



# **Annual Report 2012/13**



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## **Regional Convenor's Report to Regional Council AGM 2013**

As Regional Convenor, I would like to thank you for your support over the past year. A year for me that held many challenges both on a personal and a professional level.

During 2012, we have seen even more government policies being implemented to allegedly cut the deficit, economic cuts that will certainly see more poverty than we could have ever imagined. In my report to you last year I mentioned the rise in food banks. These are now increasing across this region on an almost daily basis.

We now have the bedroom tax being imposed, forcing more of our members into paying more for their accommodation, with less spending power due to not just a pay freeze but also the cost of living spiralling upwards.

Within most sectors we are seeing jobs and services cut, as employers attempt to reduce spending in line with budgets set by central government. The proposed introduction of Universal Credit which is due to be rolled out nationally in October 2013, will further impact on not just the poorest in society, but also on those families who work.

During 2012, the West Midlands Region has fought hard to retain public services. I am pleased that the West Midlands Police branch was successful in fending off privatisation. I was proud to be present when they were given a TUC award for the hard work they carried out to organise against the proposal of a private company running the services that they provide.

I feel that it is crucial that we adapt in how we carry out our role. We must recruit to stay strong, however, as workplaces change and our members move across sectors and employers we have little choice in changing how we engage with the workforce. I am pleased that we are now looking at how to recruit more workplace stewards and support them to become confident to carry out the role.

The targeted recruitment weeks have been very successful, giving more focus to how we can promote the benefits of being a UNISON member. Early 2013 has seen the national recruitment campaign take off and I am interested in seeing how well that has worked.

We held a Branch Secretaries' Forum in the Autumn of 2012, which was very well attended, it is something that does not take place in other regions. It is a forum that I personally feel is important, as we have many new Branch Secretaries and I do not want them to feel isolated in their role, when there is a wealth of knowledge out there to support them. This initiative will continue, with the agenda being set by what they want to see on it.

I have attended a number of events over the past 12 months and I was pleased to attend a number of Self Organised Group Events. For me the Black History Month and the Remembrance of Slavery events which were organised by the Black Members SOG were excellent and something I was proud to be at.

The year saw Eleanor Smith as our President and how proud we all were at National Delegate Conference 2012, to see her on stage representing the West Midlands.

The Regional Convenor team spent many hours looking at the Regional Standing Orders, which had been in existence for almost 20 years. I am pleased that the proposed changes were almost all accepted by Regional Council.

This year is the 20th anniversary of UNISON, and although I have no idea what is being planned nationally to celebrate this momentous occasion I am pleased that we in West Midlands Region have taken the initiative by planning an awards ceremony for branches in the Autumn. If we look at our timeline over those years, much has changed. The world is a very different place, technology has changed what we do and how we communicate. We have seen activists come and go, governments change. One thing is clear, we are still fighting against unjust practices, fighting for equal pay, safe workplaces and for what is right for our members and society.

Sadly, across the world we still have immense global poverty with unjust practices, where children are working in terrible conditions to ensure that multi-national companies make larger profits. Countries where trade unionists are murdered or imprisoned for doing what we do every day.

I would like to thank those branches that have nominated me for a further year to be your Convenor and I would like to thank the Regional Convenor Team for their support and hard work over the past year.

Sue Laws

## Regional Secretary's Report

No-one in UNISON, whether a member, activist or member of staff needs to be reminded of the very tough challenges we face. Every day at a workplace, branch, regional and national level we can see the devastating impact of this government's ideological attack on public services.

UNISON has always said the way to rebuild the nation's finances is to grow the economy, get people back to work, develop businesses so that people and businesses can help close the deficit gap by them paying taxes. We said that if an austerity package was adopted it would put thousands of people out of work; hit vulnerable communities who rely on public services; suck demand out of the economy; and damage economic growth. Sadly, we have been proven right and last year we went into a double-dip recession and we are knocking on the door of an unprecedented triple-dip recession.

Our branch activists are at the forefront of dealing with these cuts and at the same time the day-to-day disciplinaries and grievances still need to be dealt with. Our activists are the backbone of our union and it has been quite humbling to see the brilliant way they've dealt with everything that has been thrown at them.

Despite the pressures we've had some victories, notably the defeat of the mass privatisation proposals at West Midlands Police. We should all learn the lessons of this significant victory as it was not achieved by accident. The key reasons why this was a success were:

- We had a branch that got stuck into the campaign and worked constructively with its sister trade union Unite.
- We had other UNISON branches in the region engaged in the campaign and did great work in the community collecting signatures for a petition
- The regional office and the branch worked together in partnership
- We engaged the media
- We used the Labour Link effectively to secure a cast iron political commitment from the Labour candidate for the Police and Crime Commissioner not to carry out this privatisation if he was elected.

We won't win all the battles while we fight austerity – but we will win some. And we should take heart from them, reflect on them and use the lessons learned to help us with future campaigns.

The floods of people being made redundant from the public sector has had a negative impact upon our membership levels. Whilst we lost members in the West Midlands, we should take some small comfort that the rate of loss in our region was smaller than most other regions. We've not only lost members because of the cuts, we've also lost many experienced and hard working activists on whom the union relies. This coming year the regional office will be focussed on building up our membership levels and bringing more people into union activity.

Last years I said "the gloss is beginning to come off this Tory-led government" – I think it is now fair to say the gloss has well and truly come off now. Everyone can see them for what they are about: looking after the rich and powerful while ordinary people are made to pay the price for the failure of greedy bankers.

Aside from reflecting upon the way we've won campaigns it's important we:

- Don't engage in destructive in-fighting at a branch, regional or national level otherwise Cameron and his cronies will be smiling while our members suffer
- Show leadership at all levels of our union by involving people and working in a way to get best out of the people around us
- Keep up the pressure on politicians of all political parties, particularly our MPs – they need to hear the first hand stories of the damage that austerity is doing.

Let's keep our heads up and continue fighting. This is not about left and right – it's about right and wrong. I have no doubt that we are right and this awful government are very wrong.

Ravi Subramanian

Regional Secretary

## **Finance Secretary's Report**

As we approach our 20th Anniversary we find ourselves in a disastrous economic climate created by the Con/Dem coalition's incompetent response to the banking crisis. As a result our union is for the first time facing the challenge of a declining income.

Throughout the past twenty years we have become accustomed to seeing more money coming in year on year. But now we are seeing a reduction in the amount of subscriptions we collect and this is having an effect throughout the organisation.

Branches are facing difficult decisions regarding their spending. Regions and Head Office are having to prioritise their use of resources, and some things we have got used to doing are having to stop.

In 2012 our regional lay budget received an income of approximately 5.5% less than we received in 2011. If you combine this with inflation of 3.1% over 2012 then you can see that we suffered a real terms cut of 8.6%. However, due to the work we had done managing the budget in previous years we were still able to increase our expenditure by around 8% and put some further funds into reserves.

However, it's clear from these figures that this growth cannot continue into the future. So this year for the first time we have set a budget with a reduced level of expenditure across almost all budget heads. By 'sharing the pain' evenly we hope that we will be able to avoid too many difficult budget reductions in the immediate future.

For branches and for the region all of the income we receive is linked directly to the subscriptions we collect from members. Recruiting new members is therefore essential to maintaining or even increasing our income. Help from the Regional Pool is available to branches for this work but sadly this resource has been under utilised over the past two years. I hope that branches will start to make more applications and use these funds to help them in the vital work of recruitment.

The reducing income we face presents us with a challenge. It forces us to take a hard look at what we are doing and ask if we are doing the right things and are doing them as cost effectively as possible. We have already started to look at sharing resources across the region and I hope we will be able to make efficiency savings as a result. I'm confident that this challenge is one we can meet, and will ultimately leave us in an even stronger position than before.

In our annual audit our auditors have raised a query over the treatment of out of pocket expenses for the convenor's team. I have raised the point they make with colleagues at national office and am confident we will reach a satisfactory resolution in the near future. Other than this one specific query they have again complemented the region in the way in which we maintain our accounts and ensure compliance with procedure.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Keith Heron, Central Services Manager, and his assistant Claire Kenny for their assistance and without whose practical help the lay activity fund would not operate.

Malcolm R Cantello

Regional Finance Secretary

**Statement of General Fund Account for year ending 31/12/12**

2011 £		2012 £
171,573.70	Income & Expenditure A/c	162,718.84
	Retention money allocated	
	Interest	
- 34.00	Bank Charges	- 29.00
<b>171,539.70</b>	<b>Total Income for 2012</b>	<b>162,689.84</b>
	<b><i>NET Expenditure for the year</i></b>	
	<u>Meeting</u>	
22,832.33	Regional Council Meetings	23,493.26
28,888.57	Service Conditions C/tee	30,797.36
6,002.92	Regional Council C/tees	7,694.22
	Whitley Council	
	Whitley Council expense due from HO	
6,854.34	Conferences	4,476.00
64,578.16		66,460.84
	<u>Administration</u>	
	Printing & Stationery	547.80
160.99	Postage & Telephones	169.49
6,999.50	Out of pocket expenses	7,386.00
7,160.49		8,103.29
	<u>Education</u>	
6,080.00	Tutor Costs	7,556.65
6,267.10	Accommodation & Venues	2,990.34
153.20	Members Expenses	
1,983.99	Equipment & Materials	11,318.93
9,648.62	Other	250.00
- 7,211.50	Education Income	- 4,820.00
9,891.90	Membership Education	11,193.60
	National Expenditure	
	Computer Training	
26,813.31		28,489.52
8,831.53	<u>Communication &amp; Campaigning</u>	4,293.40
	<u>Branch Development &amp; Org</u>	
2,999.57	<u>Recruitment Projects</u>	13,026.20
11,831.10		17,319.60

...cont

-	<u>Sports</u>		-
524.59	<u>Hospitality</u>		
	Regional Hospitality	497.70	
	Conference Social		
524.59			497.70
368.40	<u>Health &amp; Safety</u>	- 1,147.46	
368.40			- 1,147.46
	<u>Self Organised Groups</u>		
1,701.30	Black Members	5,596.35	
916.69	Lesbian & Gay Members	424.69	
3,040.39	Women Members	1,652.60	
2,473.63	Disabled Members	1,598.70	
1,873.50	Retired Members	1,293.90	
2,256.10	Young Members	2,905.00	
12,261.61			13,471.24
	<u>Welfare</u>		
	Donations		
	National Meetings		
1,109.20	Other	1,454.98	
1,109.20			1,454.98
	<u>Donations/Affiliations</u>		
1,157.50	Affiliations	1,894.80	
4,100.00	Donations	2,150.00	
5,257.50			4,044.80
2,108.30	<u>International Relations</u>	5,119.96	
2,108.30			5,119.96
	<u>Miscellaneous</u>		
- 2,607.18	General Miscellaneous (including capital purchases)	- 2,538.25	
798.00	Officer IT		
	Dawn Lake Fund	2,066.02	
1,635.55	Depreciation	620.99	
- 173.63			148.76
<b>131,839.03</b>	<b>Total Expenditure 2012</b>		<b>143,963.23</b>
<b>39,700.67</b>	<b>Surplus/Deficit for 2012</b>		<b>18,726.61</b>

**Statement of Welfare & General Funds for Financial Year 2012**

2011 £		2012 £
	<b><u>General Fund</u></b>	
43,098.60	Balance as at 1/1/12	82,799.27
39,700.67	Deficit/Surplus for the year	18,726.61
<u>82,799.27</u>	<b>Balance as at 31/12/12</b>	<u>101,525.88</u>
	<b><u>Welfare Fund</u></b>	
53,243.09	Balance as at 1/1/12	50,240.93
663.56	Incoming Donations	916.19
<u>53,906.65</u>	Interest	<u>51,157.12</u>
3,603.75	Expenditure	3,556.25
61.97	Inland Revenue	136.32
<u>3,665.72</u>		<u>3,692.57</u>
<u>50,240.93</u>	<b>Balance as at 31/12/12</b>	<u>47,464.55</u>
<b>133,040.20</b>	<b>Total of All Funds</b>	<b>148,990.43</b>

**Consolidated Balance Sheet as at 31/12/12**

2011	The fund balances at the end of the year were:	2012
£		£
82,799.27	General Reserve Fund	101,525.88
50,240.93	Welfare Fund	47,464.55
<u>133,040.20</u>		<u>148,990.43</u>
<b>The fund balances were represented by net assets as follows:</b>		
2,456.04	Furniture & Equipment	820.49
	Less	
- 1,635.55	Depreciation	- 620.99
<u>820.49</u>		199.50
<u>Investments</u>		
39,990.17	Regional Bric Accounts - Lay	39,990.17
	Regional Bric Accounts -	
45,554.23	Welfare	45,554.23
<u>85,544.40</u>		85,544.40
<u>Bank</u>		
60,128.61	Current Account-General	77,632.47
7,478.62	Current Account-Welfare	2,096.64
<u>67,607.23</u>		79,729.11
- 20,931.92	Debtors Regional Council	
- 20,931.92	Creditors Regional Council	- 16,482.58
<u>133,040.20</u>		<u>- 16,482.58</u>
		<u>148,990.43</u>

M Cantello  
Finance Secretary

## Audit Certificate

We have examined the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet and Certify that the accounts represent a true state of affairs of the West Midlands Region of UNISON.

P Griffith 31/01/2013

M Maley 31/01/2013

Honorary Auditors

## **Education & Training**

Overall in 2012 the Regional Education & Training Service continued to maintain programmes of courses which meet the needs of both activists and members. In addition the Regional Education & Training Committee took a decision to support an initiative to promote and improve access to the expanding range of courses provided in the West Midlands through major investment in a new website: Learn in UNISON WM.

### **Our Work in 2012**

In the published Activist Education Programme for 2012 there were 48 courses. Of these 39 took place and 9 cancelled. A total of 420 workplace representatives and branches officers attended one of these courses.

One of the highlights was that for the first time in years the Region received enough applications to put on all of the Branch Officer courses, except for Branch Treasurers, although the Online Branch Accounts System training was provided twice.

The Region has continued to expand its programme of Membership Courses provided in partnership with the Workers Educational Association (WEA) and the Open University (OU) increasing the number of courses by 25%. Of the 29 courses arranged 21 took place with over 500 members from across the region attending. Further expansion is planned for 2013 with more one day workshops provided by the OU and a wider variety of courses provided by the WEA.

One outstanding feature of this varied programme is it provides learning opportunities to many members who did not benefit from the strictures of the formal education system in the UK, and work in jobs where there is little support for meeting their learning needs. The Education Service has supplemented this approach with supporting project workers in some branches to embed a learning culture. Funding for this was provided by the Union Learning Fund (ULF) and 5 branches in the West Midlands received support for their work from the ULF.

The Regional Education Team also arranged 38 courses in addition to the published regional programmes. These were attended by 318 activists and members.

## **Equality Audit**

An audit of the applications and attendance figures shows:

- A slight fall compared to 2011 in the overall numbers attending courses in the West Midlands down from 814 to 701 (14%)
- Very low numbers of Young Members (under 5%) participating on courses
- A slight increase in the percentage of Black Members attending activists from 9% to 10 %
- A slight decrease in the percentage of Women Members attending activists courses from 54% to 52%.

## **Learn in UNISON WM**

One of the main areas of work over the year was the decision by the Regional Education & Training Committee at the end of 2011 to develop a new website. This will have a number of innovative features. Members will have their own course records page, courses will be booked on-line (and when there is a need be cancelled), There is an interactive map function, there are links to all the main providers of education and training for our activists and members: UNSION national courses, Unionlearn/TUC courses, Open University courses, and WEA courses, there will be lots of information, and a news page. The plan is to launch the website in 2013 after it has been tested with a limited number of branches.

## **Bursaries for Activists 2012**

The Regional Education & Training Committee provide bursaries to:

- Kevin Holt South Warwickshire NHS Branch, £500.00 towards fees for MA Industrial Relations at Keele Univesity
- Jenny Forbes Birmingham Private & Public Health £1,000.00 towards fees for MA in International & Trade Union Studies at Ruskin College

## Welfare Committee

### What were the RWC objectives for 2012 and were they achieved?

- To arrange a seminar giving priority to new BWOs attending
- To send representatives to AGM
- To hold Christmas Appeal
- To hold School Uniform Appeal
- To undertake casework as necessary

REGIONALLY ORGANISED EVENTS	RESPONSE
Details of any event organised by Regional Welfare committees	Friday, 12 October Seminar 10.00 am to 3.00 pm Regional Office
How many Branch Welfare Officers attended	15
Was the event opened up to other activists and did they attend?	No – fully subscribed
Range of topics covered (if applicable)	Christmas and Uniform Appeals Networking Charis Grants Winter Fuel Grants Welfare Rights Octopus Croyde Bay Welfare website and application form
If possible please provide some quotes from those that attended and/or general feedback from course evaluation forms	"An excellent seminar – as a new Welfare Officer I made new contacts, met the Welfare Committee and gathered information I can see within my Branch." "Good Q&A session." "The Welfare Rights information was invaluable." "We will be joining the Octopus Lotteries." "It was nice to put names to faces." "A fun day was had by all."

<b>FUNDRAISING</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
Did your region hold any fundraising events? If so how much was raised?	Three bucket collections at Regional Council, approximately £50 per time.
Please provide some quotes and/or contact details of a few people that took part. Also email photos if these are available.	Minuted at Regional Council.

<b>REGIONAL WELFARE COMMITTEES</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
How many RWC meetings were held in 2012?	Six including Christmas Appeal and Uniform Appeal, plus additional Casework and Planning Meetings.
Is there anything you would like to say about what the committee achieved during 2012 or difficulties encountered?	<p>We feel that 2012 has been a good year in spite of spending some months without administration support - Thanks must go to Michelle Carty for stepping in and saving the day.</p> <p>The seminar was a great success although speakers had to be rearranged at the last minute. Twenty four Christmas Grants were approved and 8 School Uniform Grants, in addition to casework throughout the year. Unfortunately, one Committee Member had to resign due to family commitments but was replaced by a volunteer at Regional Council.</p>

Jane Ceresa – Chairperson  
Linda Thomas – Vice Chair

## **Regional Women's Committee**

The regional women's committee continued to meet throughout 2012. Fran Hill acted as chair to the committee a position from which she recently stood down and the committee thank Fran for all her work whilst chair of the committee.

The regional women's day was held in November 2012 and around 50 women delegates from across the region attended. Our guest speaker was Ravi Subramanian, Regional Secretary he was warmly received as this was the first time he had been able to attend regional women's day. Workshops included employment law, public transport and women and for the more energetic, yoga. The committee also worked with the international forum to provide a seminar to celebrate International Women's day.

The committee are well represented at a national level with Janet Richmond acting as vice chair to the national women's committee and chairing a session of the 2013 National Women's Committee held in Liverpool. The region had the largest delegation it has ever had to conference and Manjula Kumari our other national women's committee representative from the region was elected to attend National Delegate Conference in 2013 to represent National Women's Conference. The committee continue to be active within the regional TUC women's structures and we were well represented at the 2012 National TUC Women's Conference with Fran Hill attending as our regional delegate as part of the UNISON delegation and Sue Laws attending as the regional observer from the Midlands TUC.

## **Retired Members**

The Retired Members Committee has continued to carry out the normal programme which included the holding of a One Day Seminar in May and a half day Training Day for delegates to the National Retired Members Conference in September. Both events were fairly well supported and have resulted in attracting new Retired Member activists and the setting up or re-energising of Retired Member sections.

Retired members gave assistance to Branches in the Local Government Pensions Dispute and to the Region itself. We are more than willing to give similar assistance to the Region and to Branches, particularly on recruitment of new members.

The plans for 2013 include more retired member involvement at branch level with the consent of the branch and the setting up of more retired member sections on a formal basis. This includes the possibility of setting up sections on a shared branch basis. Another training day will be held in September which will focus on the role of retired members within Unison. The One Day Seminar will again be held in April.

Representation at the appropriate level has been undertaken both within Unison and in the wider pensioner movement. This includes Regional Council, Regional Committee, Welfare Benefits Committee, National Retired Members Committee, National Delegate Conference, National Retired Members Conference, Pensioners Parliament, West Midlands Pensioners Convention and the Midlands TUC Pensioners Network.

On the latter, UNISON has maintained its influence with the appointment of Bob Deacon as Vice Chair and the continued appointment of Sheena Gordon as Secretary. UNISON also has 4 members of the Executive Committee in addition to these two Officer posts. The Network could do with more support in terms of Branch affiliation and I urge Branches to consider doing so. There is no affiliation charge although donations would be welcome. The Network intends to become a campaigning body but needs finance to enable it to do so.

The Committee is keen to have a more proactive role at the National Retired Members Conference and will attempt to get more branches to submit motions to the Conference to deal with the large number of issues that are of concern to retired members. The Retired Members Committee is to submit two motions on the gender gap in pension provision and the status of the TUC Pensioners Committee.

Campaigning work will continue throughout 2013 for a better state pension, a National Care Service and for the defence of universal pensioner benefits and opposition to the introduction of means testing.

David Kippest

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## **Black Members Self Organised Group**

2012 was a very busy year for the WMRBMSOG. We started the year by supporting The Holocaust Memorial Day and many of our members attended the Birmingham event jointly organised by the Jewish Community and Birmingham City Council.

For the first time we made links with the Chinese community of Birmingham. On the 29<sup>th</sup> January, we joined their New Year celebrations in Birmingham. UNISON members were happy to see us campaigning on their behalf & we managed to get 235 questionnaires completed & recruited one new member.

In February, we took a strong delegation to National Black Members Conference. Our members took to the podium & spoke for or against motions. We were especially proud our first time speakers and the young members that are now filtering through.

In March, we ran a UNISON stall at an International Women's Day event. The Challenging Racism in the Workplace stand caught the eye of the Lord Mayor of Birmingham who stopped to talk about our work in this area. On the 6<sup>th</sup> March, our Challenging Racism in the Workplace event with Neville Lawrence proved very popular with our members. The event attracted a very large & varied attendance & our members found it very moving. The event also highlighted the dangers of the proposed outsourcing of police support services.



In April, we attended the Vaisakhi event in Wolverhampton. Once again, this was our first attendance at the Wolverhampton event. It allowed us to build links with the Council of Sikh Gurdwaras in Wolverhampton and the stall was very popular with the public.

In May, the WMRBMSOG collaborated with the International Forum & the regional, Women's SOG to jointly run an International Seminar. The event was well attended & enjoyed by all.

WMRBMSOG members signed the petition against the privatisation of Police Support Services. We joined the lobby at the West Midlands Police HQ to protest against the proposals & the Police Authority decided to defer their decision until after the election of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

A Genealogist joined us on the 24<sup>th</sup> August for our Slavery Memorial Day event and helped members to trace their heritage. The event also included key speakers, a film, quiz & workshops. The feedback was extremely positive & all credit goes to the working group for organising a splendid event.

In September, we joined the Muslim community of Birmingham at the Eid Mela in Birmingham. The UNISON stall was very popular with community members. It even attracted the attention of The Lord Mayor of Birmingham & The Labour Councillors who stopped to have a chat with our activists. Our activists were quick to request their support in protecting public sector services & public sector jobs.

Black activists took to the streets on the 7<sup>th</sup> October, to support the TUC rally for a Future That Works. Roger McKenzie delivered a key note speech for UNISON. On the 20<sup>th</sup> October, Black activists travelled to London to march for A Future That Works & London became a sea of purple & green.

Our Black History Month event was supported by Labour MP Shabana Mahmood, our Race Equality Officer Khadije Campbell & Eleanor Smith. It also included a workshop & films of two remarkable women who have achieved changes which are with us even today. The feedback was very positive.

In November the WMRBMSOG AGM was well attended & we elected our officers for 2013.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> November, we joined the Hindu Council of Birmingham at their Diwali Celebrations event. The UNISON stall was visited by the High Commissioner of India & The President of The Hindu Council of Birmingham. Both were interested in our work & we will continue to forge stronger links with this group. Our stall was featured on Sahara One TV Channel & we managed to get 273 postcards completed to MP's to oppose the government's austerity measures.

The West Midlands Region has also participated in a Freedom of Information pilot to all Local Authorities in the region. The information gathered is being analysed for any disproportionate effects on Minority groups.

A number of Branches have approached us this year for help & advice to set up a Black Members Group and we have been privileged to help our colleagues in their endeavours. We have also encouraged Black Activists to become more involved in their Branches, to recruit new members & new stewards and to take up UNISON Education & Lifelong Learning opportunities. We are extremely proud of all those Black activists who are now taking up positions in their Branches, in the Region & on National Committees.

The WMRBMSOG is extremely grateful for all the messages of support that we have received throughout the year and particularly to the support from Jenny Forbes, Ravi Subramanian, Sue Laws, Roger McKenzie, Eleanor Smith, Cathy Bayton, Mary Locke and Khadiee Campbell.

We hope to continue the good work in 2013.





## **West Midlands LGBT**

The West Midlands Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans Self Organised Group has had another successful and busy year in 2012.

Activities through this year have included a visible presence at all of the Region's major Pride events through the summer, including a very successful first time at the women only weekend event 'L-Fest' in Shrewsbury in July and the follow up event 'L-Festive' in Birmingham in December. Particularly through our presence at the Pride events we were able to highlight pertinent issues such as the Equal Marriage consultation, the Police and Crime Commissioner elections and the October TUC rally and encourage our members, as well as the general public, to engage with these issues to make a positive difference. As well as these events, we also attended the TUC 'March for a Future That Works' in London in October, and participated in a World Aids Day (1st December) event in a Birmingham LGBT nightclub, The Nightingale, which was arranged by Midlands TUC. The latter was part of our continuing plan to undertake activities on the gay scene outside of Pride events; bar blitzes (where members go out in groups to distribute leaflets and chat to members of the LGBT community in local bars) are also becoming a more frequent occurrence as part of this undertaking. All of these events enable us to disseminate information, raise our profile in the local community, network with other agencies, and recruit new members both to the union and our SOG - ensuring that UNISON's name is synonymous with fighting for equality and against discrimination

In November we again had a great regional presence at National LGBT Conference in Brighton. It was a successful conference and it was great to see our region making such positive contributions, whether it was moving or speaking on motions or running and contributing to workshops and fringe events. West Midlands LGBT SOG also jointly won the annual LGBT Recruitment Award again this year (alongside N. Ireland). We were able to gain new members to the SOG, both in the lead up to conference at our training event, and through the regional meeting held at Conference itself.

We are planning to attend all the pride events and rainbow picnics in our region again this year and we have secured money from an Equalities GPF bid to assist us in doing this. We will continue to promote existing UNISON campaigns and to recruit, and to make sure the community is aware of the big issues facing it. We would love to welcome any of you who would like to come and join us at your local event!

Our numbers at regional meetings have continued to grow (including new members from branches that have not previously been represented), and we now have a good spread of service groups represented including Health, Local Government, Community, and Police and Justice, as well as the Young and Retired members' sections. We still have low number of women participating within the group but it is on the increase. We regularly now have good representation and proportionality, and we will continue to build on this strong basis.

So, for the coming year we look forward to welcoming more new members and will continue to strive to recruit from underrepresented groups within both the union and the Regional SOG. We will continue to raise the visibility of UNISON at all events we attend, and to campaign for equality, and against the cuts and the Far Right, amongst other things. We also look forward to continuing to foster links with other SOGs, forums and committees, to enable us to share best practice and support each other, as well as moving forward on joint working with Labour Link. We are also hoping to run a workshop on recruiting at community events, which we anticipate inviting members of the other regional SOGs and Forums too – watch this space!

The LGBT SOG meets approximately every 2-3 months, and we welcome all members of UNISON who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans – our next meeting is July 2013. To find out how to get involved, or for any further information, please contact me on [j.titley@unison.co.uk](mailto:j.titley@unison.co.uk) or via our Facebook page (search for 'UNISON – West Midlands LGBT Group').

Jen Titley

Secretary to the West Midlands Regional LGBT SOG



## Young Members' Report

The past year has been another busy year for the young members in the West Midlands Region. They have participated in many events and conferences and have also organised events. They have also been active in their workplaces and played their part in recruiting new members to UNISON.

### 20 October 2012 – The March through London

On 20 October London saw thousands of young people take part in the march to show their support and to stop cuts. Several young members from the West Midlands Region travelled to London and marched with the young members' delegation.



*Young Members from the West Midlands marching in London*

### National Young Members Weekends 2012 & 2013

The National Young Members Weekend 2012 took place in Leeds in May and 12 members from the region attended as delegates. They participated in workshops and took to the streets of Leeds to do a street campaigning exercise. This included talking to members of the public about the cuts to public services and asking them to complete a questionnaire.

This exercise helped members to build confidence in engaging with strangers. These skills were then taken back into members' workplaces and used to recruit colleagues into the union.

The members that attended the weekend have now become involved at a local level. They have attended the Regional Young Members Forum meetings, but more importantly are active in their workplaces and local Branch. Many of them are now the Young Members Officer in their Branch and they are organising and recruiting young members in their workplaces. One young member has become a steward and is just starting her stewards training.

The weekend this year will be taking place in Sheffield and we will be sending 14 delegates from the region. For most of the delegates this will be the first time that they have been involved in anything to do with UNISON and hopefully this will give them the confidence to be involved in the region and their Branch.



*The West Midlands Young Members Delegation*

### **Young Members Newsletter 2013**

The young members wrote and designed their own newsletter this year. It was e-mailed to all young members who have an e-mail address on RMS and was also sent to all Branch Secretaries, with the request that it be distributed to young members in the Branch and

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around workplaces. The newsletter was also handed out at recruitment events during the Young Members Recruitment week in February, meaning a wide variety of members and non-members would have seen it. The newsletter was well received by members and non-members and the forum got a lot of positive feedback. Keep a look out for the next edition which will be out soon.

### **Young Members Day – 2 March 2013**

The forum felt that a regional day for young members would be a good idea. We therefore held an event on 2 March for all young members (and those who were not members but were interested in learning more). The idea was that members would have a chance to network with other young members and find out more about UNISON and how they could get involved. Several sessions took place on the day, including how to recruit and organise other young members, the structure of the union, how to be active in the workplace, how to contact your Branch. Members who attended found the day useful and a further event will be organised for later this year.

### **Follow Us On Twitter**

The West Midlands Young Members now have their own twitter account, which is @youngUNISON\_WM. The young members themselves have responsibility for the account and are responsible for adding information and informing people of upcoming events. If you are on twitter please follow us.

### **AGM**

The next West Midlands Regional Young Members Forum will be taking place on 23 May 2013 at 6.00 p.m. in the UNISON Regional Centre. If you are a UNISON member who is under 27 please come along to the meeting to find out more about the work of the young members and how you can get involved and be active. Please encourage all young members in your Branches to come along to the meeting. For further information please contact me - r.head@unison.co.uk.

### **Thanks to the Members of the Regional Young Members Forum**

I would like to thank the core group of young members who attend the majority of the regional meetings and events. They also worked very hard to put together the newsletter. It is not easy for them to get time off from work to attend meetings as most of them work for the health service and for the police. I am very grateful for all the work that they do.

Beccy Head, Regional Young Members Contact

## **International Officer's report**

Since my last annual report, we organised an international seminar at the regional office.

Sessions were held on;

*Trade Unions in Burma* – Mick Bowman from the Northern region reported back on a recent visit to meet the FTUK (Burmese trade union), which because of restrictions within Burma operates just over the Thai border (see article inside)

*Labour behind the label* - Sam Mahler outlined the work of the LBL and focussed on the Play fair campaign which addresses the iniquities of the sports wear industry and the Olympics.

*Action for Southern Africa* – Mark Beacon gave a well received session on Swaziland with a particular focus on the position of women in the country (see short article based on Marks presentation)

*Amnesty UK* – Ellis Brooks got delegates moving around whilst giving a session on the role of Amnesty and the art of protesting!

### **SITAG/ Banana link**

The UIDF funded project originating from our region continues and regular update reports have been received from Banana link (these have been circulated to all branches and BIROS.) The final report has now been received, which shows the advances SITAG have been able to make through UNISONs support.

As you probably know the visit from Fatima Orea (Womens Officer of the Peruvian trade union SITAG) planned for December was unfortunately cancelled due to the British Embassy refusing her a Visa. This is the second time Fatima has been refused a visa.

Following discussions with Banana Link it was agreed to try again in 2013. It was felt that an ideal opportunity would be to invite Fatima over for National delegate Conference, as we would be able to invite her to our regional delegates meeting And hear from her how the project which (through funding from UNISON's International development fund) our region has facilitated, has helped SITAG's capacity building. She would also be able to speak at our Regional SOG meetings. In addition other regions have expressed an interest in meeting.

In line with the visit the Region also plan to organise a fringe meeting at Conference with Banana link. This in turn will promote a motion from a branch in our region which will raise awareness of the issues and seek affiliation to Banana link.

The region made a successful bid to the National International committee for funding towards the costs of the visit and £1000 towards our costs (the rest being met from within our International budget).

### **Visitors**

We were visited in the region by Vincent Dlamini , General Secretary of NAPSAWU National public services and allied workers union of Swaziland. Vincent spoke at Wolverhampton Trades Councils MayDay rally. It was felt that to enable a wider audience for Vincents message, a video should be made with Vincent which could be circulated via social media, after some delay the video appeared on youtube.

In June we hosted the visit of Arely Lopez and Emerson Silva Urbina from the Nicaraguan public workers union UNE. Arely is the secretary of UNEs young members section and Emerson is a Trade union lawyer. Both Arely and Emerson participated in a training programme for UNE young members funded by UNISON. They met trade unionists in Wolverhampton and at the regional International forum in Birmingham. The visit was part of an ongoing process looking at building formal twinning links with the UNE.

Whilst more formal links have not been achieved yet, I am in regular contact with both Arely and Emerson through the magic of facebook! I would add that Fatima Orea is also on facebook for anyone who wants to say hi!

### **National International seminar**

I attended the above in March with 6 other BIROs from our region (which was one of the highest regional 'delegations') and spoke on our work with Banana link and SITAG.

### **International policies and priorities**

Several motions on International issues have been discussed at regional Council and at last years NDC , a motion agreed at Regional Council on Tamil Solidarity was debated and agreed.

### **Donations**

The regional international forum have made several donations over the past 12 months , most notably Palestine Solidarity, ACTSA and Venezuela Solidarity.

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Following the death of Hugo Chavez (see below) , the Forum also financed a meeting in Birmingham of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign .

## **Media**

The regional international newsletter continues to be published and the regional blogspot updated.

I continue to send out urgent actions via email, and I hope those receiving them are acting on them as they are an important way of protecting trade unionists.

Attendance at the forum has unfortunately dipped over the year , this appear to be mainly due to 'old stalwarts' retiring. The next forum is on Thursday 13th June and we are trying an afternoon start at 2pm, a buffet will be provided at 1pm - all welcome.

Finally as a long term supporter of the Bolivarian revolution , I was saddened , as I know many of you were that on March 5th this year Hugo Rafael Chavez Frias, President of Venezuela died, after a long and hard battle against cancer. He was 58 years old.

He led the progressive transformation of Venezuela by lifting millions of its citizens from poverty – standing against social exclusion, marginalisation and institutional repression – thereby restoring to them a long-overdue dignity.

Under President Chavez's leadership, his government's policies improved the life of ordinary Venezuelans as no other government had ever done in the history of that South American nation.

He showed that a better world could be constructed. Our hearts go to his family, friends, comrades, the people of Venezuela, and the people of Latin America.

Dave Auger

## **West Midlands Regional Health and Safety Forum**

The Regional Health and Safety Forum meets four times per year, in central Birmingham at UNISON Regional Centre. All Unison activists are invited.

Most who attend are sent as delegates from branches. However the forum sets no rules to how many 'delegates' a branch sends. The forum is very active. The Chair, Steve Mcmanus and core of activists are all extremely passionate in respect of the use of health and safety as a tool in the workplace to improve the working lives of our members.

Those activists who attend the forum bring with them a wealth of knowledge. Most have recognised qualifications in Health and Safety, some are Health and safety professionals actually employed in the field. Anyone attending the forum has access to the best advice and guidance possible on matters relating to health and safety at work.

At every meeting regional activists have the opportunity to present their workplace reports and receive feedback from other forum members. This enables consideration of differing views, and solutions, gives advice and supports, hence empowering activists to deal with the issues they need to address in the workplace competently and with confidence.

The forum also arranges workshops and other learning opportunities. Thompsons Solicitors ran a workshop that focused on the investigation of incidents at work, in June 2012. The workshop was open to all activists in the region and was well attended. The workshop included guidance on accident investigations and how to report a claim. The workshop was so successful, delegates furnished the chair with an eleven point action plan. Those actions were carried onto future agendas. The forum thanks Warinder Juss from Thompsons for his guidance and advice at the workshop

The past year, has been a very productive year focusing on the importance of trade union involvement in respect of the management of Health and Safety at work.

The Forum organised a Regional Health and safety Conference at the Village Hotel, Walsall on 18th October 2012. The conference was attended by over 65 delegates from across branches in the region. This event was planned and organised by the forum, some of the presentations and workshops were produced and delivered by forum members, and the event was staffed by a majority of forum members. This event was extremely successful. The forum needs to be congratulated not only was it a success but it also generated a slight profit!

The administrative support was provided by Rita Howard, Regional Administrator. Her help in producing Agendas, workshop paperwork and delegate packs was greatly appreciated. Delegates were given feedback sheets so views can be feed into planning and organisation

of the next regional event. A full report on the conference as well as a briefing from feedback views are available

There have been difficulties, but nothing more than expected in the current economic/political climate. The forum has lost some members due to redundancy, retirement, or the failure to secure facility time to attend. Some activists have found it difficult to attend even with facility time due to the increases in workload and a lack of back filling of posts due to the general downturn in employment. Whatever the pressure on active numbers as the forum is underpinned by a core group of active members the forum's work has continued. However its vital new members are found to continue the work of the forum.

Future Health and Safety events:

Workers Memorial Day - Sunday 28th April

Health and Safety expo - 15th -17th May

Hazards conference 19th - 21st July

## **General Political Fund**

There has been a increase in the amount of bids to the General Political Fund to support campaigning events in the Region. With increasing cuts, attacks on our members pay and conditions and the increasing move towards privatisation it is hardly a surprise that branches are seeking more support from this fund. A breakdown of bids and amounts awarded is shown on the table on the next page.

If you want to find out how to access the fund, please speak to your Regional Organiser in the first instance who will give initial advice. The form you will need to complete to make your bid can be found on our website [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk) click on 'Get Campaigning' on the right hand side of the screen; then 'Funding your local campaign' on the left hand side of the screen.

Once completed your form should be sent to the Regional Office, 24, Livery Street, Birmingham B3 2PA

<b>Date</b>	<b>Branch/Committee</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
Various	LGBT SOG	£2100	7 LGBT events Stall hire/sponsorship. Leaflets; promotional items; banners
Various	BM SOG	£5000	5 BM events Stall hire/marquee/balloons. Leaflets; promotional items
March	West Midlands Police	£5000	Campaign materials for campaign against privatisation
Summer	Staffs County	£4200	Anti-cuts postcards to be distributed to the public
September	Shropshire LG	£3000	Commissioning of APSE report to assist in negotiating against the cuts and privatisation
October	Staffs County	£3100	Commissioning of APSE report to assist in negotiating against the cuts and privatisation
October	Region	£3000	UNISON's contribution to enable the TUC to organise March and Rally at Tory Party Conference
November	Retired Members	£1000	UNISON's contribution towards the rally in defence of the NHS organised by West Midlands Pensioners Convention.
January	Birmingham LG	£18982.46	Poster and flyers to support the 'Fair Deal for B'ham' Campaign
<b>Total</b>		<b>£45382.46</b>	

## **Local Government Committee**

### **Cuts**

Reports which continue to come back from branches in the West Midlands make it clear that savage spending cuts are continuing to take place across the whole of the West Midlands. Thousands of local government public sector members have now lost their jobs through redundancies though the majority of these have been achieved on a voluntary basis to date. Clearly this situation will not be sustained in the near future. Birmingham continues to be hard hit, as are Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Herefordshire where massive privatisation and out-sourcing has taken place. Whilst the threat of industrial action over the cuts has been discussed in various branches the region has seen little lawful industrial action taking place in the last 12 months.

### **Recruitment and Organising**

In spite of the cuts and massive challenges faced by branches, the region is continuing to hold its own in terms of recruitment. Nine targeted weeks of recruitment in 2013 were planned for last autumn. All groups of staff are involved including the Management team and Regional Secretary. Recruitment and organising initiatives through-out Local Government will continue to be a main focus of all branches supported by all the regional staff.

### **NJC Pay and Living Wage**

Campaigning is continuing in relation to both the NJC pay claim this year as well as arguing for a Living Wage with the Local Authorities. Birmingham City Council will have been one of the first Local Authorities to make Living Wage a policy and many other mainly Labour Councils are considering the introduction of the Living Wage in the near future. Workplace meetings are already taking place in relation to the pay campaign and many more meetings will be taking place through-out April.

### **Local Government Committee meetings**

All of these meetings have been well attended in the last 12 months. Several speakers have come up from Head Office to address certain issues and these sessions have been well received. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Helga Pile, Ian Adderley, Matthew Egan and Roger McKenzie for their in-put over the last year.

Anita Whittington, Secretary to Local Government Committee

## Health Committee

### Agenda for Change

In the autumn the national union launched a major campaign– 'Postcode pay – no way!' – in response to plans under consideration in the South West to move away from AfC. The plans involve a consortium of 20 trusts who have each committed £10,000 to consider a range of changes which could cut pay for over 70,000 NHS staff by up to 15%. In parts of the West Midlands we have managed to stave off the threat.

The NHS is under tremendous pressure to make £20 billion of efficiency savings by 2014. To meet these savings some employers continue to make threats around AfC, seeking to cut or reduce terms and conditions. National agreements, such as AfC, offer our members the best access to decent working conditions and equal pay.

However, UNISON members voted to accept proposals to alter the Agenda for Change agreement in England. The union's health service group executive agreed the move when it met in London on 6 February.

Their decision follows a union-wide consultation on the proposals. Regions and branches consulted with members throughout December 2012 and January 2013, via workplace meetings, electronic and telephone surveys and in ballots.

All regions in England accepted the proposals. Our branches have worked hard to ensure that our health members could make an informed choice about the proposals to alter Agenda for Change.

Branches recognised that holding on to as much of our national agreement as possible was a better option than a 'slow death' of Agenda for Change, brought about by increasing numbers of trusts breaking away from the agreement."

They include changes to incremental progression and to the unsocial hours payments staff receive when on sick leave, as well as a trade union proposal to protect against down banding.

UNISON will continue its campaign to protect jobs and services as well as future pay and conditions of all health workers.

## **Commissioning**

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 is changing the landscape of the NHS. It is delivering the Government's vision to reshape the NHS so that it is more patient-centred, led by health professionals and focused on delivering world-class health outcomes. Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and some Arms Length Bodies (ALBs), from April 1st 2013 have been decommissioned as a result of this piece of legislation. Functions provided by these organisations have been transferred to either existing, or newly created organisations.

At the heart of the change are newly formed Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who will be responsible for commissioning services for their local communities. In the West Midlands 22 CCGs are being authorised by the NHS Commissioning Board. Locally 3 commissioning support units (CSUs) will provide expert support to clinical commissioning groups. Additionally, new and more autonomous ALBs will deliver services according to national priorities, with local government having a major new role in addressing local community health needs. There are further challenges as the bill allows greater and speedier presence of the private sector within the NHS. Additionally, in 2016 CSU's will have to become private organisations in their own right.

Staff have transferred to these new organisations along with the functions they provide. Navigating transition will be challenging due to the complex nature of the many functions and organisations involved. UNISON is committed to supporting its members through the changes; we recognise how tough it has been, and will continue to be, during this transition period. Post transfer there is a large organising agenda for UNISON in all new community health organisations.

## **Mid Staffs Inquiry**

The findings from the Francis Report into Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust provide lessons not only for the hospital, but for the Government and all NHS Trusts.

Critically, the report highlights the basic necessity for safe staffing levels and forwards to have the right skills mix to deliver high quality, compassionate and dignified patient care.

It must be recognised that day in day out the NHS and its staff deliver excellent care in hospitals across the country. But we support the need for rigorous inspection as a vital part of maintaining high standards and highlighting failures – and we welcome the Inquiry's recognition that it must be carried out by people with the relevant experience of current practice. This means the Care Quality Commission (CQC) must be adequately equipped to enable it to carry out this role.

We are pleased that the Inquiry recognised the consequences of financial pressures bearing down on the hospital. Mid-Staffordshire's hospital management were clearly focusing their efforts on targets and bringing down its financial deficit to win Foundation Trust Status, instead of on patients and the tragic consequences are detailed in this Inquiry report.

Robert Francis QC clearly ruled out looking for scapegoats or having reorganisation to cure the problem and strongly recommended that a real change in culture is needed. UNISON supports this but is warning that the Government's massive NHS reorganisation, the 7,000 cut in nursing numbers and the demand for £20bn in so called "efficiency" savings, means that the lessons of the Inquiry may be lost.

### **Recruitment**

"The only way this union can keep strong is by recruiting. And we recruit best where we've got issues and we recruit best where we've got branch organisation." Dave Prentis, General Secretary.

On the 11 March the union launched its first ever national recruitment campaign. A successful campaign will boost our strength in what General Secretary Dave Prentis describes as "the most traumatic time in the union's history". The national campaign will compliment nicely what we have been doing in the West Midlands since last May when we launched our regional campaign.

The West Midlands Health Service Group more than held its own last year and so far in 2013 we have made a pretty good start. We past our growth target in January and March and broke even in February.

We should be under no illusions that 2013 will be a very testing time for UNISON health members and in order to remain strong we have to ensure that our branches fully embrace the regional recruitment plan.

Franco Buonaguro

Regional Head of Health

## **Community Service Group**

Community Service Group members in the West Midlands, who are spread across 520 separate employers, are organised under one branch – the West Midlands Community Branch. 2012 was the second full year of the nationally backed project to establish the Branch in this Region in an attempt to test and pilot new ways of organising this sector. The Branch continued to employ two full-time caseworker/organisers throughout 2012.

Nationally, the Community Service Group has now established two sectors:

1. Voluntary Sector
2. Housing Associations

West Midlands Region is represented on both sectors in addition to our two representatives on the Service Group Executive

In the Region a formal Regional Service Group is in the process of being established in addition to the established democratic structures within the West Midlands Branch. The Branch also has established a Black Members and LGBT Self Organised Group (SOG)

With nearly 4400 members the Branch continues to grow. It had been operating for over 2 years by the end of 2012 and has made great strides in its development. Recruitment during 2012 was at a rate of 5.75%, recruiting 820 new members against an annual target of 665. Over the course of 2012 the Branch grew by more than 220 members despite the Branch having also lost many members as a result of cuts in funding to the sector.

The sector continues to be characterised by threats to jobs and attacks on pay and terms and conditions – particularly as many charities, housing associations and community organisations are seeing a drastic reduction in their annual income and funding. This is resulting in many restructuring and redundancy situations and is demonstrated in the high volume of casework that the branch has had to deal with requiring the procurement of additional case work resources.

The national/regional project was reviewed by the Region, the national Service Group and the Finance and Resource Management Committee in the summer of 2012 and further funding agreed until 2015 with the appointment of a Business Support Officer and the establishment of a Branch Office. The Branch Office, situated in the Workspace (which is a Community Enterprise housing several other charitable organisations) in Wolverhampton was leased in December 2012.

Local negotiating and bargaining is another characteristic of this sector. UNISON continues to establish and enhance good collective bargaining arrangements with various organisations. Positive relationships have been built, in particular, with large care providers, housing associations, charities and trusts. A highlight of the year was the recruitment of significant membership in the Salvation Army Homelessness Service which is undergoing major restructuring involving proposals for Regional pay. UNISON has had considerable success in negotiating favourable pay awards in this Service Group.

UNISON entered into dispute with Turning Point, a national charity into which many of our former health members have been TUPE transferred following de-recognition and attempted imposition of new and detrimental terms and conditions. At year end members were voting in a consultative ballot on taking industrial action against the employer

Lack of recognition and paid facility time is a huge and difficult problem in the Community Service Group with its multiplicity of employers. Much of the lay activity is necessarily undertaken in members' own time and addressing this issue was seen as a priority for the Branch. For example, Midland Heart stewards (who are not recognised) have engaged in training on Saturdays facilitated by the Regional Education Officer and the Branch. The strategic objective is to build our organisation achieve recognition in this large and growing employer either by agreement or by winning a recognition ballot.

Branch officers, stewards and members have also attended and participated in the following in 2012

- National Delegate Conference in Brighton
- Community Seminar in York
- Black Members Conference
- Regional Council and Committees
- National Community Service Group Executive
- Regular Branch Executive Meetings

## **Energy Service Group**

The Region's Energy Service Group met on three occasions during 2012 and considered recruitment and organising, collective bargaining issues and steward development

Our members in the Energy Service Group are split across several branches:

- (i) RWE Npower – Npower and RWE.IT employees
- (ii) Midland Energy – Western Power Distribution and E.ON employees
- (iii) Central Energy – British Gas, National Grid, Exoserve, Computer Service Corporation, Compass/Eurest employees
- (iv) Gas Operations (National Branch) – National Grid employees

### **RWE Npower – Npower and RWE.IT employees**

UNISON members who work for RWE Npower on NPR grades received an increase of 3.1% from 1 April 2012. However as part of the pay offer with effect from 1 June 2012, new Sickness Management guidelines relating to short term absence for NPR graded employees were introduced. The new criteria were far more rigorous than had previously been applied and involved the sickness absence monitoring criteria will be "3 occasions in a 12 month period or 10 days" and the monitoring period when this trigger point is reached extended from 3 to 6 months during which full attendance is expected. UNISON is monitoring the impact of the changes on members

The Branch has continued to recruit well in the year and should be congratulated. The backdrop to the year has been the continuing implementation of a new IT platform for the business called Project Atlas. Some of the implementation work on this has been outsourced to India and there is considerable concern regarding the eventual extent of such outsourcing and the potential impact on UNISON members.

UNISON members in RWE IT provide IT services to the RWE group. 2012 saw the beginning of a major restructuring of the Company to cut costs. This involves major out-sourcing and off-shoring of operations with a planned reduction in head-count from over 700 employees to around 250 by the end of the process scheduled for the end of 2013. UNISON is not fully

recognised in the Company although we are represented on the Business Review Forum which has been overseeing the employees interests in the restructure.

### **Midland Energy – Western Power Distribution and E.ON employees**

In Western Power Distribution following the previous year's restructure the joint trade unions and the Company established the collective bargaining machinery to cover the Midlands as well as South-West and Wales through a restructured Electricity Business Forum. A pay increase of 3.5% was achieved for UNISON members within the Company

The most significant achievement in EON during 2012 was the negotiation of the Energy Solutions Agreement which transformed the employee relations structure in the UK Business. Our members covered by this agreement and other collective agreements operation in Customer Operations, New Business and Sales and Marketing received a 2.3% consolidated pay settlement (Grades 2-7) with the lowest Grade 1 and sales employees receiving 1% consolidated and a non-consolidated cash payment equivalent to 1.5%. Members mainly employed in call centres who have been subject to salary realignment where almost 75% of staff in that area move into salary protection received a non-consolidated cash payment of 2.3% - 2.5%

### **Central Energy – British Gas, National Grid, Exoserve, Computer Service Corporation, Compass/Eurest employees**

The Central Energy Branch has experience a difficult year as its membership levels have been slashed due to many efficiency reviews across the employers it covers. In one instance the branch lost 7 activists which wiped out Unison presence in one workplace followed by 50% loss on the membership at the same site. The trend in this sector to employ agency staff means creative methods of recruitment are needed to engage with potential members. As yet we have seen little reward from the branch and regions efforts to recruit.

In British Gas Project Purple, BGs should be given to those activists who volunteered to help underpin representation at the site and within the branch after they had collected there redundancy payments. We have new activists, some new members and the potential to grow.

Discussions are in progress regarding the consultation mechanism at Xoserve. There have been a few difficult cases but UNISON stewards have represented members well in dealing with a more assertive approach to sickness monitoring.

In National Grid Metering This past year UNISON managed to agree a pay award that rewarded ALL members fairly. Combined with the agreement was an agreement to work on

a review of the pay structure. There has also been the creation of a staff forum. UNISON has achieved a decent level of representation on the forum from our members. The group will work collectively on any review of pay structure.

UNISON's membership within Computer Services Corporation(CSC) is diminishing. The reduction is due to the loss of contract work. Some members transferred out to other IT service providers. Others have taken redundancy, others leave the security of the collective agreements and TUPE arrangements and enter into individual contracts. The employer has sites nationally over the UK, many are now closing so it is expected within a short period of time very few members will remain.

Domestic, catering, portering and security staff at National Grid sites are employed by Compass/Eurest and UNISON is attempting to increase its membership.

### **Gas Operations (National Branch) – National Grid employees in the Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) business**

This national Branch, which West Midlands Region hosts, has now achieved a fully functioning status with a full set of officers, regular Executive meetings , 6 stewards and 9 Health and Safety representatives. The goal for the branch is to have all shop stewards and safety reps fully trained by the end of 2013. We are hopeful that our membership in this re-invigorated branch will grow significantly.

Within the National Grid Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) business, demolition of the Partington LNG storage facility commenced last summer and is now complete; decommissioning of the Glenmavis site has commenced and is due to be completed this spring. The aspirations of the majority of the staff at these sites were met largely due to UNISON negotiations. Avonmouth LNGS now reports to the Grain LNG Terminal Manager, although the regulated/unregulated relationship is still maintained within UK LNG. In the new Operating Model, the unregulated businesses of National Grid Metering and UK LNG are now in the same directorate.

## **Water, Environment and Transport Service Group**

The Region's W.E. & T Service Group met on three occasions during 2012 and discussed recruitment and organising, collective bargaining issues and steward development

### **Severn Trent Water**

Severn Trent Water is the largest employer and group of members in this Regional Service Group. Pay negotiations during 2011 led by UNISON resulted in a 2% consolidated pay offer. However, following rejection by members in a consultative ballot and a pre-emptive press release by the GMB union threatening industrial action the Company decided to impose the increase. Members also received a 1.97% non-consolidated performance bonus on basic salary and £309 in free shares.

There followed a period where relations between the Company and the trade unions were extremely strained. UNISON has worked hard to build a new and better relationship with the Company to ensure that this is the last imposed pay settlement. The Partnership Agreement has been refreshed and the Company Forum has taken on a much more strategic role. The timetable for future pay claims has been brought forward to coincide with the Company's business planning cycle and our claim for the July 2013 award was submitted in December 2012

The Region also worked with our members in Severn Trent Services, where there is no union recognition, in respect of the sale of part of the business and the TUPE transfer of the other part into Severn Trent Water early in 2013. UNISON negotiated a 2% pay award for members previously transferred to MITIE Facilities Management

### **Canal & River Trust**

The Canal & River Trust was launched in July 2012 following the abolition of British Waterways. However, given the painful reorganisations, restructures and job losses of the last 10 years the change to the Trust has been less stressful than was envisaged by most staff.

As developed under British Waterways, volunteers are being asked to carry out an increasing number of tasks. In 2012 there were almost 40,000 volunteer days. The Trust aims to increase this year on year and UNISON is monitoring closely the impact on staff and job numbers.

The 2012/13 pay claim was settled at 3% average salary increase. The protracted two year negotiations and trials for the transfer of Operational Staff to annualised hours contracts have been concluded by a ballot, which saw a hundred per cent response rate and an 88% vote for acceptance.

### **'Right to Water' Campaign**

The UNISON Service Group continues to support the Make Water a Human Right campaign. We are close to getting the million signatures required so UNISON is asking all its members to get on board and sign the petition on-line. Remember UNISON believes that water is a public good, not a commodity. We invite the European Commission to propose legislation implementing the human right to water and sanitation as recognised by the United Nations, and promoting the provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for all. Please go to the website today and sign the e-petition. The website address is; [www.right2water.eu/](http://www.right2water.eu/)

### **Environment Agency**

2012 was something of a roller coaster for UNISON members in the Environment Agency. The year began in drought, and ended with two months of floods, which kept the Agency in the profile of the politicians, which has its upsides and downsides. 2012 was a much better year than 2011, with funding being maintained and significant active recruitment taking place across functions. The Region was fairly stable with change programmes limited to the embedding of Flood & Coastal Risk Management following change in that function's structure.

A backdated pay award, the first since 2009, of 1%, for 2012 has been paid. This award was the maximum allowed under the governments imposed public sector pay policy.

### **First Group**

First Group in common with other bus companies continue to operate in difficult financial circumstances due to changes to Bus Services Operators Grant, Concessionary Fares Schemes, Council tendered contracts and the general economic climate. The 2012/2013 pay award was finally settled at 1.75%. UNISON membership levels remain hard to increase because of the amount of job losses in the administration and supervisory roles

### **Centro**

The provision of public transport has been affected by the cuts and there have been job losses within the branch membership. Following consultation with UNISON, National Express closed their call centre within Centro house. This has led to six members losing their

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jobs. The call centre had been seen previously as an area of potential recruitment, so its closure was a great disappointment. The members put forward many options in the consultation process; however, the closure was driven by an increase in cost and a reduction in income to provide the service. During the year there has been a review of policy and procedure carried out in partnership with UNISON. The branch has a large number of activists and is recruiting.

## **Higher Education**

2012 was a busy and difficult year with many restructures cuts, redundancies, and balloting on pay, and pensions. We also campaigned for a living wage, seeking a minimum of £7.45.

In the West Midlands we did achieve that in some Universities, but other areas where there's local pay bargaining, the struggle continues.

### **Local Pay**

Birmingham University voted for strike action which took place on the 21st and 22nd June 2012 on their previous years pay offer. The results of the ballot was a 46.2% return of which 67.3% (136) voted 'YES' for strike action, against 32.7% (66) voting No. The two day strike went well, and even though those days were hindered with torrential rain, the members feeling were in high spirits.

Keele University also went into dispute in relationships to the lack of harmonisation with pay terms & conditions. From that dispute Equal Pay claims have been lodged, and still on-going.

UNISON has identified further Equal Pay claims at Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and seeking further legal advice on this matter.

### **LGPS 2014**

You may also know that UNISON returned a 90% vote in the ballot with a 20.7% national return overall. All of the branches worked hard in communication with our members on this matter.

### **National Pay Dispute 2012/13**

As you are aware, UNISON negotiated with UCEA, the employers' side in higher education, regarding the pay increase in higher education for 2012-13. This dispute included about 150 higher education institutions (universities and colleges). The offer of 1% was initially rejected, but further consultation and a ballot finally accepted the offer. Once again the branches worked hard in communicating all the relevant information to their members.

Looking forwards to 2013/14, both Warwick and Staffordshire University have applied through the region under the fighting fund to share an AO. This application is still to be finalised.

Recruitment in HE for the West Midlands has seen 50% of the branches in the green, and growing. Further organising for the other branches will be addressed this year.

Times are hard, but as we have low density figures, with all of the above issues affecting our members, recruitment needs to be around the local issues occurring.

Once again, I thank all of my branches for their support and dedicated work, and will continue to enjoy working with you all.

## **Police & Justice**

2012 was dominated by the threat of privatisation of Police Staff in the West Midlands Police Force. This tied in with the campaign for the Police & Crime Commissioners. The success of the West Midlands Police Branch working with Labour Link and the Labour Party, placed privatisation high on the agenda of the election. Bob Jones the Labour candidate was elected and his first act was the scrapping of the "Business Partnering for Policing" Privatisation proposals.

In the other Force areas, the Conservatives won the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner while independents won Warwickshire and West Mercia.

Elsewhere across the region the year has been dominated by a near merger between West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police. This close collaboration is now coming to a point where significant numbers of Police Staff will be facing either compulsory redundancy or redundancy caused through relocation.

Probation Services are now facing a threat of privatisation as the Government pushes through its ill thought out Transforming Rehabilitation. At present the Probation Trust are unable to submit an in-house tender and it is unclear how the distinct between high, medium and low risk offenders will actually be decided. After 150 year of Probation Services in Britain, these proposals could totally destroy the service.

Finally the Service Group says goodbye to two stalwarts of UNISON Staffordshire Police Branch. Michael Shepherd the Branch Secretary and member of the National Service Group amongst other positions that he has held in UNISON, is retiring in June and Dawn Critchley the former Assistant Branch Secretary and member of the Regional Service Group retires in April. Both will leave a gap in the organisation, but have worked hard to ensure that their successors take over the Branch and continue the good work.