

Gateshead

UNISON News

Feb 2020

Proudly representing over 5000 members in over 130 employers

Your union will always be there for you, every single day of this new decade

Each new year is a chance to look forwards as well as back. To plan for the future, but also to reflect on the year that's behind us.

2020 marks not just a new year, but a new decade – and one that brings with it a great deal of uncertainty. The election that brought 2019 to a close ensures that we will leave the EU in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, Boris Johnson's Conservatives have been elected on a wafer thin manifesto that leaves us all in the dark about what comes after Brexit, especially when it comes to public services.



However you voted in last year's election, I know that you understand more than anyone the pressures that the services you provide are under. 2020 will be another challenging year for public services, but I also know that there's no group of people I'd trust more than UNISON members to care for, protect and educate our communities through the difficult times.

In return, I promise that your union will always be there to stand up for you, every single day of this new decade.

That means we'll be on your side, fighting for the better pay and conditions that you deserve. That means we'll be on your side, opposing attempts to privatise your jobs. And crucially, that means we'll be on your side, in your workplace, so you don't have to face the biggest challenges alone.

UNISON is the biggest union in the UK – because public service workers like you have put your trust in us to stand with you. I'm delighted that for the second year in a row – at a time when trade unions and public services have come under attack – UNISON is a growing union. The fastest growing union in the western world, and growing stronger every day as more people put their trust in us. There has never been a better or more important time to join UNISON, so remember to sign up your colleagues at work so that they too can be a part of our special union.

Yet we can't and shouldn't rest on our laurels – every new member grows our strength, but at the same time – rightly – raises the expectations on us to deliver. So in the decade ahead, our union will need to deliver more and fight even harder – and I promise you, we will not let you down - Dave Prentice.

WORTH*it* Valuing public services and the people who provide them

Pay Claim - please check/update your details - it is crucial we are organised!

You may recall UNISON, GMB and Unite submitted a pay claim last year which included:

- A 'real living wage' of £10 per hour for the lowest-paid on spinal column point (SCP) 1 and a 10% increase on all other pay points
- A one-day increase in paid annual leave
- A two-hour cut in the working week
- A joint review of workplace causes of stress and mental health problems - based on the assessments developed here in Gateshead.

The Local Government Association was expected to respond in the autumn last year, however the National Employers decided that they were not be in a position to respond to the claim until the impact of the outcome of the general election is known.

Commenting on the claim UNISON head of local government Jon Richards said: "Council staff have paid a heavy price during the years of austerity, keeping services going when cash was in short supply and hundreds of thousands of their colleagues lost their jobs.



"The government claims the cuts are behind us, but no new money behind the recent pay announcement for teachers, police officers and the armed forces suggests otherwise. The new PM should make good the damage of the past, and fund local government properly to protect jobs, wages and services."

It is crucial we are organised! Are your details up to date? check @ My UNISON or call 433 4444, It takes two minutes. If we don't have your correct information, we can't consult you and you might not be able to vote in any upcoming ballots. It is crucial that all members play their part.

Holiday Pay - Update

Following the update in last September's newsletter - protracted discussion between the council, other employers and our legal advisors supported by ACAS are still ongoing. We have reached agreements with some employers and will continue to work in good faith to progress others. For those members who provided the information required to progress their outstanding claims, please look out for further information via email, website and please follow us and on twitter/Facebook. We are the only Trade Union to pick this up on behalf of members, **we may need to contact you again** so please make sure your details up to date. Check @ My UNISON or call 433 4444 - it takes two minutes!

Care Workers for Change

I'm sure we would all agree, care workers have vital roles, entrusted to look after the people we love – to care for them while they are vulnerable, elderly or sick. It is challenging and honourable work. However the sad fact is our Social Care system is in a deepening crisis.

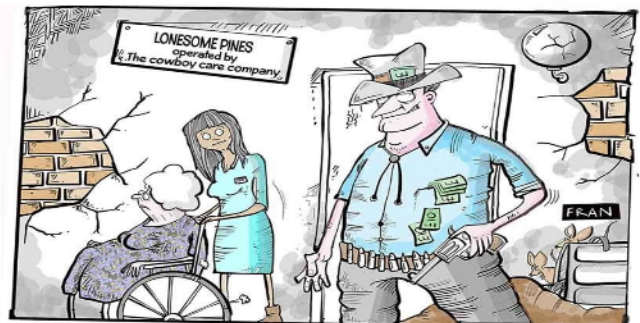
Back in 2014 the Care Act set out in law a 'market development' in Adult Social Care (backdoor privatisation) which is widely regarded as being a total failure for people in need of Social Care and for the staff who work in Care. It has however been a huge success for big care companies - whose profits have bulged.

Can you recall Boris Johnson standing in Downing Street in July 2019 saying: "We will fix the crisis in social care once and for all with a clear plan we have prepared to give every older person the dignity and security they deserve." At least the PM conceded the sector is in Crisis - a crisis they created - however no plan has surfaced, only a top-up £1bn has re-appeared but this still leaves a huge chasm. To put the £1bn into context - to restore social care services to the level seen in 2010 before the impact of austerity, would take another £11.7bn.

The market isn't working, care workers incredible contribution is clearly not valued by government, resulting in many Big care companies acting like cowboys. Care workers are some of the lowest paid workers in the UK and the quality of care that some vulnerable people receive is not good enough.

That's why we are campaigning for change. We are fighting to win care workers:

- A real living wage – as an absolute minimum
- Full pay for sleep-in's and travel time
- Fair contracts, no zero hours
- Enough time to care
- A safe working environments



Care workers deserve good jobs and the sector urgently needs sustainable funding and reform. We are going to win change. But we need your help to do it. Pledge to support the campaign! Sign-up for campaign emails at www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/care-workers-change/



50 Years and Counting

Meet Robert Laurie, who has worked for Local Environmental Services (LES) for a grand total of 50 years!

At 68 years old, he is not only the longest serving member of UNISON (dating back to NUPE), but also the longest serving employee of the council!

We caught up with to present Robbie with a certificate and a gift card for his loyal dedication to UNISON, and found out that his 50 years of service have been rewarded once again with an invitation to meet the Queen at the Royal Garden Party later this year!

Pay and Grading Structure - Working Group.

In 1997 the Local Government Single Status Agreement came into being and in 2006/7 Gateshead Council and UNISON agreed a comprehensive Pay and Grading Structure. During this process working in real partnership, openness and transparency were crucial principles underpinning both 2006/7 comprehensive review and the long-term integrity and viability of the scheme.

However for a number of years now we have been highlighting our concerns around the local application of the Job Evaluation Scheme and pay grading structure including:

- The lack of a transparent historic and ongoing monitoring of the scheme.
- The lack of scheme maintenance in relation to the national and local conventions – including the unilateral decision not to adopt or use nationally agreed updates to the scheme guidance notes.
- Specific worries raised about lack of openness, transparency, consistency or fairness within the local application of the scheme.
- So called rogue Managers and others undertaking evaluations outside of the scheme boundaries and rules.
- The current pay scale has been compressed and tweaked over many years resulting in it now being not fit for purpose and is widely regarded as a 'bit of a dogs dinner'.

The council has now agreed to look at the Pay and Grading issues and have established a working group to undertake this. We will update members as and when required and will only agree to any changes with a mandate from UNISON members.

School Funding - Schools in poorer areas will lose out

Following many years of pressure from certain parts of the country - the government's *new* approach in allocating funding through the national funding formula and then top up schools that fall below the minimum per pupil amount, will result in schools serving more affluent families seeing the highest gains, but will overall adversely affect children in Gateshead.

Not only will schools in disadvantaged areas be likely to experience smaller increases to their base budgets over the coming years than more affluent schools. Disadvantaged schools generally hire younger teachers, more Teaching Assistants' etc. and rightfully have smaller class sizes, therefore centrally unfunded pay awards are again likely to hit the schools with the highest cost pressures the hardest.



Thank You!

UNISON would like to thank all our wonderful colleagues for all the truly amazing activities they have been doing over the Christmas period to help those in need in Gateshead. It was humbling to watch all the activity and buzz from council staff donating to foodbanks, collecting shoe box gifts and Children's services delivering Christmas food and presents to over a hundred families in Gateshead!

We have been blown away by everything that has been done and I know that this work has been replicated right across Gateshead.

It might seem like the world is a difficult place just now and maybe foodbanks, toy collections etc. shouldn't really be needed - but it's heart-warming to know that there are loads of good people out there, lots of whom work for Gateshead Council/Housing Company, Voluntary sector and Schools across Gateshead.