



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

June 2021

Nursery Ballot:

Have you voted yet?

All our members working directly for the University are being balloted over strike action to oppose the closure of One World Nursery and the compulsory redundancy of eleven of our members.

Ballot papers have been sent to **home addresses**. It's important that every member fills in their ballot and posts it back in the envelope provided, by the 17th June deadline.

This is important. It's not enough to win a democratic vote for strike action. We need to achieve a turnout of more than 50% for the ballot to count, so it's crucial that all our members play their part and make sure they vote.

More to the point though, as a democratic branch and a democratic union, we need to make sure that we act on the democratic will of our members. If you don't vote, you can't complain about the outcome, so please make sure you do it today.

There's more information over the next few pages, including what to do if you don't receive a ballot paper.

We're ticking off members as they vote, so please let us know when you have.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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Save One World Nursery!

Vote YES for strike action!

Please make sure you return your paper ballot paper!

As you will know, the branch committee of this branch has taken the step of launching a full postal ballot of University-employed members over the issue of One World Nursery. We haven't taken this step lightly. In fact we've had some very long and difficult discussions about what we should do, but we are not a union branch which is willing to allow the University Executive Board (UEB) to close the Nursery and force eleven people onto the dole, without a fight.

We've made the case that the Nursery is an excellent facility which is just the kind of resource the University of Brighton needs. It requires an annual subsidy from the University of around £83,000, since the income from fees does not cover the costs, but virtually all the University's activities and services (libraries, sports centres, counselling services, disability services etc.) require a subsidy.



We think spending £83,000 a year on a childcare and early-years educational facility is a price worth paying, and a price which is virtually nothing when looked at as part of the University's overall annual spend of around £200 million. The £40 million just spent on the new Elm House building would pay for the Nursery for nearly 482 years!

Closure of One World would leave eleven people without work and destroy a valuable resource which means so much to parents and carers which use it, which are staff, students and members of the local community, in a very deprived part of Brighton.

To argue that the Nursery must close because it would allow the University to spend £83,000 a year elsewhere would make sense if the University were a small business, but it's not. It's multi-million pound operation employing thousands of people and providing education to tens of thousands of students. The annual subsidy is so small that it's about a third of the annual salary of the Vice-Chancellor or just a bit more than it costs for a grade 9 member of staff or principal lecturer. The University has been recruiting manager after manager to keep us all in check. Just one of these managers would fund a whole nursery. We recognise the University is facing financial issues, as a result of failing to recruit sufficient numbers of students, but closing the Nursery could actually make this much worse. It certainly won't make it any better.

We offered to meet UEB half way and develop a plan for a nursery reduced in size, which would have halved the number of children and staff, but this was deemed to be not serious. Faced with a situation where some of the nursery workers would leave voluntarily, and the deficit could be reduced to around £40,000, UEB are still determined to close it, in spite of all logical and sensible arguments.

We are faced with no choice but to ballot all our members and threaten to strike. Nobody wants this, but we can't ignore such a threat to our Nursery and to our members' jobs.

Please make sure you vote, and vote YES to Strike Action!

Save One World Nursery! Vote YES for strike action!

Please make sure you return your paper ballot paper!

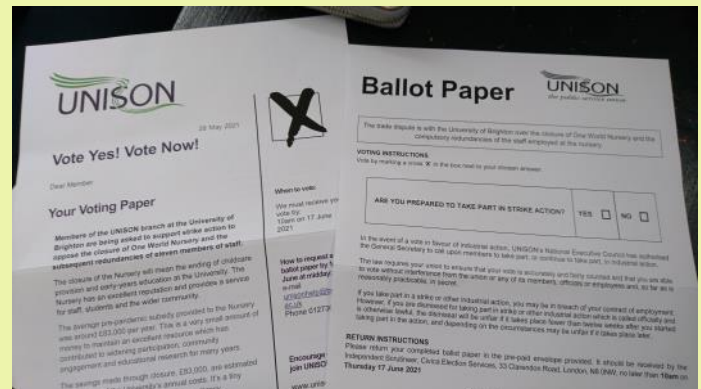
Your ballot paper was posted on Friday 28th May and will look like this:



It comes from CES, who manage postal ballots on behalf of UNISON.

Please make sure this doesn't end up with all the other junk mail. It's important!

Please open your ballot, read it, fill in your vote and post it back, like this:



Please don't leave it in the kitchen, or by the door, or carry it around for weeks. **It needs to be posted in a post box!**

Finally, please let us know you've voted. Email unisonhelp@brighton.ac.uk or iadb@brighton.ac.uk.

If you've not received your ballot, it's probably because UNISON has an out of date home address. Please let us know, and we can check this. We can also ask for replacement ballot papers if you think you've lost it.

Email unisonhelp@brighton.ac.uk or call **01273 642450**.

Every vote counts, so we'll be trying to chase up all our members over the next few weeks to make sure we get the highest turnout possible. Letting us know you've voted will save us calling you, so we can concentrate on other members who haven't voted yet.

Please spread the word. There's no point voting if others don't, so let's show the University the real strength of feeling over this decision and allow us to take action if we need to.

Please make sure you vote, and vote YES to Strike Action!

Save One World Nursery!

Vote YES for strike action!

Nursery Dispute FAQs

Why are we balloting?

The UEB are determined to close One World Nursery, which will make eleven people redundant. We think the nursery should stay open and are happy to see a reduced capacity if necessary, provided there are no compulsory redundancies. UEB have refused to discuss our proposal for an alternative and are still arguing that the £83,000 and then the £40,000 annual subsidy needs to be saved.

We've had three dispute meetings and the only concessions they've made is to improve the rights for those to be made redundant, which we think they should have done anyway.

Nobody outside of UEB thinks closure is a good idea. Local MPs, councillors and educational experts all think having One World is crucial and the financial argument falls apart if a handful of students don't come here because we've driven them away by having no nursery provision.

We're prepared to take strike action if necessary, to oppose UEB's destructive plans, but we can't do that legally without a ballot of all members. We need to achieve a majority voting YES to strike with a turnout of more than 50%, so every vote counts.

What happens if we get a mandate for strike action?

The branch committee will decide what to do next. We are entitled to name a date or dates for strike action. We're still hopeful that this won't be necessary but if our branch votes for action and UEB still stick to their course of closing the Nursery then we will strike.

What if I don't want to strike?

Nobody wants to lose money and disrupt the University, but we are a democratic union, so if members vote in favour of strike action, then we expect all members to respect that result and take action. We will encourage members in financial hardship to apply to our hardship fund.

What would a strike involve?

On strike days, we will refuse to work if we're scheduled to. Those not scheduled to can contribute by making donations to our hardship fund.

Will there be picket lines?

It depends, but we'll try to organise a Covid-safe event near the Nursery.

Are you sure this is going to work?

There's risk in every action and ultimately, it will come down to whether UEB want to go ahead with destroying One World and provoking UNISON members into striking with all the bad publicity and trouble that this will bring the University, for a mere £83,000 or £40,000. If we win a ballot and they are still determined to do that then we'll show them how serious our members are about saving One World.

Please make sure you vote, and vote YES to Strike Action!

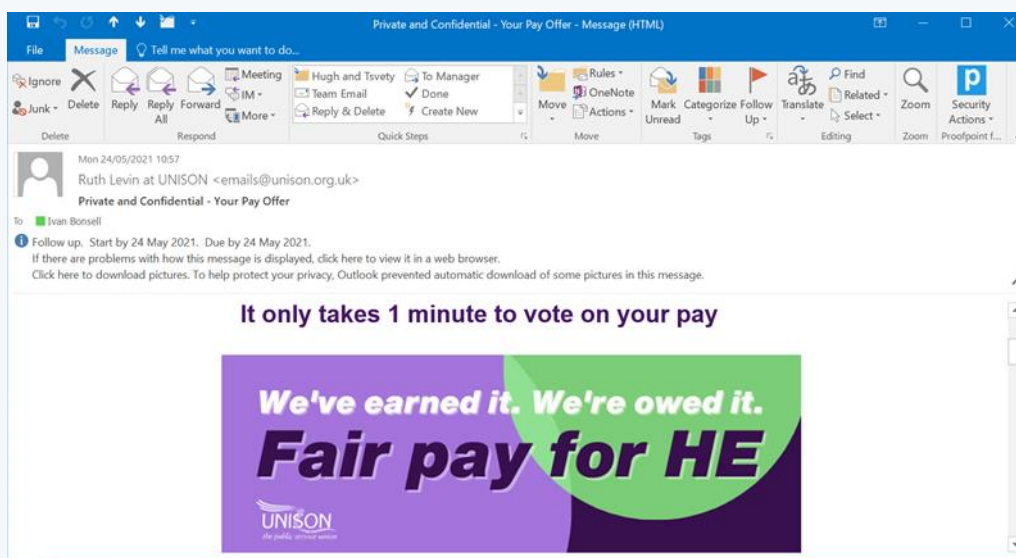
Pay News

This get's complicated, so please read carefully.

For the pay rise due in August 2021 (University staff)

UNISON is organising a national consultation over the final offer, which is 1.5%, but with slightly higher increases for those on grades 1 to 4.

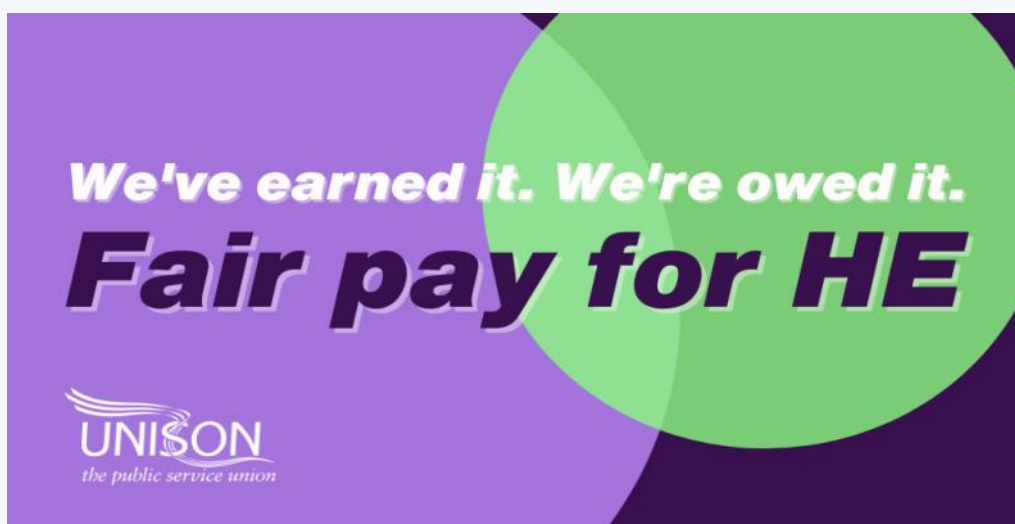
The consultation is being done electronically, so those members with emails held on UNISON's system with permission for them to be used, will have received an email that looks like this:



Please make sure you respond, and we're recommending you reject it, because it falls short of what we think higher education workers should be paid.

There are further details in the email. If you haven't had the email, you can still vote on-line. Please look here, to find out how:

www.unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/about/higher-education/fair-pay-for-he/



For the pay rise which was due in August 2020 (University staff)

We were given precisely nothing, with a load of attempted justifications and excuses about how skint universities were.

So, we're balloting members over strike action,

because threatening

to strike is the

only way we can

make a difference. It

might seem

ridiculous to strike,

potentially in

the Autumn term for

a pay rise we didn't

get last

summer, but the

combination of

dragged out

negotiations and

union bureaucracy

explain all this, and

we'll be

happy with a larger

pay rise in August

2021 if that's

how they want to

settle it.

Anyway, ballot

papers will start to

arrive from the end of June, but we'll be well practised by then at postal ballots.

Please make sure you vote, and we're recommending a YES vote.

The poster features a dark blue top section with the text 'thanks for n% nothing' in white, where 'n%' is inside a red circle. The UNISON logo is in the top right. The bottom section is red with white text: 'University staff have been offered 0% for the toughest year of our working lives', 'Vote yes' (with a large 'X' in a box over 'Vote'), and 'to strike for the pay we deserve'. The website 'unison.org.uk/thanksfornothing' is at the bottom.

thanks
for
n%
nothing

UNISON
the public service union

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offered 0% for the toughest year
of our working lives

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yes

to strike for the pay we deserve

unison.org.uk/thanksfornothing

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