Save our NHS

UNISON members head to Manchester

On September 29 UNISON members from across the country will gather for a mass demonstration at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester.

We are mobilising our members for a rally which coincides with the 65th anniversary of the founding of the NHS.

Tony Pearson, UNISON’s Regional Manager for Health, said: “The NHS has never been under greater threat from privatisation than it is now.

“Private Health Care companies are already embedded in the service and the Government is determined to privatisate more and more services.

“It is an ideological attack on the very principle of health care free at the point of use and if they are allowed to pursue this disastrous policy without serious and organised opposition it will destroy the NHS.

We need as many members as possible to support the rally and show that we will not meekly stand by while our cherished health service is sold off to enrich greedy private companies.”

UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis has announced that the event is our main priority to send a powerful message to the Government and the wider public that the Health and Social Care Act is destroying the NHS.

Rally for the NHS: 29 September 2013

DEFEND THE NHS

Lobby of the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester on 29 September. Gear up and mobilise now to make sure our voice is heard.

Continued on page 2 .....
Branch Secretary, Brian Mulvey said private companies want to “cherry pick” potentially profitable services and leave behind the most expensive and difficult medical procedures in an increasingly under-funded service.

Brian added: “The relentless publicity around NHS failures is being used to denigrate the NHS by “suggesting” that privatisation is the only solution.

“The fact that many of these problems are the direct result of Government cuts and privatisation is carefully air-brushed from the true picture.

“This is a massive and sustained attack on the very foundation of the welfare state which has saved and enhanced millions of lives in the last 65 years.

“UNISON and our colleagues in the TUC, are leading the fight against a policy which no-one voted for. This Government has no democratic mandate to privatise the NHS and we will do everything in our power to stop them.”

Come and march with Leeds UNISON to save the NHS on:-

Sunday 29 September 2013
March and Rally
Manchester

Assemble Liverpool Road, Manchester from 11am.
Rally in Whitworth Park.

UNISON, UNITE, GMB and the TUC have called for a national protest at the Tory Party Conference in Manchester at the end of September. All UNISON members are urged to attend. Leeds UNISON and the TUC are committed to provide free coaches to this event.

Phone the Leeds UNISON branch, or email, to book your place. Or tell your steward. Telephone (0113) 245 8442 from 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday or email branch@leedsunison.org.uk.
Government cuts to Council funding will be even more savage than expected

A staggering £150 million has already been slashed from Leeds City Council’s budget – with 2,000 jobs disappearing since 2010.

The Local Authority had been told there would be annual cuts in national funding of 10 per cent each year up to at least 2016.

Leeds City Council had done their budget planning on this basis but have now calculated that the real cut in funding in 2015/16 will be 14.7 per cent.

This means over the next two years government funding for Leeds will fall by around £82m. When that is added to the cuts already made since 2010 it gives a total figure of £200m.

This is a reduction in funding of nearly 40% since 2010.

This will have a devastating effect on the people of Leeds who both provide and depend on essential services, especially UNISON members in the city.

Leeds Local Government Assistant Branch Secretary Martyn Walker said: “These proposed cuts are even more savage than we expected and the Council has said that it will cease to be the conventional service provider if they are implemented.

“George Osborne said in 2010 that his disastrous “austerity” programme would mean there would be no need for further cuts in the near future. This was clearly untrue.

“The cuts will continue and so will the negative effects on economic growth – systematically widening the vast differences between the wealthy and the rest of us.”

The Council has already warned UNISON that continuing cuts inflicted on jobs and services by the Con-Dem Government will have to be found by a number of methods including further staff reductions, reviews of employment terms and conditions and reviews of some of the services it provides.

And the Council has already issued another ‘section 188’ redundancy notice which effectively places all staff under threat of redundancy.

Martyn said: “We will have to redouble our efforts to ward off compulsory redundancies and further attacks on pay and conditions.

“We need to recruit more members so we are strong enough to stand and fight against the Government’s ideological war on public sector jobs and services.”

Please make sure your friends and colleagues are aware of the importance of being a UNISON member. Jobs and services have never been under greater threat and we must urgently build our power and influence.

UNISON membership forms are available from the Branch Office telephone

(0113) 245 8442

Or complete the ‘Recruit a friend’ form on the back
“Social Enterprise” plan for Learning Disability is an expensive mistake

Leeds City Council is considering setting up a social enterprise to provide community support services for people with Learning Disabilities.

But UNISON has produced a report which says the scheme will actually increase the cost of the service without any improvements being made.

UNISON National Officer Peter Challis’s research revealed that the social enterprise model will attract costs that do not arise from the Council.

These include:

- Higher employer pension contribution - up 3.4 per cent to 17.9 per cent, adding £370,000 to the total costs in 2014/5 rising to £385,000 in 2018/9

- Bond – the social enterprise would be required to provide a bond of £1.2 million in respect of the existing pension deficit attributable to transferring staff

- Higher borrowing costs – the financial plan assumes the development of two ten-bed facilities. The financing costs will be higher than those that can be secured by the Local Authority.

The report points out that the cost of support services are part of the central costs of running the Local Authority.

They do not disappear if a social enterprise is established – they will simply be allocated to other parts of the Council.

They may represent a saving to the social enterprise but they remain a cost to the Council.

UNISON Branch Convenor Leon Kirkham said: “The report quotes the Milton Friedman phrase ‘There is no such thing as a free lunch’ and is very clear that the social enterprise will cost Council Tax payers much more than at present.

We believe it would be an expensive mistake.

“The report is UNISON’s contribution to the debate about this issue and we have made it available to politicians and council officers.

“It is in nobody’s interests to set something up which will cost more to run than at present.

“We are discussing this issue with the Council and hope our report helps them to assess the potential cost of the proposed changes - and to make the right decision for the service and for the people of Leeds who rely on it.”
UNISON challenges Education Secretary to see work of Teaching Assistants

Brenda Russell, one of the Branch’s Schools Convenors, is angry about Government threats to abolish Teaching Assistants altogether in another bid to slash education funding.

Brenda said: “I have challenged him to come here and see how hard these highly qualified staff work and how beneficial they are to schools.

“We hope our members are not under direct threat but some of the comments that have been made at Government level suggest they may be a target.

“We have 2,500 members in schools and they dedicate themselves to improving the education of our children. I think Mr Gove and his advisors haven’t got a clue about how important these posts are.

“Watching them at work even for just one day would make it clear to them that Teaching Assistants are an indispensable part of the schools system.”

Representing members working in Academies

UNISON Convenors are currently unable to represent members in Academies until after 4 p.m.

This situation has come about because Academies are not buying in to the “Facilities Agreement” that operates throughout the Council.

Schools Convenor, Brenda Russell said: “When schools were part of the Authority, they were covered by a Facility Agreement that allows Convenors to visit workplaces in normal working hours.

Now that Academies are separated, the Authority won’t allow this to happen unless the Academies buy in to the scheme. Disappointingly, the Academies are currently refusing to do this.

“The Government seems to have targeted Leeds for the Academies experiment which has included some “forced” Academies and we have more than many other local authorities.

“And if they do not allow us to represent members during school hours then members suffer and it could cause needless problems further down the line which benefit no-one.

“We are in negotiations with the Academies to change their outlook on facility time and I know the Council is doing what it can to convince them that it is far better for everyone to accept arrangements for facility time and proper representation of members.”
One of the government’s earliest policy announcements was its programme of ‘welfare reform’.

Overall they aim to cut around £20 billion a year by 2017/18, making major changes to our social security system.

And 2013 is an important year...

In April, Council Tax Benefit - means tested help for people on lower incomes both in and out of work - was abolished. The Government handed a 10% budget cut to Local Authorities to set up local schemes. The result?

Thousands of people cannot afford to pay, Councils are chasing debts through the Courts and adding court fees, which can be more than the debt owed.

April 2013 also brought us the ‘Bedroom Tax’, a cut to Housing Benefit (HB). HB helps people both in and out of work with their rent – more people in work than out of work receive HB.

Since April 2013, if people under pension age rent their home from the Council or a Housing Association and have more bedrooms than the Government thinks they need, their HB is cut by 14% or by 25%.

The result?

A shortfall between the rent and HB, with many people sliding into rent arrears. If everyone affected by the bedroom tax decided to downsize, there would simply not be enough smaller homes available.

If you are affected, contact the Council to ask about a Discretionary Housing Payment.

In August and September, the Benefit Cap will be introduced.

This limits the total amount of benefits paid to out-of-work, working age households to £350pw (for single people) or £500pw (for couples & lone parents).

There are some important exemptions but where it applies, it will work like this: if your total benefit entitlement is more than £350/£500pw, the amount actually paid is capped at the limit by reducing your HB. For example, if a family’s total benefit entitlement is £575pw, their HB will be cut by £75 per week.

This is a popular policy - after all, many people in full time work don’t get £500 per week - so it’s important to understand that outside of the south east, people only qualify for £500+ per week because they have a lot of children to feed (not because of high rents).

For example, in Bradford the benefit cap’s cuts to HB will mean over 400 families with four or more children quickly fall into rent arrears, unless they can find somewhere cheaper to live or get extra income.

You might support using social security policy as a ‘birth control’ method but it seems harsh to apply it retrospectively to children who have already been born.

In 2013 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) begins to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for disabled people of working age.

DLA is a non-means tested benefit and entitlement is not based on capacity for work.

The rules for PIP are very different from DLA so it is hard to know how each individual will be affected. But overall the Government estimates spending cuts of around 20%.

The mobility test has been changed, meaning many disabled people will lose their Motability vehicles and be unable to leave their homes.

Atos, the controversial private health care company that carries out Work Capability Assessments, has been awarded the contract to assess PIP claims. PIP replaced DLA for new claims from June 2013, and DLA renewals will become claims for PIP from October.

Many people with longer term DLA awards will not be re-assessed until after October 2015.

The biggest change of all is Universal Credit (UC). This will replace all means tested benefits and tax credits for people of working age, both in and out of work, by 2017.

Or will it? After a small scale pilot, UC was meant to go national in October but the Government has announced a much reduced roll-out. From October, UC will only replace new Jobseekers Allowance claims for single unemployed people in just 10 Local Authority areas.
There are plenty of rumours about UC’s IT system not being ready, which might explain why it is not very ‘universal’ – at least not yet.

Assuming it does go ahead, UC will replace: Income Support (IS), income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), income-based Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Housing Benefit (HB), Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC).

It will generally be available to the same groups of people in the same circumstances as the current means tested benefits and tax credits.

That means lower paid people who currently receive Working Tax Credit or HB will in future have to convince the Job centre that they are looking for more hours or better paid work - or face being sanctioned.

UC will also extend the jobsearch requirements and sanctions to the partners of UC claimants.

These aspects of UC have had little attention but will have a big impact on millions of lower paid workers.

Perhaps even more controversial are the plans for claiming and paying UC.

Most people will be required to claim UC online, to report all their changes of circumstances online and to receive all communication about their UC awards by email.

UC will usually be paid monthly in arrears, into one single bank account for the whole household. For most, this single monthly payment will include ‘Housing Benefit’, which will no longer be paid direct to the landlord.

These are big changes and many observers foresee problems.

Lots of people on lower incomes do not have computers or internet access.

Currently different benefits are paid at different times of the month and HB is generally paid direct to social landlords – all this helps people to budget on a low income.

And different benefits are often paid into separate bank accounts, meaning that (stereotypically) men and women in couples each have access to at least some income.

We await further news about the national implementation of UC, which is unlikely to happen until 2015. And there is an election in May that year. So maybe things will be different...

Online information:

UNISON has produced a number of excellent briefings on welfare reform and how it may impact on UNISON members. See the UNISON website Welfare Section at http://www.unison.org.uk/for-activists/help-and-advice/communicating/online-catalogue/

Local welfare rights advice services: you can find details online about quality assured community advice services in Leeds and Bradford.

For Leeds, go to:

http://www.adviceleeds.org.uk/localadviceserv.htm

and for Bradford, go to:

http://www.antp.org.uk/advicecentres.htm
Protecting jobs is priority as ALMOs come back in-house

Glen Pickersgill
ALMOs Convenor

UNISON is in talks with the Council about the impact of the housing “ALMOs” coming back to the Local Authority.

ALMOs (Arm’s Length Management Organisations) were set up a number of years ago and involved the Council transferring housing management to not-for-profit companies.

Branch Convenor Glen Pickersgill said “UNISON argued from the outset that these services should have remained under the direct control of the Local Authority.

“Whilst we welcome their return to the Authority, we can only regard the initial transfer as an expensive and unnecessary experiment.”

The ALMOs involved are Leeds West North West, East North East and Aire Valley Homes.

Glen added: “Now that the ALMO’s are returning, it is possible that there will be a re-structure – and that could mean redundancies.

“Members can rest assured that our priority is to protect jobs, pay and conditions.

“But I would urge anyone who has not already done so to join UNISON as soon as possible.

“We are strongest and most effective when we have high rates of membership so we can have a real influence on decisions which affect jobs and working conditions.”

Glen has identified other issues that need attention as the way capability and disciplinary procedures are carried out – as well as combating bullying and sickness due to stress.

In some instances workloads have increased by 20 per cent and the resulting stress and sickness caused by draconian targets is making the situation even worse.

Glen is negotiating ways to avoid formal hearings by having better management practices, with early interventions when problems become apparent.

Glen said: “In the ALMOs and Street Cleansing we have a dedicated and hard working team of stewards who are the backbone of the union.

“I am very grateful to them for their excellent work on behalf of members.

“What we need is more members and more activists and I know our stewards are doing all they can to spread the word about how important it is for everyone employed by the Council to join us.”

If you want to join UNISON, or if you already have and want to become a steward, please contact the Branch on 0113 245 8442
You might not know this but your boss is probably monitoring all your correspondence on social networking sites like Twitter and You Tube.

And if they believe you are in breach of contract for what you write about your bosses or colleagues, they will not hesitate to take action, up to and including sacking you.

Across the country UNISON is collecting more and more evidence of members being sacked for holding forth with their opinions on the net.

Employers are scanning social media sites, e-mails and blogs to find reasons to shed staff as the Con-Dem Government pursues “austerity” solutions to the continuing economic disaster they are creating.

Leeds Assistant Branch Secretary Martyn Walker said: “Social media is part of modern communications and of course it can be a very effective way for UNISON to get its messages out far and wide.

“The Leeds Branch is looking at ways to use these sites more effectively to reach more members and potential members.”
A word from the Branch Secretary

Despite the appalling damage being done to our public services by this Tory-led government, UNISON is standing firm to protect our members.

As you will read in this magazine, we are all under relentless attack from a Government, hell-bent on destroying our most treasured public services.

Our NHS has never been under greater threat from private companies. They are lining up to exploit the NHS for vast profits.

But we are not standing by and doing nothing, as the politicians hope we will.

On September 29th, UNISON together with our colleagues from other unions and the TUC will stage a demonstration and rally at the Tory Party Conference in Manchester.

We will be sending out a clear message to the Government and the wider public that we will do everything in our power to oppose this attack on the very ethos of public services for all, in a fair and democratically accountable society.

I am proud to say that our Stewards and Convenors are at the heart of dealing with issues which directly affect our members’ jobs, working conditions and the essential services they provide in this city every day of their lives.

We will not give up our historic role as the guardians of fairness for working people and champions of social justice.

But we need everyone in the Branch to help us recruit new members and, crucially, new stewards, so that we keep our strength and influence, to protect jobs and services.

Please try to recruit a friend or colleague who has not yet realised how important it is to be in UNISON, and if you are already a member, why not step up and get active. The Branch will give you all the training and support you need to do the job.

Because, the Tory lie that we are all in this together is being exposed every day.

It is our members and our communities who are all in this together. Let’s make sure the Government doesn’t forget that fact.

Brian Mulvey
Leeds Branch Secretary

We will not give up our historic role as the guardians of fairness for working people and champions of social justice.

Hope to see you on September 29th
RECRUIT A FRIEND IS BACK!

If you recruit a new Leeds UNISON member before the end of November 2013, using the form on the back page, you can receive a payment of £10*. There is no upper limit to the number of new members you can recruit.

Please ask your colleagues if they would like to join – it would help to make a bigger and better union. We want to recruit more members to strengthen the branch membership which helps increase democracy and makes our voice stronger.

Having a strong voice means that UNISON is more likely to achieve the things that matter to you.

Please try to recruit at least one colleague to help us achieve our aim of doubling the branch membership. More “Recruit a Friend” membership forms are available from the UNISON Branch Office, telephone (0113) 245 8442.

Completed application forms should be returned to the branch office using the Freepost address:

Freepost Plus RSLE-HLJZ-UYKE,
Leeds UNISON, Geoff Hodgson House,
160a Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, LS2 9EN

* The recruiter’s details must be included at the time of the branch receiving the membership form and the new member must be eligible for Leeds UNISON branch membership to qualify for the offer.

Crown Green Bowling

The UNISON Bowling Team consists of UNISON members from several different Council Departments, and the team is continuing to maintain a steady position in Division 3 of the Leeds and District Crown Green Bowling Association Tuesday Evening League.

There are also a number of Retired Members playing for the team.

The Inter-Departmental League Competition is now in its 40th year, and still going strong. During the course of this 40 year period there have been teams from most Council Departments taking part in the League.

Matches are played at Woodhouse Moor Park on midweek evenings (usually Tuesdays and Wednesdays) after work, and each team consists of 4 players.

If you are interested in playing or forming a team please contact Doug Taylor on Telephone number: (0113) 268 7611 for further information.

UNISON Scale of Subscriptions

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Affiliated Political Fund (APF)
UNISON’s APF is used to campaign for and promote UNISON policy and the need for quality public services within the Labour Party, locally and nationally, in Parliament and Europe. UNISON APF affiliates to the Labour Party.

General Political Fund (GPF)
UNISON’s GPF is used to pay for campaigning at Branch, Regional and National levels of the union and for research and lobbying in Parliament and Europe. It is independent of support for any political party.
I apply to join UNISON and agree to pay the subscription and political fund contribution, to comply with rules and constitution, and to do nothing harmful to UNISON or its members.

### Your Details

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### Other Details

If you are currently a member of another union or have been a member of a trade union before (including previous UNISON membership), please state which union and reason for leaving:

If you have an existing problem for which you may need UNISON assistance, please give brief details (attach separate sheet if necessary):

### Authorisation for Deduction of Subscription and Political Fund

I hereby authorise deduction of UNISON subscriptions from my salary at the rate determined by UNISON to be paid over to them on my behalf. This supercedes any other authorisation to deduct union subscriptions. I authorise deduction of the following Political Fund Payment as part of my subscription. If no fund is indicated you will be allocated to the GPF:

- Affiliated Political Fund (APF):
  - Subscription includes 6.5% contribution to this fund (see over) [ ]

- General Political Fund (GPF):
  - Subscription includes 3% contribution to this fund (see over) [ ]

### Signature: Date:

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