

# Midlands TUC Update

December 2016

## TUC Midlands Awards Night

18th November 2016  
Trent Bridge Cricket Ground

The 5<sup>th</sup> Midlands TUC Reps Awards Night was held on Friday November 18 at the iconic Trent Bridge Cricket Ground in Nottingham.



The sell-out event of 200 was another fabulous celebration of the work of our trade union reps, without whom there would be no movement.

Alongside the Award's a powerful presentation was given on the night about the campaign at Sports Direct, an inspiring story of union organising and campaigning that has had a huge impact in exposing the scandal of zero hour contracts and precarious work

## Andy Becker Student Award for Trade Union Education



**Keir Morrison** of UCATT secured the 2016 Andy Becker Student Award for Trade Union Education for his research during his TUC Diploma in Employment Law. His research into workforce casualisation was regarded by his tutor as 'as good a project presentation as I have ever seen in 18 years as a TUC tutor' and 'tackles a major organisational problem for our movement.'

## Campaigning Rep of the Year

The 2016 Midlands TUC Campaigning Rep of the Year went to **William Walker** from East Staffs TUC.



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William jointly established East Staffs Peoples TV which promotes causes from a left perspective and is currently involved in the production of a short film to promote the role of trade union councils.

He was also instrumental in organising a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum to mark International Workers Memorial Day.

During 'heart unions week' he also produced a short film featuring local trade union activists and officials explaining why they value their membership and oppose the Trade Union Bill.

The Highly Commended Certificate went to **Mark Purchon** and **Neil Wilson** from the **GMB**.

In the face of hostile management and a pay freeze, a determined campaign was fought over 18 months that brought together workers from different nationalities. The result was an increase in union membership of 300%, pay increases and the transfer of over 100 agency staff onto full-time contracts. .

### Communications Rep of the Year

The 2016 Midlands TUC Communications Rep of the Year went to **Janet Dodd** from **GMB**.



Janet has shown real leadership in the drive to transfer union subscriptions from check-off to direct debit. By personally travelling to ambulance stations across the region and, just as importantly, actively encouraging fellow workplace organisers to arrange similar meetings focussed on the 'Switch Campaign', 60% of members have now moved across to Direct Debit.

The Highly Commended Certificate went to **Mark Greenhill** of the **CWU**.



Mark has repeatedly gone above and beyond. Holding one to one meetings with members to discuss difficult workplace issues, conversations with younger workers around what being a union member means and a willingness to spread this communication into non-recognised workplaces has proven to be a successful organising approach – an approach based on repeated and deep communication.

### Health and Safety Rep of the Year

The 2016 Midlands TUC Health & Safety Rep of the Year is awarded to **Alison Morris** from **UNITE**.



Following a determined campaign Alison was reinstated to her job following her sacking for raising important health and safety concerns with the Fire Service.

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But this ordeal has not prevented her carrying out her role. Indeed, just two weeks following her reinstatement she ensured there was an evacuation following a bomb scare despite prevarication from her employers.

Alison has shown huge commitment in the face of determined opposition but has ultimately been successful with Health & Safety committees established at both a local and national level.

The Highly Commended certificate went to **Ben Cook** of the **GMB**.



The restocking of top shelves in superstores has long been a contentious issue. Ben's diligence and commitment has resulted in modifications and improvements to equipment. As a result all colleagues now have a piece of equipment that is both a huge help and, crucially, safe to operate.

### Mary Macarthur Equalities Rep of the Year Winner

The 2016 Midlands TUC Equalities Rep of the Year was awarded jointly to the UCATT Reps, **Rebecca Hart, Rae Crown, Helen Court, Jayne Shacklock** and **Maria Copeland** for the 'women in construction' initiative.



There are statistically more men called 'Dave' than there are females working within construction, with just 2% of the workforce being female.

The construction industry is facing a skills gap with nearly 200,000 new roles expected over the next 5 years. The 'women in construction' initiative seeks to address both the skills shortage and female under-representation.

To date, over 500 women have attended taster sessions and Nottingham City Homes has seen an increase of female applicants from 0.5% in 2014 to 16% in 2016 and nearly 50% of this year's apprenticeship cohort are women.

The Highly Commended Certificate went to **Sharon Henderson-Nix** of **UNISON**. Sharon has been a diligent campaigner for equality within the police service for over 16 years and has been an inspiration to female staff and reps throughout the branch.

A true champion, her colleagues wish to say *"thank you for your enthusiasm, your belief, your guidance & advice, your sense of humour and just for being you"*.

### Organising Rep of the Year

The 2016 Midlands TUC Organising Rep of the Year went to **Raja Amin MBE** from the **RMT**.



Lobbying Parliament, a letter writing campaign, community organising along with constant communication and mobilisation has delivered tremendous results in terms of improved conditions for taxi drivers and union organisation.



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Today around 800 taxi drivers have now joined the RMT in Birmingham and continue to join. From a position of low density the Organising initiative that was undertaken in Birmingham is now being used by various unions across the UK to recruit and deliver for taxi drivers.

The Highly Commended Certificate went to **Bally Sahonta** of the **GMB**. Bally has used workplace learning as an organising tool to build union organisation within her workplace.



The successful use of learning has built positive relationships with the employer and provided access to vital skills and training for care workers. Her determination over the last four years in embedding the learning agenda has led to a membership increase of 70%.

### Learning Rep of the Year

The 2016 Midlands TUC Union Learning Rep of the Year went to **Wendy McGlinchey** from **UNITE**



Wendy left school with minimal qualifications. When the opportunity came up to acquire qualifications at work she was so affected and 'fired up' from her experience that she decided to apply for a Union Learning Rep role. She is now a qualified Assessor and takes learners through a 12 month Apprenticeship programme. To date, she has overseen 60 learners through her course.

She is also part of a national team that she has mentored through their assessor training.

In essence, Wendy is the embodiment of the value of workplace learning, providing opportunities for workers to acquire new skills and opportunities and her story is an inspiration to us all.

The Highly Commended Certificate went to **Adam Alarakhia** of the **CWU**



Adam became a Union Learning Rep as training was not previously offered or talked about in their workplace. He has engaged all 1500 branch members and his commitment to learning means that he is now involved in training in a personal capacity as well as a union role.

His long term ambition of a learning centre in Leicester came to fruition in May this year.

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### Campaign of the Year

The 2016 Midlands TUC Campaign of the Year award went to the 'Sports Direct campaign by UNITE.



Widespread coalition building with campaign groups, churches and football supporters, alongside workplace organising initiatives have been the hall mark of this campaign.

The campaign led to a dramatic fall in the company's share price, the pressure of which helped to secure victories at the company's AGM.

Workers have since been moved from zero-hours to fixed term contracts, received a pay rise and secured back pay for underpayment of the National Minimum Wage, along with other important victories.

Ultimately, the campaign has done much to shine a light on the scandal of zero hours contracts and precarious work.

The Highly Commended Certificate was awarded to the NASUWT Newark Academy Team.



Faced with compulsory redundancies members at Newark School were determined to fight.

Crucial to the campaign was the engagement of parents and the local community in highlighting the effect of job losses on the pupils.

Industrial action was taken with teachers standing on the picket line for 8 days. They received tremendous support from the local community, maintained their dignity and pride and secured significant local and national media coverage.

The result was that there were no compulsory redundancies and the academy was taken off the existing sponsor. The action was an embarrassment to the employer and brought NASUWT members closer together within the school.





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### Dying to Work Update



The Dying to Work campaign has continued to grow with more employers signing the Dying to Work Voluntary Charter, with more than 170,000 workers now covered by the Charter.

The campaign is reliant on affiliates getting employers to support the *Dying to Work* voluntary charter. The TUC doesn't have direct negotiating recognition with firms and as a result affiliates are urged to take up the campaign with employers. A negotiators guide has been produced to support reps looking to support unions in their negotiations which can be found on the campaign website.

Employers that have now signed the Charter include:

- AB Produce
- Birmingham City Council
- Carillion Rail
- Central College Nottingham
- E-On
- Isle of Man Steam Packet Company
- London Borough of Harrow Council
- Legal & General
- Leicester City Council
- Mansfield District Council
- Nottingham City Homes
- Pellacraft
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Santander
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Sheffield City Council

We expect to reach a quarter of a million workers to be covered by the Charter in 2017.



As ever, the Dying to Work campaign is willing to provide speakers about the campaign to union conferences and events. If you are interested in having a speaker on the campaign please contact Rob Johnston at [rjohnston@tuc.org.uk](mailto:rjohnston@tuc.org.uk)



The campaign is also developing a bespoke training manual that will be available for employers to roll out into workplaces in order to ensure the principles contained in the Charter are fully enacted. We hope that this training material will be available early in 2017.



A full list of supporters as well as a range of campaign materials and information can be found on the campaign website: [www.dyingtowork.co.uk](http://www.dyingtowork.co.uk)

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### Conservative Party Conference: March & Rally October 2



Thousands of union activists and campaigners came to Birmingham to coincide with the start of the Conservative Party Conference.

The message from the march was clear: Austerity has failed on its own terms. Working people are hurting and the economy is failing to produce enough quality jobs needed to tackle long standing structural inadequacies. Quite simply, a change of direction is needed with investment in public services, industry and infrastructure urgently required.

Blessed with sunshine the march proceeded to snake its way from Victoria Square, down New Street and all the way to the rally at East Side Park.



### Unity in the Community



In response to the rise in race crimes following the EU referendum and a motion from the Musician's Union a 'Unity in the Community' gig was held in Stoke on 11 November.



*Image: Staffordshire Sentinel News & Media*

The event was organised by North Staffs TUC and NORSCARF and received generous financial support from UNISON & CWU and was promoted heavily by all unions.

The result was a great evening, sending a strong message that the community in Stoke will not tolerate racism and will not be divided by hate.



In addition to the event, a 'unity statement' was produced that was supported by Stoke's MPs, cross-section of councillors and unions.

In due course, we hope that more #unityinthecommunity style events will be organised across the region.



## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

### **Equalities Conference: 29/10**

Speakers to the 2016 Equalities Conference included:

- Roger McKenzie UNISON's Assistant General Secretary about securing new workers' rights
- Kathy Salt and Tricia Clough about the 'WASPI' campaign
- the Birmingham Organised Sisterhood Society (BOSS) on their campaigning activity
- Dr Andy Hodder from the University of Birmingham and Jordan Stapleton from the Young Workers forum on organising young workers
- Anita Wright from the National Assembly of Women.

The conference also elected Angela Gilraine (GMB) and Fadel Takroui (UNITE) as interim Chair and Secretary for the newly formed Equalities Forum.

### **Health and Safety Forum: 17/11**

The Health and Safety Forum met and explored the threat of asbestos and new and emerging risks. The group also discussed how to campaign to defend Health & Safety protection following Brexit.

**To get involved in the work of either the Health and Safety Forum or Equality Forum please contact [rjohnston@tuc.org.uk](mailto:rjohnston@tuc.org.uk)**

### **Occupational Cancers Conference:**

West Midlands Hazards Trust and Midlands TUC held a conference on Saturday September 17<sup>th</sup> examining the issue of occupational cancers. Speakers included Hugh Robertson, Health & Safety officer at the TUC, Helen Lynn, Alliance for Cancer Prevention UK, Satinder Bains from Irwin Mitchell Solicitors and Doug Jewell from West Midlands Hazards Trust.

## **West Midlands Combined Authority: Living Wage**

The Midlands TUC have written an open letter to all the Mayoral candidates for the West Midlands Combined Authority.

The letter calls on the candidates to commit the West Midlands Combined Authority to become an accredited Living Wage employer and to use its procurement policies to spread the Living Wage throughout the West Midlands.

In the letter, **Lee Barron**, Midlands TUC Regional Secretary says "*The Trades Union Congress in the Midlands is absolutely committed to help in building a world class economy fit to be called the 'Midlands Engine', but we are clear in that the only way a world class economy can be built is with world class jobs, terms and conditions. Not zero hours contracts, bogus self-employment, low wages and job insecurity.*"

## **Pensioners Network: Attendance Allowance Campaign**



During the Conservative Party Conference, the Midlands TUC Pensioners Network worked with the regional Pensioners Convention to undertake a lobbying action at Conservative Party Conference as part of the campaign to protect Attendance Allowance.

A campaign postcard was produced and 500 were distributed to conference delegates



# LOOKING FORWARD



Join Action for Rail's national day of action on **3 January 2017** to call for public ownership, affordable fares and a properly staffed railway that is inclusive and accessible for all.

Fares will be going up again in January 2017, and since privatisation they've increased by 24% on average – it's daylight robbery. Meanwhile we often have to endure late, overcrowded and understaffed services, while private train companies continue to pay out increasingly bigger dividends to their shareholders. There is information about the day of action on the website [actionforrail.org](http://actionforrail.org)

## Heart Unions Week



To showcase the positive work of trade unions a second 'Heart Unions week' is being coordinated.

The week will run between **7 and 14 February** with unions and trade councils holding a wide variety of activities to demonstrate the positive role of unions in the workplace and society.

## Meeting Dates

Equality Forum: *27 January*  
Unionlearn: Supporting Learners Conference: *7 February*  
Heart Unions Week: *7-14 February*  
Women's Committee: *15 February*  
Annual Conference: *25 February*  
Pensioners Network AGM: *23 March*  
Women Chainmakers' Festival: *1 July*  
Health & Safety Forum: *13 July*  
TUC Congress: *10-13 September (Brighton)*  
Women's Committee: *6 September*  
Equalities Conference: *21 October*  
Health & Safety Forum: *16 November*  
Pensioners Network: *22 November*

## Keeping in touch

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

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