

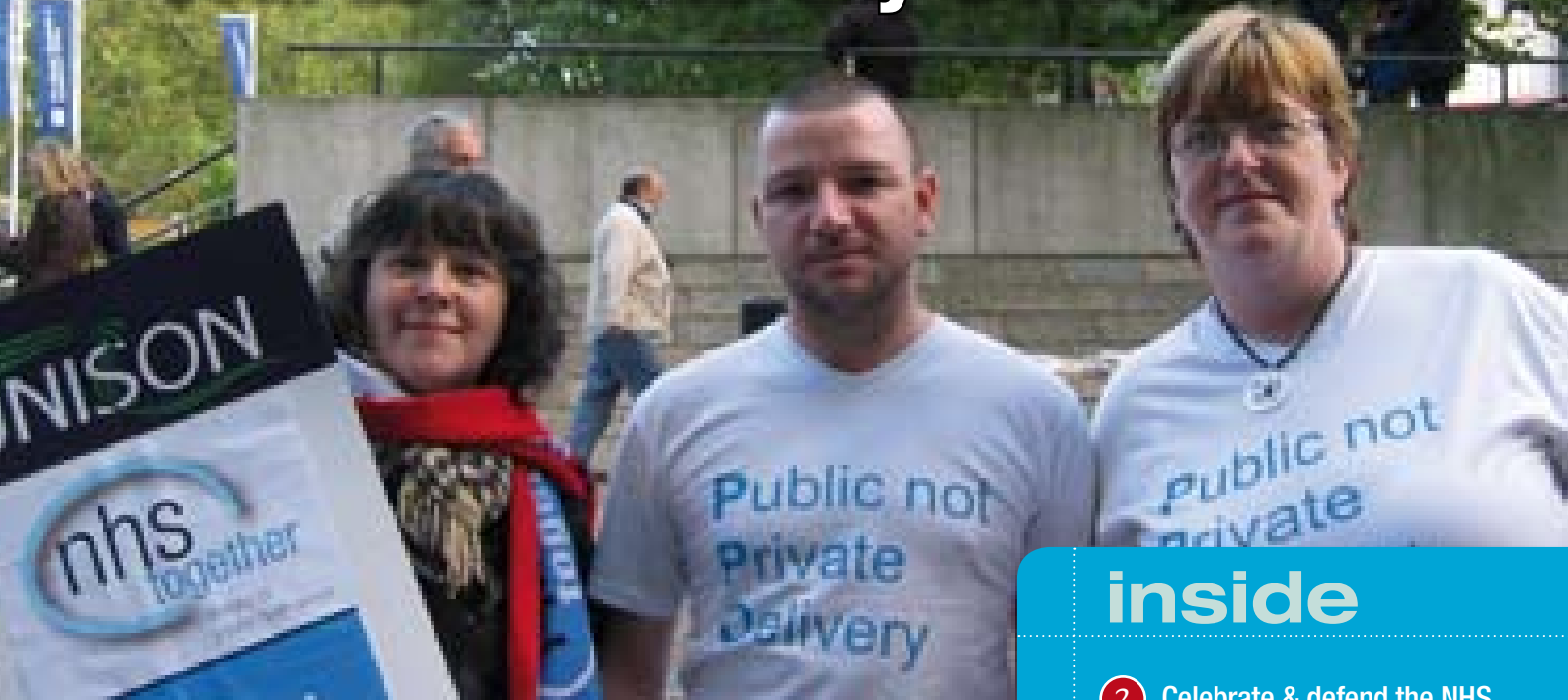
intouch

The Newsletter for all UNISON Stewards and Activists in the North West Region

Autumn
2007

NHS Together

Join us on Saturday 3 November



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As 2007 continues, issues around health and the NHS remain centre stage politically with hardly a day going by without major media interest in some aspect or other of the service. UNISON's "Keep the NHS Working" campaign continues, now in its 15th month. We continue to work closely with the other TUC Health Unions under the "NHS Together" campaign.

**Celebrate
and defend
the NHS!**

**March & Rally
3rd November
2007 London**



Celebrate and defend the NHS in a mass show of solidarity on 3 November. This is the simple message all reps and stewards need to send to members.

"Building on the successes of our Keep the NHS Working and NHS Together Campaigns, the demonstration will be the focus for a public display of celebration" said health service group chair Lilian Macer. "The NHS, after almost 60 years, is still largely owned and run by the public sector", she continued. "Widespread support for the event will send a strong message to the government that we want to keep it that way".

Marie Lloyd, Chair of the North West health

committee, herself active in campaigns within her own Trust, added "This is not just an occasion for health workers. All members, their families, friends and members of the public at large are welcome to support this event. The NHS is the greatest achievement of the labour movement. In a situation where the United States, a richer country, allows millions to fall through the safety net, the NHS remains a symbol of the fairness and decency that trade unions campaign for every day. Its defence therefore concerns everyone, not just those who happen to work there."

The national demonstration through central London is intended to bring the full weight of public opinion to support

this most vital of services. The Regional Health Care Committee is urging all branches to send as many people as possible to make this a day to remember.

UNISON has been at the forefront of the NHS Together Campaign; a campaign that embraces all TUC affiliated health unions. We have led a coalition aimed at getting the government to rethink its damaging policies; policies that increase the role of the market and private sector and that fragment the NHS. It is our involvement that has secured meaningful consultation before changes are made, not only with staff but with patients and stakeholders at all levels.

Head of Health, Karen

Jennings, wants all parts of the union to step up the campaign in the next three months. "With a new prime minister and a newly appointed health secretary, we will use every opportunity to influence government policy". As final planning for the event continues, she urges all activists to keep an eye on the health pages of the UNISON website for details and use the pull out poster in the September issue of InFocus to raise awareness of the event.

Stephanie Thomas, North West Head of Health adds "the Regional Health Care Committee will work closely with branches to ensure a good turnout from our region. Branches are advised to be thinking now about travel plans."

NHS Pay Offer Accepted

Although preparations for an industrial action ballot were under way members in the NHS voted 2 to 1 to accept the revised pay offer made in August. 68.8% voted for acceptance.

Stephanie Thomas, UNISON North West Region Head of Health, said, "I believe that workers in the health service deserve better - however UNISON said that the revised offer was the best that could be achieved through negotiation, and the result shows that members

recognised that fact.

"We are now putting together our evidence for next year's pay round and we will be making a strong case for a catch-up award. I don't believe health workers will accept a below inflation pay increase for two years running. The latest statistics show that pay growth in the public sector has fallen to its lowest for a decade. The NHS will need to work hard to keep its staff from looking for higher paid work elsewhere.

"In addition talks will be kicking off shortly on how to improve the terms and conditions of NHS staff. We want to make real progress on issues such as reducing the working week, better training and on unsocial hours which will make a real difference to the quality of our members' lives."

The staged pay package is worth 3.4% to the lowest paid and there is additional money targeted at training plus a £38 contribution towards professional fees.

The deal includes:

- From 1st November, a £400 flat-rate increase for those on Bands 1 and 2. Those on Bands 3 and 4 will receive an additional £38 as well as the 2.5%
- Additional money for staff training targeted directly on non-clinical staff (who often lose out when training budgets are cut).
- £38 paid to staff on Bands 5, 6, 7 and 8(a) who are required to register to practice. This money is a contribution to their professional fees.

Other health news...

Agenda for Change

UNISON resisted attempts to make the introduction of Agenda for Change, in October 2004, conditional on the acceptance of the Unsocial Hours scheme then proposed. We secured separate discussions on this and the option of a second

ballot on this aspect alone. In negotiations that have followed, we have secured considerable additional funding, mainly targeted at the lower grades to avoid members losing out. A draft proposal has emerged from discussions and has been circulated. However, national negotiators

have been clarifying how these proposals will affect members locally. The process continues. Meanwhile efforts have continued to extend full Agenda for Change benefits to all our members in private contractors.

UNISON National Health Conference 2008

Branches should note that this will be in Manchester in 2008.

Personal Injury UPDATE

The six months from March to August this year produced compensation payments totalling £2,228,834.44 in settlements won by our solicitors Thompsons on behalf of 365 members. As

we reiterate in every issue of Intouch, we cannot underestimate the tremendous value of this free service to our members. There is no reason for members, or potential members, to go anywhere near

"no win, no fee" lawyers on the high street. And as we also keep saying, UNISON's legal services are a great benefit to branches in the recruitment and retention of members.

Review of the National Delegate Conference 2007

Things for my branch to do!

Well you went to Brighton, bought the T-shirt, heard the debates and supported the motions. But it shouldn't end there. To make real progress we need to turn the words into action and achieve real progress on a variety of campaigns. We hate to remind you but you know as well as we do that it's the branches doing the business that really makes a difference. We've listed all the motions carried at this year's national conference, tried to summarise them (not as easy as it sounds) and hopefully picked out some of the things your branch needs to be doing to turn the fine words into real action. Good luck!

Motion 1: Organising and Recruiting

Our priority is to organise and grow. Our aim is to have two million members. A growing union is the most effective way of improving the working lives of UNISON members and eliminating unfairness at work. Branches need to

- Carry on with Challenge X - each of us needs to recruit ten members by the end of the year
- Make sure your branch has an active branch development and organising plan
- Attend employer induction sessions for new employees and sign up new staff
- Use new starters' lists to recruit new employees
- Bid for regional pool funds to pay for organising and recruitment activities – this can include paying for short-term secondments of activists
- Take part in the excellent "One Step Ahead" training course
- Remember to include self-organised groups in recruiting and organising.

Motion 2: Organising Migrant Workers in the UK

We need to carry on organising, representing, and

supporting migrant workers. Remember that recruitment and information materials are available in several languages. The recruitment of migrant workers to the union is the best way to ensure that divisions in the workforce are overcome, and that agency workers are not used to undermine the pay, terms and conditions of the permanent workforce. Get involved in the campaign to strengthen the current laws around illegal employment so that employers and not workers are punished.

Motion 5: Review of Branch and Service Group Structures

For branches it's probably the calm before the storm on this one. Conference approved the NEC's report on the Review of Branch and Service Group Structures. The NEC will produce a new branch organisation scheme. There will be a review of the use of resources, including branch income, assets and resources and much else. Branches need to make sure they are fully aware of developments, most of which will be the subject of a report to next year's conference.

Motion 19: Attacks on Public Sector Workers

Branches need to join the campaign for legislation to protect all public service workers regardless of occupation or employer and for a package of non-legislative measures, including better guidance and codes of practice for employers, with a view to the prevention of violence in the workplace.

Motion 21: Sickness Absence Procedures

Ever-tightening sickness absence procedures are resulting in an increase in the disciplining and dismissal of genuinely ill employees. Branches should continue to fight procedures where genuinely ill workers are disciplined or sacked, and campaign for the introduction, by employers, of positive policies such as Disability Leave Schemes.

Motion 22: Bullying - Action Not Words

Bullying is a major cause of stress in the workplace. Workers often remain unwilling to either report bullying or to take out formal grievance complaints. A major reason behind this is a failure on the part of

employers to take effective and lasting action. You need to see that policies are in place which are acted on. In serious cases of bullying, consideration must be given to removing the perpetrator from the workplace using mechanisms such as suspensions, without prejudice, pending investigations. Branches need to help increase the confidence of workers to tackle bullying. Start talking to your own employer(s) about how they can take bullying seriously.

Motion 31: Marketisation of Public Services

The government is obsessed with the introduction of commercial, competitive markets into public services. No public service has been exempt and all are being subjected to a market model designed to create opportunities for the private sector rather than improving services. Our principles of social equity and public accountability are under attack. Fragmented services, increased costs, monopoly profits for private companies and instability and uncertainty for staff are the result.

Make it your branch's resolution to get truly involved with the Positively Public campaign. Strengthen alliances with other unions, community and user groups and support actions like lobbies of parliament, and demonstrations.

Motion 32: Public Services

The government continues its drive to open up public services as "markets" for the private sector to give "consumers" more "choice". But there is little public support for more competition in public services. The debate about the funding and provision of public services is also taking place in Europe where EU economic policy is based on a free market, pro business ideology.

It is important that you do sign up to the European Trades Union Congress's online petition calling for EU-wide legislation to protect services from privatisation, liberalisation and competition under the single market. <http://www.etuc.org/>

Motion 34: Occupational Registration Conduct and Standards

While welcoming some aspects of the expansion of occupational and professional registration conduct and

standards there are still worries. There will be a report to the 2009 Conference to look at registration and regulation provisions, compare the relative standards and make recommendations on resources, training and development.

Motion 35: 2006 Local Government White Paper

This has major implications for thousands of UNISON members not just in local government, but in health, education, policing, transport and other areas. It also affects all our members as local citizens.

Government policy places an ever greater emphasis on commissioning services from a range of providers and more shared services. Virtually all local authorities will have to adopt a mayoral system, or have a council leader with full executive power. New unelected Local Strategic Partnerships will be set up that threaten to suck billions of pounds of funding away from local councils.

Branches should look out for guidance from HQ on how to campaign and lobby for the government to alter

the proposals and engage with Overview and Scrutiny Committees to pursue fair employment conditions and effective and accountable local services.

Motion 45: Employment Rights

Conference called for a fresh push for an increase in collective trade union rights. We still want:

- better protection for striking workers;
- simpler and fairer industrial action balloting and notice procedures
- restricted use of injunctions by employers
- solidarity action to be allowed in certain circumstances;
- the prevention of the use of replacement labour during strikes.

Carry on with the campaign. Think about affiliating to the campaign for a Trades Union Freedom Bill. Have a look at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/law/tuc-12891-f0.cfm>

Motion 51: Public Services in the Developing World

We must continue to actively argue the case for the protection and development of access to health, education,

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safe water and sanitation through public service provision in developing countries. Dealing with an issue of equal concern to people both in the UK and in the developing world, there is an opportunity for us to work together in order to turn our expertise into effective international action. Much action for HQ to do here.

Motion 52: Cuba

Get your branch to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and obtain a copy of the excellent 'Made in Cuba' pack about Cuba's unique health service and its international solidarity work in the Caribbean and Pakistan.

Motion 53: Palestine

The awful situation in Palestine was discussed. Although there is much national action to be pursued branches can help with the campaign to place concerted and sustained pressure upon Israel, including

an economic, cultural, academic and sporting boycott.

Branches should affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, help build PSC branches and consider twinning with PGFTU-organised public sector workers in Palestine.

Motion 57: Rise of BNP

Branches need to work with Searchlight, Love Music Hate Racism and Unite Against Fascism to establish local networks of activists which should be in place before the next general election - especially in BNP target areas. Consider providing support for initiatives such as school-based Love Music programmes and local gigs.

Look out too for the NEC's detailed guidance to branches on the implementation of the European Court decision in respect of membership admission of racists.

Motion 61: UNISON Commitment to the Environment

Our union has a strong record on the environment, which has included both work place specific activities, such as negotiating green travel plans, cycle to work schemes and recycling facilities, and support for national and international campaigns, such as sustainable transport policies and support for WaterAid.

There's plenty your branch can do:

- Negotiate with your employer(s) to provide clean mains drinking water at work
- Join the campaign for an amendment to the ACAS code of practice, so that trade union environmental reps get facility time;
- Affiliate to campaigning groups such as Greenpeace, Stop Climate Chaos and Friends of the Earth
- Appoint a branch Environment Rep
- Develop E-networks and E-newsletters
- Look out for the NEC's step-by-step guide to greening your workplace - and act on it!

Motion 63: Global Warming

Get your branch to campaign with your employer(s) to undertake a massive programme of installing 'green' technologies in every council home. Call on all public bodies and private employers to undertake carbon audits within workplaces and provide incentives for significant carbon reductions. Write to your councillors and get them on board too.

Motion 76: National Health Service

Payment by Results, Independent Sector Treatment Centres, PFI, and the threat of outsourcing. It's a patchwork privatisation of the NHS. Indeed there is a global trend developing in favour of private health insurance systems. This is being driven by the major private companies that are now finding a foothold in the UK. Branches must

- continue campaigning to highlight the negative consequences for both patients and staff of NHS marketisation and the growing role of the private sector;
- Contribute to local activities of the NHS Together coalition;
- Extend your work with patient groups, voluntary organisations and local campaigns where these are geared up to resisting marketisation initiatives;
- Work with these groups and others to campaign for more effective patient and public involvement in health.
- Remember to oppose Conservative plans for the NHS.
- Make sure you go on the major national demonstration on 3rd November 2007, in London.

Motion 79: Mental Health Legislation

Although the Mental Health Bill has some positive aspects there are concerns that only drug based approaches are being considered rather than a wider range of regulated or combination support therapies.

There will be a campaign for improved public service provision to meet the demands of proposed legislation, including non-drug therapies. The NEC will issue advice to branches so you can address workplace related issues with employers locally

Motion 99: Pensions White Paper and Restoration of the Link

An important motion but one on which mainly national action is required.

Motion 101: Pension Funds and Capital Stewardship - Toward the Citizen Economy

There is growing evidence that good governance of pension funds and active shareholder engagement with companies can improve fund values while simultaneously benefiting employees and society at large. There's a lot to be done but it's largely centred on advice and support for member representatives on pension funds.

Motion 106: Promoting the Gender Equality Duty

There is now a statutory duty on all public authorities to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice on the Gender Duty refers specifically to the involvement of trade unions. Make sure your branch reads the guidance and attends the training on how to participate in the consultation process and make effective use of

the three equalities duties (race, disability and gender) to achieve our equality aims

Motion 107: Northern Ireland Peace Process

Action relates purely to Northern Ireland and the NEC.

Motion 108: Charter for Change for LGBT Equality

Conference welcomes advances in legislation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality but disadvantage and discrimination are still widespread. Branches need to make sure they take part in national campaigns to promote a 'Charter for Change for LGBT Equality', and campaign for a positive duty to promote equality across all strands in a Single Equality Act. Don't forget the opportunity to recruit LGBT members using this campaign

Motion 111: Child Poverty/ Anti Poverty Strategy

The number of children growing up in poverty has fallen by 700,000 since 1997, but if we are to reduce the level of child poverty to half the level of 1998 a further one million children need to be lifted out of poverty. The majority of action is at a national level - developing an anti-poverty strategy, providing sufficient staff resources for organising low paid, agency workers, and carrying out research into the impact of low pay amongst other things.

Motion 112: Definition of Violence Against Women

Domestic violence is a form of gender specific violence. The United Nations acknowledges

the role of violence against women in perpetuating the subordination of women in all societies throughout the globe. Violence against women is a violation of internationally guaranteed human rights. But there is no statutory definition of violence against women or of domestic violence in the UK.

We need the government to adopt the definition of violence against women contained within the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Make sure your branch takes a full part in the campaign to urge the government to enact a statutory definition of violence against women. Order and distribute the leaflet or booklet that will be produced to raise awareness of the issues.

Motion 114: Access to Work

The government's plans for the reform of Incapacity Benefit involve sanctions for non-participation in work-related activity, and privatised programmes where the company has the power to make decisions regarding sanctions. It is surely wrong that private companies should profit, and even receive a share of benefit savings, when people get work through the support of numerous agencies, including the National Health Service, as well as their own efforts. The invaluable support available to disabled workers through the government's Access to Work Scheme could be even better if the scheme was properly funded. The NEC

is to work with the National Disabled Members' Committee to lobby government to increase Access To Work resources, and oppose these plans.

Composite A - Arms Trade

99 UK local authority pension funds invested at least £723 million in the world's eleven largest military-producing companies and the UK's five largest weapons manufacturers. The arms trade has a devastating and destabilising effect worldwide. Companies profit from innocent people's death. Countries with huge development needs divert resources from spending on health and education to buy arms.

There's much to do by our representatives on pension funds and nationally. Your branch should consider affiliating to the Campaign Against the Arms Trade and support its call for the end of arms investments by local authority pension funds. Raise the issue with councillors and canvass amongst UNISON members to change investment policies.

Composite B - Save Our Services

Lymington hospital will be the first NHS hospital to be run entirely by the private sector. Private companies are providing one million diagnostic procedures. NHS Logistics has been privatised; there are budget crises, PFI and Independent Sector Treatment Centres.

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In education, there's greater involvement of the private sector through city academies, PFI and the outsourcing of council education departments. Tuition fees mean many are prevented from choosing the course they wish to follow simply because of the cost.

In social care, local authority care homes are closed. Council tenants face the Hobson's choice of no improvements unless they vote for privatisation. In the civil service it's job cuts all round preparing for privatisation and off-shore provision. The National Probation Service is to be disbanded and replaced by private firms and voluntary organisations.

Privatisation is bad for our members. But it is also a disaster for the quality of

public services and the millions of users that rely on them. A major national campaign involving all of us, other trade unionists and user groups is needed. Get your branch involved. Involve your young members. Get your APF members to keep on raising these issues in Labour Party meetings. Raise awareness of privatisation among UNISON members and make sure you attend any demonstrations.

Composite C - Housing

In many areas home ownership is not an option for many of our members. Even "key worker" housing schemes are becoming unaffordable. There are 1.6 million households on waiting lists for social housing. This number has doubled in the last five years.

We oppose stock transfer, PFI and Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and support the fourth option for direct investment in council housing. Your branch needs to campaign against stock transfer, PFI or ALMOs and join local Defend Council Housing initiatives.

Composite D - Trident

Conference reaffirmed its existing policy opposing the replacement of Trident and calling for the decommissioning of the existing Trident weapons system. You may wish to affiliate your branch to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and publicise the issues to your members.

Composite F - Free Travel Pass

We agreed with the retired members that the proposal to introduce free nationwide bus travel for people over 60 from April 2008 should be extended to include buses, trams, tubes/metros and local ferries, with no restrictive time penalties on travel. Largely lobbying at national level.

Composite G - The Comprehensive Spending Review and Efficiency

The next four years will see budget cuts of 3% each year for public bodies, caps on public

service pay, and billions wasted on PFI. 1.6 million children in Britain are either homeless, trapped in temporary accommodation, or living in overcrowded or unfit housing while profits in the UK services sector have been averaging 18% per annum. We must continue to promote our vision of a fairer and sustainable society, funded by progressive taxation. You need to get involved in spreading the message to our members and the public by education and publicity.

Composite H - Europe

There are many seriously worrying effects stemming from European laws aimed at forcing nations to introduce more 'free-market' competition to all services within the EU, including health, education, postal services and energy. The Directive gives the EU's own European Court of Justice the power to deem which national laws are illegal if foreign and offshore companies do not have total access to service provision markets. Get ready to join campaigns against any EU proposals to open up health and social services to the market and competition. Raise awareness amongst members and the general public about the role of the European Union in relation to public services. ■

Iron Man in Cuba

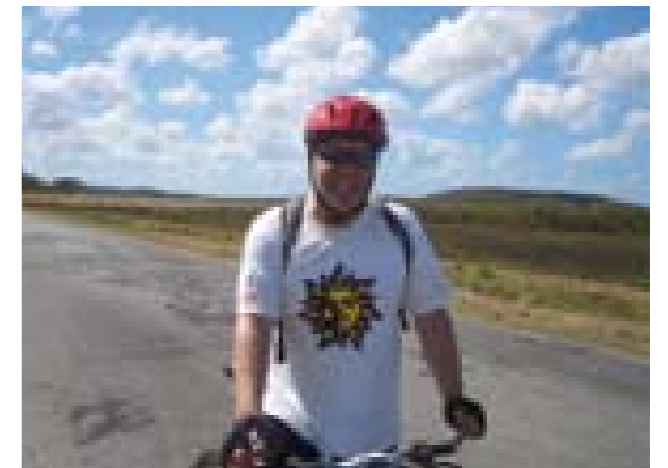
Regional Officer Nigel Flanagan spent a week this year cycling round Cuba on a sponsored bike ride – and made a film out of it!

Like a number of people from UNISON NW, Nigel took part in the 'Cuba Cycle Challenge' with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. This involved cycling 315 kilometres in five days across Cuba, a trek into a rain forest and visits to Cuban polyclinics, schools and the 'Committee for the Defence of the Revolution'. Thousands of pounds were raised by the cyclists for

the Music Fund for Cuba; a programme to provide Cuban school children with many of the instruments and equipment denied to them because of the US economic embargo.

The trip is a fantastic way to learn about Cuba, meet its people and enjoy the beautiful Caribbean scenery. The cyclists were also guests at the May Day parade in Havana, attended by over a million people.

The next trip is running in late April 2008 and will include attendance at the May Day parade. Anyone interested can contact Nigel for further details:



n.flanagan@unison.co.uk

The film 'Iron Man in Cuba' is 20 minutes long and is being shown at 'The Casa' Club in Liverpool on Wednesday November 7th by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. The campaign is using copies of the film to promote the Cycle Challenge. The Director of

Cuba Solidarity, Rob Miller says 'the film shows again the inspiration that Cuba provides'.

Nigel was sponsored by a number of UNISON branches and they will be receiving their own copies. It is being submitted to a number of short film festivals – we wish it well.

The abolition of trans-atlantic slavery

On 10th October 2007 at Manchester Town Hall the North West Black Members' Group will be hosting a one day seminar commemorating the abolition of trans-Atlantic slavery.

Supported by the North West Regional Council, the event will bring together a diverse range of people from across the region and will feature high profile

speakers. There will be an interactive workshop which will drive home the relevance of the existence of the slave trade and the legacy it has left in all our lives today.

Frank Hont, Regional Secretary is urging Branch Secretaries to attend and take part in this thought provoking and passionate educational event. He told us, "UNISON believes in

supporting the work of all its self organised groups. We champion equality for all and are acutely aware of the damage caused by the slave trade and the legacy it has left behind. We know of, and want to acknowledge, the role played by ordinary workers to support the abolition. It is vital that we mark this historic event to educate ourselves and to show all UNISON members



in the region how much we value the diversity in our communities and the experiences of our members."



Unitary Councils Update

Cheshire to be split?

As we have said in previous newsletters, the government is promoting the idea of unitary authorities wherever possible. Although the bid by Cumbria County Council to become a unitary authority, which would have extinguished six districts, has been turned down, it is still the case that there could be two new unitary authorities in what is currently Cheshire. In other words, Cheshire County could disappear and East and West Cheshire would replace both it and the six current districts.

Because of government indecision we still do not know the final structure for Cheshire even though it will be necessary, if the unitary plan goes ahead, for full scale government local elections to the new bodies next May. So the regional office is ensuring that all seven branches in Cheshire are fully supported through this extremely difficult time.

We are conscious that if you are not involved in the unitary exercise, you may feel that it is not top of your agenda, but for those involved it is an extremely challenging and traumatic time.



700 members at Manchester Mental Health & Social Care Trust have taken official strike action in protest at the continuing suspension of UNISON branch chair and UNISON national Health Service Executive member, Karen Reissmann.

Karen, a community psychiatric nurse in Manchester for 25 years, has been suspended for over thirteen weeks. The charges relate to her trade union activity and speaking out against outsourcing of services and local cuts.

UNISON believes this is an attack on the union and an attempt to prevent Karen from speaking out. Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust has to make over £3million more cuts this year - cuts we will vigorously oppose.

We believe attempts to discipline Karen are an

attempt to intimidate other stewards from speaking out against the cutbacks. The chief executive of the Trust has already said that she wants an end to bad news stories. But in the few months she has been here, she has closed a ward for the elderly, and, at an hour's notice, closed a respite centre. It is these sorts of decisions which produce the bad news stories - not the actions of our branch chair.

The strike covered all in-patient, hospital and community psychiatric services across the City of Manchester. Nurses, administration workers and occupational therapists all took action.

The action followed a massive public meeting of over 300 supporters on 25th July, and a major march and rally in Piccadilly Gardens in August. The employers' disregard for patient care in spending thousands

to manage the strike has come under heavy fire as have management decisions including the sending of patients to the North East. A further public rally on 9th September 2007 in Manchester's Peace Gardens was also well attended.

At the time of writing, every effort is being made to bring this dispute to a successful conclusion. We will continue to vigorously defend our representatives' right to speak out without fear of persecution.

If your branch would like to make a donation to the strike hardship fund, please send cheques, made payable to "Manchester Community and Mental Health UNISON", to the Union Office, Chorlton House, 70 Manchester Rd, Manchester M21 9UN

The trouble with the law...

Race discrimination claims are among the least likely of all discrimination claims to succeed at employment tribunals. Astonishingly, last year just 3% of claims were successful. This is particularly shocking given that black workers are still more likely to face disciplinary penalties than white workers and, regardless of their qualifications or experience, tend to be lower paid and more junior than their white counterparts.

Race discrimination may be more subtle than it once was, but it is still real for many black people. And it is this subtlety that makes claims difficult to win at tribunal. Employers will go to great lengths to cover up and to justify discriminatory practices or actions, making it difficult for the claimant to prove their conviction about the real motivation behind them. Low success rates however do not deter

UNISON and its lawyers from pursuing race discrimination claims which have a reasonable prospect of success. But a strategy of simply taking cases to court will not on its own eradicate racism from the work place. In any case black workers want respect at work, not compensation for a lack of it. So unions and lawyers need to work in an industrial context to fight racism rather than relying on an inadequate legal system.

There are many examples of cases pursued by UNISON North West region and Thompsons Solicitors in the last year which illustrate both the difficulties in pursuing claims, but also how good outcomes are being achieved for members.

A member employed by Manchester Primary Care Trust was awarded over £50,000 in compensation for loss of earnings, injury to feelings and aggravated damages. As part of a reorganisation her post was scrapped and she was effectively downgraded whilst a new manager's post was given to a white male. Although the employer argued that the white male had been working at a



more strategic level than our member, the Tribunal found that it was she who had been carrying out the strategic work whereas the white male's role was essentially non-strategic.

In a case that was settled at the door of the tribunal, the non-disclosure of criminal records was used as a justification for dismissing a black part-time youth worker. The member had convictions but these were for crimes committed up to 15 years earlier and were all spent. The member faced a disciplinary hearing and was dismissed. And yet a white youth worker with similar convictions kept his job.

UNISON and Thompsons brought claims of unfair dismissal and race

discrimination, helped by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders which said the dismissal in such circumstances was inappropriate. But the employer argued that the circumstances of the white comparator were different because he had made a full and frank disclosure about his previous criminal record, whereas the claimant had not.

This justification was not tested because the claim settled before the hearing, but it demonstrates how employers have a wealth of explanations and excuses at their disposal which make pursuing and winning race discrimination claims so difficult.

UNISON member runner-up in national awards

Allan Howard, a UNISON member from Blackpool Victoria Hospital is the runner-up in the North West Adult Learners' Week Awards 2007.

Allan, a domestic storeman, received the 'Skills for Life in Health and Social Care Award 2007'. He has worked at the hospital for over three years and beat over 80 entries to receive the award.

A senior officer of NHS North West, Gaye Jackson, visited the hospital to congratulate him on his achievement.

Allan, left school with no qualifications but has now completed courses

in English, maths and computing. He completed these qualifications through the Learning Suite at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

Allan said "I really enjoyed doing the courses – it is completely different to being at school."

He enjoyed doing the courses so much that he has decided that he now wants to do Level 2 in Maths, which he started in September. Allan will also become a Learning rep to help other members in his department.

Adult Learners' Week is a celebration of learning, which promotes education and training for adults. It is a national award with regional winners.

Carol Molyneux, Assistant Director of

Hotel Services at the hospital, said: "I would like to personally congratulate Allan. This is a great achievement. He has grasped an opportunity and used it to develop his skills."

Susan Shore, a Health Care Assistant at the hospital and student at the University of Central Lancashire, also received a certificate of nomination.

The Learning Project is an excellent example of how UNISON can work with employers to help staff gain new skills. Over 800 staff at the Trust have attended courses

through the Learning Suite since it opened in 2004. A wide variety of courses is available to staff, including basic literacy, basic numeracy, NVQs and a range of leisure courses.



Gaye Jackson of NHS North West presenting Allan Howard with his certificate.

Reading this but not a member?

It's easy to join the North West's brightest and best public service trade union. Phone 0161 211 1000 (Membership Services) or 0845 355 0845 (UNISON Direct) for details and an application form.

Thanks this issue to:

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If you've got anything to say, then write to us, C/o Stephen Booth at the Regional Centre, UNISON North West, Arena Point, 1 Hunts Bank, Manchester, M3 1UN or E-mail him at s.booth@unison.co.uk

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