



***Our newsletter is free to all members.***

*If you're not a member, we want you to join us.*

*You can still join UNISON easily on-line.*

*Just follow the link from our blog on Staff Central.*

## **University of Brighton Branch Newsletter**

# **August 2020**

At the start of the annual scramble for the remaining students through Clearing, many universities are already looking to make significant change to structures, as one way of saving money.

In many cases, this is directly due to projections of income being well short of what's required, in other cases, Vice-Chancellors are using the opportunity to modernise their systems and structures, whilst at the same time, carrying out cuts to jobs and changes to terms and conditions for their staff. We are seeing this across the South East. Reading, Winchester and Kent are forcing through various combinations of threats to withhold annual increments or reduce hours of work, with a significant drop in pay.

At SOAS, part of the University of London, the "Transformation and Change" plans involve the compulsory redundancy of over 40

members of staff. The UNISON branch is currently balloting over strike action and we send them our solidarity in resisting this.

Our very own "Securing our Future" also aims to save money, but other than the creation of new School Operations Managers, very little has emerged so far.

However, we are expecting hundreds of our members to be consulted over the next few months as schools merge, academic services are restructured (again) and Information Services puts its own restructuring plan into practice.

This will be an unsettling time for many people and we will do what we can to be involved in the consultations. What we won't accept is widespread redundancies and if this looks like a possible outcome then we will return to our members with a strategy to resist this.

*Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary*

### **Follow us...**

**Online: [blogs.brighton.ac.uk/unison](https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/unison)**

**Facebook: [UNISON at University of Brighton](#)**

**Twitter: [@UniBtonUnison](#)**

Our branch will be supporting this initiative. Please feel free to come and join us on this socially-distanced protest, demanding that NHS workers get the pay rise they deserve.

**8th  
AUG**

**WE DEMAND A  
15% PAY RISE**

**#NHSPay15**

**MARCH  
FOR PAY  
JUSTICE**

**BRIGHTON**

**NHS WORKERS SAY  
TO PUBLIC SECTOR PAY  
AND INEQUALITY **NO****

We are calling on NHS staff and supporters to mobilise with us on 8th August to send a clear message to the government. We do not accept your plans to exclude us from the public sector pay increase and **we will make ourselves heard until you listen.**



This event is a peaceful protest against the governments decision to leave NHS staff out of the recent pay increases.



Please observe social distancing. Wear a mask or face covering




We are feeling undervalued, demoralised, overworked and exhausted. We have lost 540 of our colleagues to COVID-19 and the fight is not over. Stand with us!

**Location:** Brighton, outside Royal Sussex County Hospital, BN2 5BE

**Plan of action:** Meet at 11am. We'll walk towards Old Steine and end at The Level.

 @NurseSayNo

 @NHSworkersSayNo



**NURSES  
UNITED**

## ***Return to working on-site***

UNISON welcomes the ***“Return to campus Covid-19 self-assessment Questionnaire”*** which the University has introduced. For anyone working on site now or in the immediate future, it’s important that you complete this and discuss it with your line manager.

It’s also necessary to see the risk assessment for the activity you’re carrying out on campus, understand it and follow its recommendations. If people are varying from what the risk assessment says, this could be dangerous and should be reported immediately.

We’re still talking to the University over safety issues as the national situation changes on a daily basis, but we’re yet to see any fully worked-out plans for students returning throughout September.

At this stage, with concerns over a second wave (or continuation of the first), it’s impossible to plan for the future with any degree of certainty, as the populations of Leicester and Greater Manchester will know.

What’s necessary is that the number of people in a given building at any given time should be minimised, and that all those people should be aware of the need to keep their distance from others and wear face coverings where appropriate.

How this actually works in a university setting, nobody really knows. Many members of staff required to attend the campuses will have concerns over students failing to follow advice and potentially spreading the virus through contact with others either on or off site.

The difficulty of trying to enforce unpopular and draconian rules on a group of excitable young people, many of whom will just be gaining freedom from home is obvious. What we hope doesn’t happen, is that the University, in trying to make Brighton the kind of place students want it to be, relax some of the necessary safety measures designed to reduce risk. It’s likely that university will be nowhere near the kind of experience many 18 year-olds would have been expecting, but it’s crucial that the safety of staff and students comes first, even if that means the campuses become much more clinical areas with very little functioning social space and general hanging around.

For some members of staff, working from home has been the norm and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. The problems that some have experienced, (isolation, difficult conditions for working and concentrating), have not necessarily diminished over time and it’s important that people in that situation make their line manager aware of how they’re feeling.

As always, please don’t hesitate to get in touch if you have any concerns or questions about all of this.





there  
for you

supporting UNISON members  
when life gets tough

# Get help with school uniform costs

**UNISON**  
the public service union

In response to the growing difficulties many members on low incomes face, a programme has been put in place that will assist our most vulnerable members with the cost of purchasing school uniforms.

## ***How much are the grants?***

They are one-off grants of £50 per school age child, up to a total of £150.

## ***Am I eligible?***

To be eligible, you must meet the following:

You are a member and have paid 4 weeks subscriptions before 3 August (the launch date of this programme);

You are financially responsible for the child/children and receiving Child Benefit for them;

You have total combined (yourself and your partner if applicable) savings/rolling bank balance(s) of less than £1,000, and;

**Either** you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

**Or** you have an annual net salary of less than £18,000 (combined salary with partner must be less than £18,000 p.a. if applicable).

For more information, please contact your nearest steward or email [unisonhelp@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:unisonhelp@brighton.ac.uk).

## UNISON General Secretary Election



Dave Prentis, the general secretary of UNISON since 2001, is to retire at the end of December. The election of a replacement will be held in the Autumn and all of UNISON's members (as at 28th July) will get a vote. Ballot papers will be sent to the home addresses of members as per UNISON's membership system, so if you've recently moved or just want to check your details, please register at [MyUNISON](#), or contact us to check.

Our branch committee will meet in September to decide which candidate, if any, we would like to nominate. This is a defining moment in the union's history and the General Secretary we elect will face some significant challenges. Please strengthen the democracy of our union and make sure you exercise your right to vote.

### Pay Latest

You may be aware that we've been offered a 0% increase in pay from August. This is, in reality, a pay cut that is being imposed rather than a genuine offer to begin negotiations in good faith.

The question is, what do we do about this and how do we propose to campaign for more when some universities are apparently in financial trouble, especially if planned numbers of students don't materialise over the next few months?



We've always been clear that our pay should keep up with inflation and that any claim we make should also address the low pay of some workers, particularly given the high cost of living in the South of England.

Since the vast majority of university funding still comes from government sources, channelled through the student loans, many of which will never be repaid, we still consider higher education to be publicly funded and therefore part of the public sector, however distorted the fees system had made the funding mechanism. We don't accept the concept of university competition, and stand for a more progressive system of universities cooperating to deliver world class teaching and research.

So, if any given university says it cannot afford to maintain the pay, pension rights and terms and conditions of our members then we demand:

- 1) That we get to see the proof that this really is the case.
- 2) That the university leadership campaign, alongside the workforce and students, for a better deal from the government to protect our rights.

Accepting that there really isn't enough funding becomes a damage limitation campaign - the type of dented shield approach that many local authorities have been applying throughout years of austerity. Carrying out cuts to jobs and local services in the hope that eventually funding reductions will stop, on the basis of "what else can we do."

Fighting cuts is not easy and there's no guarantee of victory, but we won't sit back and allow our pay to be eroded or our jobs cut without a serious campaign.

If the University's finances are in such a state that we can't have a reasonable pay increase or that jobs have to be "lost" then we will devise a national or local strategy to develop such a campaign.

The national Service Group Executive and its Pay Group will meet this month to consider the next actions we need to take. More in the next issue.



## **Update on the unionlearn Learning@Home campaign**

The [Learning@Home](#) campaign from unionlearn aims to inspire workers to take up home learning and make the most of challenging times by improving their skills.

The campaign brings together a wide range of learning resources that can be accessed online. These include the unionlearn [Careerzone](#), an [Apprenticeship Essentials](#) free app, the [SkillCheck](#) initial assessment tool, the [union learning Climbing Frame website](#), regular [webinars](#) and free resources from unionlearn partner organisations.

There is a free [online course search facility](#) and lots of information and tips on getting started with online learning. We have recently included some videos providing key information on some of the many learning websites, visit: [www.unionlearn.org.uk/getting-started-online](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/getting-started-online)

You can also access free [bite sized e-learning modules](#) on topics including Safe video conferencing, Helping your children learn at home and the Five ways to wellbeing.

For more information visit: [www.unionlearn.org.uk/learning-home](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/learning-home)