

**June
2019**

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Government Consultation Threatens Local Government Pension Scheme!

UNISON is concerned at a consultation document currently being circulated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Local Government Pension Scheme: Changes to the Local Valuation Cycle and the Management of Employer Risk*, believing that some of its proposals will introduce a two tier pension system in certain education institutions, denying new recruits access to the Scheme, and that this measure will weaken the Scheme in the long term.

The changes to the valuation cycle are not seen as controversial; currently each Fund, in our case the Merseyside Fund, is subject to actuarial review every three years, after which the employers' contributions to the Fund are determined. It is proposed to extend this period to four years, which will result in cost savings to the Funds.

What is controversial however are proposals to remove the obligation on Further and Higher Education corporations, and Sixth Form Colleges to offer the Scheme to new non teaching appointees, thereby introducing a two tier pension system into these sectors.

UNISON nationally has published the following objections to the proposals:

The changes, if taken up by colleges/universities, will lead to a two-tier workforce in pensions with new starters being offered inferior and less cost effective schemes. The government has got a bad track record of losing pension discrimination cases.

- Those affected are likely to be lower paid members of staff and mainly women; this could lead to a future challenge that could overturn the proposal and be costly to employers.
- If a proportion of employers are able to close membership to new starters this could lead to serious cash flow problems for LGPS funds with a shortfall of contributions coming in while the number of pensioners increase.

Continued page 2.....

Knowsley Protests against Trump

Your Branch Officers stood alongside many on the steps of St. Geroge's hall to demonstrate against President Trump's recent visit to the UK and his divisive politics!



Children's Centres

In March 2019, Business Facilities Assistants working in the Children's Centres were faced with the threat of redundancies following consultation with management. This would have meant a reduction from 10.9 FTE to 9 FTE.

UNISON lodged a collective dispute and working with workplace representatives from the service put forward an alternative proposal that would have achieved the same amount of savings without any redundancies.

This led to a delay in the implementation but the threat returned back in May where interviews were about to commence.

UNISON ran a consultative ballot of the members with 100% yes vote for industrial action on a 90% turnout. However, this was always a last resort and we had a further meeting with management and senior HR staff.

The result? the review of BFAs has been put completely on hold until later this year where a children centre wide review of all staff will be carried out. This is certainly a victory in the short term as we await details of further review. However, at the time of writing it looks like there will not be the need for any compulsory redundancies! Well done to all involved!

CAREER CONNECT

ANGER as management remove Birthday Leave

Our members are understandably "very angry" following the communication that the organisation is not offering a Pay Award or granting additional "Birthday leave" this year!

UNISON has communicated this to management and has asked for details of Pay Awards as staff have not received a pay inflation rise for well over 5 years now. At a time of increasing costs, threats of redundancy looming each year our members are now at breaking point.

It is our intention to hold meetings with members at the workplaces over the summer period to decide on next steps including potential pay claim and other forms of action.

Contact your nearest workplace rep for details or James Robinson at the Branch Office on 0151 548 0148 from the week commencing 24th June to arrange a meeting with your union. If you do not have a worksite rep then why not consider being one or nominate a colleague? Call the office to discuss further if this is something you are interested in.

Cont from Page 1.....

- For an employer who closes the LGPS to future membership, this could mean higher contributions to LGPS pension funds in the future for all the LGPS pensions that have already been built up for its staff and this could offset any savings achieved by offering a cheaper and inferior scheme to new starters.
- Even in the short term the cost of setting up inferior pension arrangements may well offset any savings to the employer.
- Although initially only affecting England these proposals could undermine universities and colleges who decide to still provide access to the LGPS for new starters and also put pressure on colleges in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- The LGPS is an affordable scheme - the cost of the LGPS benefits have recently gone down, not up.
- One of the LGPS Funds' concerns, is that recent legislation means that college and university employers are now regarded as more risky as they are effectively able to go out of business. Therefore, some LGPS funds believe that these employers pose a greater risk. Consequently, in some cases, despite benefits costs coming down, employer contributions are still increasing. The proposal to close the scheme to new members will not solve this problem, only dialogue between the employers and the LGPS funds can address this by showing the strength of the employer's financial position and the stability of the institution.

As can be seen, all members, not just in the sectors directly effected, are potentially affected by these proposals, **and we are urging all members to write to the Ministry about this, (a standard letter is available from the Branch Office, and we also intend to copy these to your MPs).**

School Uniform Grant 2019

The union's welfare charity There for You has once more set up a limited fund to help members on low incomes towards the costs of school uniform through a one-off payment of £40.

The process is very similar to previous years and an amount of money has been ring-fenced to support this initiative. However, once it's gone it's gone! **Deadline is Friday 19th July.**

For details on how to apply please visit the website on: <https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/unison-school-uniform-grants-2019/>

Highways

Our members who carry out essential highways work will receive the first pay rise since 2015 following collective bargaining with the Joint Trade Unions.

The outcome following negotiations was an 8% pay award back dated to the start of the work carried out this year.



As with our successful Winter Gritting pay negotiations, UNISON has pushed for future years to be uplifted in line with national pay awards and this has been accepted by management.

Court of Appeal Victory!

NHS workers who do overtime on a regular basis or frequently work beyond their normal shifts should now have these extra hours taken into account when their holiday pay is calculated, as a result of a landmark court victory by UNISON.

The Court of Appeal judgment found in favour of a paramedic and 12 of his colleagues who all work for the East of England Ambulance Service. The ambulance staff argued their holiday pay should better reflect the hours they actually worked, rather than be based solely upon their contracted hours.

The ruling could benefit tens of thousands of NHS staff employed under the Agenda for Change payment system and is in line with earlier legal cases, which established that workers should receive the same wages on leave as they do when working. Only doctors, dentists and senior managers will be exempt from the change.



ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Since the implementation of the restructure in November, UNISON had received an increasing number of phone calls from members with concerns culminating in a meeting of members and reps across the service.

Common issues identified included:

- Increasing workloads
- Low staffing levels
- High staff turnover with more intending to leave the service
- Issues with the new computer system



This led to a meeting with senior management where UNISON members spoke first hand of the impact and the potential impact on members and the service delivery including workplace stress and safeguarding concerns.

Management have brought about some changes as a result and we continue to monitor the situation, hoping to work together to resolve. However, will not rule out collective action if the issues remain for an unsatisfactory period of time.

Stewards Corner



Young Members Officer

Rebekah McNally

My name is Rebekah McNally and I am a Steward and Young Members Officer. I have recently been given the opportunity to travel to Cuba to attend the annual May Day Brigade, an eye opening and life changing experience to say the least.



Cuba has suffered for over 60 years due to an unnecessary and illegal blockade from the US, although the UN has voted for the blockade to be lifted for 27 consecutive years. Despite this, the Cuban people are generous, pioneering and resilient. I was shocked to learn of the vast numbers of Cuban doctors active in 67 countries around the world, 30,000 doctors contributing their medical expertise to those in need, such as those in Africa and Latin America. Notably, Cuba was the biggest single provider of healthcare workers to the Ebola crisis in West Africa, emphasising its innovative and progressive nature. I think we have a lot to learn from Cuba and must continue to educate people on Cuba's achievements and oppose the fabricated image of Cuba portrayed in the media.

For more information please visit the Cuba Solidarity Campaign website using the link below.
<https://cuba-solidarity.org.uk/>



Branch Away Day

Stewards & Officers participated in our first ever Branch Away Day in May.

We used the time to plan how our branch intends to organise in the future and there was lots of discussion about campaigns and ideas for the future!

The day was also an ideal time for some training for our Workplace Reps which will ultimately benefit our members.

If you have an issue or concern please contact your workplace rep who will be able to assist you in the first instance.

If you do not have a workplace rep you could consider being one or suggest one of your colleagues? Speak with James/Paula for more details on what this entails.

NEC Election Results

The results of the 2019 NEC election are now available.

You can download the results in full here :

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/2019/06/nec-2019-ballot/>

These members will take office following the end of the National Delegate Conference 2019. The term of office will run until the end of National Delegate Conference 2021.

Of particular note for our Branch is the election of our Assistant Branch Secretary, Paula Carlyle, which also puts Knowsley's voice back on the NEC!

A massive congratulations to Paula on behalf of all our members!

