

Gateshead

# UNISON Bulletin

February 2016

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*Gateshead UNISON protecting Jobs, protecting terms and conditions. Representing over 5000 members in over 130 employers in over 400 workplaces.*



## Update – Cuts Continue to Bite

Gateshead UNISON supplied a detailed response to all 65 budget proposals and highlighted some fundamental concerns. Certain proposals may lead to services becoming unsustainable, and others may result in significant outsourcing of essential services into a poor quality, chaotic independent sector. An independent sector where the use of exploitive working practices and contracts, including zero-hour contracts are widespread.

We are seeking urgent assurances on our redundancy, pay protection and redeployment agreements - we know these agreements have and will continue to fundamentally facilitate redeployment, voluntary redundancies and are therefore essential in offsetting compulsory redundancies. We have worked closely with the Council to limit the impact on members since 2010 with a strong track record of limiting CR's. As the cuts bite deeper and the challenges increase, we will redouble our efforts to support our UNISON members.

However as you will appreciate this year's budget is again hugely challenging across most service areas – government cuts continue to devastate services. The figures are stark - Gateshead Council has lost in excess of £110m since 2010, over 2000 posts have gone and a further £77m shortfall over 2016/20 is expected. Even during this time of economic growth – the chancellor's much heralded green shoots of recovery are not averting the continued dismantling of public services driven by ideology.

Its also worth noting 83% of the £300m recently announced Local Government Transition fund went to Tory areas - not a single penny landed in Gateshead. Even David Cameron's own mother signed a petition to prevent the closure of Children Centers, Adult Social Care Centers, Libraries etc. in his home constituency of Oxfordshire. Mary must have had made an impact - his area is receiving an additional £9m windfall, with other Tory regions such as Surrey and Hampshire getting £24m and £19m each.

## 'It's a Crap situation - but the only Crap in town?'

The detail supporting the new Adult Social Care 'Front Door' model is now emerging. The proposals contain a significant reduction in current posts, new ways of working rolled out and sizeable elements of council services potentially being transferred into the private sector. The model is intended to save over £3m. It is envisaged - following a period of assessment/enablement, increasing numbers of residents looking to access high quality council services will be deflected into the independent or voluntary sector - or as our members are telling us - a 'worryingly poor independent sector' or an 'emerging/developing voluntary sector'.

Some concessions have already been made and we are pushing hard for other options to be explored fully however, we appreciate this is an incredibly difficult time for UNISON members especially as the current and constant demand pressures are unrelenting. Consultation starts now - we will be arranging meetings across all service areas across the borough. If your post is covered within the new model we want to hear from you - your convenor contact details and other details are overleaf.

## KNOW YOUR BRANCH CONVENORS AND CONTACTS

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### The Gateshead Housing Company, Gateshead College BALTIC, Sage, etc.

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### Branch Admin Team

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## Come and meet Tom!! - Gateshead UNISON AGM 2016

Friday 26th February, 5.15pm – 7.00pm,  
Bewicks Restaurant, Gateshead Civic Centre  
Buffet from 4.30 - Bar - Refreshments - Free  
Prize Draw



## Gateshead UNISON - Award Winner

Branch Health and Safety Officer Adam Taylor has won the first ever UNISON National Safety Rep Award for Outstanding Contribution to Health and Safety. The award, which was presented by Unison President Wendy Nichols and General Secretary Dave Prentice at a special event held recently in London, recognises his work for our Branch and in the region, spanning some 25 years.

“It’s really nice to have my work recognised like this, but it’s also a mark of recognition for the whole branch, and I’m very proud of it”, says Adam. “It’s a shame there aren’t similar awards for other Branch Officers, because I’m just one of a team of really dedicated activists, and I think it’s something we should all share.”

Over the years, Adam has supported and represented members faced with numerous workplace hazards, including stress, violence, bullying, display screen equipment, manual handling, smoking, asbestos, poor working conditions and rat infestation. “There’s a lot of variety in all this, but the common theme is about being a voice for members, and working with management to secure the improvements needed”, says Adam. “Sometimes it’s very difficult, and sometimes we have to be quite patient, but we’re always doing our best”.

In the 1990’s, Adam pushed for the creation of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and soon after UNISON was created, laid the foundations for the new UNISON Regional Health and Safety Committee, which he chaired for the first five years. Also at this time, he did much to found the Northern TUC Health and Safety Forum, bringing together hundreds of Safety Reps from around the region for educational events and conferences, and which drew on the active support of the Health and Safety Executive.

However, it was a major piece of work done in last couple of years that really caught the judges’ eyes. This was the report on work-related stress caused by very high workload demands on Social Workers in the Children and Families Service. Adam borrowed from the Council and HSE approach to managing stress at work, and was able to present some quite detailed analysis showing the scale of the problem. This then served as a prompt for focus-group discussions and the drawing up of action plans. “The report did have a significant impact, but I’d be surprised if there wasn’t more work to be done on this one”, says Adam, “and we’re also going to see what can be learnt from the process itself, so that it might be applied in other areas, and possibly also for the benefit of other Unison branches.”

**Congratulations and well done, Adam!**

