

Lambeth UNISON

# AGM Report 2025



Protest called by Lambeth  
UNISON and others against the  
proposed cuts – January 2025

**Welcome to the Lambeth UNISON AGM  
2025 booklet!**

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## Chair and Vice Chair

*Gary Whiting and Dan Jeffery*

Firstly, thanks to our administrator Juliet for her work in the branch last year and to co-chair Sam who unfortunately couldn't fulfil his role as co-chair for most of last year due to illness but happily he has now come back to work.

As Chair and Vice Chair we have continued to do our best to oversee the branch committee. We have continued to bring in new activists and take on campaigns. Central to our work this year has been the pay campaign, which unfortunately didn't meet the threshold to take strike action that is required by the anti-union laws. However the threshold laws will hopefully be scrapped soon, and the key message is once again that if we don't take strike action, we won't get a decent pay increase. So hopefully this year we can take serious action in order to finally get the decent pay increase everyone deserves.

We have also taken part in many national campaigns from trying to get a 4-day week, to environmental campaigns, to sending branch delegations to Palestine demonstrations against the genocide being committed in Gaza.

As chairs we would ask every member to see if they could get more involved the branch in the year ahead, either as a steward, health and safety rep, learning rep, officer role or in any other way you can think of. The branch is only as good as our members and activists.

2025 will see a relaunch of Save our Services, with a fight back against the continued cuts to our jobs and departments which provide vital services to residents of Lambeth. This will include lobbies and demonstrations throughout the year.

If we want to turn around the cuts to jobs and services, the only way the trade union movement will do this is by taking more radical action, including strike action and direct action. It is no coincidence that the disputes that have been won have been via taking action. Negotiations and talking only achieve limited gains, and when we are facing the scale of cuts that we are, more radical action needs to be taken by the union movement.

So onwards and upwards, let's make 2025 a year when the trade unions burst back on to the national scene, and a year when we elect a new and radical general secretary.

## Branch Secretary report

*Jocelyn Cruywagen and Ruth Cashman-  
Joint Branch Secretaries.*

### *Cuts*

Councils up and down the country are being told that there is no money for services and wages are disheartening to say the least. A Labour government that seems to make political choices crippling workers and public services are calling for workers to stand up and fight back. Lambeth UNISON branch will be calling on our members to fight back, meaning workers have to call for demonstration and protest against the CUTS and Job losses in 2025.

This Labour government needs to be held to account by the voters. We will not stand for more loss of wages and services, That is why our branch is calling for a London wide strategy with other UNISON branches and unions to campaign for NO to cuts and job losses. You, our members need to tell us when you hear about jobs losses, cuts, team restructures, job role changes and more work overload.

### *PAY*

The cost-of-living crisis is still waging every single day. Our wages have not risen for decades and so therefore more than ever we need to continue VOTE for strike action on PAY in 2025. Come February we need to be ready to cast our PAY ballot. We need to like years gone by VOTE YES for strike action.

The PAY offer in 2025 is £3000 across all spinal cords and £15.00 per hour minimum wage.

### *Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)*

The council's is moving towards a Borough of Equity. We need to hold the Council to account. The recommendations of the Patrick Vernon report (2019) should continue to be implemented without delay in all directorates before any new reports or reviews are planned.

We need to have EDI in all directorates.

### *Sickness*

2024 seems to be the year sickness levels have grown. Stewards have been busy representing members with sickness absences across directorates COVID has seen a rise in more complex health needs which need to a very different approach to sickness absence. The lack of implementing reasonable adjustments is a huge concern. The Council has a working group in place which we hope will work closely with the unions and HR to design a reasonable adjustment policy.

### *HR and Policies*

The unions work with a dedicated HR officer to update the policies.

The HR team restructure has brought about some stability and in 2024 it felt less chaotic when directing queries to HR although some members still tell us that they find HR unhelpful. If you still feel this way speak to your UNISON representative/ steward/ convenor.

### *Back in the Office*

In 2022 the CEO's advised workers to be present in the borough 2 days per week. This advice still stands for many of the workers. COVID has shown us that work can be done flexibly, and no workers should be coerced in coming back into the office.

#### *Equans security staff*

The security staff are coming back in house in 2025. This is a victory for the security guards. Insourcing is a priority for our branch.

#### Campaigns

##### *Campaign AGAINST CUTS*

We will be launching our campaigns against CUTS and job losses on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. This will be a London wide campaign against CUTS.

##### *4-day week*

We will continue to campaign for a 4 day week. We know the benefits of a better work life balance leads to better productivity and better mental health.

##### *International Solidarity- Palestine.*

An end to the war in Gaza is a must in our life time. 42 000 million civilians amongst them women and children murdered since October 2023. We continue to march,

demonstrate, protest to end this war. Our branch is committed to a Free Palestine.

We launched the Stop investing in arms aiding the war in Gaza. We joined the Lambeth for Divest from Isreal campaign. We asked the pensions committee to divest our pension from companies invested in Isreal. We will make this campaign a priority. Boycott, Sanction and Divestment is needed to stop the war on innocent people.

*Rwanda deportation plan:* Thank goodness this plan was scrapped by the incoming Labour government, and we are proud that the branch campaigned to scrap the Tories deportation plan.

*Syria:* The fall of the Assad regime rings true that dictators can be overthrown. We hope all Syrian will be able to build their country with less interference from the west.

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## Assistant Branch Secretary Report

*Simon Hannah*

We are now facing significant cuts at Lambeth Council, with the acting CEO talking about a 'smaller' council with fewer staff. This is despite the defeat of the Tory government after 14 years. The Labour government that replaced it has continued many of the same policies and we are yet to see much positive change for working people or local government in particular. Trump's re-election in the USA is frankly a disaster

In Lambeth we had big changes at the top including the CEO and head of HR.

A lot of my time was spent helping with various tasks in the branch, including updating WARMS, sending out emails, working with the treasurer and branch secretaries on finance, and updating the website.

I helped lobby for the Council to adopt the UNISON Anti-Racism Charter and also attended the signing of the Ethical Social Care Charter, two big wins for UNISON.

I attended a meeting at UNISON HQ for the funding application alongside Ruth Cashman to provide support. Sadly we were unsuccessful this time.

I also joined the Pensions Committee, acting as the trade union side rep as a trustee for £2bn in the fund! There has been an explosive argument about investment in companies that are profiting

from the Israeli war machine or operated in the occupied West Bank. The Labour councillors on the committee have in my view played a very poor role in trying to prevent these issues being raised or making any progress on the ethical responsibility we have with our investments.

### *Pay campaign*

I spoke at the Local Government Pay Seminar on our successful vote strategy for the 2023 pay strike (89% yes vote for strike action on a 57% turn out, the best in the country). My talk was well received

We had another pay ballot as part of the ongoing pay campaign to claw back more money for local government workers after over a decade of lost wages. In 2023 we got the best turn out and highest yes vote for action in the country but this year we sadly fell short of the 50% turn out by about 50 votes. The good news is that more branches got over the threshold than the year before.

### *Four day week*

After a push a couple of years ago, the four day week is now going back on the agenda to try and force better working conditions for our staff. The proposal we are advocating for is for a 27 hour week with no loss of pay. This will save the council money because in studies for companies that adopted the 4 day week they found that there was less sickness absence and less turn over of staff, people were just as

productive if not more so and there was higher staff morale. In short it is a win-win – but only if the incoming council leadership are brave enough to take that step forward.

It remains to be seen in the other unions back this initiative.

### *JSF and CCF*

I attend the Joint Strategy Forum which meets quarterly with senior managers and councillors to discuss strategic issues at the Council. I also attend the Corporate Consultative Forum which meets monthly with senior HR officers where we can escalate issues to.

There was a proposal to reduce the frequency of the JSF and to not have councillors at it. UNISON pushed back on this as it is very useful to have such a regular meeting forum with the political leadership of the council.

Management cited the IICSA report that the ‘unions and councillors were working too closely together’ as the reason why which I have challenged.

### *Pension committee*

I am currently the trade union rep on the pension committee, this isn’t a part of the ABS role but I took it up to help represent staff and union interests on this important committee. The Pension fund has over £2bn in it to cover the pensions of all existing staff and everyone who has retired. Being on the committee means voting on investment strategies and being a trustee of the fund.

The immediate issue that came up was divestment from companies actively involved in the Israeli economy in particular the war machine and the occupation of the West Bank.

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## Housing

*Simon Hannah (Temporary acting)*

We haven’t had a convenor for Housing since April 2024 and we urgently need one!

The Housing department is in a crisis at Lambeth - facing bankruptcy unless it gets a massive bail out from the government worth £50million. We urgently need a team of stewards and a convenor for this department to organise our members and

help fight back against any attacks on our jobs or working conditions.

For most of 2024 Housing Directorate did not have a Convenor so I helped to cover this area. This has mainly involved assisting with casework for individuals.

A recent issue in the Directorate was a restructure of the Assistant Directors which was horribly mishandled by management and HR, complete failure of process. Several ADs got a pay rise which

given the current savings regime didn't come across very well.

There are massive problems of overwork in some teams, NHOs and Temporary

Accommodation in particular.

Management haven't really engaged with any of these concerns and are quick to brush them off so we will have to explore collective action.

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## Finance & Communities, Governance & Change

*Eleesha Smith*

In 2024 we continued to face restructures in the council. Particularly in Finance and Communities, Governance and Change. In December there were proposals for the transfer of the SARs function in Legal and Governance to the Information and Governance team, Digital, Data and Technology division. The Phase 1 of the proposal is to centralise the SARs function and significantly reduce the agency spend in this area, resulting in a change of directorate (from Communities, Governance and Change to Resident and Enabling Services) and change of line management for the team.

Even though there has are plans to reduce agency spend in the council, the agency staff in this directorate were given one weeks' notice before the Christmas break. The information relayed to the agency staff during this period was unclear, several were told they should stand by to see if they were required to log on for work and others were given their final notice. UNISON reached out to management

about the unfair treatment of the agency staff and their notices a week before Christmas. The branch had prepared a press release for action if necessary.

In December the council put forward their cabinet report for proposals of the council savings. The proposed savings in the council will be £50 million from 2025/26 to 2028/29.

The savings will have a heavy impact in the council and some areas will possibly have staff reduction. The focus for the finance directorate is areview of the back office and support functions to identify efficiencies across the directorate and increasing income from third parties. (£1.6 million savings)

The focus for Communities, governance & change will be the reviewing of new directorate for efficiency savings (£450k savings)

In September the ballot opened for the 2024 pay claim. UNISON asked for a pay increase of £3,000 or 10%, whichever was greater. Following a consultation of member, our NJC committee, made up of leading activists, decided that we would proceed with an industrial action ballot. We made the effort to encourage our



members to return their ballot votes, the branch held various stalls and distributed posters and contacted members to confirm the return of their vote. Agreement has been reached on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2024 (covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025). The new pay rates, each increased by £1,290 per annum.

I've maintained quarterly strategic/directorate meetings in finance where issues have been raised in respect of departmental issues. A new appointed corporate director of finance started in December following the departure of the

acting corporate director who left in November. Staff in this directorate continue to highlight issues on career progression, lack of appraisals and extension of probation periods. The number of disciplinary cases were minimal throughout the year, but I have had increase of cases with regards to sickness monitoring and occupational assessments and ill health retirement.

My aim for 2025 is to continue to support our members and the branch, continue to fight for pay and workers rights and hopefully a 4-working week.

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## Resident Services

*Simon Hannah*

Resident Services is a big beast of a Directorate which covers a range of jobs and business functions from registrars to grave diggers to ICT to parking and many other things. We don't have many reps to cover it! This has impacted on some of the case work and time I could devote to different sections.

The main issue concerning several teams in RS is the current council 'savings' which are seeing agency staff be let go, secondments ended, FTCs not being renewed and people being asked to fill in forms seeking to identify work streams that can be eliminated/automated. I have been liaising with members in different

departments about these proposed changes and pushing back with management.

There have been a lot of grievances in this directorate that I have been supporting, particularly in the PPARS department. Some of the grievances have been partially upheld but most are not and then go through to an appeal stage where they are partially upheld which raises questions about the quality of the initial decision making.

Active Lambeth is a jewel in the crown for the Resident Services department and the public services it has for the people of Lambeth. It is a very large new component to the Council which has a lot of complex issues as it hasn't been properly integrated yet into the council and the large number of zero hour ("casual") workers for instance

swim teachers which they are unsure how to incorporate on council contracts. There has been a lot of issues for staff getting the right pay, getting proper shift patterns sorted and so on. There was a protracted argument over the payment of pensions to the casual staff over when letters were sent out or not. This issues seems to have been resolved now.

We successfully lobbied for a security guard at Brixton library as there were issues there with staff being threatened and intimidated and they requested a security guard as Brixton library had two.

Libraries is in RS but within UNISON we treat them relatively autonomously as Tim

## Communities and Inclusive Growth

*Simon Hannah*

CIG is a relatively quiet directorate in comparison to some of the others in the Council, though we will see what the cuts regime means for 2025/6.

We have quarterly meetings with the assistant director where we discuss various issues. There have been concerns raised by some staff about the cuts and proposed pausing of various schemes for residents which would then have a possible impact on staffing levels.

There have also been some discussions with members in some teams of CIG about possible discrimination against Black staff in terms training and career development

and Ruth cover that area. I did assist however in making sure that the librarians got their fire marshal training.

I have started to undertake more organising work to recruit stewards and I am in touch with two members in RS who are interested in becoming reps for their areas which is very positive.

The Equans security guards are being brought back in house which has been received very warmly by the UNISON members there. We will be keeping an eye on the proposed new JDs and working patterns for the staff there.

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opportunities. No one is yet willing to come forward and take out a formal complaint

however so we are a little limited in what we can do beyond talking more generally about the problem with management. In my experience things only change if people are willing to take a stand and fight for what is right, otherwise it is hard to get any real change.

UNISON has raised concern over the onerous tasks associated with signing up for the councils bike share scheme which include having to do a test (!).

The CIG directorate meetings were also the site of the GMB and Unite trying to reduce the number of UNISON reps attending the meeting. We have three reps in CIG and myself as Convenor and the other unions said we should only be allowed to send one rep and we were 'dominating the meeting'. This is untrue and a ridiculous

attack on us as a union. In the rules we can send up to 4 reps to a directorate meeting, though we rarely send the full complement. Keeping an eye on this and will resolutely defend our rights as outlined in the council's policy.

## Children's Services Convenors Report to Lambeth UNISON AGM 2025

*Andy Tullis*

### **Tonight it's a world we bury!**

This time last year we were locked in a battle over collapsing social work teams, a department haemorrhaging staff and the impact on those left behind struggling with the sheer volume of work. Under child protection legislation all cases have to be held by a named social worker, so some staff had literally dozens of extra cases allocated to them on the basis they were only 'holding' them, but of course that's not how things work in practice, those 'holding' cases still require attention and if anything goes wrong; whose first in line for the blame?

UNISON poured on as much pressure as possible to make our senior management act, and we even got accused by some in the hierarchy of causing Lambeth 'reputational damage' because we publicly highlighted the problem.

We explained that the reputational damage was being done by Lambeth, word gets around, people who leave due to burnout

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and stress make it known in the wider social care community. A programme of recruitment measures was promised to address the issue.

Although high levels of agency staffing in children's social care continue to be a national problem the recent Ofsted focused visit report said that Services for children in need and child protection in Lambeth have improved significantly since the last Ofsted inspection in 2022, and a successful ongoing programme of recruitment and retention has increased the numbers of permanent qualified social workers, providing the foundations for further improvements. UNISON still want to know what you think of the health of your team, workloads etc?

UNISON were also invited to address the latest cohort of overseas social workers and our presentation was well received. At the 2024 staff conference, themed on equality and justice, when it was announced from the platform that Lambeth have signed up to Unisons Anti-Racism at Work Charter a big round of applause and cheer went up from the audience.

In the many individual cases I have represented in the past year I have definitely noticed an upturn in the amount of OH report meetings and sickness

reviews I attend, suggesting there a still high levels of stress in the department.

Its also clear we're now living under Labour austerity since the election in 2024. Some aspects of the new employment rights bill are welcome but far removed from what our movement must demand in repealing all the Tory anti-trade Union laws starting with the thresholds for ballots and the minimum service agreements. The extra funding for local authorities is nowhere near enough to cover the deficits local councils have incurred due to historic underfunding and increasing social care costs etc.

CSC has a budget deficit of £4.626 million in year 2024/25 and Lambeth have announced they have to make £50 Million savings in their short to mid- term financial strategy. They have said the saving budgets would impact on jobs. Yet again children's services will get it the neck and there are plans to streamline children's centres. In response I can only refer back to our branches marvellous campaign to Save Our Children's Centres in 2019, where we won major concessions and saved jobs.

There should be no excuse now for Labour Councils to continue Tory austerity policies,

we call on the council could use it prudential borrowing powers and

## Acting Schools Convenor's Report

*Jeremy Drinkall*

unallocated reserves to immediately fund services under threat and build a mass campaign to win the full funding we need from a Labour government.

Schools have also been a major battle ground for our branch in 2024/5 (see school convenors report) and we have fought hard against the councils proposed closure of two schools and the amalgamation of six others due to falling pupil numbers in London. So I must give thanks to our acting schools convenor Jeremy for his sterling work in this last year, as I thank all my CSC stewards for their efforts and support.

2025 promises to be another year of struggle, our branch started off our opposition to the cuts by lobbying the full council meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January and we must now gear up for a major demonstration at the Councils Budgets Setting meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March

Trade Unions should discuss a socialist programme of demands based on community needs that expand public services, education and healthcare for the working classes. See you all in 2025, the fight goes on.

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### *Introduction*

It has been a difficult year in many respects, but it has had some rewards for UNISON and other school unions.

Continuing budget cuts, not helped by the unfunded pay awards for teachers and support staff which ate into school budgets, remain the backdrop. After seeing two schools which dated back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century close last year, we faced another five closures this year. The change of government has changed the language of ministers, but not necessarily the content of their message: profit comes before education.

### *School closures*

We were informed in the summer term of the council's intention, in Sept 2026, to close two primary schools, Fenstanton and Holy Trinity, and merge three more pairs of schools, Christchurch (Brixton) and St John the Divine, St Saviour's and St John Angell Town, and Kings Avenue and Glenbrook. Effectively this meant five school closures and hundreds of families' lives thrown into turmoil.

Along with our sister unions, our members fought this proposal. They made so many submissions to the consultation, that the closing date had to be moved from August to November. Our members in St Saviour's (our strongest school of the eight) supported the NEU strike, some by not crossing picket lines, and saved their school (for now).

We are continuing to fight for no compulsory redundancies at Kings Avenue and are currently balloting for strike action after their closure/amalgamation date was brought forward by a year.

But the reality is that the Labour government is not funding schools, and the

London ones in particular, sufficiently; school rolls are continuing to fall; academies and free schools proliferate, leaving many state schools vulnerable to cuts and closure. So trouble ahead!

Don't mention the war!

A number of members have been effectively gagged during the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza. For fear of being accused of being anti-Semitic, head teachers have generally forbidden school staff from talking to their students about this war, which has killed over 4,650 Palestinians, 70% of them women and children, i.e. not Hamas fighters.

At least one of our school shop stewards was disciplined for handing a Sixth Former a leaflet. We saved her job, but the gagging order remains in place. We have to remain vigilant and demand the right to guide our young people through these terrible times, so they can understand the world they will have to change!

### *SSSNB*

One big change that is on the horizon is the establishment of the Schools Support Staff Negotiating Board. Hopefully this will bring about more career opportunities and better pay for our hard-working and under-appreciated school members. More on this in next year's report.

### *NEU and support staff*

We got into trouble with the union nationally, after UNISON, GMB and Unite asked the TUC to step in and forbid the NEU from actively recruiting support staff. They asked branches to disengage from



campaigning alongside the NEU and for the TUC to fine the NEU (who were then in a pay dispute) £150,000. The Branch Committee said we could not do this because it would hurt our members. The national officer for schools disagreed. But we have continued to work quite effectively with the NEU – though ‘poaching’ on all sides continues.

### *Academisation*

This year saw two more schools, London Nautical and Larkhall Primary, apply for voluntary conversion to Academy status. We had no members at the former and so were bystanders, but we did have a couple of members at Larkhall. We worked closely with GMB to try and gather support for a fight, but only a handful of members turned up to the meeting. The GMB, who have a bigger membership among support staff, and the NEU were unable to take the lead and call for a campaign of industrial action.

The relentless drive to academies means that both Lambeth councils and the unions will be less able in future to mount a defence against school closures and insist on pupil placement planning, i.e. schools taking smaller classes in order to survive the temporary fall in school rolls without closing and losing forever our schools, important resources paid by generations of past council tax payers for future generations of school students.

## **Black Workers Group**

*Jocelyn Cruywagen, Black Workers Group Convenor and Bashir Miah, Chair Black Workers Group*

### **Reorganisations**

We had two large reorganisations, at Archbishop Sumner and Henry Cavendish primary schools. The former was caused by falling rolls and the school moving from two forms of entry to one form. We were able to save several jobs and secured early retirement for one member who was on long term sick absence.

At Henry Cavendish, we were able to upgrade a learning mentor’s post. We also uncovered a historic underpayment of after school club playworkers, who were illegally being paid £10 an hour, less than the legal minimum wage! This came about because they were TUPE’d over from Kids City four years ago and had never had a pay rise. The school has agreed to raise their wages and put them on NJC scale 2, though they have still not paid all the back pay that they owe our members. There was a lot of vocal support from strike action, but this did not translate into staff joining UNISON, so sadly we have had to accept the situation and we fight on.

That’s all I have space for, but please come to the Schools Support Staff AGM online at 4pm on 13 February, where you can ask questions and report your own concerns, etc.

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### *Internal news*

2024 was UNISON’s Year of LGBT+ Workers, BWG collaborated with Lambeth Trade Unions and Revolutionary Acts, facilitating a panel at UK Black Pride 2024.

Some participants featured in *Revolutionary Acts: Love and Brotherhood in Black Gay Britain* by Jason Okundaye. In 2025, we plan to collaborate with the staff forum LGBT+ network on an exhibition highlighting the history of Black workers and the LGBT+ community.

We have experienced the departure of Bayo, a Black leader (CEO), who was personable, approachable and lead Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Both Black and White staff expressed sadness and disbelief at the event leading to his departure.

Despite our requests, a meeting with the acting CEO was not granted. Lambeth UNISON Black workers must remain vigilant on issues of EDI. While terminology shifts from equality to equity, racism persists.

Members continue to report racism, micromanagement, sexism, victimisation, and discrimination.

From the recent experience serving on EDI interview panels, we want to emphasise the importance of all members getting involved. This is a crucial way to contribute to building an equitable workforce. EDI champions and panellists play a vital role in shaping fair and inclusive hiring practices—don't leave it all to the hiring manager. Your participation ensures a transparent, fair, and equitable process. Challenge the system, be critical, question the process. It's like when the government both Tories and Labour Say: There is no money. we say: There is money. Taxing the

rich is a first step to distributing money and resources to the poor and working class. We are well and truly paid poverty wages and this needs to stop just like discrimination in workplaces needs to stop.

The UNISON Anti-Racism Charter, signed by the Council in April 2024, was a milestone. Members should review the charter and hold both the Council and UNISON accountable. The Council also adopted the Ethical Care Charter this year.

### **Case Work**

We need more Black members trained and mentored as stewards. Casework, which includes facility time, is rewarding. Over the past year, stewards handled cases involving bullying, harassment, job evaluation, victimisation, flexible work, progression, reasonable adjustments, sexism, racism, Occupational Health, and ill-health retirement.

### **BWG Members Meetings**

In 2024, we organised three key meetings:

1. **LGBT+ Webinar:** Black and Gay in Britain
2. **Disability Rights:** Reasonable Adjustments
3. **Against Cuts in 2025**

### **Campaigns**

We were disappointed that Labour did not abolish the two-child benefit cap. BWG joined Lambeth NEU in campaigning to highlight its devastating impact on families.

A remarkable 55,000 trans rights protesters marched in London, coinciding with an anti-fascist demonstration. BWG will continue to support such movements, including the anti-fascist demonstration on February 1st. With the second Trump presidency, the anti-racist movement must stay active.

We witnessed riots and racism in Southport, Wales. Lambeth UNISON demonstrated solidarity at anti-racist and anti-fascist protests in Waltham Forest, Croydon, Aldershot, Crawley, and Croydon. An injury to one is an injury to all.

### **Palestine**

We attended Council Pension Committee meeting, demanding divestment of £23.7 million from companies supporting Apartheid Israel, as was done with Apartheid South Africa. The campaign will continue until divestment is achieved. A petition is available online and in print. At the Black Members Conference, Palestine-related motions, including ours, were ruled out of order, yet we ensured our motion was publicised. We will continue raising awareness at conferences.

In solidarity with the Gaza Sunbirds, a para-cycling team for athletes injured in Israeli attacks, we raised £1,000 by cycling from South Croydon to Mile End with The Big Ride for Palestine.

### *Racism and Sexism in the Police Force*

At the National Delegates Conference, attempts to debate police racism and sexism were met with hostility. BWG has submitted a motion for the 2025 National Black Members Conference demanding UNISON campaign against police brutality, racism, and sexism.

### *Rwanda Policy*

Despite the High Court ruling the Rwanda policy unlawful, the government persisted in its attack on refugees. The UN condemned the policy, and the new Labour government abolished it. However, the tragic drowning of 12 refugees in the Channel highlights the urgent need for safe migration routes.

A Group of Black Trade Unions is developing an action plan to combat rising racism and fascism. At the Regional Black Members Committee's immigration symposium, we emphasised the need to organise migrant workers for their rights. JCWI is supporting UNISON, and shop stewards should assist members with immigration concerns. Workers cannot feel safe when racism and fascism persist in workplaces and communities. Black Trade Unionists cannot afford complacency.

### *Looking Forward to 2025*

- Campaign for more in-house Black EDI panellists – Contact us if interested.
- Recruit, train, and mentor Black members to become stewards across all directorates.

- Facilitate Black members' activism within the branch.
- Organise trans rights training sessions.
- National Black Members Conference in Wales.
- Secure a proposed budget of £500-£1000 for training and campaigning.

We must remain fearless and persist in calling out unfair practices, both individually and collectively.

**Stay Connected – Please follow us on:**

- **Instagram:** LBWG
- **Facebook:** Lambeth UNISON Black Workers
- **X (Twitter):** @LBWG3

## 2025 AGM Membership report

Erin Healy

Lambeth UNISON has 2191 members made up of 1890 full members and 297 retired members. This is an overall increase of 114 members since our last AGM.

Our membership includes:

- 82 disabled members\*
- 125 young members
- 752 black members\*
- 1359 female members\*
- 675 male members\*
- 10 not known/other/prefer not to say gender\*

A comparison against previous years:

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>All</b>	2013	2134	2066	2057	2035	2077
<b>Black*</b>	552	619	646	646	664	687
<b>Female*</b>	1319	1384	1360	1360	1322	1312
<b>Male*</b>	682	723	633	633	637	675
<b>Disabled*</b>	n/a	56	59	59	80	85
<b>Young</b>	29	38	37	37	37	82
<b>Retired</b>	405	412	325	325	300	300

*\*self-identifying characteristic*

We represent members across 189 employers including 108 with only one member and 73 with under nine or fewer members. Our largest employer is Lambeth Council and the remainder of our membership is in schools, day centres, nurseries, and outsourced services.

Our employers with ten or more members are:

<b>Employer</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>
L B Lambeth	1338
The Dunraven Educational Trust	30
Ofsted	29
Excelcare	23
Serco Ltd	17
Pinnacle Group Limited	14
Equaans UK & Ireland	13
Caretech Community Services	10
Young Futures	10
Harris Catering Services	10



Throughout 2024, we have continued sending welcome emails to new joiners on a weekly basis with their membership number, the link to UNISON online, and contact information for their convenor.

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## Private Sector Organiser

Author, Tracy Smith, Private Sector Organiser. Input from Paul Fitzgerald, Private Sector Convenor.

It has been a very busy year for casework and the recruitment of new members.

I have been involved in accompanying and representing members at disciplinaries, grievance hearings, appeals, fact finds, flexible working request meetings, long term sickness and capability meetings. Writing reports, notifications to members, appeal letters and grievance letters takes a huge amount of time. I have given advice on deduction of wages, pay queries, TUPE transfers, redundancy, ACAS Early Conciliation meetings, resignations, OH referral and annual leave queries.

I have been successful in stopping our members being sacked, instrumental in having their outcomes lowered and in a couple of cases, having them re-instated. Casework has come from across the private sector – nurseries, companies with contracts in Lambeth Council, the health care sector and care

agencies. I have visited members multiple times at Serco (facilities management), APCOA Parking Clapham, Active Lambeth (leisure), OCS (facilities management), building good relationships and making sure UNISON has a dependable presence. In 2025 I hope to campaign on their behalf for better pay and improved conditions in their workplaces.

New members - March (12), November (12) and December (11).

We recruited 5 new stewards/ reps to support with organising in the workplace collectively. 7 new members were recruited in one go at OCS and a further 10 at APCOA Clapham.

We have also had a couple of cases involving migrant workers.

My colleague, Paul Fitzgerald, reports that at Elizabethan Security his work has been mostly related to investigation meetings, and the occasional disciplinary hearing. Due to the high turnover of staff, and the nature of the work, there are often investigations going on at any given time. He has also represented members regarding pay issues.

However, having built up a positive working relationship with the Managing Director, the issues get resolved quickly and members do not generally get dismissed. Only one has been let go in all the years Paul has been involved in recruiting and representing members at this workplace.

At the Leisure Centres it is mainly disciplinary issues or dealing with pay issues.

I have also had to cope with new processes and procedures used by employers in the private sector, namely Some Other Substantial Reason (SOSR) and the Associated Persons Policy. SOSR is a process that puts the member in a very vulnerable position, as the usual formal disciplinary process is not used by the employer, in effect by-passing policies and procedures and the Associated Persons Policy, where a member can get dismissed for failing to declare they know a so-called “dangerous person”.

We have been able to strengthen solidarity through various campaigns and surveys. Several care sector members attended the signing of the

UNISON Ethical Care Charter at the Town Hall. We have asked members to take part in the care worker surveys organised by UNISON region and to promote UNISON’s Anti-Racism charter. A couple of my cases have involved the use of physical violence and I want to educate members about violence in the workplace through UNISON’s Violence in the Workplace campaign.

I have also attended a lot of Trades Union Congress (TUC) webinars educating myself on issues of Negotiating Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace, ‘Mental Health is a Workplace issue’ and Accident at Work, to better able help our members. I have also been involved in the branch’s social and economic justice campaigns.... for example Black Workers’ meetings, Black Workers’ AGM, Stop the Far Right protests in London, pro-Palestine marches in London, the UN Anti-Racism Day march, the Clean Water march, Supporting our Migrants webinar and Workers’ Power meetings.

We will continue to recruit more members in 2025 and continue to build on organising members in the private sector workplace.

## Nominations for Branch Committee

Our Branch Committee meets monthly on the third Tuesday of the month and is made up of elected branch officers

### Chair

Anna Jaloretto

*Gary Whiting*

### Membership Officers

### Vice Chair

Erin Healy and Shyrina Rantisi (*job share*)

*Dan Jeffrey*

### Branch Treasurer

### Branch Secretary

Vacant

*Jocelyn Cruywagen and Simon Hannah  
(job share)*

### Labour Link Officer

Jocelyn Cruywagen

### Health and Safety officer

Presley Rebelo

Local Government Conference

Ruth Cashman

### Auditor

George Wheeler

Anna Eracleous

Jocelyn Cruywagen

### Returning Officer

### **National Delegate Conference**

Paul Fitzgerald

Ruth Cashman

George Wheeler

### Publicity Officer

Jocelyn Cruywagen

Vacant roles that we would dearly love to fill with people who want to become more active and fight for a better world:

Assistant Branch Secretary, Environment Officer, International Officer, Equality Officer, Welfare Officer, Education Officer, Youth Officer (must be under 30 at end of their term of office (early 2026)