

Lambeth UNISON



"YOUR DAD IS A UNION MAN, ISN'T HE?"

Merry Christmas and a happy Winter break to all our members and readers!

UNISON Annual General Meeting

In January we will hold the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of our UNISON Branch. This is an important meeting at which we will elect the officers for the coming year and agree our policies.

As we have for the past couple of years we will organise a "rolling" AGM to maximise the opportunities for members to attend, with a main session (for which we will ask the Council for paid time off work) at lunchtime on Thursday 26 January, and two additional sessions in the days beforehand – one at the College and one (aimed particularly at school staff) after work at International House.

- Thursday 26 January 2017 (lunchtime) – AGM at the Karibu Centre in Brixton
- We have motions on BREXIT, migrant and disabled workers rights and against cuts as well as branch elections.
- Time off has been agreed with managers—if you have any problems then please get in touch with rcashman@lambeth.gov.uk or jrogers@lambeth.gov.uk



In this issue: Flexi time victory, libraries campaign latest, NHS cuts new housing convenors, Clean Energy for Londoners, Winter fuel allowance, AGM details, Polish solidarity with Calais refugees



Flexi means Flexi—it really is that simple

The trade union has been fighting hard within housing recently, and winning, writes Eamon Maguire.

Going all the way back to last May was the first attempt by an area manager to halve the flexi allowance from two days a month to one. On this occasion the publication of the council wide guidance, just negotiated by the branch secretary, was enough to call a halt to the attempt. However, in October I received an email from a member informing me that she had been refused a day's flexi leave on the grounds that one a month was the maximum allowed. I forwarded the manager in question the guidance, and later the same day we had a quiet

word. This was enough to change the picture for that member but just the beginning of the attempt to implement the change. A couple of days later I was called in to the area manager's

position and also informed me that the area manager had been advised to that effect. You might think that this would be the end of the matter. You would be wrong.

This resulted in an email from the head of HR, Dean Shoesmith, firmly calling a halt to all such attempts.

So at this moment this particular battle can be said to have been won, but I would not be a bit surprised to have to deal with this again. The council staff within the Housing Benefits section have just had their allowance cut back in the very same way and I know from colleagues in other areas of housing that managers have been talking about this there too. It's obviously something that management have in their sights. Can any member who received any communication on this topic let me or their local steward know immediately?



Just Say "No"

office for a little chat.

The case that was put to me was that the shortage of staff caused by the voluntary redundancy take-up now made it necessary to restrict the flexi allowance. I demurred and we ended the meeting saying we would both seek advice. Later the same day I received an email from HR that validated my

A week later I returned from a training day to discover that a team manager had held a team meeting, announced the change and followed this up with an email to confirm; one day's flexi allowance per month. I was obliged to take this up at the very highest level, at a corporate meeting with the strategic director, Sue Fos-

New housing convenors

UNISON members in Lambeth Housing department have not one—but three! — new convenors to help represent you alongside your stewards. Elaine Etim (Sheltered Housing), Eamon Maguire (South Area) and Dan Jeffery (Parking and Garages) will all be on part time job share.



UNITY AGAINST RACISM

On Saturday 8 October over 1,500 people - including Jeremy Corbyn, Diane Abbott and Alf Dubs - launched a mass movement against racism. We want to build a network of activists to support refugees and confront racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

While the Calais refugee camp known as the 'jungle' was being torn down, Lambeth based organisation Poles Connect was working with Unison members in Libraries to collect much needed support for those stuck in the camps. Marta Sordyl from Poles Connect said: "You don't need a rea-

son to help others.

The Polish Community in Lambeth has its own long history in the borough.

Most of us have made our homes here in Lambeth since Polish entry into the European Union. We came together once again, this time with donation of clothing and food for refugees from Calais jungle. We want to live in the community in which solidarity, unity and respect are core of action and we want to build fruitful connections between communities within or even be-



yond the UK borders."

In South London, Stand up to Racism have been busy raising money for refugees, opposing Trump, Farage and Le Pen. We meet every fortnight at Coffee Wake Cup Café, Clapham Park Road, SW4 7BB. Everyone is welcome, sign up to join Stand up to Racism at www.standuptoracism.org.uk

Clean Energy for Londoners

I attended an event organised by Switched On London, Fuel Poverty Action and Myatts Field North. We heard from representatives of the Greater London Authority (GLA) about the Mayor's proposed programme Energy for Londoners which aims to help Londoners generate more low-carbon electricity, boost London's recycling rates and cut landfill. A related topic was ways to tackle fuel poverty and which types of en-

ergy systems best serve communities. This was particularly significant in the context of Myatts Field North which I learnt has experienced many problems with its estate energy provider E.ON which has led to residents experiencing fuel poverty. The day covered some difficult topics, but generally there was optimism about the fact that the new Mayor has placed clean energy firmly on the agenda
Kate Ruhle

EU members unite

UNISON members who are EU citizens gathered to share their experiences since June's referendum on membership of the European Union, and share their concerns about what happens next, at a seminar in the UNISON Centre last month.



Members "are deeply concerned about the xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiment that fuelled the Vote Leave campaign and has continued to grow since," said UNISON head of strategic organising Greg Thomson.

The EU members' seminar brought union members and activists from across the range of public services together in London. They hailed from France, Spain, Germany, Poland, Sweden and Bosnia, which took the first steps to joining the EU at September's summit in Slovakia.

Their discussions will help inform the union's work to defend its EU members' right to remain in the UK, while opposing the tide of racial abuse that has arisen since the referendum.

UNISON has commissioned a booklet (attached) from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, outlining members' legal rights and set up an EU members' helpline available every Tuesday on 0800 0 857 857.

There is also a dedicated Facebook group for UNISON members who are EU citizens to talk to each other at [facebook.com/groups/UNISONEUMembers/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/UNISONEUMembers/). This is a closed group, and members will need to ask to join it.



NHS being sliced up by new government cuts programme

The government has launched new Sustainability and Transformation Plans for the NHS which will lead to massive cuts for our healthcare.

The Government requires 44 Footprint Areas across the UK to prepare the NHS for the STPs for their area. These footprints will:

- 1) Contribute to cuts of at least £2.5bn nationally this year, and £22bn within the next five years, to wipe out the NHS so-called financial deficit. In SE London this means cuts of over £1billion.
- 2) Introduce new models of care which will increase the likelihood of privatisation.

NHS bodies are severely limited in how they can oppose these cuts because they risk losing access to the £8bn NHS Transformation Fund.

However, local authorities are in an excellent position to make clear their complete opposition to the programme and the completely illegal lack of consultation on the plans.

"The NHS faces 22bn cuts over the next five years"

We call on Lambeth Council to:

- a) publicise widely the details of all proposed cuts and changes to local NHS services
- b) organise a large public consultation meeting on the STP contents
- c) refuse consent to the STP
- d) demand publicly that the Government increases the spending on the NHS from the current 9.9% of GDP to the European average of 10.7% which would raise £15bn a year and would make the cuts of £22bn unnecessary.



Defiant libraries campaign continues

The campaign to keep Lambeth's 10 libraries open hasn't gone away even though the Council have 'temporarily' closed two libraries and tried to reduce two others to staffless services. The need for people to access libraries, particularly in times of austerity, is reaffirmed with each piece of research on community need – and yet ignored by Lambeth at every turn. One watch of the brilliant new film *I, Daniel Blake* is enough to see what real lives are like in Britain today, and the important role libraries play. On 5th November 70 people from Lambeth joined the national grassroots demonstration for Libraries, Museums and Galleries in central London. Lambeth Unison also visited the Barnet picket lines where staff are on strike to fight against their 45% staff cuts and library closures.

When Lambeth closed Minet Library in the middle of the Loughborough Es-

tate, Unison and campaigners made the point that an area of massive deprivation was yet again being targeted for cuts. It is as if the Council don't even see poor people. We raised the Runnymede Trusts report that Lambeth was the most unequal borough in London and that services that enabled people to bridge the gap were being closed. Library Campaigners have attended every one of the Council's Equality Commission public meetings to make the point.

Carnegie Library, which saw the fantastic community occupation in April is now facing asset transfer and a Planning Application to convert it to a gym. Hundreds of objections have been submitted and the community are fighting hard to



stop the gym and keep their local library. Two years on from Lambeth's failed Culture 2020 plan and the battle continues. We still await the decision by the DCMS on whether they intend to launch an enquiry into Lambeth's financial and statutory incompetence. We will not leave this fight as it is a battle for a Lambeth that serves the people of Lambeth and not one that serves the interests of developers and their friends.

Tim O'Dell, Libraries Shop Steward

Welfare: Supporting UNISON members when life gets tough

There are many ways that *There for You*, UNISON's welfare service can help you when you may be experiencing difficulties.

UNISON welfare service continues to be a lifeline for members and their families.

If you are struggling through an unexpected crisis, or if the pressures of every day life are getting to you, it's your charity, so contact us now. All applications go via the branch welfare officer so contact us in strictest confidence at GWhiting@lambeth.gov.uk or HStrachan@lambeth.gov.uk or through the branch office on 0207 926 2858.

There for You offers a unique confidential advice and support service just for members of UNISON and their dependents.

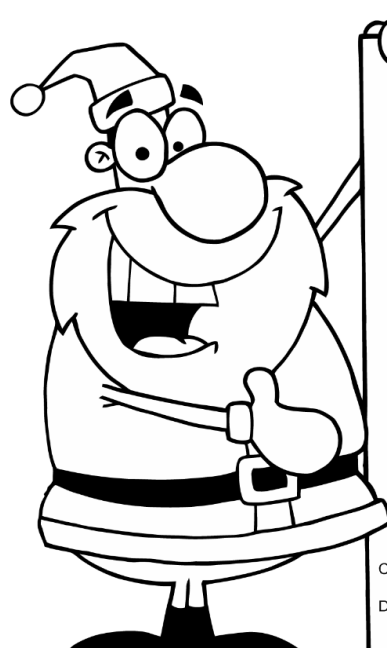
Whether it's just a chat and a sympathetic ear, or more concrete help you need, we may be able to help.

The *There for You* Winter Fuel Grant launched on 1st December runs until the closing date of 17th February 2017.

This year eligibility now includes those in receipt of housing benefit and the amount of the grant has risen from £40 to £50 per eligible house-

hold. Applicants must include their membership number and must have paid a minimum of four weeks subscriptions before 1st December to apply.

Application forms can be downloaded from the UNISON website and will be available from branches and via UNISON DIRECT.



Christmas Santa Word Search

K	Z	D	S	T	O	C	K	I	N	G	S	W	S	Z
U	E	H	P	Q	J	Q	H	M	T	E	N	Z	A	P
R	B	R	A	R	D	X	X	R	J	O	L	U	N	J
K	S	T	C	V	E	E	H	B	I	N	B	T	T	M
D	N	T	C	Z	G	S	C	F	T	S	E	S	A	T
Y	W	J	A	A	T	P	E	E	F	R	T	S	C	A
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B	M	G	X	Z	M	D	F	V	T	B	L	E	A	W
F	I	G	Q	W	Z	Q	Y	Y	L	S	E	A	U	S
P	S	L	E	I	G	H	S	G	B	B	W	R	S	Q

Christmas	Presents	Santa Claus	Sleigh	Tree	Red
December	Star	Candy	Stockings		