



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, what were you thinking?

Now is the time to join!

Fill in a paper form or join online. Just ask a steward or follow the link from Staff Central.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

July 2019

2019-20 Pay Consultation Results:

University of Brighton - 82% to REJECT on a 56% turnout

Nationally - 67% to REJECT on a 40% turnout

Thanks to all our members who voted in the pay consultation!

We've demonstrated yet again that our members at Brighton overwhelmingly reject the real terms pay cut that this offer would mean for most, and that a formal pay ballot would give us the mandate required to take action.

As a result of the national vote, we will declare a dispute and plans will be put in place for a national postal ballot, to held in the Autumn, to coincide with that of our sister union, UCU.

The hope is that this combined threat of strike action in the Autumn term will make UCEA, the employers' organisation, find some more money. If not, we will be prepared to take

action rather than suffer another year of our pay being worth less.

It's likely that UCEA will encourage university vice chancellors to impose the pay increase in August or September. This is against the spirit of the negotiation process and designed to undermine our ability to take effective action.

UCEA deliberately make sure that the negotiations are dragged out for as long as possible to make it difficult for unions to organise over the summer.

Any pay imposition at Brighton will be met with a response from both unions.

This week's newsletter is very long - there's a lot going on!

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Your pension under attack!

Potential changes to the LGPS would mean new starters are denied membership, weakening the scheme and creating a two tier workforce

The government is currently consulting on whether to make changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), the pension scheme that all support staff are members of (unless you're one of the handful who have opted out, or you're a member of USS because you came here from another university.)

As it stands, all universities which became "new universities" in the early 90s (i.e. transferred from being polytechnics under the control of the council) are scheduled bodies. This means that they offer the LGPS as standard for all support staff, which is the case at Brighton, but not at older universities such as Sussex, Southampton, Oxford etc. Higher education is littered with historical anomalies which nobody has ever managed to sort out.

In relative terms, the LGPS is a fairly decent pension scheme. The university currently contributes 19.7% of our salaries to the scheme and our contributions are banded so that how much we pay depends on our earnings, from 5.5% up to 12.5%.

Your pension is based on a calculation of career average earnings and length of service when you retire at the normal pension age. Older members will have a combination of pension, based on a career average calculation and a final salary calculation (it gets complicated). This is the legacy of changes brought in from 2014 after a massive battle with the government. In November 2011, two million public sector workers showed the potential power of working people by striking against changes to all public sector pensions. For various reasons, this ended in a compromise, which generally meant a worse pension for most of us.

What does this mean?

The proposal on the table is that universities would be given the option of not offering LGPS to new members of staff, so universities would be able to invent their own scheme or use the government's NEST scheme, which is frankly rubbish and allows the government to tick boxes about people being in a pension scheme whilst condemning low-paid workers to a retirement of poverty.

At a time when pension costs are a significant cost to universities, you can see why this would be attractive.

Last year, Brighton contributed £16 million to the pension schemes of us all. With financial adjustment costs, this came to £23 million, over 10% of total income. This is going to go up next year with TPS contribution rates rising (approximately an extra £3 million) and the future LGPS rates are also largely out of the University's control.

Some universities, like Stafford (another ex-polytechnic) have reacted to pension costs by a clever wheeze of transferring their grade 1 to 6 staff to a wholly owned subsidiary, which funnily enough, does not offer the LGPS. This is a very cynical move which UNISON members have fought with strike action.

The government's new proposal would have saved them the bother, as long as the university would be prepared to wait until enough staff turnover has created a genuinely two tier workforce.

Isn't the LGPS a good recruitment aid?

Yes, it is, and you can see that with Stafford not attacking the grade 7+ staff. They clearly did not want to put new people off, but in an environment where staff costs are the main concern of a struggling management, the need to save money will always outweigh the costs of keeping your staff happy, well motivated and not stressed up the eyeballs. You can see how the argument always goes - we have to "secure our future" by attacking the terms and conditions of current and future employees, the implication being that the future won't exist unless we do.

We know that many people want a public sector job because the wages might not be as good but the pension is generally better, not because our employers are very kind, but because generations of workers have fought for it to be.

The current ill-advised and disastrous policy of making new appointments fixed term only is probably causing havoc with recruitment because it's limiting the applications from people who are desperate for a job, rather than attracting talented people who want to make a long-term commitment. What's noticeable, just like the Staffordshire grade 7+ issue, is that senior posts don't seem to have this restriction, almost as if they instinctively know that they won't get decent applications for the top jobs, and are picking and choosing when to apply their own rules.



Protect Our Pensions LGPS campaign

a million
voices
for
public
services



What's the University said about the government proposal?

Funnily enough, very little. At our meeting with senior managers, we asked them to engage with the consultation to make the case against these changes because it would destabilise the LGPS and create inferior conditions for new employees. We also wanted a commitment that they would not go down this road even if the rules were changed.

What we got was the usual non-committal response that they would think about it....



What's UNISON doing about this?

We're clear that these proposals represent a major attack on the terms and conditions of our members and for all current and future members of the LGPS. Every pension scheme needs new members to keep it going, and limiting the number of new joiners will ultimately affect us all because fewer people (and employers) contributing means a scheme to which we're all contributing, will become weaker.

This proposal affects workers in some universities, all further education colleges and some sixth form schools. If it goes ahead, individual union branches will have to fight on their own to stop employers taking advantage of it.

It is better to campaign now to prevent a change in the LGPS rules and secure a decent pension for all workers, new and existing.



What can we all do now?

The most obvious thing is to contribute to the government's consultation.

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-pension-scheme-changes-to-the-local-valuation-cycle-and-management-of-employer-risk

Question 18, hidden in the rest of it, is the relevant part for us.

We don't believe for one minute that a handful of people emailing the government will change much, but it's worth doing anyway. The consultation closes at the end of July.

What would be more effective would be universities coming together to say that they don't want it and would not take advantage of it. If universities collectively object then they might not go ahead, but we'll let you know what Debra does.

There's also the question of a legal battle, especially after the FBU successfully demonstrated that offering inferior pension rights to new starters constituted age discrimination.

What we'll need to do if the legislation looks like it will be enacted, is respond with a determined ballot of our members as part of a campaign to keep the LGPS open for all university workers, new and existing, young or old.

Climate Change

At June's meeting with senior managers, we asked the University to declare a climate emergency and commit to reducing its carbon emissions, with a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Other universities have done this already, setting targets and putting plans in place for carbon reduction.

We argued that Brighton has a real opportunity to take the initiative and attract a whole generation of future students by being serious about tackling a global problem.

Unfortunately we were given the usual response - they're going away to think about it.

We also asked what the University attitude is of staff and students participating in the international week of action for climate change (20-27th September.) We posed the question of the University again taking the initiative, as they have done with Pride, being at the forefront of campaigning and supporting young people and workers putting pressure on those with power to take action.

Their answer was that they're thinking about it.

We'll let you know their response, but in the meantime, we're thinking about what we can do that week. Please let us know if you want to be involved.

Campaigning for better rights for Staff with Caring Responsibilities

Parents and other staff with caring duties are having to quit their jobs in some cases because of inflexible working conditions, according to research published by UNISON.

Nearly half (47%) the survey respondents say they think employers discriminate against employees who are responsible for looking after loved ones. More than three quarters (78%) also believe that staying in a job is harder for carers or parents.



The findings are based on results from nearly 3,000 respondents across the UK, including employees with caring responsibilities (88%) who have either looked after an adult or are a parent, including those with disabled children.

The results highlight how employers and the government are failing to support the estimated nine million parents and two million carers currently in work.

More than three quarters (76%) of carers and parents have been forced to make changes to their careers, according to the survey. Of those who've had to do this, some have quit altogether (17%), others have taken unpaid leave (32%), or an hourly pay cut (9%).

The survey illustrates starkly how the careers of carers and parents are hampered by the lack of support, says UNISON. More than one in ten (14%) say they have been turned down for promotion, or decided not to ask for a more senior role.

The vast majority (95%) of people who responded to the survey want employers to do more to help carers balance their job responsibilities with their duties outside work. The same number want the government to provide more support.

Paid care leave and career breaks with a guaranteed return to their job are among solutions backed by those who took part.

Here's a personal view from one of our members who is involved in the University Disability and Carers Staff Network Group.

“Did you know that 3 in 5 people will become a Carer at some point in their lives? A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. The University of Brighton doesn't monitor how many staff have caring responsibilities.

There is a huge impact on carers who juggle work and care. Carers face huge pressures, ranging from financial strain to emotional stress and physical exhaustion. 1 in 6 carers give up work or reduce their hours to care. The reasons range from inflexible work practices, the need to be able to respond to emergencies and difficulty in managing and attending appointments.

Practical things that would help include paid Carer Leave (Carers UK are campaigning for this), extending family emergency leave to 10 days, free parking and supportive Line Managers. Employers for Carers are an organisation that help employers to support and retain employees with caring responsibilities. It now has over 120 member organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors.



Carer Confident is a new benchmarking scheme for employers. It assists employers to build a supportive and inclusive workplace for staff who are carers. The Government Equalities Office encourages all employers to sign up to this.

Examples of what other universities offer include 5 days paid care leave with 5 days unpaid leave; 10 days paid emergency leave; extended carers leave of paid time off up to 10 days (20 in exceptional circumstances) in one leave year, and additional unpaid leave up to a combined period of six months in total.

We would like to see The University of Brighton join Employers for Carers, sign up to the Carer Confident scheme and embrace the carer friendly policies of the universities above. The Carers Policy has been in place for nearly a year and will be reviewed shortly. The policy currently falls short in supporting Carers fully. The Disability and Carers Staff Network Group hope to be involved in this process.

The Disability and Carers Staff Network Group meets at least six times a year and runs events for Carers Week and Carers Rights Day. Our Staff Central page is:

<https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/hr/equality/disability/Pages/home.aspx>



**HANDS OFF
MOULSECOOMB
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**“THIS IS OUR SCHOOL”
NO TO ACADEMIES
NO TO THE PRIVATISATION
OF OUR SCHOOLS**

Parents, staff, unions, the council, our local MPs and the wider community **oppose** Moulsecoomb being **forced to join a multi-academy trust** by the Secretary of State for Education and **we are united to fight** to keep our school in the local authority!

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN:

<https://tinyurl.com/MoulsecoombPledge>



facebook.com/HandsOffMoulsecoomb

Following an "inadequate" Ofsted rating, Moulsecoomb Primary School faces being forced to join a multi-academy trust by the Department for Education.

Parents, staff, trade unions, the council, our local MPs and the wider community oppose this decision and are united to fight to keep our school in the local authority.

On Saturday 13th July we will be assembling at the school from 9:30am for a 10am start.

The march will head down Lewes Road, past The Level, turning right at St Peter's Place and up Ditchling Road back to The Level.

At The Level we will have a number of speeches (speakers TBC) and a family picnic. Everyone is welcome!

Please sign our petition: <https://www.change.org/p/damian-hinds-no-to-the-forced-academidation-of-moulsecoomb-primary-school>