Welcome

By Jenny Underhill

Hello all, and welcome back after the Christmas break! I hope it was restful, and that those who were at work over the close-down keeping essential services running found time to relax.

In this newsletter you’ll find introductions from some of our new committee members, alongside lots of useful information. I’d especially like to draw your attention to the information on the AGM – to which all members are invited and encouraged to attend. This year we will be running drop-in sessions for people who are considering taking a more active role in UNISON – please do come along to these and talk to our current committee about what the different roles involve. Whether you’re looking for something low-commitment such as workplace rep, or you’re interested in a larger role, we’ll be able to talk it over with you.

As always, if you have any comments, questions or concerns please do get in touch.

Welcome to our new Executive Committee members

Kayonda Hubert Ngamaba, Steward

My first experience with UNISON started after being invited by a friend to attend a conference. As soon as I met the other UNISON members and listened to their stories, I discovered what they stand for, which are values very close to my heart. This is why I will be involved at the University of York Branch. Listening to the different members’ views on many issues, such as equality and working as a team to support those in need will be one of my humble contributions. I am Doctor in Psychology and have a background in health psychology and mental health research. Prior to joining the University of York, I worked for the NHS (Greater Manchester Mental Health) and the University of Manchester. I am currently working as a Research Associate within a team in the Social Policy and Social Work Department to evaluate social interventions within Community Mental Health Team.
Annette Johnson, Education Co-ordinator and Union Learning Rep

I decided to become a Learning/Education Rep for UNISON to give something back. UNISON currently offer education bursaries for members for Level 1, 2 and 3 courses. I have been lucky enough to benefit from these and have recently started my second year of Italian for beginners.

I really enjoy being on the committee with like-minded people who want to help others.

If you are thinking of doing any courses, take a look at York Learning: [https://www.yortime.org.uk/yortime_home/default.aspx](https://www.yortime.org.uk/yortime_home/default.aspx).

Courses are open to members with at least 4 weeks’ membership.

Branch AGM – 28 March 2018, H/G21, 1–2 pm

You are warmly invited to the Branch Annual General Meeting, on Wednesday 28 March 2018, at 1–2 pm in H/G21 (lunch will be provided). The Annual General Meeting will elect your Branch Officers, Representatives and ratify the election of Workplace Stewards for the forthcoming year.

If you wish to submit a motion for consideration, send it to unison@york.ac.uk with the name of the Proposer and Seconder by no later than **Tuesday 27 February 2018**.

If you wish to stand for a position in the Branch, please ensure that your nomination form is received by the Branch at unison@york.ac.uk, or posted to Jenny Underhill, Branch Secretary, Constantine College, by no later than **Wednesday 7 February 2018**.

**AGM drop-in information session, SLB/003, Wednesday 24 January 2018**

If you would like to find out more about standing for a position, the Branch is holding a drop-in session on Wednesday 24 January 2018 in Spring Lane Building, SLB/003. No need to book an appointment – just drop in between 12 noon – 2 pm. We look forward to seeing you there!

Branch positions include:

- **Branch Secretary**: is the point of contact for UNISON Leeds, oversees role of Officers and Reps, participates in HR negotiations, policies and collective communications
- **Branch Chair**: presides at all meetings of Branch and Committee, ensure business is properly conducted, works closely with the Secretary to provide leadership in the Branch
- **Treasurer**: conducts the Branch’s financial business, keeps accounts in accordance with the rules, advises Branch Officers and committee on financial management
- **Education Co-ordinator**: liaises with our partner York Learning and other providers in York
- **Equality Co-ordinator**: leads and co-ordinates the Branch’s equality work, supports training and development of other union representatives
- **Health and Safety Officer**: increases awareness of health and safety issues in the Branch, involved in negotiations with employers on health and safety matters
- **Communications Officer**: creates newsletters, updates social media and website
- **Membership Officer:** maps the Branch’s membership, monitors recruitment and leavers rates, makes recommendations to the committee on recruitment activities and targets.

- **International Officer:** liaises with University of York socs and groups and promotes membership within international staff and working-students.

- **Young Members’ Officer:** recruits new members, encourages existing young members to become active in the Branch, raises Young Members’ concerns to the committee.

- **Labour Link Officer:** a paid up member of the Labour Party, attends regional Labour Link meetings.

- **Welfare Officer:** provides Committee with up-to-date information on "There For You" services, ensures those seeking welfare assistance receive a prompt response.

- **Retired Members Officer:** a retired member who would like to be more involved and promote a community within our retired members section.

- **Union Learning Rep:** liaises with UNISON Leeds and Northern College to promote union training for members and reps/officers.

- **Stewards:** we welcome any interest in members becoming stewards for your area/department.

- **Workplace Reps:** point of contact for members, add information to noticeboards, bring feedback to Committee from members.

Another way to get involved is to join a Self Organised Group (SOG). Self-organisation brings together members from certain under-represented groups – women members, black members, disabled members and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members. To find out more, call in at the AGM drop-in session or see the [UNISON Yorkshire and Humberside webpage](https://www.york.ac.uk/unison/yorkshire-humberside/).

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### Education bursaries available

The branch is continuing to offer its education initiative this academic year by offering bursaries for all kinds of courses, covering education, training and well-being. What are you waiting for? Bursaries are available for most courses offered by York Learning, Languages for All or another training provider in the York area, such as York College.

All Level 1 / Introductory level and recreational courses up to £125 pounds will be paid for on a first come first served basis. We have 15 bursaries available.

All you have to do is look through the York Learning brochure: [https://www.yortime.org.uk/yortime_home/default.aspx](https://www.yortime.org.uk/yortime_home/default.aspx), or find them on: Facebook - York Learning. Choose your course, pick up the phone and call an advisor on 01904 552806. Quote your membership number and complete the form with the advisor.

In addition, we also have 3 bursaries of up to £250 for Level 2 / Intermediate Level courses, and 2 bursaries of up to £350 for Level 3 / Advanced Level courses, paid in full on a first come first served basis. To apply for these, contact: unison@york.ac.uk and we will send you a form to complete.

**Please note:** you cannot apply for more than one course per term and all courses are offered subject to funding. First come first served basis. Reviewed termly. You have to be a member for a minimum of 4 weeks to qualify.

Please DO NOT pay for any course before checking funding is available at the branch and your application for Level 2 and 3 has been approved.
UNISON members’ training courses

There are many members’ training courses offered by UNISON in 2018 – a short selection is listed below. To find out more about the courses available, visit: http://www.unison-yorks.org.uk/education.html

Mental Health Awareness Workshop (UNISON and the Open University)
Description: The session aims to understand the main mental health problems that people face, to be able to take a revised awareness to the workplace.
Monday 5 March 2018 closing date to apply: Friday 2 February 2018
Friday 8 October 2018 closing date to apply: Monday 3 September 2018
Venue: UNISON Regional Centre, Commerce House, Leeds

Dementia Workshop (UNISON and the Open University)
Description: A short workshop run by The Open University providing an introduction on Dementia Care.
Friday 9 March 2018 closing date to apply: Friday 9 February 2018
Friday 17 September 2018 closing date to apply: Wednesday 15 August 2018
Venue: UNISON Regional Centre, Commerce House, Leeds

Autism Awareness (UNISON and the Open University)
Description: This session is intended to be a general introduction to autism, with some guidance given.
Tuesday 31 July 2018 closing date to apply: Friday 29 June 2018
Venue: UNISON Regional Centre, Commerce House, Leeds

Confidence Building (Power To Be You)
Description: Would you like to feel confident, or come across as more confident? This one-day workshop will help you take positive steps to improve your self-confidence.
Friday 16 March 2018 closing date to apply: Friday 16 February 2018
Monday 9 July 2018 closing date to apply: Friday 8 June 2018
Monday 10 September 2018 closing date to apply: Friday 10 August 2018
Venue: UNISON Regional Centre, Commerce House, Leeds

Pre-Retirement Workshop
Description: This workshop run by True Bearing Chartered will make you aware of your choices and aid you in your decision making. Is this workshop for me? If you are retiring imminently or considering retiring within the next 18 months and want to be informed of the issues affecting your retirement you need to plan for your next phase of life.
Wednesday 3 October 2018 closing date to apply: Monday 3 September 2018
Friday 7 December 2018 closing date to apply: Monday 5 November 2018
Venue: UNISON Regional Centre, Commerce House, Leeds

Courses for Women in UNISON

Building Confidence In Women (7–8 July 2018)
This course is open to women members who want to increase their confidence.
Women’s Assertiveness (23–24 June or 27–28 October 2018)
Covering: assertive skills, dealing with anger, body language, making/refusing requests, learning to say no, constructive criticism. **Members would benefit completing the Building Confidence in Women’s Course first.**

Both the Building Confidence in Women and Women’s Assertiveness courses involve a 1 night residential at the Novotel Hotel, Leeds.

Pathways into UNISON (15–16 September 2018)
‘Pathways’ has been designed for women in UNISON who are interested in knowing more about the union. This course involves a 1 night residential at Northern College, Barnsley.

To apply for these courses:
download and complete a non-residential application form from the UNISON Education webpages, and send to Branch for authorisation at: unison@york.ac.uk

Forthcoming drop-in sessions
The UNISON Branch office is Wentworth, W/022. The Branch regularly runs drop-in clinics for all your work related questions and requests. The next clinics will take place:

- **Wednesday 24 January 2018**
- **Wednesday 21 February 2018**
- **Thursday 1 March 2018**
- **Thursday 15 March 2018**

Bookable appointments are available from 12 noon to 1 pm, and drop-in times from 1 pm – 2 pm. Book an appointment by emailing: unison@york.ac.uk

Mental health issues affecting an ageing workforce

*Although the term ‘ageing workforce’ is often used, of course in reality we are all ageing. UNISON Senior National Officer Donna Rowe-Merriman has shared this circular for employers to consider the impact of an ageing workforce. If you feel you may have been affected by any of the points made in Donna’s report, you may wish make an appointment or call in to the drop-in session and speak to a regional adviser.*

The average age of the British working population is rising with people living (and working) for longer. It is estimated that by 2050 the average age of UK employees will have risen to 44, from the current level of 40. The population aged under 45 will rise by 2.7 million, and those over 45 will rise by nearly 8 million. Throughout our working lives our bodies undergo changes as we grow older. Employers need to take these changes into account when they manage the health and safety of their staff.

The impact in the workplace
Addressing issues related to an ageing workforce is unfortunately not currently at the top of employer’s agenda. The CIPD’s 2014 ‘Managing an Age Diverse Workforce’ found that only a fifth of respondents either had some kind of age strategy agreed at board level or were developing a business case for such a strategy.
How does our age affect the work we can do?

As we grow older, our bodies and our brains undergo changes and in many cases these are not significant. However, in other cases, the worker may require additional training or adjustments to the work. Managing these changes is part of the employer’s duty to manage the health and safety of the worker, according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and assessments should be made routinely, rather than just when an employee reaches a certain age.

Issues that may arise from mental health problems affecting an ageing workforce can include:

**Sickness absence:** According to the TUC overall there is no evidence that older workers take more time off sick, indeed there is evidence that older workers are less likely to have frequent short term absences from work. However, older workers are more likely to suffer from chronic health problems involving long periods of absence. According to the TUC, 40-45% of workers between 50 and state pension age are likely to suffer from a health problem over a 12 month period, and poor health is the most common reason for leaving a job. Sickness absence policies should ensure compliance with any condition that could be classed as a disability and reasonable adjustments put in place to support an employee. If health problems are caused by a disability, such absence should be managed separately from other sickness absence.

**Stress:** Employers must manage and minimise stress in the workplace regardless of the age of their workforce. The HSE states that work related stress develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. In order to minimise stress, employers should consider a number of measures. These may include adjusting the demands of the job to the skills and capability of the older worker. They may also include other measures such as giving older workers greater control over their working lives, such as family friendly and flexible shift patterns, which assist workers in balancing the demands of their job with commitments outside work such as having caring responsibilities for younger or older relatives.

For more information on these issues, read the UNISON guide [The Ageing Workforce](#), or contact the Branch for support.

### UNISON There for You – Winter Fuel Grants 2017/18

Worried about paying your winter fuel bill? You could get help staying warm this winter. With rising fuel costs and another cold winter many members are worried about how they’re going to pay this year’s winter fuel bills.

**Help is at hand**

“There for You” has set up a limited fund to help UNISON members on low income by way of a one-off payment of up to £50.

To download the application form and apply: visit [unison.org.uk/thereforyou](http://unison.org.uk/thereforyou), or contact the branch office for a copy, or ring UNISON Direct 0800 0857 857 for a form to be sent to you. The closing date for applications is **Friday 16 February 2018**.