

*Standing up for public services and public service workers*

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## Time for action



The last four years have reminded everyone of what trade unions are about. Unions played a vital role in keeping workers safe during COVID. Much of this involved the day-to-day work of ensuring health & safety law and COVID guidance was followed, with our members being our eyes and ears.

At the start of the third lockdown, UNISON and the other education unions ensured school staff understood their rights to refuse to put themselves in imminent danger, and our members' refusal to do so led to a swift government U-turn which undoubtedly saved lives.

Since then union members across the country have been taking collective action to defend their living conditions with high profile strikes on the railways, at Royal Mail, in universities, at BT, in the NHS, and on the docks. In doing so, they are defending the conditions of all workers – after a decade in which we've seen a race to the bottom in pay and other terms and conditions, we are saying loudly 'no more!'. UNISON members are playing their part

and have won victories including in the Scottish local government pay dispute in 2022.

Closer to home, members in our branch at the University of Winchester were engaged in strike action throughout 2023 as part of the national pay dispute in Higher Education. This reflected both the courage and determination of our members, and the hard work and dedication of our activists at the university. There is still work to be done nationally in order to ensure we beat the ballot thresholds imposed by anti-union legislation and win a fair deal for workers in Higher Education.

The large majority of members in our branch work for Hampshire County Council. Local government remains chronically underfunded as a result of the political decisions made by the Conservative government. As we enter 2024, we face yet another programme of cuts to jobs and services. Rather than address the funding crisis in local government, the Conservatives have launched new attacks on workers rights through the Minimum Service

*continued overleaf...*

## Violence in schools— guidance for members

We now have agreed guidance which has been sent by HCC to all HCC maintained schools to ensure that staff are supported at work. Aside from giving a clear definition of workplace violence, the guidance confirms that:

Risk assessments need to be shared with staff. Staff must receive a debrief after violent incidents.

Incidents need to be reported within 5 days through the HCC system, and you should be given time to do this.

If you are subject to violence at work, you have a right to a copy of the incident report. Where affected staff believe that there was intent the incident should be recorded as a violent incident.

Schools are encouraged to support staff to stand as Health and Safety representatives if they are union members.

If you're affected by violence at work or have any questions about your rights, contact [unison@hants.gov.uk](mailto:unison@hants.gov.uk) to get advice from the branch.

## Time for action *continued...*

Levels bill. Their aim is to diminish public services, and force the remaining public service workers to accept another decade of low pay.

The 2022 and 2023 local government pay awards have done nothing to address the 25%+ cut in real terms wages since the start of austerity. Pay restraint and increasingly difficult working conditions have led to under staffing in care homes and schools, making life for our members even harder. That these services can be delivered at all has everything to do with your dedication and the fact that you care about the children, about the vulnerable people and about your roles as public servants.

Amid the upheaval, your union and your branch keep going. The day-to-day work of your branch reps involves assisting members with disciplinaries, grievances, sickness issues and restructures. We're also engaged in negotiations

around changes to policies and procedures.

Aside from this work we're trying to take forward initiatives based on the issues we encounter and what you are telling us.

A recent major piece of work involved a survey on violence toward support staff in schools. Hundreds of members took part and we used this to write a report and take a number of recommendations to HCC around reporting and preventing violent incidents. This has led to new guidance being issued to schools on dealing with violent incidents that we believe will make our members safer.

Whatever challenges are to come, we will face them together as UNISON and continue our fight for better pay, better terms and conditions, and for safe workplaces.

**Callum Williamson**  
*Branch Secretary*

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## Annual General Meeting — 27th March 2024

The **2024 Annual General Meeting** will be taking place at Elizabeth II Court, Winchester at 6pm on Wednesday 27th March 2023. Members can also attend remotely via Teams, and all members will receive a link to join.

This is the most important meeting of the year at which members can help shape both

the rules and the direction of the branch. It's also an opportunity to meet your branch officers and get more involved in your union.

Refreshments will be provided, and branch members can claim for cost of travel to the meeting, contact the branch at [unison@hants.gov.uk](mailto:unison@hants.gov.uk) for a copy of our expenses form.

## Fighting for you...

*Your branch reps and officers assisted over 750 members in 2023. Our branch membership has now grown to it's largest size since 2010.*

*Our priorities in the coming year are protecting jobs and conditions at HCC, winning union recognition with other local employers, and building our organisation so that the branch can face the challenges to come.*

## ...winning for all of us

*UNISON won hundreds of thousands of pounds last year for members in our branch through settlements linked to personal injury claims, discrimination, unpaid wages and unfair dismissal.*

*At a national level, your subscriptions have paid for legal victories which have enhanced the rights of all workers in the UK.*

## Come and give us a hand

Standing alone against your employer can feel daunting. You are but one person and it can seem like an impossible task. In our branch though we are thousands strong and we will always stand with you.

We have helped uncountable numbers make sure that their voices are heard. We have stopped injustices. We are democratic. Our organisation's priorities and goals are your priorities and goals.

However, we need your help. We often receive troubling reports from some of our workplaces which have us concerned. We cannot do anything unless our members come forward to corroborate these reports. We can help stop injustice, but we need you to tell us it is happening. That's where you might come in. We need

representatives on the floor of every single one of our workplaces. We need people who are willing to help stand up for their colleagues and make real change within their workplace.

Our successes speak for themselves, those of you that have used our services know that we can make a real difference. While our team will always be willing to help anyone who asks for it, many who are currently standing alone would be more willing to ask for help from a colleague, someone local, someone who already knows what is going on. You.

Speaking from experience I can tell you that the role of a Steward is an incredibly rewarding one.

Your colleagues will thank you and you will know you



have made a difference. Whether that is simply providing advice and support or representing colleagues before management. You can help.

Full training is provided and we will assist you every step of the way. Anyone interested in finding out more should contact [unison@hants.gov.uk](mailto:unison@hants.gov.uk)

Together we stand.

**Nathan Shirley**  
Branch Chair

## Hampshire Retired Members' Committee Update



***'Cheer up! The worst is yet to come.'* Philander Chase Johnson, May 1920**

It is not my intention to leave you depressed after reading this update, but I must be realistic.

In Hampshire ten years of austerity has left some public services crumbling. Employees, often in workplaces which are short-staffed, are sometimes not able to provide services in the way they would want, leaving them demoralised. As to the future, the prospects are grim with unpredictable: high

inflation, increased taxation, price increases on nearly everything, with many people already unable to cope financially.

The long-term future of the triple lock protection on the state pension is not secure. The protection says that the SP should rise with whichever is the highest of average earnings, inflation or 2.5%. The Conservatives, together with their media supporters, now question the future of the lock.

In October, Joe Hannigan attended the Retired Members' National Conference in Edinburgh as our branch representative. We had one motion on the agenda and several amendments to other peoples' motions. We continue our campaign for a rule change to allow Retired Members to vote in the

National Executive Council elections and to have two members serving on it.

My committee has been very active in contacting the media and our MPs amongst others, also sometimes taking our banner on to the streets, endeavouring to protect your rights. We will continue to be protective of your welfare and rights against anyone who seeks to weaken them. Being honest, climbing motorway gantries and sticking ourselves to the road is not on our agenda! If you would like to be more involved in RM activities, please contact Ange Cleife, our Secretary at [angecleife@gmail.com](mailto:angecleife@gmail.com) or via the Branch office.

There are many things in life to enjoy, family, friends and so much more. May I on behalf of my committee wish you health and happiness for the future.

**Chris O'Neill**  
*Chair, Hampshire UNISON Retired Members' Section*

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## Message from Skip Bawa, Deputy Branch Secretary and Black Members Officer

A little bit about myself, I work part-time as Deputy Branch Secretary of Hampshire UNISON along with my substantive role in HCC Adult Services. I'm the Black Members Officer within the branch and I Co-Chair the Black Members South East Regional Committee.

We are a thriving UNISON Branch who are committed to serving our membership. UNISON is a member led

union and encourages it members to be influential within it. I am pleased to report that we have Black members Self-Organised Group, the purpose of which is to play an active part within the branch and within the union nationally promoting the rights of black workers.

If you are a member and interested in joining the Hampshire Black Members group, please get in touch

with me at [skip.bawa@hants.gov.uk](mailto:skip.bawa@hants.gov.uk)

"We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we can give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity joy, healing, and inclusion" Max de Pree.

**Skip Bawa**  
*Deputy Branch Secretary*