



15–21 Dec 2014 / Millions of people in the UK are trapped in low-paid, insecure jobs. Decent Jobs Week shines a light on our growing jobs crisis.

ABOUT DECENT JOBS WEEK

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# Midlands TUC Update

December 2014

## Articles

- Decent Jobs Week
- Midlands TUC Reps Awards Night
- Qatar – PlayFair campaign
- Paul Nowak visit to UCATT / NET
- Young Workers Forum debate
- Hard Up Festival
- Pensioners Network: International Day of Older Persons
- Unionlearn: Celebration of learning

## From the Regional Secretary

Times are tough for working people. The economic policies pursued over the last few years have resulted in hardship for millions of working people and have failed to build an economy that works for all.

Unfortunately, following the Autumn statement that pain is set to continue. And yet, by any measure austerity has failed.

The Chancellor missed his deficit reduction pledge because the low-paid Britain is paying much less tax than expected. We need better pay and better jobs. The people of our region deserve nothing less.

And we know that we need *stronger unions* if we are to create a more equitable and sustainable future and that will guide our campaigning in the coming months.

So, what is coming up in 2015?

Firstly, the Midlands TUC have partnered up with Leeds University to undertake

academic research into the state of **collective bargaining** in the region. The researchers are still seeking information from unions, so please could do contact me ([lbarron@tuc.org.uk](mailto:lbarron@tuc.org.uk)) to discuss how your union can contribute to this important survey.

Secondly, following on from the successful Fair Pay Fortnight in 2014 that helped to put pay front and centre of the political and industrial agenda, **Fair Pay Fortnight** will return in February 2015 (*Feb 16-March 1<sup>st</sup>*).

Again, please do get in touch to discuss how you and your organisations can play a full role in this important campaign

Thirdly, the **Midlands TUC Annual Conference** will be held on *February 28<sup>th</sup>* in Birmingham and will coincide with Fair Pay Fortnight. TUC General Secretary, *Frances O'Grady* and campaigning MP, *Tom Watson* are already confirmed speakers.

So, I hope you will see from this newsletter that the Midlands TUC has been an active campaigning organisation, working with our affiliates to put the interests of working people first. And I trust you will also see that this campaigning zeal will continue through 2015 and beyond.

Lee Barron



## Decent Jobs Week 15-20 December



Millions of people in the UK are trapped in low paid, insecure jobs. There are more than 1.4 million zero-hours contracts in use, offering no steady work. Others, such as agency and casual workers, lose out on important rights and benefits.

The recovery is creating new jobs but many are of poor quality. As a result, more and more people struggle to pay their rent, mortgage and heat their homes. Women and young workers are particularly affected.

From 15 to 21 December, the TUC is organising Decent Jobs Week, a series of events across England and Wales that will raise awareness about Britain's jobs' crisis.

The TUC is campaigning for:

1. *Improved rights for zero-hours workers*
2. *The same decent employment rights for all*
3. *Equal pay for agency workers*
4. *Better enforcement of workplace rights for low-paid, vulnerable workers*
5. *Better access for all workers to union representation and collective bargaining.*

In the Midlands a series of campaign actions have been organised

Campaigners will be asking the public to sign a giant Decent Jobs Week Christmas card which will be taken to Parliament in

the New Year.

Activists dressed in Decent Jobs Week Santa outfits will also be handing out Christmas chocolate coins campaign leaflets in the form of Christmas cards

Midlands TUC lunchtime street stalls (12non-2pm) have been organised in the following locations:

15/12	Birmingham	High Street, near Marks & Spencer, B4 7SS
16/12	Nottingham	Brian Clough statue, King Street
17/12	Leicester	'Carpet of Light', LE1 5AD
18/12	Stoke	Tontine Square, Hanley, ST1 1NP
19/12	Derby	"The Ram", DE1 2PR

In addition to these TUC street activities, other stalls are being organised by local Trade Councils and the Midlands TUC Young Workers Forum in the following locations:

13/12	Northampton	Market Square , bottom of Abington Street, NN1 2DF from 11.00am
13/12	Hucknall	Hucknall High St, near T8's Wine Bar, NG15 7HF 10am – 12pm
20/12	Worcester	The Guildhall, Worcester
20/12	Shrewsbury	TBC

## Midlands TUC Reps Awards Night

On November 28<sup>th</sup> 270 trade unionists, employers and politicians came together to celebrate the work and achievement of trade union reps in the region.



Villa Park was the venue for the third annual awards night. Another hugely successful night, with another sell out evening of 27 tables from over 20 organisations, the Awards night continues to grow each year, a true testament to the value that the movement rightly places on the work of our union reps.

In addition to the Awards presentations, which are detailed below, the evening was accompanied by BECTU activist, Rob Lugg providing the after dinner speech about the tremendous campaign for a Living Wage at the Ritzy Cinema and ongoing campaign at Picturehouse.



We are again grateful for the support of our sponsors, without whom we would not be able to put on the Awards. Companies that share our values, companies that are truly part of the trader union movement. So, our thanks go to **Pellacraft**



for providing the Awards and materials for the night and for **Pete Jenkins** for his sponsorship of the photography.

Individual Awards had different sponsors and they are all gratefully recognised below



### 2014 Andy Becker Student Award for Trade Union Education

This year a new Award was created in memory of a well-respected Midlands TUC tutor, Andy Becker, whom sadly passed away early in 2012. A small memorial fund has been created in his name, with the winner of the Andy Becker Student Award for Trade Union Education receiving a £100 donation towards further educational study.



The inaugural winner of this award was **Michael Forrester** for his role in mentoring less experienced reps and in encouraging other reps to attend TUEd courses

## Midlands TUC Update

### 2014 Campaigning Rep of the Year



The 2014 Campaigning Rep of the year went to **Martin Page** from **PCS** for his active role in fighting threats to Check off and facility time in the face of hostile personal attacks



The Highly Commended certificate went to **Steven Hibbert** from **UNITE** for his role in campaigning to protect pension provision for workers at Rolls Royce



The Communications Rep of the Year went to the **CWU's Darren Glebocki** for his tireless work in taking his branch communication to a new level as well as producing communication materials for the Nottingham & Mansfield Trades Council



The Highly Commended certificate went to **Ian Middle** from **UNISON** for his role in establishing a branch website, regular newsletters and the most successful AGM in the history of Sandwell UNISON branch



## Midlands TUC Update

### 2014 Health and Safety Rep of the Year



**David Trigg** from **UNITE** won the Health and Safety Rep Award for his ongoing, determined and inspirational work highlighting the dangers of asbestos over the last 25 years, both for his work for UNITE and his involvement with the "Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team"



There were two joint winners of the Highly Commended certificate. Firstly, **Laney Walsh** from **UNISON** for her work promoting mental health awareness; and secondly to **John Holmes** from the **RMT** for his 7 days a week health & safety campaigning



### 2014 Mary Macarthur Equalities Award



The 2014 Mary Macarthur Equalities Award went to the **GMB's Liz McLachlan** for her work in establishing a campaigning women's group at the GMB that has done extensive work in raising awareness about domestic violence, and has channelled fundraising money into local community groups such as women's shelters.



The Equalities Award was renamed the 'Mary Macarthur Equalities Award' this year as part of the Midlands TUC's efforts to expand the Chainmakers into a series of year long activities.

Both union members and the employer have a better understanding of the needs of a multi-cultural and diverse workforce due to the work of the 2014 Highly Commended Certificate winner, **Sajid Shaikh** of the **CWU**.



## Midlands TUC Update

### 2014 Organising Rep of the Year Award



**Dawn Downes** from **UNISON** picked up the Organising Award for her prominent role in mobilising her branch into an active campaigning branch. Dawn's organising activities has led to a 25% increase in branch membership, with the number of reps increasing from just 3 to the present 21.



The Highly Commended certificate went to **Jason McInerney** of **UCATT** for his efforts in securing a recognition agreement in the face of a hostile employer who made life incredibly difficult for him personally.



### 2014 Union Learning Rep of the Year



The winner for the Union Learning Rep award went to a joint nomination for the way **Helen Penn-Berkeley** and **Mark Robinson** from **PCS** who worked hand in glove as a partnership to establish the learning agenda as a key organising tool for their branch, which has resulted in increased membership and moribund branches being revitalised.



The Highly Commended Certificate was awarded to **Stuart Webb** from **UNITE** for his dogged determination to keep the learning established in this rep's workplace and in getting learning built into the wider industrial strategy of the branch.



## Midlands TUC Update

### 2014 Campaign of the Year



The 2014 Campaign of the Year went to **UNISON** and **UNITE** for their high profile anti-privatisation campaign of national importance.

The campaign to defend the George Eliot hospital from privatisation captured the imagination of members, activists, the public and the wider trade union movement.



This was a magnificent victory and a benchmark in the wider campaign against NHS privatisation, with the campaign rightly held up nationally as an example of how to run a successful union campaign.

The 2014 Midlands TUC Campaign of the Year Award was collected by **Dawn Downes** representing **UNISON** and **Frank Finn** representing **UNITE**.

The Highly Commended Certificate went to **the GMB** for the campaign at **NORSACA**.



Following threats to major changes to the terms and conditions by the employer, this

campaign focussed on dramatically increasing union membership in a determined focus to secure recognition.

This process led to an increase in membership from around 20 members in 2013 to the present 111 and recognition as secured earlier this year.

The Highly Commended Certificate was collected by **Sean Redgate** and **Helen Mutch** representing the **GMB**



## PlayFair Qatar



Playfair Qatar is a campaign from the TUC about the abuse of migrant workers building 2022 World Cup stadiums and infrastructure in Qatar.

In 2022 Qatar will host the World Cup, taking the tournament to the Middle East for the first time. This has sparked a major construction frenzy in the world's richest country as it prepares to host its most glamorous event to date.

Unfortunately, for the workers building World Cup stadiums in Qatar, the reality is far from glamorous. Workers - drafted in mainly from India, Nepal and Bangladesh - are forced to live in squalid and overcrowded conditions, paid as little as 45p an hour and work in a dangerous environment.

To date almost 1000 workers have died in Qatar and if nothing changes the death toll could be as much as 4000 by the time the World Cup starts in 2022.

To support the campaign, please take a photo of yourself in your club colours holding one of the PlayFair signs (*which can be downloaded from the campaign website [playfairqatar.org.uk](http://playfairqatar.org.uk)*) and sent through to [photos@playfairqatar.org](mailto:photos@playfairqatar.org) and/or [rjohnston@tuc.org.uk](mailto:rjohnston@tuc.org.uk)



## TUC AGS, Paul Nowak, visits UCATT tram workers in Nottingham

On November 11th 2014, the TUC's Assistant General Secretary, Paul Nowak and Midlands TUC Regional Secretary, Lee Barron joined UCATT Acting Regional Secretary Shaun Lee, UCATT members and Organisers along with company representatives to visit the Nottingham Tram extension Project.



Joint working between the main contractors and UCATT has resulted in a positive agreement, helping overcome some of the worst aspects involved with Umbrella Companies.

The massive project, equipping the city with 3 tram lines, and has employed and trained over 1,500 operatives.

Moreover, a large proportion of the workforce has come from the local areas and helped to provide skills and opportunities for many people from deprived backgrounds with no previous skills or experience.





## Midlands TUC Update

However, as with many construction sites, Umbrella Companies have been a particularly hot topic.

Workers recruited through Agencies, (like the majority at the Tram project) are paid through Umbrella Companies, but these companies charge for this service. On top of this, workers are also forced to pay Employers National Insurance as well as Employees NI.

UCATT argue that such practices exploit legal loopholes, and serve to cut workers and Treasury incomes. More information on this can be found in this latest UCATT publication: [The Umbrella Company Con Trick](#)

Nevertheless, through working with Nottingham City Council and the contractors, UCATT have been able to secure positive results such as:

- Agreement for pay roll fees (+£20 per week) not to be deducted from workers pay. *(These fees have been met by the contractors and Agencies instead)*
- Access to, and opportunity to present at, daily site inductions.
- Unrestricted access to site canteens and members.
- Regular meetings with HR/management set up to resolve member issues.

Promoting direct employment, with proper contracts is naturally the preferred employment model. but Umbrella Companies will continue to operate in construction until adequate legislation is introduced.

That being the case, UCATT argue that the agreement on the Nottingham Tram Project is welcomed, and is something UCATT believe should be rolled out across other projects, particularly public contracts, where such practices exist.

## Young Workers Forum – Chesterfield College Debate



As part of Living Wage Week and Young Workers Month, the Midlands TUC Young Workers Network held a debate at Chesterfield College on November 9th.

Joining the Mids TUC Young Workers on the panel were representatives from the NUS and Chris Williamson MP.

The Young Workers Forum have pledged to campaign on

- A Living Wage for all
- Votes at 16
- Decent employment rights
- Affordable housing

The group is just getting active and is keen to hear from more young workers from across the Midlands as it seeks to grow activity.

The next step of the group's campaign activity will be running a stall in Hucknall in support of Decent Jobs Week.

For more information about the group contact Rob Johnston [rjohnston@tuc.org.uk](mailto:rjohnston@tuc.org.uk)



### Hard Up Festival

Thousands of trade unionists turned out for the TUC 'Hard UP' festival in Birmingham on 28 September.



Coinciding with the Conservative Party conference, the festival was organised as part of the ongoing 'Britain Needs A Pay Rise' campaign and was designed to highlight the cost of living crisis affecting ordinary working people.

Campaigners from across the Midlands gathered in Victoria Square and marched through Birmingham's busy shopping areas calling for an end to low pay and job security for millions of workers.

The family fun day was colourful and musical as campaigners engaged with the public to discuss how and why the Midlands Needs A Payrise!



### Midlands TUC Pensioners Network



To coincide with International Day of Older Person's on October 1<sup>st</sup>, the Midlands TUC Pensioners Network undertake campaign action outside the Conservative Party Conference calling on the Government to ensure decent pension provision for all.

In addition to engaging the public, over a hundred letters were written by members of the public to MPs on this topic and the group are determined to keep campaigning.

### Unionlearn: Celebration of Learning

More than 300 workers took part in Celebration of Learning events organised by the unionlearn Midlands team, during the month of October 2014.

They used the month-long learning initiative to help union learning representatives (ULRs) encourage interest in informal learning through a series of short lunchtime workplace workshops.

The team received over 30 requests to run workshops in workplaces as diverse as supermarkets, hospitals, police headquarters, local councils and central government departments. ULRs from unions including shop workers' union USDAW, public services union UNISON, public and commercial services PCS union and the probation officers' union NAPO took part in the events.

## Midlands TUC Update

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Stressbusting workshops ran with the support of UNISON ULRs at local authorities including Ashfield, Rushcliffe, North West Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Walsall; at Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Police headquarters; and at West Midlands Fire Service in Birmingham.

At the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in Corby, unionlearn delivered two back-to-back stressbusting sessions for 66 people who had been given an hour's release time by the employer.

NAPO ULR Arlene Simms helped unionlearn to run a workshop at the National Probation Office in Saltley, Birmingham. *"The workshop was well constructed and had a lot of useful information around stress – its causes, symptoms and coping strategies. I would recommend it to other branches,"* she said.

Meanwhile the team ran Supporting Midlife Development workshops in several NHS and central government workplaces. Workers are retiring later in life, pensions are uncertain and traditional forms of life-long employment are disappearing, replaced, in many cases, by short-term, insecure and constantly changing roles. Many workers will therefore work in a number of different areas throughout their working lives. But workers in midlife who lose their jobs, particularly those over the age of 50, often find it difficult to find new work.

The workshops aimed to heighten awareness of the challenges faced by workers in midlife, help ULRs to support older colleagues in their workplaces, and introduce midlife development reviews to help older workers identify their transferrable skills.

They also introduced ULRs and their colleagues to a new interactive card game produced by unionlearn, *Value My Skills*. The cards help workers interested in a

new job, course, promotion or voluntary work to identify the abilities they have developed that are useful across a range of different jobs and industries.



*Everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed it,"* said ULR and acting Branch Secretary of the PCS union West Midlands and Warwickshire (Ministry of Justice) branch Lindsey Naughton. *"Members of staff were still talking about it the following day. One of the delivery managers also spoke to a PCS colleague to say how good it was."*

Other workshops, including *Understanding Your Payslip* (to help develop maths skills) and introductory IT ran at Tesco, Morrisons and Homebase stores with the support of USDAW ULRs, and at Oswestry Orthopaedic and Chesterfield hospitals with the support of UNISON.

Such has been the demand that the team will be running additional workshops throughout the rest of the year and into 2015. Ceramics union Unity ULRs will be supporting six stressbusting workshops at pottery manufacturers' Steelite and beginners IT workshops for the unemployed will run at Middleport Pottery throughout November and December.

If any ULR is interested in having a workshop run in their workplace, please do contact Surjit at the Birmingham office – [schohan@tuc.org.uk](mailto:schohan@tuc.org.uk) or 0121 262 6384.

### Keeping in touch

Published by TUC Midlands Region, 24 Livery Street, Birmingham, B3 2PA.

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