

NJC pay and the new contracts: The branch has moved towards securing National Joint Council (NJC) pay awards for all staff on April 2013 contracts. With a dispute brewing and the threat of a ballot, useful talks with the Council's leadership have led to the Chief Executive committing Camden to honour future NJC awards for all on SP contracts and those with an appraisal rating of '2' and above on the P&M contract. We look close to winning that commitment for all, regardless of rating. Go to branch website www.camdenunison.org.uk for updates.

Newsletter of the Camden Unison Branch

CAMDEN EYE

www.camdenunison.org.uk

Number 29 ● November 2013



Photos: Steve Forrest



Sun shines on Manchester protest

50,000 marched in Manchester on 29 September to defend the NHS. The near 10,000 strong UNISON contingent was led by General Secretary Dave Prentis. It was a lively, vibrant and diverse demonstration with young people and women to the fore. Despite the massive security presence spirits remained high with a renewed sense of determination both to defend the NHS and to fight the Coalition's austerity agenda.

For more on the battle to save the NHS turn to page 4.



Capita – Keep our jobs in Barnet

In spite of a long running campaign by the Barnet Local Government Branch and local community activists, Barnet Council has signed a 10 year contract with Capita PLC to take over the provision of a number of back office services. Capita are now consulting with staff on a proposal to transfer these services to this firm's call centres elsewhere in the UK, which could result in some 350 job losses to the community and more than 150 redundancies. An online petition has been set up at <http://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/capita-keep-our-jobs-in-barnet> which branches are encouraged to sign to show their support.

University unity for strike action

UNite, UNISON and UCU, the lecturers' union, have combined to mount strike action across universities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. All three unions rejected a 1% pay offer. Activists are under no illusion that a single day's action will be enough and are working to co-ordinate a further November strike alongside the main teaching unions, the NUT and NASUWT.

George Binette
Camden UNISON
Branch Secretary

Threatened action forces halt to mental health re-organisation

The Mental Health/ASC shop has forced a 6 month halt to plans by the local Mental Health NHS Trust (Camden & Islington Foundation Trust – CIFT) to have a major re-organisation in the way Mental Health Act assessments are organised in Camden. The proposal was to end a system that had been running smoothly for around 6 years, and would have led to a much worse service for people needing treatment in psychiatric hospital. There had been no meaningful consultation with Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs), who would have to implement the new system (a Trust wide day-time AMHP Duty Service with just one manager and one administrator overseeing Mental Health Act assessments in both Camden and Islington. The shop-stewards consulted with all the AMHPs in Camden and got in touch with UNISON reps in Islington. We proposed to keep the system we have in Camden and are supporting plans in Islington to have its own AMHP Duty Service with its own dedicated manager and its own dedicated administrator. We felt that the re-organisation of AMHP Duty was not thought through properly. We were concerned that it

Local Authorities are legally obliged to ensure there are enough AMHPs to cover the Mental Health Act assessments in their borough. Camden does around 550 MHA assessments each year on their day time AMHP Duty Service – which the borough would not have been able to do if the AMHPs had refused to carry out that role.

Mental Health Act assessments are usually needed when those caring for a person with a severe mental illness feel that the person needs to be admitted to psychiatric hospital for treatment and the person is likely to refuse admission. It requires two psychiatrists and an AMHP to make an assessment. The two doctors make medical recommendations for admission under the Mental Health Act. It is the AMHP who ultimately decides if the person needs to be admitted by making an application to psychiatric hospital under a section of the MHA.

would lead to AMHPs in both boroughs feeling unsupported and would lead to a fragmentation of services, with each AMHP having to organise Mental Health Act assessments on Camden residents without the support of an AMHP Duty Service. We used Camden UNISON's 'Survey Monkey' account to survey all AMHPs working in Camden on the proposals. We set out an alternative to the Trust's plan, and concrete proposals around AMHPs taking action to stop the implementation. Around 90% of the AMHPs completed the survey and all of them were in favour

of keeping the Camden only AMHP Duty Service (the UNISON preferred option). 80% of the AMHPs were willing to boycott the new Trust-wide service and 70% were willing to stop being AMHPs if the new service went ahead. We backed this up with regular shop meetings and discussions with the Adult Social Care UNISON convenor, Phoebe Watkins. This culminated on 3rd October with a senior LB Camden manager in ASC calling a halt to the proposed changes for 6 months until a thorough investigation into its effects are carried out by Trust managers. The shop feels that this is only a temporary reprieve.

We will keep up the pressure to secure a decent service for those people needing psychiatric hospital admission, and ensure that AMHPs are properly supported in this very difficult and stressful job. The key to this success has been to use any means available to rally support from the members. It showed that a united shop can successfully influence and put pressure on managers to listen and consult properly with staff. While the support of front-line managers helped, we believe that the demonstration of unity to oppose the plans is what ultimately led to senior managers calling a halt to the changes.

National pay claim agreed: Flat rate increase of £1 an hour

National Joint Council (NJC) unions, GMB, Unite and UNISON agreed in mid-October on the basic pay claim for 2014-15 to submit to the local authority employers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland: "A flat rate increase of £1 an hour on all pay points, which would achieve the current Living Wage as the bottom NJC spinal column point". This demand is broadly in line with the option that the Camden UNISON branch committee supported, though with criticisms in a national consultation exercise. There are certainly important questions about how such a claim, if won from the employers, would be implemented in the context of London generally and Camden in particular with its mixture of old (35-hour) and new

(36-hour) contracts. Even so to have agreed to pursue a simple, straightforward claim on basic pay is a step in the right direction and could help lay the basis for a serious attempt to halt the dramatic erosion of real pay for the vast majority of local government workers. On average, a local government employee at the top of their grade has seen the real value of pay shrink by more than 15% since 2009 and this year's 1% did nothing to reverse the trend. Workers in Camden Council and across local government should take heart at what looks like developing into a significant revolt against the seemingly endless rounds of cuts in real pay coming on top of unprecedented job losses across the public sector. Fellow UNISON members in universities across England and Wales look set to

strike at the end of October and then later in the autumn alongside lecturers in the UCU union and member of Unite. On 17 October teachers in the two largest education unions mounted strike action over performance-related pay among other issues in London and three other English regions, with the prospect of an England-wide strike looming in November. Meanwhile, the three unions in the nation's ambulance services are on the brink of balloting for action against cuts to sick pay and other attacks. And especially given the fall in living standard local government workers have suffered over the past four years, we have every reason to join the developing pay revolt sooner rather than later in 2014.

George Binette
Branch Secretary

November 2013

CAMDEN EYE

Join up the struggles

October saw union resistance to the Government's austerity agenda and private sector employers' drastic attacks rise sharply. Workers at Wigan's giant Hovis bakery fought successfully against zero hour contracts. Elsewhere:

- 15,000 teachers took to London's streets against Michael Gove's policies;
- Firefighters struck for their pensions, postal workers and higher education staff voted heavily for strikes, and;
- Over 50,000 marched to defend the NHS.

All this is good news, but there is a crying need for these actions to be co-ordinated across unions and sectors. To get there our union leaders must start leading.

Divide and rule – blaming migrants

The Tory-led coalition hopes to divide growing opposition to massive cuts in the welfare state through scapegoating 'foreigners'. They would have us believe that 'health tourism' is central to a mounting crisis in the NHS; and that migrants cause shortages of housing and school places, and falling wages.

The latest scapegoating measure is Theresa May's Immigration Bill. This cuts NHS access and turns private landlords, teachers and lecturers into unofficial agents of the UK Borders Agency.

Union activists have a responsibility both to oppose this Bill and the myths behind it. Britain is the world's seventh richest nation, but with an ever growing gap between rich and poor. We need wealth redistribution not 'Fortress Britain'.

Photo George Binette



Dozens of local trade unionists including 10 or more from Camden UNISON visited Euston fire station on Wednesday 25 September to show their support for striking firefighters, defending their pensions.

Need to stand together to save the NHS

If we are to rescue the NHS and defend it we need to understand how it is that the most popular institution in the UK is being dismembered and privatised and its abolition planned. NHS SOS details in eight essays how this was planned, the deceit that was used and the failure of the organisations which could have prevented it ranging from the medical professions to the BBC, newspapers and journalists to trades unions, the Labour Party and the Lib Dems. The key decision according to Professor Allyson Pollock was the repeal of the Secretary of State's duty to secure or provide health services and its

associated abolition of the Health Secretary's general powers of direction over NHS bodies and providers. She details the consequences as follows:

- The new clinical commissioning groups do not have a duty to provide a comprehensive range of services nor to provide them to everyone living in the area;
- Local authorities will become providers of last resort;
- Loss of equity of access;
- The duty to provide services free of charge will no longer exist. The new clinical commissioning groups will determine which services are part of the health service and which are chargeable;
- The abolition of

direct control over NHS provision. Increasingly general practice and commissioning functions will be managed by for-profit companies such as Virgin Care;

- NHS Trusts will be abolished. They will be required to become Foundation Trusts who can enter into joint ventures with for-profit companies;
- Health providers will be regulated by Monitor which has a duty to promote competition.

This is chilling reading but the authors are not without hope. They set out practical steps that campaigners can take. They pin much of their hopes on David Owen's proposed amendments in a parliamentary bill which if passed would re-



Branch banner in Manchester: Photo Hugo Pierre

store the Secretary of State's duty to secure or provide health services. But it is clear that the NHS will only be reclaimed by a massive fight from below. The successful protests around Lewisham Hospital and the Whittington show what is possible at local level. The 50,000 strong NHS demonstration in

Manchester needs to be built on. With determination this battle can be won, but the pace needs to be forced from below. Pete Ainsley

NHS SOS: How the NHS was betrayed and how we can save it – edited by Jacky Davis & Raymond Tallis
Order it from your local library

The fight over Royal Mail

Camden Trades Council CWU member, **Merlin Reader**, on why postal workers voted for strike action

The Communication Workers Union ballot is over three issues:

- Pay
 - Pensions
 - Guaranteeing our terms and conditions.
- The last is a demand for a ten year guarantee, Royal Mail claim they are offering three years. Whether that is enforceable on new owners is open to question, but as unions cannot directly ballot on privatisation in the UK (it's not classed by judges as a 'trade dispute'), this is the closest we can get. Changes to pensions are being pushed

through without the agreement of union members. The pay offer is still below inflation. As our chief executive increased her income by over 30% to £1.5million last year, clearly below inflation pay rises do not apply to all. The sell off is going ahead, demand for shares has been high despite the strike ballot and our union demands. This is because the government and its City advisors have deliberately undervalued the company. A

huge theft has been perpetrated on the public, but unfortunately no prosecutions are likely. The main company organising the sale has received £21 million (that we know about). The propaganda about posties 'wanting' shares is a lie - we were all automatically enrolled for them. You had to fill in and send off a form to opt out, and most members bin everything they receive from Royal Mail. The union also didn't advise a mass opt out, as many wouldn't, cer-

tainly most non members, and it would be a lot less likely to be effective than a big 'yes' vote and serious strike action. The only reason City vultures are buying shares is because they are undervalued. They've been described as a way to make a quick buck, and Royal Mail is a 'basket case' like Railtrack. Buy, and sell when the property assets have been 'realised' - or flogged (and given to shareholders as dividends), but before the company goes down the tubes.

Posties are angry, the public is angry, and we need this sale reversed before the service is shot to pieces. The Labour Party leadership could help by announcing it will renationalise without compensation. Renationalisation is the policy passed at Labour Conference, and 10% of shareholders won't object, We'd rather have decent pay and conditions than shares.

Merlin Reader
CWU local rep, EC Deliveries, personal capacity

Jo Beardsmore, outreach officer for *ShareAction*, a charity campaigning on pension investments, spoke at Camden UNISON's branch committee on 9 September. It voted to support ShareAction's Green Light climate change campaign. Here he outlines that campaign and another on the Living Wage

Green Light campaign: Taking action over pensions and climate change

Workers' pension savings are worth

billions. The money that we pay into pensions every month doesn't just sit in our pension pots; it's invested in the stock market. That means that we all have a stake in Britain's largest companies, and can influence the way that they are run. ShareAction is a ground-breaking charity that aims to mobilise the financial power of pension investments to change the way that companies treat workers and the environment. We campaign to ensure that this investor power is harnessed to protect people and the planet, whilst growing enough to give people financial security in old age. UNISON is affiliated to ShareAction at a national level and we are working closely together, but ShareAction is also



keen to strengthen relationships with UNISON branches and members. We have two upcoming campaign opportunities – one environmental and one on labour standards – where we would welcome Camden UNISON's involvement.

Green Light

In late October we are launching Green Light, bringing together a broad coalition of environmental charities, trade unions and activist

infrastructure - where environmental and financial stability go hand in hand.

Pension funds should:

- Disclose – how much of our money do they invest in fossil fuels and high carbon intensive industries? How exposed are our savings to financial risk? What are they going to do about it?

- Divert – investment into green jobs, technology and infrastructure for a greener stable future
- Disrupt – oil companies' plans to spend billions exploring for more oil resources when existing resources are more than can be safely used

- Divest – from coal companies
- Demand – political action against climate change.

Living Wage

November 3-8 is Living Wage Week – a chance to mobilise and pull together to demand a Living Wage for all. We want to build on our shareholder campaign that has helped lift 7000 workers in the UK onto a Living Wage. We'll be launching an e-action to put pressure on pension fund managers to take the case for the Living Wage to the boardrooms of companies they invest in. We'll also be working with trade unions to get face-to-face meetings with pension trustees and senior pension fund officers who manage workers' savings. Both of these campaigns will only succeed if pension scheme members get involved. It's our money: we should make our voices heard. Contact jo@shareaction.org



Camden Black Workers' Group AGM

52 people attended Camden Black Workers' Group's Annual General Meeting on 18 September. The CBWG's aim is to represent black and minority ethnic staff working for the Council and its contractors in conjunction with the trade unions. The meeting heard from Margaret Greer, Chair of UNISON's national Black Members' Committee and branch secretary of Hammersmith & Fulham UNISON. She explained how she had become involved in trade unionism as part of the Hammersmith nursery workers' campaign for fair pay in the late 1980s. Margaret then highlighted the disproportionate effect of public sector cuts and job losses on ethnic minority communities. She emphasised that white and ethnic minority trade unionists needed to work together to defend public services from cuts and privatisation.

The meeting also heard from a steward at NSL (Camden's parking contractor). The workers at NSL – who were overwhelmingly from black and other minority ethnic backgrounds – had organised in Camden UNISON to fight for better pay. They had managed to win the London Living Wage (£8.55 per hour) in the teeth of employer opposition and were hoping to secure more in future.

Mike Cooke, Camden Council Chief Executive, addressed the meeting and took questions. Attendees were concerned about the lack of action that had been taken in a situation where the Council had been found at fault in an Employment Tribunal case for racial discrimination by a selection panel. Attendees wanted to see disciplinary action against managers who were found to have acted in a discriminatory fashion.

Mike Cooke said that he wanted to see more BME staff in senior positions. He said that the Council was launching a mentoring scheme to encourage BME staff to go for senior managerial positions.

The meeting voted to accept the following as the CBWG Executive:

Conveners:	Vino Sangarapillai & Jare Oyewole
Chair:	Hugo Pierre
Vice-chair:	Marilyn Bramble-Litchmore
Committee:	
Jacqui Wallace	Natasha Barrett
Fraser Valdez	Clive Collins
Judy Frederick	Angeline Johnson
Juliette Jones	Beverleigh Lawrence
Muna Matewos	Dee Osborne
Amanda Swaby	Paulette Slocombe
June Welcome	Patrick Pond

The Euston Tower Enquiry Centre is the busiest in the country. Anna Owens, PCS Revenue & Customs Euston Tower Branch Secretary outlines the plan to close 281 local tax offices offering tax advice while staff are prevented from investigating possible tax avoidance which could raise much needed revenue.

Protest against closure of Euston Tower tax enquiry service

Each year 281 local tax offices provide a vital face to face service for over 2.5 million pensioners, migrant and vulnerable workers, tax credit and small business customers. HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Custom Services) now plan to close all 281 Enquiry Centres in April 2014.

The service will be replaced by mobile units placed in public sector buildings such as libraries to advise people. The other option will be for people to ring a contact centre or do their taxes online.

The Euston Tower Enquiry Centre is the busiest in the country due to the number of businesses in the area and it is the only tax advice service for the people of Camden.

These closures will put more pressure on HMRC's contact

centres which already struggle to cope with demand. HMRC left 20 million calls unanswered last year and only managed to reply to 66% of letters. If these closures go ahead, around 1 million people could be at risk of getting their taxes wrong. Tax dodging already costs the UK economy over £120 billion a year.

PCS held a protest on 25 September outside Euston Tower to oppose the Enquiry Centre closures and then joined striking fire fighters at Euston Fire Station protesting against cuts and job losses in London. The two groups held up a banner which said: 'Hands off our public services'.

Anna Owens

PCS R&C Euston Tower Branch Secretary

Careworkers fight attack on terms and conditions

UNISON members working for Future Directions, a so-called community interest company in Rochdale, Greater Manchester, have staged 29 days of strike action this year in a bitter battle against attacks on their terms and conditions. The workers, mainly low-paid women, provide homecare for vulnerable adults with learning disabilities. Some have seen cuts in basic pay of a third or more since a transfer earlier this year to Future Directions, which is

ultimately run by Calderdale NHS Trust and operates the service on a contract outsourced by Rochdale Council. Careworker Karen Shatwell spoke at UNISON's London regional council, where she contrasted the reality of her loss of nearly £400 a month in earnings to the promise of a £40,000 year pay hike for Rochdale Council's chief executive, Jim Taylor. Our branch has thus far donated £200 to the workers' hardship fund.

National Minimum Wage up – well not really

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) rose by 12 pence with effect from October 2013 for virtually all workers aged 21 and older. The increase of just under 2% brings the figure to £6.31 an hour, which means that the real value of the NMW has fallen again, as the rate of inflation stood at 2.7%. Compared to 2008, the worth of this bare minimum has plunged by nearly £1,000.

Meanwhile, the gap between NMW and the unofficial London Living Wage (LLW) is now a yawning £2.24 an hour or some 36%. And the sorry reality is that there are dozens of workers on outsourced Camden Council contracts – most cleaners employed by the multinational giant ISS – on the £6.31 an hour NMW. Scores more on outsourced contracts in the social care sector and in catering make less than the LLW despite the Labour council's highly publicised policy commitment. There is, however, a positive lesson to be drawn from the recent experiences of low-paid workers working on the NSL contract and outsourced cleaners at University of London colleges like SOAS and Birkbeck: by joining UNISON, organising and fighting back the LLW and other meaningful gains can be won.



12-15,000 teachers demonstrated in London on 17 October when the NUT and NUSAWT teaching unions struck together and closed more schools in London than before. The unions also recruited more members and union reps.

Photo: Amanda Bentham

Someone new at work? Ask them to join

September saw Camden UNISON begin an ambitious recruitment drive, aimed at encouraging some 600 new starters at the London Borough of Camden to join the 3,000 existing members. Early signs are good, with colleagues already returning applications forms and joining online.

These new starters became Camden employees over the past 12 months, and work across the range of council services and sites including schools. The team at the branch office has sent personalised letters to each of these colleagues, inviting them to join.

The recent excellent work of union reps also helped by providing several examples of successes to include in the mailing. A full list of these is given below, as existing members may be interested to read about them too.

The branch would value existing members talking to new starters in their workplaces about the benefits of becoming a UNISON member. After all, there's strength in numbers! Non-members wishing to find out more about joining UNISON can email paul.england@camden.gov.uk or call the branch on 020 7974 1633.

All UNISON members have:

- Protection, representation and support when you need it

- Help with your pay and conditions of service
- Health and safety guidance and support
- Confidential welfare services for you and your dependents in difficult times
- Legal help for you at work and for your family at home
- A range of exclusive member discounts that can save you and your family money when you are shopping, buying insurance, arranging a mortgage or looking for a holiday.

Here are just some of our recent successes

- Secured a payout of around £106,000 for 74 former play service workers, following a claim for compensation for unpaid annual leave
- Helped an agency worker member secure £5,000 in back pay, when they were paid less than permanent colleagues in Repairs
- Recovered an underpayment of over £11,000 for a social work member who was not permitted to return to work following illness
- Stopped compulsory redundancies and pay cuts of nearly £5,000 per year in Youth Offending Services
- Got back pay for schools staff who had not been paid incremental increases over a 6 year period. In some cases, this ran to £1,000-2,000 each.

Paul England
Camden UNISON Branch Office Manager

Join UNISON today

● You cannot defend your terms and conditions on your own. You need to join a union. With over 3,200 members Camden UNISON is the largest union in the council. Join online or access PDFs of application forms at: www.camdenunison.org.uk/join

If you are already a member why not ask your colleagues to join? **There's strength in numbers.**

● UPDATE DETAILS
Have you moved or changed your job/workplace recently? If so please update your membership at: www.camdenunison.org.uk/update

● Visit the branch website: www.camdenunison.org.uk

● CONTACT US
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Camden Eye

Newsletter of Camden UNISON

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● email peter.ainsley@camden.gov.uk

● Copy date next issue: 10 November

● The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Camden UNISON, but the branch will defend the right of members to express those views.



Exhibitors at UNISON's health and safety fair on 22 October. Organisations represented were Thompsons solicitors, WEA (Workers Educational Association), Leigh & Day solicitors and the Council's safety team. A number were involved in the following days training which covered accidents at work, workplace inspections, agile working, asbestos and blacklisting.

School support staff win back pay on incremental increases

UNISON helped over 200 school support staff across Camden reclaim back pay on their wages for pay scale increments that were not paid or delayed. Some staff received thousands of pounds. UNISON first discovered three schools where staff had not reached the top of their grade even though they had worked in the same post for over five years. Some schools claimed it was because staff hadn't met 'appraisal' targets even though none had been set.

UNISON raised this issue in September 2012 with the Authority, pointing to the legislation and guidance schools



received separately from the DFE over the last 20 years. The Authority agreed to consider what we said. More school staff reported they hadn't had an increase after reading a CSF UNISON newsletter article in September 2012.

In May 2013 the Authority wrote to UNISON saying their legal advice now agreed with UNISON's claim and 'the contractual status does show that they should be progressing incrementally each year until the top of their grade'. UNISON

were then told that all arrears should be paid by the end of the summer holidays. The average backdated payout was estimated at £800, with total back pay amounting to £160,000. The additional incremental increases will be worth up to nearly £2000 per worker each year. Our thanks to all staff for their patience. We hope that you have now received all the back pay owed to you, but if you think you are owed money and haven't received it please contact hugo.pierre@camden.gov.uk.

■ See more Camden UNISON successes at camdenunison.org.uk/tags/success