Over 100 guests including 30 MPs from all three main parties and peers attended a UNISON parliamentary event to launch UNISON’s ‘Education our Future’ report. Full story on page 4.

L to R: Francis Beckett (author), Dave Prentis, Catherine McKinnel (shadow education minister) Stephen Twigg (shadow education secretary) Sharon Hodgson MP (Labour)

News from the chair

Denise Ward from Teesside University reports on the latest developments affecting staff in higher education.

Welcome to the latest edition of UNISON’s newsletter for members working in higher education institutions across the UK. I hope you will find it interesting, informative and helpful.

It was a great honour to be elected as the chair of the higher education service group executive (SGE) last year, especially as I was following in the footsteps of Derek Earnshaw. I want to thank Derek, who chaired the SGE from 2005, for his significant contribution and the achievements that he made during his time of office. He is missed greatly by his colleagues on the service group.

We are facing an era of great challenges as the government seeks to attack our pensions, employment rights, and all public services. In higher education we are facing a combination of funding cuts, fee rises, privatisation and deregulation – although these vary depending on which UK country you are in.

The Conservative-led coalition talks about the Big Society and they claim we are all in it together, but we know this means that the millionaire cabinet makes sure their own friends are looked after first. In the last 30 years the top executive pay rose by 4,000%, while average salaries increased just three-fold.

I know that our activists have the strength and vision to see beyond our immediate problems and demonstrate that a strong and active trade union movement can bring about effective change. This year we are launching campaigns to secure a Living Wage (see page 2) and against shared services initiatives.

The union movement was built to defend members in the hard times. We need to be there for our members and to remember these lines that come from the 1900s but still ring true today:

A union person you cannot be, no matter how you try. Unless you think in terms of we – and not in terms of I.

Pensions latest see page 4
I want to live not just exist

Living Wage campaign launched

At this year’s UNISON higher education conference UNISON and the National Union of Students launched a Living Wage campaign for the higher and further education sectors. The two organisations are calling on all FE and HE institutions to pay a Living Wage to all workers, and will be giving a ‘kite mark’ to the colleges and universities that agree to do so. The two organisations are also creating a ‘league table’ of the worst pay inequality offenders – those with the biggest gap between the lowest and highest paid staff. UNISON is also talking to Labour Students and Movement for Change who also share the campaign objectives.

The Living Wage increase has made a big difference to us. We are able to pay bills and put the heating on without the usual worry of the next gas bill.

What is the Living Wage?

The living wage is a wage level that, for a worker working a typical hourly week, would enable them to support their family and have a decent standard of living.

Research suggests that to provide the basics for a family with two children, someone working 40 hours a week would need to earn £8.30 an hour in London and £7.20 an hour outside of London. To earn enough to support their family at the national minimum wage (£6.08 an hour) someone would need to work 56 hours a week in London and 48 hours a week outside of London.

Of course, living costs change, relative prices change, and so these figures will never be set in stone. But they’re a good guide, and a good campaign goal.

One in five children currently grows up in poverty despite living in a family where one or both parents work. This is nearly two million children – roughly double the number of children living in poverty in working families in 1979.

Paying the Living Wage will reduce poverty, household debt, stress and illness and improve family life for university/college staff. It also means greater productivity and improved quality of service from more motivated staff. It is also more efficient for the university with staff staying in their jobs for longer, saving on the recruitment and training costs.

CONTACT

Telephone
0845 355 0845
Email
education@unison.co.uk
unison.org.uk/education/higher
Low pay and high pay

The average yearly income of a university vice-chancellor in 2009/10 was £218,813 – though some earn significantly more. This compares to just £12,334 for the lowest paid workers – the minimum wage for a 40-hour week in 2009/10.

Even some of the UK’s most prestigious institutions are not paying the Living Wage. At Cambridge University and its colleges – where we estimate that more than 1,000 employees are paid less than the Living Wage – the vice-chancellor earns £249,000 a year. This is almost 20 times the salary of the lowest-paid worker, who earns just £6.70 per hour.

At a rally held at South Bank University in the campaign to support a Living Wage one of the most moving speeches came from one of the cleaners who said “I want to live not just exist”. This sentiment is at the heart of the campaign. Everyone working in the university community deserves to be paid a decent wage, whether they are employed directly or indirectly by the university. There should be no place in our colleges and universities for poverty pay. Low-paid staff often have to work long hours or work several jobs to make ends meet. This means they have to choose between living in poverty and spending less time with their families.

On 1 July 2012 the University of London will make the final upgrade to pay all staff the London Living Wage of £8.30 and the branch will hold a rally both to celebrate this and to press for its introduction across the whole of Bloomsbury, and for other improvements to terms and conditions such as sick pay and improved holidays.

To kick off your campaign, UNISON has set up a website with an online toolkit where branches and college reps can download posters, leaflets, factsheets and campaign materials: www.alivingwage.co.uk

One in five children currently grows up in poverty despite living in a family where one or both parents work

This compares to just £12,334 for the lowest paid workers – the minimum wage for a 40-hour week in 2009/10.
Parliament gathers to hear UNISON members’ views

Over 100 guests including 30 MPs from all three main parties and peers attended a UNISON parliamentary event to launch the union’s Education our Future report. UNISON is the largest education union, with members working from early years right through to higher education. Education our Future sets out UNISON’s education policies and our desire to deliver a high-quality and groundbreaking education system, while fulfilling the aspirations of support staff working in education.

The parliamentarians were met by a range of UNISON members from across the UK working in early years, schools, careers, further education and higher education to talk about the vital work they do in their every day jobs.

The event was hosted by Sharon Hodgson, shadow education minister, and speeches were made by Dave Prentis, UNISON general secretary, Stephen Twigg, shadow education secretary, and Baroness Jones, shadow education minister in the Lords. Speakers highlighted and praised the variety of work and roles that support staff carry out across education and compliments were paid to UNISON on its increasing profile in the education sector. The report can be downloaded from the UNISON website: [http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/20303.pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/20303.pdf)

Local Government Pension Scheme negotiations now completed – time to have your say

After months of tough negotiations, the proposals for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland from 2014 have been signed off by ministers for consultation. At the time of writing, UNISON is arranging regional briefings for branches and members, to let you know exactly what is being proposed from 2014 so that you can have your say. The other LGPS unions and the Local Government Association will do the same.

UNISON will be consulting you about the proposals in a postal ballot. Please take time to read the proposals, tell your workmates to do the same and go to briefings held in your branch or region. And don’t forget to recruit colleagues not in the union. They need the strength and democracy of UNISON behind them to protect their pension – now and in the future.

Detailed information about all aspects of the LGPS 2014 proposals can be found on the website and more information will also appear there as details for the ballot are finalised. See: [http://www.unison.org.uk/pensions/lgps.asp](http://www.unison.org.uk/pensions/lgps.asp)
1. YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

Please tick or fill in the boxes below

- First name
- Other initial(s)
- Surname/Family name
- Date of birth
- Home address
- Postcode

2. YOUR EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

- Payroll number (from your payslip)
- Employer's name
- Your job title/occupation
- Department/section

Please give a telephone number/voice/text/email address for UNISON to contact you – indicate if work or home

3. WHAT YOU WILL PAY – FROM 1 October 2003

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions.

- **YOUr SUBSCRIPTION—what YOU PAY**
  - Weekly pay
  - Annual pay per week
  - Band
  - £0.30
  - £1.30
  - £0.81
  - £3.50
  - £1.22
  - £5.30
  - £1.52
  - £6.60
  - £1.81
  - £7.85
  - £2.24
  - £9.70
  - £2.65
  - £11.50
  - £3.23
  - £14.00
  - £4.68
  - £20.30
  - £5.19
  - £22.50

- **YOUR EMPLOYER DETAILS**
  - Postcode

- **OTHER WAYS TO PAY**
  - Direct debit
  - Cheque

4. POLITICAL FUND

- If you have been a member of a trade union before, please state which one:

- **YOUR AUTHORISATION**

  - I wish to join UNISON and accept its rules and constitution.
  - I authorise deduction of UNISON subscriptions from my salary/wages at the rate determined by UNISON in accordance with its rules to be paid over to them on my behalf and I authorise my employer to provide information to UNISON to keep my records up to date
  - I authorise deduction of the following Political Fund payment as part of my subscription: tick one box only

5. YOUR ETHNIC ORIGIN

- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Asian
- Other
- Asian
- Other
- Black
- African
- Black
- Caribbean
- Black
- UK
- Other
- Black
- UK
- Other
- White
- Irish
- White
- Other

DATA PROTECTION

UNISON will process your membership information together with other information for administration, statistical analysis, conducting ballots and other statutory requirement purposes. We may also send you newsletters, journals and surveys and let you know about educational and campaigning matters. We will disclose your information to our service providers and agents for these purposes.

If you do not want any mailings from UNISON besides those required by statute as shown in bold above, please tick this box.

If you do not wish to receive such information please tick this box.

OTHER WAYS TO PAY

- Direct debit
- Cheque

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ETHNIC ORIGIN?
Shared services – high-risk strategy

UNISON has launched a campaign against the introduction of ‘shared services’ models in higher and further education.

The public sector has seen a push from government towards the sharing of back office services between public sector bodies, with promises of massive cost savings and efficiencies. The reality is that this is not a new concept to those in FE and HE who have been used to buying into services like this for some years in the form of JANET and various purchasing consortia.

There is little evidence that outsourcing solutions like shared services actually work. Deloitte, which conducted a major review of US outsourcing experience across the public and private sector in 2005, warns that ‘outsourcing is an extraordinarily complex process, and the anticipated benefits often fail to materialise’.

So why are the government and a number of higher education institutions so keen to ignore the evidence and press ahead with shared services? The real purpose is privatisation and the outsourcing of staff to reduce costs. This poses a number of risks to members in terms of job security, pay and conditions, and trade union organisation.

UNISON believes that as a large and high-profile part of the public sector, the higher education sector has a responsibility to set high standards in promoting fair employment practices. If employment standards fall, with workers denied proper representation and a decent wage and conditions, the quality of the student experience will suffer too. If we want high-quality public services then outsourcing to shared services models should be resisted.

At UNISON’s higher education conference in March, delegates voted to back a campaign against shared services, highlighting the dangers of these models for our members, and agreeing to work together across the union to campaign against them. We need to:

- educate our members and employers to the risks shared services pose
- campaign in the press and media against shared services
- organise our members in areas where shared services are threatened, so that we maintain a strong trade union that can defend members’ interests.

UNISON has already produced a range of materials relating to shared services and outsourcing as well as running seminars on the topic. Training is available and branches can apply for funding to help with the campaign. For more details, contact Denise Bertuchi: d.bertuchi@unison.co.uk

Scotland review of HE governance

The Scottish government has conducted a review of governance in Scottish universities. UNISON has welcomed the clearer lines of accountability between higher education institutions and the Scottish government. We also believe the proposed expansion of staff (and student) representation on governing bodies would improve accountability. However, many UNISON branches are concerned that universities plan to ignore the government’s recommendations, and it is vital that employers are held to account.

Branches are also concerned at the stress and workload pressures on staff in universities. We are planning to run a survey on stress and also run some training on tackling stress in the workplace.

UNISON HE conference

UNISON’s higher education conference took place in Brighton in March. The HE sector is facing enormous challenges, as our members are faced with the effects of massive cuts, job losses, attacks on pay and conditions, privatisation, and questions about the very role that support staff play in higher education.

High on the agenda at this year’s conference were issues surrounding race, disability and LGBT equality. It is vital during these challenging times that we do not let our guard down on any of these issues. Fighting for fair pay and decent conditions of service for all our members also rightly took centre stage, with UNISON’s Living Wage campaign being a key focus.