

Unison Manchester University Healthcare Branch

Annual Report for submitting to the AGM

Prepared by Wendy Guest, Branch Secretary and Val Donegan, Branch Chair

You spoke, we listened!!

Last year during our series of AGM meetings, you, our members, raised a number of issues and asked various questions of us as your elected officers. We took on board what you said to us and acted!

The biggest issue raised was around the NHS pay award and Unison's ballot. The clear message from you was that many of you who wanted to take part and vote did not receive ballot papers. Currently, under the Trade Union Act, unions are restricted to holding postal ballots and are not permitted to ballot their members in the workplace or online so it is imperative that we hold current information for you all. For any ballot to be legal we need to know your current home address, your employer and your workplace. It also helps us if we hold an up to date email address and contact phone number for you. With almost 10,000 members in our Branch, obtaining and updating current personal details is a huge task. So we took the decision this year to employ a dedicated Data Processor to undertake that very task. They started working for us on 26th February 2024 and they have already started contacting members and updating membership records. The more current your details are on our system, the better chance we have of you all receiving your ballot papers. Industrial strikes act as a bargaining chip at the negotiating table, giving unions the leverage they need to get a fair pay deal for workers.

You can also update your details yourself. You can check the details we hold for you by registering to MyUnison using this link <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/> Once registered, you can make changes to your personal information. Alternatively, you can email us at update@unisonmanchesterhealth.org.uk with any changes and we'll update your records for you.

On the subject of NHS pay, the next pay rise is due on 1st April and Unison is calling on the Government to put NHS pay right. We need to kick poverty pay out of the NHS for good and make sure that staff notice a real difference in their pay packet. Unison is also calling for major national investment to ensure that employer job evaluation processes are fair. Nursing, admin and catering staff to name a few, tell us that they are working above their pay band. All staff should be entitled to pay band reviews to make sure they are getting paid at the right rate for the job. Unison's full position on NHS pay can be found in an article on our website - <https://unisonmanchesterhealth.org.uk/get-ready-to-hold-the-government-to-account-update-your-details-today/>

With regards to Branch finances, a number of members asked with such large reserves why we are not investing and accruing interest. Our treasurer looked into this and opened a high interest account. We have transferred £450,000.00 into this account and up to March this year have accrued just over £7,800.00 in interest. We have ensured however that this is still an account that we can easily access should we need to.

An ongoing issue, and another raised at last years AGMs, was the lack of a Unison office at the Oxford Road Campus. After long negotiations with the Trust, we have now been given space in Cobbett House at Manchester Royal Infirmary to use as a dedicated Unison office. So, if you need to speak with a rep, or have questions for us, come and visit the new office on the first floor of Cobbett

House. The office is really well signposted so you should have no trouble finding us! And you can always call us on 0161 701 0056 as we have Unison admin support staff permanently based there.

At the time of last year's AGMs, we already employed two caseworkers to help the reps with their caseloads. The caseworkers have been in post for more than two years now and have proved to be a huge success. They represent members, they support and mentor workplace stewards and they campaign and organise on your behalf. Your Branch Committee identified the need for another caseworker to help cover the huge number of cases at the Oxford Road Campus and in December 2023 we employed a third caseworker, solely dedicated to representing and supporting members at ORC.

Even with three caseworkers, we still need more of you to come forward and join our team of reps! Workplace reps are the backbone of the union and our activist roles are vital to us. Unison will provide you with all the training you need and your Branch will support you on your journey as a new rep. In most workplaces you have the right to paid time off for this training, crèches are usually available and transport expenses will be covered by your Branch. So if there's no rep in your department now, think about taking the next step and putting forward a nomination to become a steward.

Face to face Unison conferences are now firmly back in the diary following the restrictions of the Covid pandemic. Your Branch sent representatives on your behalf nationally to several Unison conferences covering all groups within our Branch including women's conference, Black members conference, disabled members conference and LGBTQ+ conference. The education and learning our reps take from these conferences to better represent you is invaluable. This year, our Branch has put a motion forward to be discussed at Unison's national conference. The motion is titled - The COVID-19 Public Inquiry. This Branch notes that the COVID-19 Public Inquiry public hearings, which began in June 2023, have revealed serious failings in the UK government's preparedness and response to the pandemic and a systematic, long-term failure to address deep structural inequalities in society which resulted in poorer households, disabled people and Black people suffering disproportionately – 60% of people who lost their lives to COVID-19 were disabled. This Branch is therefore calling on Unison's National Executive Council to:

1. raise the issues of direct relevance to UNISON members, their families and communities;
2. support members to share their experiences, so that these can be built into our evidence and also given to the Inquiry through the "Every Story Matters" process;
3. highlight the equalities impact of the pandemic;
4. hold decision makers to account.

We are really focussed on good communication with our members. We are planning regular newsletters for you so that you are fully informed and kept up to date with what is happening in your Branch and in your wider union. We have been holding stalls and drop in sessions across our larger workplaces where you can speak to our reps and Unison staff. You can even bring your colleagues along who are not in Unison and get them to join! We are pleased to report that membership numbers in this Branch are steadily growing. Recruiting new members is vital. The more workers who are members of UNISON, the stronger we are when it comes to having our voice heard, and the more likely we are to win campaigns.

Another issue you brought to us last year was how you get hold of us if you need help. You will often know who your local rep but with two staffed offices, you should always be able to contact us. The numbers are 0161 701 0056 for all ORC and Central enquiries and 0161 291 5212 for WTWA and all

other enquiries. Staff are not always available to speak with you but please leave a message, or contact us via our website, and we will get back to you.

You can also contact us via our social media platforms so please have a look, join, like and share our pages:

Twitter: UNISON Manchester Uni HealthCare Branch (@UnisonMUHBranch) / Twitter

Facebook: UNISON Manchester Uni HealthCare Branch | Facebook

Website: <https://unisonmanchesterhealth.org.uk/>

Finally, we would like to take the opportunity in this report to thank the reps, activists and Unison staff in this Branch who make it the success it is. Your reps are volunteers who are advisers and sounding boards, who talk to you about your workplace problems and who will speak up for you in the workplace so we think it is important to acknowledge the work they do on your behalf.

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