

Looking to the year ahead

Ruth Levin, UNISON national officer for further education, takes a look at the year ahead.



COLLEGES



Welcome to the latest edition of *UNISON in colleges*. We're looking forward to making a difference to our members' working lives in colleges. With our

inspiring seminar in April; new guidance coming out on behaviour management and tackling excessive workloads; and taking forward campaigns on pay and funding there is lots going on. In this newsletter, you will find articles on college campaigns in England, Cymru/Wales and Scotland as well as profiles of FE reps and how to get more out of your union.

Working in a college, the chances are that you feel like you are going through constant changes at work. What with area reviews, mergers and internal restructures in almost every college, nearly everyone in the sector feels as if they are facing changes in their college and their job.

This level of change at work has a very real impact on the workforce – new colleagues to get used to, old friends to say goodbye to, new courses, campuses and ways of working.

A new report confirms the amount of change the sector has faced. In England, since the 1980s there have been:

- 28 major pieces of legislation relating to vocational, FE and skills training
- six different government departments responsible for FE
- 48 different secretaries of state with some form of responsibility for FE colleges.

Alongside this, there has been a constant reinvention of national and regional organisations.

And then there are the number of courses, programmes and awarding bodies. No wonder the Sainsbury review recommended that the

confusing array of qualifications should be changed to 15 different 'routes' for technical education and apprenticeships.

UNISON is calling for a period of stability now. A chance to take stock, focus on getting the new technical qualifications up and running and to establish colleges as the lead apprentice training providers.

UNISON, along with the other unions and the colleges themselves, is calling for improved funding that begins to redress the many years of cuts and underfunding that has caused colleges to cut courses, grow class sizes and merge just to survive.

Join us in raising the profile of further education and making sure that you, college staff, are protected at work and that your voice is at the heart of college decision making.

Stressed out? We can help

Does your college have a problem with stressed staff? UNISON surveys show that workplace stress is a serious issue that affects a significant proportion of education support staff with nearly half of all sickness absence due to stress, anxiety or depression.

Stress has a huge impact on the wellbeing of the individual concerned, as well as their family and colleagues. Stress at work, at its worst, can lead to mental illness and have an economic impact on those affected directly and indirectly.

UNISON is here to help. We have guides and resources available to help you raise the issue with your college and improve the working environment (search 'stress' at www.unison.org.uk).

Talk to your UNISON health and safety rep too. If your college doesn't yet have a UNISON health and safety rep, then now's the time to get one! Health and safety reps are legally allowed paid time off to attend training. They have rights at work to carry out inspections and to meet with the college to tackle any health and safety risks – and that includes workload and stress.

If you would like to become a health and safety rep, we will train you for free, or if you need help taking up a health and safety issue in your college contact:

- your branch in the first instance
- healthandsafety@unison.co.uk



Our colleges, our future

Come to the UNISON seminar for all college staff and help build the vision for the future of colleges.

Share your views and experiences and hear from other experts. Meet new people from across the college team and from right across the UK.

Join us on Friday 20 and Saturday 21 April in London to hear from

- the Further Education Commissioner, Richard Atkins
- Tom Bennett, educational behaviour management specialist and government advisor
- Specialist speakers on:
 - tackling low pay
 - employment law
 - promoting good mental health in colleges
 - term-time working
 - apprenticeships
 - handling case work – and more.

The event is free for UNISON members to attend. Your branch will need to register you as a delegate and cover the costs of the seminar and travel. If you need any help with registration, please contact education@unison.co.uk

Find out more at: www.unison.org.uk/events

FREE
admission for UNISON members
Friday 20 and Saturday 21 April, UNISON Centre, London

Seats at the (Scottish) table

UNISON continues to campaign to establish trade union seats on Scottish FE college boards, as now exists for higher education institutions. UNISON organiser John Gallacher, has written to Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, minister for FE in the Scottish parliament, arguing that staff should be represented on college boards so that staff can be 'constructive partners' in the development of the sector.

Thank you Nixon Todd!

A big thanks to Nixon Todd from the Manchester College/LTE group who has chaired the FE and sixth form committee for more years than he cares to remember. Thanks for all your hard work and commitment Nixon!



And a big welcome to the new committee chair, **Gavin Cartwright**. Gavin comes from South & City College Birmingham.

Winning for our members

UNISON – and anyone who cares about workers’ basic rights – are celebrating victories for working people in two major court cases.

Employment Tribunal fees scrapped

Employment Tribunals (ETs) make decisions about disputes over employment rights, including unfair dismissal, discrimination, wages, and redundancy.

Taking a case to ET used to be free, but in July 2013 the coalition government brought in charges for working people to access justice. UNISON fought hard against this, and four years later we won a huge victory at the Supreme Court.

The judges said the fees were discriminatory and prevented people with valid claims from accessing justice due to the cost. The ruling means that anyone who has been treated illegally or unfairly at work will no longer have to pay to take their employers to court – as a direct result of UNISON’s legal challenge.

The government will also have to refund more than £27m to the thousands of people charged for



Victory at the Supreme Court

taking claims to tribunals since July 2013, when fees were introduced by the then Lord Chancellor.

Changes at work consultation – win

A second victory closely followed, to do with your employer’s duty to consult with your trade union about changes to your contract.

This time, the court case focused on changes to working hours and holiday

pay. UNISON general secretary, Dave Prentis, said bosses ‘Will have to treat their staff more fairly over pay and working conditions... If they fail to consult unions then they will be acting unlawfully and could be taken to court.’ This has huge implications for your day to day working life.

- Both cases used the Human Rights Act to ensure your rights at work are protected.

The friendly face of the law



The UNISON legal team – here to help make life better for you.

As if that wasn’t cause enough for celebration, Shantha David, a member of our own expert legal team, won the Outstanding Achievement Award from Modern Law magazine for her work on the tribunal case.



Shantha at the awards

Pay round-up

How pay is negotiated in England

Each spring, the college unions (UNISON, UCU, Unite, GMB and NEU), put in a pay claim to the Association of Colleges (AoC). In 2017 the claim called for an increase of RPI plus 3% or £900 whichever was greater, and called for the Living Wage Foundation rate to be the minimum rate of pay.

The AoC made a final pay offer in September 2017 of 1% or £250, whichever is greater. The offer included a recommendation that colleges locally work towards achieving the Foundation Living Wage.

The unions consulted their respective memberships and NEU and GMB

reluctantly accepted the offer. UCU members rejected the offer and decided to pursue pay at local college level.

What did UNISON decide?

UNISON consulted members working in FE colleges in England via an electronic ballot. The majority of members voted to reject the offer, however turnout was varied and low in most places. The committee met and considered the results, the turnout of the e-ballot, the Trade Union Act, and engagement in previous action. The UNISON FE



committee agreed the following:

"With members having voted to reject the offer, but with responses being varied, the committee decided to proceed by seeking to pursue disputes on pay on a local college basis in collaboration with sister unions."

- If you, and colleagues in your college, want to campaign on pay then please contact your branch and/or region or email education@unison.co.uk and we'll help you get the campaign going.

Scotland demands a Living Wage

UNISON has been continuing to press sector leaders to implement the April 2015 pay award, which promised that Scotland's colleges would be Foundation Living Wage accredited by December 2016. This would bring some hope to the lowest paid workers in colleges – those who work mainly in security, catering and cleaning.

We are glad that our pressure is paying off with 15 colleges now accredited. We will continue to campaign to ensure that the 11 other colleges do the right thing by low-paid workers.

While wage rises in Scotland over the last three years have been better than the UK average, with just £425 for support staff in 2017, earnings have still not kept pace with inflation.

I want to
 **live**
not just
exist

**UNISON – campaigning
for a Living Wage**

Chris Greenshields, UNISON's FE committee chair in Scotland said: "In 2018 our members should continue to press for more than they received last year. We need a just and fair pay rise in line with inflation – which is long overdue".

The 2018 joint union pay claim for FE support staff in Scotland calls for an uplift of £1,500 on all pay points; the Living Wage Foundation rate of £8.75 as the minimum rate of pay; living wage accreditation for all colleges;

and 49 days minimum annual leave including public holidays.

For more information on Living Wage accreditation in Scotland visit: www.povertyalliance.org

Living Wage for all at TEN

UNISON is delighted to announce that the all colleges and schools run by the TEN group (Transforming Education in Norfolk) will implement the Living Wage Foundation rates. City College Norwich was one of the first colleges to become accredited as a Living Wage employer and this will now be extended to other organisations within the group. UNISON steward and national FE committee vice-chair, Samina Grant, said: 'It's great news for the lowest paid workers who so desperately need a decent pay rise. We are glad that TEN are leading the way with implementing the Living Wage.'

The current Living Wage Foundation rates are £8.75 and £10.20 (in London). Becoming an accredited Living Wage employer helps to ensure that when Living Wage rates are raised, that employers will then implement the increases. Additionally, all contractors on site providing services to the college should also pay the Living Wage.

For more information on Living Wage accreditation in England and Wales visit www.livingwage.org.uk

Pay news from Wales

In July 2017, FE college employers in Wales – Colegau Cymru – made an offer of a pay rise of 1%. This was rejected by UNISON members in a consultative ballot in October 2017. Participation in the ballot was lower than hoped for, however, UNISON continues to work for a decent pay rise for college staff.

As UNISON in Colleges went to print, the Cymru/Wales FE forum was due to meet to discuss next steps and whether to take forward an industrial action campaign.

Keep up to date by searching 'further education' at:
<https://cymru-wales.unison.org.uk>

Sixth form college pay update

UNISON members in sixth form colleges have voted to accept the 2017/8 pay offer. The offer increased pay on all points by 1% with additional increases for those staff on the lower points of the scale. The Support Staff Standards Payment remains at £320.

UNISON and the Sixth Form Colleges Association have agreed to undertake a joint review of the pay and conditions of support staff in sixth form colleges, including a review of the pay spine. We hope to report the outcome of the review later this year.

Lambeth College campaigns for the Living Wage

UNISON members were recently out at Lambeth College with a petition for the cleaning, security and catering staff to earn the London Living Wage Foundation rate of £10.20 an hour.

Lot of students and staff signed the petition. UNISON college rep Jim Delaney said: "It was so successful that we decided to run it for a few weeks every lunch time. It drew a lot of interest and support from the general public who signed the petition; raised the profile of UNISON and why paying the Living Wage matters; and we recruited new members!"



A Pat on the Back instead of a pay rise?

Where ever you work, UNISON is campaigning for decent pay rises. Watch our fabulous Pat on the Back video at

www.unison.org.uk/payupnow

Remember, Sable Colby in Dynasty? Well here she steps on to the streets to offer a pat on the back to hard-working public service workers like you. Find out what happened next...



College merger news

Area reviews in England are complete but many colleges are still going through mergers. You can find UNISON advice on getting through this process. We have a 'Model agreement on organisational change' as well as a 'Joint agreement for the avoidance and handling of redundancies in FE'. Just search for 'colleges' on the UNISON website.

If you need any extra help or guidance regarding college mergers contact education@unison.co.uk

North Lindsey merges with Doncaster

North Lindsey College and Doncaster College recently merged to become the DN Colleges Group.

UNISON reps have been promised that there will be no immediate changes for staff or students at either college: current courses will continue, and prospective students will apply for courses in the normal way.

North Lindsey College was opened on the Kingsway in 1953 and trained generations of the town's steelworkers. It has a long and proud history and is a source of immense pride for the town. The merger brought together around 14,000 students and more than 1,300 staff.

UNISON has attended meetings with the management at both organisations and was fully engaged in the formal consultation. UNISON members were represented throughout the consultation, the priorities being job security and protection of pensions, pay

terms and conditions. UNISON is committed to campaigning for a properly funded further education sector that is accessible to all the people of North Lincolnshire.

Lambeth concerns

Concerns remain at Lambeth College after plans to merge with London South Bank University have been put on hold. Members at the college potentially face redundancies and/or further restructuring. The UNISON representatives in the college are actively seeking information to ensure that redundancies are absolutely the last resort. The college is now seeking a massive 'bailout' and may need to find a new merger partner. UNISON remains involved at all the meetings, questioning and challenging the process.

Super science tech

Josie Gray tells us about her day as a science technician, health and safety rep and UNISON workplace rep.



Start time: 7.45am. Well, it should be 8.30am but working on my own it helps to be in early to make sure the 9am practicals are ready to go. There

used to be two full-time technicians doing the work.

Depending on what is required, I may have to put out water baths, hotplates, set up equipment or bash ice (for ice baths, not cocktails). And yes, it hurts when you hit your hand!

I have been working in FE for 30+ years and if I did not enjoy it and get a great deal of satisfaction from what I do, the pay most certainly would not keep me here.

I cover physics, biology, chemistry, microbiology, geology, in fact any topic that is on the syllabus. I manage all the resources needed, which includes laboratory management (cleaning, checking gas supplies etc.), stocktaking, maintenance, testing some equipment and experiments

and making sure that statutory testing happens. On a day-to-day basis, I prepare and put out and retrieve practical equipment for teaching staff.

I make sure that risk assessments happen for technical support work, that COSHH assessments are completed on all the chemicals we have in stock – and that is more than 500. As the lead technician I am also responsible for mentoring and training other science technicians.

As teaching is in an annual cycle, there are patterns with workloads rising and falling. My role fits into this with certain jobs having to be done at busy teaching times and others done in quieter non-teaching times.

For the last 20 years, I have also been a UNISON Health and Safety rep and for the last 11 years a workplace steward. Why – when it looks as though I am busy enough?

Well, when I needed help, UNISON was there. During a major job evaluation process, it was decided that female technicians did not need to be paid the same as male technicians. The UNISON stewards took the case forward and eventually we won.

I received training from UNISON on health and safety that helped me in my work role. I took it forward by eventually taking and passing a NEBOSH qualification, again this fed into my union work. As a steward, I engage in policy-making consultations, which means I can help to prevent possible detriments to my colleagues. I offer a voice on the negotiating and health and safety committees. I work with colleagues during restructurings and support them during disciplinarys and capability hearings. And I also help to get places on the local branch's shopping trip for a bit of Christmas shopping!

So, for anyone out there contemplating taking on a union role, go ahead, try it, you may surprise yourself at what you can learn and what you can do to make a difference.

your
public
service
champions

To find out more about becoming a contact or rep search for 'become a rep' on UNISON's website or email: education@unison.co.uk

Proud of what I do

Maxine Rowden, UNISON representative and learning support assistant at Tyne Coast College tells us why she loves her job.

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I work as a learning support assistant at Tyne Coast College, at the South Tyneside College campus. I have worked here

for over six years, originally starting as an agency worker.

I enjoy many aspects of my job, particularly working with the learners. I work across the college and within foundation learning. Foundation learning provides support for students with additional needs, ranging from profound and complex needs to autism and dyslexia. I also work with learners on an employability course with similar additional needs.

We have a very welcoming department, where support staff and lecturers work closely together in order to help our learners achieve well. All of this contributed towards our award for both the TES college of the year and overall provider of the year in 2017.

My job as a learning support assistant and my elected role as a

UNISON college rep has given me the opportunity to work with many colleagues throughout the college, many of whom have become friends.

We have an excellent student services department, where colleagues provide high-quality services for our learners. The services we offer range from providing a free bus pass for learners with financial difficulties to a counselling service for both staff and learners.

Staff at the college are always very friendly and we all work well together. Staff generally enjoy their jobs and enjoy working for Tyne Coast College. However, over the last five years the college has gone through many restructures, redundancies and – last autumn – a merger of South Tyneside College and TyneMet College. Additionally, changes in job roles, reductions in hours and more noticeably, a change to terms and conditions in the run-up to the merger have all had a detrimental effect on staff morale.

The constant restructures led to lunchtime protests from both UNISON and UCU, concerned about the constant changes and how staff feel disregarded by management.

The changes to the terms and conditions was the final straw and lunchtime protests became a regular occurrence. It was this that led me to become a union activist, as I felt I wanted to do more to help my colleagues.

Since becoming an activist, there have been many changes: college mergers; area reviews; and changes to terms and conditions within the contractors.

I have supported members through grievances and disciplinaries. The best achievement is when you make a difference, whether that is achieving a change through negotiations, or saving a person's job. The impact that I have on those I support, whether that be minor or major makes me feel proud to be a UNISON rep.

- If you would like to get more involved as an accredited rep, UNISON will train you and support you. Find out more by searching for 'become a rep' on UNISON's website.

What's WASPI?

WASPI – or Women Against State Pension Inequality – is a campaign started by five women to fight against the unequal and unfair treatment of women born in the 1950s, facing an unplanned-for increase in the state pension age.

The WASPI campaign supports the equalisation of the pension age between men and women but it

objects to the unfair transition to the older pension age.

The government should have given people 15 years notice. Instead they gave the affected men six years notice of a one-year increase in the state pension age but they gave women one or two years notice of a six-year increase – and some women got no notice at all. By giving the women little or no notice that they were not going

to receive their pension on the date they planned, they did not give them time to make alternative arrangements to prevent financial hardship in retirement. This affects many UNISON members and we actively support the campaign.

For more information on who WASPI are and what they are doing go to <http://www.waspi.co.uk>



UNISON welcomes apprentices

Colleges across the UK will see an increase in the number of apprentices after the government introduced a new levy to encourage more apprenticeships. Not only will new apprentices be trained by colleges, but colleges will also be taking on their own new apprentices.

The shake-up will particularly affect England. Under the new scheme, the government is seeking to encourage workers of all ages to take up an apprenticeship. These should be 'real jobs' and take at least 12 months. They can be full-time or part-time and at least 20% of the time should be committed to off-the-job training.

The government is introducing new Apprenticeship Standards, but UNISON has raised concerns that some employers might use apprenticeships to replace current jobs or exploit apprentices. We have launched a charter that lists, what we believe represents, good practice.

Key points include:

- an apprenticeship employment contract for the duration of the training, leading to a permanent employment contract upon successful completion
 - payment at the rate of the job role
 - the same terms and conditions as other staff
 - high-quality training – both on and off the job
 - appropriate job supervision, pastoral support and clarity about rights and responsibilities
 - a safe and healthy working environment, free from discrimination, bullying and harassment
 - ability to join and participate in a trade union of their choice.
- For more information on our work on apprentices go to:
www.unison.org.uk/apprentices

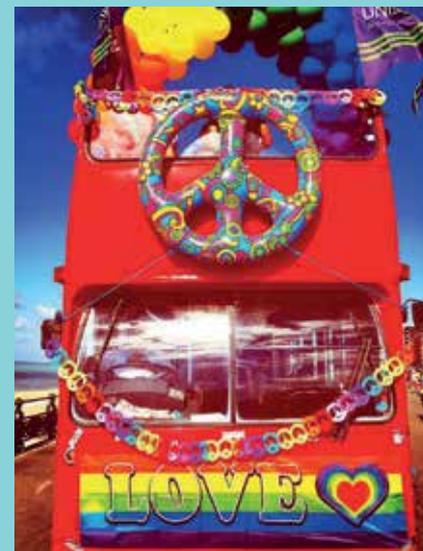


Fancy becoming minister for education?

Interested in becoming an MP? UNISON members Angela Rayner and Eleanor Smith have done just that. You can read Angela's inspiring story from council estate to the House of Commons on our website (search 'Angela Rayner'). She says: "You have the skills to do the job. All you need to do is have a passion for making a difference and to care about the people around you and you can do it. You can be amazing."

Eleanor was a theatre nurse in Birmingham, going on to become UNISON's first black president and is now MP for Wolverhampton South West. If you're up for getting active in your union and in the Labour Party we can help you. Find out more by emailing: labourlink@unison.co.uk

As Angela says: "Stop maybe-ing and just do it."



UNISON welcomes all college & FE support staff workers and celebrates diversity. Why not join us? Visit joinunison.org or call 0800 0 857 857.

Not in UNISON? Join today at joinunison.org or call 0800 171 2193