

NJC BALLOT 2026



Well, that's it. The ballot has now closed!

We have put in an incredible amount of hard work to get to this point. Over the last few weeks and months, we've visited countless workplaces, had face-to-face meetings, online meetings and phone calls, pop-up stands, handed out leaflets, and worked tirelessly to get us over the line. It has been a privilege to meet so many of you, hear your views, and have such meaningful conversations throughout this campaign. Now, we hope that all of this effort gives us a real fighting chance of securing what we the members deserve. Whatever the outcome, there are already positive signs. We have welcomed new members (more than most in the North West), built stronger workplace contacts, and strengthened our collective voice. That is a significant step forward in our ongoing fight. As the saying goes, "alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Let's not let that momentum stop here. Let's keep the camaraderie, solidarity and determination going beyond the ballot and beyond the pay offer. The strength we've built together is something we should be proud of, and it will continue to make a difference in the challenges ahead. Thank you to everyone who played their part.

Together, we are stronger.

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WELLINGTON YARD



This is the lovely Lee Hawksworth, for all members at Wellington Yard and beyond, she is your representative who you can go and have a face to face chat with on Thursdays. If you work in the Department of Place and need some advice come and speak to Lee in her very own office at Wellington Yard every Thursday. It's important to have a contact who you know has your best interests at heart and will be there for you when you need a UNISON representative.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCES

In June we sent Joint Branch Secretary Jo, Joint Assistant Branch Secretary Sam, Convenor Julie and Steward Shelley to attend conference in Brighton. They attended the Local Government conference first then onto National Delegate Conference. Joint Branch Secretary Christine was there in her role as the NEC representative. Here is what they thought and experienced at conference.



Jo Pickersgill Joint Branch Secretary

I had the opportunity to attend both Local Government Conference and National Delegate Conference as a first-time delegate. While I was naturally disappointed not to have the chance to speak this year, the experience has only motivated me to get involved even more, there's always next year. What stood out most to me across both conferences was the incredible sense of unity and solidarity. It was inspiring to witness just how passionate union members are about the issues that matter, and the collective determination to make a difference was evident throughout. At the same time, as a first-time attendee, I was struck by seeing the different viewpoints within UNISON, differing opinions and perspectives, something I hadn't fully expected, but which highlighted the importance of open debate and democracy within the union. One of the standout discussions for me was the motion on men's mental health at the national conference. It was a powerful and important topic that really resonated with me, highlighting the need for continued awareness, support and action in this area. It was also fantastic to see our own Andrea Egan representing us in her role as General Secretary. Her speech on the NJC was particularly impactful, highlighting that Local Government workers are worth far more and deserve proper recognition, respect, and fair reward for the vital work they do. Another truly memorable moment was the speech delivered by the General Secretary of Palestine. It was deeply emotional and moving, but also incredibly powerful in reminding us that, even in the face of ongoing conflict, the people of Palestine continue to live their lives, build their communities, and create new life with remarkable strength and resilience. It was a message that touched everyone in the room. Overall, it was an inspiring and thought-provoking experience, and I'm proud to have been part of such important discussions. I look forward to continuing my involvement and contributing more in the future. I have attached some information about wellness and hope in the future to start a group to help men and men's mental health. Please click on the QR code for more information.



Sam Ramsden

Assistant Joint Branch Secretary



My first time at conference was an opportunity I will never forget, I learned so much and have come back with a real passion to bring to my role in UNISON. I even got the chance to speak at conference on one of the motions, which was very much out of my comfort zone. The conference delegates were so supportive and encouraging, I spoke on "Increasing the participation on low paid women", I also went to a fringe meeting about the issue which was very informative. So many new delegates were at conference covering so many issues that affect real working people in our workforce from pay, safe working conditions, political influences etc. I had a strong personal interest in the subject of increasing the involvement of low paid women in UNISON. I am deeply committed to the empowerment and increasing the active involvement in low paid women within UNISON as I believe they are crucial for driving meaningful workforce change. They have a voice and are vital to building a stronger, more representative union. If you are interested in building valuable skills and confidence, have a real passion and enthusiasm to help improve and contribute to a better workplace, why not get involved? You will be fully trained and mentored, it only takes one phone call to the office, and we will guide you on how to start your journey. We are passionate about continuous learning at your pace and dedicated to help you achieve new opportunities and help you achieve a positive impact in your teams and workplaces. You have a voice and you definitely have a place in UNISON so, you could start with being a workplace contact, phone the office or if you know someone encourage them to step forward.



Shelley Matthews School Steward

Attending both the Local Government Conference and the National Delegate Conference was an incredible experience. It was exciting, inspiring, and at times exhausting, but ultimately very rewarding. Taking part in both conferences provided me with a much deeper understanding of the issues affecting our members and the wider trade union movement. It also gave me the opportunity to meet people from a variety of backgrounds, all united by a common goal: improving the working lives of our members and creating fairer workplaces. One of the most valuable aspects of both conferences was meeting delegates from across the country. Despite coming from different sectors, regions, and experiences, there was a strong sense of solidarity throughout. Listening to delegates' share their workplace challenges, successes, and concerns reinforced how many issues are shared across industries and communities. The opportunity to speak with people face-to-face and hear their personal experiences brought many of the motions and debates to life. These conversations often highlighted the real impact of workplace inequalities and the importance of collective action. One of the most powerful aspects of attending both conferences was hearing personal stories from delegates and members. Listening to people describe their experiences of workplace discrimination, financial hardship, and inequality was often emotional. These testimonies brought home the reality behind many of the motions being debated. They reminded us that conference decisions are not simply policy discussions; they can have a genuine impact on people's lives, wellbeing, and futures.

BRANCH NEWSLETTER UNISON



Bolton Branch

Tracey Rigby - Health & Safety Officer

WOW, in the words of the song it's been 'HOT HOT HOT'! As you may be aware there is no maximum temperature for a workplace and as the heat has increased over the period of the heatwave, we have heard stories of ambulances called to schools, workplaces baking in over 40 degrees and thousands of people calling for a maximum workplace temperature now. We are in buildings that are not built for the current climate and even on our little island, weather and temperatures are becoming increasingly high. There should be reasonable adjustments made for work and not just buying Ice Lollys!! Remember the rules. Whenever possible stay out of the sun between 12 and 3, wear sun screen and keep hydrated!!

Andrew Thomas - Children's Services

Recently there has been a pay and grading in children's residential which has seen all roles (apart from Head of Service but that's being looked at) be put up by one grade and back pay from September 2025.

Staff have moved across to the comparative pay scale as well so they will all get around £2500 before tax in backpay. Fantastic win for members as their job descriptions hadn't been fully evaluated across the service since 2009!

Tracey Rigby - Adult Services

As you may be aware there have been changes in Residential Intermediate Care. Dove Unit has now closed and following staff consultation, care staff including seniors and supervisors have been moved to Wilfred Geere and Laburnum Lodge. The nursing beds have moved from Laburnum Lodge to Ward F6 at Royal Bolton Hospital. The work has been completed on N3 for a specialist intermediate care unit. Both Wilfred Geere and Laburnum Lodge will also have changes and Laburnum Lodge will have 8 Dementia respite beds which will become ready later in the year. As with all moves there have been teething problems although the staff continues to provide an excellent level of care to the residents of Bolton.

Marta Cunado - University

UNISON and UCU are working together to find out whether the VC has resigned, retired, sacked or something. But unfortunately, neither the Board of Governors nor the senior leadership are willing to make any comments. So a year on, we are in a downwards spiral effect, things getting worse, staff morale even lower, staff leaving to other HE institutions or private employment.

Buildings crumbling for lack of repairs, during winter students sat in classrooms with coats and hats on as it was very cold, equally some offices were extremely cold and staff struggled to work, just simply because the University apparently does not have money to make any improvements. Finally, news for the staff at University of Greater Manchester after lots of speculation, three people were arrested by Greater Manchester Police as part of an investigation into alleged financial irregularities at the University of Greater Manchester. The individuals arrested were two men in their 60s and a woman in her 50s. All three were arrested on suspicion of money laundering. The two men were also arrested on suspicion of fraud, one of the men faces an additional arrest on suspicion of bribery. The woman is reported to have a family connection to one of the men. The arrests relate to suspected money laundering, fraud, and bribery, but at this stage there are allegations being investigated and no charges or convictions yet.

MILEAGE ALLOWANCE PAYMENT

If you are an essential car user, you could be facing an average pay gap of around £6,000 per year due to the costs of using your own vehicle for work. Around one in five public service workers are required to drive as part of their role, with the majority being lower-paid workers, particularly those employed in social care. These workers are not only driving high mileages, but the constant use of their vehicles also leads to increased wear and tear, higher servicing costs, repairs, tyre replacements and rising fuel bills. The financial burden of using a vehicle for work is placing many essential car users under significant pressure. How many of these workers are being forced to use food banks or take out loans simply to make ends meet because they are not being adequately compensated and are left out of pocket for doing their jobs? Following discussions with UNISON and the government to improve mileage rates and the current system, the Government announced an increase in mileage payments. In May the mileage allowance was increased from 45p per mile to 55p per mile, representing the first increase to the main rate in 15 years. Petrol was 133.5p per litre compared to 153p (if you are lucky) While this increase is welcome and marks an important victory for workers and UNISON, it does not go far enough. To keep pace with inflation and the true cost of motoring, the rate would need to be around 63.4p per mile. The current allowance still leaves many essential car users out of pocket. Fuel prices remain volatile, maintenance costs continue to rise and workers should not have to worry about whether they can afford to put fuel in their car in order to do their job. Public service workers should not be subsidizing public services from their own wages. The increase to 55p per mile will make a difference, and it is a step in the right direction. However, for the hundreds of thousands of workers who rely on their vehicles every day to deliver vital public services, it simply does not go far enough. Until mileage rates fully reflect the real cost of driving for work, the campaign for fair reimbursement must continue.



ELLEN STRANGE MEMORIAL WALK

On the 4th July a group of Bolton UNISON members joined the organised memorial walk to Holcombe Moor to pay tribute to all victims of domestic violence. There is a cairn on the moor and a monument to remember and pay respects to Ellen Strange who was murdered in 1761. Back at

Emmanuel Church attendees gathered around Ellen's grave and listened to her story, which was of murder by her husband. The group of about 100 people read out the names of 98 women who had been murdered as a result of domestic violence. Her story is 265 years old and tells of how Ellen had an argument with her husband and then walked to her mother's house across the moor. This is where he allegedly murdered her and left her body to lay undiscovered for 2 days. Following Ellen's death it has been a tradition to place stones on the spot where she lay and this is still tradition today.

This memorial walk is a yearly event which is supported and organised by Endeavour, closely aided by the unions and Emmanuel Church. Save the date 3rd July 2027. The day was full of strong emotions which turned meaningful by a good walk and chat, there was also time for refreshments at the end and a de brief.

PRIDE



On 23rd May, Bolton Pride took place under glorious sunshine, and Andrea Egan, our General Secretary popped along to join the celebrations. Bolton Pride has been a key part of the town for the past 11 years, growing steadily and establishing itself as one of Greater Manchester's largest and most vibrant Pride celebrations. Bolton UNISON branch has always played an integral role in the event, celebrating the LGBTQ+ community and advocating for equality, diversity and inclusion.

Over the years, the branch has regularly hosted stalls and fully engaged with the festivities. Although the branch adopted a more relaxed approach this year, members still made their presence known and remained actively involved throughout the day. Pride is not only a celebration but also an opportunity to highlight the ongoing challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people. Bolton UNISON continues to campaign on key issues, tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in workplaces and communities. Defending trans and non-binary rights and standing against discrimination and exclusion. Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across all public services. Supporting inclusive workplaces where everyone can be themselves without fear of prejudice. Challenging hate crimes and discrimination in all its forms. We stand together. Bolton UNISON will always actively campaign for fairness, dignity and respect for all, while standing proudly with our LGBTQ+, trans and non-binary members. The day was a fantastic celebration of diversity, equality and community spirit, with several of Bolton UNISON's officers enjoying the occasion and showing their support for Pride.

"An injury to one is an injury to all."

SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD

Although football did not come home for England this time, our commitment as a union remains unchanged. We will always stand against racism, discrimination and hatred, standing together in solidarity and strength. During conference, we heard about the excellent work of Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) and the positive impact the organisation continues to have on future generations.

The charity was established in January 1996 following an experience involving former Newcastle United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop, who was subjected to racial abuse by a group of youths at a petrol station. When the group later recognised him and asked for his autograph, he realised the influence footballers could have in educating young people and challenging prejudice. Together with fellow player John Beresford, he began visiting schools in the North East to share their experiences and use football as a platform for positive change.

Today, SRtRC delivers educational programmes in schools and workplaces, as well as events at football stadiums across the UK. In 2023 alone, the organisation reached more than one million people through its initiatives, a remarkable achievement. Its mission is to challenge racism by empowering positive role models within communities, organisations and sport, helping to create a more inclusive society. To learn more about their work, visit the Show Racism the Red Card website. You can also support their annual Wear Red Day, which takes place on 16 October.



RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

A thank you to those who answered the questionnaire some time ago now. Here is some of the feedback but don't worry, if you didn't answer we will be sending it back out again in a few months to see if we have improved.

- Only 12.5% don't know who to contact when you need advice, phone Branch 01204 247947.
- 67% knew how to contact UNISON
- 57% needed advice and said this was helpful
- 29% didn't need help
- 14% said it was difficult to get help, sorry about that we really do try.

Do you feel you receive enough information about what is happening at work?
Only 47% said yes. Hopefully this newsletter will help with similar questions this will now be a regular feature and if there is something happening in your department let us know.

By an outstanding 96%, email was the preferred way to receive updates by members!
We will still do social media, notice boards and face to face but we hear you.

Similar question, do you engage in meetings and ballots?

- 47% said no to meetings
- 55% said yes to ballots, maybe we just need to set more meetings up a few pop ups now and again.

Unfortunately, 25% of members don't feel they have a way to be heard. Let's change that, we all have a voice, chat to your rep or workplace contact, contact Branch and we could arrange a 10-minute talk in your workplace. Or you could be your section rep?

On the whole the answers where you want to be contacted via email, you mostly feel consulted on issues affecting you and involved in decisions that impact UNISON and would like to have more opportunities to contribute to union discussions. We will be doing a regular newsletter and 10 minute talks, if you would like to get more involved in UNISON ring the Branch and they will give you the advice you need.

More personal responses:

Be more visual and visit teams not just based at Town Hall and Castle Hill, we now have Lee who is based at Wellington Yard on Thursdays and we will happily come to your workplace.

Better support for supervisors and lower management, all members get the same help and support if you feel you are not please email your concerns to us at the Branch. We stand together.

Support disabled members this is something we take very seriously. We have just elected two disability officers for the Branch. If you feel you would like to discuss your issues please get in touch.

Keep us updated hopefully this has already been answered with newsletters, social media and notice boards but if it's not happening in your department please let us know.

Recruit new reps not enough anyone who wants to step up or knows someone in the workplace contact the Branch and we can advise how to participate.

Member meetings we have been currently holding online member meetings, and we will definitely look at setting more up. There are going to be groups set up in the very near future.

We had 96 members respond so once again a big thank you. We are working on the issues raised and will re issue the questionnaire soon.

AQA PICKET LINES

On the 21st May our Joint Branch Secretary and the two Assistant Branch Secretaries joined our fellow comrades on the AQA picket line to show solidarity and support from the Bolton Branch. The battle is still on-going! AQA staff took three days of strike action in May and four days in June and July since then have been working to rule, which means they have stopped doing overtime and weekend working also refusing to be on call. More than 400 workers have been involved in the dispute and feel little progress has been made. UNISON members are not backing down until they get a fair deal and are now going to be joined by their colleagues in Unite. After years of real-terms wage cut and a new pay framework that makes a bigger divide between gender and ethnic pay they have had enough and will not back down until management have met some core demands such as, a real pay rise to make up for a reported 10% fall in the last five years, equal pay they are still reporting a 10% gender pay gap. We stand with them and will keep you updated on the plight .



Benefits

Do you know the benefits of being a member of UNISON far outreach the workplace.

From healthcare benefits and opticians to dentists you can claim £500 of NHS dental cover and your money back when you and your family visit the dentist. If you join the UNISON health plan you can receive benefits from optical, dental, special consultation, complementary therapies, chiropody and hospital cash. Insurance, finance, motoring, shopping and rewards and travel and holiday benefits. All of this is included in your membership just log onto your account to get the benefits.



ROSA LUXEMBURG ORGANISING TO WIN

As part of the time for real change campaign, we have a real opportunity to become a union that delivers real improvements in members lives. This starts with grass root training and getting activists organising to win. The goals of this campaign are strong and aims to make the union more democratic, transparent and focused on member led industrial organizing. In April Bolton UNISON reps and officers were on a practical multi day training course which was run by Rosa Luxemburg. The aim of the project was to build a foundation within the branch to empower and develop the knowledge and skills of our reps to enable them to pass this on to the members. The main aim of the course was to teach strategic campaigning, planning and workplace organizing skills. The group were on a learning and political journey from past to present. The course was delivered for the group to learn the impact on working class history and political economy. The main objectives were to discover the role and power of organising to build a strong union by developing the technical and practical skills of conversation and communicating. Here's what joint secretary Christine Collins thought after attending the course "A key focus of the training was how we, as a branch, continue to develop ourselves and our members. Activists reflected on how to take these lessons back into workplaces, build meaningful conversations and bring colleagues with us not just to understand the issues, but to feel confident acting on them. Growth, succession planning and a long-term organising strategy were central themes, reminding us that looking forward is just as important as looking back."

The Rosa Luxemburg programme strengthened our collective understanding, sharpened our political awareness and reaffirmed our commitment to building a branch that is informed, confident and ready to fight for working class interests.