# BRANCH NEWSLETTER

UNISON




*Bolton Branch*

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# WE WILL FIGHT TO KEEP THE RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS FOR ALL OUR MEMBERS - STANDING UP FOR BOLTON WORKERS

The workplace rights we rely on today were won through ordinary members standing together through their unions to campaign for fairness, dignity and safety at work.

Today that collective voice remains just as important. Changes to working practices, health and safety concerns, staffing shortages, and budget cuts - all have a direct impact on employees' wellbeing and on the services they provide. Trade unions help redress that balance. Without an organised workforce, many employees would be left to face these issues alone.

Through collective bargaining, UNISON negotiates on pay and improved terms and conditions. Through trained workplace representatives, members receive support during disciplinary, grievance and redundancy processes. UNISON safety representatives help ensure employers meet their responsibilities to provide safe and healthy workplaces. UNISON equality work helps challenge discrimination and promote fairness for all staff. The principle behind every UNISON policy is simple: workers are stronger when they stand together.

A workplace without UNISON means workers speaking individually. However, progress is rarely achieved by individuals acting alone. Lasting improvements happen when workers organise, support one another and campaign together for positive change.

At Bolton UNISON, members continue to demonstrate that strength every day. Whether supporting colleagues through workplace difficulties, campaigning for fair pay, improving health and safety standards, promoting equality, or defending the public services our communities rely upon, our members make a real difference.

UNISON is not about creating conflict, it is about ensuring workers have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. They are about fairness, consultation, respect and accountability. They are about making sure that workplace changes are discussed rather than imposed, and that staff are listened to rather than ignored.

That is as true today in Bolton as it has been throughout the history of the trade union movement. The rights we enjoy, the services we defend and the improvements we seek for the future all depend on workers having a strong collective voice.




**Together, we are stronger.**
**Together, we make a difference.**
**Together, we are UNISON.**
**Are you willing to lose out on your rights?**



# THINKING OF RETIRING?

ARE YOU APPROACHING RETIREMENT OR HAVE YOU ALREADY RETIRED AND WOULD LIKE TO STAY INVOLVED WITH UNISON, WHY NOT JOIN THE BOLTON UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS GROUP?

WE'D BE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME YOU.
RETIREMENT FROM WORK DOES NOT MEAN RETIREMENT FROM UNION VALUES.

## WHY SHOULD I BECOME A RETIRED MEMBER?

BEING A RETIRED MEMBER GIVES YOU ALL THE BENEFITS OF BEING A FULL MEMBER EXCEPT FOR REPRESENTATION AT WORK..... BUT WHO NEEDS THAT WHEN YOU'RE RETIRED.

YOU RETAIN ACCESS TO ALL THE UNISON MEMBER BENEFITS (DISCOUNTS ON INSURANCE, HEALTHCARE AND HOLIDAYS, ACCESS TO FREE LEGAL ADVICE OR PERSONAL INJURY CLAIMS VIA THOMPSONS SOLICITORS AND ACCESS TO UNISON WELFARE IF YOU EXPERIENCE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES) AND SO MUCH MORE.

THE BOLTON UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS GROUP CONTINUES TO PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT VOICE FOR RETIRED MEMBERS WHILE OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES TO STAY INFORMED, ACTIVE AND CONNECTED WITH FRIENDS AND FORMER COLLEAGUES.
THE GROUP BRINGS TOGETHER RETIRED MEMBERS FROM ACROSS BOLTON TO DISCUSS ISSUES THAT MATTER TO OLDER PEOPLE, INCLUDING PENSIONS, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE, THE COST OF LIVING,PUBLIC SERVICES AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING.
MEMBERS RECEIVE UPDATES ON LOCAL AND NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND CAN CONTINUE TO PLAY A VALUABLE ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE UNION'S WORK.




## YOU DON'T HAVE TO LEAVE UNISON WHEN YOU LEAVE WORK - WE OFFER MEMBERSHIP TO ANY EXISTING MEMBER WHO IS TAKING RETIREMENT FOR A ONE-OFF PAYMENT OF £15, THAT COVERS YOU FOR LIFE. BARGAIN!!!!

BOLTON UNISON IS PROUD OF THE CONTRIBUTION RETIRED MEMBERS MAKE TO BOTH THE BRANCH AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY.
THEIR CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT HELPS STRENGTHEN OUR CAMPAIGNS AND ENSURES RETIRED MEMBERS' VOICES ARE HEARD ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT THEM.
TOGETHER, WE CONTINUE TO STAND UP FOR PUBLIC SERVICES, DEFEND PENSIONERS' RIGHTS AND BUILD A STRONGER, FAIRER COMMUNITY FOR ALL.

THE BOLTON RETIRED MEMBERS GROUP MEETS MONTHLY ON THE SECOND WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH AT THE HUB, BOLD STREET, BOLTON,BL1 1LS AT 10.45AM-12.15PM
NEW FACES ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!!!

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES, PLEASE CONTACT THE BOLTON UNISON BRANCH OFFICE.






STAND UP TO RACISM

TRANS RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS




# SELF ORGANISED GROUPS

Have you ever wanted to meet other members who share similar experiences, have your voice heard, or help make positive change in your workplace and community?

Our self-organised groups are a welcoming space where members can come together, support one another, build friendships and work collectively on the issues that matter most to them.

Supporting members and providing a safe space to share experiences.

The groups aim to help build networks and friendships across the branch, campaign for equality, fairness and respect at work, celebrating diversity and making important events through out the year and encouraging members to get involved and make a difference.

Every voice matters, and together we can make our branch stronger, more inclusive and more representative of all our members.

**Stronger together.**
**Louder together.**
**Better together**

Interested in getting involved?
We'd love to hear from you.
Contact Bolton UNISON branch
and find out how you can join.

**The Self Organised Groups we have in our Branch**

Black Members Group
Disabled Members Group
Women's Group
LGBT+ Group
Young Members Group



# HAZARDS CONFERENCE -

## KEELE UNIVERSITY

Lee Hawksworth and Tracey Rigby attended the Hazard's conference this is what they thought

"I attended my first Hazard conference in Stoke, which was a new and valuable experience for me. I found the conference very interesting and informative and I learnt a lot about different hazards and how they can be managed. It was also a great opportunity to meet other stewards from all unions. We shared different experience and ideas.
Overall, I really enjoyed attending and feel I gained useful knowledge that I can take forward in my UNISON work.
Bonus I got to spend time with our General Secretary Andrea Egan."

# BRANCH NEWSLETTER

UNISON

*Bolton Branch*




Local authorities, including Bolton Council, continue to face significant recruitment and retention challenges, particularly within adult social care and frontline public services.

Migrant care workers are essential to the delivery of adult social care in Bolton and across the UK. Many are women working in demanding frontline roles, providing vital support to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

However, the current visa sponsorship system can leave workers vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, excessive overtime and workplace bullying because their right to remain in the UK is often tied to a single employer. Too many workers fear speaking out about poor treatment due to concerns about their immigration status.

To address these issues, UNISON has worked with migrant workers to develop the Migrant Care Worker Charter. The Charter promotes fair treatment, ethical recruitment, protection from exploitation, support for workers who lose employment, fair pay and stronger safeguards for migrant care workers.

Bolton Council has recognised the valuable contribution migrant care workers make to local services, but it has not yet signed the Charter.

Bolton UNISON believes that all workers deserve dignity, respect and equal treatment at work. Signing the Charter would demonstrate a commitment to tackling exploitation, challenging racism and ensuring migrant care workers have the same protections and opportunities as every other worker. We are calling on Bolton Council to back the Migrant Care Worker Charter and support fairer protections for the workers who help keep our care services running every day.

## We are calling on Bolton Council to:

·Sign the Migrant Care Worker Charter.
·Demonstrate zero tolerance for exploitation, discrimination and racism.
·Protect migrant care workers from abuse and unfair treatment.
·Support calls for a fairer visa system that does not tie workers to a single employer.

If Bolton values migrant care workers, it should back them. Sign the Charter.
Bolton UNISON will continue to campaign until this commitment is secured.
When we stand up for migrant workers, we strengthen workplace rights for everyone.

# BRANCH NEWSLETTER

UNISON Bolton Branch

## IF BOLTON CARES, BRING BOLTON CARES BACK IN-HOUSE!!!

Bolton UNISON is campaigning to bring Bolton Cares back under the direct control of Bolton Council as part of the union's wider INSOURCE NOW! Campaign.

It was established in 2016 by Bolton Council to deliver adult social care services for local people.

While Bolton Cares is wholly owned by the Council, it operates as a separate company.

We believe adult social care is too important to be kept at arm's length and should be directly accountable to elected councillors and local residents.

This campaign is about supporting both workers and service users.

We are proud to represent Bolton Cares staff and recognise the outstanding work they do every day.

It is about ensuring care services are delivered through a fully public model that promotes accountability, fairness and consistency.

Bolton Cares

**Bolton UNISON is calling for:**

**Bolton Cares services to return to direct Council control**

**Fair and consistent terms and conditions for care workers**

**Greater accountability and democratic oversight**

**Public services delivered in the public interest**

Over recent years, Bolton UNISON has consistently argued that the best public services are publicly delivered, publicly accountable and properly funded. Bringing Bolton Cares back in-house would be a positive step towards achieving that goal.

### Ending Two-Tier Employment

A key reason for bringing Bolton Cares back in-house is to address concerns about differences in pay, terms and conditions across the workforce. UNISON believes that staff delivering public services should not face a two-tier workforce, where employees doing similar jobs can have different employment conditions depending on who employs them. Bringing services back under Bolton Council would help create greater consistency, fairness and equality for care workers.

### Our Message

Care workers deserve fairness. Service users deserve accountability.
Bolton deserves public services in public hands.

# BRANCH NEWSLETTER UNISON

*Bolton Branch*

Its that time of year again when we encourage you to support the annual Endeavour Christmas Appeal, helping local families, individuals and pets across Bolton who may be struggling over the festive period.

The appeal collects gifts, toiletries, pet toys and other essential items to ensure that people in our community can experience some festive cheer at Christmas. Every donation, no matter how small, can make a real difference to someone facing hardship.

UNISON is proud to support initiatives that strengthen our communities and reflect the values of solidarity, compassion and mutual support.
As trade unionists, we know that Christmas can be a difficult time for many households facing financial pressures, and this appeal offers a practical way to help.

As always, UNISON members are demonstrating that when communities need support, we stand together.



# BRANCH NEWSLETTER UNISON

*Bolton Branch*

## NJC

### Bolton Members Deliver Strong Support for Fair Pay

Bolton UNISON members delivered a resounding vote “NO” in support of the NJC pay claim, sending a clear message that local government workers deserve fair pay and proper recognition for the vital services they provide. Although this time we didn’t quite make it the results are clear we will keep up the fight. The ballot returned an impressive 87.52% YES vote, with 659 members voting in favour of the claim and 94 voting against. With a turnout of 36.48%, Bolton recorded one of the strongest results among large local authorities in the North West.

### A Huge Thank You

This achievement reflects the commitment of members, stewards, activists and branch officers who worked tirelessly throughout the campaign.



Since June, branch representatives have:

·Visited more than 40 workplaces across Bolton.
·Conducted visits to 25 schools.
·Held 12 online member meetings.
·Welcomed 85 new members to the branch.



·Built dedicated communication networks to keep members informed and engaged.

Every conversation, workplace visit and vote helped strengthen our collective voice.

### Lessons Learned

While the result is something to celebrate, the campaign also brought challenges. The branch experienced difficulties with phone banking, as some calls were incorrectly marked as spam, limiting the number of members we could contact directly. The timing of the ballot during the school summer holiday period also made engagement more difficult, while preparations for the move to electronic balloting added further challenges. Despite this, the campaign has left the branch in a much stronger position for future consultations and ballots. The experience gained and networks built this year will help us organise even more effectively in the future.

### What's Next?

The national pay campaign continues, and members can help maintain momentum by:

·Staying engaged with branch communications.
·Attending workplace meetings and briefings.
·Supporting future campaign activity where needed.
·Ensuring contact details are up to date.

### Help Shape Future Local Campaigns

The strength shown during the pay campaign provides an opportunity to tackle local issues important to Bolton members. Over the coming months, the branch will be seeking members' views on future workplace priorities and local campaigns. To ensure everyone can take part in surveys, consultations and potential electronic ballots, members are asked to check that UNISON has their current:



·Personal email address
·Mobile phone number
·Workplace location
·Job details



### Together We Are Stronger

This ballot result demonstrates what can be achieved when members stand together. By voting in such large numbers, Bolton members have sent a powerful message: Together we have delivered a strong result. Together we can continue building an even stronger voice for UNISON members across Bolton.

# BRANCH NEWSLETTER UNISON

*Bolton Branch*




## A New Deal is coming for School Support Staff after a overwhelming vote of 99% in favour.

School support staff across England could soon benefit from nationally negotiated pay, conditions and training thanks to the return of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB).

Following the Employment Rights Act 2025, the government is working with the unions and employers to establish the new body, which will cover support staff in state-funded schools, including academies.

## What will the SSSNB do?

### The SSSNB will negotiate:

National pay rates and annual pay increase
Terms and conditions of employment
Training and development opportunities
Career progression and recognition of skills

For the first time in many years, school support staff will have a dedicated national body focused specifically on their needs and workplace experiences. School support staff are the backbone of our schools. From teaching assistants and administrators to technicians, caterers, cleaners and site staff, these workers play a vital role in supporting pupils and keeping schools running smoothly. The aim is to ensure that support staff receive the recognition and reward they deserve.

## UNISON leading the campaign

UNISON has been at the forefront of the campaign to restore a national negotiating body for school support staff and is working closely with the Department for Education on the arrangements. As the largest union representing school support staff, UNISON will play a major role in negotiations once the body is formally established. The reinstatement of the SSSNB is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve pay, conditions and career development for school support staff. Together we can win the respect, recognition and reward that support staff deserve.



This is what school's convenor Lauren Alergant said
"For UNISON members in schools the launch of the SSSNB will have a direct impact on them as for the first time they will have their own negotiating body to fight for fair pay. So many members have been disappointed by the low offers they have seen over the years while their workloads increase, all they want is fair pay and recognition of the vital role they play in our schools."

BRANCH NEWSLETTER UNISON

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# EVENTS

## UNISON Supports Staff Wellbeing Event

UNISON representatives were pleased to attend the recent Staff Wellbeing and Leadership Engagement event held at Castle Hill and the Town Hall, joining colleagues from across Bolton Council to promote the importance of health, wellbeing and staff engagement in the workplace.

The event provided staff with an opportunity to access information and support services, connect with colleagues, and hear directly from the Corporate Leadership Team. Events like these play an important role in supporting employees and creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue between staff and senior leaders.

UNISON believes that staff wellbeing is not an optional extra but a vital part of delivering quality public services. Healthy, supported and valued employees are better able to serve Bolton residents and contribute positively to the workplace.

UNISON representatives attending the event welcomed the opportunity to speak with members and non-members, listen to concerns, and discuss the issues that matter most to the workforce. From workload pressures and workplace wellbeing to career development and support at work, these conversations help ensure staff voices continue to be heard.

The branch would like to thank everyone involved in organising the event and encourages members to take advantage of future wellbeing and engagement opportunities.



# BRANCH NEWSLETTER UNISON

*Bolton Branch*









## MENOPAUSE LUNCH AT TOWN HALL

To mark World Menopause Day on 18 October, colleagues came together to raise awareness, share experiences, and promote understanding of menopause in the workplace. The event provided an opportunity for staff to learn more about the impact menopause can have on health, wellbeing, and working life, while highlighting the importance of support, inclusion, and open conversations.

World Menopause Day is held annually to increase awareness of menopause and improve support for those affected. We had our table full of valuable information to hand out and for members to take back to their workplace. With women making up around 70% of Bolton Council's workforce, supporting colleagues experiencing menopause is an important part of creating a healthy, inclusive and supportive workplace for all.

Menopause is a natural stage of life, usually occurring between the ages of 45 and 55, although symptoms can begin earlier. Common symptoms include hot flushes, night sweats, anxiety, low mood, brain fog, sleep disturbances and fatigue, all of which can have a significant impact on daily life and work.
Lee Fallows Bolton Council menopause champion introduced the quest speaker Dr Bev Matta who was there to quash some myths and give some real valuable advice and information.

## COMMUNITY SHOP OPENS ITS DOORS IN GREAT LEVER




## A MESSAGE FROM OUR WELFARE OFFICER - JULIE TUDOR

A new community-focused social supermarket has officially opened in Great Lever, bringing affordable shopping, practical support and opportunities for local people to connect and learn.

Community Shop Sunnyside, based in the former Sunnyside Park Lodge, has been created through a partnership between Warburtons and Bolton Council.

The facility combines a discounted food store, community hub and community kitchen under one roof. The shop offers significantly reduced-price groceries and household essentials, including its "Plenty for 20" range, providing fruit, vegetables and bread for just 20p.

Profits from the store will be reinvested into community support services, helping local residents access skills training, confidence-building programmes and advice.

The Community Kitchen will also provide a welcoming place for people to meet and enjoy home-cooked meals, with children able to eat free every day. Located at 1 Moisant Street, Bolton, membership is free for local residents receiving means-tested benefits.

# Palestine Children

*Report by Karen Dalley*
*International Officer*

*13th August 2026*
*"Voices of Palestine" Event at the Bolton Specialist Club.*

*7 Palestinian children and their teacher shared their stories and experiences and lives event also included music and dance.*

*The speakers talked about daily life under occupation, they described structural violence embedded in daily life including restrictions on movement, road closures, limited access to places, wider control of schools, housing and health care.*

*The teacher described the arrest and house arrest of children, with lasting psychosocial effects into adulthood.*

*Families being separated by permits, residency restrictions, including watching loved ones being denied access to medical treatment.*

*Limits on schooling and no Palestinian curriculum.*
*Each spoke with remarkable courage.*

## Reflections

*It was humbling to hear from these school children, they spoke with extraordinary oath about lives shared by occupation, violence including beatings and they did so by speaking out. Their bravery is a powerful reminder of why international solidarity matters and why we must not keep silent. It was a powerful way of remembering the importance of raising Palestine voices.*

*I put in a motion to support Palestine children visiting Bolton. The branch recognises the importance of providing solidarity and support to the children and two teachers during their cost, including helping with essential care. Bolton unions agreed a donation of £200.*

## What Can members do

*·Join political and solidarity groups,even small activism has an effect*
*·Donate to the organization online*
*·Raise awareness and amplify Palestine voices*
*·Continue boycotts and activity sanctions*



# WASTE

## AN ATTACK ON ONE IS AN ATTACK ON ALL

### RESPECT WASTE WORKERS

**Bolton's Waste Workers: Keeping Our Borough Moving**

Recent coverage in the Bolton News has highlighted the ongoing pressures facing local government services. Behind one of the most visible council services are Bolton's waste and recycling workers, who keep our communities clean, safe and healthy every day.

Waste collection is about far more than emptying bins. Crews collect thousands of tonnes of waste and recycling each year while working in all weather conditions and facing risks including heavy manual handling, road traffic, slips and trips, hazardous waste, and abuse from the public. A typical waste worker may walk over 20,000 steps a day, handle hundreds of bins and climb on and off collection vehicles countless times during a shift.

Despite the physical demands of the job, waste collection represents a relatively small proportion of overall council spending, while delivering a service relied upon by every household in Bolton. Council budget reports continue to highlight the financial challenges facing local authorities while maintaining essential frontline services. Despite being one of the most visible council services, household waste collection costs residents the equivalent of just £2-£3 per collection, representing only a small proportion of council tax while delivering a vital public health service.

UNISON believes waste workers deserve fair pay, safe staffing levels, quality PPE, modern equipment and the respect that comes with delivering an essential public service.

Waste workers don't just collect rubbish.

They protect public health, support recycling and help keep Bolton running every day.

## EVERY CLEAN STREET. EVERY EMPTIED BIN. EVERY WEEK.

### THANK A BOLTON WASTE WORKER

**Essential Workers. Essential Service.**



# *CREMATORIUM VISIT*

## *BRANCH VISITS OVERDALE CREMATORIUM AHEAD OF MAJOR REFURBISHMENT*

Following discussions around personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensuring staff have equipment that is suitable and fit for purpose, representatives from the branch were invited to visit Overdale Crematorium to observe the service in operation and meet the workforce responsible for delivering this vital public service. The visit provided an opportunity to see first-hand the challenges staff face while also learning about the major refurbishment programme planned for the site over the next two years. Branch representatives will be able to compare the current facilities with the improvements once work is completed, helping to demonstrate the benefits of investment in both staff working conditions and services for residents.

Bolton Council has approved a £3 million investment to modernise the crematorium, with work scheduled to begin in summer 2026 and be completed by spring 2028 through a phased programme designed to minimise disruption. The project follows years of limited investment despite the crematorium carrying out around 2,000 to 2,200 cremations each year.

**The refurbishment will include:**

·Replacement of ageing cremators with modern, fully abated and environmentally compliant units.
·Essential roof repairs and building maintenance.
·New canopies at the East and West Chapels.
·Improved access arrangements and upgraded facilities.
·Modernisation of a service that has been supporting Bolton families since 1954.

The improvements are expected to increase capacity significantly, helping to reduce waiting times while ensuring families continue to receive a high-quality and compassionate service close to home. Environmental benefits will also be achieved through more sustainable technology and biodiversity improvements within the grounds, including the continued development of wildflower meadows.

During the visit, branch representatives were able to see the professionalism and dedication of Overdale staff. Despite working with ageing equipment and facilities that have become increasingly difficult to maintain, employees continue to provide a caring and respectful service to bereaved families every day. Like many council departments, Overdale staff consistently go above and beyond in the delivery of their duties. During our visit, it was clear to see the care, compassion and professionalism they bring to their work every day. Their dedication, attention to detail and consideration for the families they serve are a credit to both the service and Bolton Council.

Thank you to the team from us at Bolton UNISON branch.

**WE believe that investing in services means investing in staff.**

Joint Secretaries Jo and Christine, alongside Joint Assistant Secretary Sam, joined care workers on the picket line in support of industrial action at Miocare in Oldham. Care workers in Miocare's Extra Care service are fighting to end a damaging two-tier workforce that leaves them treated as second-class employees within a council-owned organisation. Despite delivering high-quality care in demanding and often challenging roles, Extra Care staff are denied the pay and conditions enjoyed by colleagues elsewhere in the organisation.

While workers in other areas of Miocare receive local authority pay rates and access to occupational sick pay, Extra Care carers are paid less and receive only statutory sick pay when they are ill. As a result,some workers can be left with as little as £45 a month throughno fault of their own when sickness strikes. This shocking inequality exists despite all staff contributing to the same vital mission of supporting some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

After years of unfair treatment, staff have been left with no option but to take industrial action in pursuit of basic fairness, dignity and respect at work. Their demands are simple: equal pay, decent sick pay, and an end to the two-tier workforce that has no place in a publicly owned care provider.

Bolton stands firmly with these workers in their fight for justice
















## Marta from the University is still holding strong for transparency

Since the Vice-Chancellor's departure, many hoped the University would return to its core purpose as a place of higher education. However, many staff feel that significant issues remain, with concerns about governance, transparency, and the long-term direction of the institution. Questions continue to be raised about how University funds are being spent, while staff and students face ageing facilities, limited resources, and an environment that falls short of expectations. These concerns have led to weekly protests outside the Chancellor's building, calling for meaningful change. With several key leadership roles still held on an interim basis, many feel the University remains in a state of uncertainty, making it difficult for important decisions and improvements to move forward.

On a positive note,UNISON membership continues to grow, reflecting increased confidence in the union's ability to support staff. Although casework has also risen, this suggests more colleagues are willing to come forward for help and challenge unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

UNISON is making a difference, and we remain committed to supporting our members and campaigning for the positive changes the University needs.

# MEET THE STEWARD

## Sarah Morgan



My journey into UNISON began after I experienced first-hand the support that a union representative can provide. At a time when I felt I had been treated unfairly by management and HR, a UNISON representative was there to offer guidance, advice, and support. That experience inspired me to get involved myself.

I wanted to give something back and help colleagues who might find themselves in similar situations. I have also always felt strongly about workers receiving the pay and recognition they deserve. During pay negotiations and strike ballot campaigns, I became increasingly aware of the important role unions play in ensuring employees have a collective voice.

In 2025, I became a UNISON Workplace Contact after reading an email about the role. It appealed to me because it offered an opportunity to support colleagues and learn more about union work without immediately taking on the full responsibilities of a steward.

As a Workplace Contact, I met regularly with John Pye to discuss issues affecting colleagues within my service area. We talked about concerns people had raised and considered what action could be taken to address them. This often involved speaking with management and seeking clarification where there were inconsistencies or grey areas within workplace policies. In some cases, teams carrying out the same role were being treated differently, and it was important to seek fairness and consistency for everyone.

Part of the role also involved talking with colleagues, gathering feedback, and encouraging people to become involved when workplace issues needed addressing.

Although I enjoyed my role as a Workplace Contact, I eventually found myself wanting to do more. I wanted the opportunity to gather information through meetings and questionnaires, learn how to represent staff in individual cases, gain a deeper understanding of council policies, and attend training sessions on a wider range of topics.

In March this year, I finally took the plunge and became a UNISON Steward.

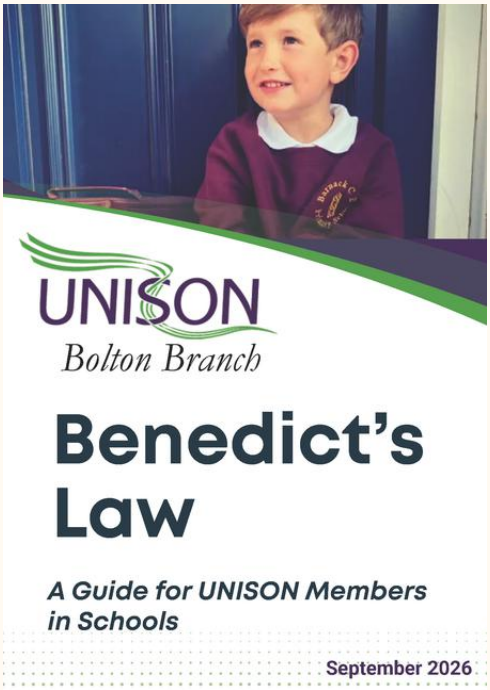
If becoming a steward is something you have considered but felt unsure about, my advice would be simple: don't be afraid to take that first step. You will not be pressured or rushed into doing anything you are not ready for. You can progress at your own pace, and I have found everyone involved to be welcoming, supportive, and genuinely pleased to help new people get involved.

Some members may worry about obtaining facilities time from their manager to undertake union duties or training. If you encounter difficulties, UNISON's admin team is available to help. Throughout my experience, I have found the admin team and branch officers to be incredibly supportive and always willing to answer questions.

Becoming a steward has given me the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people,and play a more active role in improving the workplace for my colleagues.



# We are Busy Bees!













**There's no substitute for being out in workplaces, talking directly to members, hearing their concerns, and understanding the challenges they face every day. Recently, branch representatives visited colleagues in the workplace to meet members, discuss local issues, and ensure their voices continue to be heard. These conversations are at the heart of what makes our union strong. Whether members wanted to talk about workloads, health and safety, staffing levels, pay, or workplace wellbeing.**

**Workplace visits are about more than handing out leaflets or sharing updates. They are an opportunity to build relationships, provide support, answer questions, and identify issues before they become bigger problems. They also give members the chance to influence the priorities of the branch and ensure the focus is on the issues that matter most to them.**

**Every improvement won in the workplace starts with a conversation. When members speak up and work together through their union, they have the collective strength to make a difference. That is why regular workplace engagement remains one of the most important parts of union organising. A big thank you to all the members who took the time to stop and chat. Your views, experiences, and ideas help shape the work of our branch and strengthen our collective voice. The message was clear: people value having a union that listens and acts. If you have an issue, a suggestion, or would like to become more active in your workplace, please get in touch.**

JOINT BRANCH SECRETARY CHRISTINE AND ASSISTANT JOINT SECRETARY SAM AT ADELAIDE WITH SOME ADULT SERVICE STAFF

