council's overspend of £400,000. This has resulted in the council relying on unqualified volunteers while cutting full-time staff to save money.

UNISON wants to see more books, more qualified staff and an end to the reliance on volunteers. It also called for the reopening of St James Street Library, closed in 2007. Jane Wright, local author and library campaigner, said: "The closure and dumping down of libraries is a crime against democracy."

Meanwhile Camden plans to modernise its library service by introducing new technology which may threaten the library profession and de-humanise the service. Camden's plan will replace front-line staff with self-service machines like those in supermarkets. Librarians fear savings will be made in staff numbers and traditional services will be compromised.

To find out more about UNISON's library campaign visit: <http://www.unison.org.uk/localgov/library.asp>

Ambulance service back in-house

AN NHS ambulance trust is set to win back the work of transporting 600 patients a day to hospital appointments in North Staffordshire.

The West Midlands Ambulance Service will take over the multi-million pound contract from private firm Parkwood. The deal aroused controversy when the firm paid new recruits less than the staff who transferred from the NHS, despite having signed up to the two-tier code that should have prevented this.

Ray Salmon of UNISON said: "We are delighted the contract is reverting to the NHS." Mark Gough of West Midlands ambulance, said the staff had shown "exceptional commitment and professionalism to their patients at times when they faced much provocation from the company and it has been their dedication which has maintained the quality in the service."

Two-tier pay campaign ends in victory

A UNISON campaign to end the two tier workforce in Durham has ended in victory.

Staff at Durham hospital employed by the private firm Balfour Beatty will now be paid on NHS terms and conditions on a par with their NHS counterparts. The victory follows campaign activities and negotiations with Balfour Beatty to get the employer to honour a 2006 national agreement to bring them in line with directly employed NHS staff.

More than 60 porters, domestic, catering, switchboard and security staff will benefit from the deal.

Standing up for affordable housing

UNISON is campaigning alongside council tenants against excessive rent increases in Lambeth.

Tenants face rent increases of up to 17% due to a budget deficit and errors at the council's arms length housing management organisation (ALMO). The ALMO plans to sell off 100 properties, even though 17,000 people are on the council's housing waiting list. It is also cutting around a fifth of its workforce.

PFI plans successfully challenged

A UNISON-supported legal case brought against PFI plans in Liverpool has triumphed.

It was judged that the NHS failed to adequately consult the public about proposals to redevelop the Royal Liverpool hospital with the use of PFI. The Trusts will now have to carry out further consultation.

The legal case was brought by NHS Unlimited, a UNISON-supported campaign which aims to stop or delay the privatisation of health services.

More information from www.nhscampaign.org

Privatisation News

Specialist education firm may close

A private school firm, Active8 Education Limited, has run into financial difficulties and may close.

The crisis has left workers out of pocket and youngsters without schooling. The firm works with more than 40 vulnerable and disaffected youth. It has suspended all its activities and looks set to fold.

Active8 was set up to work with children who have special needs, are excluded from school or are in danger of exclusion. Bristol City Council and other public agencies have placed students with the firm.

Trade unions have warned that this case highlights the problems that can arise when local authorities privatise services. A union spokesperson commenting on the crisis said: "The authority is hell-bent on outsourcing. But if it wants to improve education in the city, the council should be providing services to work with challenging young people."

Private health care under investigation

The private health provider, Take Care Now, is being investigated over concerns of patient safety.

The firm is contracted by NHS Cambridgeshire to provide out of hours GP services. The Care Quality Commission has launched an inquiry into the private firm following concerns over the death of an elderly patient in 2008.

UNISON is concerned that the privatisation of health care services will compromise patient safety and lead to poorer quality care.

A recent UNISON fact sheet outlines our concerns about the privatisation of primary healthcare. You can download it from:

<http://www.unison.org.uk/file/B4444.pdf>

DOH puts competition before care

UNISON has slammed a Department of Health (DOH) consultation on guidelines for the new NHS Co-operation & Competition Panel.

The panel has been set up to adjudicate between NHS bodies and health providers (including the private sector) over the awarding of contracts to deliver NHS care. But Mike Jackson, UNISON Senior National Officer, said the focus of the consultation is too narrowly focused on how to promote competition in the NHS. "There is no guarantee that competition will lead to a better health service and there is a risk that it will put the real needs of patients in the backseat."

UNISON's position has been backed by a number of other respondents to the consultation, including the NHS Confederation, the Foundation Trust Network, and even former Health Secretary Alan Johnson.

This year the stakes have been raised in the battle over NHS marketisation, with the Transforming Community Services programme threatening to usher in far greater use of private firms to provide local services (see previous issues of Positively Public Briefing). And in May the Department of Health published its latest commercial operating model, entitled "Necessity Not Nicety". This sets out plans to provide £20m to set up a network of Commercial Support Units which will look to boost local NHS efforts to stimulate the market.

More information at www.unison.org.uk/healthcare/

Hampshire privatisation criticised

Plans to privatise waste, street cleaning and grounds maintenance services in Hampshire have met with opposition from protest groups and councillors.

Protesters held a rally over concerns that the plans for a shared service contract with other authorities will lead to poorer quality services and job cuts.



UNISON Regional organiser, Caroline Villiers, said: “We cannot believe anyone can provide as good a service as local people doing local jobs. The union has been told there would be at least 25 administrative redundancies and a reduction of between five and seven refuse vehicles and crews.”

Labour Councillor Paul Harvey, said: “All of the available options have not been examined. For example, the New Forest provides a cheaper service than we do, the work is done in-house and they have a better recycling rate than us.”

Reports

PFI waste exposed

A new study shows that the private finance initiative (PFI) is a huge cost to the NHS and taxpayers.

The study by the University of East Anglia focuses on the funding of PFI financed hospitals, with particular reference to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, one of the earliest and most controversial PFI hospitals. It says the PFI hospital is costing nearly £20m a year too much and should be bought back.

Dr Chris Edwards, a senior fellow of the University of East Anglia, says the hospital which opened in 2001, is currently due to cost more than £800m in rent to the end of the contract in 2037. He added that: “Taxpayers could save £217m if the PFI at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH) is bought out. It has been an incredibly profligate way of funding an undersized hospital at great cost to the public, providing massive, excessive profit to the private sector.”

Meanwhile UNISON has published a new report calling for all new planned PFI projects to be replaced with publicly funded design and build schemes. UNISON Dave Prentis said “PFI has been a long a wasteful failure and it is time to bring it to a close”.

UNISON’s report can be downloaded from <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/18461.pdf>

Good Practice

UNISON launches green project

UNISON has launched a joint project with Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children aimed at making the NHS more green and environmentally friendly.

The project will bring trade unions and hospital management together to work towards a greener Great Ormond Street Hospital. It is the first of 15 projects, which will be run at organisations including Leicester City Council, United Utilities and the University of Brighton.

The project will fund training for workplace environmental reps, and organise awareness raising activities to spread the green message.

More information from: http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1431

TUC research on recession

The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) is carrying out a major piece of research on the economic crisis for the Trade Union Congress (TUC).

The research will involve a large survey of public sector employees to get their perspectives on the economic downturn.

To take part visit: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=aE5Y_2bRh_2fK7Hflw5XkMXm6g_3d_3d

SEND US YOUR STORIES!!

We want to hear from you about what’s happening in your area – new campaigns, successes to celebrate, problems to highlight. Contact the team on **020 7551 1759** or email **Positivelypublic@unison.co.uk**

www.unison.org.uk/positivelypublic