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## **University of Brighton Branch Newsletter**

***April 2018***

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### **2018-19 Pay**

#### ***University Employees***

Negotiations between the five unions representing university staff across the majority of universities and the employers' organisation, UCEA, have been described as productive. However, there is still a large gap between what the unions have asked for (7.5% or £1,500, whichever is greater) and what UCEA have offered (1.7% or £325).

The employers' offer is well below inflation, whichever method you use to calculate it, and goes nowhere near addressing the years of real-terms pay cuts university workers have put up with over the last decade. It would also leave the lowest paid just below the Living Wage of £8.75/hour, which we think is totally unacceptable.

UCEA have produced information to show that apparently, university workers are much better off than other public sector workers, but we're not getting drawn into a debate about which group of workers is better off than other groups. We all need a pay rise which at least keeps up with the increase in prices of things which working people need to buy.

We'll be looking for UCEA to make a substantially improved offer at the final meeting in May or we'll be balloting for action to force it out of them.

#### ***Students' Union Employees***

After consulting with all SU members, we're meeting the SU managers on 27th April where we'll be discussing our pay claim for 3.0% and our demand that all student SU employees receive at least the £7.83 minimum wage, irrespective of their age.

*Ivan Bonsell,*

*Branch Secretary*



## **WORK-RELATED STRESS**



A group of members at Moulsecoomb came at short notice to hear Bob Woods from Workstress give a presentation on work-related stress, what it is and how we can eliminate it.

Bob talked about how the University deals with its staff members suffering from stress-related illnesses and how ultimately, the University's duty of care to its employees should mean that they recognise stress and aim to make sure that the workplace is as stress-free as possible.

We talked about the different aspects of work at Brighton and how stress can effect people in different ways. There was also some discussion over the wide range of jobs which are members do and how different stress factors relate to different roles.

The group looked at the HSE Stress Management Standards, which is a set of six standards recognised as being the key to prevention of work-stress:

**Demands** – *this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment*

**Control** – *how much say the person has in the way they do their work*

**Support** – *this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues*

**Relationships** – *this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour*

**Role** – *whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles*

**Change** – *how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation*

Bob then asked us to give a low/medium/high indicator to a range of stress factors, such as work demands, performance management and job definition. As you'd expect, the response was varied by type of role, but the point was that we were all thinking about stress levels and what was causing them.

This is important because we have seen an increase in stress-related cases in many people over the last few years and part of the way of tackling that is for people to be able to recognise the problem and raise it with their line manager.

The University does not have professionals to deal with work-stress because they think it's a good idea; they have a legal obligation to exercise their duty of care to make the workplace as stress-free as possible.



As many people will know, we asked, as the trade union half of the Safety and Wellbeing Committee, for the University to conduct a stress survey. As far back as the meeting in May 2017, the Committee agreed that we would conduct such a survey, the minutes stating :

#### **770 Stress Survey**

**ACTION** Director of Health & Safety, Chair and a representative from HR to investigate and plan a stress survey of staff, before consulting with Trade Union representatives on a proposal to take forward.

Over the course of a year, the planned stress survey was scaled down to become part of a planned staff engagement survey and then the staff engagement survey had a handful of questions which alluded to stress, but did not by any recognised standards aim to properly identify it.

We were happy to talk about how we could include stress-related questions in the staff survey, but we don't feel as if the original intention to identify, recognise and deal with work-stress has been completed or is likely to be addressed as a result of the staff-engagement survey in its final format.

So, at the Safety and Wellbeing Committee on 15th May, we will be stating our case, again, in favour of the University conducting a stress survey which is designed to at least assess how staff feel about their work and whether they are suffering from, or at risk of suffering from, stress-related health issues.

This is not a case of arguing over the details.

**This is a case of the University avoiding the issue of stress by organising a survey which does very little to address it.**

We have said for a year or more that if the University does not run a stress survey then we will run our own, so if the Committee fails to accept that the staff survey is not good enough then we'll be asking all employees some relevant questions about stress before the end of the year.

The problem with all this is that the Safety and Wellbeing Committee is a joint committee, so having a fundamental difference over what constitutes a stress survey is a big issue. The management side have no more right to outsource an agreed stress survey to be run by Human Resources as a small part of the planned staff-engagement survey, than we do to use the University's resources to run our own survey design (which would be bound by the Health and Safety Executive's recommended guidelines on measuring stress, as we wanted.)

Maybe what this points to is that there is a refusal from some parts of the University to accept that stress is a legitimate staff welfare and safety concern which needs to be measured and addressed. If that is the case then we have a situation where the University is deliberately ignoring guidance jointly published by the TUC and HSE which advises employers to carry out a survey or audit to give an overall view of the workplace, based on the HSE indicator tool.

The fact that we are yet to see this suggests that we will have to campaign harder on all health and safety issues to make the University recognise it's legal obligations, but at the moment, their refusal to implement what was agreed could result in a significant dispute over health and safety.





**UNISON**  
*the public service union*



**March and rally**

**12 May 2018**

**London**

**#stepup**

**UNISON**  
**SPREAD THE MESSAGE**

On Saturday 12th May, we'll be travelling to London for the TUC's national demonstration, demanding decent, fully-funded public services and proper rewards for those of us providing them.

We'll be meeting at Brighton station at 9am and if you want to join us, the branch will pay for your train fare. If you'd sooner go from Hastings, let us know and we'll give you the coach details.

Either way, please let us know you're coming. Friends and family are welcome.