

Regional report from Northern TUC and unionlearn

Regional Council 12 October 2013

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Public Services Alliance



As the NHS turned 65, two events took place which sent a clear message to the government – Our NHS is not for sale, not today, not tomorrow, not ever.

The first, organised by the Public Services Alliance took place in Durham on Saturday 21st September under the banner ‘Built to Care’.

More than 70 people gathered at County Hall to discuss collectively what unions, medical professionals, service users and MPs can do to defend the NHS from increasing privatisation and fragmentation. The meeting heard from a variety of speakers including Joanna Adams of 999 Call for the NHS who spoke passionately about her own experience of the NHS when her sister was diagnosed with lung cancer.

The morning started with the excellent video commissioned by Unite which can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/unite65>

A full report on the event is available on the TUC website www.tuc.org.uk/northern.

NHS faces the gravest crisis in its history

That was the message from the TUC General Secretary, Frances O’Grady when she addressed the Save Our NHS Rally in Manchester on Sunday 29th September, the day the Conservative Party began its annual conference. In her speech Frances said “High-quality healthcare should be available for all according to need, not the ability to pay. We won’t let this government destroy what has taken generations to build.”

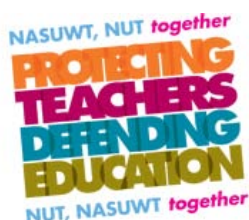
It was estimated that 70,000 people joined the march and rally and came from all areas of the country travelling by bus, coach, train and car, as individuals and as groups organised by their trade union and local trades council. A number of coaches travelled from the north east and Cumbria.

The government were left in no doubt of the overwhelming support to keep the NHS in the public domain, and working with unions through the PSA and others we will do everything possible to protect our most cherished national institution.

The PSA also supported the FBU official action on 25th September and the protests against the sell-off of the Probation Service organised by NAPO held in Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Darlington.

And as local coalitions continue to campaign against the Bedroom Tax, the TUC commented that “With both Labour and the Liberal Democrats now committed to scrapping the barmy bedroom tax, the onus is now on the government to do the right thing and end the policy now.” With nearly one in four tenants across the North East and Cumbria in bedroom tax debt and the situation likely to get far worse over the coming months, campaigners will be stepping up the pressure to ensure this needless and cruel policy is abolished.

Proposed NASUWT/NUT Industrial Action



Following the day of action which took place in the Eastern, West Midlands, East Midlands and Yorkshire and

Humberside regions on 1st October over adverse changes to teachers’ pay, pensions, working conditions and jobs, a day of action is taking place in the northern region on Thursday 17th October in Durham.

10.00am – Assemble for March at Millenium Place in front of Gala Theatre, Durham, DH1 1WA – March leaves at 10.30am

- 11.00am – Rally at Durham Students’ Union, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham, DH1 3AN

Information is also available on the NASUWT website www.nasuwt.org.uk

NHS Campaigners Toolkit

People from all walks of life joined together to fight against the Health and Social Care Act that the government pushed through in 2012.



Now we need to regroup and strengthen that coalition to fight to keep our NHS safe by:

- exposing the cuts and privatisation that threaten to break it up
- campaigning for patient safety and safe staffing levels
- campaigning against NHS money going into private profits
- lobbying for transparency and openness from all providers.

This free campaign guide will help you get involved in action to save our NHS where you live and work. Download a copy of the guide at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/industrial/tuc-22629-f0.cfm>

Transforming workplace Health and Wellbeing in the North East



oversight of the Better Health at Work Award.

We are pleased to report that there is now an official partnership arrangement in place between Newcastle City Council and the Northern TUC to provide coordination and

The North East Better Health at Work Award was designed by the local NHS to encourage employers in the region to improve conditions at work so their staff have the opportunity to be fitter, healthier and safer. Now working in conjunction with the Northern TUC to widen participation even further, more than 400 employers have committed to better health a work.

To find out more please contact Tom Ross, tross@tuc.org.uk, telephone: 07919174202

Landmark victory for transport cleaners

Congratulations to the RMT for securing a landmark victory for cleaners working for Churchill on the Tyne and Wear Metro in their long running battle for pay and workplace justice. The landmark deal has secured a 5% increase in pay every year for the next four years and an additional leave day for some of the lowest paid workers in the country. Craig Johnston, RMT Relief Regional Organiser North said “This is a massive victory, not only for the RMT but for all Trade Unionists – the message is clear, Organised Workers Can Win!”

Government plans to charge migrants

TUC comments on Government plans to charge migrants to use NHS. The TUC has a long history of opposition to racism and xenophobia, and has consistently highlighted and

campaigned against discrimination against black and minority ethnic (BME) workers in the British labour market. The TUC believes in a rights-based approach towards migration which ensures equal rights for people at work whether they are indigenous or migrant workers. The TUC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Health's consultation on migrant access and their financial contribution to the NHS provision in England as we have serious concerns about the premise on which the proposals are founded as well as the negative impacts they are likely to cause. The full response is available on the TUC website <http://tinyurl.com/NHSmigrant>

Joint Working with MPs

Following on from the joint meeting with MPs held in May, a further meeting was held at the TUC offices on 17th September to look at how we could work together on some of the key campaign areas of the Regional Campaign Plan. Iain Wright MP for Hartlepool and Chair of the Northern Group would be discussing future joint working activity and identifying the relevant MP to lead on the various campaign strands at the next meeting of the Northern Group.

Reshuffle news

- Bridget Phillipson MP for Houghton and Sunderland South has been promoted to a Labour Whip. At 29 this makes her the youngest frontbench MP in the House of Commons.
- Sunderland Central Labour MP Julie Elliott has been promoted to one of the Shadow Ministers for Energy and Climate Change having previously been PPS to Caroline Flint within the Shadow team for this department.
- Sharon Hodgson Labour MP for Washington and Sunderland West has become a Shadow Minister in the Women's and Equalities Office, moving from Shadowing the Department for Education
- Workington Labour MP Tony Cunningham is no longer a Shadow Minister for the Department of International Development

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Other Labour MPs in the region continue with existing posts in their respective Shadow ministerial teams.

No Coalition MPs in the region were promoted by their parties.

Northern Living Wage Summit



We are delighted to report that Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary and Rachel Reeves MP, Shadow Works and Pensions Secretary have

confirmed attendance at the Northern Living Wage Summit which takes place at South Shields Town Hall on Thursday 7th November.

With up to 1 in 3 North East workers paid less than a living wage, this timely event (organised during Living Wage Week) for local authority councillors, businesses, community organisations and trade unions aims to help the North East take a leadership role in tackling poverty pay.

The Northern TUC Living Wage summit will enable you to find out more about:

- The impact of wage decline in local areas
- The cost of poverty pay
- The role of low pay in child poverty
- What is a living wage and how is it calculated
- The economic case for a living wage
- Overcoming barriers

To register please contact Melanie Lowden mlowden@tuc.org.uk

New guide for union reps



The TUC has launched a new guide for union reps on how to combat homophobia in the workplace.

The guide, LGBT Equality at Work, provides legal tips for challenging harassment

at work and practical advice on how unions can best represent their LGBT members.

LGBT Equality at Work offers guidance on a range of issues from challenging unacceptable behaviour and language to ensuring that LGBT workers who are posted to hostile countries are fully protected by their employers.

The TUC hopes the guide will help unions to make workplaces more accepting places for LGBT workers.

LGBT Equality at Work is available free to unions and can be ordered from TUC Publications or the PDF can be downloaded from the TUC website at:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-22605-f0.cfm>

Own up! Pay up! Clean up!



**OWN UP! PAY UP!
CLEAN UP!**

For over 20 years employers in the construction industry used secret files to vet new recruits and keep out of employment trade union and health and safety activists.

This blacklisting came to light when in March 2009 when the Information Commissioner's Office raided the offices of the Consulting Association and exposed the existence of a blacklist containing the details of 3,213 construction workers. They also found that the blacklist had been used by over 40 UK construction companies.

It is four and a half years since 44 construction workers were exposed as blacklisters following a raid on the Consulting Association by the Information Commissioner. The raid followed a tip off two years earlier than the company had been keeping secret files illegally for over 16 years. Yet even now, most of the 3,213 blacklisted construction workers and environmentalists are still unaware they have been blacklisted as they have not been contacted. Nor has a penny been paid to any of the victims.

That is why the TUC, along with the GMB, UCATT and Unite unions, and the Blacklist Support Group, is calling for a Day of Action against Blacklisting. This will be held on 20th November.

The TUC and the unions working in construction want a full public inquiry into the blacklisting scandal along the lines of the Leveson Inquiry into press behaviour.

For details of other activities and news around blacklisting see <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-22652-f0.cfm>

TUC Economic Quarterly October

This quarterly TUC report provides an analysis of UK economic and labour market developments over the three months to September 2013.

In this issue we find:

- Despite the recent pick up, growth has been weak and rebalancing is not occurring. There has been very little progress on deficit reduction.
- The labour market statistics continue the story of recent months: rising employment and stagnating earnings.
- Employment and unemployment performance between June 2010 – June 2013 has been less impressive than is often presumed.

Download the report at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-22649-f0.pdf>

Pensions news...

You will see from the front page of the TUC's trustee newsletter <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-22512-f0.cfm> that it's an exciting time for the trade union movement, as unions begin to put their money where their mouth is on pension funds and responsible investment. You can read more about the new Trade Union Share Owners initiative on page 4. It's also an exceptionally busy time for everyone connected with pensions

as the Pensions Bill continues its journey through Parliament. The Bill will transform the UK's state pension system but will also have a direct impact on trustees of workplace pension schemes, as the government looks to cap scheme charges, introduce a new system of pension transfers and revise the Pensions Regulator's approach to DB funding. You can read more about the Bill on this page - and see page 8 for more on the TUC's vision for a 'third consensus' in UK pensions policy. We are also eagerly looking forward to this year's annual trustee conference. See www.tucmembertrustee.eventbrite.com

Postcode divide in state pension entitlement set to grow to £67,000 by 2028

A woman in her late 40s from Corby can expect to receive £67,000 less state pension when she retires, compared to a woman of the same age in East Dorset, due to a widening gap in life expectancies and a rising state pension, according to a new report published by the TUC.

The report looks at life expectancy projections by gender, occupation and geographical area, and their effect on the amount of state pension people are set to receive. The state pension age is due to rise to 66 between 2018 and 2020 and to 67 between 2026 and 2028. The full report is available on the TUC website www.tuc.org.uk/statepensiondivide

Health and Safety News...

HSE Board

The last meeting of the HSE discussed a number of issues.

One of these was the revised ACoP on the Workplace regulations. Trade unions wanted a maximum temperature included. Not surprisingly that was not agreed but they did reluctantly agree to produce some guidance on the new "Workplace" page about high temperatures in particular sectors and what should be done to mitigate the effect on workers. On electronic and herbal cigarettes they said that they had not covered those in the section on smoking as the Code can only cover

what is in the legislation but they are apparently considering the need to have new legislation on this if DH research currently being undertaken shows that there is a need for it.

On construction the TUC representative made the point about bogus self employment which is connected with the proposals on self-employment in the de-regulation Bill. Given the experience over the removal of the hard hats and changes to the tower cranes regulations the TUC said that it was imperative given all this that the promised communications exercise was fully taken forward. They assured the board that this was in hand.

There is a new worry as well which officials reported at the meeting, which is the appearance of bogus asbestos certificates being produced to satisfy the needs of contractors in a hurry. Unions are strongly encouraged to report anything they suspect along these lines to the HSE. The next meeting of the board is on the 30th October.



Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others. To receive the bulletin weekly register with the TUC at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-22666-f0.cfm>

Included in the 5th October issue:

- Tell blacklisters to own up, pay up, and clean up!
- Unions challenge new 'resilience' push
- Pilots welcome flight hours change rejection
- Shopworkers are suffering violent abuse in silence
- Rail concerns as ministers axe safety jobs
- Rail union 'disgust' at tunnel maintenance neglect
- Slip cost bus driver his job



International

International Development Matters Issue 126

International Development Matters Issue 126 October 2013 IDM - Monthly newsletter reporting international development matters and issues affecting trade unionists around the world - including reports, statements, interviews and events www.tuc.org.uk/international

Death threat against human rights defenders in Cali

Some of you may have met Alfamir Castillo of the Women Sugar Cane Cutters Committee when she visited us in March this year. We have been advised that once again her life and the lives of her compatriots are in danger. News of this latest threat has come to us via War on Want. Please see details below:

A death threat has been left at the Cali office of human rights organisation Nomadesc. The note specifically threatens the lives of four human rights defenders: Berenice Celeita and Olga Araujo of Nomadesc; Alfamir Castillo of the Women Sugar Cane Cutters Committee and Martha Giraldo of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes. It states that all four will be punished with death. Please follow the link below to take action:

www.waronwant.org/protect

Tell High Street brands to fix their dangerous factories in Bangladesh - update



Who's hanging their workers out to dry?

We've had our first campaign successes! River Island and Matalan have agreed to sign the Accord. We've removed them from the list, but there are still 6 others to go. We know now that this works, so please help us keep the pressure on the remaining firms.

Due to the pressure of trade unions, campaigners and concerned consumers, over 80 brands – including H+M, Zara, Next, Primark, New Look and Debenhams – have so far committed to a union-backed Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. For details on this campaign and others please go to the TUC's Going to Work page <http://www.goingtowork.org.uk/>

Cuban activists visit the north east

The Northern TUC together with a number of affiliate trade unions had pleasure in hosting a visit of two young Cuban activists to the North East Region as part of a UK wide visit to raise awareness and support for an international campaign against the continuing illegal US blockade of Cuba imposed after the 1959 Cuban revolution, whilst building on the continuing work of campaigning for the release of the Miami Five.

Yudith Camps Alejo works for ICAP (Cuban Friendship Institute) and has responsibility for Middle Eastern and African countries, whilst Yamil Eduardo Martinez is a representative of the Public Service Workers' Union at municipal and provincial level. Both have lived their entire lives under the blockade and have had to suffer the difficulties and effects that has had on Cuban society.

Whilst in the Region Yudith and Yamil participated in a visit to Sunderland College looking at how young building apprentices are trained, gathering information on sustainable

resources and techniques that can be utilised around the world. Following on from this Unison Gateshead Health Branch Members welcomed our visitors to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead. This gave an opportunity to exchange views on how austerity and capitalism is impacting on the NHS and compare this with the Cuban health system.

Concluding a busy day of activities was the Northern TUC International and Young Members Forum. Yamil told the Forum about the impact the blockade has had on the generations of Cubans who have known nothing but life under the US oppression of Cuba through the imposition of the illegal blockade. Emphasis was placed on the role of young people and women within politics and society. Young activists from the region had an opportunity to explain how participation in recent visits to Cuba had increased their understanding of international issues, improved self-awareness and confidence, whilst emphasising the importance solidarity work has in times of struggle, providing a strength and unity that makes for a better world for us all.

We would like to express our thanks to UCATT, the Fire Brigades Union and Unite the Union for assisting in the financial facilitation of the visit to the North East.

UNIONLEARN



Unions make an outstanding contribution to north east Equality Awards

Unions, employers and individuals were rewarded for their strong commitment to equality and diversity as the winners of the 2013 North East Equality Awards were announced at a glittering ceremony at Gosforth Park Marriott Hotel on Friday 4th October.

Unionlearn with the Northern TUC were once again very proud to sponsor their own category, specifically for trade unions or trade union-led projects/initiatives and the calibre of

applications was as high as ever. The winner was Unison's Community Organising project which offers learner-led training targeted at people who don't traditionally engage. So far, the project has offered a wide range of training, such as Autism Awareness, Self-confidence for women and Alcohol Awareness/Substance misuse.

However, this was not the end of recognition for the role trade unions play in embedding equality and diversity into the workplace and beyond. The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) Northern Region LGBT Network fought off steep competition to win the Gateshead College sponsored Outstanding Practice Award for their innovative poster campaign designed to raise awareness and change perceptions of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and their contribution to industry and society.

Education, Learning and Skills Forum

The next Education, Learning and Skills Forum will take place on Monday 21st October at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.

This Forum will focus on the Family Learning Festival (which runs from 19th October to 3rd November 2013) and include Informal Adult Learning. There will be an update on the Learning and Skills agenda, including Better Health at Work, Go ON North East and Apprenticeships. There will also be the opportunity to take part in an informal learning taster session. To register go to <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/> or contact Anne Cairns, a cairns@tuc.org.uk.

To coincide with the Family Learning Festival and Get Online week 14-20 October, unionlearn has a small amount of funding for members to put on events, e.g. taster sessions in the workplace. Please contact Anne Cairns for further details on how to apply, acairns@tuc.org.uk, 0191 2275571.

New research shows over 500,000 North East adults lack basic online skills

Over half a million adults in North East of England – nearly a quarter of the region's population - lack the four basic online skills

needed to send and receive email, use a search engine, browse the internet and complete online forms.

Go ON UK, the cross-sector charity established by Baroness Lane Fox to make the UK the world's most digitally skilled nation, launched on 1st October kick starts Go ON North East – a programme designed to boost the basic online skills of every person, small business and charity across the region. The initiative will run for 26 weeks, there are over 100 partners involved and all 12 local authorities in North East have signed up.

TUC Organising Programme 2013-14

The TUC's Organising Academy Programme for 2013-14 has been released.

Our work through the Organising Academy has been designed to ensure that any union staff member can find a course that supports them in their effort to build a strong trade union movement. Within the programme for this year, you will see a continued focus on making organising more strategic and following on from successful trials last year, improving communications within campaigns. We continue to offer organising courses for support staff and also expand our leadership and management offer.

Also, we understand that unions often wish to develop their staff and executives in organising, campaigning and leadership around specific areas that reflect their key industries, sectors and challenges. We can tailor our programme on a bespoke basis and also the following:

- Building Campaign Community Coalitions
- Strategic Research
- Collective Bargaining and Negotiations
- Leadership and Management
- Lay Leadership: effective governing of unions

For more information on our core programme, including dates and content, please go to:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/union/tuc-22505-f0.cfm>

Bitesize Briefings September to December

The latest round of Bitesize Briefings takes place between September to December 2013. Briefings coming up in this quarter:

- Exposing Loan Sharks and Learning about Fair Finance: Wednesday 23rd October, TUC Newcastle, 1pm-4pm
- Living Wage: Monday 4th November, TUC Newcastle, 1pm-4pm
- Apprenticeships - Quality and Equality: Wednesday 27th November, TUC Newcastle 1pm-4pm

Full details on what the briefings cover and how to apply is available at

www.tuc.org.uk/northern

Getting Ready for e-Learning (GReL) course

This course introduces learners to the world of online learning. It covers both the technical aspects involved and the way learning takes place online.

The course covers: logging-on; using discussion forums; downloading documents; working with others online including group working; using web based resources; and responding to tutor led educational sessions.

The course generally runs over a period of 4 - 5 weeks with the students required to log on regularly for 5 - 6 hrs per week. (This course is only for those based in the Northern, Yorkshire and the Humber region).

If you are interested in the above course please complete the application form using the link <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/civCRM/event/info?reset=1&id=2898>.

Three in ten apprentices paid less than the legal minimum wage

The TUC has called on the government to take urgent action after official figures revealed that three in ten (29 per cent) apprentices were paid less than the legal minimum wage in 2012.

The Apprenticeship Pay Survey, published on Friday 4th October by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, shows that the

number of apprentices paid below the correct minimum wage rate increased by 45 per cent in 2012.

However, in some industries, such as children's care, underpayment shot up by two-thirds (65 per cent).

Seven in ten (69 per cent) hairdressing apprentices were paid less than the legal minimum wage in 2012.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said: 'These findings are shocking and show how many apprentices are currently seen as little more than cheap labour.'

'Apprentice exploitation is getting worse across the board. In some industries, such as hairdressing, abuse has become endemic.

Ministers must launch investigations now into this abuse.' To read a full report on the findings go to <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-22671-f0.cfm>

Diary dates

October

- 14th – Gateshead PSA, Blaydon Room, Civic Centre, Gateshead, 5.30pm
- 16th – Sunderland PSA, Civic Centre, Sunderland, 5.30pm
- 17th – NASUWT/NUT Rally, Durham (see above)
- 21st – Education, Learning and Skills Forum, Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne
- 23rd – Exposing Loan Sharks and Learning about Fair Finance, Bitesize Briefing, TUC Regional Office, 1pm-4pm. Contact: Anne Cairns, acairns@tuc.org.uk
- 24th – South Tyneside PSA, South Shields Town Hall, 5.30pm
- 29th – Asbestos Support Trustees Group meeting, TUC Regional Office, 4pm
- 30th – Teesside PSA, St Mary's Centre, Middlesbrough, 5.30pm
- 31st – LGBT meeting, TUC Regional Office, 5pm

November

- 4th – 8th, Living Wage Week
- 4th – Living Wage, Bitesize Briefing, TUC Regional Office, 1pm-4pm. Contact: Ananthi Parkin, aparkin@tuc.org.uk
- 4th – PSA Steering Group, Unison Regional Office, 5pm
- 5th – Durham PSA, County Hall, Durham, 5.30pm
- 7th – Northern Living Wage Summit (see above)
- 11th – Gateshead PSA, Blaydon Room, Civic Centre, Gateshead, 5.30pm
- 20th – TUC Executive, TUC Regional Office, 10am
- 20th – Sunderland PSA, Civic Centre, Sunderland, 5.30pm
- 27th – Apprenticeships: Quality and Equality, Bitesize Briefing, TUC Regional Office, 1pm-4pm. Contact: Anne Cairns, acairns@tuc.org.uk

December

- 2nd – PSA Steering Group, Unison Regional Office, 5pm
- 6th – Young Members Forum Inaugural Meeting, TUC Regional Office, 5pm
- 9th – Gateshead PSA, Blaydon Room, Civic Centre, Gateshead, 5.30pm
- 11th – Teesside PSA, St Mary's Centre, Middlesbrough, 5.30pm
- 17th – Durham PSA, County Hall, Durham, 5.30pm
- 18th – Sunderland PSA, Civic Centre, Sunderland, 5.30pm

January

- 13th – PSA Steering Group, Unison Regional Office, 5pm
- 18th – Northern TUC Regional Council, 10.30am (venue tbc)

Contact information

For more information check out the Northern TUC website: www.tuc.org.uk/northern. For information regarding the content of this report please contact Melanie Lowden mlowden@tuc.org.uk – 0191 232 3175.