

New web site for UNISON Bury branch

UNISON Bury is pleased to inform members that the branch now has its own website, at www.unison-bury.org.uk. The branch will endeavour to keep members informed of the latest union news via the website. Information on the benefits of UNISON membership and services to members is also included on the site. If you'd like to be included on the branch's email mailing list, to get updates, please send us your email address to enquiries@unison-bury.org.uk.



Equal Pay – pay justice for women workers stalled by council appeal

Members will be aware that 1,200 low paid women Bury branch members won their equal pay case last month thanks to a great deal of hard work on the part of UNISON Bury branch officers. The tribunal judgment should mean that the women will receive the equivalent of bonus payments based on 33.33 - 50 % in line with men for up to 6 years prior to the date on which the women put in their claims to the Tribunal through to the 31st March 2007 (when the bonus payments were removed).

However, the council, who have already used over £600,000 of council taxpayers' money on fighting this case, have now decided to appeal against the decision of the employment tribunal judges. On the subject of the expense incurred Steve Morton, UNISON Bury Branch Secretary said, "We always knew that we would be footing the bill for this case. It is ridiculous that they spent so much given that every other authority in Greater Manchester assessed the risk and decided to pay out instead of lose court action."

Frank Hont, UNISON North West Regional Secretary said, "On the day the council revealed that they have already spent over £600,000 on legal costs, the news that they now plan to waste even more council tax payers money by appealing against this decision is nothing short of a disgrace.

"The council has wasted £600,000 in an effort to save millions of pounds which it owes to its female staff when it could have asked the Government to release funding for this through the Capitalisation process. It now looks like it is prepared to spend a further million pounds to continue its failed defence."

Mr Hont concluded, "Even at this late stage we call on elected members of Bury Council to reconsider their position and approach UNISON with sensible proposals to settle our members' claims.



What the claim could mean an example calculation

A manual grade one Catering Assistant has been employed by the Council since before April 2001 and submitted a claim for equal pay to the Tribunal in April 2007.

The Casual Assistant is relying on a male employee employed in a male dominated role who is in receipt of a 33 1/3% bonus with whom to compare her pay.

Assuming the basic annual salary of the Catering assistant and her comparator in 2007 is £11,500, the potential bonus to which she is entitled would be £3,832.95.

The Catering Assistant can then backdate her losses for the 6 year period prior to putting in her claim to the Tribunal. Assuming she was entitled to the same potential bonus payment each year, her potential claim for the 6 year period would be £22,997.70.

Part 3 proposals – the misery continues

Not content with cutting the pay of hundreds of council employees through the Pay & Grading review and denying hundreds of women their rightful payments under the Equal Pay judgement, Bury Council is now considering ways in which it can take more money from their hard working but increasingly demoralised staff.

Under their further proposed changes to conditions of service, known as “Part 3”, the council plans to reduce payments to some of the lowest paid staff in the authority and many staff who have already lost out through Pay and Grading.

For instance:

Premium Payments for Particular Types of Working

Management proposal is to pay staff contracted to work, outside the normal 9 to 5 Monday to Friday on a points system with, for example some staff who work up to 50% of their time at weekends being paid £500 per year lump sum, instead of overtime rates.

On-Calls /Standby

99 shifts per year of Stand by would be rewarded with £ 500 per year, which equates to less than £5 per night or £10 per weekend.

Unsocial hours

Night work would see staff who work 100% of their time at night, such as night care assistants offered £ 3,200 per annum regardless of how many shifts they work. So in effect if you work 104 nights or 156 nights the reward is the same.

Car mileage

Reduce the Casual rate from 47.7pence per mile to 37.1 pence per mile
Review the criteria for essential car use status, no doubt presenting a further opportunity to re-assign people to casual and take away the lump sum they currently get.

Paid Breaks.

Remove all paid breaks unless the service can justify their retention. If justifiable reduce to 20 minutes maximum. Staff affected by this proposal include, library staff and leisure attendants.

Sleep-ins

150 sleep-ins a year would attract a payment of £800 or £5.33 per night but if someone does 25 nights per annum they would receive the rate of £20 per night. Still substantially less than the current rate.

To view all the proposals see the News section of the branch's website at www.unison-bury.org.uk

Pay offer for 2009/10: some slightly better news?

The Local Government Employers have given UNISON their final offer of:

Pay

- From 1 April 2009 an increase of 1.25% on SCPs 4 to 10 inclusive.
- From 1 April 2009 an increase of 1.00% on SCPs 11 to 49 inclusive

Annual Leave

- From 1 April 2009, an increase from 20 to 21 days in minimum annual leave for employees with less than five years' service.

The National Agreement Part 2 Para 7.2 would therefore be amended to read as follows, with effect from 1 April 2009:

7.2 Annual Leave

The minimum paid annual leave entitlement is twenty one days with a further four days after five years of continuous service. The entitlement as expressed applies to five day working patterns. For alternative working patterns an equivalent leave entitlement should be calculated.

The employers state that this improved offer represents their final position and they are not prepared to negotiate further. If the offer is rejected, councils will not implement it unilaterally so there would be no increase for 2009/10.

It is this branch's view that the maximum number of eligible members should participate and that the Union is given the clearest possible view of their feelings on the pay offer. Any decision on the next steps needs to be informed by the majority views of members

It should be noted that only those members who would directly benefit from the NJC pay offer can vote. This means only those members who are contractually conditioned to the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay and conditions. This will include grant maintained and foundation schools. Members covered by other agreements, e.g. craft workers, youth and community workers, chief officers, Soulbury staff, ancillary workers, FE and 6th form colleges should not vote.

The NJC Committee is recommending that members accept the offer as the best achievable by negotiation. If it is rejected, then consideration of that outcome will be given at the UNISON NJC Committee meeting on 9 September.

Consultation timetable

Branches must forward their consultation results **by 5.00 pm on 7 September 2009** to their Regional Head of Local Government at the Regional Office. Regional Heads of Local Government have been asked to send all the results from their Regions to the Local Government Section **by 12 noon on 8 September 2008**.

Therefore, ballot slips, **which are included with this newsletter**, should be returned to the branch office by no later than the 12 noon on Monday 7th September to be included.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Morton

Branch Secretary

On Behalf of the Branch Executive.

Tax Refunds



Thousands of UNISON members have already received tax refunds that total **over £17 million** but many thousands more are going to lose their refunds under new rules being introduced by the Revenue.

Since 2001, UNISON has offered all members a **NO REFUND – NO FEE** tax refund service to make sure they've received all the tax allowances they're entitled to in the previous 6 years. Over 72,000 members have already discovered that they were due a tax refund, with the average amount refunded being £243.52.

However, new rules being introduced by the Revenue will reduce the period you can claim a refund, from 6 years to just 4 years, leaving hundreds of thousands of members unable to claim refunds due to them and their money lost forever!

For more information on this see the letter included with this mailing. On the reverse of the letter is an application form should you wish to submit a claim for a tax refund.

Schools Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB)

Working in a school? Then you need to be aware that, discussions are underway with the Government about establishing a new School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). UNISON have been talking to members in schools and a number of questions have been raised which this newsletter aims to answer.

Why has The SSSNB Being Set Up?

School Support Staff have consistently told us they want national terms and conditions that address issues such as term time only contracts, fair access to training, nationally agreed pay rates and nationally agreed job descriptions. UNISON members have also told us that they want any terms and conditions to have a statutory underpinning, as for teachers. The SSSNB aims to address these issues.

National Negotiators

Two UNISON reps from the North West are on the National School Sector Committee, Pam Howard (Warrington) and Roger Moore (Manchester). Both have a wealth of experience of working in schools and of being UNISON activists. They know how schools work, along with other negotiators from around the country. Pam is involved in the main negotiating body, the SSSNB, and the working Sub-group on JE and Role Profiles.

UNISON Members

UNISON has 350,000 members working in Schools. This figure has been growing steadily, particularly in the North West. If we are to negotiate a successful deal we need to demonstrate to our national negotiators that our membership is growing, so if you're reading this and your not a member, then don't delay and join UNISON today.



School Contacts

We are seeking volunteers to help with the distribution of information, keeping the school notice board up to date and making us aware of any issues that support staff require clarification on. We expect a lot of information will be coming out from September, so have a talk amongst yourselves and if you want to volunteer for this now, then contact the Branch Office and we will put you on the mailing list. It's much better for us to deal with one person from a school, rather than the 20 individual members.

Next Steps

The branch will be arranging a series of briefings for all school based contacts. Look out for the dates and if your school contact is unable to attend, feel free to send someone else from your school.

We haven't ruled out the possibility of calling area meetings for members once we obtain more information. We will organise these prior to the distribution of ballot papers. We are aware that the negotiations are taking a long time, but it's an enormous piece of work and we want to ensure your concerns are addressed and dealt with as part of any agreement.

Ballot of members

Only when we are satisfied that the package is the best that can be achieved by negotiation will we ballot members. We believe the ballot will be held in the Spring of 2010. If your not a member of UNISON, you wont get a vote, so **YOU NEED TO JOIN NOW.**

Change in the law.

Legislation will go through parliament and receive Royal Ascent in October. This paves the way for the changes to be implemented when agreed by you the members. It also means that schools cannot veto any part of the package. If they do, they will be breaking the law.

Job Evaluation

Despite UNISON representations that it will be confusing and disruptive to our members. In Bury the employer has decided to implement the green book JE scheme and work will begin on evaluating non generic job descriptions from September 09. However a new scheme for schools is also currently being negotiated and is expected to be rolled out across the country, Despite UNISON representations that it will be confusing and disruptive to our members.

The UNISON logo features the word "UNISON" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. Above the letters, there are three stylized, overlapping teal and white wavy lines that sweep across the top of the text. Below the letters, there are two teal wavy lines that sweep across the bottom of the text, mirroring the style of the lines above.

Term Time working.

We think it's grossly unfair that most support staff are paid for only 45 weeks a year, yet teachers are paid for 52 weeks. This is a top priority for our national negotiators.

Permanently Temporary!

After 4 years you are deemed to be permanent, unless the school can prove otherwise. Temporary and permanent staff also have the same entitlements to things like redundancy, redeployment and unfair dismissal so there is really no need to keep staff on temporary contracts.

Working for Nothing!

Many support staff are working additional hours for no extra pay. This situation is not unique in the North West and our negotiators will be addressing this as part of the negotiating process.

Your questions answered

Will this affect my terms and conditions?

Yes. It will affect all support staff employed within all involved Local Education Authority schools.

Does this Include Foundation Schools?

Yes, it includes Foundation Schools, and Voluntary Aided Schools but NOT Academy Schools

Will there be any detriment to my pay or terms and conditions?

UNISON are pressing very hard for proper protection arrangements to be put in place. We will keep you informed of progress



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NEWS 5 BURY UNISON

Bury UNISON Branch Newsletter

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Is my Head aware of the changes?

Hopefully the Local Education Authority and DCSF are keeping Heads up to date. Feel free to show them this newsletter, as it's important they know what's going on.

What about Job Evaluation?

There will be nationally agreed job descriptions that will be subject to a national job evaluation scheme. Approximately 60 different role profiles have already been identified. If you believe your job is "unique" please send us details.

When will we have more information?

Two working groups looking at i) Core Contracts and the Working Year and ii) Job Evaluation and Role Profiles will be presenting their reports by February 2010. These reports will be considered by the SSSNB Executive Board in March 2010. It's expected that detailed information on the agreement will then be distributed to members.