

UNISON

the public service union

University of Leeds Branch Bulletin

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WHAT'S OUR BRANCH EVER DONE FOR US?

Many of our members may not realise what their branch has achieved over the past 12-18 months. Here are just a few of the things we've done for our members (and non-members!):

Help for local flood victims - UNISON joined forces with Unite and UCU to e-mail the VC and HR, asking them to highlight the University's Hardship Fund in light of the flooding over Christmas that was likely to have seriously affected some staff members' finances. There was a notice in the next staff e-newsletter, which they almost certainly wouldn't have done without our request, although the unions weren't mentioned in the notice.

Free car parking – because of their shift patterns overlapping with the new core hours ruling, many of our evening cleaners were about to be charged full day parking rates. UNISON was able to either help them to change shifts or come to an arrangement with car parking services so that they would not be charged for a full day because of 20-30 minutes' parking.

Challenging Fixed Term Contracts – keeping the pressure on senior management about the unacceptability of the over-use of such contracts (there needs to be a 'justifiable reason', such as maternity cover, for their use) has resulted in a good number of these contracts being changed to open-ended (i.e. permanent) in recent months.

Fixed Term Promotions (which, after initial challenges, the University tried to rename as secondments) – a particular group of staff, who had been encouraged to apply for promotion, were told that they were to be promoted, 'but only for a fixed period'; this was out of step with any agreed University procedures. 18 months of pressure later and the employer has announced that these contracts will now be made permanent.

The Trade Union (TU) Bill – local initiatives, led by some of the branch's newer reps, have seen targeted lobbying of members of the House of Lords (who have in private replies been complimentary about the initiative and quality of the work done) have assisted in pushing the legislation to the committee stage where it will be gone through line by line; recent press reports suggest the government is becoming increasingly unsure of its ground in this battle. There is still much work to be done, but this has been a promising start.

LUU pay negotiations – negotiations resulted in an agreed 2% pay increase for the calendar year 2016.

University's (initial) plans for the School of Healthcare - this involved the loss of several courses, some of which are held in high esteem nationally, which would have led to the loss, not just of the teaching and expertise, but to student/career opportunities and jobs as well as a loss in expertise for the NHS. The move was opposed by a collaboration of all three campus unions and students with the result that all courses and jobs were saved and the University was forced to seek more creative solutions in its search for economies.

Many **individuals facing redundancy / dismissal** due to 'capability' or other reasons have been assisted to get the best deal possible in their particular circumstances, including different employment.

Almost **weekly consultations** with management over amendments / improvements to University policies that affect the day-to-day working lives of members (and non members).



Above and below: UNISON Reps Rose Bavage and Martin Pelan at the Big Workplace meeting

WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

UNISON Stewards Rose Bavage and Joanne Bamford, Communications and Admin Officer Dawn Amesbury and Caroline Hammerton from the Yorkshire and Humberside region, ran a stall at the TUC's Women's Health in the Workplace event at Leeds Park Plaza on 8th March. Our branch also sponsored and provided a raffle prize for the event, which was part of International Women's Day.

The event had some excellent speakers, including Dr Christine Sprigg, Occupational Psychologist at the University of Sheffield's Management School. Dr Sprigg's talk, which dealt with bullying and incivility in the workplace, revealed women are more likely to be victims of bullying although the reasons were not entirely clear and more research was needed. Also, university staff members (academic and non-academic) were more likely than other public sector staff to be victims of cyber-bullying both in and outside of the workplace. Other speakers included Leti Hawthorn, MacMillan/Leeds OHAS, Malika Machour, UGTT, Tunisian National Trade Union, and Tony Mander, Nuffield Manor Oxford, Member & Fellow, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

HEARTUNIONS WEEK

Our branch ran and promoted several activities as part of the TUC's Heartunions Week, a week of action to celebrate the great work done by union reps and members in our workplaces and in society.

The week kicked off with a screening of the Big Workplace Meeting hosted by Eddie Izzard and Frances O'Grady. Later in the week we ran a 'Take Your Lunchbreak' event, inviting all members to come and take their lunch with us.

We also held a foodbank collection and encouraged members to attend the Staff Wellbeing Fair at the Staff Centre Lounge.

