

After a long period of being unable to hold stalls due to COVID restrictions, your Unison Branch will be holding some stalls over the next few months. As well as the usual campaign updates and opportunities to join UNISON, there will be focused topics - the Importance of Breaks, Safe Travel, Menopause, Equality and Respect - all with tailored freebies!

It will be a great opportunity to pop down to have a chat and meet your Branch, so remember to invite your colleagues to come and join your union and spread the word that we will be on site over lunchtime, on the below dates:

November: Health Fortnight - Menopause

10th - North Manchester General Hospital (NMGH)

12th - Royal Manchester Children's Hospital

November: H&S - Safe Travel

15th - Dental Hospital

22nd - NMGH

29th - Altrincham

December: Equality & Respect

6th - Trafford General

13th - Withington

20th - MRI

We have also set up a new Facebook page and Twitter account so we can get messages out to our members; please share the links with your colleagues for regular updates on branch activity:

[UNISON Manchester Uni HealthCare Branch | Facebook](#)

[UNISON Manchester Uni HealthCare Branch \(@UnisonMUHBranch\) / Twitter](#)

Vote in UNISON's indicative strike ballot over 3% pay award

For months, UNISON asked for pay talks to agree the decent NHS pay rise you really deserve, but the government refused. After months of dither and delay, it imposed its pay decision of 3% for NHS staff in England. The pay rise and associated backpay went in your September pay packet.



4 out of 5 members who took part in our [summer consultation](#) said they wanted to challenge the 3% and were prepared to take industrial action.

But only a minority voted, leaving a silent majority who have not told us where they stand.

The only way to improve the 3% is by taking collective and sustained industrial action that forces the government to reconsider. If we're to do that we need to run a formal industrial action ballot. But we need to be more confident that enough members actually back that course of action. So we're running this indicative industrial action ballot first.

How will the indicative ballot work?

The indicative ballot will run from 4 November to 5 December 2021, and eligible members will be emailed a secure personal link to vote online – or you can vote via www.nhspay.org. We want the result of the vote to reflect what a large proportion of people really want to do: we need to hear from at least 45% of members to have confidence that we could reach the level of turnout that trade union laws require.

One Team Day (10 November) is a chance to celebrate, recognise and acknowledge operational support staff who work tirelessly in the NHS, often without the recognition they deserve. They have played a vital role during the pandemic and they continue to work tirelessly throughout the health service to ensure that patients get the care they need.

So, let's give them the celebration that they deserve, let them know that UNISON is proud of them and proud to represent them.

ONE TEAM

Join us on 10 November: *Speak to your UNISON branch to find out about local events; if you're not already a member, join UNISON at join.unison.org.uk; send us your One Team photos so we can share the celebrations on social media.*

Mandatory vaccination risks worsening NHS staff shortage

UNISON has fed back concerns that forcing health service employees to get the job is likely to backfire, in response to the Government's consultation on making the COVID and flu vaccines mandatory.

Widespread take-up of the Covid vaccine across the NHS and social care workforce is essential. But government plans for mandatory vaccinations would be counterproductive and could trigger employee shortages at a time when the NHS needs its workforce more than ever.

The union has detailed its concerns in evidence to a Department for Health and Social Care consultation. The requirement forcing social care workers to take up the vaccine or face losing their job, which has already been introduced, has led to significant workforce challenges already, with the Government itself predicting the loss of up to 70,000 staff as a result. Guidance agreed between UNISON and NHS employers ensures that staff in the NHS who are unable, or have not, taken up the vaccine and who work in care homes have access to redeployment opportunities and support, but many staff

unionised companies in the private sector do not.

UNISON research in the social care sector, prior to the introduction of mandatory vaccinations in care

homes, showed that those staff who had faced the worst treatment from their employers were far more likely not to have been vaccinated. One in five care workers (21%) who had faced threats and had also not been given any support said they had not been vaccinated, compared with the 12% of staff overall who said they did not get a jab.

UNISON said the government should take alternative steps to compulsory vaccination to boost take-up such as a major advertising drive, asking vaccinated staff to reassure hesitant colleagues, and targeting resources at areas where uptake is low.



HEALTHCARE STUDENTS

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Requesting flexible working is a new 'day one' right for NHS staff

UNISON representatives have won a landmark agreement with all NHS employers to ensure staff are able to access more flexible ways of working, to support home life balance.

The changes, introduced into the national Agenda for Change contract in September, should ensure that more staff have access to flexible working, and that employers cannot simply 'refuse' requests out of hand without demonstrating a commitment to supporting staff's requests, if it's feasible and reasonable to do so.

Flexible working can significantly benefit your work/life balance by helping to allow you to fit work around other life commitments, particularly for staff with caring commitments

What are the new provisions?

On the 13 September 2021, through negotiations by UNISON and health unions, it was agreed all employees of NHS organisations in England and Wales have **a contractual right to request flexible working from day one of employment.**

The new improved provisions we have negotiated mean:

- all employees have the right to request flexible working from day one of employment, regardless of reason.
- there is no limit on the number of requests you can make
- organisations must keep a central overview of how requests are being

handled and check for fairness and equality of outcomes

- where no solution has been found, there is a further escalation stage to check for other suitable options
- your line manager should have regular conversations about flexible working – without waiting for you to make a formal request

Things to consider before making a request for flexible working:

- Have a look at the flowchart to help you know what to expect if you make a request www.nhsemployers.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/NHSE_Flexible_Flowchart_.pdf
- Consider all the options of flexible working, including the impact your flexible working options might have on your pay, terms and conditions and prepare for conversations with your manager.
- Speak to your colleagues including those working in other teams to find out how they are working flexibly and see if these can be replicated in your own team.
- **AND FINALLY** – speak to your local UNISON branch if you're unsure about your options and how to go about applying for flexible working. Your local UNISON Branch is always on hand to guide you through your flexible working application including helping you to put in an appeal if your request has been turned down.



Getting you the **right** holiday pay

Whilst UNISON members are still being consulted on our union's response to the 2021 NHS Pay Award, over the last few weeks, some 200,000 NHS staff in England have been able to celebrate getting the right pay for when they've gone on holiday.

Until now NHS employers have failed to account for regular overtime when making holiday pay calculations – leaving many members underpaid for years.

But thanks to UNISON's campaigning many of our members have received back pay for their eligible overtime – some to the tune of thousands of pounds!

One healthcare workers said *“Staff in my department who work on call and overtime have received substantial back pay, giving some of them double their monthly wage. I know of some who got over five or six grand in their pay packets. And people know it was UNISON that did it. Good stuff!”*

If you have a story of backpay success or would just like to know more about this campaign, then please contact your local UNISON branch.

The Menopause at Work

We spend most of our lives at work and 77% of staff in the NHS are women, with the majority of those inevitably experiencing the menopause at some point in their lives, and not necessarily in their late forties or early fifties. It can also affect younger women, transgender and non-binary people too.

Some may cope well with the physical and emotional changes, but for others they may cause particular difficulties both in work and out of work - yet it's not something we usually talk about as it's often treated as an embarrassing or taboo subject.

Many women are being driven from the workplace because they find that adapting problematic symptoms around inflexible work expectations is just too difficult. Others may find that managing symptoms mean they miss out on promotions and training, reduce their hours, lose confidence in the workplace and see their pay levels drop, all contributing to a widening gender pay gap.

UNISON says that the impact of menopausal symptoms on women workers is an occupational health issue, an equality issue and therefore a trade union issue

Your UNISON representatives campaign for meaningful workplace support for anyone experiencing the menopause, they negotiate practical policies with employers to keep you healthy and safe, promote the benefits of a supportive and flexible environment, and help to protect you from discrimination.



The menopause is an issue for everyone who cares about fairness in the workplace, not only those who experience it directly. Why not get involved:

- Speak to your colleagues about what would make your workplace more supportive of those experiencing the menopause and feedback your ideas to your UNISON branch.
- Contact your regional education team to ask about our popular member learning courses at northwestlearningandorganising@unison.co.uk
- Get involved in building a stronger and vibrant union in your workplace - become a UNISON rep or get more involved in UNISON's Women's Group - please contact your branch for further information.

Healthcare assistants celebrate pay and grading victory after campaigning in UNISON

Following a worker-led campaign, UNISON members working as Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) at three Trusts in Greater Manchester – Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust, Manchester University NHS Trust and Stockport NHS Trust – have voted in a UNISON ballot to accept a framework agreement to resolve the issue of being paid Band 2 while performing Band 3 duties, with 99 per cent voting to accept. This means HCAs in scope should receive back pay from April 2018, as well as the opportunity to be placed on a higher paid role.

The campaign began when UNISON members raised concerns that they were being asked to undertake more and more clinical duties but weren't being paid for the added responsibility.

Band 2 HCAs should only undertake personal care – such as feeding, toileting and bathing – but a significant number were regularly undertaking duties above their band, including doing patient observations, bloods and ECGs. As a result, some staff were being underpaid by thousands of pounds.

Workers across the three Trusts came together to collectively demand fair reward and recognition for the clinical duties



they've been undertaking. UNISON members escalated their concerns by running public petitions, submitting collective grievances, lobbying their MPs and speaking to the media to share their stories.

With mounting public and political pressure, the three Greater Manchester Trusts agreed to collective negotiations with UNISON which resulted in the framework agreement which will ensure the appropriate banding of HCAs and the potential for up to three years' back pay.

We know there will still be many HCAs across other Trusts in the North West who may be underpaid for the work they do.

Are you a Band 2 HCA or Support Worker in the NHS? Do you regularly or routinely undertake clinical duties? If so, speak to your UNISON branch and find out more about what we can do together to make sure you and your colleagues are paid correctly for the work you do.

Is your employer managing risk at work effectively to keep you safe?

As winter approaches and the rise of COVID-19 infections continues, it's more important than ever that employers ensure adequate risk assessments are in place in wards and departments. If you or your colleagues have particular risk factors or an increased vulnerability to the virus, your employer should also undertake a risk assessment with you personally, putting measures in place to lower the risk.

Trades Unions and NHS employers in the North West have agreed a joint statement in September, through the NHS Social Partnership Forum, to underline the need for robust risk assessments in NHS workplaces alongside any required measures to keep staff and patients safe.

The statement reads: "As COVID restrictions have eased and vaccination levels of staff and patients have increased, we have become aware of a number of issues raised by staff regarding the undertaking/implementation of risk assessments in NHS workplaces. These have often, but not always, centred around staff who have particular vulnerabilities to COVID due to a long-term condition, pregnancy etc, changes to working practices or workplace environments, or around issues such as visiting arrangements on wards and departments.

"There is still a need/requirement to risk assess and ensure staff are fully supported in the workplace. Risk assessments should be up to date, effective and any mitigating measures to reduce risk identified from them should be identified and implemented. Assessments should also be subject to regular review, and the matter of risk assessment should be a feature of consultative



discussions in established health and safety structures, in partnership with staff side."

The statement is a significant joint commitment to keeping you and your colleagues safe, but we know that in some areas and in some departments, adequate risk assessments are not being undertaken. UNISON is also concerned that recent published guidance has sought to remove some infection control measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as the wearing of masks in some circumstances.

Despite this guidance, the requirement to risk assess any change and ensure adequate safety measures are in place, or that it is safe to reduce the requirement for PPE, still applies.

Are the right measures in place in your department to keep you safe at work? If you have any concerns, speak to your local UNISON branch (details at www.unisonnw.org/branches) or your local representative to find out more about how we can work together to improve health and safety at work, and make sure your work and you workplace are properly risk assessed.

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when life gets tough

Charity registration number: 1022010000000

If you are a UNISON member struggling through an unexpected crisis There for You is here to help.

Members experiencing financial and emotional difficulties can contact our welfare charity, There for You, which provides a confidential advice and support service for members and their dependants. This includes • Financial assistance • Debt advice • Wellbeing breaks • Support and information.

Speak to your branch welfare officer or call 020 7121 5620
www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou



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